



# COWABUNGA!

## SAND BUSINESS BOOMING THANKS TO DAIRIES

**I**n the dairy business, cow comfort is king. When a cow is comfortable, milk production rises. And when cows lie down on the job, so to speak, the more the blood flows to the mammary glands and the more milk they produce — up to 25 percent more, in fact. So it's important to provide a comfortable bedding surface. And it turns out that sand not only appeals to cows, but also to farmers, since it doesn't harbor harmful bacteria that can end up on the teats, unlike straw, sawdust, or shavings. Sand also provides better traction for the cow, reduces hock and knee injuries, and promotes uniform hoof wear.

But just not any kind of sand will do. Studies have been made as to which kinds of sand the cows prefer, based on particle size. However, according to Guy Brandl, president of I. Brandl, Inc., in Marshfield, Wisconsin,

color is important too. "The farmers tell me the whiter and softer the sand, the more milk they produce. If we get too far into brown sand, they'll let us know. I've got about 50 farmers I take care of."

Just how did he get started in the dairy-sand business? "About 16 years ago, a farmer in a nearby community saw our sand in a volleyball court. He'd been reading about the whiter, softer sand and decided to give it a try. He told another farmer, and another, and so on since they talk amongst themselves.

"Not too long ago I had a dairy conglomerate come in. They had 470 head of cattle but expected to get up to 9,000 within two years. They asked if I was interested in supplying them with sand, but I said no. I've got my own farmers that I take care of. I've got one that takes about 8 to 9 loads of sand a week.

Another company takes over 250 cubic yards of sand a week. Although milk prices have been down, they are hanging in there."

### SECOND-GENERATION OWNER, THRIVING BUSINESS

Known locally as iBi, Brandl's company was started by his dad in 1929. And ever since it first opened, he says they've never had a bad year. They specialize in sand, gravel, fill rock, landscaping materials (such as decorative rock, top soil, and shredded bark), and excavation work — primarily basements and garages. Of their four pits, Eisenhower is their primary sand pit and is where their newest Kawasaki, a 90ZV-2, works. In all, iBi owns four Kawasaki wheel loaders, which are used at their pits and main yard.

*Brandl's 90ZV-2 is running the local dairy farmers' favorite sand through a Kolberg 241 screener. At the Eisenhower pit, the sand is found in veins. Sometimes it is on the surface, other times it has to be dug out from under clay.*



Selling to both contractors and the general public makes for a very full day, multiplied by six times a week. "Sometimes I come down the road to our office and there are 14-20 people waiting to pick up," says Brandl. "We have our own delivery trucks but sometimes we have to hire extra to meet the demand." The company services areas up to 65 miles away. Ninety percent of the outgoing loads return with a variety of materials, usually sand or rock, which helps hold down costs.

For many years, the company was known for its basement excavations — often at 100 or more a year. Then garages were the hot item. This year it's dairy sand and decorative boulders. For a company as swamped as iBi, thanks to its diversity of products and services, the thought of expansion has certainly crossed Brandl's mind. But it's not taken up permanent residence.



**Guy Brandl, Owner, I. Brandl, Inc.**



*The 65ZV can be found at iBi's Bakerville Pit and is used primarily for concrete and asphalt recycling. However, occasionally, sand is hauled out of the pit as well.*

"We are into so many different areas. We do public and commercial. But we never go for really big jobs. I'm 69 years old and really don't want to grow. I've got 12 employees, including my daughter and son-in-law, and I want to keep it at that. Most of them have been with me for over 20 years. We used to lay them all off during the winter, but now with the dairies, we keep most of them all year. It's nice to be able to let good workers work."

## WHY KAWASAKI?

"We've had really good luck with Kawasaki," says Brandl. "That's why we've stuck with them. They are very good. We've got one at about 8,000 hours — no trouble at all. We did look at others. John Oberthaler, our rep at American State, brought one out years



*Research and practical experience show cows prefer bedding on sand. Regular filling and maintenance is crucial. Levels should not be allowed to fall below the level of the curb, so dairymen who use sand are regulars at iBi.*

ago so we could demo it. We really liked it. We've owned quite a few through the years and we've been happy with all of them.

"All of our drivers run the loaders, plus we've got one guy who is on the 90 full-time. Even our office manager will jump on the loader if

we need her to help out here in the yard. I run them all myself too. I know Kawasaki has made improvements over the years, but I like them all about the same."

***I. Brandl, Inc. is serviced by American State, Wausau, Wisconsin.***