

# Registered Cow Represents Blue Chip Stock

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Someone who has been successful with cows. Showed successfully, and done some judging. We still think that's very important obviously. But now we are not saying we had to successfully show an All-American or breed a great herd of cows. We do need someone that can definitely see there is a difference in cows. He can tell strengths and weaknesses. But the big difference of what we want now is a person that can communicate. We could find a considerable number of people who were qualified from the cow background. That could be trained to score cows consistently, do a good job. But when you put them under pressure. They couldn't communicate. The ability to relate to people is really a very fine attribute that we want. We also want people that have some sales ability. Again they need to be able to sell themselves. They need to sell the program. We also ask them to help us determine the needs of dairymen.

Q. How much turnover do you have?

A. Not very much. I'm thinking in five years in area one and we've had anywhere from nine to 15 classifiers at the max. We wouldn't lose one classifier a year. We look hard at prospects. We put them through a much more vigorous training program than we ever did in the past. We try to put people in our training program that we feel have an excellent chance of succeeding.

Q. How has the evaluation of dairy cattle changed over the last 20 years?

A. Today we have different evaluation systems of cattle. On talking about numbers or indexes, I personally believe that it's the best tool we've ever had to rank cows and bulls. But to some people it's THE tool almost as though it's the gospel. In fact it is not. There are some people who say numbers are popular because it's so easy. You just take the highest bull and that's how you breed cows. It's sort of like paint by the numbers. I personally believe that it's actually more difficult to breed a good herd of cows in today's environment than it was back when I was at Allen Dairies. At that time we did not necessarily put the stress on our cattle that we do today. We were satisfied with the two year old who milked 14,000 then went on to live a long time. Today we are asking our cattle to produce a lot more milk at a younger age. In the elevation or the ratings for indexes, a lot of weight is put on two year olds. One of the reasons is just plain economics. You need information quick. If you wait too long, next thing the sire is too old and you get a very short possibility of production of semen from him. The other thing, it does appear that the general ratings on the two year olds stand up over a period of time.

I go back to the changes between then and now. It's more difficult now just because of the fact we do stress the young cattle. We calve in 24 months or even a little younger. We formerly calved in 30 months. That six month's time is a big difference. In addition, we are asking our cows to milk more now. The cow that milks more tends to be angular. In some cases tends to lack some substance. Breeding for milk does not necessarily go hand in hand with breeding for longevity. As a matter of fact they tend to go in two different directions. I think we need to be looking at both. That's why I said I think it's more difficult now in today's number situation than it was back when we didn't ask a cow to do as much. The reason I say that is when you look at the bulls that are siring the high milk, they have the high indexes for milk, generally their daughters are very angular.

If you keep using them generation after generation eventually you will come to the point some time sooner or later that you'll have a cow that is quite angular but too frail. Even though she has the will to work hard, she does not have the body to consume large amounts of roughage that she needs to produce milk economically. She does not have the strength to resist the stresses of hot weather. She will probably have more difficulty calving. She might even be a little lighter boned. The Holstein Association needs to be cognitive of that. We need to help come up with some more measurements and ranking tools that show the value of longevity. Maybe separate out some bulls whose daughters not only produce at young ages but also last five or six lactations. They get to be old cows. We have a few cows now that we could call disposable. In other words they're used once and thrown away. They are high as a two year old but after that it's all downhill. Again it comes down to the fact of what we'd call functional type. Opposed to what Allen Dairy used to refer to as show type. A classifier does not necessarily have to have a cow that's huge in order to go Excellent. We talked about a 56" tall cow or 1450 lb. to 1550 lb. cow. She's big enough. If everything else is right, she has the potential to go Excellent. As opposed to a cow that may be 1800 to 2000 lb. and doesn't have the angularity, doesn't look like she'll work. Of course again getting away from size now and going to other parts of the cow, there are two type traits that tend to take the cow out of the herd. Her udder and her feet and legs. She's got to have a good udder. She's got to have enough strength, enough width of body that there is a place for that udder. Then she's just got to have good feet and legs.

Q. Are the index numbers and type classification two separate ways of judging a cow?

A. We do put them together in a rating called TPI, which is Total Performance Index. Starting January of 1987, the TPI formula will be two parts or 40 percent would be pounds of butterfat, 40 percent would be pounds of protein and 20 percent is the type of the cow. Now some people feel maybe there ought to be a little more weight put on the type. I could see down the road that we could produce a TPI rating that would give more weight to type.

Q. What about herd mate evaluations versus daughter dam evaluation?

A. Of course this is part of the controversy today, so much weight both for type and for production is compared to herd mates and perhaps not enough is given to daughter dam considerations. This may have some weight. But I believe, and again I'm not a geneticist and I'm not a statistician, but it does appear that there is more validity in the herd mate evaluations just because it tends to wash out management. If you look at that on one particular farm situation it may not be true. When you take statistics as a whole, it is true. That doesn't mean that we should throw out all daughter dam evaluations, particularly I think in the area of functional type. But I believe our genetic advancement committee will be taking more of a look at this situation.

Q. You are representing the national holstein association, the decentralization of the national holstein association. How do you function with the state organization? It may be of value to clarify how you are working in relation to the state organization.

A. We cooperate. We have, for instance here in Pennsylvania, a state organization that is involved in securing membership, offering

services, working with young people, judging schools, and gets involved in marketing cows. We as a national association try hard to assist them. The major thing I guess we would do, would be a reduction of cost to register a cow if you're a state member. And it's very significant. As far as the area one office compared to Pennsylvania Holstein Association office in State College, we are involved in a 14-state supervisory situation. We happen to be here in the Harrisburg area. We deal just as much with people from New York and Maryland, or New Jersey or any of the other states. I would have to say those people located in New England do tend to deal with the home office rather than call here. We really are not competitive. Our field staff, and our consultants carry applications for state membership in their cars just as they will for the national association. We encourage them to do that. Another major part of our job is the national classification and the state's are not involved in classification. I do know that they promote the program and cooperate with us. We have the same goals, same objectives as the state organization does. We do get involved in doing mating services. At this point I don't think any of the state organizations are doing that. We do market cattle. At times, in the past, maybe we've been competitive, but we don't want it to be that way. For instance, with the state association here in Pennsylvania, we cooperate with each other, particularly in some export orders.

Q. How do you see the Holstein Association expanding membership? Are there areas that you can move into to make up for some of the farmers who are going out of business?

A. Yes. I think there are. For one, the consultant is the one who is going to be responsible primarily for our growth. In years past, the fieldman tended to visit the established breeder. To pat him on the back a little bit, to give him some recognition. We still think that's somewhat necessary. The established breeder basically doesn't need the services of our consultants. So we have directed the consultants to spend more time with dairymen, be they registered or commercial grade. Working with dairymen who are not quite the level of some of the people that might come to mind as being really successful with marketing cows. And that's really why you're in registered cows—is that you want some marketing opportunity.

Another thing I think the Holstein Association needs to do, and this is personal opinion, we need to look very hard at the grade cow today. The unregistered cow. The cow that isn't at this point eligible to be registered. Many of those owners are excellent managers of their herds, excellent breeders of cattle. Some of them are using better service sires than some registered dairymen. They are using off-the-top line of bulls. Making good decisions. And they've done that for generations. We need to look very seriously at opening a herd book in the near future to accept some of those cattle into the registered herd book. I think there need to be specifications for that. They just don't open the book. I'm not saying exactly what they should do. But I would expect that they probably would be identified for three, four, five generations. Then perhaps you would also put on certain functional type specification and then also production specifications. It's going to take some open mindedness of the traditional registered breeder. But I think some of the top grade cattle would be an asset to us.

Q. I heard you say that basically your place for expansion or for

even maintaining your own simply because of the diminishing number of farmers is in the area where you are not just speaking through your breed organization. You need to reach out beyond where you are at now.

A. We've been perceived by a lot of commercial people as being an exclusive cattle club. If we maintain that perception we will probably have no reason for existence in the future.

Q. Where do you think the embryo program has taken us at this point? And where do think it will go?

A. That's speculation on my part because I probably don't know a whole lot more than maybe you do. Historically what it has done for us at this point is that it has reduced the opportunity for some dairymen to be involved in marketing bulls. There are just fewer cows that can produce more bulls. One of the problems I think we have is some people involved in ET work have been spending the money and investing the money in doing some embryo transfers in some cows that really don't have any reason to quality. Now it's a judgement call too. But they might be better off going out to a sale. A lot of good cows are getting sold now. It's never been a better time to get involved with registered cows or to upgrade your registered herd. I think a lot of the future hedges on two things that probably will happen. One is higher recovery rate of frozen embryos than what we have now. And two more success in nonsurgical implantation. I could see down the road organizations will be selling embryos just like they sell frozen semen. I think that has tremendous possibilities for upgrading the national herd.

Q. I'd like to talk a bit about somatotropin from the registered breeders point of view in relation to records. How do you foresee the handling of one herd who is using some kind a stimulant to promote production and another herd who does not? How do we incorporate these records and get indexes or anything else? How do you maintain the credibility of our records?

A. Obviously it would be another tool that an unethical breeder could use to create false rankings of a herd of cows. We've always faced a few people that have an inkling to do that.

I heard Frank Dickerson from USDA address this subject. He believes that statistically over large numbers this could be handled. And that as far as evaluations for bull information, there will be no problem. They'll be just as accurate as they ever were. Individually, as far as an individual cow index, you can't use the considerations you would over

large populations. There is the possibility I could see of maybe a little lesser weight put on your cow index.

Q. So the unscrupulous person would give somatotropin to the daughters of this bull and not the herd mates?

A. Yes. The bull stud people have to look at this. Already today, we have some manipulation that they must be aware of. That's why with bull proofs you have the daughters spread into large numbers of herds that are of disinterested ownership.

Q. So you're saying that in a bull proof in a large number of herds, some herds will using somatotropin, some won't be. But the proof will be valid because of the numbers.

A. Yes. And we are assuming that in the herds that are using the growth hormone, they are doing it equally with other cattle. Obviously we are human people. Some of us at times because of economic awards, we would tend to cheat. It does create another tool. But someone who is inclined to do that will do it.

Q. Because of the herd mates?

A. Yes. You'll find that those people will come to the surface. They will just be ignored by the AI organizations and other markets.

Q. If you had a chance to talk to all of our readers at once in a meeting, what would you tell them?

A. I like people that are positive. It was interesting for me just before you came to talk to Glenn Freeze. He is positive. Let's look at the good things we have. We can be caught up in the negatives and this certainty has been a down phase in the dairy industry. We all need to look at the bottom line. But if I'm going to to your readership, I'd say this. There's never been a greater opportunity to get involved in the registered holstein business or to upgrade the level of your involvement. The difference right now between the commercial cow and the registered cow is very narrow as far as the profit margin for milk production. But you can now get involved in the registered business for that second income when you market some cows. You need to position yourself right. We know the market is depressed right now, not only for milk but for seed stock cattle. When the milk situation changes to the positive you will correspondently see the marketing opportunities for registered cattle change too. It's a great time now to think about five years or 10 years down the road and get yourself in position. It's kind of like if you were investing in the stock market, you buy low and you sell high. Now if you look at the registered cow as a blue chip stock, it's the time to buy.

## Agway Schedules Meet In Syracuse

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Several thousand farmers and guests will gather for the 22nd annual meeting of Agway Inc. October 23-24 at the Onondaga County War Memorial in Syracuse, NY.

Reports by Richard Croner, chairman of the board of directors, and William A. Hiller, president and chief executive officer will be highlights on Thursday, October 23. Six farmers will be elected by the members present to three-year terms on the 18-member Agway board of directors.

A seminar on issues facing farmers will be held Thursday morning, October 24, at the nearby Hotel Syracuse.

The popular Agway farm show in

the lower level of the War Memorial will feature feeds, on-farm computers, new crop varieties and crop management programs, and other products and services designed specifically for Northeast farmers.

Thursday evening more than 5,000 will attend an entertainment program "Liberty - A Salute to America." Friday morning, October 24, members have an opportunity to question senior Agway managers on a wide variety of topics during the free-wheeling open forum.

Agway is owned by 101,000 farmer-members in 12 northeastern states and is headquartered in Syracuse, NY.