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Hunsinger Farm Is Best Managed Operation

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SPRINGVILLE (Susquehanna Co.) — The moral of the story is: Big changes get noticed, but it's many small changes which get results.

Nothing could be truer for Susquehanna County dairyman D. Byron Hunsinger who has been recognized by the Pennsylvania Dairy Herd Improvement Association (PaDHIA) for having the most improved Holstein herd of Pennsylvania members.

Hunsinger's 50-head, all-registered milking herd has shown the best overall improvement in management, not only among the state's black and white herds, but among all dairy breed herds.

The recognition started this year with the intent by PaDHIA to reward those dairymen who have been doing a lot of things right, but not just one thing fantastically.

The program is based on a multiple factor formula which awards points according to certain aspects of herd care and herd response. The maximum possible points is 130. Hunsinger received the most with 103 points.

The points are awarded for milk and milk component production increases, average peak milk production, average number of days at peak, the improvement in somatic cell count linear score (SCC LS), the mean average SCC LS, the average number of days open, the number of services per pregnancy, and the average age at first calving.

The award is unique from other DHIA awards in that the herd must show improvement and acheivement in many areas, not just excellence in one.

In fact, Hunsinger's herd was not the top herd in any one catagory. However, his herd performed above average in all areas.

"I think (the management award program) is a fairly decent thing to have, not just because I won it, but because it does give recognition to someone who has made an effort to improve. It's something I think is worthwhile," he said.

What it means to Hunsinger is that his investments in capital improvements, education, nutrition, and other areas, have begun to pay off.

All the small changes he's been making over the past several years have come together and are showing results.

Years ago, Hunsinger bought his grandfather's farm. It had not been updated for some time and Hunsinger continued to operate according to the farm design.

Slowly, and especially within the past three years, the design of the farm has been changed to better suit Hunsinger's present method of operating.

"Probably the biggest thing we did . . . I built a new barn three years ago. I built more silos. Probably, overall, it's better management feeding wise than I used to do," he said.

The old barn design had few

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From the left, D. Byron Hunsinger and wife Pat stand with sons Brandon, 10, and Leslie, 12, at their family farm noted recently for its management.

A History And Perspective Of The Pennsylvania DHIA Program

Editor's note: Penn State College of Agriculture's Dairy and Animal Science Department recently published a booklet entitled "A History and Perspective of the Pennsylvania Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA) Program from 1910 to 1991."

In the booklet's introductory letter, Dr. Stan Curtis, department head, said PaDHIA serves thousands of dairy farmers in Pennsylvania and elsewhere in myriad ways and it has been doing so for more than 80 years. Curtis said the history was written for those who have recently become associated with PaDHIA. In addition, he said even those persons who have worked with this dairy association for decades can profit from its reminders of where the association has been with a view to develop a vision for its future evolution.

This presentation, written by Donald Ace, fits well in this issue of *Lancaster Farming*, which includes PaDHIA's semiannual report to members and many farm features on the top managed herds in Pennsylvania. Therefore, *Lancaster Farming* is grateful to Dr. Curtis for permission to reprint this extensive DHIA history for its readers.

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Section 1
INTRODUCTION

The evolution of production testing programs in the United States has provided a significant part of the foundation for many of our industries. New ideas are formed out of necessity or curiosity, or are an outgrowth of previous ideas. To determine if an idea is worthwhile or valid, it must be tested. The results of testing provide new information, which may be useful to the tester, as well as to a larger group of people in a related field. Ideas spawn new ideas, reveal new needs, answer old questions, and help make an industry move forward and prosper. The Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA) records program, through testing, analysis, refinement, and the creation of policies and regulations, has evolved in this way. It has become a valuable management and evaluation tool for dairymen, the Agriculture Industry, and educators. Few programs can equal its impact on and importance to the success of an industry.

Modern dairymen and many of those conducting DHIA programs have little or no knowledge of the first 50 years of testing done by this organization. Few of them appreciate the insight of the early pioneer who recorded 511.1 pounds of butter churned from the milk produced by a Jersey cow over a 350 day period. The year was 1854. In 1890 the Babcock Test was introduced, allowing milk to be tested for fat content, and the butter production of a cow was calculated on the basis that butter was 83.5% fat.

Early records of butter and milk production were recorded by individual breeders of cattle for their own use. In the late 1800s the seven day record was a popular test, usually recorded during a fair or exposition, and often coinciding with a beginning lactation. Those milk weights extrapolated over an entire lactation grossly overstated the amount of milk produced. In the early 1900s it was proven that the production of a cow over the course of an entire lactation provided more reliable information than that obtained during a shorter lactation period. The 365 day lactation became a standard period of measurement, and later the 305 day record became the industry standard, with 365 day records made available upon request.

Today testing has evolved to provide valuable information about all facets of the dairy industry. It has grown from individual dairymen's personal records to state, national, and world wide computer based testing and data processing, which helps dairymen everywhere to manage herds more efficiently and profitably.

This history and perspective of the Pennsylvania DHIA deals not only with testing and results, but also with the people who made it happen. Hopefully this view will give readers a better understanding of how and why DHIA began, how it has grown to where it is today, and where it will go in the future.

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DHIA FEATURES