



Ja-Bob:

Adapting to Suit Different Aspects of the Genetics Industry

Red, polled, A2A2, and now slick – the breeding goals at Ja-Bob Holsteins in Ohio have been evolving to encompass different aspects in Holstein breeding. Owner Mark Yeazel is constantly striving to produce genetics that will have a positive impact on farmers around the world.

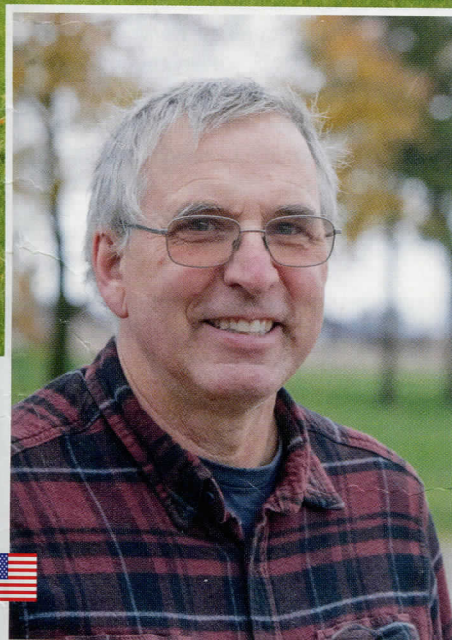
📷 DOUG SAVAGE 🎥 HAN HOPMAN

Mark Yeazel developed his fascination for Red-Holsteins early in life. His older brother was in 4H, and although Mark was too young to be a member of the club he still wanted to have a calf to train. 'It was the only red calf we had and my mother said it was chosen to make it easy for me to pick it out from all the others in the pen,' comments Mark. That little red calf grew to become one of the higher producing cows in the herd. 'My father kept a bull

from her and we ended up with 3-4 red daughters from that bull,' he recalls. With this, Mark's interest in red had been firmly established. By the time he was in college, embryo-transfer was becoming a new part of the breeding industry and Mark found himself doing an internship with Select Embryos. This gave him the idea that the way to go was to find some red carrier daughters of the leading bulls of the time and to flush them. The search was on. He eventually

located and purchased a red carrier Astronaut, a red carrier Hilltop Apollo Ivanhoe, and a red carrier Tony. The Tony, Sky-Hi Mars Helen, was just completing her 2-year-old record in the herd of Gus Wendorf at La Crosse, Wisconsin. 'A full brother to Helen was a red carrier, so I knew we had a 50/50 chance that she carried red too,' Mark points out. The Tony daughter was out of a Bootmaker and then a Piney-Hill Majority-RC. Mark took the gamble and in October 1983 he

Ja-Bob Addict Rachel-Red VG-88: This Addiction daughter traces through Ronelee Durable and Golden-Oaks Vince to Golden-Oaks Perk Rae-Red, the Red-Impact Cow winner from 2012.



Mark Yeazel.

Ja-Bob in the US

- Located at Eaton, western Ohio
- Owned by Mark & Joy Yeazel.
- 103 acres/42ha: corn, triticale, wheat & soybeans
- 125 cows, 90 heifers
- Production: 28,310lb/12,841kg 3.9% 3.2%
- Ration: Corn silage, triticale silage plus corn, soya-meal, soya-hulls and minerals. Concentrate pellets in the robots.
- Current Sires: SJK I Am-Red-PP, 3Star Oh Ranger-Red, AOT Ronald Highwire-Red, Bacon-Hill Resonate-Red, Vogue Redeye-P-Red & Delta Launch-PP-Red.

purchased Helen. After she calved, he flushed her to Needle-Lane Jon-Red and she obliged by producing a red calf. While the other two foundation cows failed to leave anything of note, the Helen family went on to become the back-bone of the Ja-Bob herd. Numerous bulls have gone to AI over the years with the most influential being Ja-Bob Jordan-Red, sired by the Blackstar son Mercy Phideaux and tracing through Momentum-Caveman-Mark to Helen. Today almost 80% of the herd comes from the Helen family, including a couple of lines with 8 and 9 generations of EX tracing directly to Helen.

ROBOTS

The herd of 120 cows is milked by two Lely A4 robots that were installed in the existing barn a few years ago. 'The first 6 months were a bit rough because we were learning and the cows were learning, but they have certainly cut the labor time in the barn,' remarks Yeazel. In addition to the dominant Helen family, the herd also includes a branch of the Roxy's and some descendants of Continental Scarlet. In fact, the cow pictured with this story, Ja-Bob Addict Rachel-Red VG-88, comes from the Roxy's and is a maternal sister to the bull Ja-Bob Rex-PP-Red at Triple-Hil Sires.

ADAPTATION

Down through the years Mark has kept the Ja-Bob breeding program current by adapting to different market aspects: 40 years ago it was red, 25 years ago he moved towards polled genetics, 10 years ago he added A2A2, and 4 years ago the slick gene for heat tolerance. Each change has opened new market opportunities for Ja-Bob genetics by appealing to a new group of buyers. While it has become increasingly difficult to get young bulls into the major AI programs, these specialty traits add extra attraction to Ja-Bob genetics. Yeazel also sells semen from a number of bulls, including the slick sires Ja-Bob Mambo-SL-Red (Rudolph Missy family) and Calganados-JB Aviator-SL (out of Seagull-Bay Miss America, the full sister to Supersire). His first cow carrying the slick gene is completing her first lactation while there is a group of heifers that will calve in the spring. In total Ja-Bob now has 25 slick animals which Mark sees as a nucleus to advance the cause of slick breeding. He now has the highest red/polled/slick bull available, Ja-Bob Hallmark-SL-P-Red (2349 gTPI), the highest red/PP/slick bull, Ja-Bob Jacuzzi-SL-PP-Red (2224 gTPI), and the highest slick/RC bull Slick-Gator-JB Smart-SL-P (2494 gTPI). Mark's interest in slick genetics started when he attended a conference in Puerto Rico at which it was revealed that cows that carried the slick gene that produced the short-haired coat were averaging 1,500lb/682kg more milk and breed-

ing back 30 days earlier than cows that did not have the gene: A dramatic difference given most cows were only averaging 12,000lb./5,500kg in the heat of Puerto Rico. 'The Holstein Association has started a project using slick genetics in a few herds in Florida and California, and so far they are seeing more differences in the hot, humid conditions of Florida and not so much in the hot, arid conditions of California. I'm doubtful that we will see a huge benefit from the slick gene here in our conditions, even though we do have some hot days each summer. However, as breeders here in America we need to look much further than just trying to make the most milk we can under ideal management conditions. If we can develop genetics that can really change the lives of farmers in tropical countries around the world then we need to do it.' It's something Mark is very passionate about. He runs a community and church program recycling scrap metal to raise funds to build housing for orphans in Tanzania. This year's funds are to buy a tractor to help in the growing and harvesting of vegetables to feed them.

DOUBLE-CROPPING

In addition to corn silage, the other major forage component in the feed-ration is triticale, a cereal crop that is a cross between wheat and rye. 'We plant it at the end of September to have it well established before winter. Then in the spring it will grow rapidly so we can chop it in late May and then plant soybeans or corn straight back into that ground,' explains Yeazel. Being able to chop the corn and triticale for forage early rather than waiting for the seed to ripen, adds flexibility to the cropping rotation and makes double-cropping an appealing option. Indeed, research from various parts of the world consistently shows minimum or zero tillage with double-cropping to be more profitable than conventional cropping. And the other major benefit is that it puts more carbon back into the soil. While a lot has been made of the importance of trees in the fight against climate-change, in fact all plants take carbon-dioxide out of the atmosphere. Bare earth is the enemy. Fallow ground and cultivating fine seed-beds in traditional farming does nothing to help carbon capture: Having plants in the soil at all times puts more carbon back into the soil. 'Unfortunately, apart from a hog farmer down the road I think I'm the only one in our region who is double-cropping. We need to do a much better job of getting the message out there to other farmers,' comments Yeazel. 'Farmers are in the unique position of being able to capture carbon from the atmosphere and put it back into the soil so we need to adapt our farming practices and maximize that process to the best of our abilities.' ●