

## Dairy Tour Promotes a Healthy Economy

Economic development and preserving rural vitality are priorities in many Iowa counties. A dairy farm family interested in relocating to O'Brien County to build a large new dairy farm held a community meeting to explain their plans.

During the meeting, many questions were raised, revealing the fact that most county citizens did not have a good understanding about modern dairy farms, their relationship to the local economy, and current stewardship practices used to manage the dairy cows, the employees, and land resources.



To help fill in this information gap so that citizens could make informed decisions about proposed dairy development/economic development projects, O'Brien County Economic Development Corporation and ISU Extension coordinated an Informational Tour of local dairies as an educational event. Currently two, 2,000 – 4,000 head dairy operations are breaking ground with an estimated economic impact of over \$60 million to the area.



**Dr Chris Mondak**  
**Dairy Field Specialist**  
**Iowa State University Extension**

*“The dairy tour was a very effective way to help O’Brien County citizens gain a better understanding of a large modern dairy farm operation, and perhaps more importantly, to gain an understanding of the values and priorities of the people who own and manage dairy farms. As they led the group through a tour of milking parlor, cow freestall building, and outside feed and storage areas, the dairy owners explained the ‘whys and wherefores’ of typical daily cow care, feeding practices, employee management, and manure management.*”

*It was fascinating to see defensive, serious faces replaced by smiling faces belonging to tour participants that had eager questions, and who were so obviously caught up with the thrill of learning new things, or things they didn’t expect. I think they came away from the dairies realizing that the values that had about taking care of cows, the land, and people were the same values that govern the dairy owners each day.”*

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For more information about this program or other Iowa State University Extension resources, contact the O'Brien County Office at 712-957-5045. Information is also available on the Iowa State University Extension website at [www.extension.iastate.edu](http://www.extension.iastate.edu).

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