

Alpine Focus: Intertwined Success

by Kevin W. Kinney

In 2004 I started contributing the annual Alpine herd Q&A to the United Caprine News, featuring Shahena'ko Alpines. Through these articles, it has become evident to me that the accomplishments of today's Alpine breeders are found in the successes of the past. For each advancement in the breed is intertwined with the herds that came before them. Building on this concept, this year I have chosen two herds rich in genetics, which have been finding their own success, notably by their recent national show accomplishments. I hope you enjoy this year's featured herds: Harmody Acres (HA) and Windrush Farm (WF).

When and how did you start in dairy goats?

HA: The Larson family involvement with dairy goats all started when the oldest child, Amanda, asked for a horse. The answer was a resounding "no" so she started researching what other animals might satisfy the craving for a large animal 4-H project. Another family in our 4-H club had dairy goats, so Amanda set out to convince her parents that it would be a great idea to start a herd of her own. In the end, she purchased two Alpine does, the beginning of the Harmody Alpine herd.

WF: It all started as a small 4-H project for our two sons back in the summer of 2000. We were walking around our county fair discussing different animals the boys might be interested in raising. We came

upon our neighbor, Sam Jackson of Udder Things Alpines and his pen of dairy goats. The boys liked playing with the kids and the decision was made. We were just going to get a couple of does and keep it small because we never planned to have any of those smelly bucks around the farm. Sam lives just down the road and he said he would let us use his bucks for breeding. Sam only had one kid for sale so he sent us over to Scott and Marcia Jura at Angel Prairie for a second doe. Fast forward to 2013 and we currently have close to 30 does and five bucks. So depending on the day, we either thank Sam or blame him for getting us into dairy goats.

Have you always worked with the Alpine breed?

HA: Alpines have always been the breed of choice. We do have a few goats as tokens of other breeds (LaMancha, Oberhasli and Toggenburg).

WF: Alpines are the goats that always caught our eye. We started with purebreds and aside from our first breeding to our neighbor's American buck we have kept with the purebred lines. In 2009 we added our one and only LaMancha to the herd. Lena always loved the breed's gentle nature and when our friends at Summer Haven offered a doe kid for sale at a weekend show we brought her home with us. Unfortunately living with Alpines has corrupted her and she is now one of the bossier goats in the barn.

What Alpine lines were people working



GCH Harmody R Bria's Cantata, 2010 Reserve National Champion.

with when you started that contributed to your herd?

HA: When we started to understand the basics of making breeding decisions, more than what buck was available, we looked to Pearl Valley in southern Colorado and Redwood Hills in California. We were looking for stylish does that were also good producers.

WF: We bought three of our first four doe kids from the Angel Prairie herd. Their pedigrees contained a mix of Maple Glen and Nodaway genetics. After extensive research and talking with Alpine breeders we could corner, we added Iron Rod ET Sheriff to our herd. His genetics were a mix of Sanstorm and Angel Prairie lines that theoretically should work beautifully with our girls. Sheriff was one of those bucks you could breed to almost any doe and he would make whatever improvements you were looking for. He gave us general appearance, arrow straight toplines and beautiful udders. To this day I can look out over the herd and pick out his daughters straight away. He was a once in a lifetime buck and we really miss him.

How do you select bucks to use in your breeding program?

HA: We select bucks for our breeding program by analyzing the performance records from their dams and siblings. Our goal is to raise animals that can excel in the show ring as well as put milk in the bucket. Every time we go to a show we

are looking at other Alpines there, looking at what traits we see that we like. We look for a herd with a similar style, with lines that are similar to ours as well. We have learned from experience that bringing in totally different animals tends to not cross as well as when there are common ancestors in the pedigrees.

WF: The first thing we look at when considering any buck is the pedigree and the conformation of the dam. We want something from a strong doe line that has proven it can reproduce itself. The main thing is to evaluate what characteristics you are looking for to improve and find a buck that is strong in those areas. LA scores and milk records can help enormously with this. Choosing offspring out of a proven buck is also a good thing. Proof on the ground of what he is producing is very valuable. Purchasing an already proven mature buck can be even better.

What are your strongest doe lines?

HA: The strongest dam lines in our herd trace back to Harmody ES Con Bria and Pearl Valley Obsession Birdie. Birdie gave us bucks that crossed well with our does. Bria's contribution to our herd can be seen in almost every group of animals in our herd.

WF: Almost all of the does in our herd can be traced back to the first doe kids we started with. SG Angel Prairie Dutch Cinnamon was one of these and her cross with

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SGCH Windrush Farms IRS Saffron and GCH Windrush Farms IRS Corriander, first place Produce of Dam at the 2010 National Show.