

Beef Club Tours Lancaster County Farms



Members of the Red Rose 4-H Beef Club admire the purebred Polled Hereford and Angus cattle at Salunga

Acres during a tour of three Lancaster County farms on July 17.

LOU ANN GOOD
Lancaster Farming Staff
LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)
— Some of the top farmers in the county credit their success to 4-H roots. It's no surprise that they are eager to find time in their busy schedules to meet with today's 4-H'ers.

"They are our future breeders to maintain agriculture," said C.J. Furlong, manager for Salunga Acres. "We want to get more young people interested in raising beef."

With that purpose in mind, about 20 persons affiliated with the Red Rose 4-H Beef Club began a day-long tour of county farms on July 17. In addition to Salunga Farms, the group toured Masonic Homes, which has pastures with Shorthorn, Simmental, and commercial beef, and the egg processing complex of Esbenschade Farms, Mount Joy.

Salunga Acres

Purebred Polled Herefords and Angus grazed on the gently, rolling hills at the Spooky Nook farm, one of four that Salunga Acres owns.

"We breed cattle with performance," Furlong said of the 250-acre operation. George and Dorothy Metzler own the operation that stunned competitors at the Pennsylvania Farm Show in January. At that show, Salunga Acres took Polled Hereford grand champion bull, reserve champion heifer, best herd, premier breeder and exhibitor and reserve grand champion Angus bull. On the national scale, the Polled Hereford bull placed second.

"Our goal is to produce cattle with balance, low birth rate, high weaning weights, and better milk production," Furlong said. "All cows are bred AI and detailed

records are kept in performance." Furlong told the 4-H'ers, "It's important to have feminine females and to breed animals for performance, style, and type." He pointed out these characteristics in many of the individual cattle.

Even when things are done correctly, puzzling results occasionally happen. Furlong told of using one Angus cow for flushing that produced three bull calves with performance, style, and type. But the cow's natural calf was born with all white feet.

Salunga Acres prefers calves to be born in January and February for better marketing. This year, the farm bred 82 Polled Herefords and 38 Angus cattle. They do not crossbreed. In the early part of March, the calves are put out on rye.

Salunga Acres operate a certified and accredited vaccination program. "We believe that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," Furlong said. "We worm twice a year, and I think breeders would be amazed at how much better performance they get out of their cattle if they did likewise."

With increased frame size, the cattle are bred for 7 and 8. "Sometimes we sacrifice a little milk for size," Furlong explained, "but you need muscle to back the size to have structurally sound cattle."

To remain in the business, Furlong foresees that beef farmers need numbers behind cattle. Salunga Acres plans to increase the amount of shows they enter this year. Although the barns are kept extremely clean, the cattle are not washed and brushed often. "We don't have a lot of time to work with show cattle. If we ran this operation in show condition all the time, we couldn't get everything

done," Furlong said.

They do concentrate on what really counts in the show ring — breeding and performance. They halter break close to show time.

Members of the 4-H beef club judged four purebred Polled Herefords on the farm. The members needed to rely on both visual observation and performance appraisal by studying the EPD's (expected progeny differences) chart.

"Look for balanced traits," Furlong cautioned the members. "You must consider birth weight, weaning weight, maternal milk, yearling weight, and look at the sire. Remember the higher maternal value the better the weight at weaning."

Masonic Homes

A drive-through tour of Masonic Homes grounds in Elizabethtown revealed 600 acres of barley, rye, and oats, a 100-acre orchard and vegetable crops, and a farm operation of dairy, beef, hogs, and

poultry.

Frank Stoltzfus, herd manager, said the farm was begun in 1910 to supplement the nursing care center and retirement home on the grounds. The cow-calf herd has 72 head of Shorthorns, Angus, Simmental bulls and 125 Ayshire cows.

"Shorthorns have great maternal instincts and make good mothers. There are definite advantages in crossbreeding," Stoltzfus said. "Dramatic increases are clear as a bell on indexes. If one cow has a high index, you can count on heifers having the same index range. Figures mean a lot to use, and we do use them," Stoltzfus told the 4-H'ers.

The calves, usually born in February are weaned at 205 days and weigh an average 583 pounds with some more than 800 pounds. The cattle are raised on pasture and forages are used over winter. Due to extreme dry weather, Stoltzfus said that hay was put in the pastures for the cattle to feed on. "It's

the first time we had to feed hay in July," he said.

This year, the cow herd was doubled. About 140 head are used each year for consumption at the Masonic Homes.

The tour included a stop at the formal gardens and a picnic lunch on the grounds before members proceeded to Esbenschade Farms, at Mount Joy's north plant.

Esbenschade Farms

Glen Esbenschade owns the Mount Joy operation, which is Pennsylvania's largest egg processing complex. It has more than 640,000 layers in seven chicken houses.

Barry Renno, manager, explained the egg processing operation to the Beef Club members, who are familiar with beef, not chickens. The egg processing complex includes a feed mill and trucking operation for eggs and feed.

Shavers, Babcock, DeKalb, Delta, and Delta XL breeds are used in the laying operation.



During the Red Rose 4-H Beef Club tour of Lancaster County farms, the group found solace from the hot sun underneath the Esbenschade Farms feed equipment. Front row, from left: Chris Hess, Joellen Donough, Ryan Donough, and Dwayne Livengood. Second row, from left: Matt Hoover, Travis Donough, John Hess, and Delvin Krypt. Third row, from left: Lilly Ann Kopp, LaRue Donough, Deb Hess, John Day, Sean Kopp, Dean Livengood, and Dale Livengood.

Homestead Notes