

French 'Cheese' Breed

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Producers in that state, said Chateau, are crossing the breed with Holsteins to increase the fertility and longevity of the calves. Additionally yearling heifers are going to the feedlot and showing a two-pound-per-day growth rate and posting impressive feed conversion statistics.

Studies on milk production are in progress, he said, since this year is the first year that Normande crossbreds have reached milking age in the U.S.

"Because it is a dual-purpose breed, the animals have increased fertility and longevity and are stronger, which is why people in grazing circles are interested," Chateau said.

Crossbreeding is set to become important in the U.S. for all types of setups, however, he said. Normande crossbred offspring, believes Chateau, will be the "crosses of the future for both grazing and confinement operations."

Adding Normandes To The Herd

Arvid and Kathleen Kobosky, New Alexandria, Westmoreland County, have been in the dairy farming business for 25 years. The couple began with Jerseys, then introduced Ayrshires, then Holsteins to their herd.

Now the Kobosky's barn holds 14 different breeds of dairy cattle, many of them French or German breeds.

Kobosky started with the Normande breed to put vitality, health, and components into the herd.

"Plus I just like to be different," said Kobosky, who has been to France three times: twice for Normande conventions and once for a Tarentaise convention.

The Koboskys milk 45-50 cows with 90-100 head total. They rent their ground and buy all their feed, which consists of corn silage and baled hay. They operate with a freestall barn and milking parlor.

Eight years ago, "I saw an advertisement for semen for the breed, which was formerly imported into the U.S. strictly as beef animals," he said. "I thought, 'why couldn't I milk them?', so I got semen from a beef association."

Since the semen the association offered was geared toward the beef breeds, Kobosky is working on breeding a more ideal udder on his calves.

"They're big strong animals," said Kobosky. "They have strong chests and good feet and legs."

Temperament is another characteristic that attracts Kobosky to the breed. "They are so friendly," he said. "You can't get rid of them. When you walk through the barn they constantly have their noses in your back pocket."

All French breeds, in fact, according to Kobosky,

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