

Desire to merchandise leads Ruth family to Jerseys

BY ROBIN PHILLIPS
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Follow the Jersey breeders to the west next week for a preview of the Jeff Peters farm. This is one of the places the Jersey breeders will visit during their annual meeting on April 11 and 12 in Meadville.

SPRING CITY — When Loren Ruth of R1 Spring City decided enter the dairy business, it was with the intention of merchandising cattle. "The only reason I wanted to milk cows was to merchandise them," he says. "You've got to breed what is going to sell."

Loren is the 22-year-old son of Vernon Ruth, who formed a partnership with his sons, Doug and Loren, and plunged into the dairy business for a second time in 1983. Selecting heifers with high standards, the Ruths assembled one of the highest indexing Jersey herds in the state.

A successful Holstein breeder until 1978, when he dispersed his herd of 85 cows and heifers, Vernon Ruth explains the decision to begin again with the Jersey breed. "They (his sons) weren't interested in milking cows when we had Holsteins," Ruth begins.

In 1983 the sons became interested in merchandising a high-quality dairy animal. "We might as well go for quality instead of quantity," Ruth says as he reflects on the changing attitude of the milk market. He adds: "The main reason (for Jersey cows) was the barn was built for Guernseys and was always really too small for Holsteins. I'm glad they went this

way. The Jersey cow is nicer to handle, a smaller animal."

Ruth's wife, Janet, adds, "I was glad to see them go to a smaller cow. I could never get used to the Holsteins." Janet explains that her grandfather began the farm with Guernseys many years ago in what was then a predominantly Guernsey area. Her father followed this tradition until Ruth's Holsteins eventually replaced the Guernseys.

Stonyrun Farm is now home to 35 registered Jerseys. The selection criteria the Ruths set for this young herd was tough. The Ruths credit David Parkinson, American Jersey Cattle Club area representative, with working with them to find the heifers that would meet their standards.

The heifers had to descend from high testing cow families, dams had to be plus for type, and milk records were to meet 13,000 pounds or above. The Ruths also sought high indexes and P1's.

In the fall of 1983 the Ruths purchased 34 open heifers. They began using the top sires in the breed to start their breeding program on the 15 heifers from Massachusetts and the 15 heifers from Vermont, plus several heifers purchased from top dispersals. Top Brass, Volunteer, Bruce, Stardust Gemini, and Bossman were heavily used.

After freshening in the fall of 1984, the young herd recorded an initial average of 9400M and 424F. The pedigreed herd of three year olds this year is averaging over 10,000 pounds milk with a 4.8 percent test and features several individuals who pump out over 70

pounds a day.

The Ruths anticipate a better average every year and are optimistic about A.I. and national sale interest on several of their animals.

Of these leaders in the breed, a favorite is Bryant Hill Magic Hopscotch, a VG-86 daughter of Quicksilvers Magic of Ogston. Hopscotch is currently on the breed's Elite list and is projected to 15,470M and 761F on her three-year-old record.

Her dam, an Excellent daughter of Mayfield Volunteer, sold in the 1982 All-American Sale. Her granddam is also an Excellent-90 and has a Hall of Fame record to her credit. This past year Hopscotch gave the Ruths a Top Brass heifer who they hope will continue to carry this cow family's production and type.

Another favorite in the Stonyrun barn is Mar-Bil Top Salome, a Top Brass daughter with a two-year-old projection of 14,380 milk and 656 fat. Her dam is an Excellent Samson daughter owned by William Yoder, Meyersdale, and contracted by Carnation Genetics.

Smokey Hill Saint Polly, a VG-85 three year old, occupies a high ranking to the Ruths. Polly is projected to 12,100 milk with a 5.3 percent test and comes from a high testing family. Her Top Brass heifer was sought by the national committee for the 1985 National Heifer Sale, but the Ruths decided to keep these genetics in the herd for a while.

Appraisal day pleased the Ruth family. The young herd consists of 13 "very good" out of 35 animals. "I want to stay plus on type if I can," Loren Ruth says.

All the forages and grains for the herd are grown on the farm, with everyone sharing the responsibility. Cows are fed high moisture shelled corn, corn silage, and alfalfa hay. Grain is fed four times a day and high producers get a top dress including some purchased cottonseed. Hay is always fed with or before grain feedings and the Ruths plan to change to include haylage in their feeding program this year.

Cows are milked in an immaculate stanchion barn with four bucket units. The Ruths enjoy sharing duties and their system enables everyone to have time off.

A planned calving interval is also a labor saver and causes less stress on the animals. Cows and heifers are bred with fall freshening in mind. When the hot summer comes with its additional field work, most animals are dry and due to freshen in late August and September.

Although the Ruths say their milk check suffers at this time, they plan to keep their calving interval at 12.1 because of the saved labor in the barn and the reduced heat stress on the cows at calving.

Heifer management on the farm includes individual calf pens for newborns on the open southern side of the barn and group pens in an open barn when weaned. All calves are also ringed to prevent sucking after they are weaned. Everything is bred artificially.

In the stanchion barn, cows are bedded with chopped straw and thoroughly washed before milking. A strip cup is used and the somatic cell average has stayed at approximately 140,000.

The Ruths remain optimistic about the future. They plan to breed the best and plan to begin marketing after their herd is built up to its capacity of 45 to 50 cows.

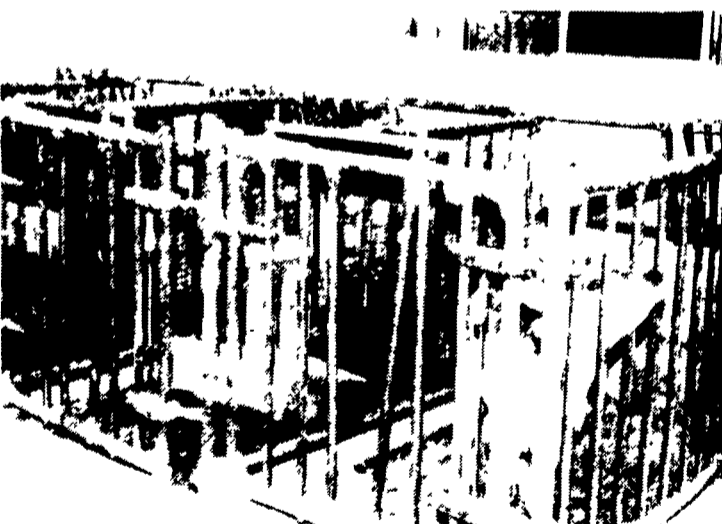
After an initial year of milking 35 first-calf heifers, first-year problems with a new herd, and an adjustment of storage facilities for a smaller herd, the Ruths remain enthusiastic for the dairy business and look forward to becoming known among Jersey breeders.



Doug and Loren Ruth show their Top Brass heifer out of the Hopscotch cow. They are hopeful of A.I. interest in this richly-pedigreed November heifer.



The cows in the Ruth barn enjoy the fine quality hay, well-ventilated barn and clean stalls.



The calf pens in the barn are located on the southern side where the sun can reach them daily.

PA Grange backs rural judge bill

HARRISBURG — The Pennsylvania State Grange is actively supporting SB601, a bill ensuring more rural representation in the election of appellate court judges. By creating districts similar to congressional or legislative districts, voters will have the opportunity to vote for local candidates they are more familiar with than someone from another part of the state. One judge will be voted on from every district for the Superior, Supreme, and Commonwealth Courts.

During the annual State Grange Convention, the Grange became involved in this issue after a resolution was passed advocating the need for mandatory rural representation on the bench.

"Traditionally rural people in Pennsylvania are not represented fairly in the appellate court system," said Brenda Shambaugh, PA State Grange Legislative Director. "This legislation will allow all Pennsylvanians to be equally represented," added Shambaugh.



Loren Ruth explains that heifers are bred around 14 months or later according to size. Service sires currently in use are Top Brass, Legend and Duncan.



Doug Ruth completes the milking chores this evening while Loren has a night off.