

Hard times down on the farm



DAIRY PAIR: Irving Fraleigh stands with one of his charges at his farm on Route 199 in Red Hook. Fraleigh, a life-long Red Hook dairy farmer, says the most recent fall in milk prices is nothing new, but it's one more thing that's going to hurt the farmer. (Photo by Kathy Leonard.)

Falling milk prices hurt local dairy farms

by Robert Doar
and Kathy Leonard

Dairy farmers are facing hard times.

That is the conclusion of farm economists and local dairy farmers who have seen the price of milk fall dramatically in the past two months and expect the downward spiral to continue well into 1991.

The result will be prices that could be as much as 35% less than prices in January 1990.

To local dairy farmers who have seen the price of everything else go up, that price drop is very bad news.

"Prices per hundredweight of milk are expected to fall from a high of

\$15.50 a year ago to as low as \$9 this coming January," said Robert Wellington, an economist with Agrimark, a milk cooperative which serves some 20,000 farmers in New England and eastern New York.

Each \$1 drop in price per hundredweight (a unit representing 100 pounds of milk) means a \$10,000 drop in income for a farm milking 60 cows. The expected price reduction could mean a drop of more than \$40,000 in total income for the average farmer.