

# Program: Economic Comparison of Soft Covered Barns Vis-à-vis Post-Frame Steel Clad Barns for Lactating Dairy Cows in Ontario



Jim Fisher

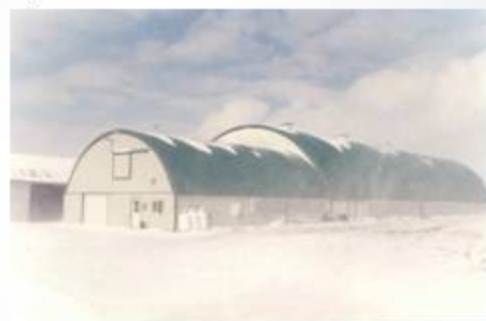
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## In Partnership With Ontario Dairy Farmers

### Objective:

Soft covered barns were found to work extremely well for the purpose of housing lactating dairy cows. Soft covered barns are either plastic or canvas; they come in many colours; are flexible and provide an excellent option for cattle housing. Eleven farms using this technology were surveyed in the summer and winter of 2001 to record visual documentation of how these barns were functioning.

An extensive photo library is available and as the following tables show, the cost of canvas barns were found to be about half that of a comparable steel clad barn. Plastic barns were about 75% of the cost of steel clad, attributable, in the most part, to the concrete footings used to mount the building.



|                                  | Canvas       | Plastic      | Industry |
|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Number of barns                  | 7            | 2            |          |
| Average cows to capacity (range) | 67 (40-100)  | 100 (50-150) | 57       |
| Barn size (square foot)          | 7,011        | 9,480        |          |
| Area per cow                     | 105 (64-142) | 95 (78-144)  | 90       |
| Average winter milk yield        | 24.8         | 28.2         | 24.5     |
| Average summer milk yield        | 25.2         | 24.2         | 24.5     |

| Barns (60' by 120')       | Canvas   | Plastic  | Post Frame |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|------------|
| Total purchasing cost     | \$51,184 | \$76,042 | \$102,654  |
| Footing + steel purchase  | \$46,224 | \$73,442 | N/A        |
| Skin purchase cost        | \$4,960  | \$2,600  | N/A        |
| Annual depreciate cost    | \$1,995  | \$2,969  | \$3,696    |
| Annual Interest Cost      | \$2,232  | \$3,335  | \$4,517    |
| Ownership cost            | \$4,227  | \$6,304  | \$8,213    |
| Insurance cost            | \$262    | \$390    | \$456      |
| Average Annual Total Cost | \$4,489  | \$6,694  | \$8,669    |

### Support Appreciated

from:



Community Benefits Include: Improved shelters for dairy cows, reduced cost of production