



Veteran dairy man named to top post

By PAUL FORDE

Sitting on the edge of Markham just north of Major Mackenzie Drive and nestled at the end of a country lane lies Romandale Farms of Unionville.

Scattered about in the surrounding pastures are about 80 fine looking Holsteins, each worth thousands of dollars. Holsteins are those black and white cows that graze calmly in a field and blend into the landscape. (Eighty per cent of dairy cattle in Canada are Holsteins.)

Holsteins are big business and Markham's Romandale Farms is one of the busiest dairy farms in Canada. Herd superintendent, David Houck, transacts business all over Canada, the United States, Mexico, Spain, England, South America, Scotland and even Japan.

Besides, Mr. Houck, 61, is the newly elected President of the Holstein Association of Canada.

Mr. Houck has a lifelong affiliation with Holsteins which began way back in 1925 when his father was involved in Limou Holstein Farm near Niagara Falls.

His parents were prominent in their community with his father, Jack, serving on one of the first Ontario Milk Control boards and his mother, Ruth, being the first woman to serve on a United Nations delegation under Prime Minister Lester Pearson.

Before Romandale Farms, Mr. Houck honed his skills and expertise at the family farm in Brampton where they established the Houckholme Holsteins.

It was while travelling a fair deal from one show to another that Mr. Houck said he learned to differentiate between poor and good quality Holsteins.

Mr. Houck arrived at Romandale Farms in 1953 as herd superintendent. Working with the Romans — owner Stephen (chair-

man of Denison Mines), and his brother Jack, the farm manager, Mr. Houck has seen Romandale Farms make a worldwide impression on the Holstein industry.

The names of cows that helped build the reputation of the Romandale Farms reads like a who's who in the cattle business. World class cows are continually being bred and sold from the farm.

Names such as Texal Highcroft Colanhan, Annizibar Marquis Sue, Hahoney Babe and Pluto Sovereign Gertie are deep pedigree cow families that the Romandales are more than proud to be credited with.

Foreign breeders will travel the globe for sperm from the Romandale Reflection Marquis, a three-time all Canadian bull.

World record sales of cattle were established at the Romandale Farms in 1979 when 201 head of cattle were auctioned off reaching a staggering total of \$2,795,500.

As Mr. Houck says, "I wouldn't have missed it for the world".

Romandale Farms paid \$45,000 for Alda, "one great cow". Alda has produced 240,000 lbs. of milk in her lifetime and has born 16 daughters.

Association duties

One of the jobs of the association is to look into long-range planning of this industry. Mr. Houck as president takes into account the importance of Canada's thrust towards free trade with the United States in regards to Holsteins and the dairy industry.

At the moment there are 14,000 members in the Holstein Association of Canada alone. This is the largest membership in the British Commonwealth.

The association provides services to dairy farms in Canada which enable them to understand government tactics, dairy costs, accounting practices, and what seems to be close to Mr. Houck's heart, an emphasis on breed improvement programs and the maintenance of foreign markets.

An important new factor has cropped up in the last year from the United States which has a profound affect on the industry. A research professor at Cornell University has come up with a way to make cows produce between 20 to 40 per cent more milk within three days.

The injection of one of the cow's own hormones seems to stimulate its ability to turn food into milk. According to Mr. Houck, it is an impressive technological find and one that seems capable of lowering milk costs for consumers but which could forecast an end to the small scale family farm.

It is possible that this hormone could be on the market in the United States by 1988, but full commercial approval here in Canada will probably lag far behind this.

The affects of this hormone injection suggests a detour from nature and the Ontario Humane Society has been arguing against its use.

This new treatment will require an efficient, highly industrialized and specialized farm set up to be operative. Only farms like Romandale would be able to accommodate the technology and capital investment required for the program.

Mr. Houck argues against its practicality in Canada with our milk production quotas and the program's inability to conform to

Continued on Page 19

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David Houck, herd superintendent at Romandale Farms in Markham, was recently named president of the Canadian Holstein Association, the largest dairy farming organization in Canada. Mr. Houck says that new technology is changing the face of dairy farming and that new hormones which increase milk production are already being tested in the United States.

— Bill Lanning

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