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Producer Spotlight

Heritage and pride in quality production

Who: Todd Roth

What: White Clover Dairy

Where: Jerome, ID



Dairy traditions run deep in the Roth family, where all seven of Todd Roth's brothers and sisters are involved in operations in the "Magic Valley" near Jerome, ID. Si-Ellen Farms, run by oldest brother Mike, is the largest and gets a lot of attention. But Todd's White Clover Dairy carries the name of the Swiss family's first American farm and takes their grandfather's legacy to the next level.

Founded in 2004, the all-Holstein operation at White Clover includes 3,000 milking cows and 350 dry cows. It also raises 3,000 replacement heifers (babies to springers), which return to Si-Ellen for six months then move to another location for breeding. At present, White Clover has 40 employees for dairy production.

“We’re working on an expansion plan for 2016,” Todd says. “We want to be able to keep all our heifers at White Clover, rather than transport them to Si-Ellen. It’s going to be a lot simpler and more efficient, with less stress on our animals and everyone involved.”

Currently, White Clover has free-stall housing for 2,000 cows, shaded corrals for 1,000 cows, and another shaded pen for dry cows. All cows circulate through all pens, both inside and outside. Bedding is wheat straw and compost.

“Sand would be nice for bedding,” Todd says, “but we live on a volcanic plain where the nearest sand is a long ways off. Manure compost bedding is part of our total nutrient management system, with the nutrients either recycled into our feed crop production or available to nearby crop farmers.”

White Clover grows corn for silage on 1,000 acres in an area where dams and canals on the Snake River “magically transformed” the arid valley in the early 20th Century. Corn silage is stored in drive-over, side-walled pits, covered in tire-weighted tarps. The farm’s commodity barn stocks alfalfa hay, beet pulp, distillers (DDGS), and a “grain mix” concentrate made at Si-Ellen, which includes canola, distillers, cottonseed, corn, vitamin-mineral pack, and Original XPC™.

All feeds at White Clover are total mixed rations (TMR) fed twice per day. However, for fresh cows, Todd also top-dresses the TMR with Original XP™.

“It’s the way we’ve done it since we opened White Clover,” Todd says. “It’s not tradition – more like insurance for high-producing cows.”

White Clover achieves consistently high milk production throughout the year, with only a couple of pounds variation winter to summer. Milking takes place in a double 50 parallel parlor, three times per day.

Where the Roth family’s Swiss tradition really shines at White Clover is in the farm’s cleanliness, tidiness, and attention to detail, particularly in consistent management and operation, day-after-day, year-after-year.

“Cows thrive on consistency,” Todd says. “So we try to eliminate anything sudden or unexpected, right down to opening the gate the same way every time.”

Looking ahead, Todd notes the challenges facing all dairy producers, including hiring and training good dairy employees and coping with volatility in the milk markets.

“We just went through a \$10 swing in milk prices,” he says. “That sort of thing could affect your operation. Diamond V’s Dairy Advisors help keep us ready and steady.”

For 2015, thanks to the Roth family, consistency in top quality dairy production is going to part of the magic in Idaho's Magic Valley. For more, see:

http://www.americasheartland.org/episodes/episode_619/farm_ecology.htm



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