

Celebrating Wisconsin's Dairyland

Written by Kathleen Vinehout, State Senator 31st District
Monday, 19 June 2017 15:35 - Last Updated Monday, 19 June 2017 21:09

<http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/wisc-dairy-farm-s5.jpg>



This week Sen. Kathleen Vinehout writes about celebrating Wisconsin's Dairyland as part of June Dairy Month. She shares some reminiscences about being a dairy farmer.

ALMA, WI - "Do you still milk?" I asked Jim at a recent gathering. "No," he told me. "My son tells me the most help I can be is to stay out of the way," he joked. We both agreed that was hard. Dairying gets in your blood.

June is dairy month. A time to celebrate all we love about 'America's Dairyland' – home to 1.28 million dairy cows, which is more than one cow for every five Wisconsinites.

Reminiscing with an old dairy farmer, you realize the love of cows and farming never really goes away. The smell of newly mowed hay or the glistening dew on the field of newly emerging corn brings back tangible memories. While the body is worn and weary, the mind still remembers the satisfaction of a job well done when every cow is milked and fed, the barn is clean and limed, and all the other farm animals are ready to settle in for the night.

Dairying is a life of details. Every good farmer I know carried a notebook in his or her coveralls. Did Daisy finish her feed? Is that heifer calf sucking up breakfast with the relish of yesterday? Did I call the mill to order feed? Which heifers need vaccinating? Everything is written down. A human's touch completes each task.

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Today we have computers to help remember the details. Robotic milking helps some farmers handle the milking chores. But, no matter the technology, there's a human paying attention to the details on every successful farm.

That farmer also has back up from many other human resources who pay attention to details. Veterinarians, agronomists, implement dealers, dairy equipment technicians all answer that emergency call for the sick cow, sick crop or broken machinery. These folks are the back-up team that helps the farm family succeed.

Then there are the folks that provide psychological and moral support, like the spouse, who pays the bills, keeps the house clean and the hay crew fed. The pastor who counsels the family through hard times and the accountant who helps navigate moving the farm from father to daughter and son-in-law.

Reminiscing with Jim brought back my own memories of cold January mornings when I didn't want to get out of bed at 4:00 a.m... Grudgingly I donned long underwear and layers of warm clothing and headed out into frigid weather.

Before I got the cows fed, Bob Bosold's cheery voice came over the radio. "It's the shank of the morning," he crooned. Bob reported that it was another day (about the 16th in a row) where the high temperature was expected to be "two below." He then launched into some corny joke about "Tupelo, Mississippi." I do not remember the details, but it made me smile.

I am sure dairy farmers across western Wisconsin had a better day because every one of them knew Bob was up before the sun and hard at work before they ever ventured out into the subzero weather.

Bob Bosold, the long-time farm broadcaster at WAXX radio in Eau Claire, was recently recognized as the National Farm Broadcaster of the Year. This well-deserved honor cannot possibly capture the dedication of forty years Bob made to the farm families across Western Wisconsin. Every dairy breakfast, FFA convention, Farm Progress Days and early morning milking, Bob was present, by radio, bringing the important news and stories to the farming community.

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His counterpart in the southern part of the state, Pam Jahnke – the Fabulous Farm Babe – has done the same since 1990. Bob and Pam are just some of the folks that make up a part of the fabric of our great dairy state.

We celebrate our great dairy state during June. However, every day we should be thankful for the farmers' endless work, which feeds us and contributes to our economy. As Daniel Webster said, "Let us not forget that the cultivation of the earth is the most important labor of man. When tillage begins, other arts will follow. The farmers therefore are the founders of civilization."

So hats off to the hard-working moms and dads, uncles and aunts, daughters and sons. Big thanks to the 84-year-old grandpa who still cuts the hay and the "retired" farmer Jim who "just can't seem to stay out of the way!"