



James & Janette Stauffer

A few well-pedigreed registered Holstein calves being born in Japan started out as embryos at MMPA District 2 Outstanding Young Dairy Cooperators James and Janette Stauffer's dairy farm in northern Indiana.

A neighboring dairy farmer recently got James' interested in marketing embryos overseas. So far, Japan is the only country the Stauffers have sold embryos to. They have also sold them in the U.S. through registered sales and through the Cattle Connection newspaper.

"I didn't know much about selling embryos at first, I kind of took a crash course in it from my neighbor," James says. "He helped get me connected with places to buy desirable cattle and connected me with people who buy and sell embryos."

The Stauffers market registered Holstein embryos through an embryo broker as a way to supplement their farm income.

Sometimes, the buyer requests that semen from a certain bull is used to breed the cows. Once the cows are bred, James takes them to a flush facility to retrieve their embryos. Only embryos receiving a #1 grade are marketable to other countries.

"It is nice when you get a check from Japan for the embryos," says James. "It helps to pay the bills."

James uses embryos he doesn't sell to more rapidly increase the number of registered Holsteins in his 52-cow herd, a more cost effective way than purchasing registered cows or heifers.

"We have only 10-15 grade cows in the herd," James says. "We use them to carry embryos that we have flushed. My goal is to see all of the herd registered."

Selecting well pedigreed cows has also given the Stauffers extra income by selling registered bull calves locally. They hope to sell bulls to stud companies in the future.

"I just bought two cows that some stud companies are interested in if the cows have bulls," James says. "The farmer I bought them from has already sold a bull calf from one of their sisters to a stud company."

James has always been interested in registered Holsteins, and bought his first small herd when he was 16 years old. Those cows stayed on his uncle's farm until 2000 when James was able to find a barn and parlor to rent.

The Stauffers felt fortunate to have the opportunity to rent the facility, but making it work on a daily basis was challenging for the young family. The barn was located a few miles from their home, James works full-time driving delivery truck for a local lumber yard and was the Chief of the Foraker volunteer Fire Department.

"It was pretty hard to take care of the cows," James says. "You're just not with them enough. But it got us started."

In 2003, the couple was able to lease a farmstead in Nappanee from MMPA milk hauler Roy Martin. It was then that they chose to join MMPA, a decision the couple is pleased with.

"Moving to MMPA made a little bit of a difference in our milk check," James says. "After we changed, I felt I made a good move."

Living in the same location as the cows allows James to spend much more time with the cows and his family while still working full time for the lumber company.

"I chose to keep my job because I didn't have to borrow as much money to get the farm started while keeping a steady income," James says. "It is not hard to do; I have a good boss and three weeks of vacation. He allows me to take some time off to do farm work if I need to. I am not doing crop work, I am just milking the cows."

James purchases all of the cows feed, most from the local crop producer that farms the land near the Stauffer's farmstead. He also purchases minerals from the local feed mill and buys semi loads of western dry hay.

Even though he works full time off the farm, James tries to milk the cows himself at least once a day to monitor their health.

"I like to be in the parlor at least once a day because I can see the cows and catch if something's not quite right," he says.

Now that they live near the cows, Janette and the couple's children, Marissa, 8, Bradley, 6, Delphine, 3 and Jolen, 1, are able to help James with chores and milking. Janette and the children milk while James is feeding the cows. The pit parlor was designed shorter than normal so the previ-

ous owner's sons could help milk when they were young. The set-up allows Marissa to dip the cows without standing on a stool.

"Moving from a little house in town to the farm is definitely better," Janette says. "Living on the farm gives the children a lot more to do, especially in the summertime, when we can spend a lot of time outside. We are all looking forward to when dad can be home all day."

James hopes to quit his off-farm job and work full time on the farm once the herd reaches 80 cows. The move will allow him to spend more time with the cows, focusing on herd health, improving genetics and marketing embryos and cattle.

To ensure the cattle he markets are John's disease free, James participates in Indiana's John's control program. Once a year, a blood ELISA test is performed on the whole herd. At that time, James sits down with the veterinarian and goes over a John's management practices checklist to ensure he is doing every-

thing he can to reduce precedence of the disease.

"The program does allow you to keep a cow that does test positive, but I choose not to," James says. "I had one positive, she didn't show any clinical signs of the disease, but I did not breed her back on purpose."

James and Janette are members of MMPA's Constantine Local. In addition to working full time delivering lumber, James is a volunteer firefighter for the Foraker Fire Department.



The Stauffer Family: (back row) Janette, James, Jolen, (front row) Delphine, Bradley and Marissa.