

Eighth generation dairyman combines breeding, feeding in top Holstein herd

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When you talk to a dairy farmer about breeding programs, it is inevitable that sometime in the conversation the topic of transmitting ability will come up.

What are the chances of that top quality bull or cow passing on the excellent traits he or she displays?

That idea has been the cornerstone for many dairy producers' herd developing strategies. Its importance is evident at a glance when examining each year's sire summaries, listing top bulls' Predicted Difference and Repeatability scores.

It's a proven fact that genetics plays a dominant role in the quality of future generations of dairy cattle. But, along with the inherited blueprint, a cow or bull's performance is influenced by its environment.

The idea of 'you are what you eat' applies to cows as well as people. The ability to keep a top-pedigreed dairy animal pampered for top production is a quality exhibited by knowledgeable dairymen, those who've succeeded in the business for generation upon generation.

Lebanon County's Harold Bollinger is one dairyman who not only breeds top Holstein cattle, but who also knows how to treat them. He is the eighth generation of Bollingers in the dairy business, farming on the same 50 acres as his forefathers.

Over the years, each generation of Bollinger has milked a herd of registered Holstein cattle. Today the herd, which numbers 39 head on the milking string, has its roots in the Black and White foundations built by the Bollinger family.

When Harold bought the farm from his parents in 1943, he didn't have to start out from scratch. Along with the knowledge of the business, the 28-year-old dairyman also brought with him several head of Holstein cattle he had raised as 4-H and FFA projects while a student at Schaefferstown High School. These cattle, along with some he bought from his parents herd, got Harold and wife Amy off to a good start.

In his second year of farming on his own, Harold recalls, he decided to start building the genetic capabilities of his herd through the use of artificial insemination. In selecting a sire to compliment his



Conservation plays an important part on the Bollinger farm. Contour strips, a sod waterway, tile drainage, along with no-till and chisel plowing help keep the fertile soil from

cattle and bring out their best traits, he chose Gold Medal Proven sire Lauxmont Admiral Lucifer, one of the Holstein breed's most influential sires who was bred at a farm in Wrightsville, York County, that still bears his prefix.

With this female base, Bollinger added another genetic keystone in Osborndale Ivanhoe, an Excellent Gold Medal sire.

By the early 1960s, Ivanhoe daughters made up half the Bollinger herd. Then in 1963, the genetic progress suffered a slight setback as lightning destroyed eight head. "We were lucky, though," remembers Harold. "We didn't lose any Ivanhoe blood, and only lost four Lucifer daughters."

One of the survivors of this destructive act of nature has brought national recognition to the Bollinger herd. For in 1966, an Ivanhoe daughter gave birth to a heifer calf sired by Limerock Reflection Oscar. Her name — Willow Maple Reflection Mae.

Now 15 years old, this graying hallmark of the Bollinger herd is still standing in the stanchion barn and pouring out the production records. She was recently recognized as the national class leader in milk for senior aged cows. As a 14-year-old, Mae milked 32,256 pounds in 365 days with 1,111 pounds of butterfat.

Mae's production records haven't gone unnoticed at the state level while all these national honors were being doled out. Under the supervision of the Dairy Herd Improvement Registry, Mae has come in at the top of her class in milk production for Pennsylvania. Her 13 lactations have made 295,000 pounds of milk and 10,616 pounds of butterfat.

Her prime came as an 8-year-old, when Mae made 37,865 pounds of milk in 375 days, along with 1,276 pounds of fat.

With a production record like Mae's, Bollinger admits he would

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washing away. Donald has been an active director on the Lebanon Conservation District Board since graduation from high school.



Along with their dairy operation, the Bollingers raise five flocks of broilers each year, under contract. Each flock numbers 72,000 birds that reach the 4-pound market weight in six weeks.



Is it possible that the ability to be a top dairyman runs in the family? If Lebanon County's Bollinger family is proof, there's no question. Harold Bollinger, left, is the 8th generation dairyman milking registered Holsteins, along with son Donald, right, and 7-year-old grandson Steven.



Fifteen-year-old Willow Maple Reflection Mae and her nationally recognized production record of 32,256 pounds milk with 1,111 pounds fat has helped keep the Bollinger herd's rolling average above 20,000 for the past four years.