

## Octoberfest for Hendricks Farms and Dairies

*[Editor's note: In September, 2008 Bill Chirdon of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) suspended Hendrick's Farms and Dairies, of Telford, Pennsylvania, license to sell raw milk, after reports of gastrointestinal illness from the area around the dairy. The PDA issued a damning press release distributed to every radio station, TV station and newspaper in the area, and it was also printed out and distributed to student nurses in at least one college. All this was done with no proof whatsoever of Hendricks' culpability and in spite of their seven year spotless record. Hendricks suffered serious financial harm as a result. Their customers and supporters rallied to help them and held an Octoberfest as part of that effort].*

It was the kind of day most folks would stay inside, cocooned in a warm blanket with a cup of hot cider in one hand and a good book in the other. Not the typical sunshine-filled Fall day when families pack in the car to bounce down and curve around country roads to find an out-of-the-way farm for an Octoberfest celebration. But some did.

About seventy brave souls made their way to Hendricks Farms & Dairy on Saturday, October 25th to support and celebrate Hendricks Farm after a recent week-long, unwarranted suspension of milk sales and flurry of negative press.

From the front door the obvious question arose, how could the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) pick on this farmer? The PDA had to be scratching their heads and asking themselves, "Contaminated milk from HERE?"

It is that easy to see the quality of the Hendricks' work. They do not do things in half measure. Their pristine creamery, farm store, milking rooms, cheese making and cheese storage and offices are located in one large new building between the farm house and the new barn. Everything shouts out CLEAN, ORDER, HARMONY, GOODNESS.

When we walked in the door, we were warmly welcomed by Hendricks family and helpful staff. Gathered inside, warm and dry, we nibbled cheese while sampling a pot luck line headlined by tasty farm-raised ham, beef brisket and a bottomless jug of raw milk. Constitutional scholar Bill Reil gave us all a short course in Constitutional rights. Our rights guaranteed by the Constitution include the farmer's right to sell, WITHOUT HINDRANCE, and the consumer's right to purchase goods of their choice. A wake up call for many.

Those of us standing in that creamery knew that the main reason we had left our comfortable cider and books at home is because we have drifted far from the Constitution's protections and we need to reassert them, reclaim them, as our inherent rights, not permitted rights. We have the inherent right to sell and purchase food for our sustenance because we are human.

If the Hendricks were disappointed by the turnout, no one would have guessed. Their usual number of customers on a Saturday is 150 for the farm store only. But after the PDA's punitive actions and bad press, they've become accustomed to less, much less. Their wholesale business is down 100%, their retail business is down 25% and their expenses are the same.

Bad things happen to good people, and this is a perfect example of how the PDA hinders and hurts a respected, permit-holding farm, with a booming retail and wholesale business, without consideration for the family, employees, customers and friends that depend upon the farm for their livelihood. And, as Bill Reil would say, without any consideration of the Constitution these public officials are sworn to uphold.

It appears that anyone holding a raw milk permit in Pennsylvania could also be walking in Trent and Rachel Hendricks' shoes. Trent knew this happened to other folks, he just never thought it would happen to him. He was the PDA's Golden Boy and never thought he'd become their Whipping Boy.

So, if you didn't attend, you still have a chance to put your money to work for fairness and goodness and help the Hendricks Family through this rough patch. It's easy....buy some cheese. Why not give cheese as your gift for the holidays this year to teachers, employees, co-workers, neighbors and families? You'll be giving three presents:

- A delicious gift to the person receiving this cheese made with care.
- A monetary gift to the Hendrick's farm in the form of an unanticipated sale.

- A future gift to yourself, ensuring small farms like Trent and Rachel's will continue to provide our sustenance.

Ask for the Bavarian Swiss—it won a blue ribbon from the American Cheese Society in 2006. It's a favorite. Other might like the Parmesan or Pub Cheddar. Staples for every kitchen. You can look at their varieties online, and call the store. They will send out your order directly if you like, and they'll do a nice job. Hendricks Farms & Dairy, 202 Green Hill Rd., Telford, PA 18969 [267-382-0556]  
[www.hendricksfarmsanddairy.com](http://www.hendricksfarmsanddairy.com)

Thank you for your support of this small farm and farm family!

--Cathy Raymond, *Friend to Small Farms*