

Doug and Joyce Weld's grandchildren are the 8th generation to work at their family's Berkshire farm. After 197 years of farming, The Welds have made the difficult decision to auction off their cows and equipment. They will rent the land to others and keep the buildings. "We had to go one direction or the other" says Joyce Weld. "There was no half way. We either had to get out now or double the size of our herd."

Without the land or barn space to support more cows, the only way to continue would have included building an additional barn and buying more feed from elsewhere. Such an expansion would have meant taking on a huge amount of debt with no guarantee that added income would come from the added expense. The decision to sell, while difficult, was clear. "It seemed like the right time to say 'this is it'" says Joyce.

"It was getting harder and harder" says Berkshire's Doug Weld. "It costs me \$15 to make 100 pounds of milk and they pay me \$10. Even if they paid me \$15 I'd only be breaking even. Instead I'm going in the hole. I work as hard as I ever did but everything costs more and we get paid less. We're losing every day."

"It's a whole different world now" says Doug. "You can't live on your own anymore. You have to get more and more from other people and the cost of everything is going up. If you can't pay your bills they'll take everything; the barn, the land, the house, everything."

On Wednesday February 11th, The Welds gathered to watch their beloved cows and equipment be sold to buyers from all over the Northeast and Canada. "We struggled to get every one of those items" says Doug of the equipment being sold. "Now we're selling it at a loss."

Doug's wife Joyce relates the story of how the family was finally able to purchase a rock rake a few years ago. After years of picking stones by hand, the rake was a rare luxury for the family. Now it will be a luxury to someone else.

"All of our grandkids have worked on the farm" says Joyce. "Everybody has worked and worked and worked. There have been as many as three families that have been supported just by this farm. "We've been through about everything that could happen" says Doug.

For The Welds, a life without farming is a great unknown. "There are a lot of places we haven't gone and a lot of things we haven't done because of the farm" says Doug. "I got a long list of stuff for him to do" says Joyce of Doug's new free time.

"I guess I'm gonna play the game now and see where I end up" says Doug. "I'm going to miss it all. It has been a lot of work but it's been a good life and I don't think I would have changed much if I could."