

Misty Hollow Farm On 'Unofficial' Tour

Jersey Farm Strives For Excellence In Breeding Program

QUARRYVILLE — The Pennsylvania Jersey Cattle Club will hold its annual state meeting next weekend at the Historic Stasburg Inn, Lancaster County. While no formal tours are planned as part of the meeting, several breeders in the county will welcome visitors to their farms.

One of these farms is the Misty Hollow Farm, Spring Valley Road, Quarryville, home of the Robert Ulrich Jr. family and Valley U Jerseys.

Misty Hollow has been breeding Jersey cows since it was established in 1939 by Robert's father, Robert Sr. Since that time it has been run as a family farm.

The family recorded one of their greatest breeding accomplishments last July. At that time their home-bred cow, Valley U Brass Betsy, topped the CPI list in Pennsylvania and ranked as the 25th high cow in the nation.

Betsy, a 3 year old, produced a 2-year-old record of 16,491 pounds of milk and 772 pounds of fat with a 4.7 test in 324 days. Her CPI was approximately 225. Her dam produced a top record of 21,430 pounds of milk and 874 pounds of fat in 305 days. Ulrich noted representatives from a bull stud expressed interest in a calf from Betsy, but they are waiting to see her performance in her current lactation. Betsy freshened in January with a Duncan heifer calf.

Two other cow families stand out in Ulrich's mind as making significant contributions to his herd — Valley U Superb Babe and Valley U Mercury Florence.

Babe classified Excellent and produced over 900 pounds of fat. He has sold one bull from Babe to a stud service. Babe's daughter, Valley U Fascinator Luella, produced over 900 pounds of fat and classified Excellent. Robert has sold two bulls from Luella into a stud services.

"The third generation was just fresh a few days ago," Ulrich noted, expressing optimism for the future of the family.

Florence produced six consecutive records over 850 pounds of fat in 305 day lactations. Last year she completed her 305 day lactation with 985 pounds of fat. During her lifetime she has produced an averaged 5.4 test per lactation.

Despite her superior production abilities, the Florence family offers no genetic value to the Misty

Hollow Farms because the Mercury bull was a limberleg carrier, Ulrich explained. "But she pays the bills," he said.

"We are getting to the point now in our breeding program where we can start to merchandise. A few cows have CPIs that are high enough and the pedigrees are deep enough. If the cows do like I expect that they will, I think we will be able to start merchandising out of some of them," Ulrich explained.

He expects a proof on his first bull, random sampled through NOBA, next January.

Marketing replacement heifers has helped Ulrich maintain his cash flow, he explained. Two years ago he sold 22 replacements.

Ulrich noted he keeps every heifer born on the farm. Those not need for replacement within his own herd are offered for sale. He has entered two heifers in the state sale to be held on Saturday, March 28, the second day of the Pennsylvania Jersey Cattle Club's annual meeting.

Ulrich posted a 1986 rolling herd average of 13,800 pounds of milk and 678 pounds of fat on 100 cows.

He breeds 25 to 30 percent of his animals to young sires and selects the top three or four TPI bulls in the breed for the rest of his herd. "I think it's any dairymen's responsibility to help prove the young sires," Ulrich said. He selects the young sires on a random basis without regard to bloodlines.

Top Brass is one sire Ulrich holds in high regard. "I think he's going to have a tremendous impact on the breed," the Quarryville Jersey breeder said. Ulrich noted he is pleased with the Top Brass daughters in his herd which have been freshening. "Before Top Brass the 2 year olds were not what I wanted genetically." He added, "Hopefully, he'll help push us over the 700 pound plateau."

Ulrich expressed frustration with his herd average. "It seems like we've been knocking against 700 for so long but just can't seem to make it. We seem to have hit a plateau."

Presently, Ulrich is working with a local feed company to improve the herd's RHA. A total mixed ration program is on the drawing board, he commented.

He currently feeds approximately 10 pounds of alfalfa haylage, 18 pounds of corn silage, nine pounds of baled alfalfa hay,



The 100-cow herd at Misty Hollow Farm is milked in a conventional stanchion barn. Last year the herd averaged 13,800 pounds of milk and 678 pounds of fat.

high moisture corn, and a 25 percent topdress.

He houses his milking herd in a stanchion barn, which the Quarryville dairymen noted was designed for 58 head. A loafing barn takes up the slack. Ulrich and his father originally milked 58 cows during their partnership which lasted from 1969 to 1974. When Ulrich bought out the partnership he "realized 58 cows were not nearly sufficient to do the job."

Future expansion depends on the plans of his hired man, Jeff Keller, and his 16-year-old son, Tim. Ulrich credits notes Keller, who has worked for him for the past nine years, with playing a key role in the herd's progress. The opportunity for him to buy in at any time is there, Ulrich explained.

Keller maintains the farms equipment and works with the heifers. He presently owns 15 Jerseys, Ulrich added.

Ulrich has started his calves in hutches for the past six years. In that time he reduced the herd's calf mortality rate from 20 percent to 2 percent. He recently added an eight-pen calf kennel which he notes is easier on the person feeding. Previously, calves were raised in the back part of the barn where environmental conditions were poor, he added.

Calves are kept on a milk diet for three months. Ulrich has found the extended period on milk provides the calves with a better start and helps them grow more rapidly.

At 4 months of age the calves are moved to a three-sided open front barn in pens of eight and grouped by age. When the heifers reach 10 or 11 months, they are moved to a nearby, open-housing type heifer barn. After a pregnancy confirmation and near calving time, the heifers are moved back to the main barn area.

He gears his breeding program to freshen heifers in the fall to meet base production demands. The heifers range in age from 1 year 10 months up to 2 years and 3 months.

During high school Ulrich became active in the management of the herd by selecting herd matings. Since that time the herd has become 100 percent AI.

Through working with the sires he has witnessed changes in the Jersey breed which have secured and increased his alliance to the breed. "At one point I thought the Jersey breed was not progressing the way it should," he said. However, within the last 10 years the breed has made real progress, he noted.

"I don't think 800 pounds of fat is out of reach for the breed. In fact I think it is very much within

reach," Ulrich said.

Misty Hollow Farms has raised Jerseys since the beginning and Ulrich never considered changing the color of the cows on the farm. "That's what I was born and raised with," he commented. He professes loyalty to the breed and readily cites its advantages.

"I'm really high on the breed," Ulrich said. While the breed is working with a smaller genetic

pool than the Holsteins, he feels it has made just as much progress production wise.

Highland Magic Duncan's dollar value at \$236 is quite remarkable, Ulrich commented. He noted only the Holstein's Comin-On Holsteins Chief owns a higher dollar value among active AI sires.

He classified the Jersey's as the "breed of the future" due to the

(Turn to Page A25)



Jeff Keller checks on one of the heifers in the heifer barn of Misty Hollow Farm.



The Ulrich family's farm is located on Spring Valley Road, Quarryville, in southern Lancaster County.



Hutches have reduced calf mortality from 20 percent to 2 percent since Robert Ulrich began using hutches six years ago.