

MILK INSPECTORS DISCUSS DAIRY SETUP AT “GOAT DAY”

By Susan Miller

Dan Roller and C.B. Cooper, inspectors from the Department of Public Health, Milk Safety Branch, in Frankfort, outlined plans for setting up a goat dairy and cheese plant at KSU's Goat Day. They started by saying there has been only one licensed goat dairy and cheese plant in operation in the past decade or so. That dairy shut down because of too much work versus too little profit. (So get those business plans going!)

There were so many questions asked - and Roller and Cooper offered so many helpful suggestions - this informative session could have gone on for the rest of the day.

Here's a brief outline of their presentation:

*Before starting construction, you need to draw up your plans (not fancy, just clear) and submit them to the Kentucky Milk Safety Branch for approval. This eliminates costly changes later. Their central office phone number is (502) 564-3340 or fax (502)564-8787.

*A goat dairy would mirror a cow dairy, only on a small scale. Besides a milking parlor, separate rooms are needed for the milk room (where milk is stored in a bulk tank), and the processing area for cheese. Within that processing area, separate areas would be needed for storage, packaging and aging. A small lab area would be needed for the mandatory antibiotic testing on each batch of milk.

*If you want to set up a dairy only, the cost would not be prohibitive, but finding a market for your milk would be the key to success. (Reality check!)

*In most dairies, a pipeline carries the milk from the milking parlor through the wall to the milk room, and from the milk room into the pasteurizer.

*A pasteurizer would not be needed if you only make aged cheeses. Any cheese aged 60 days or more does not have to be made with pasteurized milk. However, most goat cheese makers would probably want to make some soft or semi-aged cheeses, so they would need this expensive piece of equipment.

*The pasteurizer is the big-ticket item. Start looking around for a used one because the older ones are much better quality. Cooper wasn't very enthusiastic about the quality of the pasteurizer in that lending program in New Hampshire that a lot of prospective cheesemakers have read about.

*Walls and ceilings of the milk room and processing area should be covered with light-colored, waterproof paneling that can easily be washed. The paneling must be waterproof all the way through.

*Floors should be concrete, preferably with an epoxy coating to make them hold up longer. There are other waterproof floors on the market, but they are much more expensive than concrete. Floors should be graded toward drains which carry out the water from all that cleaning you will be doing.

*If you have a dairy only and it is near your house, a bathroom is not required. However, because a cheese plant is classified as a manufacturing facility, it needs a bathroom.

Though time did not permit much more information, a FAQ sheet was provided giving information about selling milk and cheese. Basically, it emphasized that you can sell milk or cheese if your facility is licensed and you have followed the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance guidelines (the PMO). You can get a copy off the internet.

The only way you can sell unpasteurized milk in Kentucky is with a doctor's prescription. If you also want to milk sheep, the same milking parlor can be used, but the milk from each animal has to be stored separately.

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A useful website for finding equipment, recipes, workshops, etc. is www.smalldairy.com
If you would like a copy of the handouts provided at the session or more specific information call Susan Miller, (859) 266-6650, or email househounds@msn.com