

MOO-VING EXPERIENCE



There are over 1,600 dairy families in California today, and those hard-working families have made California the leading dairy state in the U.S. Since 1993, California has ranked first in the production of milk, butter, ice cream, yogurt, nonfat dry milk, and whey protein concentrate, and second in cheese production.

A mere 200 head of longhorn cattle first arrived in California with Spanish soldiers and priests in 1769. By 1860, there were about 100,000 milk cows in the state, thanks in part to the Gold Rush and the need to provide local resources rather than shipping in goods from other locations. By 1890, the numbers had jumped to 260,000. Fast



George Martins; Tom Garton, Garton Tractor; and Timothy Silveira.

forward a hundred and twenty years or so, and the number currently stands at 1.75 million — a fifth of all the dairy cows in the United States.

Three thousand or so of those cows (2,200 Holsteins and 800 Jerseys) are housed at the two locations of Martins Brothers Dairy Farm in Gustine and Hilmar, California. Neighbors include Hilmar Cheese, the world's largest producer of cheese manufactured on one site. So the milk from those 3,000 Martins Brothers' cows has a ready buyer, as does the milk from some 157,000 additional cows living at more than 260 other dairies in the area.



Purchased in 1996, the 300-acre Martins Brothers Dairy continues to evolve.



Bloodless bullfighting has many enthusiastic followers in Portugal, Canada, and California.



About 2,200 milk-producing Holsteins along with their calves are cared for at this facility.

To keep those 3,000 cows fed, and the corrals clean, Martins Brothers Dairy uses three Kawasaki wheel loaders — all 65s. Their oldest has about ten years under the hood. One has the Super High-Lift Arm option, the others are more traditionally equipped. The dairy finds the high lift a less expensive alternative to a roll-out bucket.

“We’ve been running Kawasaki for the last 15 years,” says George Martins, one of three brothers who own the dairy. “We tried pretty much all of the other ones — John Deere, Volvo, Cat®, and Daewoo — but we are more comfortable with Kawasaki. We’ve never had any problems with the Kawasakis; no breakdowns. That’s why we’ve stuck with them.”

“We’ve been working with Martins Brothers for about a year,” relates Tom Garton, Vice-President/Sales Manager, Garton Tractor.

“I didn’t have to talk them into buying Kawasaki — rather they actually talked me into selling Kawasaki! That’s how sold they are on the brand.”

The Dairy uses their wheel loaders primarily to fill the feed wagons. It’s very dusty work,



“We’ve never had any problems with the Kawasakis.” — George Martins

thanks to the fine-milled ingredients used in making feed. Feeding starts at 3 AM and finishes 10 hours later. There is no day off. They count on the loaders to fire up each morning and put in a full day’s work.

The loaders are also responsible for cleaning out the corrals and removing manure. All in all, this is a very corrosive environment for wheel loaders.

Beyond milking cows, growing their own feed, and transporting their own milk, it turns out this dairy property has a whole other life, as indicated by the large horse

barn and adjoining arena. The Martins Brothers are active participants in California-style bloodless bullfighting. This is based on the centuries-old Portuguese form that uses fighters on horseback. In the 1980s, Californians began putting Velcro on the bull’s shoulders and equipping riders with Velcro-tipped lances. As a result, the fights today are all about showmanship, and demand a great deal of skill from both rider and horse.

“This is my hobby,” explains George. “Our horses have all been imported from Spain or Portugal and are bred to fight the wild bulls. Our trainer is from Portugal. We compete not only here in California, but in Portugal and Canada as well.”

Just as bullfighting is popular in the Central Valley of California, it turns out that Kawasakis are becoming that way too. “When we bought our first Kawasaki, it was the only one around,” says George. “Now some of our neighbors have them.”

Martins Brothers Dairy Farms is serviced by Garton Tractor, Modesto, California.

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– George Martins, Co-Owner

