

Brown Cow Lays Golden Eggs

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his cows' milk component production.

Not only does Mase have Leena, a 3E, twice-30,000 pound milk-producing registered Brown Swiss that is still able to produce eggs for embryonic transfer, but when she was peaking her production of milk recently, the protein component was higher than her butterfat.

Leena has had several flushings during the last couple of years, but she has remained a consistently quick in breeding back, Mase said.

At 7 years, 2 months, she posted a 365-day 31,098 milk, 1,134 butterfat and 1,183 protein. Her 8-11 record as of December 1989, was 31,311 milk, 1,105 butterfat and 1,157 protein.

Her lifetime to date, with eight lactations, is 167,431 milk, 6,452 butterfat, and 5,888 protein.

She is right near the top for milk production and has outproduced other breeds in this county, includ-

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ing Holsteins, for protein; this is in a county that led the state overall in rolling herd average for 1989.

The production of protein is one key in the value of Mase's animals.

Production Is Key

It is largely anticipated that the federal pricing system will switch from placing importance on butterfat production, which Brown Swiss and other colored breeds are known for, and put more emphasis on protein production.

The reasoning is that the public demand for dairy products is away from butterfat and toward cheeses and other products that rely on other milk components.

The strength of the belief held by dairymen that protein will be more important has been shown in the recent purchase of one of Mase's calves from Leena. A two-month-old calf sold for more than \$4,000 during a Brown Swiss Association Mid-Atlantic calf sale. It was the fourth year in six years selling there that one of his calves topped the sales.

"Calves have always sold well for us down there," Mase said. "We've showed down at Timonium and with the sale in Maryland, it helps with the advertising to show there," he said.

Another indication of the trend toward finding cows already producing higher amount of protein and total solids, Mase was recently contacted by a Mid Western dairyman who wanted to buy all the embryos from Leena so that he could use them to conduct his own herd improvement experiments with breeding.

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So far, according to Mase, the first generation cross-bred cow is a good animal which displays an apparent hybrid vigor, but successive breedings to cross-bred cows results in uncertain quality calves.

He said some breeders are working on developing a consistent cross-bred strain that would combine the high quality legs and feet, the high component production, the gentleness of Brown Swiss along with all the best aspects of Holsteins.

Mase mentioned possibly getting involved in such an experimental breeding program, but it is

still just in the consideration phase.

He has a consistent buyer for every cross-bred bull calf he gets and said they appear to express the same hybrid vigor with faster weight gains and larger sizes. He said he wasn't sure about the type of meat quality resulting from the cross.

Along with the breeding program, the real money backbone of his operation is the same as for everyone else - selling milk.

Mase is a contract-producer for Wengert's Dairy in Lebanon and he is making ends meet. Right now, with about 35 Brown Swiss milking cows and another smaller herd of mixed breed, including some Holstein cows, he said he is averaging about 70 pounds milk a day, per cow, in the tank.

His mixed herd, which includes 15 Holsteins and about six cross-breeds, was rated third in the state, and his Swiss herd was rated top in

the state for milk and protein and second in fat production.

Beauty Is A Beast In Production

Overall, Leena's maternal half-sister Beauty, now ending her 10th lactation, leads the county in lifetime production for 1989 certificates. Her lifetime production record was 238,386 milk, 9,056 butterfat and 4,830 protein.

Last year, the county recorded lifetime records for six other 10th lactation cows, all Holsteins. The closest production among them showed 229,254 milk, 8,904 butterfat and 4,746 protein.

None of the other Holsteins with 10 lactations broke the 200,000 pound mark.

Mase said he doesn't dislike Holsteins, he just likes Brown Swiss more. He started with two calves 20 years ago as his 4-H project. They were gifts from his older sister, from a dam she had purchased for less than \$100, as a calf.

Brown is Beautiful

The calf that sold for more than \$4,000 was the great-granddaughter of his 4-H project calf that can be traced to a herd owned by William Daubert, of Pine Grove.

"The cows are all fed the same. There's no color difference as far as when it comes to feeding them," Mase said. "I feed according to milk production," he said.

"I feed a total TMR and then top-dress strictly on production. I don't see color when I go down the barn feeding cows. I look at milk weight.

"And with my Swiss, I don't stress test, like some of the guys do. That'd be the only reason that some guys might feed differently.

"It does take different amounts of feed for butterfat, but I'm not too worried about butterfat, I'm worried about pounds of milk. I have as many Holsteins testing 4.5 (percent butterfat) as I do Swiss," he said.

As far as government and industry support stressing protein production, Mase said, "I just hope it comes my way, that's all. That's the only difference. I don't think I have to make any changes. I just hope that the market is going to change for me."

The production from his cows is not magic formula. Mase said genetics, luck and care combine to

produce high-production animals.

Sire selection is varied as to source, he said. "With Brown Swiss it's a wide open ball field," he said. "There's really no set stud there. So, I have to go with selection with the Swiss. We even get some (semen) privately from some other breeders."

He does his own choosing, selecting first for milk production and udders.

"That narrows it down in a hurry as to what bulls I want to use. Once I have it down to bulls of that caliber, then we more or less fine tune it to what that cow might otherwise need to be improved.

"For instance, this calf we just sold, (the dam) is just an averaged sized cow with a real good udder, so we bred her to a decent bull that should improve stature," he said.

The Holsteins on his farm are all grade animals used as recipients for embryonic transfer and serve him well in that capacity, in addition to helping his mixed-breed herd average a little more than 20,000 pounds milk.

"I'd like to actually go all Swiss, but I'm in no real hurry. I guess I could sell the Holsteins. Right now we ought to cut back because we are running the tank over, but it's too hard to part with some of those good cows," he said. "And it never seems to be the right time to sell them, either when they're carrying embryos or we're getting ready to flush in about two weeks, so . . ."

But the young dairyman does have some different ways of doing things.

Nighttime Is The Right Time

A softball enthusiast who plays in four different softball leagues and on some teams sponsored by agricultural businesses, Mase doesn't follow tradition when it comes to milking hours.

He milks twice a day; at noon and midnight.

He said that, in addition to allowing him the time to play softball and to attend activities with his wife and three children, it has other advantages.

"It's not as cold during the winter," he said. "Midnight isn't as cold as 5 a.m. and noon isn't as cold either."

Also, researchers have suggested that peak times for observing heats are late in the night,

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around midnight or later. He said the noon and midnight milkings also are "calmer."

Apparently human activity seems to slow down around noon and is certainly quieter at midnight.

Human activity is strong near the Mase operation. His father, Clarence Mase, owns the 70-acre spread and rents an additional 40 acres. The father and son collaborate in a 50-50 deal; Gary runs the dairy end and helps with some hay-making, Clarence crop farms. The two split the milk check.

The Mases raise most of their own forage, but have to buy hay. They also have to buy some high moisture corn in late summer. Gary doesn't use newspaper bedding, but has a steady supply of sawdust.

Calf Survival

In addition to milk money, Gary depends heavily on income from selling calves, especially with the recent purchase price.

Just out of pure economics, he



Gary Mase with his son Anthony and the great dam of the Brown Swiss clan in Lebanon County, Leena, a 3E producer of 30,000-plus pounds milk. Her eggs, used for embryonic transfer, seem to have been touched by Midas.

said he couldn't sell a calf for less than \$1,000. With such an emphasis on calf-selling, calf survivability becomes an even bigger issue than for most dairymen concerned with raising replacement stock.

Mase said he stresses calving in a clean environment. He's lost one calf during the last three years.

He keeps an eye on the newborn calf to make sure it starts feeding within the first four hours, which, he said they all seem to do.

He also allows the calves to stay with their dams for some time. He said the importance of getting the antibodies from colostrum into a calf can't be stressed enough. And as far as getting plenty of colostrum and follow-up milk to the calf, the feed-as-you-please manner in which a calf feeds on its dam

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seems to also work better for Mase.

Gary Mase Family

Overall, the Gary Mase family, wife Patty, eldest son Garrett, daughter Lisa, 6, and 3-year-old son Anthony, are all involved with Brown Swiss.

In his first year showing at the 1990 state Farm Show, Garrett took home a Junior champion title earned by his two year-old Meadow Hill Jade April.

Lisa hand-picked her own calf, Meadow Hill Titan Agatha, which happened to give Mase his best

lowing the farm like some huge amoeba devouring a particle of food.

Another problem exists with the farm. Located along Route 241 about two miles south of Route 72, the highway splits the house from the barn and pasture.

According to the Mases, when Gary's paternal grandfather owned the place, officials were in the process of improving Route 241, which obviously originated as a farm road.

The elderly Mase has requested that officials not split his farm in two, but rather he was willing to donate a portion of his property so that a straight road could be built and his farm could be kept intact.

The Mases said that officials, already having designed a bridge

for the Snitz Creek, balked and forewent the common sense and practical solution offered by the elderly Mase.

Now, one of the most common sites of automobile accidents in the county is the Mase farm: A severe "S" curve splits the home from the barn. The result has been that fencing and a smaller roadside barn have been struck numerous times, and lives have been and remain threatened.

This would seem enough to make many people sell the property and move the herd. But Gary said he isn't sure what his father intends to do with the farm.

Gary said he knows that land prices are far too high for him to buy the farm from his father and pay it off by running a dairy operation.

Lebanon County officials have not taken any steps toward any type of farmland preservation. And like many other high quality parcels of farmland in Lebanon County, Mase said it could very well become a housing development.

"If he (Mase's father) gets his farm sold for a good price, more power to him. You can't afford to farm a farm around here for what you're getting for the price of land.

"We really don't plan to be here for that long. We're not expanding, we're aren't remodeling, we aren't doing any kind of improvements. It's just a year to year proposition," he said.

"I'd love to see pop sell his farm for big money and set me up some where else," he said, laughing, then getting serious, "I don't see much future here. It's too close to town and the land's getting too salty. So I don't see how I could afford to buy.

two-year-old record last year with a 2 year, 3 month record on 320 days of 17,518 milk, 700 butterfat and 608 protein.

Son Anthony, 3-year-old, got his first calf in October. Gary said it will be Anthony's 4-H project. That calf's dam seems to promise special things. She was purchased as a two-year-old, and is named Quiet Valley Jim Dandy. She has been rated an Excellent and was second high in the state for '89 for protein and butterfat on a 5 year, 3 month, 305 days lactation record of 25,820 milk, 1012 butterfat, and 954 protein.

But all of this happy family involvement with the Brown Swiss is threatened by some things, apparently out of their control.

How long Mase remains in Lebanon is unknown.

The farm is now within walking distance of Lebanon City. The developments and houses are visible from the barn windows. It seems that urbanization is swal-