

Patience Creates Picture Perfect Cows In A Snap

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HAMBURG — "It's a marketing tool," states Mark Jenson, professional agricultural photographer concerning photographs of dairy cattle. "Breeder's should have in mind in-depth pictures of strong cow families," he says. Jenson recommends a combination of pictures over several generations. "Then you have something to show the bull stud," he concludes.

Jenson, a professional photographer for almost 14 years, hails from New Hampshire. Recently, he was in Berks County where he was working at his specialty, dairy cattle photography, at several area farms.

A graduate of Ohio State University, Jenson brings to his profession a wealth of experience in working with and developing an eye for well-bred dairy animals. He was originally from Massachusetts where a neighbor's dairy farm attracted him to dairy cattle as he was growing up.

He began his college career at the University of Massachusetts and later transferred to Ohio State where he majored in animal science. After graduation, he worked for the Central Ohio Breeding Association and worked his way up to district manager in seven years. Several years were also spent teaching vocational agriculture in school.

Always interested in photography, Jenson saw a need for an agricultural photographer in the New England area and after working for another photographer for a very short time, knew that a career change was in order.

Moving back to the New England area, Jenson has been very successful and in much demand for his photography skills. Although he describes himself as a commercial agricultural photographer, 80 percent of his business is dairy cattle. "My business is a bit different," he says. He does some work in the poultry industry, for equipment manufacturers, and also for horse people.

"You have to have a lot of patience with this," Jenson goes on to say, and also adds that an extensive knowledge of judging dairy cattle is a must.

He encourages breeders to prepare for the photography session well in advance of his arrival on the farm. "The quality of the photographs depends on how much the owner has prepared the animal," he maintains.

"The big thing is to get the animal used to the halter," he stresses. The photographer then works at positioning the animal to the exact position where she will look her best in the picture. The efforts can be frustrating, but Jenson, as all good photographers, has an eye for what he wants and the patience to get it.

Jenson gave the following

guidelines for preparation for a photographic session: 1. Clean and wash the animal; 2. Clip the animal, as for a show; and 3. Get the animal used to a show halter and train her to be led and held.

On the day of the pictures, he recommends five people to be on hand to assist in positioning the cow.

A person accustomed to leading and controlling the animal should be at the halter. A person is also needed at the tail to kneel on the ground and use a fish line attached to the tail and a bar to control the tail and keep it from swishing at the wrong time. One person is also needed on either side of the animal to position feet and steady her after she is set. The fifth person is needed in front of the cow, making the noises to attract the cow's attention and get her ears up for the camera. "It takes a very uninhibited person out in front of the cow," Jenson remarks.

Often this job turns out to be a big challenge. The "moorer" or noisemaker, must wave a burlap or black plastic bag, jump around, moo like a calf or a bull, and attract the cow's attention on command, often in a split second when the photographer has the animal just the way he wants her, and everyone backs away in time. Sometimes a calf is needed to be pulled around by the "moorer" to get the cow's attention properly.

A wrong noise, a miscalculation, and the picture is lost when the animal jumps and must be repositioned all over again for another try.

For the person holding the cow, a stiff shoulder, and aching arms are often the result of hours of trying to get good pictures. Jenson repeats, "a lot of patience is needed," and he also adds, "a little bit of work makes a whole world of difference," referring to advance preparation and training of the animal. He also states that if the dairyman is able to recruit some friends that have helped take pictures before, the session runs smoother.

Jenson enjoys working with Jersey cattle and visits many Jersey dairies in the New England area. Most likely because of their size and disposition, he finds that this breed is one of the easiest to work with in a session. Guernseys, he adds, are also nice to work with.

Taking many Holstein pictures and visiting many of the well known Holstein dairies, Jenson finds that the larger Holsteins can be a challenge to pose. Some of the bloodlines develop high strung individuals who are extremely hard to maintain control of and snap a picture at the right time. But, often, this type of picture



The tail must be held straight with fishline. A helper behind the cow can then hold the tail still without interfering with the photo.



Helene Dreisbach fills the role of the "moorer" by waving a bag and making noise to attract the cow's attention and get her ears forward. Carol Dreisbach on the halter attempts to keep the cow from moving her head up.



Five people are needed to position and alert the cow for a good picture. Helping to position the cow are: Connie Troutman at the halter; Dolly Spatz at the tail; Mary Jo Brown on the front side; and Matt James on the back side. Mark Jenson works on the tailhead.



Before positioning the cow, Jenson combs the hair up on the back of the cow to create a straight appearing topline.

turns out very well since the animal is extremely alert and looking sharp, according to his photographer. Again, Jenson advises having a "workable animal."

Jenson recommends trying to get a picture of a valuable animal in the best part of her lactation. The udder should be free of swelling, full, and the cow should be in top condition. Pictures of 2-year-olds and then pictures of the same cow as a mature individual can be a valuable marketing aid. He encourages breeders to use photographic services in advertis-

ing and marketing their valuable dairy animals.

"A picture is worth a thousand words," is a well known idiom. With valuable, well-bred, fancy dairy cattle, a good photograph, or a series of photographs over generations of a cow family can make a breeder's goals become reality.

As one breeder explained before a picture session — when a color picture of their best cow appeared in the breed journal it made all the difference. Everyone noticed the cow and her offspring were in demand.



A successful photo session develops pictures such as this one of Irish Creek GG Monday which can then be used as a valuable marketing tool.