

## All quiet on the Green Mountain Dairy front, until the sun comes back

SHELDON - When I arrive at Green Mountain Dairy, owner Bill Rowell was in his office, preparing his testimony for the Vermont Legislature on coated seeds, which are being threatened with a ban. He had me read his notes. As 2:14 p.m. and the start of the eclipse approached, he remained calm.

"It'll start slow," he said.



We headed to the calf barn, where Rowell talks to the calves like they're babies, glowing with pride in how healthy and energetic they look. After a stroll down to where the mothers are, we headed back to the office and Rowell suggested we drive his pickup the short distance to the edge of a vast field, where we can sit on the tailgate to watch the big event.

Rowell got a pillow out of his truck for me to sit on and a folded up coat for himself. As the moon began to nibble away at the sun, he commented on how quiet it was.

"This morning there were geese flying around," he said. "There were turkeys across the field in front of me in the field, when I came to work."



It's so wide open out here – more like the Oklahoma prairie than verdant Vermont – that I asked Rowell where else birds would even be.

"Right here you'll see them coming and going in the barn or you'll see them on the telephone lines," he answered. "When we were looking out the back we didn't see any in that big bunker full of corn silage. We didn't even see one, did we? Nothing flying, nothing roosting that we can see."

He's right. Darkness began to spread across the fields, a strange darkness, not like night, but something else.

"Look at that, very weird," Rowell said. "Look at it, it's like Biblical weird. Now she's just got a little sliver left. Oh, she's almost there. And she's gone. She's gone."



Rowell stood staring with his eclipse glasses at the once-in-a-lifetime event. He noticed a star. Or was it an airplane? The night light on the barn blinked on. The air cooled.

"You notice the breeze stopped?" Rowell asked. "There's no noise and look how cool it is. For Pete's sake."

A few minutes later, with just a sliver of the sun back, daylight returned. The cows started mooing again. A flock of birds wheeled overhead.

"Here it comes, here it comes," Rowell said. "Well the crowd isn't too bad here, is it?"