

CORN & BUTTER PICK UP WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 18 (1-5 PM)

Since we are still unable to do tours (this time due to construction) we will be following the same procedure for corn pick up as last year. We would like to give your family a dozen ears of fresh sweet corn and a pound of butter once again. For your corn and butter pick up, we will have a drive by pick up system. Prior to your arrival, please insert your name and correct address (if necessary) on the label, tear off that portion. When you arrive at the Dairy, please come in the east driveway, drive up to the tent area, stay in your vehicle, hand that tear off portion of the letter to the attendant and they will give you the corn and butter. You will then exit the west driveway.



VAN DER GEEST
DAIRY CATTLE, INC.
715-675-6043

5555 County Rd. A • Merrill, WI 54452

FALL 2021 NEWSLETTER

Many things have changed in the last year for all of us. Van Der Geest Dairy has undergone many changes and upgrades as well.

For over 50 years, Van Der Geest Dairy has been a part of the community here in central Wisconsin. We strive to be supportive and transparent with our neighbors and community. This newsletter will bring you up to date on the many changes going on at our dairy farm.



NEW FREESTALL BARN

We are constantly looking for ways to improve the environment for our cattle. Last summer we built a new freestall barn for our milking cattle. Previously our calves went to a nursery shortly after being born, then at 6 months old we sent them to another facility in southwest Minnesota. At approximately 18

months old the heifers were brought back to our facility. At 24 months old they have their calves and begin producing milk for our dairy.

Raising a heifer is quite expensive, approximately \$2000.00 is spent per heifer until they are old enough to produce milk. To decrease this expense and stress on the animals, we eliminated shipping them to Minnesota. The calves come right from the nursery to our facility. However, this change meant we needed more housing for our cattle. The new freestall barn became a home for milking cows and it allowed us to manage the young stock to be cared for in the existing barns.

The new freestall has 56 - 72" fans which draw fresh air from the northside of the barn and expel the air on the southside towards highway A. This is called a cross vented barn. Fans turn on as the preset temperatures are reached, this keeps the animals in a temperature-controlled environment. On warm days the breeze in the barn can reach a speed of 7mph! The new barn allows less walking for the cattle to get milked, larger, softer bedded stalls for the animals in which to lay down, easier access to water and feed as well as more natural lighting for easier movement of the animals.

TOURS

Due to construction, tours of the dairy have been suspended for the safety of our visitors.

Once the new parlor is complete, we plan on resuming scheduled tours. We enjoy welcoming the public to tour our facility and see where great Wisconsin cheese originates from. Visit our website VANDERGEESTDAIRY.COM for updates. We hope to resume scheduling tours in late fall!

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Like many businesses, the Covid pandemic took a toll on the workforce. We are looking for reliable people to join our team at the dairy. If you or someone you know is looking for full or part time employment working with cattle, operating equipment, or driving truck, stop by our office to pick up an application or visit our website to complete an application and email it back to us.



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CROPPING

2021 has been a great year for crop growing. We were blessed with a warm, dry spring to complete planting. Timely rain and plenty of heat has helped our crops grow quickly. We hope the season finishes out the same and that we have a dry fall for harvesting.

We will once again be working with Feddick Farms of Medford to assist us with harvesting. As always, we expect all drivers to be courteous and careful. If you notice anything that doesn't appear to be proper, please call and let us know. We also like to pass positive comments on to our crew so should you see anything above and beyond our expectations please let us know that as well.

As a reminder, our trucks and implements are large and slow moving. Should you get behind them please be patient. We are trying to harvest high quality feed in a short period of time. Once fall harvesting is complete, we will begin transporting our organic manure to the fields to prepare for the next growing season. We haul the manure by semitruck to the fields farthest away from our facility so that we do not have to haul in the spring when the roads are soft from the frost.

The field soils are tested, and the manure is applied for the crop's nutrient needs. We test the manure daily when applying to ensure the proper amount is placed where needed. There is a meter on the tractor that allows the operator to monitor how many gallons are applied, this is done while following all regulations for setbacks on wells, waterway, creeks, pond, wetlands etc. A great amount of effort is put into this process to ensure it is done properly. Thank you in advance for your patience with us during harvesting and fertilizing!

We are always looking for productive cropland to produce feed for our cattle. If you own ag land within 15 miles of the dairy and are not already renting to us, but are interested in doing so, please give us a call! Our policy is to take care of the land leaving it better than it started. All the land we utilize is covered by liability insurance, and we follow Natural Resource Conservation Service guidelines as well as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources standards, in addition we pay a competitive rental rate.

NEW MILKING PARLOR

Our current parlor is over 21 years old. This parlor runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Since the milking center is the key component to our business it must be capable of harvesting milk constantly, properly and in a safe manner for our employees and cattle.



Therefore, after much research it was decided to construct a new milking parlor. The type we chose is known as a rotary system. The cattle will step onto the rotary carousel, be milked, and then step off. This seemed to be a very calming process for the animals. While doing the research, we were impressed with how quiet and comfortable the cattle seemed to be while being milked on the carousel.

The rotary system is less labor intensive. Animals are moved to the worker instead of the worker moving to the animals. The system will also have a robot assisting with some of the milking process. The robot will spray the animal's teat with a sealant when milking is complete.

Technology has improved over the last 20 years. The new system will monitor activity, temperature, and other vital information for each animal. Ensuring that if a problem arises and the animal needs assistance, we can help her immediately. We are excited to have access to all this new information.

All of us at the dairy sincerely appreciate everyone working with us. We wish everyone a safe and happy remainder of 2021! Thank you again!

From all of us at Van Der Geest Dairy