

Thomas Farm & Dairy in Sunderland

Jim Thomas and Laurie Cuevas

A passion for farming led Jim Thomas and Laurie Cuevas to buy farmland in Sunderland where Jim built their house and barn. While eager to enter the dairy business, they soon realized that on their small farm, goats would make more sense than cows. These friendly animals proved a wise choice. "The more we work with them, the more we love them!" said Laurie. Several Local Farmer Awards have greatly benefited Thomas Farm.

Swinging Automatic Goat Brush had far greater impact than anticipated (2020)

Goats have to satisfy a compulsive need to scratch themselves continuously and will seek any available space to find relief. "I was cheering when the **Swinging Automatic Goat Brush** arrived," Laurie told us. "Since it was installed, our girls can't leave it alone!" Always in use, it keeps the goats clean, removes extra hair so the milking operation is more sanitary, and makes their coats gleam. The result is happy, unstressed animals. Not simply a nice amenity, the brush has proven essential. Laurie summarized perfectly: "If our goats are not happy and healthy, we can't make a living."

Ultrasound Machine for Pregnancy Testing makes a key step quick, easy and painless (2023)

A critical step in the cycle of cheese production is first to determine goat pregnancy. The time-consuming drawing of blood samples routinely put about a hundred goats through discomfort and stress. It took a tedious, costly, and invasive process to draw samples, send them for analysis, and await results. The process changed with the purchase of an **Ultrasound Machine for Pregnancy Testing**. Today this small, efficient machine determines pregnancy on the spot in a painless, quick and easy way. "Best of all, our ultrasound machine is noninvasive," says Laurie.

Goat Pens & Hay Feeders improve safety, sanitary conditions (2024)

Safe and attractive, the **Goat Pens & Hay Feeders** have kept the hay pristine for the goats' consumption, eased safety concerns, and greatly enhanced the barn's appearance. "We were using makeshift wooden panels. It was difficult to work with them, keep the wood



Jim Thomas & Laurie Cuevas with new goat pens and hay feeders

sanitary, and maintain clean hay," said Laurie. "These new metal livestock panels are beautiful and are constructed specifically for animals like goats so we no longer have safety concerns." She and Jim described other advantages as well. The feeders keep the hay separate and sanitary, preventing goats from playing in it. The livestock panels can be sanitized. And they can be reconfigured as needed to hold more goats or transport them to agricultural fairs. The goat pens and hay feeders have proven to be a game-changer. "But the fact is," said Jim, "we couldn't have acquired them without our 2024 Local Farmer Award."

Jim Thomas and Laurie Cuevas often work 18-hour days and take pride in everything they do. Besides managing their goats, they harvest and wrap hundreds of bales of hay for feed, plant flowers and vegetables, and fix just about everything on the farm requiring repair. Ask them how they feel about their farming life and they'll answer, "We are grateful – for our beautiful farm, for our happy goats, and also for the support we get from wonderful people who value what we do."