

# Robert Smith family, a Guernsey tradition continues

**BY MARTHA J. GEHRINGER**  
**PALMYRA** — When Pennsylvania Guernsey breeders visit Robert Smith's Lebanon Valley Farms, as part of their annual convention tour, they'll find a family tradition that has continued for over five decades.

The Guernseys started with Robert's father Jacob in the '30's. Originally he bought a couple of crossbreds "some of which came out black and white," said Robert. "But he wanted Guernseys, and there's been Guernseys here ever since."

Jacob started by buying reactors to brucellosis from Fairview Farms, a large Guernsey herd south of Lebanon. He was able to get these animals cheaply and built from there. All of the animals have been registered.

As these cows came fresh, their calves were placed at a different barn. By using this method, he was able to develop a clean herd. For some time he was also milking two herds at two barns to make certain the herd stayed clean.

Jacob went with Guernseys because of the premiums being paid for Golden Guernsey milk by a local dairy. In the early 70's the dairy stopped these high premiums.

The Smiths felt they could do just as well marketing their own milk, so they opened the Ja-Mar dairy store near their home.

They process all their milk and sell milk, ice cream, and cheese. These products are made from their own milk.

Many customers find their milk to be better tasting than milk they find in a regular grocery store. As David observes, "Maybe we wouldn't be in the current situation if we had kept a better milk product on the shelves."

The Smiths have never had any problems finding a market for their surplus milk. They usually sell to a local cheese plant that prices favorably for Guernsey milk. They give a fat premium and base pricing on protein content.

There is also a creamery in Elizabethtown that will call them when they need milk.

One of the difficult aspects of a juggling operation is the assessments the government has levied. Some people think they are exempt from these assessments,

however, they must report and pay the government for any milk sold through the store.

"It hurts twice as much this way," David noted. Since they must send the check to the government, they know exactly how much the government is taking. They do agree to the need for the 15 cent advertising deduction, however.

The herd has been paying its way at the milk pail. The Smiths have a couple of cows over 140,000 pounds of milk and six over 100,000 pounds of milk. Presently their rolling herd average is 14,188 pounds of milk, 692 pounds of fat, with a 4.9 test on 75 cows.

This average has been steadily increasing for the past several years. As Robert proudly points out, "A nearly 700 pound fat average proves their worth."

This average in addition to their successes on the tanbark trail has gained them national attention. The National Sale was interested in having a Lebanon Valley prefixed animal in their upcoming sale. Unfortunately, they didn't have anything this time.

Although David and his brothers had shown at the 4-H level, they only recently entered the bigger shows. David feels that now they "have something that can compete at the bigger shows."

With their recent successes in the show ring, it appears they will be continuing their winning ways. Last year they were the Premier Breeder and Exhibitor at the Maryland State Fair.

This year they tied for Premier Breeder at the Farm Show. In the 1984 Farm Show they captured both Premier Breeder and Exhibitor. They also showed the Grand Champion and the Junior Champion.

The Smiths have worked hard to get high quality cattle. They are currently using top bulls from the PTI list and the top PD milk bulls. David noted that 30 percent of the herd is bred to young sires.

They realize the importance of "getting out and sampling their young bulls to find the top future bulls." David suggested this is something all of the high protein breeds must realize and start to do more of.

Another management tool they have recently started using is the



Robert, left, and David hold Lebanon Valley Star Elsie, a 90 point 2 year old.

TPE program that the Guernsey Association offers. This program classifies three times in a two year period.

This allows the classifiers to see more daughters quicker and then develop better more accurate sire summaries.

One more point they can claim when marketing their animals, is that they have been certified free of Johne's disease.

While they have been doing some innovative things in marketing their animals, they have been doing some uncommon things on other phases of the farm.

They recently they began feeding roasted, ground soybeans, as part of their protein supplement. One advantage is a higher moisture harvest. This past fall was damp. The Smiths were able to harvest the beans at a moisture level of 20 percent.

Roasting reduces the moisture level to a tolerable amount. They noticed a .1 percent increase in fat as soon as they started on the soybeans.

The roasted beans are complemented with soybean meal in the protein supplement. They also feed a shelled corn and oats mixture that is combined with a concentrate of minerals.

Forages on the farm are fed by baled hay and silage, with the recent addition of haylage. They never put haylage up before because they were set up to handle it. This problem was resolved with the addition of a large plastic bag placed in the top of the silo.

The bag serves to limit spoilage by creating an oxygen-limiting situation in the silo. Feeding haylage this year helped to reduce feed costs by supplying more homegrown protein. As David joked, "And we were tired of baling hay."

Rations are determined for each cow and adjusted grain amounts

are adjusted after each month's DHIA report returns. That is one of the advantages David has found with the stanchion barn, individual feeding.

The replacement animals at Lebanon Valley Farms are raised on at different barn. The heifers are placed in four group pens which are based on age. The calves are placed in individual pens that David built.

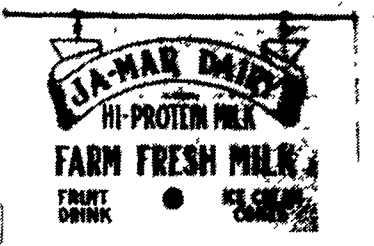
All the feed on the farm is also grown on the 180-acre farm. This past year they rented an additional 80 acres.

They decided to rent land to reduce equipment costs and possibly raise some cash crops, or at least become self-sufficient feed producers.

With all the other distractions, they felt they weren't doing a sufficient job of keeping up to date on the latest in crop production. To get help in this area they have joined the newly formed Crop Management Association.

The Smiths have ambitious plans for the future... including higher production, higher quality animals and a more efficient operation.

It's a Guernsey tradition in the Smith family. And a winning tradition at that.



The cows at Lebanon Valley are housed and milked in this stanchion barn.



Lebanon Valley Farms is located southeast of Palmyra.

## USDA announces cuts for Gramm-Rudman

**WASHINGTON** — The U.S. Department of Agriculture soon will begin spending reductions in its commodity programs to comply with President Reagan's Feb. 1 sequester order issued under the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act).

The order calls for the USDA spending reduction of \$1.3 billion for fiscal 1986, equal to a 4.3 percent reduction in those USDA outlays subject to provisions of the Act. The reductions, scheduled to begin March 1, will be allocated equally on a pro-rated basis among these programs.

USDA programs exempted from spending reductions include the Food Stamp, the Child Nutrition, and the Women, Infants and Children Special Supplemental Food Programs.

Officials said \$823 million in reductions will be made in 1986 Commodity Credit Corporation programs. No reductions will be made in price support loans,

purchase agreements and regular deficiency payments made for 1985 crops.

Target prices and loan and purchase rates will not change for 1986 crops. Also, payments made in-kind or by negotiable commodity certificates will not be subject to reduction.

Reductions of 4.3 percent will apply, however, to checks paid to producers for commodity loans, deficiency and diversion payments for 1986 crops, and to payments for certificates that producers redeem for cash.

Both advance and final payments will be subject to the reduction. The reductions will be made after the maximum payment limitation of \$50,000 per producer has been applied.

Producers entering 1986-crop programs will be notified at the time of sign-up how programs will be affected by the deficit reduction legislation.

In regard to dairy programs provisions, officials said the price

support level of \$11.60 per hundredweight will remain unchanged for the current fiscal year, but CCC purchase prices for cheese, butter, and nonfat dry milk will be discounted by 4.3 percent from March 1 through Sept. 30. USDA previously announced that payments made to producers based on bids received under the 18-month dairy termination program will not be reduced.

In regard to wool and mohair payments, officials said payments will not be subject to the 4.3 percent reduction. However, the support price for these commodities will not be increased. Payments under the National Wool Act due on or after April 1 will be based on the frozen support price for shorn wool.

In regard to provisions of the conservation reserve program, officials said the amount of acreage entering into the reserve and the level of annual rental payment based on bids received will not be reduced.