

South Africans visit Lancaster farmers

By Sally Bair
Farm Feature Writer

Lancaster County Holstein breeders have been hosting tours to their farms for a long time. But in the past five years they have added another dimension to the average farm tour by opening their homes to Holstein breeders from other states and other countries. They offer an evening of good food, fellowship and a companionable discussion of Holstein cattle.

This week local breeders played host to eighteen dairymen from the Union of South Africa who are here to learn a lot about dairy cows - and particularly dairy bulls. Their tour was arranged under the auspices of the Friesland Cattle Breeders Association in South Africa in cooperation with the Holstein Friesian Association of America. They have a sire selector who is traveling with them.

Two of the South African visitors spent the evening at the home of Elam Bollinger, Manheim R7, and talked about dairying in South Africa. They also asked many intelligent questions about dairying in this country, and were eager to learn. One of the men, Marno Meyer said, "We're deciding if we want to import cattle."

Although they apologized for their lack of ability with English, both visitors at the Bollingers communicated very well. Their native language is Afrikaans, and when they were not sure of a question or a response they held a quick discussion in that tongue. The language sounded a lot like Pennsylvania Dutch, and sometimes the Bollingers understood a few words.

Meyer and Jurie Geldenhuys agreed that dairying in the Union of South Africa, located on the southern tip of the continent of Africa, is not too much different from here, but farming itself is quite different.

The farms are quite a lot larger than what we are accustomed to in Lancaster County. Meyer described his farm as having about 5,500 morgen. According to Webster's, one morgen is equal to two acres. These 5,500 morgen are farmed jointly by a "company" which consists of his father, two brothers and himself. His own farm where he resides is nearly 1300 morgens. This farm is not just a dairy farm. In fact, Meyer says, they have a total of 60 dairy animals, including calves, but they also graze about 1,000 ewes and raise nearly 650 vealers.

Meyer's dairy animals are primarily Frieslands, which are black and white animals of Dutch extraction. The Friesland cattle are dual-purpose animals, Meyer said, meaning they are used both for meat and milk production. His cows are registered with their Friesland Breeding Association. He said he also has imported some Dutch cattle.

Jurie Geldenhuys on the other hand is a great Holstein enthusiast. He said, "Holsteins give more milk." Geldenhuys says he has had Holstein cattle for about three years and he became interested because, "I read production records for them and they give so much more milk than Dutch cattle." As a result he inseminated his Dutch cattle with Holsteins "for more milk."

There ensued a friendly discussion between the two men as to whether the Holsteins were indeed superior and

Meyer was of the opinion that they must first prove themselves. If they are, in fact, better producers, he could be persuaded to accept them, he said.

Geldenhuys has 80-90 milking cows and farms about 1400 morgen with his father and brother. The dairy herd is presently a mixture of Friesland and Holsteins. His average production is about 2.8 gallons per day per cow, he says, but he claims that his Holsteins average about 3.5 gallons per day, thereby being superior.

Geldenhuys said his dairy cows are fed a ration of corn silage, which is stored in a bunker, lucerne hay and a concentrate with 15 percent fishmeal protein.

The main agricultural income is from maize, and they make a lot of hay to feed the animals.

Geldenhuys also grazes about 1,000 sheep and has about 200 Africander beef animals, which he described as being much like a Brahmin.

The Geldenhuys' cows are milked in a double-six milking parlor, manufactured by Alfa Laval. He uses weigh jars to help with his production records.

Milk is sold through a "milk board" which bottles and markets it for the farmer. Geldenhuys, whose milk is sold for drinking, said his milk is sold "just by volume, not by butterfat." He stores his milk in a bulk tank, and is paid about 67½ cents per gallon.

Homestead Notes

Meyer, on the other hand, sells his milk for manufactured milk, and receives 47 cents per gallon for 3.5 test. His cows are milked by hand and the milk stored in cans. In the winter, he said, it is cold enough so that he does not have to cool the milk, but in the summer he cools the afternoon milking and the milk is picked up just after the morning milking.

There is a testing association, called the "Milk Record Scheme," with the samples being taken by the individual dairymen. Inspections can come at any time the men said.

Semen is available through artificial breeding stations in South Africa and Geldenhuys says that he uses semen from an imported Canadian bull for his Holsteins. Meyer said, "Artificial insemination is just at the beginning of its development. Only the bigger farmers want it." Both men do their own insemination work.

The starkest difference between South Africa and this part of the country, according to Meyer, is the climate. There are seven months of summer there, and while it gets a lot hotter, there is not the humidity that we have here. It is now winter in South Africa. The landscape is flat, "more or less," and there is not the abundance of trees they find here in Lancaster County. The native tree, Meyer says, is a thorn tree. Both men hail from the Free State, one of four provinces in the Union of South Africa. The average annual rainfall is 26-30 inches, but this year



Meyer Marno and Jurie Geldenhuys look over the DHIA records with Elam Bollinger.

they have had 35-40." Meyer said that farms in South Africa are "not that mechanized." Some people are highly mechanized, but the average farmer works with small tractors and small equipment.

Because of the diversity and largeness of the farms, these men consider themselves primarily "supervisors." The work is done by approximately 60 laborers on the Meyer farm and 25 on Geldenhuys. The laborers are given housing and food. Because of this, Meyer said, "Farming is so different here. We must have laborers."

Bollinger noted, "Labor here is out of reach. If we can't do it ourselves we don't do it."

After some consultation in the native tongue, it was agreed that a tractor costs about the same in South Africa as here, but an automobile is "much more expensive." Cars are all imported, and gasoline costs about 70 cents per gallon.

The primary income in South Africa comes from gold, and the second highest is agriculture, including wool and corn, a lot of which is exported. The visitors raised some excitement when they said they live very close to gold mines and diamond mines, but they quickly explained that diamonds are not so readily available, and possession of an uncut diamond could mean a jail sentence.

The group of South Africans had spent one week in the Netherlands and one week in Canada, prior to coming to the United States for a week. Before returning home they will spend one week in Great Britain.

In the United States they visited the National Holstein Association headquarters in Brattleboro, Vermont and were in Washington, D.C. Locally they visited the farm of J. Mowery Frey, Jr., Lancaster and the Atlantic Breeders Cooperative stud.

According to Bollinger, local Holstein club members host four or five tours annually.

Country Corner

A summer day spent down on the farm

by: Melissa Piper

These last few days in August have brought with them a lingering warmth from July coupled with the fresh breezes of the Fall months yet to come.

And while the area farmers have been busy preparing the wagons and machinery for that annual fete of silo filling, farm wives have been busy reaping the last produce from their gardens and preserving it for the winter days ahead.

As a child, I remember my mother on days such as these busily coordinating efforts in the kitchen to can quarts of ripe red tomatoes and golden peaches. My younger sister and I would watch the whole process from peeling the fruit to dunking the jars in the canner. But we knew the job wasn't done until we'd hear the pop of the lids sealing later in the day.

Either a case of homesickness or nostalgia (I think the former) prompted me this week, to visit a Lancaster County farm wife who was in the midst of canning a basketful of peaches. Joining her for a day of canning on Wednesday was quite interesting although I hope she didn't mind a novice cluttering her kitchen!

Canning Day Revisited

The early afternoon sun was already quite warm as I drove to a farm in the eastern portion of Lancaster County. And as I turned off the main roads and onto the winding farm roads, the thickly leaved trees offered a little more shade.

When I arrived at the farm, I felt as if I had made a trip home as few other houses were in sight and only the squawking of a few birds and muffled noises from the barn were evident.

The inside of the farm house was cool with breezes playfully whipping at the curtains and the

smell of peaches was faintly floating through the air.

The first process of canning the fruit was to sort through the basket and find only those peaches which were not too ripe but not too hard. This was



The last few days in Lancaster County have been busy ones for farmers as well as their wives. Filling silo and canning the last produce from the garden has kept everyone on the go.

done skillfully by the farm wife and her daughter.

Before long, a small kettle of boiling water was bubbling on the stove and the peaches, a few at a time were being dipped into the liquid just long enough for the skins to loosen. From there the peaches found a temporary home in a basin of cool water and waited there to be skinned and halved.

The farm wife had lined up seven wide-mouth jars and was steadily filling them with peach halves as we talked. A hunt for lids brought the conversation around to the availability of canning lids which prompted many thoughts on the issue.

When asked if she had noted any shortage, the farm wife replied that she had bought most of hers during the last season but that finding them in Lancaster County sure "had been a chore" this year.

My thoughts quickly flashed to conversations I had had earlier in the year with consumer officials in Washington concerning the shortage. Most of that particular talk had centered around the fact that lids were being hoarded.

Both the farm wife and I agreed though that hoarding hadn't seemed as much as a problem as just plain shortages. For after speaking with many merchants in Lancaster County we both realized that lids just hadn't been delivered or at least were not making it into the stores.

By that time, the peaches had been loaded into the jars and packed tightly. The syrup that had been slowly cooking on the stove was ready and we were beginning to pour it evenly into the jars. A quick reminder to get the air bubbles from the

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