

Biosecurity, Identification, Disclosure Issues At Center Of National Holstein Attention

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Editor

WEST MIDDLESEX (Mercer Co.) — Holstein breeders face a plethora of issues: the importance of Holstein ancestry identification, open disclosure, and biosecurity.

Biosecurity reigns almost at the top as one of the hottest issues today, according to James N. "Bud" Leckie, National Holstein Association president.

Leckie spoke last week during

the 88th annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Holstein Association (PHA) at the Radisson Hotel in West Middlesex.

"It may come to pass that even if the (dam's) daughter is rated Excellent, it won't bring big money as long as there isn't some assurance there's no disease in her," Leckie said.

Leckie, who grew up in Mount Vernon, Ga. and lives near the Smokey Mountains of Tennessee,

said the business is fun to be into "because there's people involved." The people we meet, Leckie noted, "is what makes the difference."

Keeping up with the breed association, the issues faced by breeders, the plunging stock market, and all the technical aspects of registration and genetic documentation is headache enough, according to the Holstein president. "I know livestock," he said. "You can get a headache just trying to keep the cattle alive."

The national association remains on pretty sound footing, Leckie noted, and plans are under way to expand the field representative staff to about 16. Though the association, like everyone else, is at the "mercy of the markets," he said, "I think to me that registering cows is the only way to go.

"If you don't know where you have been, how are you going to know where you're going to be?"

Leckie spoke about efforts to use crossbreeding to improve milking through "hybrid vigor." He views this as kind of a fad. "We can have a bigger gene pool in the Holstein breed if we do it right," said Leckie.

Biosecurity is still a big problem, with John's Disease becoming a real worry. Looking at the issue would be like watching the problems with BSE, or "mad

cow" disease, overseas. Can you image, Leckie said, what would happen to steakhouses if we had a BSE problem in the U.S.?

America has always been notorious, Leckie said, for "sitting on its hands and waiting for something, some disaster to happen." A big issue is cattle disclosure — a system to let stockyards know where the cattle are coming from. A system to track them could be in place within the next

two years, and could be part of the 2002 Farm Bill, if the associations want it.

"We want protection for us, for all of us," he said. Calling for solutions to these issues involves grass-roots involvement. "If you don't get involved," Leckie said, "you don't get much out of it."

The convention included several awards presented at a breakfast awards program.

Following are photos of various award winners.



PHA local club membership goal winners, from left, Paul Hartle, Centre/Clinton counties, and William DeHart, Butler County.



2000 All-Pennsylvania Award winners, front, from left, Linda Kisner, Clayton Wood, Emily Cloninger, and Fred Strouse. Back, from left, Gerald Kisner, Bradley Coffman, Adam Sonnen, Thomas Boyer, John Foster III, and Wayne Cessna.



2000 Progressive Genetic Herd Award winners, from left, Douglas Seipt, David Brandt, Frank Conyngham, Lori Bonzo, Myron Bonzo, Keith Decker, Michael Weimer, and Thomas Kelly.



2000 Progressive Breeder Registry Award winners, from left, David Brandt, Paul Hurtle, Vernon Yoder, Douglas Fiely, Debra Fiely, Eleanor Kalinowski, and Diane Kalinowski.



2000 Progressive Breeder Registry Award winners, front, from left, Douglas Seipt, Jay Houser, Cindy Shaffer, Phoebe Bitler, and David Bitler. Back, from left, Kenneth Umble, Gary Lentz, Jeffrey Shaffer, and Alan Meyers.



Progressive Genetic Herd Award winners, from left, Paul Berdell, dairy manager for H.E. Heindel and Sons.; Jay Houser; Robert Mong; Sheryl Horst; Marilyn Hershey; Kendra Meyers; and Barbara Lentz.



Additional 2000 Progressive Breeder Registry Award winners, from left, Duane Hershey, Ross Snider, Lori Bonzo, Myron Bonzo, Debbie Decker, Keith Decker, Charles Bean, and Thomas Kelly.