

Balancing Milk Volumes

Rare is the dairy processing venture that uses all of its milk out of the starting gate. You will have to plan for the extra milk produced on the farm. The following are options used on many farmstead operations:

Ship excess to bulk markets. Many start-up operations are already shipping milk to a conventional bulk market. They take a portion of the milk out to process and gradually work up to using a certain percentage (or all) of the milk produced on the farm. Points to consider:

- Many milk cooperatives will not allow farmers to divert milk for veal calves or processing. Have an agreement **in writing** that shows that the market agrees to your using this milk for processing. **DO NOT** make this a verbal agreement.
- Always have a certain amount of milk in the tank for the milk truck to pick up. If you do not, drivers and field representatives will become annoyed. You may lose your market.
- Because they have milk quality tests that are done to your milk anyways, it is handy to have this information available.

Other operations will start with a minimum number of animals and gradually expand numbers as processing capacity allows. The limiting factor is the ability to grow from within or to purchase clean, healthy in-milk animals to supply the markets. If you plan to purchase lactating animals as needed, speak to a veterinarian about a biosecurity protocol for any incoming animals. This is especially important for more critical populations as the spread of disease will limit the expansion of a viable population.

Pigs are a great way to use whey, excess milk, and treated milk. They do not suite every person, but some of the heritage pig breeds developed a symbiotic relationship with dairy processing ventures in their country of origin – Gloucester old spots fed whey from Gloucester cheese production made from milk of Gloucester cows...

Field spreading/composting are expensive ways to handle excess milk. It has been done traditionally, especially with whey and skim milk. Make sure you have a nutrient management plan in place to account for this milk.