Pennsylvania Simmental Genetics Make New Home In Poland

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ment." So far, the Ostaszewski family has been very receptive.

"The family wants to be on the forefront of raising red beef cattle in Poland," she said.

However, the challenges of exporting beef genetics to the Ostaszewski family proved formidable.

Bill Flagg first became involved with the project in the summer of 1997, when a friend of his met Joe Czudak, who went to the same church in Philadelphia as Matthew Ostaszewski. Matthew's family had purchased the farm in Poland and wanted to help restore the farm to productive use.

Matthew's plan was simple: use western genetics to literally "beef up" the Polish herd, composed mostly of cows of mixed and indistinctive genetics, used primarily for milk production.

Embryo calves from this herd would become the foundation herd for the family.

Karen noted that the family believes demand for beef from this herd would be "great." The shipment was a full year in the making. "There were times when we almost gave up," Karen said. But they persisted.

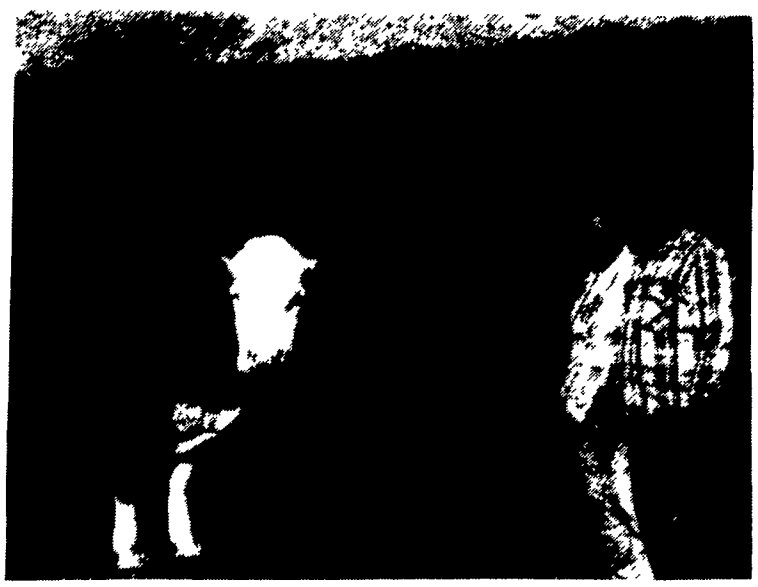
First, all health requirements had to be met. People who could thaw the genetics from liquid nitrogen freezing had to be available in Poland. Health requirements established by the Polish Ministry of Agriculture had to be satisfied. Shipping arrangements had to be made to accommodate the tank of frozen nitrogen. Permits had to be secured and import duty paid.

Bill noted that the Ostaszewski's wanted to hand-transport the embryos and semen by plane. Hand-transportation could prove difficult with the headaches of customs and the lack of insurance. However, Bill was able to convince them to allow a commercial freight company to deliver the material to Poland. Through the assistance of Mower and Sam Hayes, Pennsylvania secretary of agriculture, who visited Poland, the Flaggs were successful in transporting the material.

There were 20 embryos in three separate lots. They were:

• Lot 1: Sire: Yust-Pol Homesteader. Dam: PMF Athena.

• Lot 2: Sire: Switz Pol Red M785. Dam: PMF Cameo.



The bulk of the embryos were from Athena, the Flagg's 19- year-old fullblood cow whose dam was imported from the Fleckveih region of southern Germany in the mid-1970s. According to Karen Flagg, Athena's sons have consistently excelled when placed on test at the Penn State Meat Animal Evaluation Center.

In mid-October, shipments of fullblood Simmental embryos and semen were made to the Ostaszewski family from Warren Point, a fullblood Simmental cow/calf farm operated by the Bill and Karen Flagg family in Elverson.

• Lot 3: Sire: Switz Polled Progress. Dam: PMF Athena.

The semen lot was from a bull, PMF Abraham, son of PMF Athena, according to Bill.

Simmental cattle originated in Switzerland.

The purebred line means that Simmental genetics were crossbred to another breed. However, the Flaggs maintain a 100 percent fullblood line — meaning the genetics have never been mixed with any other breed.

The fullblood Simmentals are a more highly muscled, red in color, and are excellent foragers, noted Bill.

A couple of decades ago, when the Flaggs began their cow/calf operation, they become "sold on fullblood Simmentals because they forage extremely well, they're not extreme in size," said Karen. "But they're full of meat and gain very efficiently." Karen noted the Simmentals produce lots of red meat, are easy to handle, and are quiet, gentle animals.

"We're breeding to create a good product and a really functional female," Karen said.

The last three years, Bill noted, Simmentals have achieved top gain at the Penn State performance tests. Altogether breeders must recognize these factors above any kind of "beauty contests," he said.

Recently a family in Gap purchased eight head of bred animals from the Flaggs to start a small herd.

The Flaggs moved to Elverson from their former farm, Pickering Meadow Farm, in Schuylkill Township near Phoenixville.

They began raising Simmentals in 1979 after responding to an ad for Simmental beef in *Lancaster Farming*, Bill noted. In 1994, when they moved to Warren Point, they maintained about 50 brood cows and 25 calves. Now they maintain about 40 brood cows and 15 calves on the farm.

Bill and Karen Flagg farm with their two sons, Dean, 14 and Chris, 12. Altogether they care for about 112 acres, all pasture or hay. They maintain about 30 acres for rotationally intensive grazing (25 acres of sacrifice area in the winter) and about 45 acres of hay. The hay includes an alfalfa mixture and the remainder an orchard/timothy/ryegrass mixture.

Bill said that he gets about four cuttings of alfalfa per year and two off the regular grass hay mixture.

On the rotationally grazed lots, the paddocks range from ¾ of an acre to two acres. Most are ¾ to one acre in size. The grazing areas contain a mix or rye and clover and other grasses.

The paddocks are fenced with 12½ gauge aluminum wire, "visible to the cattle and deer," Bill said. The wire is mounted to blue recycled vinyl fence.

The farm name, Warren Point, has been in existence since the Flaggs purchased the farm, at one time owned by the Pew family.

The homestead was built in 1756 and was an "iron plantation." According to Karen, the name "Warren Point" probably originated when a bell mounted on top of the older section of the house was used to warn the people of the iron quarry of approaching indians coming up the valley. So the name "warning point," shortened to "Warren Point," stuck.

Composting: Least-Cost Method

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acids work. In Georgia, a layer operation was using sodium or potassium hydroxide as a base to digest feathers off the birds. He also reviewed a place in Texas where birds from a broiler were rendered using a fermentation "slurry." In the end, the product included 37 percent crude protein, 28 percent fat, and the products were recycled back to feed ingredients (to the tune of 5-10 percent of the total diet).

Penn State conducted its own research using sodium hydroxide and enzymes to rid birds of the feathers and to render the carcasses. The product provided little spoilage, it eliminated the bad bacteria, and "pickled essentially pretty good," Patterson said.

In the study, there was evidence of destruction of protein. But the by-product cold be fed to baby chicks and cockerels, noted Patterson.

An ag economist from Alabama researched the economics of the various disposal methods available to producers. He pointed out that it would cost about 3.68 per hundredweight to use disposal pits, $4.88 per hundredweight for large bin disposal, $8.92 per hundredweight for incineration, $4.55 per hundredweight for fermentation, and $11.41 per hundredweight for refrigeration.

Minicomposting was the least expensive, at $3.50 per hundredweight.

Producers must understand "there are some challenges out there," said Patterson. "There are some birds that need to be disposed of.

"These issues are critical and close to proximity situations," he said, "certainly like we have here in Lancaster County. The public is going to be looking at how these are handled."

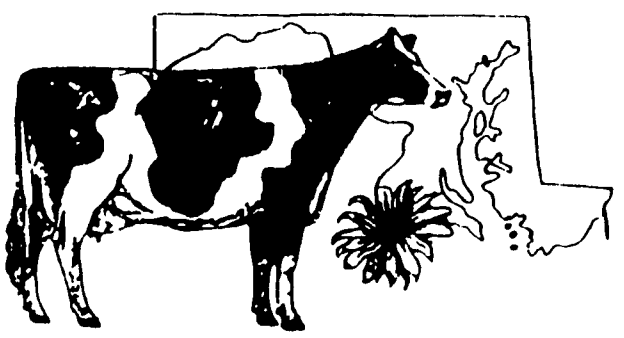
PEQAP Update

Dr. David Kradel, poultry health consultant and coordinator of the Pennsylvania Egg Quality Assurance Program (PEQAP), informed those at the seminar Monday about the recent meeting of the PEQAP Executive Committee.

As of Monday, there were 177 premises enrolled in PEQAP, representing 284 flocks.

The Salmonella Enteritidis (SE) flock positivity rate has remained steady at 8½ to about 9 percent. But with 35 new flocks coming into the program as of October, the SE positive rate has jumped to about 13 percent, which concerns the program directors. PEQAP would like to see the rate below 8 percent.

To provide more credibility for the program, Kradel noted, one proposal was to allow the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture animal health technicians to come in to the houses on unannounced inspections. There won't be prior notifications for animal health technicians to visit premises, according to Kradel, in order to provide the maximum level of credibility to the program. The committee did not finalize anything regarding the proposal, according to Kradel, and the proposal is still up for discussion.



Five Maryland Holstein Scholarships Available

The Maryland Holstein Association is offering five scholarships to Maryland Holstein youth. A $2000 scholarship will be awarded to the Outstanding Maryland Holstein Scholar and four $750 scholarships will be presented to other deserving winners at the Maryland Holstein Convention Banquet to be held in Howard County in March 1999

A student must be attending a two-year or four-year degree granting institution in a College of Agriculture. The scholarships are available to undergraduate and graduate students who have been or are currently enrolled in a dairy project with Holstein cattle as a 4-H or FFA member.

The Outstanding Maryland Holstein Scholar award is offered to the most outstanding applicant based on scholastic achievements, 4-H/FFA, school and community activities, Holstein project activities and accomplishments, and future goals.

Applications can be obtained by contacting Arthur & Peggy Johnson at 301-972-8274 Applications must be postmarked no later than January 15, 1999 for consideration of these awards with all required information included: