

## Huge Goat Farm to go in Calumet County

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BROTHERTOWN (AP) — A huge goat farm once planned for Jefferson County now is headed to Calumet County, near another goat dairy operation that apparently has similar grandiose plans.

Drumlin Dairy LLC has an accepted offer to buy 35 acres in the town of Brothertown, about 15 miles northeast of Fond du Lac, and hopes to start construction for a 9,000-goat operation there in about two months, said Kenn Buelow, one of Drumlin's co-owners.

The site near the eastern shore of Lake Winnebago is about five miles from a goat dairy owned by Milk Source LLC — the state's largest cow dairy operation — that opened last month with 700 milking goats but has plans to reach 9,000, too, Buelow said.

If both goat dairy operations reach the capacity Buelow predicted, Brothertown, population 1,300, would be the site of the two largest goat operations in the country and two of the biggest in the world.

Town Chairman Chuck Schneider said he has reviewed the plans for both operations and confirmed Buelow's statements about Milk Source's plans, though a company spokesman said it has no plans to expand.

“We're going to be the goat capital of the world, I guess,” Schneider said.

Wisconsin has the country's most milk goats (44,000), but more are needed to meet the needs of state goat cheese makers, Buelow said. He lives in nearby New Holstein and is part-owner of the Holsum Dairies cow operations in Calumet County.

The Drumlin farm would have 7,000 milking goats and 2,000 kids on a site on Dick Road, about 2½ miles from Lake Winnebago.

In its application for a conditional- use permit in Jefferson County, Drumlin estimated that milk production from the operation when it reaches full capacity would hit 25 tons a day. A similar plan is in store for the Calumet County site, Buelow said.

The Jefferson County site had been land at Mansfield and Harvey roads in the Town of Aztalan. However, the landowner would not sell the property to Drumlin Dairy.

Milk Source spokesman Dick Harke said the company has no plans to expand, partly because the goat milk market is changing so rapidly that it's difficult to plan for the future. He said Milk Source is too busy learning how to milk 700 goats to think about expanding. “We're learning as we go on this one,” he added.

Calumet County conservationist Tony Reali said he believes Milk Source is planning to expand its operation on a renovated 600-cow dairy farm and said it just received a permit from the county to add a third manure storage area. Per state measuring standards, 700 goats create the same amount of manure as 70 cows, so Reali said expansion is the only reason for Milk Source to expand manure storage because it already had enough for 600 cows.

“Three manure storage (sites) could handle 9,000 goats pretty easily,” Reali said.

That same state measuring standard is used to determine whether a farm needs to meet only town and county standards for approval or the more rigorous water, soil and siting standards set for larger dairy farms known as concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). The state defines a CAFO as having more than 1,000 cows or 10,000 goats, so the Drumlin operation would not need to meet those tighter standards.

Brothertown is one of five towns in the county that have their own zoning laws, and Drumlin won't need a conditional use permit. Schneider's biggest concerns were whether Drumlin will stay “neighbor friendly” by keeping odors down and limiting extra truck traffic from milk haulers that could deteriorate town roads.

“They don't have to jump through too many hoops, but they are going to anyway,” said Schneider, who has known Buelow and many members of his family for years. “They said they are going to meet most or all of the CAFO laws because it must follow town zoning regulations.”

Reali said Drumlin, which plans to compost its manure, still needs permits from the county for manure storage, erosion control and storm water management, and one of the requirements for the manure storage permit is a nutrient management plan.

He said Drumlin's site is part of the Lake Winnebago watershed, while the Milk Source site sits in the Manitowoc River watershed. He said he has no concerns about potential environmental damage from either operation if a nutrient management plan is implemented and followed.

Buelow said the goat operation will meet all water, soil and siting standards for CAFOs because it wants to be environmentally friendly and a positive part of the community where it resides.

“I don't know what differences there could be between what we will do and what those (CAFO) standards are,” he said.

Drumlin stopped looking at sites in Jefferson County after some residents feared that the operation would create health hazards, odor and traffic problems, adding to woes created by some of the state's largest chicken operations that are located there.

One land deal fell apart in February, and Drumlin abruptly broke off negotiations for another site two weeks ago after learning the permitting schedule could include appeals that would not allow for construction to be completed by the end of the year, Buelow said.

The biggest concern among Jefferson County residents was evidence cited at a meeting of a Lake Mills environmental group that showed large concentrations of goats could increase the likelihood of a Q fever outbreak. Q fever is a disease that can be spread from animals to humans by inhaling dust contaminated with the bacteria *Coxiella burnetii*. Goats have been the culprits in some of the bigger outbreaks in recent years.

At a town meeting Tuesday night with Buelow in attendance, Brothertown residents expressed similar concerns.

“I thought Ken answered those questions quite well,” Schneider said.