

York County's Oldest Milking Cow - Going Strong at 17 and Still Producing

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York County Correspondent

HANOVER — Oil Creek Apollo Vicki is a tall, deeply-ribbed, nearly black registered Holstein. She's scored VG-85, freshened with a bull calf a few months ago, and is milking over 90 pounds each day.

"So what?" you say.

Consider this: Oil Creek Apollo Vicki will be 17 years old in November.

She's now milking in her thirteenth lactation, and has given birth to a total of seven bulls and six heifers. At her last breeding, Vicki settled on the first service.

For several years, she's earned the high lifetime fat award from DHIA in York County, and currently boasts total lifetime credits to date of 251,975 milk and 10,986 fat.

And she's continued her accomplishments in spite of undergoing a twisted stomach surgery several years ago, and the loss five years ago of one quarter.

No doubt about it. At the Med-O-Valley Farms, owned and operated by the Earl Fuhrman family, Vicki is the undisputed "queen" of the herd.

Sometimes she plays the part to the hilt.

Termed "headstrong" by the Fuhrmans, she's sometimes reluctant to step across the gutter. And if a herdmate happens to snatch her stall, Vicki will wait with regal patience until the spot is cleared of the upstart interloper.

"She's the fastest eater in the barn," chuckles Dale Fuhrman, who with his father, and brothers Doug and Kenton, maintains the 100-head milking herd, just east of Hanover. "Vicki can clean up a bucket of grain in half the time it takes most of the other cows. She eats an awful lot of grain — about 40 pounds a day."

This power-packed performer gets the same diet as her herd-mates: a home-blended mix of shelled corn, roasted beans, 32-percent protein concentrate and minerals, plus corn silage and haylage. A ten-pound ration of hay is offered to Vicki every day.

One concession to the herd matriarch is box stall availability during herd loafing hours. Over the summer, she may occasionally join the herd in the pasture.

Vicki's impressive DHIA credits include six 305-day records over 20,000, and she's charted three 1,000-pound plus fat records. In her days of prime production, her tests averaged as high as 4.6 and 4.7 percent fat.

Offspring of Vicki's are strengthening her influence on the Med-O-Valley herd. Four of her daughters are currently in the cow and heifer strings, plus grand-daughters coming on as well.

Fancy, by Elmsmith Marcus Mariner, recently wrapped up her third 305-day lactation with 21,066 milk, and 749 fat. Chloe, by Quality Edge Champion, a Glen Valley Star son, just completed her first lactation, with 18,937 milk, 596 fat, in 324 days.

And Arletta, a granddaughter, from one of Vicki's first daughters, has 305-day records over 24,500 milk and 930 fat.

Long-lived individuals are not all that unusual in the Fuhrman herd, although Vicki holds the record. A herdmate just a year younger was lost last year, after accumulating lifetime milk records to 230,000. Ten and twelve year old cows are fairly common within the herd.

Rolling herd average on the Fuhrman herd is at 17,300 milk, 600 fat. Because they favor well-grown cows with plenty of size and strength to meet their herd production goals, heifers are bred at about 18 months.

"We don't like to freshen them too small; our belief is that they develop better if they're well grown," explains Earl. "But we'll calve them at 24 months if they have the size and weight we want."

Baby calves go into individual hutches, then continue through five stages of groupings, also based on size and weights.

Matings are selected carefully, leaning toward bulls from dams and cow families with proven quality. Atlantic sires see heavy use here, along with some select young sires from their own top individuals — such as Vicki.

Bulk of the herd traces back to three registered Holstein purchases made by Earl when he joined his family cows on this home farm, in 1956. He and his wife Eleanor married that year, and purchased the three purebreds from Lancaster County breeder



Is Oil Creek Apollo Vicki the oldest producing cow in York County? A long time DHIA lifetime fat winner for the Fuhrman family, she'll be 17 this November. With Vicki, from right, are Earl, Dale, Kenton, and Doug.

Elvin Hess, Sr. They were Wye Oak Lucifer Sam, a daughter of Admiral Lucifer, along with a daughter of Ty Vic, and one by Regal.

"They were good basic bloodlines for us, and produced

13,000 and 14,000 pound records back then," Fuhrman relates.

Since then, replacements have been primarily home-raised, with only scattered purchases "here and there."

Sons Dale and Doug and their

families are part of the Med-O-Valley farm partnership. Kenton, the youngest, just recently completed his education and plays a major part in helping with the Fuhrman milking and cropping operations.

FmHA Seeks Committee Nominees for York Co.

YORK — Eligible farmers in York County are invited to become nominees for the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) county committee, FmHA County Supervisor, Douglas J. Gabel announced recently.

As a result of the 1985 Farm Bill, two of the three members of FmHA county committees must be elected. The third member is designated by FmHA. The York county committee assists the FmHA county office in determining the eligibility of applicants for certain types of FmHA loans.

Generally, farmers who are residents of the county but not FmHA borrowers are eligible to become nominees for the FmHA county committee.

"Farmers in this county, serving on the committee, play an important role by assisting in the process of loan applications and reviews," said Gabel.

For this first election only, two members will be elected at the same time. One member will be elected for a term of one year, and one number will be elected for a two year term. In the future, all terms of service will be for three

years each on a staggered basis. Nominating petitions must be returned to the FmHA York county office by June 16, 1986.

Additional information and application forms for those who

are interested in becoming nominees for the county committee are available at the FmHA county office, 124 Pleasant Acres Road, York, Pa. 17402, or by calling 717-757-7635.



Earl and Eleanor Fuhrman treasure this cheesebox top painting of the Med-O-Valley herd favorite, Oil Creek Apollo Vicki. A gift from their son Dale's family, the painting was done by Mrs. Jason Yohe of Spring Grove.



York Mall Promotion

Jill Zimmicky was one of hundreds of York Mall visitors who stopped to pet calves during the June 7 Dairy Day at the Mall. Shoppers also devoured nearly 3000 free ice cream cones, nibbled cheese and sipped milk samples. The annual event was sponsored by the York area Young Dairymen chapter, Middle Atlantic Division of Dairymen, Inc.

Ice cream and ice milk may be kept up to two months if stored at 0°F or below. A tightly closed carton prevents drying, shrinking and the formation of ice crystals. It may be over-wrapped with foil or plastic for storage of more than a few days. After the carton has been partially used, the surface of the ice cream should be covered with protective wrap, the kind that molds to the ice cream itself.