



The Ken Mase family, Lebanon County, makes the dairy business a family affair. Ken, who serves as president of the Lebanon Holstein Club, believes dairymen "should be able to get more milk out of less cows" in the future, thanks to genetic tools like embryo

transfers. Concerning the milk surplus, Mase says "dairy farmers could survive without support prices, but we'd help floor the beef market. Everything at the bottom end of the line would go to the butcher."



All of Mase's 80 milking Holsteins are fed their grain ration in the stall barn, with 17 pounds of shelled corn and 6 pounds of soybean meal going to 50-pound producers. Mase milks in two groups, with the second string being housed in the freestall barn.

Mase family regroups after tragic loss

BY SHEILA MILLER

LEBANON — When Lebanon County Holstein Club president Kenneth Mase says he's concerned about the nation's 10-percent surplus of milk and is therefore not expanding his herd, he qualifies his statement by adding he's not cutting back, either. "Milk still pays the bills around here," he smiles.

Mase's purchase of two registered Holsteins at the recent county sale would seem to negate his philosophy except that Ken-Irene Holsteins suffered a tragic loss last month with the death of their top Holstein. Her production record of 21,000 pounds as a two year old made replacing Millbach El Bob Dandy difficult.

The only consolation the Mase family has when recalling the Friday the Thirteenth death of this VG-88 Holstein cow is the fact that her frisky Milkmaster heifer calf is healthy and strong. Much of their hopes for raising a future Excellent cow rest with this two-month-old Holstein-handful who may someday wear the same tag

number, "8," as her dam did before her premature death.

Ken refers to the loss of Dandy as his "biggest letdown" since going into the dairy business on his own three years ago.

"We had hoped for an Excellent cow someday, and she would have been our first," he says, gazing at a picture of Dandy.

"Her death really shook us up," confesses Irene, who admits she saved Dandy's ear tag and plans to retire the number. "I wasn't raised on a farm and it gets to me when an animal dies. I was ready to hand in everything. — Why go on? — But that's the name of the game."

Since the Mases purchased Dandy at the 1979 Lebanon County Holstein Sale, where she was consigned by breeder Daniel Shirk of Newmanstown, it was only fitting that they buy her replacements at the same place.

Both natives of Lebanon County, Ken and Irene Mase started their dairying career in 1970, one year after Ken's high school graduation. While attending Annville-Cleona High School, Ken was an active

member of the Future Farmers Association, serving as chapter and county president and state chaplain. He attributes his success in the farming business to his experiences in FFA.

After graduation, Ken worked for his parents, Clarence and Arlene, on the home farm where Ken now lives. He continued to work for his father after he and Irene were married in 1970 until 1979 when Ken and Irene took over the farm and struck out in the dairy business on their own, renting the farm for three years and finally buying the 124-acre farm this past April.

Since help is always in demand on a farm, newly-wed Irene learned how to milk and actually enjoyed the twice-a-day job until their first daughter, Kathy, was born in 1972. That's when she retired from barn to bassinet.

The following year, daughter Michelle was born, and three years later daughter Kendra joined the family. Two years ago the Mases' son, Jeremy, was born.

Irene's retirement prompted

Ken to hire a fulltime employee for the farm. Currently, Chuck Gingrich is filling the second-milker's shoes, and quietly tends the cows when it comes time for the 4 o'clock milkings, twice each day for 13 days straight. When Chuck takes his day-off, Irene lends a hand in the barn.

At the present time, the Mases are milking 80 head of registered and grade Holsteins, with 12 additional mature cows waiting in the dry cow group. Replacement heifers number about 70, all of which were calved on the farm.

Eventually, says Ken, he would like to have an entire herd of registered Holsteins. Toward that end, he says he is continuing to sell his grade heifers, having sold 18 this year in order to purchase 10 registered animals.

The Red and Whites in the Ken-Irene Holstein herd are in the minority, and will continue to be, says Ken. Only four red Holsteins

are in the milking string, including his latest purchase, and there are only three young reds waiting in the wings.

During the three years of dairying on their own, the Mases have added 22 head of Holstein to their herd. When they took over the dairy operation in 1979, Ken owned 20 head of Holsteins and purchased an additional 50 head from his father. He cut back from more than 100 milking cows that filled the Mase barn before 1979.

Other than the additional cattle, not much else has changed under Ken and Irene's management. They continue to milk two groups of cattle in the stall barn which holds 53 cows. The remaining cows take up quarters in the freestall barn.

Ken's first group of top-producers are housed in the stall barn, and cows aren't shifted between groups as their lactations drop off. All of the cows are fed

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Millbach El Bob Dandy, the Mase family's pride and joy and future hope for an Excellent Holstein, died last month on Friday the Thirteenth from complications resulting from a

twisted stomach. This stroke of bad luck has not deterred the Lebanon County dairy family from pursuing a successful career in the Holstein business.



Ken and Eileen Mase (holding son Jeremy) and daughters Kendra, left, Kathy and Michelle pose with Dandy's July heifer calf who'll bear the name Dandylion and wear her dam's ear tag number, "8."