



Collette Cassidy feeds a calf on the Kliever Lane farm where she would like to locate the rest of the herd.

Shmuel Thaler/
Sentinel

County's only dairy plans to move in June

Claravale Farm eyes property north of Watsonville for its 50 Jersey cows

By **TOM RAGAN**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Ron Garthwaite and Collette Cassidy have the best milk in the Santa Cruz County — they've got the only milk in the county.

Since 1997, the couple has been churning out Jersey milk — named after a special breed of cow — at Claravale Farm and selling it at health food stores around the country.

It's the only dairy in the county and the smallest in the state, producing about 165 gallons each day.

Garthwaite, 51, plans on moving the dairy farm operations from Monterey Bay Academy just south of La Selva Beach to the vicinity of Green Valley and Pioneer roads outside of Watsonville.

But don't fret if you're a fan of Claravale. The move, expected by June, will have little effect on the product, Garthwaite says.

However, Santa Cruz County Zoning Administrator Don Bussey on Jan. 19, must hear and sign off on the plan, whereby 50 cows will be transferred to the 12-acre piece of property at 345 Kliever Road.

The construction of a milking parlor is also being proposed on the site.

"We own the land," said Garthwaite, a geneticist before he turned dairy farmer. "And we've been wanting to make this move for quite a while because right now we're leasing the land at Monterey Bay Academy."

So far, it looks like the couple will be given the go-ahead, said Paia Levine, the county's deputy environmental coordinator.

Levine, who looked at the potential for adverse effects on water quality and erosion, said she hasn't found anything wrong with the proposal on behalf of Claravale Farms.

While the county at first was a little bit concerned about the proximity of Pinto Lake downstream from the proposed site, Claravale Farm has submitted manure management plans that are up to snuff, said Levine. And the couple has promised to build a fence to keep their cows out of the riparian area.

Claravale Farm sells its milk, which is bottled in returnable quarts, at New Leaf, Staff of Life, Wild Oats, Whole Foods and other independent stores that specialize in health food.

Contact Tom Ragan at tragan@santacruzsentinel.com