



Home for Pennsylvania FFA president Joy Hess, kneeling, is in Gettysburg, where the family works together to farm 1,000 acres and milk 350 cows three times daily. A new barn and a double 10 herringbone milking parlor is being built with plans to increase the herd size to 500 milking cows plus replacements. From left are Jaylene and John Hess with daughter Jaleesa, Dale, Bonnie and John Hess, and Josie holding Hannah, 7 months. Another daughter Jocelyn, 2, is seated on the ground with Joy.

Joy Hess Heads Pennsylvania FFA's 8,000 Members

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GETTYSBURG (Adams Co.)
—Although she is the youngest of three siblings who are leaving their mark on the dairy industry, Joy Noel Hess's imprint on agriculture's future promises to be impressive.

The 19-year-old has already been appointed a hefty responsibility. She is the recently elected president of the 8,000-member Pennsylvania FFA.

The daughter of John and Bonnie Hess is no stranger to hard work. She is in charge of the night shift, milking 350 cows, and in charge of calf feeding and the breeding program on parents, Bonnie and John Hess, farm in Gettysburg.

Joy's hours in the barn are from 8:30 p.m. to 2 a.m.

"I like those hours because they're cooler in the summer," she said.

Originally the family milked only Holsteins, but when Bonnie was 8 years old, she wanted a Brown Swiss as her 4-H project.

"Dad and my sister liked them a lot too, because Brown Swiss are a lot calmer than Holsteins," Joy said.

She now has 30 registered Brown Swiss on test.

The Hesses live on a 1,000-acre farm complex named JoBo Holstein Farm. When her dad purchased the farm in 1971, only one barn was on the property. A corn shed, two freestall barns, a hospital barn, a calf barn, equipment shed,

and commodity shed have been built. In the process of being built is another freestall barn and a double 10 herringbone milking parlor expandable to 18 units. When completed, the Hesses hope to milk 500 cows using only one person.

Her dad said of the family's continual expansion, "To succeed you must be efficient and competitive. It takes dedication by putting forth our best efforts."

Joy is the only sibling still living at home with her parents, but the others live nearby, and most are involved in helping on the farm. Sister Jenny's husband Dale, a brother John, and a sister Josie works full time on the farm. Three other full-time and four part-time employees also work on the farm.

Calves are housed in the 64 calf hutches on the grounds and then moved to one of the 69 box stalls. Two-year-old cows are kept in separate facilities instead of being incorporated into the cow herd.

"They do better when they're not pushed around by older, mature cows," Joy said. "I consider 2-year-olds to be the same as teenagers who are rebelling."

A sprinkling system that automatically goes on every five minutes out of every 15 is used to keep cows cool. After the sprinklers were installed in the freestall barn, the family noticed the cows liked it so much they often stood in the headlocks just to get wet.

A manure system holds the manure until it is emptied every season.

Joy said that she took over the farm's breeding program two years ago when she became fascinated with genetics while doing a lot of livestock judging through 4-H and FFA. Through FFA she qualified for national competition and placed in the top 10 in livestock judging.

Joy selects sires to produce fancy show cows. While most of her choices please her, she admits that

some combinations produce disappointing results.

Joy takes her cows to about six shows annually. Her sister Josie and another part-time helper assist a bit in the show ring, but most of her siblings don't enjoy showing like she does.

Because of FFA leadership responsibilities, Joy knows that she will miss some show dates this year. "But FFA comes first. Showing cows will be there next year," Joy said.

At this point, Joy doesn't plan to go to college. Instead, she'd like to own her own dairy—a 60-cow herd of both Brown Swiss and Holsteins because they push the milk out, she said.

"And, I've always dreamed of being a professional classifier for the Brown Swiss breed," she said.

In her last year of 4-H, Joy was president of the 4-H Dairy Club and served as a judging coach. She was thrilled that her team advanced to state level. She was also showman and fitting champion. Her cow won grand champion at state level and she was named the outstanding member of 4-H.

"It was hard to walk away from 4-H, but achieving all that helped me feel like I had finished up," she said.

Joy is now a leader of the 4-H Dairy Club. She is also president of the Junior Holstein Club and in 1995 was named outstanding intermediate member of the state. She is a member of the Pennsylvania Brown Swiss Association and was in charge of the Pennsylvania page for the newsletter until appointed state FFA president.

In June, she completed a year as the Adams County Dairy Princess, something that all of her sisters had also achieved.

Although Joy learned a lot through the dairy princess program, she said, "I never could get used to wearing a crown and I don't

especially like dressing up." She feels much more comfortable in FFA garb of dark blue jacket, skirt or trousers.

A 1996 graduate of New Oxford High School, Joy gained experience in leadership by filling offices of both vice president and president of the FFA.

Of being selected as president statewide, Joy said, "I'm really honored to hold that office. I owe a lot to my high school adviser Brian Campbell. He really pushes leadership and people skills."

Joy is the first person from her school to be appointed president. Six years ago, a state chaplain was selected from New Oxford.

"I wanted to be a state officer, but I didn't think that I'd be president," Joy said. "When they announced my name, I froze to my chair. If there was ever a time that I almost passed out, it would have been then," Joy said.

Growing up on a farm, Joy believes, "I learned a different view of life than most of the kids my age. I learned the value of responsibility and work."

Milking three times a day has proved a plus for JoBo Farm.

"The somatic cell count dropped and mastitis is no longer a problem," she said. "At first the herd average dropped but now it's at 23,000 pounds."

BST is not used indiscriminately, but on 25 to 45 percent of herd, depending on the condition of the individual cows. Josie, who is in charge of the daytime milking shift, makes a list of the cows she believes qualifies, and Joy selects from that list.

Her older sister Jenny, a former extension agent, now works for a feed company. Another sister Jane works for Mid-Atlantic Milk Marketing Association. Josie, who is married to Mike Risser and have

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"Sara is my pride and joy. The last of my 4-H projects is one of the top 10 producing Brown Swiss in Pennsylvania and scored 92 in classification," said Joy. She was instrumental in getting the family to incorporate Brown Swiss into the registered Holstein herd when she selected a Brown Swiss for her first 4-H project. Now 30 Brown Swiss are on test among the 350 cows milked on the family farm.