

Dunn Not Finished Leading County

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NEW RINGGOLD (Schuylkill Co.) — James Dunn is a busy young man.

After climbing down a hay elevator, sweated and dusty from stacking hay bales, he laughed and said, "Yes, I'm always done (Dunn), but never finished."

And neither is his herd of grade and registered Holsteins.

A few years ago, within a short time after getting into the dairy production business, the Dunn herd took over the lead in the county Dairy Herd Improvement Association production standings. He's kept the standing and his cows' production has continued to climb.

In fact, he may well have the cow which will lead the state this year in individual lactation production — a 3-year-old Holstein which is projected at more than 40,000 pounds of milk on 305 days. He shook his head and said that she may go closer to 50,000 if she continues on a 365-day lactation.

And she wasn't the only cow in the herd projected that high. He has a few other cows which have been regular producers of 30,000 pounds and more.

Dunn said he isn't really sure why he's getting such good results. "We had several tours go through and guys say, 'You're not doing anything differently,'" he said. "I don't know exactly why they've (the cows) been doing so well."

He feeds TMR and hay several times a day. The waterers are cleaned regularly. An ultraviolet water filter was installed to kill any bacteria in the water supply and the cows seem to drink often, which is a key to good production.

But, it's only one of many keys for which Dunn said he follows a regular maintenance schedule.

Though no expert has examined the Dunn farm to be able to make an educated guess as to how and why the cows are performing so well, to the casual observer it

seems a combination of paying attention to detail, staying abreast of research developments and reports of success, and perhaps mostly, consistency with cow care.

The bedding is always better than adequate, the waterers are cleaned on a regular maintenance schedule, the forages are tested once a month and when Dunn suspects a change in forage. Dunn does these things not on a trial basis, and not occasionally, but every time.

"I'd say nutrition is first in priority. Second is cow comfort," Dunn said, adding that both areas of concern demand attention to detail and a professional attitude.

It seems to be paying off. "I was happy to get 20,000 pounds," Dunn said, "but then it kept going up."

In fact, he finished 1991 with a rolling herd average (RHA) of 25,034 pounds of milk, 826 pounds of fat and 802 pounds of protein. The milk production is now averaging about 26,000 pounds.

"I had trouble with fat, but now it's up to about 900 (pound average)," he said, adding that the reason for a relatively depressed butterfat average continues to evade him, but now it's almost a moot point.

Unbelievably, his herd posted a rolling herd average with protein running about 100 pounds above butterfat. That happened for about a half a year.

At request, Pennsylvania DHIA checked the records for possible errors, since the numbers for butter and fat appeared switched.

However, the numbers were correct. Dunn had one of the few, if not the only herd in the state to average higher protein production than fat production. But he doesn't know how he did it.

However, it changed to reflect the normal trend — higher butterfat average and a lower protein average.

"Once protein went over 800 (pounds), it tickled me. It's not like

I tried any new mineral or anything."

If he went to milking three times a day, the production could reasonably be expected to increase a little, but that's not necessary and Dunn doesn't have the time to milk cows all day long.

James is the dairyman in the family business, a partnership between father and sons, but there are many other hats he has to wear.

The main business started with James's grandfather who bought orchard land and raised and marketed fruits and vegetables for years. James' father took that over and expanded and as James came of age, his father and brother agreed that adding dairy production to the family business would further add to its stability because of the diversification.

"I think that's what makes it work, diversification," Dunn said. "If it wouldn't be for the fruit business, I wouldn't be where I'm at," he said. He started at a farm without a good silo, feeding cows off of silage piles, sometimes questionable quality hay. But now he feeds quality feed (21 percent protein hay on his last cutting), has good equipment and put up a silo.

The most recent addition to the barn is an improved ventilation system. His father purchased a lot of non-typical fans for use in the barn. It raised the electric bill considerably, but also moves air well.

James said he calculated that it would take an increase of 2 pounds of milk per cow to pay for the increased electricity. The herd has been averaging about a 200-pound-per month increase.

Low milk prices and the investments in land and buildings make the dairy aspect of the family operation not as profitable as it could be, but eventually it should come to represent one of the stronger aspects of the multiple commodities family business.

James doesn't have the privilege of concentrating only on his cows. He has other duties in the partnership too, such as pruning apple and peach trees — they switched to a practice of pruning in late spring and early summer, rather than the fall, so that more energy goes into fruit production rather than into new growth.

He said that removing small suckers from the trunk and branches is easier in June and it also allows more air to circulate through the tree and more sunlight to hit the fruit, aiding in its maturation.

There's also helping with the family retail market sales which keeps James busy. The Dunn family has several small market locations and almost every family member plays a role in keeping them running smoothly.

They make cider in the fall, sell vegetables, raise most of the bull calves as steer and raise their own feed crops.

With all the work, he doesn't have much time for attempting too many new things.

But, although he's been in business a relatively short time, Dunn is also working to get his herd to be completely registered.

When he started, he bought cows and heifers from different sources, but the main supplier was a Lancaster herd, from which Dunn bought 21 cows. Most of his cows were grade, but good producers. The registered animals he purchased are the ones he is following and developing.

With those, he uses the best



James Dunn wipes off teats after treating with an iodine solution before milking. He also treats after milking. He said reducing somatic cell count and maintaining healthy udders is reason enough for the practice.

bulls he can, taking advantage of a mating selection program offered by his artificial insemination service company. He said it turns out that the sires he's been using are almost all among the top 100 for index.

Also, he's been flushing and using the grade cows to carry embryos of the registered cows. Eventually, he wants to start marketing genetics.

Not everything has gone his way. Last year he lost three cows

which had been making 30,000 pound lactations. "That hurts," he said. "We never found out why they died."

He said the herd gets its regular health checkups and they are all vaccinated against the usual bovine diseases.

He said that the bottom line is a consistency in himself, which gives him a better chance of consistency in the animals and in the milk tank.

All American Hosts Three Breed Sales

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Now is the time for breeders to consider making consignments to three outstanding cattle sales that will be conducted during the 29th Annual All-American Dairy Show held in September at the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg.

Brown Swiss enthusiasts will kick off the week with the Invitational Brown Swiss Sale sponsored by the Pennsylvania State Brown Swiss Association on Monday, Sept. 21.

Consignments are now being taken by the sale chairman, Dean Daubert, of McElhattan, PA. Daubert can be reached at (717)769-7324 or contact Brown Swiss Enterprises of Beloit, Wisconsin at (608)365-4474. Don't hesitate, because this sale has an outstanding national reputation and will help you merchandise your Brown Swiss.

The Pennsylvania Elite Ayrshire Sale is seeking consignments for their sale to be held on Tuesday, Sept. 22. This sale is sponsored annually by the Pennsylva-

nia Ayrshire Breeders' Association. Interested Ayrshire breeders wanting to consign an animal are encouraged to contact John Rogers, sale chairman, at (717)935-5242. This sale boasts a tradition of excellence and is one opportunity to showcase your cattle you won't want to miss.

Last year, hundreds of Holstein breeders attended the Eastern National Holstein Sale at the Pennsylvania All-American Dairy Show. This year the sale will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 23 in the Small Arena. Sponsored by the Pennsylvania Holstein Association, breeders interested in making a consignment can contact Bill Nichol at (814)234-0364.

The Pennsylvania All-American Dairy Show is proud to cooperate with these breed organizations in hosting these outstanding dairy cattle sales. Be sure to participate in these and all the activities of the All-American September 21-24, 1992 in Harrisburg. For more information call (717)787-2905.



James Dunn feeds hay, a mixture of Reeds Canary Grass and Timothy, to his Holsteins. They get two servings of the grass hay and two servings of second cutting alfalfa plus three servings of TMR every day.