

VPI, Berry College swap dairy breeds

BY ROBIN PHILLIPS
Staff Correspondent

VIRGINIA — "A university ought not to be a single breed organization," states Dr. John M. White, head of the Dairy Science Department at Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, Blacksburg, Va.

Also echoing these sentiments was Dr. Stewart Fowler, head of the Berry College Agricultural Department, Mount Berry, Ga. "He felt that since Holsteins comprise the majority of the dairy cattle in the United States, our students should be exposed to the Holstein cattle," states Mark Grundahl, dairy supervisor at Berry College.

With the same purpose in mind, these progressive-minded faculty members of these two colleges were able to trade their bovine resources for the mutual benefit of both colleges. Berry College, home of an outstanding Jersey herd, needed to add Holsteins for additional research and student involvement. VPI, after sacrificing several Jerseys in research several years ago, faced dwindling numbers of this breed in their 190 cow Holstein herd.

Jersey, .. Holstein trade benefits both schools

"We didn't have the funds to go out and buy," states Dr. White of VPI's need for additional Jerseys. "We found out that VPI wanted to increase their Jersey herd," says Mark Grundahl of Berry College. "We worked out a trade that benefitted both of the institutions," he says.

This past spring negotiations were completed. Sixteen Holstein heifers and calves left VPI for Georgia 18 Jersey heifers and calves left Berry College and headed for Virginia.

With the faculty members of both colleges well known to Jersey breeders throughout the nation, Dr. White says that Jersey breeders were very much interested in this plan to increase the Jersey herd at VPI. In fact, he says, it was Tracey Stiles and his wife, Janet, of Waverly Farm, Clearbrook, who mentioned to him that Berry College was interested in a small Holstein herd. "I just picked up the phone and called," Dr. White stated about his plans for the trade.

After negotiations were started, Jersey breeders took the initiative. Harold Roller, Rockingham County, Va. a dairy extension agent and former Jersey breeder, rallied the support of several of New England and Southern Jersey breeders. With Roller's organization, richly pedigreed Jersey heifers were donated to VPI from Briarcliff Farm, Maine;

Green Dream Farm, New Hampshire; High Lawn Farm, Massachusetts; Fair Weather Farm, New York; and Ogston Farm, New Jersey. Additional heifers have also been pledged from other supportive breeders, including Waverly Farm, Virginia; Cedarcrest Farm, Alabama; and Senn-Sational Jerseys, South Carolina.

"I wanted to help with this program," says Roller. He states that he and his son, Kenneth, both graduated from VPI.

Even though his own herd was dispersed in 1981, Roller remains very active in the Jersey breed. A former director for over eight years of the American Jersey Cattle Club, Roller served as chairman of the Performance Committee when the PDT program was initiated. "I saw it as a real good opportunity to have another college involved in Jersey breeding, feeding, and research type work," Roller says. "This was my part in it," he continues. "It will be that much more benefit to the Jersey breed."

"We do want to have a good, strong, representative Jersey herd," Dr. White states. With facilities for 200 cows, VPI Holstein herd had increased to approximately 190 milking cows. Because of the ongoing research, the Jersey herd had decreased to seven milking animals. The heavy research program trains approximately 125 undergraduates and 30 graduate students yearly in one of the largest dairy science programs in the country. Five hundred and fifty acres are farmed and cows are separated in as many as 20 to 22 groups for nutrition, genetics, reproduction, and mastitis research.

Berry College has had registered Jerseys since 1905. In 1983, their Jersey herd ranked sixth in the nation for herd size of 75-100 cows with an average of 14,152 M and 631 F. They remain at the top of the breed list for milk production in Georgia in the last five years. Students are involved in all segments of the dairy operation at Berry and the herd is used for judging, reproductive physiology research and management education.

Negotiations start in spring of '83

Mostly bred heifers were involved in the trade between the two colleges. Most animals were moved in December, 1983, and any calving before that included the calves also.

It was in the early spring of 1983 that negotiations were started and in July, 1983, faculty members from each college visited to select heifers for their respective herds. Dr. Fowler and Mark Grundahl, Berry College, came to select Holstein animals that they would

consider for their herd. Dr. White, along with Dr. Bernard Cassell, and Dr. Mike Barnes, VPI, traveled to Berry College, to select their Jerseys. The two groups of selected animals were then appraised by an impartial cattle appraiser and they were traded on a dollar for dollar value.

Dr. White states that the people at Berry College were "tremendous to work with." "I'm really pleased with it," (the trade) he continued. He also credits Harold Roller and Mike Stiles, Waverly Farm, Clearbrook, who did "a tremendous job of helping to get this thing going."

"Jerseys are an extremely strong alternative breed," Dr. White goes on to say. "We feel that the Jersey breed is the only really strong viable to the Holstein breed," he says. When he interviewed seniors, White states that they also expressed concern over the dwindling Jersey numbers. "We made the decision as a faculty," he says.

Students have mixed feelings

Mark Grundahl, dairy supervisor at Berry College, says he received mixed comments from their students. "Some students come here because of the outstanding Jersey herd. These students did like the idea of the Holsteins. Other students prefer the Holsteins. I think it is good to be able to compare the two breeds. We plan to maintain 20 milking Holsteins and 80 milking Jerseys."

Virginia Tech now has over 17 milking Jerseys with plans to maintain 160 milking Holsteins and 50 milking Jerseys. Dr. White says that with the donated animals and new animals freshening, VPI will be very close to that goal by this coming fall. "I'm really excited about it," he continues. The Jerseys that VPI received from Berry College included daughters of Favorite Saint, Samson, Earl, Boss Man, Top Brass, and Magic of Ogston. The donated animals are of comparable quality. The top record of the traded Jerseys was close to 17,000 pounds milk (m.e.) and of the 17 they are currently milking only two are older than two years old. The actual rolling herd average is running over 11,000 pounds milk with 4.8% fat on these two year olds.

Jersey production levels rise again

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Jersey cows have proved themselves to be efficient producers of milk, fat and protein throughout the years. Rapid genetic improvement and better management practices have helped set a new all-time high breed average for both milk and fat. The 1983 DHIR lactation average was 12,234 pounds milk and 584 pounds fat.

These figures, released by The American Jersey Cattle Club, Columbus, Ohio, are based on a 305-day, 2x, mature equivalent basis. There were 40,275 cows included on official DHIR test in 1983.

The top five states in the nation for milk production with five herds or more on test were:

State	No. Cows	Lbs. Milk	Lbs. Fat
Maine	862	13,744	649
Alabama	1,429	13,667	622
Washington	1,281	13,445	671
Oregon	1,427	13,390	654
Virginia	498	12,889	600



This is part of Jersey herd at VPI, which is being built back up through donations and swap with Berry College.



Modern milking parlor is featured at VPI.

Berry College traded for some daughters of Lucky-Royal, Pete, Milestone, Cinnamon Mars, and Bell. Their top producer is VA Bell Crystal Mermaid, a Bell daughter projected to 24,044 milk, and 723 fat. "We tried to get a mix of the popular high PD bulls," states Grundahl.

As Harold Roller pointed out, most of the current data on nutrition, feeding, etc., is based on Holstein animal research. Because of this, according to Roller, this trade will benefit breeders across

the country. Research on nutrition with Jersey animals will become available.

Dr. White states "you need 40 to 50 animals in a herd to have a good teaching program." He looks forward to the additional research they will be able to conduct at VPI with Jersey breed. Mark Grundahl, Berry College, concludes the trade with, "I feel the trade was beneficial to both schools and should make both teaching programs stronger."



Dairy barn facilities at Virginia Polytechnic Institute cover an extensive area.

produced per day of Pansy's milking lifetime. She is the only Jersey cow in history to complete three records over 30,000 pounds milk in 365-days. Pansy is owned by the William H. Diley Family, Canal Winchester, Ohio.

Rocky Hill Debbie Rockal, VG-88, is the second leading living lifetime producer for both milk and fat. The cow produced 261,277 pounds milk and 12,163 pounds fat in 3,470 days. Those figures give Debbie Rockal a daily average of 75.3 pounds milk and 3.5 pounds fat. She is owned by Foundation Associates, Newberry, S.C.

For more information on today's high producing Jerseys, contact The American Jersey Cattle Club, P.O. Box 27310, Columbus, Ohio 43227-9987, phone 614/861-3636.