



Hoard's Dairyman Farm

# EDITORIAL COMMENT

## OUR GUERNSEYS NOW HAVE SOME JERSEY HERDMATES

AT THE time of our expansion in 2007 and 2008, there was not much thought given to growing with any other breed than Guernseys. We purchased nearly 150 head from around the country to fill our new barn. Until this fall, we had been milking about 265 Guernseys with 330 on the test sheet.

We favor the high-solids breeds, and Guernseys are wonderful cows to work with. They are gentle (in a pinch, you can breed and do preg checks in the free stalls) and produce wonderful, high-solids milk. But each breed has its strengths and weaknesses. Guernseys can be a challenge to get bred. Plus they seem to be susceptible to metabolic and infectious diseases, although our SCC has been running around 160,000.

Now that we have resolved some problems with our manure storage (another story for another time) and the milk price picture is improving, we're in a position to add more cows. It is difficult to purchase good-sized groups of affordable Guernseys that meet our health and other requirements. That left us considering Holsteins or Jerseys.

So many people have told us that Jerseys don't co-mingle well with Guernseys that we have considered Holsteins. Besides, Holsteins would be a good fit for us from the standpoint of free stall sizes and parlor operation. However, our milk buyer, Torkelson Cheese, makes Muenster mostly and really likes high-solids milk.

This fall, we purchased 40 Jersey cows. They're the right size for our old tie stall barn which we are operating as a free stall barn. They will be fed in existing outside bunks and milked in our parlor. First impressions are that they move from the parlor in about half the time of the Guernseys, and, yes, they are a little light-footed.

Guernseys continue to be an important part of our long-range plans for now. In fact, we just purchased another 10 Guernsey cows. We will watch energy-corrected milk production efficiency closely for all cows as well as preg rates, vet costs, and other factors in an effort to make a careful decision about the best cows for our business.