Project Title: Researching and testing the direct marketing of locally produced goat milk and milk products (mainly cheeses).

Producer/Project Leader: Renae/Steve Farnsworth

Address/Phone: Rte. 1, Box 31, Downing, MO 63536

1. Describe in detail your work activities and how you used your grant funds this year. (Use another sheet if necessary.)

Steve and Renae have contacted both the Iowa and Missouri state milk board offices for information on the milk laws. We received information packets from both states describing the laws for setting up a dairy and regulations for fluid and processed milk products.

Renae attended a small business show at Moberly on March 27, 2004, at Moberly Area Community College. All vendors at the show were to be home-based businesses. Some of the businesses represented were soy candles, all natural based snack packets, beauty based products made from glycerin and milk, and gardening centers. It was very interesting visiting with all of the vendors about product manufacturing (non food and food differences), packaging designs, coops, and marketing ideas. All of the vendors that Renae visited with were very excited about exchanging ideas with one another.

Growing interest from vendors at the small business show and from the public prompted Renae to try several simple recipes for different products made from goat’s milk. The recipes all required the use of stainless steel pans. Various sizes were bought to accommodate these recipes. Recipes for fudge, ice cream toppings, and dried milk were experimented with. Additional cheese recipes found also require stainless steel pans.

Renae attended a goat conference that was held on April 3, 2004, at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. Dr. Helen Schwartz, a professor at Lincoln University, in cooperation with the Missouri Goat Producers hosted the conference. Harvey Considine, a well-known goat specialist, was the main speaker at the conference. He covered such topics as: goat management, nutrition and cleanliness, and live evaluations of the different breeds of goats. Attendees had a chance to discuss various topics (health tips, management) including their own personal herds and business ventures that they encountered with their herds (meat goats as well as dairy goats). The meal served was made up of mostly goat products (cheeses, dips, and polish sausage). Quite a few commented on how good the food was and that they didn’t know that goat meat and cheese could taste so good!
Renae has contacted several grocery stores in the area about goat’s milk cheese. They said that they would be more than happy to promote a local person’s produce. We were told that we could not do surveys or hand out promotional materials on the benefits of goat milk products, though.

Renae visited Goatsbeard Farm at Harrisburg, Missouri, which is owned by Ken and Jennifer Muno on July 28, 2004. They produce soft and hard cheeses made from goat’s milk. Jennifer gave Renae a tour of the farm, the milking room, the different cheese making rooms, and the coolers. Ken and Jennifer have built the entire processing facility from the ground up by themselves with the help of family and friends. Renae cannot even begin to imagine what it would have cost to have someone come in and build this type of facility. Everything flowed in a smooth pattern from once the does entered the barn to be milked to the refrigeration of the finished cheese product. Renae was amazed at the complexity of the wood burning stove setup of the heating system that heated not only their home but the barn, too. It heats the barn’s cement floors to provide a consistent, draft free heat. Gas/electrical heat would definitely be more costly. Soft cheeses are the most popular product that they sell at farmer’s markets, to restaurants, and grocery stores. A cooling room has been added in the last few years enabling them to start making solid cheeses. Renae purchased several varieties of their soft cheeses to sample.

In September several Amish families from the Drakesville, Iowa area contacted Steve and Renae to help them start up goatherds of their own. They have been offered a milk line contract from another Amish community. Each farm needed to have a minimum of 100 milking does producing by February in order to start up the milk line. They needed to have a minimum of 8 working farms by that time. A cheese making facility in Wisconsin has expanded considerably and needs a large amount of goat’s milk. They needed more than what was being produced in the nearby area. The families had heard about the Farnsworth herd and wanted to buy milking does and breeding bucks. Steve and Renae did not have any animals for sale at the time. Renae accompanied Andy Nisley on one trip to look at a group of dry does that were for sale and on another trip to look at milking equipment. Steve and Renae have been to Andy’s farm to see the beginning stages of his dairy setup. Steve has worked at several bovine dairies in the past in different capacities. Andy and Steve discussed different ways to set up a penning system in the confinement that would be housed in a hoop building that most of the farms were going to construct. Penning systems would flow into the waiting areas before entering the milking barn. Andy has also visited our farm to look at feeding systems, breeding animals, and has given us ideas to renovate one of our barns. Renae also accompanied William Borntrager to look at a group of dry does in October.

Renae has made several inquiries (by phone and in person) into equipment that was used in former working bovine dairies. Some of the equipment is outdated, and there was no way that it could be converted to be used in a caprine dairy. Costs ranged from very affordable to outrageous. Once specific needs are established, potential equipment to purchase can be located.
Renae did a power point presentation on the progress of our project at the Small Farmer’s Forum at the Boone County Fairgrounds on November 6, 2004, in Columbia, Missouri. As a first time speech maker the presentation of the material was a little too fast. Quite a few people did not realize that if one processes a food product on one’s farm that they have to meet grade A requirements to do so. Several audience members stayed after the presentation to offer thanks for the extra handouts promoting goat’s milk health benefits, goat dairy requirements, recipes using goat’s milk, and goat merchandise catalogs. The presentation facilitator took some of the extra handouts to use at a goat meeting being presented the next evening.

Steve and Renae have made several small repairs to the milking barn, the holding area that connects to the milking barn, and buck shed. We have had several people look at an older barn to give us estimates of what it would cost to renovate or down size the existing structure into a smaller barn for holding pens for weaned kids and housing for dry does. We were lucky enough to find a source for fencing materials that we could purchase for a minimal cost to start construction of a more efficient management intensive grazing system. Steve and Renae would like to split our pastures into more paddocks for grazing.

Steve and Renae’s does started kidding the second week of December. It has been a very wet winter. This area has gotten more rain than snow this year. Renae bought a Rubbermaid cart that attaches to our garden tractor to use for hauling manure and other barn waste material to spread on our pastures. It is much more convenient than forking manure into a wheel barrel, pushing it out to pasture, spreading the manure by pitchfork, and trekking back to the barn for 30 more trips of the same!

2. List the results of your project and what you have learned so far.

Steve and Renae have contacted both the Iowa and Missouri state milk board offices for information on the milk laws. Their local board of health director has been very helpful in giving them general points to consider in undertaking plans for a dairy facility. Both states agreed that they did not have specific laws written for caprine dairies. One day they will have to be addressed because of the growing interest in caprine dairy facilities. They currently follow the guidelines that they have set up for bovine dairy facilities. Both states were very good about sending informational packets concerning the bylaws and regulations. All dairy facilities that use milk produced on site to be processed into any cheese products have to be set up as a grade A dairy. The guidelines for a grade A dairy are very stringent. The booklets that they received are very detailed as to the specifications for setting up such a facility. Steve and Renae will be going through the information with a fine-toothed comb to make sure that they fully understand how a facility must be renovated to meet specifications. Ken and Jennifer Muno told Renae that she would need to draw up a plan for a facility and submit it to the state. If the state thought that the plan was feasible Steve and Renae could inquire about costs to renovate their existing structure. The milk board office is extremely busy going over plans and inspecting existing facilities. They do not have the time to make frequent visits to go over “floor plans”.

Steve and Renae have had several inquiries about buying goat’s milk for use in lotions and soaps after the small business show in Moberly. One vendor has since bought frozen milk for use in soap production. Most of the businesses that use goat’s milk in lotions and soaps now have to order dried milk if they do not have a close source for fluid milk (it is cost prohibitive to order/ship fluid milk). Renae found a recipe for drying goat’s milk and tried it. It ended up taking over 16 hours to complete the recipe! This is not a cost effective venture for them to undertake at this time. Renae has found articles on the internet since using this recipe that state that most dry milk is flash dried for this and other purposes.

The milk line that has started in the Amish community in Drakesville, Iowa gives Steve and Renae tremendous encouragement for the promotion of goat’s milk. The farms have to be set up with animals, milking facilities, and be prepared to ship milk by February. Steve and Renae could put their name on the list of farms to be considered for the milk line, but do not wish to do so at this time. Each farm must have 100 head of goats to milk. They cannot possibly increase their herd size with quality animals in such a short amount of time. The cost of shipping the milk would be more, too, since they live 25 miles from Drakesville.

Renae was amazed by the facilities at Goatsbeard Farm, owned by Ken and Jennifer Muno. It gave her insight into the complexity of a working facility. She got some very good pointers on building ideas and got to taste some wonderful cheeses.

3. Describe your work plan for next year.

Since most of the does have kidded for the upcoming year there will be a good supply of milk to start experimenting with new recipes. Renae is going to order some basic cheese making equipment and supplies/ingredients. Renae is anxious to get started making soft cheeses and try some basic mozzarella recipes. She has numerous friends and family waiting to be test tasters!

Steve and Renae will be meeting with the Amish farmers to present meetings on animal selection and herd health. They hope to exchange ideas on facility setups and gain some knowledge from their own experiences in building their dairies. Steve would like to possibly meet with the other community in Kalona that is working in partnership with them to view their facilities, too. They are all shipping their milk to a cheese making facility in Wisconsin. Steve and Renae would love to possibly view that facility too.

Measurements will be taken of the older barn on Steve and Renae’s farm to get cost estimates on refurbishing it. They are hoping that they can have someone from the surrounding Amish community do the work so that they can work alongside them to learn more. One gentleman has expressed an interest in doing the work.

Steve and Renae are drawing plans up for the pastures for the construction of more paddocks to better manage our intensive grazing system. They may have to re-dig one of
the ponds in one of the pastures before it can be utilized correctly. This project will require a lot of elbow grease!

4. How did you share information from your project with other producers? (Include the number of people who attended field days or demonstrations.). What plans do you have for sharing information next year?

Renae shared information on the benefits of goat’s milk and its products in one on one or in small group discussions with 15-18 people at the small business show in Moberly. She also talked with several extension agents from the Moberly area about the grant research she was working on.

Goatsbeard Farm presented Renae with an opportunity to discuss her findings on the milk laws with actual cheese producers, Ken and Jennifer Muno. She came away from the visit with more questions to research.

Renae did a power point presentation on the progress of our research at the small farmers forum with approximately 20-22 audience participants. A packet of the presentation was given to each audience member along with handouts on promoting goat’s milk health benefits, goat dairy requirements, recipes using goat’s milk, and goat merchandise catalogs. The presentation facilitator took some of the extra handouts to distribute at a goat meeting being presented at a meeting the next evening.

Steve and Renae would like to begin work on promotional fliers/pamphlets of the benefits of using/consuming goat milk products for distribution to the public. They hope to start distribution of these materials at an open-air market in late spring into the summer.

Steve and Renae plan on hosting a meeting for presenting materials on animal selection, herd health, dairy setup regulations and an exchange of milk recipes sometime in March or April. They would like to have a local veterinarian present at the meeting to help with the herd health and animal selection portion of the discussion.