

Establishing a stand

Forage spokesman Joe Hartle on production

BY TRISH WILLIAMS

BELLEFONTE — To most dairymen forage crop production provides a means to feed their cattle. To Joe Hartle, Centre County dairyman, forage production is more than a means to an end, it is a vocation he pursues with a yearning for perfection.

Hartle's desire for constant improvement in the quality of forage he feeds his cattle led to his involvement in crop and grassland organizations. Skillful application of the knowledge he has gleaned through such organizational work has earned him high yields in the field and in the milk tank.

His cropping practices and high yields earned him the title of Grasslander of the Decade in 1980, an award presented by the Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council. Hartle is a member of the Council as well as the Centre County Crop Association, and he is a strong advocate of both. Hartle's personal efforts to advance forage production practices among his fellow farmers through these technical trade organizations, won him recognition as the Grasslands Council's 'Outstanding Forage Spokesman', an annual award that was presented to him last November.

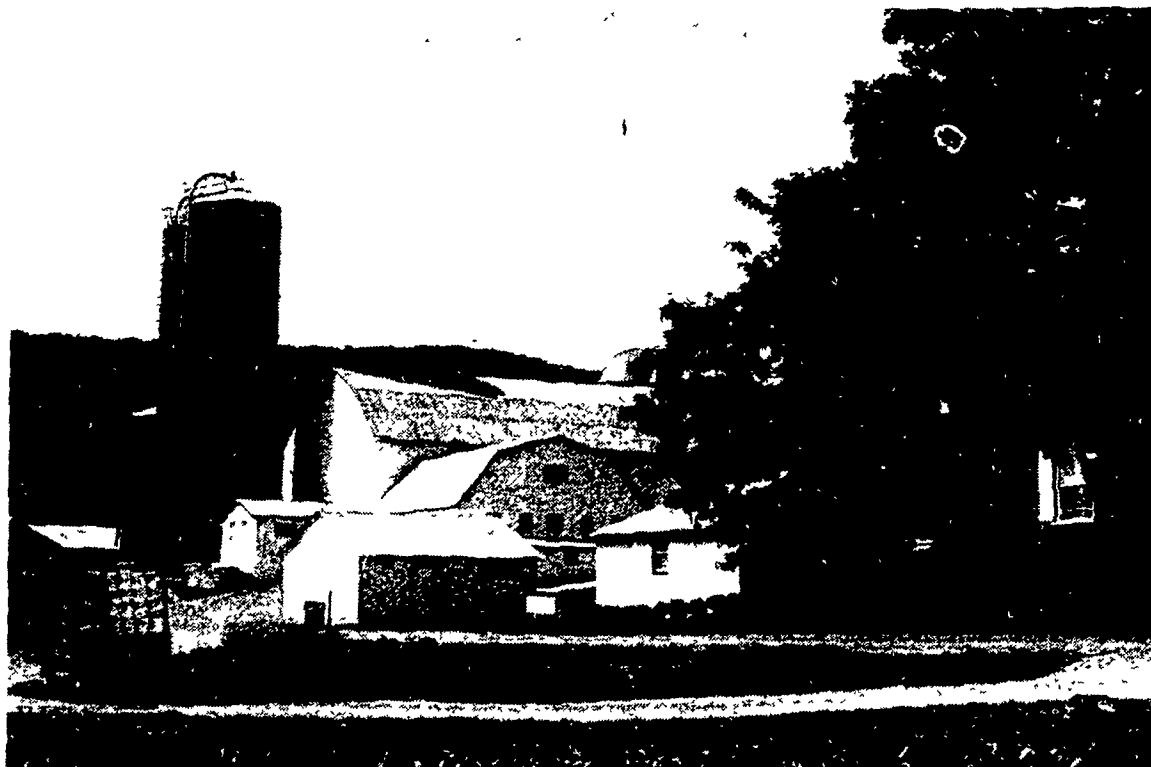
Hartle is a Centre County native, who grew up on a farm just three miles from his present day 'Lonely Spot Farm'. After graduating from high school he took a short course at Penn State to become a DHIA supervisor, a job that he worked at for one year. Then his father bought a jug milk operation in Bellefonte, and Joe went to work with his father in the retail milk business for a period of five years.

In 1956 Joe and his wife Gladys purchased their Lonely Spot Farm, a gracious farm nestled in the valley between State College and Bellefonte along Buffalo Run. They began farming the next year, working hard to learn the productive characteristics of the farm and improve on them.

Since that time the farm has flourished. The Hartle's five children, Linda, Janet, Debbie, Betsy, and Tom, all shared the responsibility of caring for the dairy herd while growing up. All five were active in the local 4-H dairy club, a club that Hartle has served as a leader for the last 29 years. The four girls have all moved away from the farm, in career pursuits. Tom is working on the farm with his parents, but not today. Today Tom is being married to Lorie Schall. The newly weds are working to renovate a farmhouse on the adjoining farm, purchased by Hartle in 1969.

Tom works primarily with the dairy herd, and is in charge of the breeding program. The herd consists of 145 registered Holsteins, with 72 cows in the milking string, and the rest in replacement heifers. The Lonely Spot herd has a rolling herd average of 21,700 pounds of milk with a 3.7 percent test, and 810 pounds of fat. Good breeding and feeding has maintained the fat average for the herd over 800 pounds for the last three years.

Lonely Spot Cavalier Fluke, a home bred six-month-old heifer calf, topped the 1982 Pennsylvania state calf sale, selling for \$5,700. Tom selects high PD bulls and uses only proven bulls in the Lonely Spot breeding program. Merchandising breeding stock is a



The Hartles enjoy hosting visitors to their scenic Lonely Spot Farm, last year more than 1500 visitors signed Hartle's guest book. Like a clean restaurant, Hartle believes a well maintained farm and clean dairy is good milk promotion.

source of farm income. Each year some of the better bull calves are raised to sell later as pasture bulls, and according to the replacement needs of the milking herd heifer calves are sold. Two heifers have been consigned to sell in the Ag Progress Sale. The sale is put on by the Centre and Mifflin County Holstein Club and will be held August 23 at the Centre County fairgrounds in Centre Hall.

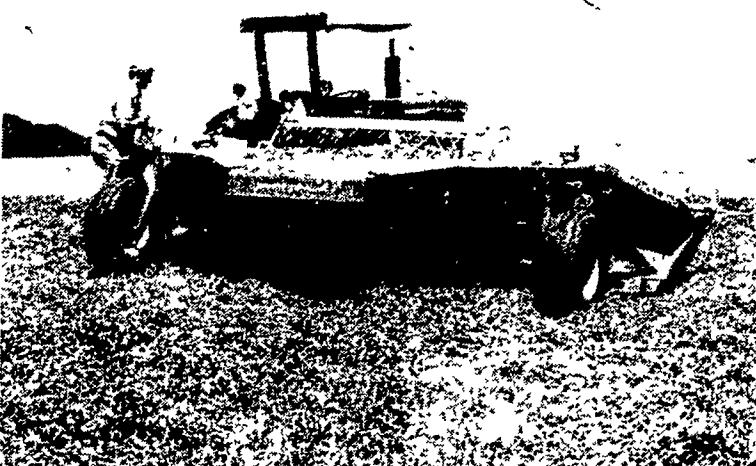
"Forage is the backbone of our feeding program," says Hartle. "We don't feed grain heavily, I have found that the most economical way to get protein into the cows is to feed them high quality home grown forage."

Since Tom has grown into the partnership, a division of labor and expertise allows Hartle to concentrate on crop production. Including some rented ground, the Hartle's farm 310 acres. This year 115 acres are in corn, 112 acres of established alfalfa stands, 22 acres are new spring seedings of alfalfa, 20 acres are a grass mix of brome and timothy for dry cows and heifers, 22 acres of oats, 8 acres of wheat and the remainder is in pastureland.

Hartle, a very personable man, enjoys visiting with other farmers, and for the last nine years has worked part-time as a Dekalb Seed dealer. Looking toward his retirement, Hartle plans to continue to sell seed after he relinquishes his farming duties. So naturally he plants only Dekalb seed.

"We establish our new alfalfa seedings by direct seeding 15 pounds of alfalfa seed, along with two to four pounds of a bromegrass-timothy mix, on a per acre basis. After the stand is established, depending on the field it will result in a stand that runs about 90 percent alfalfa and 10 percent grass," explains Hartle. "About one-third of our alfalfa seedings are put in during August following oats. The other two-thirds is seeded in the spring on ground that was in corn the year before."

"From a new spring seeding we will generally take two cuttings off the first year," Hartle continued. "Average production the first year is three to four tons of dry hay per acre. An established stand with good rainfall will yield us four cuttings and an average of six to seven tons of dry hay per acre. But we generally put the first cutting of hay in the Harvestore as haylage. We try to fill our two 20 X 80 Harvestores according to the weather and then we bale the rest



Cutting hay on a beautiful day can be relaxing. As well as his own stands of alfalfa, there are two Penn State research plots on the farm.

in conventional bales."

When it comes to questions about forage production facts and figures, Hartle has all the answers, and they are all arranged neatly in a crop production notebook. As treasurer of the Centre County Crop Improvement Association since its inception in 1979, Hartle has enjoyed a mutually beneficial working relationship with the Association.

Hartle likens the Crop Association to the DHIA, in that it is financed totally by its members with a \$3 per acre charge, and it calls on the technical expertise of Extension and Penn State agronomy specialists. The first of its kind in the state, member enrollment has grown to 60. There are now eight other similar organizations throughout Pennsylvania.

Two full time technicians work year round to serve the members. Their responsibilities to the members include, taking soil samples, making periodic checks for weed and insect infestations, and reporting data back.

Presently, alfalfa fields are being swept every 10 days for leafhopper by the technicians.

On individual field record sheets, Hartle records data on: seeding dates, rates and costs; crop variety; fertilizer and lime application rates and costs; pesticide application rates and costs; population; and yield, as well as noting any comments on weather or problems. The association takes this data and returns a computer printout to him with all the cost factors and returns. This provides Hartle and other members with a production profile for each field.

Forage analysis data used in conjunction with this forage production data takes the guess work out of Hartle's cropping operation. Wise use of this information allows him to keep production costs low and efficiency high. Hartle, a Master Farmer in 1979, has through the years cultivated superior management abilities and altruistic qualities that now enable him to assist other farmers and to be an Outstanding Forage Spokesman.



This new heifer facility makes feeding forage easy and allows segregation by age group as well as daily observation.



Converting the 22 percent protein haylage into 3.7 test milk is the job of Hartle's herd of 72 registered Holsteins.

