



Energy audits pay off

Tom Quaife, Editor, Dairy Herd Network | Updated: 08/01/2012

Triple A Farms is located just six miles from the corporate headquarters of retail giant Wal-Mart in Bentonville, Ark., which makes for an interesting juxtaposition. Both entities have taken a leadership role on sustainability.

Triple A is a 300-cow dairy that participated in an energy audit last summer. An independent expert came out to the farm and made several recommendations, including installation of a plate cooler. The plate cooler (using recycled well water) allows for more efficient cooling of milk before it gets to the bulk tank. Estimated energy savings: \$4,000 a year.



In this case, being sustainable paid off, agrees farm owner Ryan Anglin. It won't always be the case — you have to evaluate each situation, he says, — but there are definitely times when the sustainable approach makes sense for the farm, as well as society at large and the environmental movement.

Sustainability

Admittedly, sustainability is a nebulous term. If you ask 10 people what it means, you will get 10 different answers.

To Dan Rice, who represents one of four families that own and operate Prairieland Dairy in Firth, Neb., sustainability means keeping the farm economically viable, while also doing the right thing for the natural environment.

Like Anglin, Rice participated in an energy audit program under the auspices of the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy. An independent expert came out to the 1,500-cow operation and found a number of ways that the farm could save on its energy bills. For example, the dairy converted to a new high-efficiency, low-temperature detergent for cleaning milk equipment and systems. It allowed the dairy to turn down the water heaters to 120 degrees, thus saving on propane.

Detergent costs will be higher, but with a significant reduction in propane, the net savings will be about \$4,000 per year. All the while, the dairy is able to maintain a top-quality wash.

When all of the changes are made, including the new detergent, more efficient lighting, and an electric pump on a liquid manure irrigation system, the energy savings could add up to more than \$18,000 a year.

It doesn't come as a surprise to Allen Dusault, project director for the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy.

"Most dairies have an opportunity to implement energy-efficient equipment and practices that can save anywhere between 10 and 35 percent on their annual energy use," he says. Dairies can't control their feed cost or the price they receive for their milk, but they can control their energy cost to some extent, Dusault points out.

To learn more about the energy audit program, go to the following web site:
www.usdairy.com/saveenergy

Click [here](#) for online version.