

## Howcrest Opens Farm

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knowledge from the National Holstein Association. Each state has only one award presented each year. All the state winners then are compared by judges and the national awardee decided.

All dairymen in Lancaster County area have a chance to see the Howards' farm and talk with the young couple. Their farm, just south of Lancaster City on Hans Herr Drive, is the site for this year's Lancaster County Holstein Association Field Day. An evening of fellowship and fun is planned, starting 6:30 p.m., on June 18.

The speaker and official judge is to be Pete Blodgett, head of Landmark Genetics. The meal is catered chicken barbeque with numerous side dishes.

The cost is \$8 per adult, \$3.75 per child. Reservations are needed by Wednesday, June 12. For more information or reservations, call Lynn Royer at (717) 560-0632, or 564-2304 (farm), or call Steve Hershey at (717) 367-4593.

The 1990 end-of-the-year rolling herd average for Howcrest Holsteins' 40 head was 23,063 pounds of milk, 868 pounds of fat and 744 pounds of protein. Lancaster County's top producing herd for protein last year was a mixed herd which average nine pounds of protein higher.

The most recent DHIA report for Howcrest shows an increase in average production. According to the May test, the average was 24,148 pounds of milk, 913 pounds of fat and 777 pounds of protein on twice a day milking.

At their last classification they had seven Excellents, now reduced to five through attrition, including the loss of one of the original purchases made to start the operation.

Those who attend the field day will have a chance to judge three classes of cattle with four in each. The classes are tentatively going to

be 2-year-olds, aged cows, and a heifer class.

John said the herd is mostly traced back to four groups of animals he and Susan purchased.

He purchased a group of bred heifers from a farm in Port Royal which included a Jet Stream daughter which eventually classified an Excellent 92.

Also in the group was an Excellent Elevation daughter, which has been "The foundation of the family that there's been the most interest in," John said.

"She had a 98 point Valiant daughter that's a contract cow. She has a couple of sons in AI and was flushed to Ned Boy."

One of her Ned Boy daughter has also been contracted to AI and flushed. From there have been two Very Goods, an 86 and an 87.

"I also bought a group of bred heifers from Clarion County, which included a Genesis daughter with several thousand-pound fat records," John said.

A Morris Tony daughter produced the first cows John and Susan merchandised.

There are still members of that family in the herd, and the Howards are currently proving her grandson.

The Howards also bought a group of heifers during the 1981 Central Pennsylvania Classic sale. There they picked up Ivanhoe Star and three of her descendants are home bred Excellents. Two are still on the farm and one was sold to Keystone.

"Star has been the foundation for a lot of show cows," John said. "Last year we had best three females bred and owned, we won the last three years, and they all came from that (cow) family."

The one he sold was a Mark daughter of Ivanhoe Star that was consigned at a State College sale to Keystone and eventually went Excellent.

The Howards have pretty much kept a closed herd since buying

those initial groups. They said they bought four animals since.

All the animals will be on display during the field day.

Visitors will also get a chance to view a new barn ventilation system that should be completed by the field day. It is designed for a complete barn air exchange every 30 seconds.

The barn and the house at Howcrest are historic.

John and Susan rent the 70-acre farm from her mother, Dorothy Frey, of Fultonway Farm Inc., and they also rent an additional, adjacent 40 acres for cropping.

The farm house and the Howcrest property is adjacent to the historic Hans Herr house, a well-known Lancaster landmark. It was one of the earliest buildings of Hans Herr, an original German settler to the Lancaster area whose house still stands at the edge of the Howards property, within a stone's throw of the farm house.

In fact, for the field day, John said he has gotten approval to use the parking lot of the historic landmark.

Those who are intending to attend the field day should bring some lawn chairs and park in the Hans Herr parking lot.

The Hans Herr house is a remarkable structure, using one solid wooden beam and a huge, double-sided walk-in fireplace and chimney for the main support structure and wall-tie. When Susan Howard was growing up, prior to the restoration of the Hans Herr house and its subsequent use as a historic landmark, she said she used to play in the house.

The farmhouse in which they live, and five other homes nearby, where also either built by Hans Herr or one of his descendants.

"This house was built by Hans Herr," Susan said of their farmhouse. "It's like living in a piece of history." Some day they'd like to restore the house for historical reasons, she said.

The current barn at Howcrest farm dates to 1866 and was built by John and Elizabeth Harnish. The stone bearing that information is on the wall in the milkhouse.

The barn was remodeled in the 1960s by Mallery Frey Jr., and the stalls and manger are still in good shape. However, a 2-inch milking system was installed since.

Also of interest at Howcrest, a 15-acre pasture is across the street from the barn. It has a small pond and a stream running through it. The pond has been fenced off from cattle since the second year the Howards have been there, in order to minimize the risk of mastitis and for other sanitary dairy concerns.

At the same time, the pasture was divided into two. John said he allows the cows to feed in one of the pastures for a time and then he mows the other one, baling the grass for use as bedding. Then he switches fields, allowing the cows to pasture in the cut pasture, while he mows the pasture they cows started in.

Using the pasture is an attempt to maximize the cost effectiveness of feed. Sometimes the cows seem to drop a little on pasture in the spring. He pastures them during the day in the spring and fall, during the night during the summer and he allows the cows to use the barnyard exercise lot everyday.

The lot, or barnyard also has

several calf hutches on it and the Howards raise all their heifer calves. Ideally, he said he'd like to wait until after the heifers freshen before he decides whether a heifer will become a permanent part of the string.

However, he said he has sold a few before he wanted to, when the offer was right.

John said that as far as conducting business, income derived from selling stock for breeding reasons constitutes anywhere from 25 percent to 40 percent of the total farm income. And he said that with milk prices so low, the income from selling genetic stock has increased percentage wise and has become even more important.

While the Howards have owned three grade cows, they are committed to registering animals. "We used the grades for recipients of embryos. It doesn't cost any more to feed or raise a registered animal," John said.

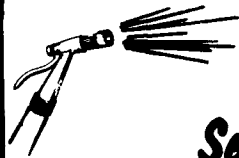
As far as feeding, John doesn't have a total mixed ration, but they do feed a balanced diet and test their feeds regularly.

The farm doesn't have a lot of silo storage, so John keeps some corn silage bagged, although he has to be careful with the plastic because of the many ways the seal can be broken allowing air to spoil the feed.

He said he tried haylage in the bags also, but he is going to try to avoid making haylage this year, since it's easier to feed baled hay and its less time and labor consuming. Otherwise, he has to make a lot of trips with a cart between the bagged feed and the barn.

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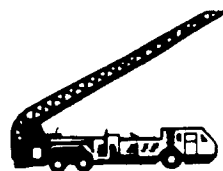
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