

# Burket, Freese Discuss Philosophies Of Holstein Breeding Program

BY JOYCE BUPP

York Co. Correspondent

**YORK** — A panel discussion featuring two well-known cattle breeders headlined the annual York County Holstein meeting and banquet, held October 21 at S. Matthew Lutheran Church.

David Burket, East Freedom, and Glen Freese, Oxford, detailed their philosophies of breeding dairy cattle in a question-answer forum, moderated by Jed Beshore.

The Burket's three sons are all involved in the Blair County operation, with 90 registered milking Holsteins, including both red and polled bloodlines, and cropping of 350 of the family's 700 acres. Rolling herd average is at the 20,000 level. With notable success on the showing circuit, Burkett Falls has bred an All-American and reserve winners, plus several All-American nominees.

Freese's Chester County farm includes 70 head of registered Holsteins, with a rolling herd aver-

age of 22,000 milk and 770 fat, and cropping 200 acres for feeding. Merchandising of the herd's high production, high-indexed herd is the key emphasis at Glee-Hi Farms, and a heavy use of embryo transfer technology from selected individuals. At present, Freese has 22 bulls, all under a year old, head for A.I. organizations.

Burket, a leader of the Breeders Majority, a grassroots Holstein industry movement to restructure current "numbers" indexing formulas, stressed his emphasis on type conformation and a "generally good cow" when selecting matings.

"What constitutes a good cow, and who should decide what constitutes a good cow are where a lot of the differences lie," believes Burket, of the continuing industry debate on the value of the "numbers" computer indexing genetic valuation of cattle.

Burket Falls cattle have been mated over theyears through use of

the AAA coding, although Burket emphasizes that many successful cow analysis-mating programs are available.

"If you breed a cow with longevity, and she gives you several daughters, only one is needed to replace her," he added. Other daughters are then available for herd upgrading or merchandising. And, if cows are mated properly, Burket believes, lower TPI sires can be used and result in quality offspring.

Few cattle are purchased by the Burkets, and cow index is not a major factor in those acquisitions.

"A purchased cow would have to be one I can look at and like," stressed Burket. "I would buy a cow on looks, if she milked, but never on index alone."

He added, however, that he would be "one of the last to do away with numbers and indexing entirely, but they're too heavily emphasized."

Freese acknowledged that he,

too, is interested in a "good" cow, adding, "I don't like a good-looking cow that doesn't milk, or a good milker that doesn't look good."

Breeding programs, he figures, do not have to be complicated. The three-point program he has followed for 17 years has resulted in a herd B.A.A. of 106. Freese had bred 20 Excellents 102 Very Good individuals in that time.

First step in his program is AAA analysis, initially after heifers freshen at two years, and again as three-year-olds.

Continuing study of the "Red Book," USDA's semi-annual listing of sires, is Freese' second breeding program focus. Of the top 100 TPI sires, he considers only the highest 25, and then, lastly, matches those with comparable AAA codings to each his herd individuals.

Freese holds to a ceiling of \$40 on the sires he chooses, except for cows being flushed for embryo transfer.

"Breeding is not as precise as we think it might be," Freese suggests. He adamantly believes that quality management, from calthood through maturity, can add five to seven points to an individual's type score, while poor management may cost an animal 10 to 20 points.

Income from merchandising of cattle has equalled the income of the Glee-Hi herd's milk production for the last three years, according to Freese. And the herd's top selling individuals each of the past five years have averaged over \$70,000.

"We keep registered cattle to give our family a good standard of living, and provide money for investment," he emphasized.

Using a tru-type Holstein picture he received as a gift in 1959, Freese noted differences in what was considered the ideal cow nearly 30 years ago to present conformation standards. No one knows, he added, what the ideal cow will look like in another half-century.

The Chester County breeder also compared credibility of proofs

of stud-proven sires to breeder-proven sires. For his consideration, breeder proven sires must have higher percentages of repeatability and be "honestly" done, according to Freese. Fabrication of proofs and records will eventually "catch up and weed out the problems, correcting themselves."

Other speakers at the York meeting included national Holstein director John Cope and PHA membership director Ken Raney.

Cope briefly reviewed the activities of the national Holstein Association, noting that traditional income methods no longer provide adequate funding and creative new finance methods are being studied. Registration volume is down 23,000 applications from the level of one year ago, running about 2,000 less monthly.

However, due to the cattle export activity generated by the Farm Bill's Export Enhancement Program, Cope related that the Holstein Friesian Services, Inc. (HFS), is in a very positive condition and has "wiped out" a previous debt to the parent Holstein organization.

Exports are expected to continue, according to state membership director Ken Raney. The past year's high level of export activity has generated some \$5.7 million worth of business for PHA.

"Cattle are moving well, prices are up, and we're looking for another busy year," Raney said.

Recognition for her five years as York's dairy extension agent was extended to Shannon Neumann.

Three new directors were elected for three-year terms during the annual business meeting. Filling those board seats are Jed Beshore, New Cumberland, Dale Fuhrman, Hanover, and Melvin Marks, Airville.

York County's Holstein Association is sponsoring a three-day trip to the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto, Canada, November 12-14. A few seats remain for that tour; individuals interested in participating are asked to immediately contact Tom Boyer, York, at 717-225-5240.

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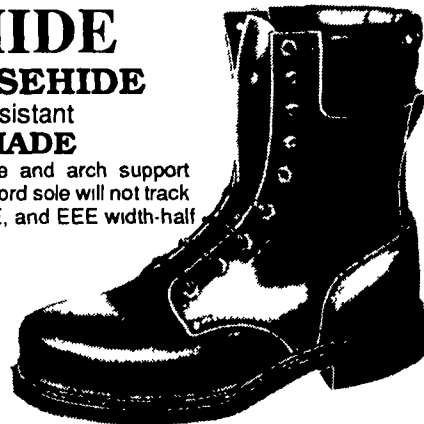
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