

Test breeding, fine-tuned feeding bring butterfat honors

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN
MANHEIM — Butterfat production has shown a steady increase for the herd of Nelson and Alma Wenger, R6 Manheim, since they started farming on their own seven years ago.

Their herd average has climbed nearly 200 lbs in that time to a high of 771 lbs during the past year. And that was enough to bring them the high herd butterfat honors at the Lancaster County DHIA Banquet this week.

That average also is believed to be an all-time record for the county.

Looking back, Wenger points to three main factors which came together during the past year to hike the butterfat production to the 771-lb average, which was a 90-lb. jump from just the year before.

First, he has continued a specific program of breeding for test, which was actually started under his father Arthur.

Second, he's been able to fine tune his feeding management to the point where he's getting good production results with a minimum of problems.

And finally, the Wengers admit they had their share of good fortune with the herd. There were no major difficulties, other than some breeding trouble during the peak of the summer's hot and humid weather.

The foundation for the butterfat honors moved out of the Wenger herd during this past year just at the time the achievement was being attained. She was a 13-year-old cow, Valley Run Smokey Rocket, which had come from his father's herd.

One of her calves was a bull, Valley Run Silver Tiger, who was sired by Silver Tip, a Curtiss bull. Rocket was a 4.8 percent test cow and Silver Tip had a plus test.

Half of the present Wenger herd can be traced directly to Tiger, who was a minus bull in so far as milk was concerned, but has been proven to be an admirable sire for test.

"His offspring are slow maturing and usually don't



Nelson H. Wenger, R6 Manheim, scatters some hay to his award-winning high butterfat herd of Holsteins.

have high milk production as first-calf heifers," Wenger explained.

"But generally by the third lactation, they become some real good producers."

Concerning test, Wenger cites 18 of the offspring who are all over 4.0 percent and five with at least 5.0 percent. The Wengers had four cows over 1000 lbs. of fat in 305 days during the past year.

Della, freshened at 7 years, 4 months, had 27,807 lbs of milk and 1138 lbs of fat at 4.1 percent test.

Vanessa, freshened at 5 years, 2 months, had 26,426 lbs of milk and 1085 lbs. of fat at 4.1 test.

Winner, freshened at 5 years, 9 months, had 20,172

lbs. of milk and 1019 lbs. of fat at 5.1.

Cotton, freshened at 6 years, had 22,326 lbs of milk and 1118 lbs. of fat at 5.0 test.

And another member of the Wenger herd recently recorded an additional significant production achievement.

Cinnamon, freshened at 4 years, just finished test in October with 30,373 lbs of milk and 1021 lbs. of fat at 3.4 percent.

"She's our first cow to top 30,000 lbs. of milk in 305 days," Wenger said.

"During her top month, she was giving 137 lbs. a day and was still producing 129 lbs daily the following month."

The Wenger herd averages

about 45 milkers and 40 young stock. They raise all their own replacements and market quite a few heifers and bulls for breeding.

Recently, a heifer went to Arkansas, three to Illinois and another sold at the state calf sale.

A number of the bulls are destined for overseas, where greater emphasis is placed on the butterfat differential. One of Della's bulls is in Holland and the next is scheduled for Carnation. And a Cotton bull is contracted for Holland.

The Wengers have a limited supply of Tiger semen left, which they'll continue to use. But they also include other sires in their breeding program, such as Creek and Ace from Sire Power and Cinnamon from Select Sires.

In addition to breeding, Wenger places emphasis on feeding management, especially the fine tuning of his high moisture shelled corn ratio.

"About two and a half years ago we started feeding the high moisture shelled corn," Wenger said.

The moisture level is critical and, at first, I believe we were feeding it too wet.

Now, we've been keeping the moisture lower in the feed and eliminating a lot of acid conditions in the rumen.

We try for a happy medium — moist enough to get proper fermentation but dry enough to avoid the problems.

The feeding program also includes haylage, corn silage and a limited amount of hay.

Roasted soybeans with minerals and vitamins added are fed as top dressing to the high moisture corn.

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Standing next to their farm sign along Earhart Road, west of Manheim, are Nelson and Alma Wenger, who have built top butterfat herd in just seven years of farming.

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