

A visit with Harmody Acres and Windrush Farm

continued from page 15

make breeding decisions and select replacement animals, we paid special attention to feet and legs, level toplines and the overall picture of the goats. As a whole, our herd lacks a bit of body capacity. Our younger does show a marked improvement in depth of heart and barrel, which we hope to continue.

WF: Our goats tend to have level toplines and wide, level rumps. We started with these traits and were fortunate that the first bucks we used did nothing to diminish this quality. We are working to maintain good feet and legs and trying to add more angulation to some of our does.

What direction would you like to take your breeding program in the next year?

HA: In the next year we hope to continue the improvement we have seen the last few years. One of the challenges we have here every year is selecting which young we think will be good enough to replace an older, proven doe.

WF: When we get it figured out we will let you know. I'm sure Keith and I will be arguing about it all summer long.

A number of breeders have used your lines. What kind of influence are these lines making or have they made across the nation?

HA: The herds that our animals have joined have seen an improvement in production, style and mammary system attachments. More than the traits that our lines have influenced, we have made connections with Alpine breeders across the country, networking that will serve us well in the years to come.

WF: We have only been breeding bucks to sell for about ten years now so it's hard to say how our bucks are influencing the breed in such a short period of time. We do have a buck working in the PJ Baileys' herd, CH Windrush Farms IRS Charmer, that sired the 2011 National Junior Champion and also sired the first place junior get of sire that same year.

Tell me about your accomplishments at the national show level, with DHIR, linear appraisal and state awards?

HA: We have shown our animals at the national show since 2002, with the exception of 2004. Our goal was to make the cut one year, an objective that we achieved our very first time in Pueblo. Our next goal was to earn a ribbon and we were pleasantly surprised with an 11th place in Gillette, WY in 2007. We were shocked when Cantata was selected as 1st place udder in 2008 and then again in 2009. In Louisville, KY in 2010, Cantata won her class. We did not think we could be any

more excited and then Bria won the aged doe class. Standing in the championship line-up at Nationals was far beyond anything any of us had ever hoped for. We were ecstatic when the judge named Cantata as reserve champion, reserve best udder and then went on to win dam and daughter with Bria. The following year we traveled over 2600 miles to Springfield, MA. Our goal was that each doe would walk into the ring in the best condition possible. Once again Bria and Cantata won their respective age groups and we found ourselves with two does in the champion line up! When the judge announced the national champion as the aged doe, I think it took all of us a few minutes to realize that it was our Bria! Bria and Cantata won best and reserve best udder, first place best three, dam and daughter and produce of dam. We have participated in the DHIA program for the past 13 years. Our does consistently earn their milking stars. Bria received lifetime production awards in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

WF: The first national show that we took a large number of goats to was the 201 show in Louisville. We were very excited to place our yearling milker, Windrush Farms IRS Emily second in the class. We went on to make the cut with every goat we took and even had the first place produce of dam in SGCH Windrush Farms IRS Saffron and GCH Windrush Farms IRS Corriander. We debated over making the long drive to Massachusetts the next year but were very glad we did as we took home the Premier Breeder and Premier Sire awards. We also had the first place three year old, CH Windrush Farms IRS Renee. Colorado was an longer, hotter trip but we loaded up the girls and headed to the big show. We had a couple of first place finishes and had 2nd place dairy herd, 2nd place Best Three Females and for the second year in a row has a doe in the line up for best udder. We participated in DHIR testing for a couple of years and then had to stop due to time constraints. We are planning to resume testing this year. We do have many does with their milking stars and have three SGCH does currently in the herd. We do participate in the linear appraisal program most years. We have done it four times but have had the same appraiser the past three times. While we were very happy with our appraiser, we think we could benefit more from having a variety of opinions rather than the same judgment each year. The program itself is very valuable in helping to research genetics and determine what characteristics you need to work on in your herd but I think the program will suffer if

more appraisers aren't added or at least not send an appraiser to the same state two years in a row. We have had numerous grand champions and have received the Premier Breeder and Exhibitor award for six consecutive years at a very competitive Indiana State Fair. Regionally we have attended the NAILE several times the last being in 2009 where we had the supreme best three does.

What do you feel has been the most significant accomplishment of your breeding program? What is your proudest moment?

HA: The most significant accomplishment of our breeding program is the quality and consistency our herd shows. As we compete in shows across the country under different judges, our does consistently place at the top. Our does are strong in each age group, meeting the competition present, and, when put together for a group class attract attention in any showing. Our proudest goat moment was the 2011 national show. Starting with showmanship where Joseph placed 1st, Hannah placed 4th and Emily placed 2nd. Then later in the youth program, the four Larson siblings placed 2nd in the fitting contest as a team. Hannah placed 1st in the senior judging and management contest which helped her win the overall senior premier youth exhibitor and Alpine premier youth exhibitor awards. Then Alpine day where we started off with a 14th place dry yearling and continuing to the champion lineup where there were two Harmody Alpines. The day finished with Bria as the 2011 Alpine national champion and best udder and lifetime production award winner. That whole day had a surreal feeling to it. On a more personal level, the proudest moment occurred when all eight Larson family members were present at the national show in 2012 and it was captured in a photo with Bria. It was a moment in time that represented so much more. Each person had given something, learned something and played a part in the past 14 years of dairy goat experience. Bria holds many of the first titles for Harmody Alpines, making her the perfect doe for the family picture. Whether learning about life and death, responsibility and resourcefulness, goats have been the avenue for so much personal development for all members of the Larson family.

WF: we are proud of the fact that you can trace almost every goat in our barn back to the first couple of doe kids we started with just over ten years ago. In the short amount of time we have built our herd to be able to compete at a national level. Our proudest moments probably both happened at the 2011 national. Our son Reece show-

ed his goat CH Windrush Farms IRS Renee into first place. She was a granddaughter of the first kid he picked out when he was only seven years old. We then went on to win Premier Breeder and Iron Rod ET Sheriff was named Premier Sire.

What would you do differently? What would you do the same?

HA: If we went back and started over, we would have been more purposeful about choosing our bucks for the first five years of our breeding plan. The first couple of years we often chose bucks and breedings from different breeders whose animals placed well at national shows but with little research on if their lines were similar and would complement ours. We would still make this a family project. Goats are something that we all do together, from milking to planning matings, from traveling to goat shows to checking expecting does in the middle of the night. Harmody Alpines is a family project and that would remain the same.

WF: I think we would definitely have done a lot more research into dairy goats and the health and maintenance involved in taking care of a show herd. We were very fortunate to have the help of a lot of experienced goat breeders in the state of Indiana who were always willing to share their knowledge with us. We were especially lucky to have Scott and Marcia Jura of the Angel Prairie herd who always took our frantic phone calls, even the late night ones, and always had the answers for us. We would definitely still have chosen Alpines for our main breed. We love our feisty girls. We've always loved the variety of color and personalities they all have. We also like the fact that they are one of the most competitive breeds. In Indiana you never have to worry about making numbers at a show!

What advice would you give new breeders?

HA: Do not get caught up in the newest thing, or herd name. Make decisions that benefit your herd, stay in your budget and choose the animals you are bringing into your herd based on performance, not just pedigrees.

WF: The most important thing in starting a new herd is to buy healthy does from a respectable breeder. Don't be afraid to ask for health records and test results. Go to shows, look at the goats and ASK QUESTIONS! The thing that all goat breeders like to do most is talk about goats. Get as many opinions as you can and use that information to find what works for you. The most important thing is to start with goats

continued to page 20