Advances in Dairy Research
ISSN: 2329-888X
OPEN ACCESS Freely available online



# Editorial Note on Centralized Dairy Farming

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## EDITORIAL

While cattle were domesticated as early as 12,000 years ago as a food source and as beasts of burden, the earliest evidence of using domesticated cows for dairy production is the seventh millennium BC – the early Neolithic era – in North-western Anatolia. Dairy farming developed elsewhere in the world in subsequent centuries: the sixth millennium BC in Eastern Europe, the fifth millennium BC in Africa, and the fourth millennium BC in Britain and Northern Europe. Centralized dairy farming as we understand it primarily developed around villages and cities, where residents were unable to have cows of their own due to a lack of grazing land. Near the town, farmers could make some extra money on the side by having additional animals and selling the milk in town. The dairy farmers would fill barrels with milk in the morning and bring it to market on a wagon. Until the late 19th century, the milking of the cow was done by hand. In the United States, several large dairy operations existed in some northeastern states and in the west, that involved as many as several hundred cows, but an individual milker could not be expected to milk more than a dozen cows a day. Smaller operations predominated. Dairy farming has been part of agriculture for thousands of years. Historically it has been one part of small, diverse farms. In the last century or so larger farms concentrating on dairy production emerged. Large scale dairy farming is only viable where either a large amount of milk is required for production of more durable dairy products such as cheese, butter, etc. or there is a substantial market of people with cash to buy milk, but no cows of their own. Dairy farms were the best way to meet demand.

Innovation in milking focused on mechanizing the milking parlor (known in Australia and New Zealand as a milking shed) to maximize the number of cows per operator which streamlined the milking process to permit cows to be milked as if on an assembly line, and to reduce physical stresses on the farmer by putting the cows on a platform slightly above the person milking the cows to eliminate having to constantly bend over. Many older and smaller farms still have tie-stall or stanchion barns, but worldwide a majority of commercial farms have parlors. In herringbone and parallel parlors, the milker generally milks one row at a time. The milker will move a row of cows from the holding yard into the milking parlor, and milk each cow in that row.

Once all of the milking machines have been removed from the milked row, the milker releases the cows to their feed. A new group of cows is then loaded into the now vacant side and the process repeats until all cows are milked. Depending on the size of the milking parlor, which normally is the bottleneck, these rows of cows can range from four to sixty at a time. The benefits of a herringbone parlour are easy maintenance, the durability, stability, and improved safety for animals and humans when compared to tie stall. The first herringbone shed is thought to have been built in 1952 by a Gordonton farmer.

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**Received:** August 14, 2021, **Accepted:** August 23, 2021, **Published:** August 30, 2021

**Citation:** Parson M (2021) Editorial Note on Centralized Dairy Farming. J Adv Dairy. 9:567.