

Lancaster Holstein Enthusiasts Tour Chester County

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HOMEVILLE (Chester Co.) — A review of the history of successful Pennsylvania Holstein breeding operations and a presentation about strategies for the future were among the many highlights of last week's Lancaster County Holstein Club tour into Chester County.

About 75 Holstein enthusiasts participated in a planned bus tour of five registered Holstein herds in Chester County, and the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine's New Bolton Center. They also had dinner at the West Fallowfield Christian Day School, in Atglen, on the return trip.

A major purpose for conducting the tours is to allow Holstein enthusiasts to see daughters of certain sires in various stages of maturity, but especially in milk.

Another important reason for the tours is to allow participants to see different operations, different equipment uses, setups, feeds, and to hear successful people explaining some of their decisions, strategies, and outlook.

Tours also provide an increasingly rare opportunity for dairy people to talk to each other.

The farms visited included Dunwood Farms, Melwood Farm, Caernarvon Farm, Glen Valley Farm, and Wallmoore Farm.

While all farms exhibited well-functioning operations and interesting aspects, of special note were the tours of the Dunwood and Melwood farms.

Those familiar with the Dunwood prefix would also recognize that the family farm, started in 1953 by Jacob Stoltzfus, developed the Golden cow family, and had a widely known herd dispersal in 1979 that featured the sale of

Dunwood Chief Carmel and 60 animals from the Golden family.

The farm is now under the operation of Jacob's son Alvin, while Jacob's other son Melvin Stoltzfus operates nearby Melwood Farm, with a herd that currently leads Chester County in average production.

In fact although the two operations are separate, Alvin and Melvin work together on certain projects.

At Dunwood Farm, Alvin introduced his family — wife Lily, daughter Rose, and their four boys, Marling, Steve, Nathan and Dwayne — and then introduced the farm's mission statement.

Alvin said that he and his wife came up with the mission statement, and they have it posted on the wall of the barn office.

The statement is three-part: "to properly manage and maintain all that God has entrusted in our care; to provide a comfortable standard of living, job opportunities and character training for the family; and to produce a product (milk and breeding stock) that will benefit others."

Jacob talked about starting with 16 cows and a farmstead that had a bit of timber on it. The wood was used and sold and when Jacob was done with cutting wood, they decided to call the farm "Dunwood" as in "done with the wood."

He said he went to Canada to look for a brood cow that had at least three generations of production of 4 percent butterfat and that had classified as Good Plus, or Good for three generations.



Melvin Stoltzfus discusses some of his management strategies which have enabled the Melwood Farm to have the Chester County herd with the highest rolling herd average and perhaps one of the lowest overheads.



The Dunwood herd is calm despite a group of about 75 people walking around them in the simple, but effective tie-stall with a smooth, tiled manger with hay and TMR.



A group of heifer calves at Dunwood Farm do well in with these bedded pack setups. Unseen, in the front of the stall is a series of wooden head gates.



Jacob Stoltzfus talks about how he and his wife started the Dunwood Holstein farm and how he developed the famous Golden cow family line.

Jacob said that he breeds for conformation and type and that getting milk production is a matter for management.

He said that, at the time he paid \$700 for the cow which he said would translate in today's prices to spending about \$2,500 to \$3,000.

The first calf from that brood cow was Dunwood Daisy, which became the farm's first Gold Medal dam. He then added Golden to the herd. Since then he had nine generations of Gold Medal cows in that line.

He said his bull selection strategy was to use bulls which balanced out the existing cow conformation. For example, he said that a short length cow would be crossed with a bull that would correct for longer length.

According to Jacob, when he was breeding, artificial insemination was just getting started and he wanted Ragapple sons, but settled for grandsons and greatgrandsons. He said that he would keep crossing back on those bulls with the succeeding generations.

When the barn was expanded from 27 cows to the current 60-stall barn, he got Dunwood Chief Carmel, daughter of his Cola

cow, an Apollo daughter. Carmel then gave Jacob his Coco cow, all of which became fairly well known.

Carmel was especially recognized, as she became the first cow of the breed to have recorded five consecutive lactation productions of more than 1,100 pounds of butterfat. She was sold for \$53,000 during the 1982 All-American to Dr. Alan McCauley, owner of Em-Tran, and embryo-transfer business in Elizabethtown. A photograph of Carmel is in the Dunwood barn office.

According to Alvin, he got married in 1974 and was working for his father who gave him the option of cash or calf-in payment.

By the time of the 1979 herd dispersal, Alvin had 20 animals in the herd that he was able to sell and recoup his earnings. Alvin said Melvin got started by using surplus heifers from the Dunwood farm and those became his foundation cows, up until Melvin had his own dispersal seven years ago.

Melvin then did church-related work for three years, before getting back into dairying four years ago.

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Lots of high-producing, clean, groomed cows with good udder attachments, good rear ligaments, nice legs and feet, and lots of dairy character, make up the Dunwood herd.