



Executive Secretary
David Kendall

THOUGHTS

From The Secretary

An important part of future Brown Swiss breed progress will come from our young Brown Swiss animals. The decisions we make as Brown Swiss promoters in how we breed and develop these young animals will have a major impact on our pocket books. One of these choices is calving our heifers in at a younger age to put more profit into our operations quickly while also improving our relative competitiveness with other dairy breeds in productive life. When you add the advantage we have in somatic cell and actual pounds of protein, calving our heifers in at 23 to 25 months would give us a big boost in lifetime net merit rankings that would be stunning. Think about it this way, it is allowing our heifers to generate positive cash flow for us 3 to 7 months earlier.

Some breeders continue to give excuses for not calving in heifers under 30 months. One that is commonly uttered is that Brown Swiss heifers do not cycle at an early age. This is one belief that other Brown Swiss producers continually prove to be mistaken. As illustrated in the article on the Little Hill Herd in the January 2006 Bulletin, Brown Swiss heifers are very capable of not only cycling but also conceiving at 13 to 14 months of age. Another rationalism that is heard is that if you want to show your heifers, in particular Fall Yearlings, you need to hold off breeding them to get size. On the recommendation of your National Show Committee your Board is introducing the Senior Yearling in Milk as an All-American Class beginning in 2008 in part to address this notion. You can breed your heifers

younger, win a class in a major show, garner All-American recognition, have a calf to merchandise sooner and increase your income from milk sales.

Perhaps the most egregious reason that some proclaim for holding off breeding Brown Swiss heifers until later is that, well, they do not milk as young animals. After Lime Rock Frolic Jiggy's remarkable performance when calving in at 23 months of age and, it should be noted, off to another phenomenal start this year in her second lactation, one hopes that people will let that fallacy quietly fade away. Folks that is a lot of milk and fat and protein; and she did it at what age?

Jiggy is no fluke. When you look at her picture you see a dairy cow with strength. Not a small framed cow but also not overly tall, that word balance applies to Jiggy from end to end. Her breakdowns in the New Score Card with her 87 in Strength and Substance and 90 in Dairy Quality illustrate the point. Jiggy was raised in the Lime Rock herd's top-notch heifer-rearing program and is now managed in a first-class dairy operation. Jiggy has taken the opportunities given her and responded to her good fortune in a world-class manner. Many thanks from the breed to the Meinert Family for breeding, growing and having faith in the ability of Brown Swiss to milk at an early an age. And major kudos to Amanda Lee and her mother Barb for sharing that faith not only in Jiggy, but also in the Brown Swiss cows competitiveness at an early age in a commercial setting.

However, there is something else worthy of note about Jiggy in regards to future breed progress. In this issue of the Bulletin please read the excellent article about young sires. You will see a variety of approaches to selection; but you will also see uniform agreement on the need for the breed to improve sampling by expanding the number of cows and heifers bred to young sires. In that regard while Jiggy is by the widely proven R Hart BC Collection *TM, her dam was different being by a well-bred young sire sampled through Genex in cooperation with the BSCBA Sire Proving Group Swiss Pride. Kruses LJ Prelude Sizzler is a shining example of the potential of using young sires. While he was not returned to active service, Sizzler has had a major impact on the breed through the performance of his maternal granddaughter. The use of this young sire obviously did not reduce the productive or income possibility of this pedigree.

If we, as a breed, decide to embrace these two movements, to calve our heifers in at a younger, profitable age and expand the number of cows and heifers bred to young sires to increase the rate of genetic improvement, the moneymaking, positive impact on the Brown Swiss breed beginning within two to five years will be remarkable. The reality is that these are not difficult practical choices; what they do represent are diverging philosophical alternatives from the path some of us choose to follow. The ultimate choice is ours: our combined personal objectives are what propel the direction of the breed. Till next time with the Brown Swiss cow, the cow that calves young and gets the job done...Dave