

# Starpoint Farm

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Improvement Association (DHIA) reports or are members of the American Jersey Cattle Club (AJCC).

After all, Starpoint is one of the top 10 Jersey herds in the nation for its size.

According to AJCC reports, Starpoint nationally ranks fourth for milk, fifth for protein and eighth for fat among herds with 10 to 29 lactations.

On a straight comparison among Pennsylvania's Jersey herds, Starpoint isn't as strong, but statewide rankings don't take into account comparisons between herd sizes. However, their Jerseys are among the best.

And, as of last month, the couple's Holstein herd ranked top in rolling herd average production in Chester County.

Dairy farming for a little less than four years, and married for four this June, John and Cindy recently went into partnership with Bill Ulrich who owns a 174-acre farm a couple miles north of the border between Chester and Lancaster counties.

The Batchelders are mainly responsible for the maintaining the dairy herd and milk production and raising calves. Ulrich's primary

jobs are forage production and raising heifers.

The plan is to help each other out as work dictates. A dairy science professor from Cindy's alma mater at Virginia Tech, Bill Etgen, helped the couples with forming a partnership plan, in that he gave them ideas about how to go about setting it up.

"He's consulted quite a few partnerships in getting set up," Cindy said. "Basically, Bill didn't want to sell his farm, but he didn't want to keep milking by himself."

She said that for she and her husband, the partnership offered an "opportunity to farm without having a large cash reserve."

"I'm not crazy about debt," John added.

The Batchelders own the herd, and it is the animals which attract attention.

How the two got such a good herd in such a short time goes back to the qualities of the Batchelders.

John was exposed to the Jersey breed since 1967, while growing up on a farm in Kentucky.

"Dad bought the bottom cow from the University of Kentucky Jersey herd and she kept having heifers. She had six heifers and they had heifers." His father milked about 35 cows. They also

worked with thoroughbred horses.

John worked for four years as a classifier for the American Jersey Cattle Club and traveled all over the nation.

Because of the population of the Jerseys, the AJCC classifiers don't have restricted regional responsibilities. Thus, John got to travel extensively; even to Central American once. He traveled a lot during those years, he said.

Meanwhile, Cindy grew up on a large dairy and dairy store in Montgomery County and she became exposed to Jerseys there.

She said her father's operation, no longer in existence, was in Collegeville. It was called Walebe Farms. He had 1,500 acres and a 400-head milking herd.

With a master's degree in animal science from University of California at Davis, where she did her thesis research on sexing embryos.

With both of them having the background, skills and experience to work for decent money for other businesses, the decision to run a small farming business had only been a dream that each held for a long time before they met, they said.

"If we wouldn't have met, neither of us would be doing this. Not on our own," Cindy said.

But they met and fell in love and decided that because of their relationship and the dreams they shared, they should try to run and eventually own a farm.

Cindy said it's as romantic as that.

"A good marriage has helped business," Cindy said. "We make a good team."

She handles the artificial insemination, he handles deciding which bull to use.

"John's really good at marketing. I seem to have a knack for the day-in, and day-out.

"He's concerned with the forage quality, and I work with the nutritional balance in the cows rations," she said.

The couple started off on a farm in mushroom-growing region around Avondale, near the Pennsylvania-Delaware border. They spent part of a year renting there.

For the past three years, the two had been renting a farm in Oxford in Chester County.

It was through the physical proximity of the Ulrich farm and the Chester County farm, and through mutual interest shows and activities in the Jersey Cattle Club that the Batchelders met up with the Ulrichs.

Bill Ulrich, whose son joined the Marines and didn't show an interest in taking over the farm,



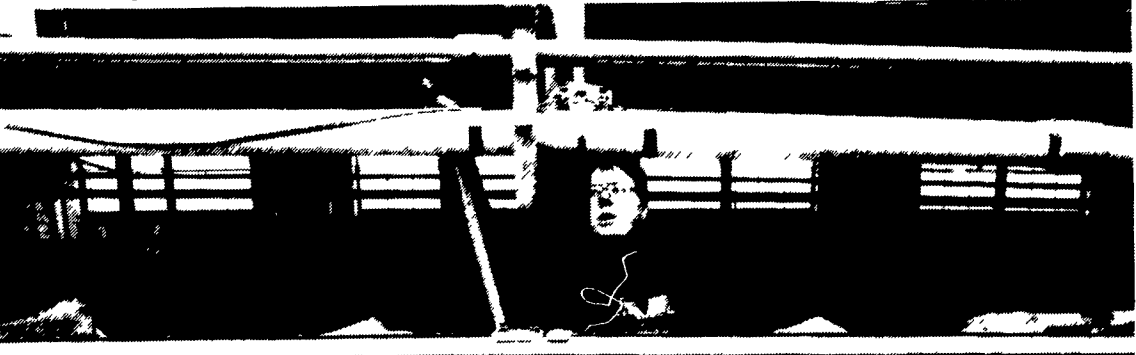
Cindy checks the condition of two young calves, one a Holstein, the other a Jersey. Several of the Batchelder's young bulls have been targeted for purchase by artificial insemination organizations.



Cindy Batchelder's duties include feeding the herd and raising the calves. Here she gives milk to a several-day-old Jersey heifer calf.



Fastidious about herd health, John Batchelder performs predipping.



John Batchelder hooks up a claw to the pipeline in preparation for milking the herd.

dispersed his Jersey herd last November. He had been milking 115 Jerseys. (Ulrich's 1990 end of year DHIA data shows his past milking herd at 105 animals with a rolling herd average of 14,187 pounds of milk, 709 pound of butterfat and 551 pounds of protein.)

The Batchelders milk about 50 Jerseys and 45 Holssteins. The bulk tank shows a 3.8 percent to 4.2 percent butterfat test and a 3.4 percent to 3.6 percent.

Their goal is to maintain both herds. The Jerseys help with the bulk tank test and provide them premium money for milk solids other than fat. The Holsteins provide volume.

The goal is to have a farm with a 50-50 split.

"It seems to balance out well, with milk and protein," John said.

The Holsteins, while they don't get overlooked when it comes to breeding to good animals, are primarily for making milk and money. They also carry Jersey embryos which makes for extremely easy deliveries. And Cindy said it seem to her that Holstein cows delivering Jersey calves maintain better body condition, deliver larger Jersey calves, and

breed back a lot faster than normal.

The profits from the operation are being reinvested and the couple has specific goals and direction for their operation.

Right now, about 10 percent of their annual income is attributed to selling of Jersey genetics — bulls for A.I. and embryos. The goal is to achieve an income percentage closer to 30.

John said they have enough head of cattle right now for milking. So the concentration has to go toward genetics in order to expand business opportunities.

Right now, with the barn up and running and a total mixed ration feeding system just starting up, the two are beginning to squeeze time in to unpack more of their personal items.

Their intent is stay for the long haul, in the quiet little valley with the spring-fed stream, stone farmhouses and willow trees in the pasture, barely within earshot of the constant traffic on Rt. 272.

They are working toward a dream they share.

And for the first four years of their marriage, the two have been lucky, they said. "But I think you make some of your own luck," Cindy said.