

MINER MATTERS

A NEWSLETTER FOR EMPLOYEES



MEMOIRS OF A MINER GIRL Japanese black cattle... mmm mmm good! *By Heather Dann*

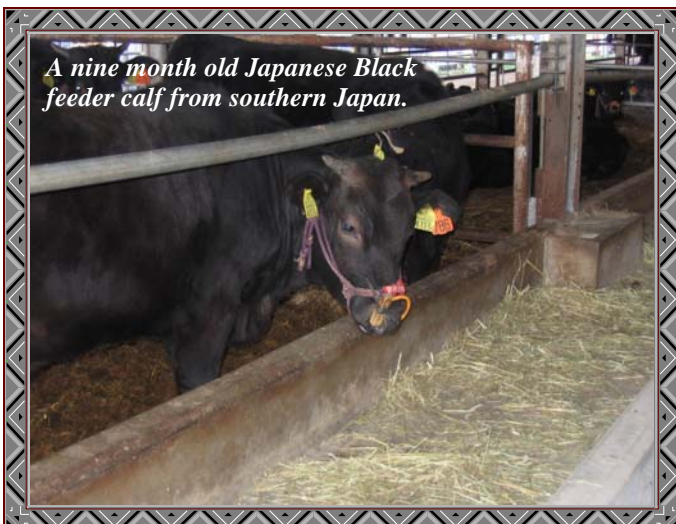
Rick and I traveled to Japan at the beginning of November to present research reports to Zennoh. After the meeting, I spent a couple of days touring around Tokyo, Tsukuba, and Zennoh's research laboratory, dairy farm, and beef farm. I was amazed by the Japanese Black Cattle (Wagyu Cattle) that are finished at the beef farm. They were impressive looking steers with more body condition (fat) than our US beef cattle. When harvested, the meat is highly marbled (up to 40% fat). Japanese Black Cattle yield some of the most expensive beef in the world. I saw beef being sold for over \$60 per pound in the butcher shop. I was told that certain cuts would sell for \$100 to \$200 per pound.

Zennoh buys Japanese Black feeder cattle at 9 months of age from southern Japan (famous region for Japanese Black

Cattle) for approximately \$5,000 per head. The cattle are raised to approximately 30 months of age and 1800 pounds. Feed costs are \$2,000 to \$3,000 per head from 9 to 30 months of age. The Japanese Black steers are purchased for approximately \$10,000 by Japanese restaurants and retailers who specialize in high quality meat.



A 30 month old Japanese Black steer.



A nine month old Japanese Black feeder calf from southern Japan.

I worked up quite a craving for beef while touring around the beef farm with my Zennoh friends, so for dinner that night we had Japanese beef barbeque (not like our American barbeque). We sat on the floor around a table with a grill in the center and cooked tiny pieces of beef. Given the high cost of beef, few cuts appear to go to waste. At dinner, we ate tongue, cheek, diaphragm, intestines, and loin. All the cuts were highly marbled and tasted great. My favorite was beef cheek.

HEALTH INSURANCE UPDATES what's new for

2006 *By Kirk Beattie*

During the holiday week the last thing you want to think about is health insurance options and flexible spending plans. However, by the time you're reading this article, you should have received your annual election form for these benefits. There are a few changes to the Blue Shield plans for 2006. Included with your election form is a side-by-side comparison of the current plan and the renewal plan with the changes highlighted in bold letters. These changes were not decisions made by Miner Institute, but were requirements of Blue Shield. The only change for the Empire plan was the co-pay increase to \$20. This makes the two HMO plans similar and reduces an 18% increase to 8% for that plan, which is a savings to the employee of approximately \$75 for single coverage or \$205 for family coverage.

The renewal increases for 2006 are between 4% and 16% depending on the insurance plan. Even though Miner Institute pays 80% of the overall health insurance premium, employees will still see the same percentage increase on their portion. In the past, we have made changes to the plans to help control these increases and at the same time provide good coverage for employees. This is a difficult balancing act because saving a percent or two is nice but not if it will cost employees more in terms of out-of-pocket expenses. In the future, we will continue to look for ways to improve our health insurance options both in quality of coverage and cost.

If you're not already doing so, you may want to consider taking advantage of the

flexible spending plan. This benefit will not only save you a considerable amount in income taxes but also gives you extra cash to help pay for medical and dependent care costs. Medical expenses can be the co-pays for doctor visits or prescriptions, dental expenses, eye exams, glasses, contacts or even some over-the-counter items such as contact solution or cough syrup.

Here's an Example of How It Works

Ms. Employee elects the \$600 option for medical expenses under the Miner Flexible Spending Plan, which costs her \$5 per paycheck or \$125 each year. Since she can be reimbursed for up to \$600 in expenses, she has immediately earned \$475 in extra benefits. The \$5 is also paid before taxes and is not subject to income taxes at the end of the year. So depending on Ms. Employee's tax bracket, she could save \$25 or more in taxes.

During the year, Ms. Employee spends money on various medical expenses. In total she spends \$600 on a dentist visit, prescriptions, doctor visits, cough medicine, contact solution, etc. Throughout the year, she mails in the receipts for these expenses and each month is given a check reimbursing her up to \$600.

If you would like more information on the flexible spending plan or an explanation of the differences between the three health insurance options that Miner Institute offers, please stop by and see me anytime.

EMPLOYEE CELEBRATIONS

Birthdays

November

Lynn Commaille
Wanda Emerich
Mark Gonyo
Hope Jubert



December

Shawn Bechard
Ryan Dumont
Chad Hebert
Kirk Beattie
Priscilla Hackett

Births

Welcome to the world Nathaniel Dake Thomas, grandson of our own "Crops Dude". Nathan was born on November 8, 2005 and is the first child for Matt (Ev's son) and Peg (a SEFM student in 1991).



Engagements



Congratulations to Heather Wolford on her engagement to John Gauthier from Mooers, NY. The wedding is set for April 22, 2007.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Sally Flis

"I've been around cows most of my life. I showed cows with 4H until I was 16. It seems natural to transition that knowledge and interest into a career."



A Summer Experience in Farm Management student in 2001, Sally rejoined the staff as a research technician in January of this year. She was already familiar with the Institute, even before her tenure as a SEFM student. Her Dad works for the agribusiness company Carovail and is good friends with Ev.

Sally attended the University of Wisconsin at Madison (but was never a cheese head) where she double majored in Dairy Science and Agronomy. She also received her masters in Dairy Nutrition. In September, she began her Ph.D. program as a Miner Institute/UVM student. She is still deciding what to study, but is leaning toward environmental management or dairy nutrition. Sally is currently working on a greenhouse project at Plattsburgh State.

Sally lives in Plattsburgh with her boyfriend Ben, who is a DJ for Entertainment Unlimited, and her dog Jake, an eleven year old beagle. Her and Ben spend time playing the XBOX, but she also enjoys hiking, ice skating, working out, and jogging.

Sally was born in Northampton, MA, but grew up in Castleton, VT. She has an older sister who lives in Massachusetts and a younger brother living in Montana. Her parents still live in Castleton.

HORSE RELATED NEWS *By Karen Lassell*

The New York Morgan Horse Show at the state fairgrounds in Syracuse was a success again for Miner Morgans. HD Plumbrook, a 4 year old mare, came in first in a class of 14 horses with an excellent score and nice comments from the judge in the "Sport Horse Suitability" class where they are judged in hand on conformation, way of going and attitude.

The other highlight from that class was that I did not fall down or have a heart attack after running more than I ever do anywhere! "Reggie" our barrel-racer put in a fast time and was the winner of that section of the Versatility Challenge and came in second overall in this perennial favorite class. Our other veteran show horse, "Sara" had some nice ribbons, including a blue, in the carriage and hunter pleasure divisions.

Miner Institute is instrumental in conducting the Youth Contest at the show. Lynn judged the presentations and helped score the written tests, I judged the riding test, and Katie pulled the whole thing together! Youth that win the contest are eligible to go on to compete at the Morgan Grand National.

Sarah Ruby, SEEM & Intern alumnus was representing the farm she now works for and did a nice job for them. She showed a filly that was purchased from Miner in utero to some very respectable ribbons. We weren't surprised either to hear that they call her "Sarah the Wonderful".

The other big benefit of the horse show is the chance to make contacts with a big group of equine supporters and Morgan Horse promoters. We'll be free-leasing an amazing sport horse mare from a farm in Pennsylvania for the 2006 breeding season; a connection made at this year's show.

RICK'S VIEW

As you all know, I just spent two weeks in Japan for a combination of research reporting with ZenNoh and then two 4-day workshops with Dr. Ito who is Vice President with Miner-Japan. You may not know much about this particular aspect of Miner Institute, but Dr. Ito essentially runs a one-man extension service for Japan's dairy industry. He has a subscriber list for his publications and meetings of over 600 producers, extension people, veterinarians, and allied industry. This year, I traveled to Japan with Dr. Tom Overton of Cornell University and we presented 10 seminars apiece on various aspects of transition cow management.

The entire program was repeated twice - once in Tokyo and once in a small town in the middle of dairy country on the island of Hokkaido. Approximately 60% of Japan's dairy industry is located on Hokkaido and it is very similar to the dairy industry in northern NY. Although I enjoyed the meetings and toured some outstanding dairies, it feels great to finally be back again. I've already traded sushi for Dunkin Donuts!

Enjoy the last of Autumn, and I hope you all have a Happy Thanksgiving!



Thanksgiving is all about togetherness, love, sharing, and giving thanks for our blessings. Strengthen the ties that bind you and your family and loved ones together! Convey your wishes with a message from your heart... and a very Happy Thanksgiving to you from us!

DATE SET FOR NEXT RESEARCH MEETING

By Katie Ballard

We're happy to continue our monthly research meetings with the Miner Institute staff.

Research Update Meeting

Monday, December 12, 2005

Noon in dairy barn classroom

Based on the fact that Danny Belrose stayed awake through Jeff, Kurt and Maggie's discussion of the Pro-Act Microbial Manure study, I will continue to delegate speaking duties to members of the research staff, other than myself!

Heather will be sharing her experiences in Japan as she traveled with Rick in early November to present 2005 research to Zen-Noh. She'll share her experiences with Japanese agriculture and cuisine. We hope you can join us for pizza lunch on December 12th in the dairy barn classroom at noon. Please share any feedback you might have on these monthly research meetings with me.

MINER HAPPENINGS

events, activities, and noteworthy items of the month

The Senior Citizen council visited the Heritage Tour Center on Thursday, October 20th. Approximately 22 enthusiastic people were on hand. Linda and Debra provided a guided tour of both the exhibit and horse barn. They then went on to the Alice T. Miner Museum.

Miner Day was celebrated by the Chazy Central Rural School on Friday, October 22. While the elementary was busy visiting various Miner related sites, eight grade students visited the Heritage Tour Center. The students were well prepared, having done some research in advance of their visit. Many knew that they had a connection with Mr. Miner and Heart's Delight Farm through a relative who had worked on the farm in earlier years or one who works here now. The students are required to write an essay about some aspect of Mr. Miner's life after they return to class. In addition, they used crossword puzzles created by Miner staff in a hunt for more information and to get the "treasure," which is extra social studies class credit for completing the puzzle. "Mr. Miner's contributions are well worth being noted, especially as it pertains to New York State history. I always organize my lecture on entrepreneurs so that it coincides with Miner Day" says Justin Frechette, 8th grade Social Studies teacher at CCRS.

Ev's comments regarding soybean crops were newsworthy on Saturday, October 29th. An article appeared in the Press Republican and a news clip was aired on Channel 5.

Hosting approximately 60 kids, Junior Youth EquiDay was a big hit on November 5th. This year's topics focused on how to treat horse wounds and how to deal with an easily spooked horse. Karen and Lynn were the event coordinators providing the seminar and demonstration presentations. A nice article, complete with picture, appeared in the Press Republican on Monday, November 7th. The horse barn and its staff didn't get much rest following this event. On Friday, November 11th, Dana Grant's Girl Scout troop was on hand to work toward their horse badge.



Post-it-notes were used to show the anatomy of the horse during a demonstration for a local Girl Scouts troop. Andy (horse) stands patiently, waiting to be humiliated.

OUTREACH SERVICES making connections at the

Northeast Dairy Challenge *By Wanda Emerich*



I represented Miner Institute at the 3rd Annual Northeast Regional Dairy Challenge held at Morrisville State College in Norwich, N.Y by serving on the Program Committee and managed the information desk at the contest. Past Advanced Dairy Management students, Brett Denny and Jason Taylor were also involved in assisting at the contest. Brett now works for Vermont DHIA as a computer specialist and Jason works for Genex offers programs on heat detection and AI training. Charlie Sniffen, representing his business, Fencrest Consulting, served as one of 15 judges for the competition. The 2006 Advanced Dairy Management students coming to Miner Institute in January participated in the Challenge representing the University of Vermont.

On October 20-22, 110 college students from 12 Northeast colleges participated in the event. The departments of dairy management, agriculture science, and ag-business at Morrisville State College welcomed students from Penn State University, Morrisville State College, University of New Hampshire, University of Connecticut, Delaware Valley College, University of Maine, SUNY Cobleskill, Cornell University, Alfred State College, University of Massachusetts, Vermont Technical College and University of Vermont.

The Northeast Dairy Challenge is an innovative three-day event designed by a

team of industry and university professionals to promote a vibrant future for the dairy industry. Working in mixed-university teams of five students, contestants assessed all aspects of a working dairy farm and presented recommendations for improvement to a panel of judges and participating farm families.

Participating dairy farmer Andy Bartlett stated, "The Dairy Challenge is like free consulting for my business. College students from across the Northeast evaluated my business and gave me suggestions that will help my business become more successful."

The objective of this evaluation process is to create a real-life situation that stresses the importance of teamwork and professionalism. Contest Chairperson Barry Putnam of Genex Cooperative Inc. reported, "Our business requires employees that can work well with all types of personalities. Not only does the Dairy Challenge teach technical knowledge, it excels in assisting students in developing people skills."

Students arrived at the Howard Johnson's Hotel in Norwich, N.Y., on the afternoon of Oct. 20. After check-in and registration, participants were split into mixed-university teams. Teams got to know each other over pizza and then participated in team-building exercises with Jim Henion of Genex Cooperative Inc. At the YMCA in Norwich, Henion worked with students to discover the strengths and capabilities of their team, examine ingredients of effective teams, appoint a team leader, and examine

personality styles of team members. At the end of the evening, teams received detailed production, financial, nutrition and reproduction records, and began brainstorming for their farm visit.

The next morning, teams traveled to one of three host farms to evaluate cows, facilities, and management practices. After a two-hour farm visit, teams returned to the Howard Johnson's to analyze their data and develop recommendations for improvement. Each team prepared a 20-minute presentation that detailed their observations and suggestions. The second day concluded with dinner and a tour of Norwich 's Classic Car Museum and an elimination volleyball tournament at the YMCA.

On the program's final day, each team presented their evaluation and recommendations to a panel of industry judges at Morrisville State College's Roger W. Follett Hall in Norwich. Teams were ranked as platinum, gold or silver, based on how well their evaluations matched the judges' evaluations of the dairy

operation.

When the teams were not presenting, they traveled to Marshman Farms in Oxford, N.Y. At the farm, participants enjoyed cookies, ice cream and hot chocolate as they participated in dairy nutrition, calf care, milk quality and bunk management workshops.

The Dairy Challenge ended with dinner and an awards ceremony at Howard Johnson's. Keynote speaker Bill Lipinski of First Pioneer Farm Credit congratulated Dairy Challenge participants and stressed how important teamwork is to the dairy industry's future success. After completing the event, SUNY Cobleskill agricultural business student Rob Keeney said, "The challenge gave me a perspective of what I need to do to be successful in the dairy industry."

The third annual Northeast Dairy Challenge was made possible through generous contributions from industry sponsors.



MINER MATTERS



CALENDAR

Thanksgiving

November 24

Office Closed Nov 24/25

Microsoft Outlook Tasks training

November 30

Maggie Carter will be holding this training session at 10:00am in the computer lab. It is open to all Miner employees who are interested. Please contact Maggie to let her know you will be attending.

Dairy Day

December 6

This year's guest speaker is Gregoria Billikopf Encina from the University of California.

Pearl Harbor Day

December 7

On this day in 1941 Japanese planes attacked the US Naval Base at Pearl Harbor killing more than 2,400 Americans. The *U.S.S. Arizona* remains underwater at Pearl Harbor, preserved as a memorial to those who died there.

Nobel Prize awarded

December 10

The Nobel Prize is an international award given yearly since 1901 for achievements in physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, and for peace. Winners are announced in October every year, but receive their awards on December 10.

Research Seminar

December 12, 2005

Institute Board Meeting

December 16

Institute trustees will be onsite for their annual budget meeting.

Fall semester ends

December 16

Holiday Party

December 17



2005 Miner Institute Food and Toy Drive



Benefiting the JCEO Outreach Center

Chazy, NY

In the spirit of the upcoming holiday season, Miner Institute is proud to organize a food and toy drive. Any employees wishing to participate should bring in food items and unwrapped toys.

Boxes will be placed in the Farm Office and at Miner Center beginning Monday, November 28th through Thursday, December 15th. Non-perishable items are best, but all food items will be accepted. Please call Debra at extension 113 if you are interested in donating a perishable item such as meat, or if you would rather give a donation.

Your generous support will make a difference this holiday season!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

If you would like to contribute information (articles, upcoming events, announcements of special achievements, new baby/grandchild, etc.) please forward them to Debra at the Farm Office, ext 113.

**The next issue of Miner Matters will come out on
December 19, 2005.**

The deadline for receiving items is December 16, 2005.