

# Breed leaders talk about

**BY JAMES H. EVERHART**  
LANCASTER — Throughout the state, dairy producers often discuss the merits or the attributes of the different breeds of dairy cattle.

More in an attempt to enlighten, and certainly not to create dissention, *Lancaster Farming* contacted the officers of the various breed organizations, and asked them to summarize the virtues of their breeds.

We urged them to make sure their comments were phrased in a positive light, and not slanted so as to "put down" another breed.

Almost universally, the respondents accepted those limitations and expressed their comments in a way that should be viewed favorably by the average reader.

Their comments follow:

## Holstein

By almost any measure, Holsteins are the dominant dairy breed in this country, virtually setting the standard for production and milk products.

Holstein cows produce approximately 90 percent of the fluid milk consumed in this country. In addition, about 90 percent of all dairy cows in the country are Holsteins.

Milk output last year for a typical Holstein cow averaged 15,791 pounds statewide and 15,862 nationwide, with fat totals of 586 and 576 pounds, respectively.

The breed's 3.5 percent average for butterfat, in fact, is the accepted consumer standard for fluid milk.

Holsteins are rugged, durable animals that do well in all climates. A total of 500,000 animals are registered, while the nation's total Holstein herd is estimated at



Zane Akins

10 million.

The breed is backed by an aggressive organization, the U.S. Holstein Association, the largest dairy breed association in the world. The association, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, conducts a variety of programs to keep its 52,000 members in touch with the various advances in breeding, herd management, marketing and genetics research.

The Holstein Association conducts a progeny testing program for young sires, and works closely with A.I. firms to evaluate daughters of their young sires, according to the association.

It has also recently introduced the Total Performance Index for cows, which allows breeders to compare the genetic merit of individuals within their herds. Using the Index, the association last year compiled its first Premier Performers List, which identifies the top 2,000 genetically superior registered Holstein cows in the country.

"Industry use of this information is expected to have an accelerating effect on the rate of genetic advancement within the breed," said Zane Akins, the association's chief executive officer.

The breed has attracted attention worldwide, as tens of thousands of animals are exported each year to countries like Saudia Arabia, Tunisia, Hungary, Mexico, Canada, South America, China and South Korea.

"During the last 40 years, total milk produced in the United States has increased 21 percent, with only 46 percent as many cows," said Akins. "Average milk production of all Holsteins in tested herds has soared to nearly 16,000 pounds, with the top Holstein Association member herd averaging more than 27,000 pounds.

"The progressive use, by our members, of technology has been responsible for development of Holsteins as the world's most productive, efficient dairy breed. The tools provided through the Association have been evolutionary, beginning with the simple measurement of production and conformation traits and progressing, in steps, to contemporary comparisons and stardardized indexes of genetic transmitting ability.

"The rate of genetic improvement in the breed must be considered phenomenal. For the registered population of Holstein cattle, the annual rate of genetic improvement is 150 pounds of milk and five pounds of butterfat.

"Today, the Holstein Association's computer technology makes the genetic evaluation tools available to dairymen. For the Association, technology has become a valuable production. It's a high-tech business serving a high-tech world."

## Red and White Holsteins

Sometimes not viewed as a separate breed, Red and White Holsteins do have slightly different characteristics than their black and white sisters.

The latest breed average from USDA shows a slightly lower annual production figure (15,840 pounds), but reports slightly higher fat (3.69 percent) and protein (3.18 percent) levels.

"As a breed in the formative stages, this opportunity to develop higher butterfat and protein, while having the production of the Holstein breed, gives Red and Whites promise for the future market when hauling expenses will increase and protein payments will become more common," says John Carpenter, president of the Red and White Dairy Cattle Association.

Currently, Carpenter notes, the RWDC is pursuing an "Open Herdbook" policy which allows breeders with black and white or colored breed cattle to join the group, enroll their cattle and develop a registered Red and White from them.

The practice, he says, "is a unique opportunity among breed associations."

The major problem in the breed, he notes, is "trying to keep them on the farm."

"While this may sound like a humorous answer, it is true," he notes. "Many breeders have a difficult time keeping their best Reds because of the pressure to sell and the high premium they can receive."

Generally, registrations of Red and Whites have been on the rise for the past five years, although 1984 figures were down slightly, an apparent reflection of "difficult financial times" experienced by the members.

The group has a number of programs designed to make sure an adequate number of sires is available, and foreign demand for red semen encourages development of all available opportunities.

"The Red and White breed is the most attractive and exciting breed in the dairy business," Carpenter summarized. "Combining the many advantages of the Holstein breed with our unique color and tremendous demand in both the U.S. and foreign markets, is making Red and Whites red hot."

"Another huge advantage that

Total Registrations, U S	
U S Holstein Association	500 000
American Jersey Cattle Club	50 000
Red and White Dairy Cattle Association	49 000
American Guernsey Cattle Club	20 765
Brown Swiss Cattle Breeders Association	17 500
Ayrshire Breeders Association	10 153

Breed	DHIA Production Records				
	Milk, pounds	Fat, percent	Fat, pounds	Protein, percent	Protein, pounds
Holstein	15791	3.71	586	3.24	511
Red&White	15578	3.70	576	3.26	508
Brown Swiss	13655	4.13	564	3.58	489
Ayrshire	12372	4.02	497	3.40	420
Guernsey	11677	4.69	548	3.63	423
Jersey	10564	4.85	512	3.82	403

Source, Pennsylvania DHIA 1983-84 Statistics

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