

Hunsbergers To Host Somerset County Day At Farm

GAY BROWNLEE

Somerset Co. Correspondent

DAVIDSVILLE (Somerset Co.) — Like a freight train about to roll into his station, the 11th annual Somerset County Day at the Farm is sweeping upon Bill Hunsberger in a hurry. It is on Sunday, June 19, and Father's Day to boot.

"I don't know," sighs the slightly overwhelmed dairy farmer, "I'm getting knots in my stomach. There's so much to do," he says.

He's right, of course and speaks from experience that has no doubt dimmed a tad from when he and wife, Jeannette, hosted the first event back in 1984. He recalls some 800 visitors attended.

Sponsored by the Somerset County Farmers' Association, the free event has grown in both scope and attendance throughout the intervening years. Officials now charge \$1 for vehicle parking space.

The popular hay bale toss and milk chugging contest, barn tours, hay rides, sheep shearing and milking demonstration and petting zoo promise an afternoon of great country fun.

Square dancers will be swingin' their partners to Day at the Farm "mood music." And folks really should demand a fiddle performance by 16-yr. old Matt Hunsberger, the eldest of the six kids. Matthew can really saw the fiddle!

Matt's so darn talented with the violin that he wound up a member of the Johnstown Youth Symphony Orchestra some five years ago and they've still got him.

Commodity queens and princesses will help the various agricultural organizations promote farming through food samples, fine exhibits and many door prize drawings. Day at the Farm, is after all, an educational event to teach non-farm consumers about dairy, beef, lamb, vegetable, maple and other agriculture products. Agriculture is the leading industry in Somerset County.

An added treat at the Hunsbergers is the cemetery on the hill in which the remains of Joseph Johns I, 1749-1813, are interred. He was the founder of Johnstown, a well-known city located just a few miles north of the Johns Cemetery.

Visitors to Day at the Farm may visit the cemetery which will be staffed that day. Doubtless they will find themselves so engrossed by the glorious panorama of country-side and the history of the deceased Johns family they'll linger and linger.

Headstones in the cemetery are in sequence. Each male was named Joseph Johns until the

fourth generation, when for unknown reasons, the male descendent was named Sem. Joseph was again the name of the fifth and sixth generation males. Buried beside them are their wives.

Hunsbergers, by purchasing the farm in 1983, have broken a six-generation Johns family ownership. The sixth generation Joseph Johns is 81. With his sister, they still live in another house on the farm. According to Hunsberger, Joe, the last male in the line, never married and so leaves no male heir to continue the Johns name and tradition.

A Bucks County native, Hunsberger worked in Blair Co. before the Johns farm opportunity opened to him.

He and Jeannette's other offshoots are Nick, Butch, Reuben, Lydia and Olivia. The kids are in 4-H, American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO), church and school activities. They all attend the Johnstown Christian School and all participate in the Kaufman Mennonite Church.

Hunsberger, and Dwight Speigle, his only full time employee, are busy with a dairy herd of some 130 Holsteins, including dry cows. Crops of corn, barley and alfalfa are raised, filling three silos that are staggered in size.

Two Harvestores flank the older concrete silo and hold haylage, high moisture corn and other grasses, much of what is raised on rented acreage. The farm itself has some 114 acres so Hunsberger rents another 340. He also has cows at two locations, some six miles apart, he said.

In the barn whirring fans ensure a comfortably cool environment for the cows, which Hunsberger says are allowed outside for exercise an hour each day.

He says his theory is if the cows are fed right in the barn there's no need to pasture them. And he's a die-hard believer in that theory. Right now the rolling herd average is around 22,415, he said.

Hunsberger listens as Speigle talks about a new problem in a day of many. "I'm gonna' take an early retirement," Speigle says in mock seriousness.

A past president of both the Somerset Co. Farmers' Asso. as well as the DHIA, Hunsberger has no wish to hold high office in the organizations to which he belongs.

"I stay clear of those now," he says, "there's a lot of calling around and I get tired of it."

He's also a member of Johnstown Christian's school board, a church youth leader and in the county Holstein Asso.



The Hunsberger family together on the lawn. From left, Butch, Matt, Nick (back), Bill, Reuben, Lydia, Olivia, and Jeannette (back).



The Bill Hunsberger farm buildings.

The history of his farm is precious to Hunsberger. It's something he intends to preserve. For that the Johns survivors can be glad, as can the historians of Somerset and Cambria Counties.

Although she works parttime in a doctor's office, Jeannette, a licensed practical nurse, is always transporting some member of her very active group to an event.

The kids were delighted when Speigle and wife, Lori, gave them a soccer net for their Christmas gift. Now they hold sibling competitions in their own yard.

Hunsberger's farm is a mile from Route 403 in Davidsville, south of Johnstown but north of Somerset, off Route 219. Leave four-lane 219 at the Davidsville-Hollsopple exit, on Route 403. Turn at Davidsville's only traffic light according to Day at the Farm signs.



The burial site of Joseph Johns I, the founder of Johnstown, will be part of the visit to the Somerset County Day at the Hunsberger farm on June 19.

Chronic BVD 2 Threatens, It's Not Just BVD

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— The state secretary of agriculture this week issued an advisory statement to beef cattle and dairy herd owners to have their animals vaccinated against a new, acute form of Bovine Viral Diarrhea (BVD) called "Type 2 BVD." BVD is potentially deadly to bovines, but cannot be contracted by humans or other species of farm and domestic animals. However, deer and elk are susceptible.

Symptoms of infection can include fever, loss of appetite, depression, diarrhea, abortion, and in severe cases death. It has been reported to kill up to half an unprotected herd upon initial infection.

Although recommendations to vaccinate and increase farm biosecurity against BVD were made last week by the Field Investigation Unit (FIU) of the state Animal Diagnostic Laboratory at Penn State, there is additional information in Wolff's statement.

The Penn State FIU is part of a new statewide animal disease diagnostic program that was designed to pick up slack in preventative and emergency animal disease diagnosis and control. In its report last week, no mention was made of a potentially deadlier form of BVD.

Also last week, because the disease has been found in counties in the northwestern part of the state, the Pennsylvania Holstein Associ-

ation canceled its annual Western Junior Judging School to minimize chances for exposure to the disease.

(Its Eastern Junior Judging School, scheduled for June 29-30, as of presstime was still planned. For more information, call the PHA at (814) 234-0364.)

In his advisory, Wolff said farmers should tighten biosecurity practices "because the disease has been confirmed in herds in northwestern Pennsylvania and is suspected in animal illnesses at two farms in Lancaster County."

In the release, Wolff stated, "Testing has confirmed that animals were infected with acute BVD on farms in Crawford and Mercer counties.

"Considering normal large-scale movements of animals from sales and from farm-to-farm, it would be prudent for farmers in all counties to institute precautions against BVD. Many veterinarians advise vaccinating herds to prevent infection."

Herds in Erie, Crawford, Mercer and Lancaster counties are under investigation, according to Wolff.

According to the release, "While a mild form of BVD is commonly found in many herds in the United States, recent investigations suggest cattle herds are being exposed to a more acute form of the disease.

"Cattle owners should minimize contact with other herds and consult veterinary practitioners for

advise regarding protective measures. Persons having contact with cattle exhibiting signs of, or known to have been exposed to, BVD should avoid contact with other herds and should change clothing and footwear before leaving affected farms.

"Otherwise people who might deliver farm foods or supplies also should minimize their travel between herds and employ biosecurity precautions that would help stop spread of the disease," according to the news release.

