

Land squeeze prompts switch to Jerseys

BY JUDY HULL
Staff Correspondent

LITTLESTOWN — Rumor has it that bib overalls and straw hats are still the preferred work clothes for farmers. That makes Ginger Myers mad.

"Children's books still show farmers wearing plaid shirts and straw hats and carrying a milk bucket. I tell my own children that just isn't how it is," she says. She also would like to tell the rest of the world.

A fine example of the new generation of farmers, John and Gingers Myers own and operate Green Manor Farm, a Guernsey - Jersey farm near Littlestown in Adams County. And while they purchased Green Manor because it was John's grandfather's farm and they wanted to carry-on the family heritage, their ideas about dairy farming are anything but nestled in the past.

"We must be very efficient for the amount of land that we have," John says. Their next door neighbor is a non-farm family and plans are in the works for a housing development to be built just down the road.

This "tight" land situation, plus several other factors, figured in the Myers' decision to add Jersey cows to their farm operation. "There have always been Guernsey's on this farm," John says. "The Jerseys, however, are more efficient, require less feed input, less storage, less manure, and less use of our equipment. We can get the same profit out of a (Jersey) cow that consumes less," he adds.

Although the couple are firm believers in the Jersey breed and

are thoroughly educated about the breed, they are quick to add that they have nothing against Guernseys or Holsteins.

"Ninety-two percent of the cows in this country are Holsteins," Ginger says. "We have nothing against them. We just feel that the market is changing and is demanding a higher solids producing cow."

The Myers' see the increase in the popularity of Jerseys as a trend in the dairy industry. "Jersey sales are up and their value has held real reasonably," John says. "They have a lot of promotional material, their journal is excellent and the selection of AI bulls is tremendous," he adds.

They started building their Jersey herd by purchasing four or five cows. Today they milk 55 Jerseys and 10 Guernseys.

Like all dairymen, the Myers' are concerned about the price they get for their milk. They are proponents of Equity, a Jersey breed program, and end product pricing. But they feel more has to be done if the dairy farmer is going to get the most for his product.

"We are really behind in marketing. Too many dairymen out there still don't care enough. We have to be concerned - we are in the problems we are right now because of it," Ginger says.

"For a long time the government support programs made it (farming) profitable," John adds. "Now we must be concerned about what we get."

"Agriculture is so specialized now. It's no longer just enough to produce it, we must try to get the most for it," Ginger emphasizes.



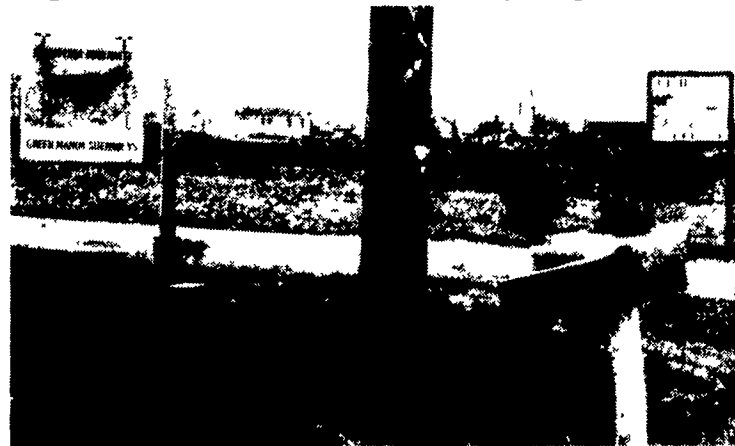
Ginger and John Myers, with daughter Susie, are shown among their mixed herd of Jerseys and Guernseys on their farm near Littlestown, Adams County.



Jerseys of John and Ginger Myers pose proudly for Dairy Issue photograph.

Dairymen, they say, must think in terms of "eating milk" and not "drinking milk." "We need a general term - dairymen," Ginger says, who produce high protein milk. Consumers, she continues, must be educated about milk's protein content as well as fat content.

John describes his Jersey cows as "tenacious." "They will eat anything you give them," he says. He adds that they usually have no appetite problems and as a result, he experiences less feed waste. The Jerseys also have no problems calving, according to John.



Green Manor Farm boasts two signs — one for Jerseys and second for Guernseys.

The Myers' say that priority for selection of bulls in service at Green Manor is PD dollar value. Jersey bulls currently in service are Quicksilver Magic of Ogsten, A-Nine Top Brass, Briarcliff Soldier Boy, Briarcliff Black Magic, Shadewell Fascinator and Sandblow Warrior. Guernsey bulls include Maurana Wis Telestar, Welcome Choice Admiral, and Kellogg Choice Pender.

In 1981, the Myers' sold Green Manor Legacy to the Legacy Syndicate for \$7,000. This is the first syndicated bull which they sold and semen is now distributed in 14 states.

While they are sure they could hold jobs in other professions (Ginger holds a teaching degree) the Myers' are convinced that dairy farming is right for them.

"We feel that our best talents are being used right here," Ginger says. She adds that farming for them is family oriented and challenging.

Attesting to this commitment to

the industry, both John and Ginger are active in numerous dairy and farm organizations. "We try to stay involved in activities that compliment each other," Ginger says. These include being involved in organizing the 1985 National Jersey Convention which will be held in Lancaster, and holding membership in the Pennsylvania Jersey Cattle Club and the Cumberland Valley Jersey Breeders of which Ginger serves as secretary. John is president of the local chapter of the Mid-Atlantic Guernsey Sires and the York-Adams Guernsey Breeders Association. Ginger is also a 4-H leader and a coach of the dairy judging team and is an approved judge for the PBCA. The family also holds membership in the Pennsylvania Farmers Association.

Clearly, the Myers' are doing their part to dispel the myth that farmers need only a contented cow and three-legged stool to make it in the dairy business.



Calves, Bossman and Soldier Boy, are kept in hutches during first eight weeks.



Counter-slope heifer barn on the Green Manor farm of John and Ginger Myers permits easy removal of manure and sloping roof helps to keep replacement stock cool in summer and warm in winter.