

# DHIA records prove a plus for Piney Lane Guernsey Farm

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LITTLESTOWN — Mervin K. Myers has been using Dairy Herd Improvement records for thirty years but this year they held special significance - they made his Piney Lane Guernsey Farm at Littlestown in Adams County the top Guernsey herd in the state in both milk and fat production.

His fifty-six head of cows had a record of 14,088 pounds of milk and 705 pounds of fat.

Mervin and his son David who works in partnership with him are modest about the accomplishment but proud of the achievement which is a first for them.

Mervin says, "We were a little surprised, but I guess you could say it was considered a goal. We are just trying to do our best and the cows responded well."

They currently milk 55 head and have about 55 head of young stock and they are pleased that they can know each cow as an individual. David says wryly, "We also know all their problems."

The Myers family are unabashed Guernsey enthusiasts, and Myers said it was his grandfather Daniel Sell who started the Guernsey tradition. His father Harry also had Guernseys and Mervin worked with him for 10 years before beginning on his own with 21 head, including 14 cows and seven heifers. His father had his herd on DHIA test and Mervin followed.

"We are backed by 30 years of constant testing," Myers states. "Testing is definitely an advantage if you are going to have continuity. But if you don't use the records, it won't help. We use it in culling and also in measuring our feeding program."

David adds, "Otherwise you don't know who's low."

Myers also has his animals on protein testing, something Mervin feels more dairymen should consider. "Component pricing is a coming thing. I think it is the answer to the surplus problem," he states.

Myers feels that if component pricing were used, dairymen would cull more heavily from the bottom which is where the surplus problems arise.

He feels strongly that support should be given for efficiency in production, one good argument for component pricing. He explains, "Everybody thinks there will be a big chance in payout if component pricing comes. But the lower half will get \$.02 per hundred less and the upper half will gain."

He feels Holstein breeders stand to gain the most from a change in that direction.

Myers is a strong supporter of promotional programs, adding, "If we had an increase in consumption it would help the surplus problem. I support promotion and our local farmers association backs the Dairy Princess program." Their group also sold real milk shakes during the Apple Blossom Festival, a taste treat to festival-goers.

Myers quotes Extension Area Marketing Specialist Larry Yeager who believes that farmers have always been known for helping themselves, and who advises that they go out and sell their products.

In their feeding program they feed high moisture ear corn on top of corn silage. "They seem to like the combination," Mervin states. "It seems to hold production."

The corn is stored in a 12 foot by 65 foot concrete stave silo with a top unloader. Mervin points out, "We are very critical about the

moisture level when we put it in. We mill it at the silo. We used to chop it in the field and that gave us a problem."

Seventeen percent flaked feed is fed in the stall and four pounds of 40 percent protein crumble is fed on top of the feed in the bunk. They use a combination of Total Mixed Ration and individual rations, and any cow below thirty pounds doesn't receive grain in the barn.

They make all their own hay, an alfalfa and grass mixture and make pure alfalfa hay for sale. They farm about 250 acres.

Mervin and David work together on the dairy program and the field crops. Mervin says, "You must have adequate crops. Cows take management and so do crops. The two go hand in hand."

Milking is done with a pipeline milker and two people working. Mervin says, "One person can handle it but it goes better with two." Calves are raised in hutches "with good success."

Recently the Myerses constructed a semi-solid manure pit which is 132 feet from the barn and is served with a ram-pump through a 12-inch PVC pipe. They are pleased with it and Mervin says, "It eliminates going to the field every day." For projects like this and other up-to-date information they consult the Extension Service and use information from Penn State University.

They raise their own young stock and occasionally purchase animals. They have two cows which have produced five sons now in AI service. These two cows, McDonald's Darimost Linda and McDonald's Darimost Kitty, rank second and third in the country in lifetime per day production. Kitty had a record of 156,240 milk and 8,558 fat in 10 lactations making her the fifth highest lifetime fat producer in the country.

They have superovulated Linda who has a USDA index of +758 milk and +36 fat, but Mervin says, "We approach it with mixed emotions." Of the 20 fertilized eggs from Linda, six were discarded, 14 were transferred and eight recipients carried calves.

Nevertheless, they observed problems with further conception and feel it can be justified only with "top caliber cows."

They use artificial insemination widely, looking for size, capacity and strength in the bulls they choose. Mervin is critical of the trend to using only very high PD bulls, saying, "I think it is a mistake to emphasize only numbers. I guess I'm a real controversial fellow. We don't have an elite cow in the herd."

They always use plus proven bulls but do not use only extremely high ones. "We don't want a big minus on test," Mervin states. David comments, "Daughters of high PD bulls are sometimes too frail. A cow has to have the equipment to do the job."

Mervin also feels there should be more emphasis on maternal contributions to the genetic product, without basing everything solely on sires. He adds, "I think there is too much emphasis on milk in the Young Sire program and then you get low fat results. I agree with the concept, but now what it is doing." He feels participation in the Young Sire program is not adequate.

Mervin has been very active in community organizations, having served as president, vice president and a director of DHIA for many years. He was county president of the Adams County Farmers

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Mervin Myers coaxes one of his heifer calves from the hutch as son David looks on. These calves get a good start into the herd which was high in the state in DHIA records this year.



There's nothing like a gentle Guernsey cow, and here Mervin enjoys being in the pasture with one of his favorites in the 55 head herd which was highest DHIA herd in the state. This three-year-old classified 87 points.



Mrs. Myers is often found in the barn or in the milk house helping with chores although she also works away from home on a part time basis.