

**News from Northern New York Agricultural Development Program
PRESS RELEASE**

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St. Lawrence County Farms Featured in Successful Dairy Strategies Publication

Two St. Lawrence County farmers and the strategies they have used for profitably operating small dairies will be featured in a new publication called "Profiles of Successful Strategies for Small Dairy Farms." Loren and Cynthia Ortman of Brasher Falls and Doug Thompson of Gouverneur profitably operate dairy farms of less than 100 cows.

Working with a grant from the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program, Steve Richards, Program Director of NY FarmNet and NY FarmLink, developed the new publication with assistance from Cornell Cooperative Extension educators in Northern New York.

"These case studies will be most useful for farm owners who are considering making changes to their operations to increase profitability and to meet personal and family goals. These profiles will provide them with ideas, information and inspiration from their fellow farmers working in Northern New York," says Richards.

According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture and the New York Agricultural Statistics Service, 78% of the Northern New York region's 4,572 farms have less than 100 dairy cows producing about 33% of the region's milk. Statistics show that about 92% of the region's farms have less than 200 dairy cows producing about 63% of the region's milk supply.

About 80% of the dairy farms in St. Lawrence County have fewer than 100 cows.

Ortmans Go Full-Time Into Dairying

After raising and selling heifer for several years, Loren and Cynthia Ortman decided to try conventional dairying. They remodeled their tiestall barn and seeded their pastures, but two years and a silo full of moldy silage convinced them to transition to rotational grazing and feeding baleage.

"To keep our investment low, we partnered with neighbors to put up baleage," Loren says. "We plan to be debt-free in five years and expanding our operation to about 60 cows with farm improvements supporting that expansion."

Thompson Transitions to Rapid Grazing System

Doug Thompson owns and operates a dairy farm that has been in his family in Gouverneur since 1828. He is milking about 60 cows with the help of just one full-time employee. After 12 years of struggling to grow corn on his farm's heavy clay soils, Doug decided to transition to a rapid rotational grazing system. That means he moves his cows to fresh pasture about every 12 hours.

"It is amazing how grazing can bring back land that is not so great," Doug says.

Installing an in-barn baleage feeding system uses less electricity than a silo unloader and the baleage allows him to harvest his hay at optimum quality. He says the cows eat better now than when he fed corn silage.

The switch to the intensive rotational grazing system has increased the farm's dairy-based profitability, allows Doug to put money away for retirement, and allows him time to increase income from the farm's maple sugaring and saw log operations.

The Successful Strategies publication will feature two small farm dairies in each of Northern New York's six counties: Lewis, St. Lawrence, Jefferson, Franklin, Clinton and Essex. Other strategies profiled include partnering and sharing resources: equipment, manpower; making a niche product such as farmstead cheese, and using computerized production technology. Transition Tips can be adapted for any dairy operation.

"Small farms are a vital part of New York's dairy sector," says Joanna Green, Extension Associate with Cornell's Small Farms Program. "In addition to contributing to Northern New York's economic well-being, small farms support the social infrastructures in their communities, contribute attractive working landscapes and help protect the region's rich environmental resources. I hope these profiles are helpful to other farmers looking to make adjustments to ensure the successful future of their small dairy businesses."

The new publication will be available at Cornell Cooperative Extension offices. The farm profiles will also be online at www.nnyagdev.org/dairyfarmprofiles.htm.

The Northern New York Agricultural Development Program is a farmer-driven research and education program specific to New York state's six northernmost counties. For more information, visit www.nnyagdev.org or contact Board Chairs Jon Greenwood, Canton, 315-386-3231, or Joe Giroux, Plattsburgh, 518-563-7523, or call Dave Smith at Cornell University at 607-255-7286. # # #