



Summer 2019

Day in the Life of a Dairy Farmer in the Spring/ Summer

4:00 a.m.! Time to rise and shine!

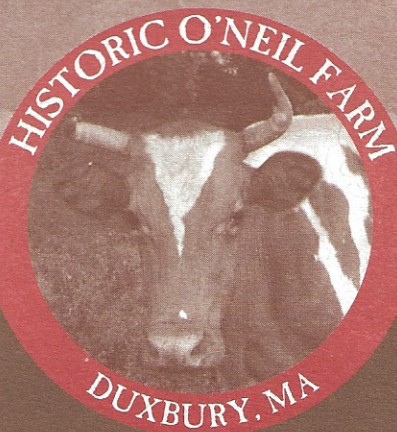
Mornings come quick on the farm and with that there never seems to be enough hours in the day to get everything done. There's much more to life on a dairy farm than milking cows. Farmers need to have a whole range of skills in order to run a profitable and sustainable farm. There's never really a typical day on the farm, but each day is based around the milking times for cows and the time of year. Most small dairy farms milk their cows twice a day at the same time every day because cows are creatures of habit. The time between milking is when most chores on the farm are done which could range from mending fences, fixing the down milk pump, or maintenance of a tractor. When you're a farmer, you have to be good at being an electrician, plumber, and mechanic as well as being a good herdsman.

The mornings begin with walking through the barn checking the calves, heifers and any cows that need extra attention. After checking on everyone the milking cows' grain is put down upon their designated stanchion. Now it's time for the cows to come up from their pasture where they had spent the night, and the day begins in full swing. Once the cows have all come in and been looked over to confirm that they are eating and drinking normally, it is time to milk. The milking process varies in time depending on the size of the herd. After the cows have been milked they are let back out to pasture, and it's time to feed the calves their milk. Now that the calves, heifers, and cows are taken care of and the barn has been cleaned, it is off to complete the to-do list for the day. This list varies by season. Spring and summer are usually the busiest with managing crops and monitoring calving.

After the morning chores have been completed, the farmers themselves get to have their own breakfast and make any notes about how the morning went. Farmers need to keep records of everything that happens on their farm, such as what a cow eats, veterinarian visits, as well as other paperwork like purchases and schedules. This is usually a good time to make phone calls for ordering supplies for milking, grain, bedding and machinery parts before heading out for the next task of the day. One more check on the calves and heifers to make sure they are resting comfortably and full from their breakfast, and another check any cows that might be due to calve.

The itinerary for the day is largely determined by the weather. Those sunny dry days in spring and summer are taken up by getting crops planted, and hay mowed and baled. Once the fields are tended to there is, hopefully, enough time to check fences, cut up some firewood, or check the garden. Rainy days are well-spent with barn repairs, machine maintenance, and catching up on paperwork.

Before you know it is 3:00 p.m. and time to tend to the cows again, doing the afternoon walk-through of checking the calves, heifers and cows in the barn before the milking cows come up from the pasture. After the barn is ready the "ladies" make their way in with full udders eagerly waiting to be milked. Once every one has been fed, milked and looked over, they can head back out to pasture unless one of them looks as though they may calve. Then it is stall rest for them for the night as they will need to be checked every few hours in case they need assistance. The barn is scraped, cleaned and bedded again for the early morning arrival. As the sun begins to set there is sometimes the opportunity to sit and admire the happy cows chewing their cud and lounging in the pasture.



The Historic O'Neil Farm, Inc. is a private, non-profit corporation committed to maintaining the 145-acre farm in agriculture in perpetuity, preserving and protecting the historic landscape and natural habitat, providing educational programs, and offering public access to the farm.

Board of Directors:

Susan Schortmann,
President

Kimberly Glattstein,
Treasurer

Sam Butcher,
Clerk

Jerry Ingersoll
Marie King

Jessica McNally
Douglas Muir, Esq.

Carl O'Neil

Historic O'Neil Farm, Inc.
PO Box 2755
Duxbury, MA 02331

email:

historiconeilfarm@gmail.com
website: historiconeilfarm.org

Find Us on Facebook:



The Autumn Avenue trailhead parking lot is open dawn to dusk.

Haying



Carl O'Neil Haying

The sun at it's apex on a warm autumn day. A farmer passes through the field on a tractor raking recently cut and dried grass into windrows. A red-tail hawk scans the freshly turned grass from a perch high in a bordering oak. Mice, voles or rabbits no longer benefit from the cover as the hawk looks for a meal.

Towed behind the tractor six disks spin en echelon, casting the cut grass lightly into neat serpentine windrows. Yellow steel tines a blur. Concentric trips start at the field's margins and work inward toward the center. The farmer works quickly, the tractor moving across the field with purpose. The farmer, one hand on the wheel looks forward to check his course, then back to the neatly formed rows, forward, then back as the tractor races along.

A farm hand on a second tractor tows a bailer that straddles the windrows swallowing the grass, periodically stopping to disgorge a large disk of neatly baled grass. A third tractor and a pickup truck towing a long flat trailer follow the bailer, stopping to carefully load each half-ton disk for the short trip to the farm. Rake the grass, bale it and load it, at once choreographed and free form, all implements keeping pace with one-another. A dance.

"Makin' hay isn't the same as mowing your yard." The farmer told me.

You and I might call any process that involves cutting tall grass to make bales "haying". It is not that simple. First, farmers make a distinction between making baleage and making hay. Baleage is typically cut when the grass is younger and when the moisture content is higher. Hay is made when the grass has more time to grow and is drier. The moister bales of grass destined for baleage are wrapped tightly in plastic. Bacteria consume what little oxygen remains in the airspace within the bale fermenting the grass slightly and producing just enough lactic acid to inhibit further bacterial growth, thereby preserving the nutritional value of the grass. Without a tight plastic wrap the grass would simply rot.

Hay, on the other hand, is cut when the grass has grown a bit more and when the grass' moisture content is lower. With the lower moisture content there is less risk that hay will rot but it still has to be kept dry so grass cut for hay is also wrapped tight with plastic.

"Haying" requires farmers to be weathermen. Cut grass generally requires three days to dry so the haying operation has to start during a dry stretch. Grass cut on the morning of Day 1 is fluffed and turned, or tedded, in the afternoon allowing the sun to dry all sides. Left overnight the grass will be tedded once or twice on Day 2, each pass of the tedder lightly tossing and turning the grass to assure uniform drying. No wet spots. If everything goes according to plan the farmer can ted one last time and then bale the grass on Day 3.

But sometimes the weather does not cooperate. A passing summer shower means another day to dry, delaying the baling process. A soaking rain and the grasses become too moist and start to decompose: months of careful field work goes to waste. In New England having three days of dry weather when the grass is ready to be cut is a gift. Any farmer who can get two or three cuttings in a summer considers himself lucky.

Got Milk?

We enjoyed three afternoons with the Bay Farm Montessori 7th and 8th graders sharing information about the life on the dairy, teaching them how to handle the calves, and other aspects of small farming. This year we conducted a little experiment with the kids to see if they could identify by taste, sight, and smell the types of dairy and alternative milk products available. Interestingly, they found it difficult to identify most of the product and were surprised by the ingredients and other factors that go into the products that are marketed as the "best for them".

We compared Almond, Soy, Organic Milk - Lactose Free, Organic Non-homogenized Milk, Buttermilk, Hood Whole Milk, and Garelick Dairy Pure Nonfat Milk. Sue was quite surprised at the types of milk and milk alternatives available to consumers. The ones selected were only a small portion of what is available to us when we walk up the dairy aisle

How do you select milk? Freshest, i.e. quickest farmer to market and least traveled, Less ingredients, more protein, lactose free, amount of fat, amount of calcium, organic, brand name?

- Want the most calcium? Almond milk, however, it is added to the product.
- Want the most protein? Everything but Almond Milk - at 8g of protein for all the other products.
- Want the least fat? Almond, Soy, Buttermilk, and, of course, Nonfat.
- Want the most naturally occurring vitamins? All of the milk products that came from cows with 9 essential nutrients.
- Which one had the quickest farmer to market? Hood Whole Milk from Lynnfield, MA
- Which had the least ingredients added? The Organic non-homogenized milk
- Which one came from the farthest away? Almond milk
- Which one had the most added ingredients? Almond milk and Soy milk

A great marketing test for the kids was their answer to which one did they think was the best for them. Most of them agreed Dairy Pure because of the name. Dairy Pure was the non-fat milk from Garelick Farms and came from Dallas, Tx.

What is the best milk for you? It depends on what health benefits you are trying to gain from drinking the milk, and/or, what you are trying to avoid and still enjoy a taste of milk. What would be the most beneficial, least processed, locally sourced selection? Hood Whole Milk

We also discussed whether Almond and Soy milk should be called milk and in the dairy aisle. Do you consider it dairy? The kids also were interested in how the lactose is taken out of the milk and, thus, how some cheese (like Cabot Cheddar) is naturally lactose free.

We all walked away with a greater appreciation for locally produced dairy milk from cows and an education on all the things one must consider in our healthy food selections.



Bay Farm Montessori 7th and 8th Graders



CANCELING FARM DAY THIS YEAR

Greetings HOF Family,

At our last meeting the Historic O'Neil Farm Board of Directors made the difficult decision to cancel this year's Farm Day. This decision was not made easily as Farm Day boosts our energy and enthusiasm as we see old friends and make new friends visiting our hidden historical and agricultural resource.

As you know, Farm Day requires a lot of preparation and volunteer effort and the board believes that this year our effort should be concentrated on necessary maintenance and improvements to the infrastructure, fields and walking trails. The rest of this summer and fall will be a combination of physical and planning efforts that ease maintenance, ensure the quality of one of our most precious resources, our grazing pastures, and give us time to focus on planning for the changing requirements for small agricultural farming.

The initial area of our focus are our fields and barnyard where invasive plants, such as, knotweed, multiflora roses and many other fast-growing vines and plants, too large for a mower. Cutting these is not enough. Invasive species must be uprooted and sometimes treated chemically. It is hard work but is necessary to improve our grazing pastures and maintain the barn yard.

Another project is our 100+ year old barn. It requires structural repairs after 100+ years of housing generations of cows and which went through a major fire (in the 1960s). In preparation for addressing the structural concerns, we will be going through the barn and removing anything unnecessary to the dairy operation. Again, this is to make maintenance and potential improvements easier to identify and accomplish.

We look forward to sharing our progress and hope that next year the efforts will be evident in our pastures and barnyard. We sincerely appreciate your ongoing financial, volunteer, and involvement in Historic O'Neil Farm.



Our best,

The board of Historic O'Neil Farm: Sue, Carl, Sam, Kim, Jessica, Jerry, Marie, and Doug.



Farmtastic 4-H

It was a very long winter/spring of 2019 at Historic O'Neil Farm, but now it is a busy summer for the Farmtastic 4-Hers Club. Our club meets on the farm two Saturdays a month during the winter/spring, but once the nice weather arrives, we try to meet every Saturday to practice with the animals and prepare them for their upcoming shows. Our Club typically shows at the following fairs: Westport, Barnstable, Marshfield and Topsfield. In addition to being on the farm, we also do a lot of community service events that we bring the animals to. Please be sure to visit us in the Dairy Barn at the Marshfield Fair August 16 - 25, 2019!!

If interested in learning more about the 4-H program at the farm, please feel free to contact: Cheryl Cloherty at ccloherty@vertexeng.com (Cow Club minimum age: 10 years old).



Maggie Roderick



Lindsey Vitiello



Dairy Show at Barnstable Fair

Dairy Farm News

Due to the wet spring, haying was delayed by a few weeks. We did get caught up and are back on schedule. Just finished our 1st cut on August 5th and will be starting 2nd cut mid-August. A typical hay day at HOF depending on which field we are in is 10/12 hours, from tending to stacking hay. The hay crew consists of 4-5 people including Carl.

This spring the farm has welcomed 6 calves. We will be anxiously waiting for about 7 more cows to calve by the fall. Before any field work can be done maintenance and servicing need to be done on all of the equipment, Carl and John Davis spend many hours together draining oil, replacing filters and repairs as needed.

Invasive Species

As we have touched on in our spring newsletter and above letter from the board regarding farm day, one of the focuses of this year is to start the eradication of the invasive species here on the farm.

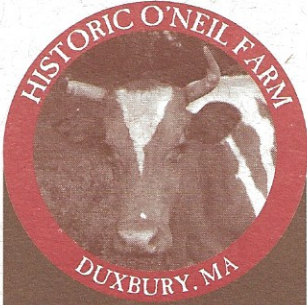
Invasive plants are a threat to the Historic O'Neil Farm fields, because they take over valuable pasture and hayland. Some of the species we are trying to get rid of is the multiflora rose, bittersweet and Japanese knotweed. We have hired Bartlett Tree Company to help us eradicate these invasive species. They have a three part plan and the first stage was started last week and has been very successful. We are very grateful for their expertise in finding the safest, most effective herbicide to target our problem.

Visit our website at
www.historiconeilfarm.org

Historic O'Neil Farm, Inc.
PO Box 2755
Duxbury, MA 02331

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Duxbury, MA
Permit No. 6

Address Service Requested



See inside for:

Haying

Got Milk?

Farmtastic 4H

Dairy Farm News

Invasive Plants

No Farm Day This September
~ See inside for more information ~

2020 COW-lendar

Supporting Historic O'Neil Farm

Purchase and enjoy a 2020 COW-lendar for \$25 created by Julia Payne to raise awareness of our farm and its place in supporting small dairy farms in Massachusetts. Julia selected Historic O'Neil Farm for her capstone project at Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School which asked their middle school students to complete a community service project which raised awareness about a local organization they care about. Julia told us "I decided to raise awareness for the importance of supporting small dairy farms in Massachusetts. The Historic O'Neil Farm is one that I have enjoyed visiting as a kid." Julia has spent the summer designing props, backgrounds, and photography the cows in fun settings representing the seasons of the twelve month calendar. The calendar also provides facts about Massachusetts dairy farms as well as fun dates to celebrate dairy products. Sample pages are viewable on our website donation page. To indicate you would like to be sent a calendar in addition to making a donation, please indicate by checking "Calendar- \$25" on your donation form and include \$25 for the calendar in your check. To purchase a calendar online visit:

www.historiconeilfarm.org/donate.

All proceeds will be donated to HOF. Thank you.



Donate today and help us to save the pastures from invasive species, maintain our trails, and tackle the needs of the aging barn and historic house.

Your financial support helps us carry on the farm's important agricultural, community, and educational mission.

Please assist us in this endeavor by filling out this form and sending a tax-deductible donation to:

Historic O'Neil Farm, Inc., P.O. Box 2755, Duxbury, MA 02331

Or donate securely online at

www.historiconeilfarm/donate.

YES, I am committed to helping Historic O'Neil Farm, Inc. move into the future.
Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$25 Calendar \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other

Name: _____

Address: _____

email: _____

The board of directors thanks you for your generosity and continued support.