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American Milking Devon Cattle Association

Established in 1978 to promote the conservation of American Milking Devon cattle as a triple purpose breed by maintaining a breed registry, encouraging knowledgeable and responsible breeding, and educating the public about the historic role of American Milking Devon Cattle, as well as their place in a healthy sustainable agriculture.

Properly cared for Milking Devons will work for you, not you work for them.-- Diurna Kibbe



PRESERVING AMERICAN MILKING DEVONS: AT OXHILL DEVONS IT'S A FAMILY TRADITION

Three Generations of Van Ords

Front Row: Lily's OxHill Generations

**Back Row: Howard, Lily (The New Owner of OxHill Generations) and Andrew Van Ord
(Picture courtesy of Andrew Van Ord)**

To stop receiving the newsletter or if you have suggestions, content or announcements to be included, please contact Tom Slater
patriotsretreatfarm@yahoo.com



More from OxHill Devons. Howard started with Devons in the early 70's. Andrew bought his first Devon in 2011 when he bought the farm. This is a photo of future drover Andrew in 1976 with his Dad's Buck and Bright. (Photo courtesy of Andrew Van Ord)

FEATURE ARTICLE ON DAIRYING WITH GRASS-FED CATTLE: "A BREED LIKE THE DEVON WOULD HAVE A VERY DISTINCT ADVANTAGE"

This Feature Article is a transcript of a presentation made by Brent Beidler at the Annual Meeting of the American Milking Devon Cattle Association held at Tunbridge, Vermont on May 7th, 2016. The subject is grass-fed dairying and will be presented in several parts due to the length of the presentation. Readers are welcome to respond to this article. Responses may be included in the OVER THE BARNYARD FENCE section of the next edition. The AMDCA Newsletter exists to promote the AMD breed, not individual breeders. Submissions for the newsletter need to be directly AMD related. The Editor reserves the right to edit any submissions in accordance with this policy.

Part 1: Getting Started

I'm excited to be with you here today, my name is Brent Beidler and my wife Regina and my daughter Erin and I have a farm about 20 minutes from here in Randolph Center. If you're not familiar with the area it's just over the hill. And we've been there for 18 years, my daughter is 18 and we started farming the year she was born there. Just briefly to introduce my connection to this group is that Dexter [Randall] (*Dexter is an AMDCA Board Member*) and I are both members of the Organic Valley Crop Cooperative. We've been friends for a while and he, I guess, was thinking of me when the topic of grass-fed comes up because we are grass milk producers, and I'll get into that a little bit more. I'd like the presentation to be as interactive as possible. We probably don't have time to understand where you guys are all coming from, what your situations are with Milking Devons, but if you have specific comments or questions please throw those out at me.

Just briefly, I did grow up on a dairy farm, my grandfather had a farm in Pennsylvania which is where I was inoculated to farming. When we visited when I was a kid, I just loved it



The Beidler Family Enjoying the Grass Before It Becomes Feed
Regina, Erin and Brent

and I always had the vision of becoming a dairy farmer. My grandfather proclaimed that when he saw me with cows, “that kid’s going to farm.” I took it to heart and so living in Vermont I grew up just south of here in the White River area. I had lots of farm mentors along the way. Farmers that allowed me to tag along and that’s how I got my experience. I went to the University of Vermont and I studied animal science, but my goal was to get started farming. Just before I took the plunge and tried to buy a farm, I decided to do a term of voluntary service in Bangladesh. I was working as a livestock researcher and doing very basic research with the farmers there. It was a way of knowing if you purchase a farm you don’t have time to do anything else. So we took a three year period and did that.

While I was there, I had a friend who sent me an article, from I think it was *Small Farmer’s Journal*, and he said Brent you have to read this when you come back and farm. I know you are thinking of having a grass farm, a grazing farm, these American Milking Devons are something you should look at. If you are going to 100% grass that would be a good way for you to get started without lots of infrastructure, equipment, they are high forage, they are able to handle high forage diets. I think you should think this over. So that was a kernel that started many many years ago, that was in the late 80’s and there are probably people in this room that were featured in this article. I’m not sure, I think it was the *Small Farmer’s Journal*.

So when I came home and really dove into working for other farms, it was a completely opposite production system from that. We were a high grain, high intensity, 29,000 lb herd average. This was back in the 1990’s, and so the farms that we were working for were absolutely not there, but that was my way of getting started. I raised my own animals and I actually investigated maybe if I could get a hold of some Devons but it just didn’t work out for me. But the idea for going to grass-fed was already there, and you know the organic dairy market was just starting in then. That was in the 90’s and by the time we purchased our farm we started to transition. That was our goal, first of all to use rotational grazing as the foundation of our forage system. And then the organic milk market with a steady price that was a little higher, was what we needed to get started and be viable.

We purchased our farm in 1998 with a group of heifers that I had raised from calves while working for another farm. I was fortunate to have the help of that person. We started immediately to get as much forage based as possible. So we were rotationally grazing which was something actually new for dairy cows, as I said I was working for farms that were just more high production. We slowly reduced the amount of grain that we were feeding and we saw that the cows were okay with it. They were healthy and we started working on genetics toward that as well with New Zealand based Friesian genetics in our Holsteins and with Jerseys as well and I had some cross-breeding too. I think when folks are looking toward a completely grass-based diet, genetics are important. I know as Devon owners you are very aware that animals that are genetically predisposed to high forage diets just do just so much better on that management system. (To be continued next Issue).

ASSOCIATION BUSINESS



Attendees of the 2016 AMDCA Annual Meeting in Tunbridge, Vt. May 7, 2016
(Photo courtesy of John L. Hall III)

ANNUAL MEETING – The Annual Meeting of the American Milking Devon Cattle Association was held on **Saturday May 7, 2016 at 10:00 A.M.** at the Tunbridge Town Hall, in Tunbridge, Vermont. Draft Meeting Minutes can be found on the Association’s website <http://www.milkingdevons.org> . Some highlights of the meeting are:

- Devon Registrations: 150 females and 45 males have been registered over the past year; 185 cattle have been transferred
- 17 new members joined the Association last year

ANNUAL MEETING –(continued)

- John L. Hall III and Thomas Slater were elected to serve three-year terms on the Board
- The Board of Directors was directed to develop new policy regarding registration fees graduated by the age of the animal, and ineligibility for registration beyond five years of age
- The membership passed a MOTION that members not in good standing by April 1st of each year will not receive an election ballot
- A DNA Typing proposal will be submitted to the Board for future consideration
- Point of Information: Tattoo numbers are not included in the herd book as they can be used for fraudulent purposes
- Brent Beidler spoke about his experience producing grass-fed milk

Board Decisions at June Meeting

- The following were re-elected to serve the Board in the following capacities:
 - John L. Hall III, President/Treasurer
 - Jeremy Michaud, Vice-President
 - Andrew Van Ord, Secretary
- Bonnie Hall was reappointed Registrar and Membership Secretary
- **New Policies affecting Registration of Cattle: After discussion at the Annual Meeting, the Membership directed the Board of Directors to develop and implement two new policies regarding registration. The first directive was to develop a policy that created an upper age limit for the registration of cattle, and the second directive was to create a sliding fee scale for registration that increased with the age of the animal being registered. These policies were deemed necessary by the Membership, as many problems and issues arise and increase the longer registration of an animal is delayed. The Membership felt that these two policies would encourage more timely registration of animals, contribute to a more accurate Registry, and reduce some of the problems which the Association has no control over that are currently occurring between buyers and sellers. The Membership also directed the Board to provide a grace period before these new policies took effect, so those who currently own unregistered cattle may have ample time to get them registered. Based on the directives of the Membership, the Board adopted the following policies at the June meeting:**
 - Effective midnight December 31, 2017 no animals exceeding five(5) years of age will be registered by the American Milking Devon Cattle Association.
 - Effective midnight December 31, 2017 a new cattle registration fee schedule will be implemented as follows:
 - Cattle less than one year old -\$5
 - Cattle one year old but less than two years old -\$10
 - Cattle two years old but less than three years old-\$25
 - Cattle three years old but less than five years old- \$50
 - The Registrar is to receive \$25 of the \$50 fee for three years and older registrations due to the volume of work involved
 - Cattle five years old or older cannot be registered
 - Mistakes in registrations that are corrected by the Registrar will be published in an Appendix of a future edition of The Herd Book.

Membership/Dues Policy Reminder- Membership is open to any individual or organization interested in furthering the purposes of the Association. An organization shall designate an individual to represent it at business meetings of the Association.

There shall be three categories of membership;

1. Voting Members, consisting of all members owning registered Milking Devon cattle.
2. Associate Members, who wish to further the purposes of the Association.

The annual dues for these two categories as established by the Board (currently \$20) shall be due and payable on or before December 31 of each calendar year. Lapsed members shall be reinstated on payment of outstanding and current year dues.

3. Junior Members, a category open to those under 21 years of age for a single dues payment (currently \$20), can access all membership services at the established fees. Only Voting Members are entitled to vote at membership meetings. Except for voting rights, no distinction shall be made between the three membership categories as to the availability or cost of services provided.

Ray's Corner

Quotes and advice from Director Ray Clark

When cows eat they grab the grass and whatever else is there, and send it down to their reticulum where it is processed. Sometimes while eating they grab staples and other pieces of metal hardware. This metal can puncture their stomach and affect the heart. To counteract this a magnet can be inserted into a cow using a balling gun. This magnet will stay in the reticulum, collect metal hardware together, and make it less dangerous for the cow. This is not 100% effective but it helps. A balling gun and magnets can be purchased through NASCO out of Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. Check them out on-line or call 1-800-558-9595 for a catalogue. Also just a reminder, if you are in the pasture with a bull, keep one eye on him at all times and always have an escape route planned. Remember it's the "friendly ones" you want to watch out for....Some more tidbits for your information- a cow's normal temperature is around 102 degrees...if your cows don't get outside for regular exercise watch for overgrown hooves, they may need to be trimmed.

THE HISTORICAL DEVON

Devon Cattle- Part 2- This article appeared in the April 1846 edition (Vol. III, No. 4) of *The Cultivator*, which was published in Albany, NY. Since it is long, it was divided into two parts.

L. TUCKER, ESQ.—.... Our practice is to let our Devon heifers have calves at two years old, believing that they are as suitable for breeding at this age as most other breeds are at three, but should be well kept.

I do not eulogise (sic.) this breed for the sake of personal gain, by disposing of stock at a high rate for breeding, as we have none, nor do we expect to have any for this purpose. We dispose of them to the drovers or butchers, at an early age. But our object is to see them widely

Devon Cattle- Part 2 (Continued) - disseminated through the country, and it is our candid opinion that there is no one breed which comprises so many valuable qualities. I would recommend to all those farmers who do not feel sufficiently able to purchase an entire stock for breeding, to select a few of their best cows, and cross with a Devon bull, and by thus continuing, in a few years will have a fine stock, with all the nearly beautiful characteristics of this profitable breed of cattle.

But how often is it the case that when some farmer has been to the expense of purchasing a superior bull, many of his neighbors will use an inferior animal, because it comes a few cents cheaper. Such men seldom have good stock, and never have an agricultural paper, unless it is a *borrowed* one. To such I would say, abandon this penurious principle, raise good stock, and take at least one agricultural paper. This is one part of the way to become “wealthy and wise.”

Unadilla, N.Y., Jan. 27, 1846. S.G.CONE.

OVER THE BARNYARD FENCE

This section is for reader opinions and experiences with FEATURE ARTICLE topics from prior editions. The Association does not endorse or recommend policies and practices expressed in this newsletter. It is left to the reader to decide for themselves the policies and practices they wish to employ. However, we sincerely thank the author(s) of this section for their willingness to take the time to express their opinions and share their experiences. You can submit your articles to the Editor through e-mail at patriotsretreatfarm@yahoo.com . If you don't have e-mail, send a hard copy to Thomas H. Slater, 303 Cripplebush Rd., Central Bridge, NY 12035.

On Artificial Insemination by Linda Maurer Springhaven Farm, Madison, VA 22727

We are a small fall-calving farm in the central Virginia Piedmont hills. We use EstroTect heat patches to detect standing heats in our cows approximately 2-3 months after calving. Since we only use AI to breed rather than live cover, we prefer to catch cows on a natural heat and we use a veterinarian that specializes in cattle breeding and genetics. We used to do our own AI but our vet is more accomplished than we are and faster. He can also do a wellness check at time of breeding to highlight any concerns with a particular animal – we aren't veterinarians and don't have that skill.

After the cows have calved and prior to re-breeding, we use several homeopathic remedies to help the cows recover from delivery, notably: pulsatilla immediately after calving to re-tone uterus; arnica and calendula to heal bruised tissues and alleviate pain; and sepia given 21 days post partum to improve conception and shorten calving interval.

When we've had a larger herd of nearly 20, we used other methods such as CIDRS (which requires a total of 4 hormone shots including prostaglandin). We have not seen that many cows come into heat all at once to make it worthwhile or save on farm calls. Another approach we've used frequently is to observe an initial heat, then give 2cc's Estrumate or Estraplan 15-16 days after that first observed heat cycle, then breed no later than twelve hours after their next observable standing heat.

This gives the best quality of egg at conception and produces very good results. If we are in

On Artificial Insemination by Linda Maurer (Continued)

doubt about whether we've got the standing heat earlier or later, we'll give a shot of GnRH at breeding to ensure ovulation. We try to breed within 8-10 hours after standing heat is observed. Once confirmed bred, we try to sex calves via ultrasound at around 50-65 days. That helps to plan herd size, seed stock sales, and beef sales.

Overall, catching cows on a natural heat with a small herd works very well, the animal's system isn't taxed with artificially induced hormonal spikes and the take rate is very good. Our AI success rate has consistently been in the 95% take range on the first attempt each year for the past eleven years, likely because we are using an experienced veterinarian who specializes in cattle breeding. Others we've spoken to claim that 30-50% take rate is a good number for them. That's too costly for us. Farm call for us is \$35 and vet is approximately \$150/hour. However, he is able to "get in and get out" in about 15 minutes or less per cow so it is cost effective given the initial take rate. That fifteen minutes includes getting the cow into the squeeze chute/head gate, heating the mug to thaw straws, putting the AI gun/straw together, and actually inserting the straw. Our vet also at time of breeding checks to see the cow's uterine condition, if there are any pockets of fat or necrosis (we are in the fescue belt), or any other issues that may interfere with conception.

Early on we chose to purchase an AI tank and purchase semen from the AMDCA. We've not had good luck with private semen or embryos that are often collected by AI technicians and not properly stored or handled. One particularly valuable bull's semen was quite damaged and worthless – a very expensive cost for our small farm and quite frustrating. We now routinely test straws for quality and semen viability before breeding. Occasionally we'll get a bad straw.

We research bulls to be compatible with the frame size of our cows. We've been very successful with this approach producing animals of superior conformation as well as performance on grass alone. The books from the Livestock Conservancy by Dr. Phil Sponenberg have been very helpful as well as discussions with other long-time Milking Devon breeders. Our vet has been the best education we've gotten given his background and experience across a wide variety of dairy cattle for over 40 years. He supports our approach to natural methods and homeopathy but will speak up and let us know when conventional approaches are more germane to an animal's survival and that particular situation. We also take the name of the bull we use, trace back through the registration herd books their lineage by hand and see how related the animal is to any of our cows. Based on that information, we pair cows and bull semen to be no closer than five generations. Unlike many long-time breeders, we don't have the decades or generations of experience to comfortably use line-breeding techniques at this time.

Other books we've relied on heavily in our learning have been:

- Color Atlas of Diseases and Disorders of Cattle by Blowey & Weaver
- Homeopathy for the Herd by Edgar Sheaffer
- Natural Cattle Care by Pat Coleby
- The Homeopathic Treatment of Beef and Dairy Cattle by Dr. Day
- A Veterinary Materia Medica by George Macleod
- Reproduction and Animal Health by Walters & Fry

DEVONS MAKE THE NEWS...AGAIN!!- American Milking Devons in the Public Eye

The recent veterans' farming workshop, From Service-to-Stewardship (S2S), jointly sponsored by The Livestock Conservancy and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, prominently showcased American Milking Devons (AMD). The workshop, held in Culpeper, VA, was designed to introduce military veterans to conservation of heritage breeds and was attended by over 50 veterans and active duty personnel from eight states.

Milking Devons were prominently displayed throughout the workshop beginning with Jeremy Engh's young Milking Devon working steer team, in yoke, greeting participants as they arrived at Lakota Ranch.

Host Jeremy Engh's presentation on *Raising & Marketing Grass-Fed Devons* and subsequent tour of the Engh's beef operation and Devon herd coupled with Richard Larson's presentation on *A Decision Tree for Getting Started – an Informed Commitment* and farm tour the following day gave participants a close-up view of both large and small grass-based Devon operations.

The S2S workshop was a success, a great opportunity to introduce a new generation of potential breeders to American Milking Devons, due in no small part to Kendy Sawyer's (an AMD breeder) organizational efforts and passionate commitment to American Milking Devons. (Article submitted by Richard Larson)

EVENTS YOU JUST SHOULDN'T MISS...American Milking Devons at the Virginia State Fair

The Virginia State Fair has added a new division (All Other Breeds) to its 2016 Open Dairy Cattle Show. This change is a result of a request for the Fair to allow American Milking Devons to be exhibited at the Fair. Historically, the dairy show was restricted to Holstein, Brown Swiss and Jersey breeds. This will be a great opportunity for AMD breeders to showcase their Devons to an average of 20,000 fair goers per day.

Entries are due **no later than 8/15/16**. Entry fee is \$10 per head and premiums range from \$70 for 1st to \$15 for 10th. There will be four heifer classes, three yearling heifer classes and seven older cow classes. Arrival is Thursday, September 22, show on Saturday, September 24, and release on Sunday, September 25. More information is available at www.statefairva.org. Feel free to email Richard Larson Oldgjerpenfarm@yahoo.com with any questions. He would appreciate hearing from breeders who are thinking of participating. (Article submitted by Richard Larson)

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES FOR SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER IS SEPTEMBER 15, 2016.

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FEEDBACK- Your comments, ideas and "constructive" criticism are always welcome. I would like to know what topics interest you that could become feature articles. The best way to reach me is through e-mail patriotsretreatfarm@yahoo.com . If you don't have e-mail call me at (518) 868-9328 or mail me at Thomas H. Slater, 303 Cripplebush Rd., Central Bridge, NY 12035. Thank you in advance for your assistance with this newsletter.