

Chapter 1

On a bright sunny day we're driving out in the flatlands of the San Joaquin Valley to find the right 2,000 to 4,000 acre ranch to use as a site for a new 5,000 to 10,000 cow dairy. Adding the dry cows and replacement calves and heifers, we are actually looking for a place to house 12,000 to 24,000 animals.

Today, we have only one property to show the dairy producer. Its 3,000 acres of all level row crop land that has in the past been planted to small grains, corn, cotton and alfalfa. Lots of wells with motors driven by either liquid fuel or electricity. Lots of pipeline on the place for irrigation.

The dairyman is impressed. All he has to do is build the facility. Everything else is in place and he can harvest a year's worth of commodities before milking the first cow. It seems absolutely ideal. The location is right, the family can build a beautiful home in town and the commute to the dairy is quite reasonable.

Before an offer on the property is made the dairyman checks with the banker, the CPA and his dairy builder. He also brings his wife to the site and while she's rather impressed with all the flat land, she's quite happy about the nearby city. (25 miles away) with its upscale shopping and prestigious residential neighborhoods.

A decision made. An offer for the property is formulated at a price of \$3,000 per acre. It is well under the asking price but a reasonable figure from which to begin the negotiations.

The property is purchased. Now begins the work of all the specialists – water experts, soil experts, building experts plus the people who do the investigative work and write the Environmental Impact Report. This is a lengthy process and depending on which county the property is located will take from one to two years.

Things move at a much slower pace than the dairyman had hoped for and the time delay frustrations at almost every turn gives him fits! The total of 3 years from land purchase to the first milking proves to be the most stressful time of his life and certainly has its impact on his family as well.