

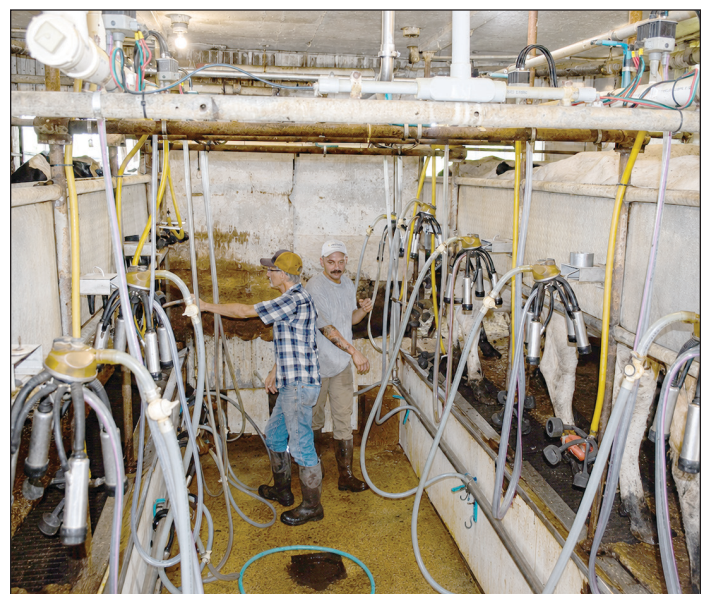
MILKING CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE



▲ PHOTO | MARY BETH SALLEE
Kendell Branstetter, left, and his son Hunter Branstetter pose among the dairy herd on the family's farm. Hunter works alongside his father in the operation, while son Alek Branstetter also helps on the farm.



▲ PHOTO | MARY BETH SALLEE
Kendell Branstetter looks out over his farm. He has worked his entire life in the dairy industry and now works alongside his sons to continue the family operation.



▲ PHOTO | MARY BETH SALLEE
Kendell Branstetter, left, and his son Hunter Branstetter prepare for afternoon milking in the farm's milk parlor.

tradition spanning generations, a livelihood built on hard work and sacrifice, and a way of life that has remained constant through decades of change.

"Well, I was more or less born into it," Branstetter said. "My grandfather and my father both had been in the dairy farming business...When I was eight-years-old, I ended up starting milking on my own. I wasn't quite big enough. I'd stand on a bucket in some places to reach the cows."

"My dad went out in the early '80s, and I bought a farm in '86 or '87 and started my own (dairy farm)," Branstetter continued. "I have been involved with dairy cattle my whole life."

Today, Branstetter keeps around 130 cows in milk at any given time, with close to 200 head total when heifers and dry cows are included. For the past five or six years, the operation has been run by Branstetter and his two sons without any outside help.

Having his sons work alongside him carries mixed emotions.

"It means a lot to me in one aspect, and in another aspect it kind of bothers me," Branstetter said. "Maybe if they didn't have this to fall back on, they would've pursued something else. I don't know. It's kind of a gray area for me in that part."

Still, he appreciates their willingness to be there.

"It means a lot that they do help me, no doubt," he said.

At the same time, Branstetter worries about the future of smaller dairy operations. The challenges facing dairy farmers today are vastly different from those Branstetter saw growing up.

"I don't know how long the dairy industry or the man under 1,000 head of cattle will be able to milk much longer," he said. "I just don't know if that's going to work."

Back in the day, dairies were everywhere across Hart County.

"It's changed from over 300 dairies here in this county down to five or six," Branstetter said.

He remembers a time when dairy farms dotted the countryside and local milk processors provided opportunities for small producers.

"At one time, we had Hart County Creamery here at Horse Cave. It took a lot of small producers," he said. "You couldn't drive three or four miles until there was a little dairy. Not a lot of them milked a lot of cows, but they all milked a few cows, and that's not the case anymore."

While the number of dairies has dramatically declined, technology has transformed the industry.

"You've got a lot more invested, but it's a lot more efficient and a lot faster than what it once was," Branstetter said. "It's had a lot of changes for the better. It's had some that probably weren't, but it's had a lot of changes for the better."

Despite the industry's evolution, some things remain unchanged. Branstetter still finds satisfaction in being his own boss and working in a profession he genuinely enjoys.

"I've been fortunate, and I've never had a public job," he said. "I've never had to punch a time clock. That's one thing I feel fortunate about."

When asked about his favorite part of dairy farming, Branstetter admitted

it is difficult to narrow down.

"It'd be hard to pick a favorite part," he said. "As long as it's going all right, I like it all. When it's not going good, I don't like none of it."

Years in agriculture have also taught him lessons that extend far beyond the farm gate: endurance and patience. Those lessons were learned through difficult seasons and uncertain times.

"There have been times that times have been bad, and you just think, 'Why am I doing it, and how can this go on?'" Branstetter said. "But it's like everything else. If you just keep trying and stay at it, it'll turn around."

As public understanding of agriculture becomes increasingly disconnected from daily farm life, Branstetter hopes people recognize the care farmers invest in both their livestock and land.

"A lot of people will give you kind of a bad name or think maybe you don't treat your animals right or you don't seed your ground the way you're supposed to. That's totally false," he said.

But the reality, Branstetter said, is simple.

"If you don't take care of your livestock and your ground, you're done to begin with," he explained. "You're not going to make it."

For most farmers, caring for the farm is not just part of the job.

"That's our life," Branstetter said. "That's the first thing we think about in the morning and the last thing we think about at night."

Branstetter sells his milk through Dairy Farmers of America, commonly known as DFA. After the milk leaves his farm, where it ultimately goes is determined by the cooperative.

"It's up to them about where they send it after they pick it up from me," he said. "After they've paid me for it, it's theirs. I sign the contract with them, and they take it from there."

Branstetter acknowledged that starting from scratch in today's agricultural economy is far different than it once was. While he encourages young people interested in agriculture to pursue their dreams, he also recognizes that the barriers are significant.

"Right now, as much as the ground would cost and the cattle would cost, they're going to have a hard row to hoe," he said. "Truthfully, a young man starting out in it right now or a young woman starting out in it right now, it would be hard for them to start from scratch and make it work. They would have to have off-farm income, I think, to subsidize it and make it work out."

Even so, he believes determination still matters.

"By all means, if it's something they want to do, they should pursue it," he said. "They'll find a way."

Looking ahead, Branstetter doesn't measure success by acres farmed or cows milked. Instead, he hopes the work he has invested throughout his life provides opportunities for future generations, including his own sons.

"I hope that it brings prosperity and maybe a way of life that they can enjoy and be satisfied with," he said.

At the same time, he understands that each person must choose their own path.

"It's not for everybody, and everybody has to make their own choice on what they want to do with their life," Branstetter shared.

Still, he hopes his efforts leave something meaningful behind: "I

hope what I've done kind of leaves something that they can have a better life with."

More than a job, dairy farming has been a family tradition that has shaped Kendell Branstetter's life from childhood to today. And while the number of dairies in Hart County may have dwindled, the rhythm of milking time remains unchanged - a daily reminder of the generations who came before him and the legacy he hopes will endure long after the next trip to the milk parlor.

► PHOTO | MARY BETH SALLEE
At Right, Standing in the doorway of his milk parlor, Kendell Branstetter looks out across his pasture and cattle on his farm in Horse Cave.



▲ PHOTO | MARY BETH SALLEE
Kendell Branstetter attaches milking equipment to a cow during a milking shift at his dairy farm in Horse Cave.

HART COUNTY MASTER COMMISSIONER NOTICE OF SALE

By virtue of Judgment and Order of Sale entered in the Hart Circuit Court in the case listed below, the following property located in Hart County, Kentucky, shall be sold at the Hart County Judicial Center in Munfordville, Hart County, Kentucky, on Wednesday, June 24, 2026, at 9:00 A.M., (Central Time), and being more particularly described as follows:

290 Harper Drive, Horse Cave, KY 42749

Deed Book 377, Page 241, PVA Parcel ID # 430-00-09-016.00
Orchard Tax Lein Services, LLC vs. Johnnie Paul, Vanessa Paul, German American Bank, City of Horse Cave, Kentucky, County of Hart, Kentucky
 Civil Action No.: 26-CI-00009

Judgment - \$243,596.96, plus interest as set forth in the Judgment and Order of Sale

63 Luke Street, Munfordville, KY. 42765

Deed Book 2, Page Number 684 - Parcel ID 064-04-01-015.00
Mortgage Research Center, LLC d/b/a Veterans United Home Loans, a Missouri Limited Liability Company vs. Dyedreakus Waller, et al.
 Civil Action Number 25-CI-21

Judgement - \$237,895.19 plus interest as set forth in the Judgment and Order of Sale

1095 Cub Run Highway, Munfordville, Kentucky

Deed Book 350, Page 492. - Parcel ID- 054-00-00-036.00
ANP Tax Lien Company, LLC vs. Unknown Heirs, Devisees, Legatees of Jana Dawn Poynter, et al
 Civil Action No.: 24-CI-27

Judgment - \$10,086.02 plus interest as set forth in the Judgment and Order of Sale

321 Dell Avenue, Horse Cave, KY 42749

Deed Book 266, Page #242 - Parcel ID #402-00-03-0001.00
Kentucky Housing Corporation vs. Robert L. Lopau, et al
 Civil Action No.: 25-CI-00238

Judgment -\$45,347.51 plus interest as set forth in the Default Judgment and Order of Sale

At the time of sale the successful bidder shall either pay full cash or make a deposit of 10% of the purchase price. If, as the successful bidder, you only pay 10% down, you must have a Kentucky Bank to act as unconditional surety on the remaining 90% of the purchase price, plus interest pursuant to the terms of the judgment, which must be paid within 30 days of the Sale date. (The necessary surety form can be obtained at the Master Commissioner's office). The Surety MUST BE PRE-APPROVED by the Master Commissioner's office no later than 12:00 noon on the Friday immediately preceding the sale date to secure the unpaid balance of the purchase price. A Loan Officer from the preapproved Kentucky Bank must sign the surety bond at the sale. In the event the successful bidder is the Plaintiff, then in lieu of the deposit, that Plaintiff shall be allowed to bid on credit up to the judgment amount. NO FAXED OR EMAILED BIDS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

The buyer will be responsible for taxes for the year of the sale. The property shall be sold free and clear of all parties named in the above-styled action, but subject to the following: any lien not included in the suit, recorded easements, rights of way, any facts which an inspection or accurate survey might reveal, and the planning and zoning regulations of Hart County, Kentucky. The Master Commissioner does not obtain title inspections or investigate for further liens on the property. The purchaser is responsible for title inspection and/or any additional liens not named in the Judgment and Order of Sale. It is recommended that a title search be done prior to the sale.

The purchaser may take possession of the property pursuant to the terms of the judgment. If the judgment does not make provision for possession, the buyer may seek possession of the property through the court system after payment of the full purchase price. The Master Commissioner does not have ability to grant access or possession of the property. The Plaintiff, the Court, and the Master Commissioner shall not be deemed to have warranted title to any purchaser. Said property is sold subject to the Judgment and Order of Sale in these cases which shall be reviewed carefully prior to purchase. Bidders shall be prepared to promptly comply with the above terms. For updates and information on sale cancellations, please refer to the Master Commissioner information located at www.hartcountykymastercommissioner.com.

This the 5th day of June, 2026 This the 27th day of March, 2026.

/s/ Patrick A. Ross
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