

Lancaster Holstein Tour Group Sees Many Excellent Cows

EVERETT NEWSWANGER
Managing Editor

GETTYSBURG (Franklin Co.) — A congenial group of registered Holstein breeders left the Farm and Home Center in Lancaster Tuesday morning for the annual tour sponsored by the local Holstein Club. Even though the day got progressively colder and windier, the warmth of fellowship and the visiting with fellow dairymen in Franklin and Adams Counties made for an enjoyable day for all 41 of us on the tour bus. Our hosts showed us an incredible number of high producing and high scoring cows.

The first stop was Bo-Joy Farm where the John and Bonnie Hess family have built a new milking facility and free-stall barn to expand the operation for their five children, in-laws, and grandchildren.

They started milking in the double 10 (expandable to 18) milking parlor in September of last year. Since then, they have increased the herd from 240 cows to about 450 cows with an eye to reach 500 cows. The herd average is 23,000m, and the herd is divided into various feeding groups according to age and production. In addition to a registered and grade Holstein herd with 65 percent registered, a few notable Brown Swiss cows are in the herd.

The calves are raised to nine months at the home farm and then moved to a neighboring farm to grow into replacement heifers. The larger operation has realized some efficiencies of scale that include a lower electricity bill. In the milking parlor one person can do the milking. On 3x, the parlor is utilized efficiently with a two-hour clean-up time between milkings.

They farm 900 acres.

The beautiful herd at Penn Gate Farm, owned by Steve and Chris Wood, catches your eye as you walk into the tie-stall barn. Tall, strong cows with picture udders not only show excellent type, their records posted above the stalls include many above 30,000m, with daily production records up to 169 pounds.

Noted for their show herd, Penn Gate's most recent honors include the All American Best Three Females that were present in the barn.

Steve said they flush several top cows for their own herd improvement but have somewhat backed off from contracts because of the length of time it takes to fulfill the contracts.

About one-fourth of the herd is classified excellent. A barn fire several years ago burned down into the stable from the upper floor and has made the Woods very conscious of the possibility of losing the whole herd along with the barn. A neighbor came home from his off-farm night job three hours earlier than usual and noticed the smoke coming from the barn. He called the fire company and awakened the Woods. They were able to lead the cows to safety, but today, a fire alarm system is in place to give warning both in the barn and in the house.

The neighbor received a registered calf from one of Woods' best cow families as a gift for saving the cows.

At Rice-Crest Farm, brothers Dale and Fred Rice milk 265 cows that average over 22,000m. They are especially noted for two cow families that form the basis of their ET and embryo exporting business. Eight daughters of Luke out of Ned Boy full sisters are an impressive part of the herd.

Of course, the Rices are the breeders of the Tesk Terry and the newly released Marty bulls. The brothers are in partnership with their families, and the herd size and the acres farmed has steadily increased. Machinery repair work and building construction and repair are done with the help of their four full-time employees. Because of the lay of the farm land, more than half of the manure is spread by irrigation directly onto the fields.

The cows are milked in a free-stall and milking parlor set-up. The Lancaster group pulled into the farm at noon behind another tour bus that included the Lebanon County Holstein tour group. Both

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Walnut Lane Farm.



The Lancaster tour caught up with the Lebanon tour at Rice-Crest Farm.



Joy Hess talks about some of their top cows with Lancaster tour group.



The calf barn at Rice-Crest.