

As published in



Who: Kevin Haakma

What: Haakma and Sons Dairy

Where: Farwell, TX



In West Texas, the oil industry has a long history while the dairy industry is relatively young. Both industries require good workers, but, during an oil boom, the petroleum industry can pay a lot more. Even so, the way Kevin Haakma sees it, working in the dairy industry has advantages far beyond what oil can offer.

The oil boom of recent years proved to be a challenge for Haakma and Sons Dairy near Farwell, TX. Although the dairy paid its employees well, Kevin and brother Eric lost some good employees who went to work in the oil fields around Midland and Odessa.

Producer Spotlight

Beyond West Texas boom/bust

Over the past year, commodity prices for milk and oil followed comparable paths. Milk prices peaked in spring and but stayed strong until near the end of the year. Oil prices peaked in summer and then began to slide. Both milk and oil kept sliding into 2015. Oil prices ticked up a bit in January and fell again, while milk fell to prices 30-35% off a year ago.



Now, the West Texas oil industry is shedding workers. Some previous employees would like to return to feeding and milking the Haakma cows.

The Haakma family dairy got its start when Kevin's grandfather emigrated from the Netherlands in the early 1900s, dairying first in South Dakota, then moving to California. The family

established a dairy in Artesia, then moved east to Chino and finally Ontario. These towns grew into cities and eventually merged into the Greater Los Angeles metro area.

"Our family kept growing the dairy operation," Kevin says. "But SoCal kept growing, too. The land was changing from farming to housing, right under our feet."

Finally, in 2006, the Haakma family – including Kevin, Eric, and four other sons and daughters – sold their California land and made the big move to West Texas. They brought along their herdsman, his family, and 2,000 Holsteins, representing 50 years of dairy genetics. They hit rough patches with the low milk prices of 2009, then some droughty years, and every year had weather extremes never experienced in California.

Today Haakma and Sons Dairy has 3,000 milking cows and 25 employees. Cow housing includes free stall barns and shaded lots. Feeding is by TMR consisting of the farm's own corn silage along with purchased hay, commodities, and Diamond V Original XPC®, which was part of the feeding program back in California, too. Milking takes place in a parallel parlor two times per day. Diamond V Dairy Advisors, including Perry Church and Scott Wilson, keep in contact.

A neighbor currently raises the Haakma day-old calves to springers. Kevin plans to adjust to a shorter period off-site rearing in order to reduce the need for stanchion training of heifers.

“Our family works ‘hands-on’ every day,” Kevin says, “which keeps us close to the cows. We don’t wait for them to give us bad news through the milk tank.”

With four girls and two boys of his own, Kevin looks forward to the future of the Haakma family dairy. He also looks forward to helping grow his West Texas community. “The dairy ‘boom’ in West Texas may not be as big as oil,” Kevin says, “but it’s going to last a lot longer – generations. Where dairies go, towns can grow.”



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