

The Durrer Family

Dairy Family Spotlight

» As with many California dairy families, dairying isn't a job for Chris Durrer. It's a way of life that goes back generations.

"The dairy life is something I've enjoyed ever since I was kid," Durrer says. "I'd jump off the school bus, run across the yard and go help my dad feed calves."

Today, Chris operates the family dairy on Beckwith Road near Modesto with his father, Leo. The family manages a herd of about 1,500 animals including milking cows, heifers and calves. While their dairy was built a generation ago, the family's dairy roots go back to a tradition of dairying in the U.S. for nearly 65 years, and before that, in Switzerland.

Environmental stewardship is important to the family, and they make protecting air and water quality a daily priority. The dairy has achieved environmental certification through the California Dairy Quality Assurance Program, meaning the operators have attended university classes on California environmental regulations, developed environmental response emergency plans, and successfully passed a third-party on-site environmental evaluation.

In addition to Leo and Chris, the dairy employs eight skilled workers, whose jobs include milking cows and feeding and caring for the livestock, as well as keeping the dairy clean and well-maintained.

These days, the dairy has a new and frequent visitor, 20-month-old Clayton, son of Chris and his wife, Ellen. Clayton already loves the cows and his proud dad hopes he'll carry on the family tradition.

"It's a great life. You learn a lot of valuable lessons," Durrer says. "You learn the value of a dollar. You learn what hard work will get you. These are the things I learned growing up and the things I want to pass on to my children."



The Durrer dairy milks about 650 Holsteins in this barn, constructed in 1980. Milking provides steady, year-round jobs for those who enjoy working with animals. Cows are fed carefully balanced rations to maximize health and nutrition.