

# Tom Wisner And His Cattle Are On A Winning Streak

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WESTMINSTER, Md. —

When it comes to cattle, Tom Wisner has learned a lot over the years. He began as a novice nine-year-old with two "stockyard" calves. Today, at the age of 20, he raises, breeds and shows Simmental cattle from his Carroll County Maryland base. They have become an important part of his everyday life.

Tom Wisner of Taylorsville, began showing cattle as a 4-H'er. Since that time, he has traveled to eight states exhibiting his Simmental, earning a name for himself along the way. Last year he won Grand Champion nine times with his purebred Simmental heifers. At two of those shows he also took Reserve Grand Champion. What began as a hobby has become a special part of life for this energetic young man.

"We took him over to the (Westminster) stockyards when he started," says Tom's father, Bob Wisner. "Back then, we bought two calves for \$160. Both of them were on bottles. Later we found out that one of them was a granddaughter of Lafayette, one of the first Simmental bulls in the United States."

"I just kind of ran into the breed by accident," Tom Wisner said. "But, when I found out what breed I had I started sending for information and learning more about them. It got me excited because I found out there weren't many Simmental around."

That first year he showed his heifers, 1985, at the age of nine, Tom Wisner won Champion Commercial Heifer at the Carroll County 4-H and FFA Fair.

Over the years Wisner has built his herd of cattle up to 40 head. He says he buys one or two new heifers a year, although he has not returned to the stockyard. These days, Tom Wisner only buys from reputable Simmental breeders. He breeds 20 to 25 heifers a year, selling most of the offspring. He says he bought several from a New York breeder just this year.

When asked how he has developed his line of Simmentals, Wisner says it is through selective breeding and knowing what to keep and what to sell. "First, you gotta know how to pick 'em," he admits. "Calves change a lot as they grow and mature. I look at how they walk. How are they on their legs and feet? I look for the thickness of muscle. They'll change 100 different ways as they grow." After he has decided which calves to keep, Wisner says from there on out it is all in the feed and care.

Wisner says that he feeds a commercial premixed total mixed ration and a good alfalfa or alfalfa mix hay.

Tom Wisner says his fiancée, Melanie Schwedes, is as involved in the breed as he is. She keeps all the records, and "she gets into studying genetics. When we pick our bulls for breeding each year we make a list of all the bulls each of us like. Then, we go through and nit-pick over each one until we have it down to the 5 or 6 we want to use. "Then," Wisner says, "we have to match them up to each cow (to come up with the most desirable traits in the calf). Depending on what each cow needs, we find it in the bull," Wisner adds. He relies mostly on artificial insemination in his breeding pro-



Tom's Simmental cattle have won awards in eight states.

gram, although he does keep a "clean-up" bull for those artificial inseminations that just don't take for one reason or another.

Although Simmental cattle come in black, reds, blonde and smokey grey, Wisner says he prefers a deep cherry red heifer, or a black. "They are the two preferred colors in the breed," Wisner says. Then he admits that one of his Grand Champion heifers is a smokey grey. "She just has so much going for her that the color doesn't matter as much," he says.

"About five years ago I got to the point where I couldn't keep them all here on my dad's place, Wisner says of his cattle. With his father's five-acre Taylorsville farmette overflowing with cattle, Tom Wisner went searching for other facilities. Today, he still keeps his top show cattle on his dad's farmette and leases an additional 25 acres of land with run-in-

sheds (in New Windsor) for the rest.

According to Wisner, "It is hard to make a living with purebred cattle," so he works full time for his father in the family business, Wisner's Clean Sweep, Inc., a lawn care service.

Wisner says that a lot goes into the shows. "A week before each show you start clipping (hair)," he says, "and you are still clipping up until just before you go into the ring." But baths and clipping aren't all that goes into preparing a "prima donna" heifer for the show ring. There is spray paint for black hooves, hair glue to get the hair to stand up so the top-line on the cow (the line of hair along the back) looks straight. He says Zoom Bloom is a shampoo that, when blow dried, makes the hair "bloom" with fuller body.

White must be white, black must be black, red must be red and

dirt must be gone, when a heifer struts into the show ring. A full showcase of trophies, silver plates, ribbons and photos, prove that Wisner's cattle are at their best when they enter the ring.

"I'm half-afraid to go back into the show ring this year," Wisner said. "I won too much last year. It won't happen again," he predicts.

But this young man would not be disappointed if he and his cattle kept on as they have been . . . winning. "I want to cut back to 15 or so head," he says of the future. "I want to aim for quality, not quantity."

Although Tom Wisner says he does not think he will ever make a living with his cattle, he admits that they will always be an important part of his life.

Tom Wisner's Simmental cattle have won championship trophies in eight states.

## Never Too Old To Play Ball

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff  
ELIZABETHTOWN (Lancaster Co.) — You're never too old to play softball.

That's the philosophy of a bunch of guys — mostly farmers — who formed an over-60 softball team.

"We're just a bunch of guys who love to play ball and got too old,"

said Roy Sauder of Mount Joy.

The 14 team members range in age from 61 to 72.

They play in a Modified Pitch Softball League with eight other county teams.

"Each team is allowed one member who is 59; all the others need to be over 60," Sauder said.

These guys prove that muscle



Eight teams make up the Senior Citizens Modified Pitch Softball League. Modified rules help avoid contact injuries. These team members, who are mostly retired farmers, play at the Sam Snyder farm in E-town.



These guys might be over 60, but they still play a good game of ball. Seated from left are Roy Sauder, Les Hawthorne, Wilmer Nissley, Harold Musser, and Cassel Mumma. Standing from left are Harry Hershey, Andrew Hess, Martin Wiltman, and Wilbur Ebersole. Missing from the photo are Jim Garber, Clair Hilsher, Robert Wolgemuth, and Fred Hershey.

power is still there despite the age. Their hits are powerful and their throws are forceful.

But some modifications are made because of age.

Members are allowed to overrun every base, not just first base and they don't need to tag home plate.

"That's so we don't injure ourselves by colliding with the catcher. We do what we can to avoid contact injuries," a team

member said.

The teams compete every Monday night. Their home field is located at the Sam Snyder farm in Elizabethtown.

"Some guys try out for team, but get so stiff and sore they quit," Sauder said.

"For most of us, it's a lot of fun. As long as we're in good health, we'll still play ball," he said.

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