

Registered Cows Equal Merchandising Success

BY GINGER SECRIST MYERS
Adams County Correspondent
MERCERSBURG — "If we didn't have registered cows, we wouldn't be in the business. Having registered Holsteins and being able to merchandise a few of the good ones has made all the difference to us," explains Jim Burdett of Windy-Knoll-View Farm, Franklin County, when evaluating his position in today's dairy business.

Jim and Nina Burdett and their sons, Justin, 7, and Kyle, 3, are a self-made dairy family that has achieved success in both the bulk tank and on the tanbark circuit. Their 64 registered Holsteins are rolling at 18,500 pounds of milk and 690 pounds of fat, making them one of the highest producing herds in the county.

This past spring they exhibited the first-place senior calf, first-place junior yearling, and the first place junior best three females at the State Spring Holstein Show.

Transplants from Montgomery County, Maryland, the Burdetts moved to their present 140 acre farm in 1975. Prior to relocating, they were farming on rented ground in Maryland, but had the land on a 60 to 90 day notice.

Wanting to escape the Washington D.C. sprawl that was just thirty miles from their farm, and seeking a more secure cropland situation, the newly-married Burdetts moved their

herd of 17 Ayrshires and five Holsteins north to Franklin County.

Nina, who was raised with beef and horses, really hesitated moving into a dairy situation. However, today Nina handles the milking duties and cares for the calves daily.

Jim, who is a protege of the Johnny Morris school of dairy cattle judging, was a dedicated farmer from the very start.

They began their farm with Ayrshires as they had been Jim's 4-H projects, but they soon became disenchanted with their cows. In his herd Burdett had four National Show Champions, but couldn't command a selling price higher than \$2,500 for any of them. By 1978 the Ayrshires were sold and the Holsteins moved in.

"We didn't spend a lot for any of our Holstein. We bought registered cows for about \$600 to \$700. One night I bought three cows that were due to go to the butcher the next day. One of those eventually scored excellent and the other two both scored very good," Burdett remembers.

Since 1980, the Burdetts have made only an occasional purchase of an individual when they thought the type and numbers were right for the price.

Their move to registered Holsteins has garnered for them the recognition of being solid dairy managers who still breed for ex-



Jim and Nina Burdette pose with just a few of the trophies and awards their show-winning Windy-Knoll-View Holsteins have netted for them. They credit showing and the registered business for keeping them enthused about dairying.

ceptional type. "Everything we do here has to pay," Burdett states.

"We milk in a 16-stall tie barn with eight in-place units. We don't have a fancy feeding program, just high moisture corn and supplement — fed twice a day, 14 pounds of hay a day per cow, and haylage and corn silage fed four times a day. We also plan our matings to maximize profits; and we keep everything cost effective here," he added.

In reflecting on their showing successes for the past 10 years, the Burdetts both agree that while showing is a costly venture, it has also been profitable. It has served as the back door into some very lucrative advertising for both their show winners and the cow families they are derived from.

The Windy-Knoll-View prefix has been carried by nine homebred excellents, four Holstein Spring Show winners in the past two years, as well as various other state and county show champions.

To breed this type of Holstein, Jim reveals, "Type is my number one priority in a mating. I want to

improve the cow on type and then cover my bases on production."

Bulls that are presently used in their breeding program include: Gold, Valiant, Ned Boy, Starbuck, and Warden. Twenty-five percent of the herd is bred to young sires that the Burdetts feel have excellent cow families behind them.

Burdett feels that the registered breeder is caught in a "Catch 22" situation when mating cows for today's market. While he agrees that the dairyman should keep the index numbers in mind, he also feels that a breeder should capitalize on matings from the best type bulls that will produce highly marketable show-type offspring.

He is quick to acknowledge that the number system is in place and should not be discarded; and he does have strong reservations as to its apparent lack of consideration for cow families.

Jim and Nina feel they will never catch-up on their numbers, but note the added income from merchandising show offspring is an asset to their cash flow.

Another factor he considers in

mating is the bull's protein yield. While their Co-op does not presently pay for protein, the Burdetts do feel it is coming in the future.

Currently they ship their milk with Maryland-Virginia Cooperative. In 1981 they were named the Co-op's Outstanding Young Cooperators.

The Burdetts are anxiously anticipating this show season as one of their best. Jim reflects that investor money has probably blemished showing for the average breeder, particularly in the larger shows.

However, he is optimistic, stating, "I think that in five years the Eastern National Show will come back to the breeders and the 'funny money people' will be out of it. I try to give people a fair deal in the showing and when I sell them an animal."

Added Nina, "It just makes you feel good when your animal does well at the show or you talk to someone who is really pleased with the animal they bought from you."



The Burdette bred and exhibited this winning senior calf at the 1986 Spring Holstein Show. Half interest in Windy-Knoll-View Lotsa Quality was recently sold to Lyle-Haven Holsteins, Vermont.

Indexing How Top Dairymen Do It

BY DR. GEORGE
F.W. HAENLEIN
Extension Dairy Specialist
University of Delaware

NEWARK, Del. — Annual reports of DHIA records are an opportunity to evaluate progress on a dairy farm and to identify some of the underlying reasons for success. They can also help other producers see where they can make changes to improve their own dairy income. Recent annual Delaware DHIA meetings featured such reports, along with the usual awards for outstanding achievements.

One thing these records show is that it pays to keep high-producing cows longer because it reduces the high cost of replacements. The average age in most herds these days, unfortunately, is less than 5 years. This means at least one-fifth of your cows must be replaced with heifers each year.

At our 1986 DHIA annual meetings, four Delaware herds were honored for lifetime production of more than 7,000 pounds total milkfat in seven or more lactations, with more than 160,000 pounds of milk from cows over 9 years of age. Some of the

high-producing cows in these herds aren't even purebred registered — they're just grade cows.

Other awards went to the producers in our state with the highest genetic merit cow indexes, honoring the combination of superior sires with genetically superior dams that produced genetically above-average cows. These cows now qualify as mothers for future A.I. sires — a good potential source of side income to supplement that from milk on these farms.

Farm visits and DHIA records reveal several other characteristics of above-average dairy herds in our region. Herd size tends to be larger in herds with higher annual milk and milkfat production per cow. And fat tests are one to two points higher, reflecting better roughage feeding programs. This is borne out by feeding records over the entire Northeast, which show that high-producing herds in this region receive significantly more silage and haylage per cow per year — as well as more concentrates, of course, because of their higher energy needs.

Nevertheless, the higher milkfat

tests in these herds indicate that higher concentrate feeding is well-balanced with sufficient amounts of fiber in daily rations. A minimum of 17 percent crude fiber in the total daily ration is required to maintain at least a 3.6 percent average fat test.

In addition, supplements such as sodium bicarbonate, magnesium oxide, bentonite, cement dust, long fiber haylage and whole cotton seed are heavily used by above average herds to balance fiber in the ration.

DHIA records also show that our better herds typically tend to have less days open for all cows, less cows not bred 100 days after calving, shorter calving intervals, younger age of first-calf heifers, higher average age of cows and earlier stages of days in lactation.

Records for all 5,936 Holstein herds registered in the Northeast confirm the value of these reproduction parameters in identifying above-average herds. Very significant differences are also found in the level of proofs for service sires used in above-average herds here. Cow indexes, sire proofs, dam indexes and the indexes for recent and even

current unborn calves differ significantly in favor of the top herds.

When you consider that each cow's performance is limited genetically to a certain ceiling, which is inherited by her offspring with a 25 percent predictability, it should be of high financial interest to dairy farmers to invest only in bull semen with above-average proofs and above-average reliability for mating, as long as the price makes economic sense.

Remember — profits from good feeding and management can come only from cows that genetically merit such treatment. The average difference between the top half of dairy herds in this

area and the bottom half is 3,500 pounds of milk, with an overall range of 10,000 pounds of milk. Last year, Delaware's top herds averaged 653 pounds of fat in 17,647 pounds of milk compared to the lower half of our herds, which averaged only 517 pounds fat in 14,366 pounds milk.

The producers who own these above-average herds appear to be making skillful use of genetics, feeding, reproduction, heifer raising and cow longevity. They also keep good daily and monthly records.

Let's see more of this kind of management. We need it to overcome these hard times on the dairy farm!

