

Marshall Brothers Keep Fat Level Rising

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ROARING BRANCH — Maintaining a high butterfat level with a large herd is a difficult feat, but one that Marshall Brothers of Roaring Branch have achieved for a number of years.

The butterfat level of the Marshall's herd of 189 Holsteins perennially ranks as one of the highest in Lycoming County. Their main herd of 123 cows maintains a rolling herd average of 17,611 pounds of milk and 743 pounds of fat with a 4.2 test. A second herd of 66 cows averages a 3.8 percent fat test.

Brothers Clyde and Elwin Marshall and Clyde's son, Steve, form a three-way partnership. Genetics, according to the Marshalls, contributes greatly to their high fat percentage.

"As long as I remember we've had cows that would test well," says Steve who left college to return to the farm. "We've never used a lot of bulls that are minus test. We've always been real conscious of it."

Clyde notes that Steve does most of the breeding and hopes to have a top breeding herd someday.

When James Marshall, Clyde and Elwin's grandfather, bought

the farm in 1933 it contained 100 acres. Through the years additional land was purchased; today, with rented acreage, the Marshalls farm 765 acres to support almost 400 head of cattle.

They've been on test since 1972, Steve says, and have always tested at a 3.8 percent fat level and above.

"We use all the tools available in selecting bulls," Steve adds.

In an effort to breed cattle that are merchandisable and to improve their milk, Steve says, they select bulls out of the top of the TPI list with strong fat and protein tests.

Cow families with impressive records dot Steve's conversation. He alludes first to their Olive cow family. Marshalea Kate Olive 2E-GMD has produced a lifetime record of 200,000 pounds of milk and 10,000 pounds of 5.0 percent fat. Her daughter, Ollie, VG-86 has over 100,000 pounds of milk to date with a lifetime 5.0 percent test. Ollie has a Kingpin daughter 3 years of age, GP-83, with a 4.7 lifetime test.

Another outstanding cow family of the Marshalls' is the Hope cow family. Marshalea Kate Hope has produced 200,000 pounds of milk in 11 years. Hope's daughter, VG-86, produced 27,000 pounds of milk and

1,400 pounds of fat in her highest lactation. Another daughter ranked second or third in the nation for fat in DHIR, according to Steve. An additional daughter of Hope's by Sexation scored VG-86 and produced over the 4.5 fat level.

At 18 years, Marshalea Perseus Belle, the Marshall's oldest cow is EX-2E and has produced 150,000 pounds of milk to date, however, she started on the testing program as a 10 year old. Belle has a granddaughter who went Excellent and made 1,000 pounds of fat as a two year old. Some of Belle's sons have gone to bull studs.

And as a former 4-Her Steve recalls with pride that out of Marshalea Kate Rachel, a cow given to him for his ninth birthday, came a daughter that won the 1974 Reserve Junior All-Pennsylvania.

The Marshalls raise the majority of their registered heifers. Presently, Clyde says, they have a total of 200 replacement stock. Two large heifer barns at the main farm with loose housing for 50 and 75 to 80 head accommodate heifers. Calves are tied outside.

Concerning the Marshalls' feeding regimen, Steve observes, "I don't think we feed any different, but how we feed may be different."

Grain is fed three times a day, Steve notes, and they see that the cows get plenty of fiber.

According to Clyde, this time of year they feed high-moisture corn, silage and hay. During the winter the cows receive haylage. The cattle are turned out to pasture at night with the low producers turned back to pasture for a couple hours in the morning.

When you're feeding almost 400 head of cattle, it takes a lot of feed. Except for protein and minerals the Marshalls grow all their own feed. This year they planted 375 acres of corn with an additional 350 acres in alfalfa hay. Forty acres are direct seeded.

The Marshalls fill a 100-by-30 foot trench silo with haylage which, when full, will accommodate 100 acres of hay. An even larger trench nearby measuring 130-by-50-by-12 feet dwarfs a dump truck parked inside.

The trench takes approximately three weeks to fill with 100 acres of corn silage, according to Raymond Livermore, an employee. Two silos at the main farm are filled with high moisture corn, while at the Mars-View Farm two additional silos are filled with corn silage and high moisture corn.

Clyde stresses that their is "truly a family farm." Although Steve does most of the breeding, he says, they all work together at whatever needs doing to make the



Clyde Marshall, left, stands with his wife, Jean, daughter, Pamela Mummert and granddaughter, Lauren.



Raymond Livermore, the mechanic on the farm, keeps everything running, according to Clyde Marshall. Here he sharpens mower knives in preparation for the next day's mowing.



Don Warren feeds the heifers in the 66 head heifer barn.

farm function.

They don't take too many shortcuts, Clyde says, and he observes, "You have to have a routine . . . not this today and that tomorrow . . . Cows have to come ahead of you most days."

A "go-fetcher" is what Clyde calls his wife, Jean. She knows where to get most anything there is, he explains, and sees the bills get paid.

Breeding a good cow is one of the most rewarding aspects of farming to Steve, whereas "the most troublesome is trying to get the work done when it should be."

With both farms the Marshalls employ five full-time helpers.

"The success of their farm," Steve reflects, "has been a lot of hard work and keeping at it . . . Persistence, I guess," he adds.



The Marshall Brothers farm is located near Roaring Branch in Lycoming County. They farm 765 acres and raise almost 400 head of cattle.



Marshalls raise all their feed with the exception of proteins and minerals. Steve takes a break from cutting haylage to discuss plans with his father, Clyde.