

Updating farm wiring: couple takes advantage of cost-sharing program

With numerous farm rewiring and cost-sharing programs available, more Wisconsin farmers are finding the time is right to update their farm electrical systems and install energy-efficient equipment.

For Jim and Carole Anhalt, the decision to update their dairy farm's wiring was an easy one. The couple partnered with Wisconsin Public Service to replace the 25-year-old wiring on their family dairy farm near Manitowoc.

"We knew it was time for an electrician to take a look at the farm's electrical system. Plus, it was a good time to install energy efficient, long-day lighting fixtures, as well as install one more exhaust fan for cow comfort," Jim Anhalt said.

As part of the Wisconsin Public Service's farm rewiring program, the Anhalts worked with a qualified electrician of their choosing and converted the farm to a four-wire system. Several above ground electrical wires, located in high-traffic areas, were also placed underground for safety.

Inside their dairy barn, where the Anhalts milk 70 registered Holsteins, a handful of 100-watt light bulbs were replaced with 33 compact fluorescent fixtures on timers. The Anhalts plan to

implement 16-hour long-day lighting during fall and winter months to boost their herd's milk production.

"The added lights have really made a difference," Carol Anhalt said. "We've gone from working in a cave to a milking in a well-lit supermarket. It's amazing how much it has affected our mood."

Cow comfort has also increased with the addition of a third energy-efficient exhaust fan that draws outside air into the barn during hot summer months.

The Anhalt's \$17,000 farm rewiring project, with new equipment installation took about three months from start to finish. WPS paid the first \$1,000 and then split the bill 50/50 with the Anhalts.

"This program allowed us to update our farm

wiring and purchase the energy-efficient equipment that we knew we needed," Jim Anhalt said. "We're pleased with the end result."

Rural Energy Management Council member Jeff Opitz, a dairy producer near Saukville, said farmers who have considered updating their farm wiring or installing new equipment should work with a qualified electrician to take advantage of a cost-sharing program.

"These programs are serious about getting farms wired for safety. It makes sense to participate," Opitz said.



Jim and Carole Anhalt, who milk 70 Holsteins near Manitowoc, recently updated their farm wiring.

Many farm rewiring programs are available, including:

- **Alliant Energy Farm Rewiring Program:** any Wisconsin livestock farmer who is an Alliant Energy customer is eligible. Alliant Energy pays the first \$1,000, and then pays 50 percent of the remaining cost, up to \$6,000. Financing is available for up to \$20,000 at 3 percent. Contact 1-800-255-4268.
- **Focus on Energy:** Services available at no charge to 85 percent of homes and businesses in Wisconsin. Check to see if your electric provider participates in Focus on Energy. Advisors or your equipment dealer can help identify energy savings for your operation. You may be eligible for grants to help pay for improving energy efficiency or new technologies. Contact 1-888-291-6434.
- **Safety First! Rewiring Program:** dairy farmers who belong to an electrical cooperative are eligible. Grants are available for 20 percent of the estimated cost of a rewiring project, up to \$4,000. Low-interest loans are also available for the remaining 80 percent, up to \$16,000. For more information, call your local electrical cooperative.
- **Wisconsin Public Service Corporation Rewiring Program:** Public Service customers are eligible. WPS pays the first \$1,000 and then pays 50 percent of the remaining cost, up to \$18,000. Financing is available for up to \$15,000 at 3 percent. Contact 1-877-444-0888.

Updating farm wiring brings several advantages:

- ✓ **Farm safety:** Eliminate wiring hazards and restore your electrical system to safe working conditions
- ✓ **Energy efficiency:** Consider equipment upgrades to save energy
- ✓ **Modernization:** Set up your operation to use long-day lighting practices effectively
- ✓ **Reduction of stray voltage concerns:** Eliminate on-farm sources of stray voltage