

Flat Stone Lick

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"As a result, we have quiet animals that are fairly trouble-free," he boasts. "In our area there are a lot of people who work off the farm. They need the kind of cattle that aren't hard calvers and that are good milkers."

In the farm's breeding program, Les says he "attempts to follow the trends — striving for more frame while still keeping milkability without hard calving."

"Our cows aren't the biggest in the industry," Les concedes, "but they're bigger than average. We're selling a reliable genetic package to a person who needs it."

In the process of selecting genetically superior progeny, Les says the policy at Flat Stone Lick is to keep only about 12 bull calves out of each year's crop. The remainder are castrated and kept on the farm for one year, after which they are sold as lightweight feeders. In merchandising bull calves, Les notes most are sold to commercial cattle breeders.

Commenting on the difficulty of selling purebred bulls to commercial operations, Les admits "it's hard to get \$100 over beef price for purebred bulls. People don't want to pay for the premium of management." He also cited the same problem when merchandising purebred cows and heifers.

Nevertheless, Les stresses Flat Stone Lick calves will continue to be purebred Polled Herefords. Through genetic manipulation, he says the Polled Hereford breeders are "attempting to get their cattle's frame size up in order to have a desirable end product for steer sales." But, he says, the pressure from Mother Nature is to go

smaller.

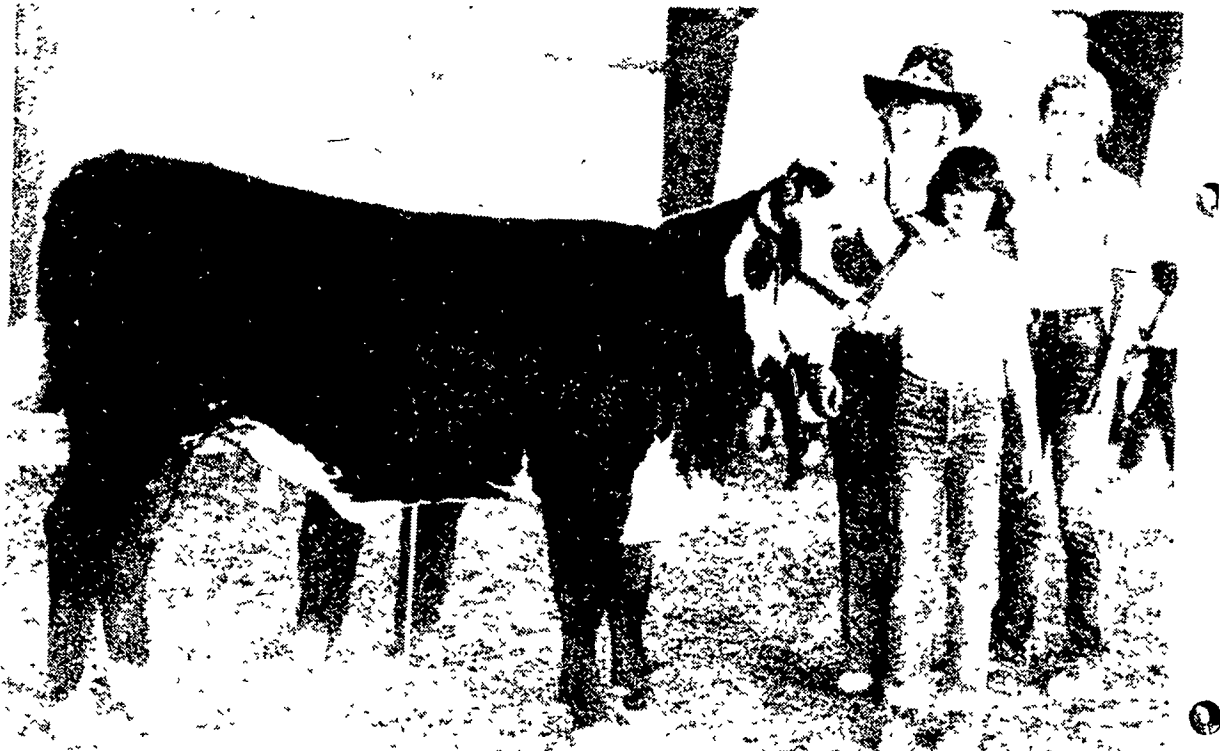
One of the problems Les says he sees with the modern, larger framed Polled Hereford cows is the fact that they will cost more to maintain, requiring more grain to keep them cycling. He also says he fears structural faults will make calving ease a problem, especially with two-year-old, first-calf heifers.

At Flat Stone Lick, Les says calving has never been a problem. This year they only had to assist with six calves out of a total of 88. And, two of those assists were the result of bad presentations, he explains.

Flat Stone Lick's cow herd doesn't receive any quantity of grain, and show prospects don't receive special treatment. Les says that some silage is fed with hay during the cold months. Since grass tetany is such a problem in the area, he feeds a half pound of ground ear corn per cow. He combines this with corn silage toppedressed with magnesium oxide for their daily diets from Thanksgiving to Memorial Day.

Flat Stone Lick's calving season runs from January through March, a three-month period during which cows are kept in a restricted area. Although Les says the farm has calving stalls, he notes he likes his cows to calve "on frozen ground. I've had frozen ears and tails already, but our Polled Herefords are winter hardy. Our biggest problem comes with mud."

Two other problems that plague the cattle at Flat Stone Lick are parasites, like coccidiosis, and pink eye. To fight the parasite battle, Les says they employ drenching as a problem-solving weapon — treating calves over five



Nine-year-old Kimberly Midla exhibited the champion heifer at the Pennsylvania Polled Hereford Junior Show this past summer. The heifer later went on to be tagged reserve champion of the open show that same day. Proud mother, Nancy, far right, beams a happy smile.

consecutive days. For the pink-eye problem, Les says they inject a 1/2 cc mixture of penicillin and cortisone into the membrane of the eyelid as soon as the eye begins to drain. This is coupled with the traditional pink eye spray treatment.

Managing the breeding herd is a challenging task for most cattle breeders. At Flat Stone Lick the cows are given a five-week period after calving during which they are bred artificially. After this, the cows are turned out to pasture with three herd bulls.

According to Les, this year the farm had two-thirds of their cows conceive after being serviced artificially.

Calves are allowed to stay on the

cows until Oct. 1. Les explains that only a few weeks before this weaning date are they introduced to creep feed. At the time of weaning, the calves are inoculated with various vaccines, wormed and degreubed.

Cows are pregnancy checked in September, Les notes, adding that any open cows are culled immediately and sent to auction. Prior to the examination, all the cows in Flat Stone Lick's accredited herd received their brucellosis blood tests and tuberculosis vaccination. The "preg" checks are done when the veterinarian returns to read the TB test.

Les sums up the farm's philosophy on raising Polled

Hereford cattle, saying, "We have respectable cattle, but not world trendsetters. They're not groomed to compete with the well-fitted show cattle — they're just well-grown."

In reflecting on their 15 years of record-keeping and the resulting Benchmark Dam designations, Les comments that the two-foot thick stack of records have provided an essential management tool.

"First you have to know your cows in order to make decisions. Then you take your records and make more decisions," notes Les. He comments that each of these decisions taken separately is not as

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