

California Honors Jersey Breeders

More than 70 California Jersey breeders were on hand to celebrate achievements of their peers at the annual meeting of the California Jersey Cattle Association (CJCA). The event, held at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center in Visalia on February 5, culminated with a pledge of \$5,000 to Jersey Youth Academy.

Jim Sweeney, Visalia, was presented with the CJCA Senior Breeder Award. Sweeney has been working with dairy cattle for more than four decades and breeding Registered Jerseys the past 10 years.

Sweeney's Rancho Vista Jerseys is enrolled on REAP and has a 2010 AJCA lactation average of 18,162 lbs. milk, 836 lbs. fat and 654 lbs. protein on 70 cows. With the October 2010 appraisal, the farm in central California is home to 14 Excellent and 67 Very Good cows and has an appraisal average of 84%.

Sweeney's interest in dairying was sparked through 4-H and FFA projects in the early 1970s. After graduating from Fresno State in 1981 with a degree in dairy science, Sweeney began working at Quist Dairy in Fresno and saving money to start a dairy of his own. His dream became reality in 1989, when he and his wife, Amelia, established Sweeney Dairy in Caruthers. When the herd outgrew the facilities three years later, the couple



Jim Sweeney earned the Senior Breeder Award. He and his wife, Amelia, left, and their children Lena, Matthew and Theresa, center, operate Rancho Vista Jerseys. Queen Mann congratulates the family.



Yale Ahlem receives the Junior Breeder Award from California Jersey Queen Karessa Mann on behalf of his father, Vance.



California Jersey Queen Karessa Mann congratulates winners of the California Youth Achievement Contest, including Natalie Sanders (senior division), left, Theresa Sweeney (intermediate division), center, and Rebecca Sanders (novice division).

moved the herd to its present location in Visalia. This was the point in time that Registered Jerseys were added to the Holstein operation. Today's 260-cow herd is 160 Holsteins and 100 Jerseys.

Rancho Vista Jerseys has been the low somatic cell count Jersey herd in Tulare County the past 18 years and the production leader two of those years. The herd has also earned Tulare County Fair's prestigious milk quality award, which is based on a number of milk quality standards over a one-year period and flavor scores at fair time.

Sweeney's work ethic and love of dairy cattle has been handed down to his children: Lena, 20, Matthew, 18, and Theresa, 16. All have followed in their father's footsteps and become active in the dairy industry.

Lena, the reigning National Jersey Queen, is a third-year biology student at Stanford who plans on attending medical school after graduation. She was a member of the inaugural Jersey Youth Academy in 2009.

Matthew is a freshman at the University of California, Los Angeles and also majors in biology.

Theresa is a junior at Visalia High School. She received the California Youth Achievement Award in the intermediate division this year. Theresa recently placed in the 2009 National Jersey Youth Production Contest and the 2010 Pot



The Sweetheart Award was given to Lois Casale for her years of service to California Jersey breeders.



Juniors receiving laurels in the youth production contest include (left to right) Lars William Russell (first), represented by Daniel Costa, Theresa Sweeney (second) and McCalister Russell (third). Queen Mann presents the awards.

O'Gold Production Contest. She will attend the 2011 Jersey Youth Academy.

Vance Ahlem, Hilmar, was given the CJCA Junior Breeder Award. Ahlem was raised on the Registered Jersey dairy owned by his family, James Ahlem Dairy, and been active in the business from an early age. He is now a managing partner of Ahlem Foothill Farms, a 2,000-cow dairy in Denair that was purchased with his parents, James and Carol, and brother, Grant, in 2008. He also is a partner in Ahlem A-5 Ranch, an operation in Dalhart, Texas, and Dalhart Jersey Ranch, a heifer raising facility in Dalhart. Ahlem is a partner in Hilmar Cheese Company.

Ahlem was active in Jersey youth programs at local, state and national levels and earned his American Farmer Degree through the FFA organization. He graduated from Cal Poly with a double major in dairy science and agriculture business. He was a member of the university's Los Lecheros Dairy Club and participated in Cornell University's post-graduate exchange program in 2001.

He chairs the Hilmar Municipal Advisory Board for Merced County and was board treasurer for the Dalhart Jersey Ranch. Ahlem is also a graduate of Western United Dairyman's California Dairy Leaders Program.

Ahlem and his wife of five years, Ashley, have two children, Yale, 4, and

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President Benny Rector presents Karessa Mann with the California Jersey Cattle Association Scholarship.

California Meeting

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Brooklyn, 18 months.

The CJCA Sweetheart Award was given to Lois Casale, Denair. She has served as the secretary of the Central Valley Jersey Breeders Association for many years.

Junior Awards

Karessa Mann, Turlock, earned the CJCA Scholarship in the amount of \$1,000 and was crowned as the 2011 California Jersey Queen. The daughter of Manuel and Lisa Bettencourt is a freshman at Modesto Junior College and plans to transfer to a four-year university to pursue a degree in agriculture communications. She has been involved with Jerseys for seven years and manages a Registered Jersey herd of 14 cows and nine heifers.

Mann has served as the Western National Jersey Queen and the California Dairy Princess and was a member of the inaugural Jersey Youth Academy.

Mann was high individual in the post-secondary dairy judging contest at the Eastern States Exposition in 2010 and then ranked second in the contest at the North American International Livestock Exhibition, third at World Dairy Expo and fifth at the All-American Dairy Cattle Show in Harrisburg, Pa.

She is the public relations officer for Modesto's dairy club and treasurer of the CJCA Junior Association. Mann was state treasurer for the Collegiate Agriculture Leaders program and belongs to the California Women for Agriculture and American Agri-Women organizations.

The Nanette Sherman Taylor Scholarship was presented to Mikayla Marie Boer, Willows. The high school senior received a check in the amount of \$1,000, which will be used to fund her studies at Shasta Community College next fall. She plans to then obtain a bachelor's degree and pursue politics, focusing on agriculture issues. Boers is the daughter of Martin and Heather Boer. Her grandparents are Emily (Van Till) and Martin Boer; her great-grandparents are the late Verna and Jim Van Till, founding owners of Hilmar Cheese Company.

Boer works closely with her father managing the family's 350-cow dairy. She has been active in her local 4-H club and FFA chapter, which she served as sentinel and vice president. She is a member of the Key Club and Interact Club and plays high school tennis. Boer spent two summers as a nanny in Scotland and helps her mother with a catering business.

Natalie Sanders, Hilmar, received the CJCA Youth Achievement Award in the senior division. She is the daughter

of Scott and Sharalee Sanders and a freshman at Modesto Junior College. She plans to transfer to a four-year institution upon graduation and pursue a degree in dairy science.

Sanders has been involved with Jersey youth projects for 14 years and established Fire-Lake Jerseys with her aunt, Cathy, in 2009. Sanders owns five breeds of dairy cattle and has a Registered Jersey herd that numbers 16 cows and 21 heifers.

She is a regular exhibitor at local, state and national shows and earned the premier exhibitor award at the California State Fair Junior Jersey Show in 2010. Her most well-known show cow, WF Axel Rosita, was named Reserve Supreme Champion of the California State Fair in 2009 and then earned Supreme honors this past year. "Rosita" is a three-time Grand Champion of the Western National Junior Jersey Show and was named Reserve Junior All American Aged Cow in 2010.

Sanders has presided over the state's junior Jersey organization the past two years and served as vice president, secretary and treasurer of the Chatom 4-H Club. She is a member of the American Agri-Women, the California Scholarship Federation and the California Women for Agriculture, which gave her a scholarship in 2010.

Sanders was a member of the inaugural Jersey Youth Academy and will attend the class again this summer.

As mentioned previously, Theresa Sweeney, received the youth achievement award in the intermediate division. Rebecca Sanders, Hilmar, earned the award in the novice division.

Lars William Russell, Hilmar, topped the youth production contest with his entry, Trinity's Iatola Cindy-ET. The Excellent-90% daughter of SC Gold Dust Paramount Iatola-ET, GJPI +69, produced a 3-10 record with an m.e. of 26,121-1,092-883 and a dollar value of \$4,240.04.

Theresa Sweeney placed second with Wilsonview Abe Airie, who made a record with a dollar value of \$4,216.60. McCalister Russell, Hilmar, placed third with Yosemite Roulette Jersey, who made a record with a dollar value of \$3,830.32.

Officers

Officers elected to serve the CJCA in 2011 were: Benny Rector, Hilmar, president; Patrick Martin, Fresno, vice president; Janice Rector, Hilmar, secretary; and Nancy Miguel, Denair, treasurer. Miguel will fill the shoes of Joan Brown, Hughson, who held the treasurer position for more than three decades. Monte Hoggard, Stratford, was elected to

sit on the board.

Junior officers are: Natalie Sanders, president; Kelli Ann Carstensen, Petaluma, vice president; Karessa Mann, secretary; and McCalister Russell, treasurer. Rylin Marie Lindahl, Visalia, Nicole Sanders, Hilmar, and Rebecca Sanders were elected to serve as reporters.

Programs

California Jersey producers were also treated to an educational program which included presentations tailored to Jersey management. Todd Stroup, PAS, Pine Creek Nutrition Service, Inc., spoke about the ration for lactating cows. Todd Heuer, a calf specialist with J. D. Heiskell and Company, gave tips on calf nutrition.

Jersey producers learned how to evaluate the performance of the Jersey herd using benchmarks for reproduction, milk production, somatic cell count, culling and other measures from Paul Fernandes, with Pfizer Animal Health.

Erick Metzger, General Manager National All-Jersey Inc., brought the group up-to-date on genomics and relayed information from the sustainability study released by Washington State University last summer.