



Thirty-eight South African dairymen and their wives visited Lancaster County last week to learn more about dairy practices. From left are Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Ross, D. Charles McDonald, and Dr. and Mrs. Joachim Prinsloo who took time from their schedule to be interviewed about South African dairying.

## South African visitors discuss farming "back home"

## Homestead Notes

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For the thirty-eight South African dairymen in Lancaster County last week, their trip around the world to visit dairy herds brought some interesting comparisons, some new ideas and a feeling that people everywhere are very much alike.

Despite the heat and humidity which had local people drooping, the South Africans were delighted with their reception and with the opportunity to talk firsthand with dairy farmers about their programs and management practices.

Their visit to southeastern Pennsylvania was part of a two week trip which took the dairymen and their wives first to the Netherlands and will take them across the country to visit dairy farms in California.

What they found here was no surprise, since most dairymen subscribe to breed magazines and other dairy publications from this country, and are well versed on exceptional animals and bulls.

Indeed, as they drove through Lancaster County last week, the men agreed that there are animals of equal quality to be found in South Africa, but they were impressed with the intensive farming methods of this area.

Although dairying is the third most important agricultural product in their country, after maize or corn and beef, it is often just a small part of very large operations which include crops and beef animals. The average size of herds varies from 100 to 200 head, and farming operations, which are mostly family owned, include thousands of acres of land.

One large difference between dairying in South Africa and in this area is that most animals are

grazed or kept in paddocks, eliminating the necessity of expensive housing. Most milking is done in parlors.

Kenneth Ross, a young dairyman traveling with his wife, said, "I came to learn about the management aspects and to see the cattle and the breeding." Ross milks about 45 Friesland Holsteins in a milking parlor and feeds according to production, with low-producing cows on ryegrass pasture.

Dairying is just a small part of his operation on 4½ thousand acres. He raises sheep, beef and angorra goats as well. The Ross herd produces about 14,000 pounds of milk at 3.6 percent fat. They purchase grain concentrate for their balanced ration and store silage in trenches.

Ross said they raise all their own herd replacements and calves are handled much the same as in this area, being raised in hutches up to seven weeks. After that heifers run on pasture.

Dr. Joachim Prinsloo, also traveling with his wife, went into dairying after retiring as a medical doctor, so has been in the business for just five years. Farming with his oldest son, Prinsloo is responsible for the dairying portion of their farm, milking 40-50 head of cows. He says, "The dairy is a small part of our operation. It is mainly to keep me busy."

For instance, they plant over 2,000 acres of corn and dry beans, with kidney beans being another large crop. These beans are processed in factories, and Prinsloo noted that harvest is now underway in South Africa where it is mid-winter.

Prinsloo started off with dairy shorthorns, but "various circumstances" led him to change to

Friesland. "Actually," he says with a laugh, "I'll milk anything with teats."

Prinsloo points out that in his operation, as with many others, cows are "more scavengers of the leftovers of other farming concerns. Farming here is much more intensive and smaller scale than in South Africa. There is a much more intensive production of feed."

The group of South Africans is traveling under the auspices of World Wide Sires, an international marketing cooperative consisting of the 11 major AI cooperatives in the United States. Atlantic Breeders Cooperative, which is a member, served as local host for the group.

Dr. Charles McDonald, who is traveling as group leader, is deputy general manager of the Taurus bull stud in South Africa, which is the only bull stud there, having been formed by the merger of four smaller cooperatives.

McDonald pointed out that the majority of dairy cattle in South Africa are black and white cows, direct descendants from the Dutch Frieslands, which are a shorter, squatter cow than the Holstein-Friesians in this country. They are strictly dairy animals, and there are about 900,000 of them in South Africa.

McDonald said, "We have a different type of Friesland, based on the Dutch animals. The breed is changing. We need to see if the more intensive dairy type will suit us. We need to assess the animals we see here. There are those who would like a more dairy intensive cow, but it is still controversial."

He added, "Twenty percent of the national herd is bred artificially with 99 percent of that

being trained by their AI cooperative."

At the moment importation of cattle is closed in South Africa, although in the past animals have been imported from this country. Semen is imported on a selective basis, McDonald said. Embryo transplants have taken place in South Africa, according to McDonald, but in a small way.

"There has been no importation of embryos, but it will be done. It will never have a real impact," he states.

All milk is marketed through cooperatives, with the price of milk being set by the government. About dairying, McDonald says, "It is very important. At the moment we are importing dairy products." But the importation of dairy products is not always necessary, depending upon the market, and, according to Prinsloo, hinging on the inconsistency of the rainfall.

Dairy products are imported on the basis of who can deliver it most economically, and at the moment these products are coming from Ireland, although sometimes New Zealand and Australia are big suppliers.

Dairymen are paid by the liter, and there is a minimum fat requirement which varies in different areas. Money is deducted if the dairyman does not meet the minimum requirement.

McDonald explained that there are two prices for milk, with fresh Grade A milk bringing the farmer \$.29 per liter in South African currency. That is roughly \$1.53 in American currency per gallon. Industrial, or manufactured milk, brings about \$.23 in South African

currency. By comparison, milk costs about \$.44 per liter in the store.

According to the visitors, beef is probably the most important agricultural product in South Africa, followed closely by, or perhaps equalled by, corn, or maize as they call it there. Both products are exported, with the Far East being a large market for South African products. Prinsloo said, "Maize and beef go hand in hand. We use maize to produce beef. Maize is a basic substance in South Africa. It is a basic staple."

The Republic of South Africa is 1500 miles long and 1000 miles wide, so has a wide range of climates. Most of the country lies on a plateau which is as high as 6,000 feet above sea level. Some parts of it are semi-desert, some has high rainfall and some is semi-tropical. Sheep are an important crop in the semi-arid rural areas, with merino being the most popular. In the western part of the country, there are many vineyards on small farms. The population numbers just 26 million.

The price of land was dismissed as an impossible topic of discussion. McDonald said, "It varies tremendously. It can range from \$150 per hectare to \$20,000 per hectare."

Prinsloo pointed out, "Our rainfall is much lighter and the humidity is much higher here than at home. While you grow corn, it is not with the same intensity as we do. But the type of dairying and the type of feeding is the same." He added, "We import a lot of machinery from this country

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