

Bringing Buyers and Sellers Together

With the fluctuating economy of the past several years, more and more dairy producers are exploring the options of buying and selling cattle. When pursuing these opportunities, many go back and forth between what is the proper channel to follow: is it better to be your own personal broker, or hire an experienced third party to handle everything? With farmers constantly expanding or downsizing to fit the ever-changing market, this issue is very prevalent in the dairy industry.

Exploring the Options

During the early months of 2011, Jim Quist, Fresno, Calif., was having this very debate about the future of his dairy herd. After many years in the dairy industry, having switched to Jerseys in 1998, Jim was considering selling his herd. He had toyed with the idea of expanding, developing a niche market or possibly just downsizing, but in the end he decided the best option for himself and his family was to disperse his herd.

He contacted Kristin Paul, Director of Field Services of the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA), and Neal Smith, Executive Secretary, to discuss his options and eventually set a tentative date for Jersey Marketing Service (JMS) to disperse his Jars of Clay herd. Although a date had been penciled in for a public auction, Jim was still very interested in finding one buyer for his entire herd and selling by private treaty agreement, instead of auctioning the cows off one-by-one. This would also allow Jim to move the animals quickly and not deal with the influx of farm and phone traffic. Kristin and Jim decided if they could find a private buyer for the entire herd within one month, they would forgo the public auction.

Those that have known Jim for many years might have been surprised that he opted to use a third party broker to sell his cows, being that he started hosting a series of Holstein sales in the 1980s called the Gold Rush Sale. During these events, Jim had thousands of people regularly

attend the event, which resulted in several quality sales—including a bull that sold for \$600,000 and a cow that was purchased for \$250,000.

Not only was Jim known around the dairy circles for hosting this annual sale, but also for the high genetic merit of his Jerseys after changing the color of his herd. In July 2011 there were 24 Jars of Clay-bred cows ranked on the Top 1.5% list for GJPI and six ranked on the Top 1.5% list for traditional JPI. He also has seven heifers featured on the Top



Jars of Clay Venerable 1771 2620, pictured above, ranks on the Top 1.5% JPI list and was bred by Jim Quist, Fresno, Calif. She is now milking at Rancho Teresita Dairy for Cornell and Case Kasbergen as they purchased all but six of the well-known, and highly ranked Jars of Clay cows from Quist in a Jersey Marketing Service private treaty sale.

500 GJPI list with an additional heifer on the Top 400 Traditional JPI list after his last appraisal. The herd had an average score of 83.4% on 492 animals scored, 50 of which are Excellent.

Jim had before explored the idea of dispersing his herd, but had a hard time imagining a life outside of the dairy industry and the farm that had been in his family since 1933. Earlier this year it seemed to all align in front of his eyes that it was time, so he decided this was for sure the right route for his family. During the decision process, he admits considering a couple other marketing services before eventually handing the reigns to JMS. Having worked with the Jersey association for many years and currently serving as a director for the American Jersey Cattle Association, he knew the quality of work and ease JMS could bring to the table.

“JMS got the job because of the work done by the staff,” said Jim. “They really just came in and got the job done.”

The Ultimate Experiment

Fifty miles south of Fresno in Tulare, Calif., Case and Cornell Kasbergen, Rancho Teresita Dairy, were interested in the buzz surrounding the Jersey breed. At the time, they were milking 3,500 Holsteins on their 1,800-acre family farm, producing 75% of their own feed. They had started

to realize that having to buy that remaining 25% of feed was keeping them from having better control of their operation costs.

When they began investigating further into the feed efficiencies of Jerseys, it occurred to them there was a way to produce all their own feed on the same acreage, without decreasing the number of cows or taking a huge hit to production. The answer was not black and white though, it was brown.

The Kasbergens began purchasing Jersey cattle from various producers, including Jer-Z-Boyz Ranch in Pixley, Calif., buying some fresh heifers, and Yosemite Dairy Farm in Hilmar, Calif., where

they bought springers and cows. But what they really wanted was a complete view of what this breed was capable of. They really wanted a complete group of Jerseys.

“We wanted to milk enough Jerseys to make a thorough evaluation of milk production and feed efficiency,” said Case. Luckily, during the same trip to California that she met with Jim, Kristin decided to head south and pay the Kasbergens a visit. She talked with them about their ultimate goals and what exactly they were looking for from the Jerseys, and then informed the father-son duo of a large herd located just a short drive north.

Making the Switch

The Kasbergens were quickly impressed with all the information that was readily available to them before they even knew who owned the herd and exactly where it

was located. By knowing the vaccination records, having access to the pedigrees and all other data available for this REAP herd, it only took one visit to see the cows before they were ready to make an offer, eventually buying all but six of the milking cows owned by Quist.

The Kasbergens also decided during their initial visit with Kristin to go ahead and sign up their newly-acquired Jersey herd in the REAP program so they could take advantage of Genetic Recovery and all the services offered by the AJCA. Though their genetically well-known Holstein herd was not completely registered, they recognized the value of having Registered Jerseys and how the high genetic merit of this new herd and the information and cost savings would help their business and possibly introduce new avenues of income.

While they have never had a Holstein bull enter A.I., the Kasbergens are very interested in sampling this outlet as they explore the many possibilities offered by the Jerseys they have purchased.

Historically, they have always flushed a few cows every year, but now will be doing a significantly larger amount of flushing with the Jerseys, using the Holsteins as recipients. Cornell and Case also plan to do in-vitro fertilization work with some animals from the herd at Brentwood Farms, Orland, Calif., as they have a strong friendship with owner Bob Bignami, newly-elected AJCA president.

However, this was not the first time Jerseys had been stalled at Rancho Teresita Dairy. Ten years ago, 200 Jersey cows shared a bulk tank with the prominent Holstein herd in Tulare. Without a separate tank to take advantage of the higher premiums for Jersey milk, the Kasbergens sold their brown cows to a family member in Woodland, Calif., who was already milking 75% Jerseys. The Jerseys had made an impression though, and it was one that would last a decade to when Cornell and Case found themselves searching for a way to control feed costs.

Impression or not, the Kasbergens were still skeptical about what type of impact switching to Jerseys was going to have

on their bottom line. After two months of milking their new herd alongside their Holstein herd, the average had slightly dropped, but this has not waivered the ambitious family from continuing to explore with Jerseys. While they admit they might not ever turn their herd 100% brown, they do plan to eventually add a second milk talk so they can clearly monitor the progress being made by the Jerseys and if this new venture has proved successful.

Cornell is also very involved as an advocate for the dairy industry, serving as a director for Land O'Lakes and a director of the National Milk Producers Federation,



The Jerseys now making their home at Rancho Teresita Dairy, Tulare, Calif., are sharing a bulk tank with the Holstein herd that has been a staple to the farm since its origin in 1989. Cornell and Case Kasbergen, owners of Rancho Teresita, are exploring the benefits of owning Jerseys, and what that could mean for the bottom line of their business. They recently purchased the herd of Jim Quist, Fresno, Calif., and are deciding that owning Jerseys helps control the volatile feed costs of the dairy industry.

where has been a committee member that has developed Foundation for the Future.

“We expected the Jerseys to be more efficient feed converters than the Holsteins, and we have not been disappointed,” said Case of their goals for the Jersey herd. “Converting feed into milk was a problem with the Holsteins.”

Ideally, they would like to milk 4,000 Jerseys, if the production to feed ratio is what they expect, allowing them to produce 100% of the feed required for their entire farm.

They currently have 550 Jersey cows milking alongside the 3,000 Holsteins in their two double-25 parallels parlor. Having just installed new stanchions a year and a half ago, they have no plans to make any facility changes to their current free stall barns, or any other structural changes to

their farm, which was originally built in 1989. The heifers and first lactation cows, in addition to the Jerseys, are milked three times daily, with second lactation and older cows being milked twice a day. All of the animals are bred A.I., a regimen they have followed for 40 years, by an in-house A.I. technician that is part of their 35-person work force.

Keeping His Ties

While the Kasbergens purchased almost all the cows from the Quist farm, Jim decided he was not ready to part with all the animals and the familiarity of his day-to-day life. In addition to six Holstein cows housed at a farm in Visalia, and six Jersey cows, housed at D&E Jerseys, Hilmar, Jim has a group of young heifers he is holding on to.

“It tugs at your heart a little, the idea of getting rid of the animals you know so well,” said Jim of his decision. “I love the Jersey breed and wish I would have owned them at an earlier age.”

As for his future plans, he will continue working with the Jersey association as he was elected to serve another term on the board of directors, and explore the options available to him through the animals he still has. He plans to perhaps do some flush work with the cows, and possibly sell the heifers as they get older. The heifer herd includes the number five female

in the breed for GJPI, Jars of Clay Valentino Bridget, GJPI +278, (7/11).

“It was a privilege for JMS to be able to work with both of these producers and the high quality animals that were involved,” said Kristin of her time spent with Quist and the Kasbergens.

Bringing buyers and sellers together is more than just a company mantra for the staff of JMS, it is the core of their business. Even with all the different ways that have been developed for farmers to buy or sell cattle, many people in the dairy industry still find the services of JMS to be the most efficient and professional way to achieve their cattle needs. No matter if the buyer and seller are 900 miles away or right down the road, there is always a way to satisfy all of those looking to work with Jersey cattle.