

All for the Love of Cows

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Her life revolves around cows. She loves them. In fact, when it became time to look for a job after high school for this young lady, there was one criteria that had to be met. "I wanted it to be with cows," states Patricia Jenkins, Polo Road, Toughkenamon.

Meet 22-year-old Patty Jenkins, the daughter of Bill and Janet Jenkins of Clearview Farm in southeastern Pennsylvania, whose wish came true. Not only is Patty a veteran showman of her own prize winning Jerseys, but she's also the very capable herds person of a research herd at the New Bolton Center of the University of Pennsylvania. Patty cares for the isolated negative herd in the Bovine Leukemia virus research program. Patty says she has learned a lot from her job and can apply it at home. But, according to her supervisor, Mark Hodgson, the research center can take advantage of Patty's "cow sense."

"Patty knows when an animal looks sick," Hodgson states. Admitting that most of the animal care at the center is done by women, Hodgson says that Patty's past 4-H experiences and that with her own animals was really appreciated in her job. Patty's daily duties include taking care of calves, feeding older stock, bloodtesting each individual, and some lab work.

The leukemia research program consists of two herds at the center. The positive herd consists of Jersey cows and the negative herd is made up of Guernsey steers, and Jersey heifers and bulls who have

tested negative for the virus. When a calf is born in the positive herd, it is Patty's job to remove it immediately, care for it, and start the bloodtesting procedures to determine its leukemia status. Bloodtesting is done every three weeks in Patty's negative herd to monitor the leukemia status. If a positive animal would show up, it is also Patty's job to clean and disinfect everything and return the herd back to its negative status.

Although there is no cure or vaccine developed to control the virus yet, Patty tells us that some conclusions have been discovered in this research.

1. Calves should be removed from their dams immediately after birth.
2. Colostrum from a negative cow should be fed to the calf. Although the virus can be passed through the colostrum, it was also discovered that not all calves that get positive colostrum will get the virus.
3. Flies should be controlled. When a positive animal is found in the negative herd, (about one a year) it is attributed to flies or mosquitoes.
4. Do not use the same syringe and needle for another cow.
5. There is no evidence that the virus is transferred with embryos.
6. There is no loss of production or fertility.

"I think the farmers should be educated about it," states Patty. She says that she does not like the disregarding attitude of most dairymen to the disease. The known effects of the leukemia virus on cows is a gradual wasting away with much loss of flesh.

Advanced cases develop tumors and swollen lymph nodes. It isn't until there is evidence of this lymphosarcoma that many dairymen realize that the disease is in their herd.

Although there are export restrictions on a leukemia positive animal, unless a dairy is directly affected, there is no incentive to try to eradicate the disease, Patty tells us. "Unless they find human health complications or direct loss, there is not going to be much interest," her supervisor says.

When she is not caring for the research animals, Patty is at home caring for her own. During her nine years in 4-H and her years in the showing since then, Patty has become well known throughout the state for her refined Jerseys and her professional showmanship. Her career peaked this January as she won the Premier Breeder award at the Pennsylvania Farm Show.

"We don't have 100 to pick from," Patty says of her victory. "We were happy to do as well as we did with what we had."

Patty and her 18-year-old sister, Beth, own a total of eight Jerseys. They attend six shows a year and usually take all their animals. Since their home farm is not a

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Patty takes care of the negative herd in the leukemia research program at the New Bolton Center.



The two sisters stand with one of their calves and their pet goat. "My goat keeps the cows company," Patty says.

Homestead Notes



Patty and Beth Jenkins stand by their trophy case. They are very proud when they can win with animals that they have bred.



Patty and her supervisor team up almost daily to take blood samples of each animal. Samples are taken on a three-week rotation for each animal to determine its leukemia status.