

Adams twi-light meeting features mating guidelines

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Staff Correspondent

LITTLESTOWN — Adams County Holstein breeders recently received guidelines to help them make their mating selections at a Twi-light Meeting held at the farm of Guy and David Kehr, Kehr Acres, Littlestown. Also included in their information-packed agenda was a slide presentation on herd promotion, plus an opportunity for breeders and friends to sharpen their dairy cattle judging skills.

Featured speaker for the evening was Ron Buffington, sire director for Select Sires. Buffington, who has been with the artificial insemination unit for the past six years, is in charge of product knowledge, bull and daughter pictures, and sire directories.

In discussing mating selections, Buffington demonstrated the linear system to evaluate the cow's traits, matching them to the linear coding of the bull's traits as listed at Select Sires. Other studs have similar linear coding for their bulls. The linear system has been endorsed by every major U.S. dairy breed association.

When choosing a service sire, Buffington explained, "Look for the cow's good traits and appreciate them. Hope that those traits will transfer. Then, list the things that you would ask the sire to do and choose from there."

Noting that a single mating will not correct all the cow's faults, Buffington said, "The trouble with type evaluations is that you can't go for the whole package. Sometimes you have to sacrifice fixing everything, but the correlation of parts is helpful." Buffington explained that breeding to correct one fault may help to correct another fault since, genetically, they seem to correlate. He used the example of bulls that improve stature and also improve pasterns.

Buffington stressed the importance of using good A.I. bulls in the breeders' programs.

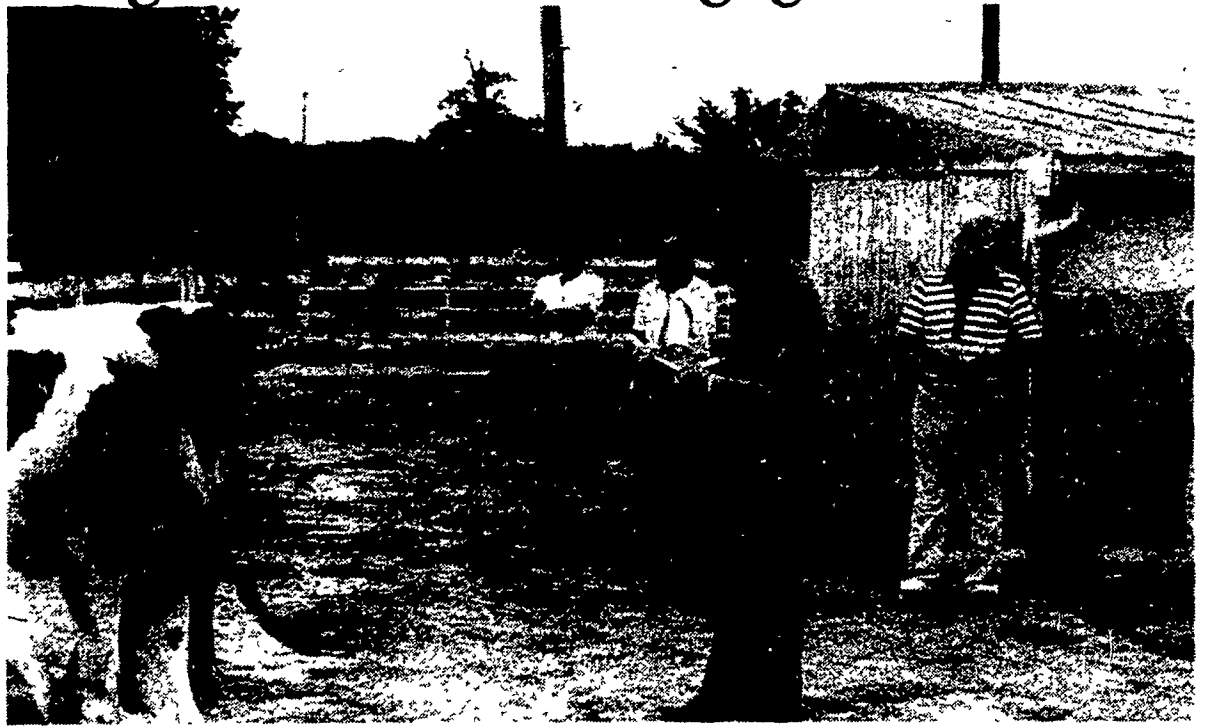
He stated, "The most important thing about breeding cattle is to use good bulls, but use them selectively. Don't breed good bulls randomly."

Using good bulls and understanding how to use them is more important than just using high predicted difference bulls or high total performance index bulls. The sire director also stressed that while it is beneficial to know as much as possible about the cow's pedigree, breeders should not become lost in the traits and numbers involved in too many generations back in the pedigree.

When asked whether the genetic base of the breed had become saturated with Elevation blood, Buffington replied, "It happens a lot and it seems that most of the really good animals of the breed have some doubling-up of blood in their pedigrees. We're seeing it happen more and more with Elevation daughters being bred to Elevation sons. A lot more people are going to try it just to see what they get."

We have better animals today and better traits. With the data that we can get today on a greater number of cattle, I think we're writing a new chapter on inbreeding and linebreeding in dairy cattle. It seems that everyone asks for outcross bulls, but then everyone only wants to buy semen from those Elevation sons."

While adjourning from the cow stable to the upper floor of the barn, breeders were given the opportunity to view the Kehr's new 90 stall Rigid-Ply freestall barn and their new manure storage area. Seated on bales on the Kehr's barn floor, breeders viewed a slide presentation by Buffington which featured herd promotion techniques. Buffington stressed that for breeders to take full advantage of their registered



Ron Buffington, Sire Director for Select Sires, places a heifer class at the Adams County Holstein Breeders Twi-light Meeting held recently at the farm of Guy and David Kehr, Kehr Acres, Littlestown. Buffington was the featured speaker for the event, discussing sire selection and herd promotion.

Holsteins, they must learn to breed them to good AI bulls, manage them properly, and then do a good job of merchandising and retailing them from the farm.

Buffington noted that there is a tremendous demand for dairy cattle in the South. He predicted that those who know how to retail their cattle, would be the ones who would profit from this demand through increased sales.

Hosting the evening meeting were Guy and David Kehr, a father-son partnership, operating on 159 acres and milking 68 cows. The partnership was formed two years ago. According to Dave, improving

their herd average and taking better care of their cows are their present objectives. They are trying to improve their homebred stock, Kehr explained by only using bulls that are plus on type, plus on test and have a PDI of at least \$150.

The next event scheduled for the

Adams County breeders is their dairy tour to Lancaster County set for Friday, July 23. The tour will include farm visits and lunch at Groff's Farm Restaurant. The cost is \$18 per person which includes the meal plus transportation and disposable boots.

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