

California Jersey Breeders Meet in Hilmar

Members of the California Jersey Cattle Association met for their annual meeting on February 6, 2016, at Hilmar Cheese Company in Hilmar. They tended to organization business, honored their peers and finalized plans for the national Jersey organizations' annual meetings, to be hosted by the state this summer in San Diego.

Erick Metzger, the general manager for National All-Jersey Inc. (NAJ), was the guest speaker. Metzger reported on NAJ's testimony in conjunction with the USDA hearing to consider promulgating a Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) in California. NAJ emphasized the value of protein to the California dairy industry. If USDA recommends an FMMO for the state, NAJ urged it not adopt provisions that would lessen the value of protein producers. NAJ's testimony also argued against mandatory pooling of manufacturing milk.

Metzger gave Jersey breeders an update on the generation count suffix that will replace prefixes in the names of animals recorded in the Genetic Recovery and Jersey Expansion programs beginning in May. He also spoke about Breed Base Representation (BBR), a new genomic trait that assesses the similarity at the DNA level of a genotyped animal to breed reference groups.

Jersey breeders were brought up-to-speed on other activities of NAJ and the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA) by AJCA Director C.A. Russell, NAJ Director Mike Wickstrom and AJCA-NAJ Area Representatives Maija Haggith and Seth Israelsen.

The group reported that records for breed production and participation in all primary services were broken during 2015. Standardized production for the 113,897 lactations in the breed average climbed to 19,927 lbs. milk, 960 lbs. fat, 727 lbs. protein and 2,472 lbs. cheese. The AJCA registered 122,701 animals and



Gary de Graaf was recognized with the California Senior Breeder Award. He is flanked by 2015 California Jersey Queen Regina Pozzi and the new queen, McCalister Russell.

assigned linear scores to 119,545 cows. Some 169,913 cows in 1,165 herds were enrolled on performance programs, with REAP accounting for 64,118 cows in 986 herds. Project Equity contributions from 1,063 investors totaled \$873,195.

California Jersey breeders contributed heavily to the function of the organizations in 2015, with 37.5% of registrations and 34% of Equity revenue.

Jersey breeders were told the national Jersey organizations' budgets for 2016 are based, in part, on 127,250 registrations, 20,000 transfers, 176,000 performance program cows (172,500 REAP cows), 330,000 JerseyTags and \$945,000 in Equity revenue.

Members also heard from National Dairy Promotion and Research Board (NDB) treasurer Carol Ahlem of Hilmar. Ahlem said Dairy Management Inc., which is funded by NDB and manages the national dairy checkoff program, sponsored several recent high-visibility dairy promotions, including a commercial during Super Bowl 50 and a meet and greet with Heisman Trophy winner Troy Smith at the Tulare Farm Show as part of the Fuel Up to Play program. A float promoting dairy will be displayed in the Rose Bowl parade in January. Ahlem said DMI has developed two video programs, The Udder Truth and Acres and Avenues, to address common myths about the dairy



California Jersey Queens Pozzi and Russell present the California Junior Breeder Award to Case Kasbergen and his wife, Allison, and their daughters Kamryn, front, and Kate.

industry and help consumers reconnect with dairy farmers.

Officers elected to serve the California club were Jim Quist, Fresno, president; Brett Barlass, Hilmar, vice president; and Cathy Sanders, Hilmar, secretary. Kate Garcia, Turlock, was appointed treasurer to fill the position vacated by Nancy Miguel of Turlock. New directors elected to serve in 2016 were Gary de Graaf, Pixley; Jonathan Merriam, Hilmar; and Cathy Sanders. Grant Ahlem, Hilmar, was appointed to the board to replace retiring director Adam Van Exel of Lodi.

Breeder Awards

During the luncheon, several breeders were honored for their achievements with Registered Jerseys.

Gary de Graaf received the California Senior Breeder award. He and his wife, Donna, and son, Daniel, and his family operate Jer-Z-Boyz Ranch, a 4,000-cow Jersey dairy, in Pixley.

De Graaf is an eight-generation farmer and second-generation dairy producer who is operating a farm established by his father, Gerrit, after he emigrated from Holland in 1948. The de Graafs started with Holsteins and switched to Jerseys 21 years ago when Gary saw industry changes—declining fluid consumption and increasing product consumption in the form of cheese and yogurt—that made it beneficial to milk Jerseys.

The de Graafs purchased 1,400 Jerseys to make the switch, including a herd losing its home in Orland, Calif., and additional cattle from 13 states. The dairy has a 2015 lactation average of 18,959 lbs. milk, 960 lbs. fat and 729 lbs. protein on 593 cows and an average JPI of +56 (April 2016) on 779 cows. The dairy has received the high cheese yield award from Hilmar Cheese Company for many years.

De Graaf most appreciates a cow with high components, regular calvings, longevity and persistency. This is

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Carol Ahlem receives the California Sweetheart Award from Queens Pozzi and Russell.



Chuck Ahlem was given the California Distinguished Service Award. He is recognized by Queens Pozzi and Russell.

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exemplified through the herd's three matriarchs that placed in the lifetime production contest this year—Jer-Z-Boyz Lemvig 8853 {3}, Excellent-90%, with 281,019 lbs. milk, 12,443 lbs. fat and 9,870 lbs. protein in 4,262 days; Jer-Z-Boyz Mecca 14045 {5}, Excellent-91%, with 248,322 lbs. milk, 11,929 lbs. fat and 8,771 lbs. protein in 3,541 days; and Jer-Z-Boyz Mecca 12608 {3}, Very Good-87%, with 247,249 lbs. milk, 12,297 lbs. fat and 8,683 lbs. protein in 3,643 days. Not far behind is Jer-Z-Boyz Maximum 14157 {3}, Very Good-88%, with 204,100 lbs. milk, 10,932 lbs. fat and 8,080 lbs. protein.

Milking cows are raised in open corrals and freestall barns on two facilities. They are milked in a double-35 parallel parlor at the home farm and a double-20 parallel parlor at the rented farm, Cream Top Dairy. Heifers are raised at the home farm and two additional rented facilities. The de Graafs raise 75% of their forage needs and purchase the balance along with all concentrates. They double crop corn and wheat for silage.

The California Junior Breeder award was given to Case Kasbergen of Tulare. Kasbergen and his wife, Allison, and their daughters, Kamryn and Kate, operate Rancho Teresita Dairy in partnership with his parents, Cornell and Teri. The Kasbergens manage a mixed herd of 2,500 Jersey and 1,200 Holstein cows. The Jersey herd is enrolled on REAP and ranks among the top 25% for genetic merit with a herd average JPI of +39 (April 2016). Thirty-nine percent of the milking string has been genotyped. Five members of the herd rank on the list of the Top 500 Females for GJPI. Kash-In Jerseys has a 2015 lactation average of 20,647 lbs. milk, 1,046 lbs. fat and 782 lbs. protein on 1,013 cows.

Case is a third-generation dairy producer, following in the footsteps of his grandfather, who immigrated to the U.S. in the 1950s and started his career milking cows by hand for other dairy producers. Jerseys were added to the dairy herd at Rancho Teresita Dairy in March 2011 because they could more efficiently convert expensive feed to milk. At that point too, the Kasbergens established an in vitro fertilization (IVF) center at the farm in partnership with Trans Ova Genetics to develop elite genetics. About 1,000 members of the Jersey herd today are IVF offspring.

Jerseys were initially purchased from Brentwood Farms in Orland, Calif. Additional California purchases



Youth achievement contest winners included Regina Pozzi, left, reserve winner senior division, Kylie Konyn, center, winner intermediate division, and McCallister Russell, winner senior division.

were made from Jer-Z-Boyz Ranch and Yosemite Jerseys of Hilmar. The Kasbergens also bought Jersey herds from Quist Dairy (Jars of Clay Jerseys) in Fresno, Calif., and Dutch Valley Farms in Clovis, N.M., and a truck load of heifers from the Cedarcrest Farms sale in 2012. Several elite animals have also been purchased at The All American Jersey Sale.

Cows are housed in freestall barns and milked in a pair of double-25 parallel parlors. The initial freestall barn built in 1989 housed 1,400 cows. After three expansions over the years, the facility has a capacity of 3,700 cows. Heifers are raised at the farm as well.

Rancho Teresita Dairy encompasses 2,000 acres, with 1,800 used to raise wheat, corn and alfalfa and 280 for almond production. The Kasbergens raise all their own silage and purchase about 25% of their hay needs and all their grain.

Chuck Ahlem of Hilmar received the Distinguished Service Award. Ahlem and his family milk 6,000 Registered Jerseys on four dairies in the Hilmar area and another dairy in Livingston. Two of the dairies, Charles Ahlem Dairy and Bamboo Jerseys, rank among the top 10 in the nation for all measures of production among herds with 750 or more cows with respective 2015 lactation averages of 22,283 lbs. milk, 1,081 lbs. fat and 803 lbs. protein (2,602 cows) and 22,185 lbs. milk, 1,086 lbs. fat and 802 lbs. protein (1,251 cows).

Ahlem is a founding partner of both Jerseyland Sires and the Hilmar Cheese Company, which produces more cheese annually than any other facility in the world.

Ahlem sits on the boards of the California Dairy Council, the California Milk Advisory Committee and the Western Institute for Food Safety and Security. He was undersecretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture during the Schwarzenegger

administration and has been the dairy representative of the California Board of Food and Agriculture. He is a past president of the Merced County Farm Bureau and sat on the organization's state board. He served on the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board and chaired the California Dairy Quality Assurance Program.

He was named California State Fair Agriculturist of the Year in 2015 and will be honored with the AJCA Distinguished Service Award at the organizations' annual meetings in San Diego.

Carol Ahlem earned the Sweetheart Award. Carol and her husband, Jim, and their family milk 6,000 Registered Jerseys on three different farms in the central part of the state. The home dairy, James Ahlem Dairy, has ranked among the top 10 in the nation for all measurements of production the past two years and has a 2015 lactation average of 26,297 lbs. milk, 1,232 lbs. fat and 910 lbs. fat on 2,305 cows.

In addition to her service as treasurer and board member of the NDB, Carol is director of Emanuel Medical Center Inc. in Tulare. She also was a council member of the Cal Poly Parent Advisory Program and sat on the board of Farmology, a consumer education program founded by California Women for Agriculture. She received the California Jersey Cattle Association's Distinguished Service Award in 2008.

McCallister Russell, Hilmar, topped the senior division of the youth achievement contest and was crowned as the 2016 California Jersey Queen. The high school senior is the daughter of C.A. and Kirstin Russell. She plans to enroll in the International and Area Studies Program at the University of California-Berkeley and major in global economics.

Her herd of Registered Jerseys managed with the herd at the family farm, Yosemite Jerseys, numbers nearly 120 head. She has fared well in the show ring. She exhibited the Overall Winner of the Premier Performance Award at the All American Junior Jersey Show, KCC Applejack Hartley, in 2015 and the winner of the E. Lea Marsh Trophy at the National Jersey Jug Futurity, Free-Mar Blackstone Beeves, in 2012. Russell has placed in the Pot O'Gold Production Contest and the National Youth Production Contest many times. She topped division II of the National Youth Production Contest in 2012 with a Pot O'Gold purchase, High Lawn Artis Ginger Ale.

Russell has served her Turlock Christian School FFA chapter, which she helped to establish, as president and vice president. She has also been reporter, historian,

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sergeant of arms and junior leader for her 4-H club and is the current president of the California Junior Jersey Cattle Association.

She is class valedictorian and a member of her high school basketball and swim teams.

Regina Pozzi of Petaluma earned second in the senior division of the youth achievement contest. She is the reigning National Jersey Queen. Kylie Konyon of Escondido won the intermediate division of the achievement contest.