

Master Farmers stress longevity is dairying key

Somerset Co. father, son team win farming award

BERLIN — A Somerset County father and son, who for years have been operating one of the most efficient dairy operations in the state, were named Master Farmers for 1981.

Paul and David Countryman of R1 Berlin, will receive the award January 12 at a special luncheon in Harrisburg. Sponsors of the award are the Pennsylvania Farmer magazine, Harrisburg, and Penn State's Cooperative Extension Service.

The award winners, who milk 87 cows, also merchandise purebred cows which adds about 20 percent to their farm income. The herd average of 17,167 pounds can be attributed to cow longevity which makes dairying even more profitable.

“Our oldest cow is 15. She has a lifetime production of 310,000 pounds of milk,” Paul the senior partner in the operation, points out. “We have another cow that has produced over 200,000 pounds of milk, but she's just 11.”

Another 23 cows have a lifetime production of more than 100,000 pounds of milk per cow.

“We got into purebred breeding because of David's 4-H work,” Paul adds. “Although we keep an eye on cow sales, a high priority is given to producing our own herd replacements. We're not sold on animals with attractive pedigrees

but since merchandising brings in 20 percent of our income, it's the pedigree that counts.”

The Master Farmers have that pedigree reputation. Their farm name, Lansdown, can be found in the stud books. They emphasize that there isn't an animal in the barn they wouldn't sell. Of course, some are more valuable and would be priced accordingly.

Somerset County, with its high elevation, has short growing seasons, but they try to grow all of their own roughages. They farm 370 acres, 170 of these are leased. Crops include 45 acres of alfalfa, 40 of clover, 35 of mixed grass hay, 90 of ear corn, 35 of silage corn, and 28 acres of oats.

They keep fields in hay for about three years, then produce corn on this land for three years. This is followed by small grain for a year.

“The grain is mainly for weed control,” David explains. “If we grow corn for more than three years, production starts to fall off.”

Each morning Marie, Paul's wife, and Linda, David's wife, take care of milking chores while the two Master Farmers feed high moisture corn and haylage concentrate. At the end of the milking, they give the cows corn silage.

While all animals get about the same roughage, the other

ingredients drop according to production. For example, a cow producing 80 pounds of milk each day receives 38 pounds of corn and 10 pounds of concentrate, while one producing 60 pounds per day gets 25 pounds of corn and six pounds of concentrate.

Bull calves are culled, but usually 4 to 6 are raised and sold as young breeding bulls to neighbors who raise them for farm use.

“The cows are put on pasture at night during the summer. Our barn is more comfortable during the day because we control the temperature. Night pasture allows the cows a chance to stretch themselves and flies don't bother them,” Paul says.

The elder Master Farmer and his wife tried a number of different ways to make a living at farming during the early years. They first grew sweet corn to make the payment on their 99 acres. They had 12 milk cows at that time.

Over the intervening years, Paul and his wife fed hogs and cattle for beef. They also ran a sugar bush on the hillsides.

“We put up 150 gallons a year, but I won't go back to producing sugar maple. Those folks earn every penny of the \$20 a gallon they get for their product,” he emphasizes.

In 1970, David joined the operation as a partner. The partnership rents the farm from the family corporation. The farm has been in the family for 150 years, and with an estate plan now being drawn up, they hope the family will farm the land for many more years.

“David came into the partnership at the right time,” Paul relates. “I've had a hip replacement operation and I wouldn't be in the dairy business

today if we didn't have the family to take over.”

Like other Master Farmers, they are involved in numerous agricultural and community organizations.

Paul has been a director of the Pennsylvania Holstein Association, Farmers Home Administration, Somerset County Extension Association, and Berlin Brothersvalley Community Fair Association. He has been active in the Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church and is a member of the IOOF and Grange.

He also was an officer of the County Republican Committee and Somerset County Conservation District. Paul was honored as Father of the Year by the Somerset County Pomona Grange, and he won Premier Breeder Awards in 1974-75 at the Somerset County Holstein Show.

David, like his father, is active in breed, farm, and cooperative organizations as well as in his church. He was Outstanding Young Farmer in 1979 and shared Premier Breeder Awards with his father.



Somerset County's Paul, right, and David Countryman attribute their dairy herd's 17,167 pound rolling average to cow longevity which “makes dairying more profitable.” The father and son partnership earned the 1981 Master Farmer awards.

USDA bars produce firms

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Two produce firms, one from New Jersey and the other from New York, have been barred from operating in the produce industry by the USDA after failure to pay Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act reparation awards.

The New Jersey firm, L&M Schneider, Inc., Fairfield, failed to

pay a reparation award of \$2,630, involving the shipment of carrots from Massachusetts between June and September, 1980.

The New York firm, Union Food Service, failed to pay a reparation award of \$73,735 involving produce shipped during July and August, 1979.



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