

# Sweet-tooth Shirley moos, "Ya are what ya eat"

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**EAST BERLIN** — If you have a "Shirley" in your dairy herd, just forget all those dairy herd management recommendations about high TDN, adequate fiber, protein concentrates and computer balanced rations.

Shirley is a ten-year-old grade Holstein owned by Adams County dairyman Kevin Holtzinger.

Kevin's first inkling that Shirley had her own opinions about what comprises "cow food" came the day she turned to theft.

The milking crew in the parlor at the York County farm he was then renting frequently kept snacks handy by setting them on the steps down into the pit. One day as she was leaving the parlor after a turn at the milkers, Shirley nosed the goods on the steps, snatched a bag of doughnuts and hustled out via the parlor exit door.

She then proceeded to systematically devour every doughnut in the bag.

"She's pretty good at getting her nose in a bag and taking out whatever food she finds in there," chuckles Kevin. "Shirley eats just about anything, especially fruit, cookies and candy. The only thing she really doesn't care for is barbecued potato chips."

Grocery bag of goodies in tow, Lancaster Farming embarked last week on a research project of the bovine sweet tooth, based, naturally, on Shirley.

There were bananas for an appetizer, not quite as ripe as they should have been, the faint tinges of green outlining the yellow.

Shirley never checked. She just grabbed the banana Kevin offered and gulped it down. Two, three, four bananas later, Shirley was diverted to a second course.

Kevin offered her a doughnut from a box of a dozen assorted types. She promptly gobbled her way right through the sugared ones, practically swallowed whole the chocolate-iced, crunched down the coconut covered, and neatly polished off the remaining cinnamon with barely a pause for breath.

Before Kevin could discard the now-empty box, Shirley snuffed it, ripped off a corner and began work on a cardboard cud.

Figuring that variety should be included in this scientific study, a salty snack of potato chips was next on Shirley's menu. These were plain, of course, not barbecued

After nosing at the crunchy bits,

Shirley nibbled at one or two with only half-hearted interest. She raised her head, pondered a moment, and headed toward the camera, the direction from whence the sweets had been arriving.

Dangling a couple of Hershey chocolate bars — no almonds — before her discerning nose, immediately regained Shirley's attention.

Before Kevin could even remove the inner wrapper from the first bar, Shirley stretched out her tongue and snatched the chocolate from his hand, polishing off the wax wrapper along with the contents.

The second bar disappeared just as quickly. Maybe she knew they had milk in them.

Shirley capped off this picnic by finishing the remaining three bananas.

Now the bag was empty and Shirley's dark eyes pleaded for more.

Reluctant to leave the handouts, the big black cow finally let herself be led back into the cow lot, mulling with herdmates eating their nutritiously balanced, but dull, portions of silages, hays and grains.

Her disappointment was apparent as she lingered just inside the gate, eyes hopefully glued to the former sources of sweets.

"She'll stay there until we leave," assured Kevin. "Just in case there's something else we forgot."

Kevin adds his herdswoman's four-year-old daughter adores Shirley and recognizes the number 12 on the cow's bright yellow ear tag.

The tot recently came to visit the cows carrying along the sandwich she was having for lunch. Shirley borrowed it and swallowed the sandwich in two bites.

Kevin admits she's not "too wet" but he's reluctant to part with Shirley because the cow is everyone's favorite barnyard pet.

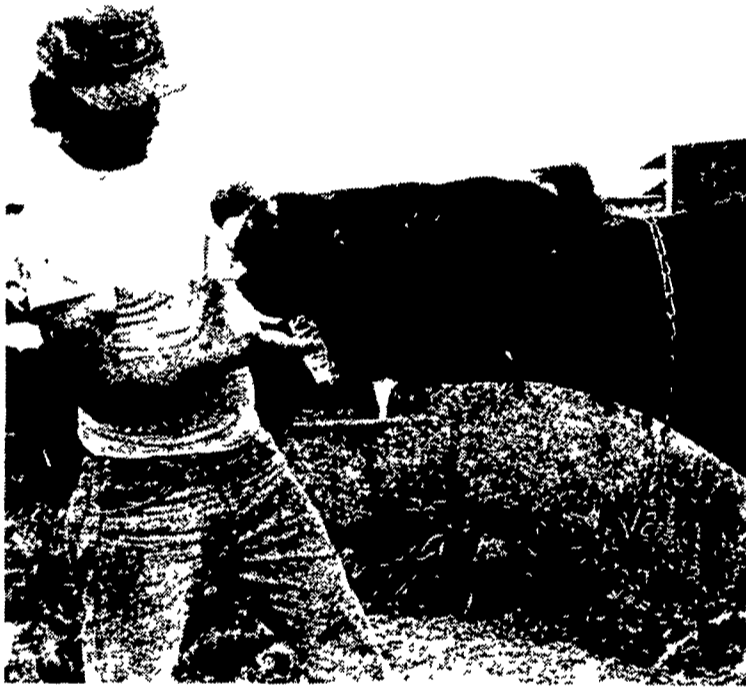
Her forty pounds of production doesn't rank her very high in a herd of 220-cows with an average of over 16,000 pounds milk and almost 600 of butterfat.

"She's one of a kind, by all means," Kevin grins, shaking his head.

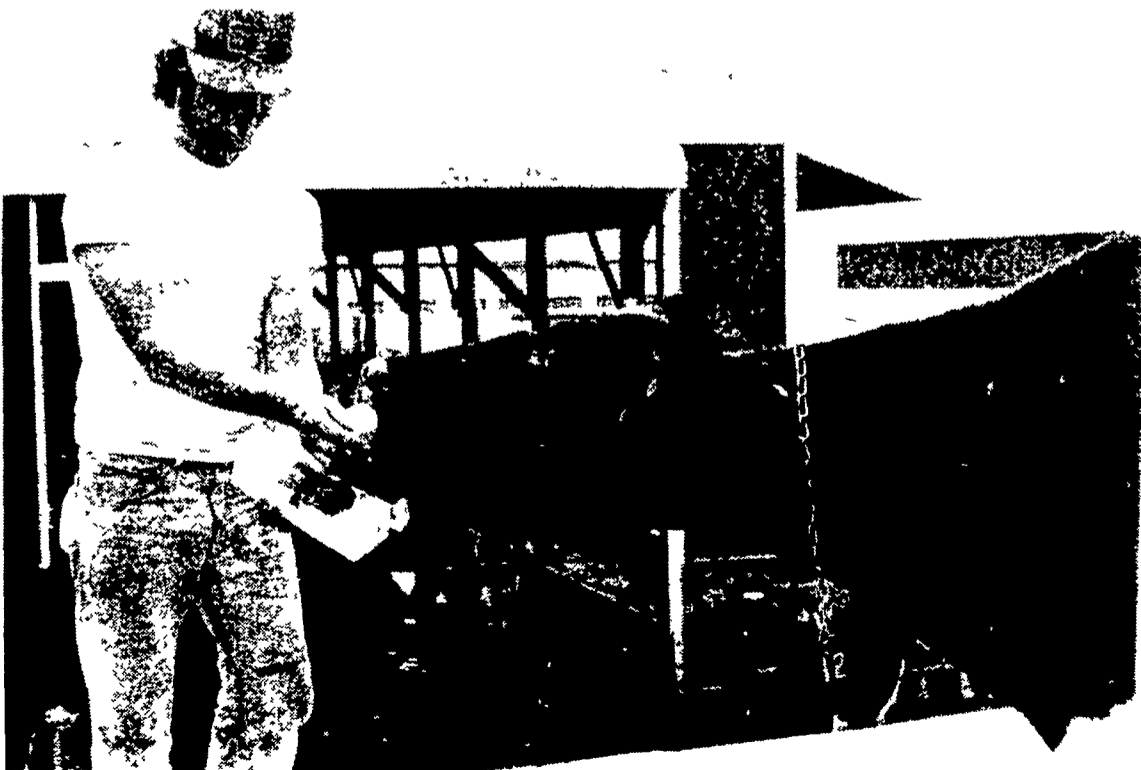
And the unbiased projection from this scientific study on dairy cattle feeding is that a special cow named Shirley is likely to be around the Holtzinger barn for a while longer.



Peel a banana? Why? Didn't your mother ever tell you there's more organic fiber in it if you eat it with skin intact?



Chocolate bars - my favorite! What do you mean "take the paper off first?" I'd better stop at two, though. Next thing I'll lose my girlish figure.



Gee, it's so tough to decide which flavor doughnut to start with. Take them all? Don't mind if I do.



Potato chips? One of my favorites. Just the plain, of course.