

Virginia Dairymen Examine Foxlease Farm At Field Day

BY JULIE GOCHENOUR

Virginia Correspondent

UPPERVILLE, Va. — Foxlease Farm, John Archbold's Loudon County dairy operation, was the site of the annual Virginia Holstein Field Day held last Friday. More than 300 breeders, dairymen and their families attended the traditional July meeting which featured tours of the farm, the Virginia Holstein Duchess contest, a picnic lunch and short business and educational meetings.

Dairymen took advantage of the field day to get a first-hand look at the well-known dairy herd. The Foxlease herd was established 30 years ago and has been continually reinforced with a strong breeding program and females purchased in New York state. According to the new farm manager, Ted Cole, who was formerly the herdsman, the breeding program's emphasis in the past has been on strong maternal lines.

"No-Na-Me Fond Matt has more influence in this herd than probably all but four or five herds in the country," Cole says. "So we have a good fat background from Matt, although we have always been fat conscious on our breeding." But production hasn't suffered either, he hastens to add. "A lot of our older cow families, like the fifth and sixth generation, milk 27,000 to 28,000 pounds of milk with 1,200 pounds of fat."

The 122 head herd is milked twice a day in the farm's stanchion barn which gives them "an excellent amount of individual attention," Coal reports. The cows receive a total mixed ration three times a day, topdressed with corn and concentrates based on the stage of individual lactations. The tie stalls also mean easier management, he believes. "You can keep a much better eye on the cows in their tie stalls. You can walk through and see who's not

eating or who might be in heat that you missed out in the field," the manager explains.

Unlike their position in many herds these days, aged cows are an important part of the program at Foxlease. The milking herd includes cows ranging in age from 2 year olds in their first lactation to 12-year-old cows in their tenth — with the average age right around 6 years, Cole estimates. "We probably have more longevity because a lot of people cull on simple production reasoning. But we have some of these strong cow families and we like to protect these families; their progeny are very valuable."

The herd statistics support the logic behind this reasoning. In 1985 the rolling herd average was 21,000 pounds of milk with more than 700 pounds of fat. Fawn Bobbie of Foxlease, a 9 year old, contributes to the herd average with 27,036 pounds of milk with 4.4 percent of 1,183 pounds of fat, while a 2-year-old daughter of Foxlease TT Doris, Foxlease Whisper Diana, has finished 365 days with 24,582 pounds of milk and 3.4 percent or 827 pounds of fat. "Our BAA for the Holstein classification was 1,046," Cole notes.

Strong maternal lines don't necessarily mean high indexes, though, and Cole thinks that not enough percentage is going toward the maternal lines when indexes are calculated. "The bloodlines we were able to start with for the foundation herd were excellent; we've been fortunate enough to be able to keep up the breeding and really have made them better. But we stayed more toward the strong maternal lines so lately we've been forced to breed a little bit toward the index." Still, he expects the next calf crop will be rated at \$100 according to the index.

"A lot of your breeding decisions aren't based on what you want but

what the buyers are looking for," he elaborates. "Since so much of our program is steered toward the merchandising of cattle, sometimes you have to breed what the market demands at the time. We try to make a compromise between the two, but in the last 12 to 18 months, we've been leaning more toward the indexes and the high dollar value cows. But I'll admit that it doesn't make a lot of sense to me. You can have a 28,000 pound cow who has a daughter that milks 22,000 pounds on her first lactation and still have a minus index."

Cole estimates that merchandising cattle makes up 30 to 35 percent of the dairy's income annually, with the balance coming from milk production. His long-term goal is a 50-50 ratio. Most sales are bred heifers and last year a Bova daughter out of Foxlease TT Doris bred to Valiant was sold at the national sale for \$2,800. The farm also sells quite a few by private treaty, although not as many as they do through state, regional and invitational sales.

Exports have always been a characteristic of Foxlease's merchandising program and about 20 to 30 percent of the heifers are exported each year. The profit percentage from export sales is about the same as for domestic, Cole notes, but overseas buyers are a good market for strong producing heifers from the bottom end of the herd, he reports. High production statistics, especially fat, makes Foxlease animals particularly desirable overseas and the farm has sold cattle to breeders on all seven continents.

Throughout the self-guided tours at the Field Day, however, Virginia dairymen seemed most interested in a Bova daughter consigned to the Virginia Holstein Sale of Stars on August 1.

During other activities, Glenda



Sam Chaffin from the Virginia DHIA talks to Mac Wall, a dairy farmer from Blacksburg, Va.

Hazelgrove of Farmville was chosen to serve as the Virginia Holstein Duchess, while Brandie McDonald of Stephens City was selected as the junior Dutchess.

Following a picnic lunch provided by Foxlease, Virginia Holstein Association President Ed Titman conducted a short business meeting before the educational program. After the show and sale committee reports National Director Nelson Gardener of Bridgewater spoke on the outcome of the national convention and went over the changes made in the

fees structure.

Horace Baccus of Baccus Pedigree Company and Bob Miller, an economist with the USDA, were guest speakers for the afternoon. After reviewing improvements in breed records and technology that have occurred over the last 50 years, Baccus predicted the dairy industry will continue to change and dairy farmers will eventually have to accept quotas.

Following Baccus, Miller spoke on the short-term results of the whole herd buy-out program.

Dietrich, Ladlee Receive Scholarships

UNIVERSITY PARK — David A. Dietrich, R2 Mifflinburg, and James R. Ladlee, Smethport, each received a \$300 scholarship during FFA Activities Week held recently at Penn State University. The scholarships were awarded by the Pennsylvania Vocational Teacher's Association.

David A. Dietrich, the son of Mr.

and Mrs. David A. Dietrich Sr., is a member of the Mifflinburg FFA Chapter and will attend Penn State University to study agricultural science.

James R. Ladlee, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Roland J. Ladlee, is a member of the Bucktail FFA Chapter at Smethport High School. He will study agricultural education at Penn State University.

Any student pursuing post-secondary education in agriculture is eligible to apply for the scholarship if his chapter has contributed to the fund either during the year the applicant applies or in a previous year.

Criteria for selection are financial need, career goals, high school scholastic achievements, achievement in vocational agriculture/FFA and recommendation by the applicant's high school vocational agriculture instructor/FFA advisor.

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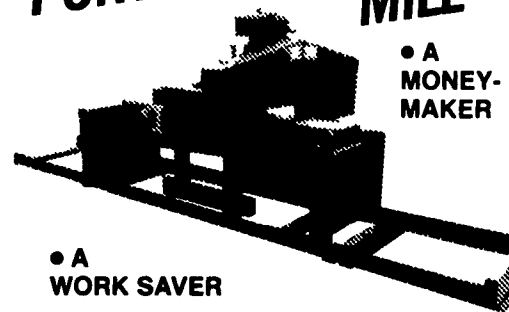
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