

TO ADVOCATE THE USE OF JERSEY COWS

Identification and the recording of ancestry, type evaluation and production testing—once their need was determined, all these functions progressed quickly from idea to implementation. Not so with field service, first proposed by President R. A. Sibley at the 1894 Annual Meeting of The American Jersey Cattle Club.

Jerseys had so dominated the dairy production tests at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition that Sibley sought to take advantage of the opportunity. His proposal: To hire a man to attend dairy conferences and public meetings in order to "advocate the use of Jersey cows when the best results in dairying are required."

The members at the 1894 Annual Meeting authorized field work, but it would be another 26 years, until January 27, 1922 to be precise, before the Board of Directors would assume direct responsibility for guiding and financing a formal field service. In the interim, satisfying "a very general demand for field service" proceeded in fits and starts.

"No other work in relation to the spread and prosperity of the breed has been so slow in its initiation, or has presented more problems," R. M. Gow recalled in 1936.

Creating A Field Service

The American Jersey Cattle Club was experiencing growing pains at the turn of the 20th Century. It had quickly become more than an exclusive organization serving "the gentleman breeder; the man who has two motives, the sporting element and the desire to do some constructive breeding." As President M.D. Munn would report, "Over 95% of the returns coming from the registrations and transfers of this Club . . . come from what we know as the every day farmer-breeder of Jersey cattle . . . men back on the farms, making their living there and using the Jersey cow as a means of livelihood.

"I think we must view our Club activities in the field having in mind the overwhelming percentage of the great rank and file of Jersey breeders."

The Board of Directors soon discovered, Gow wrote, that "It was much easier to call for field work than to outline its nature, to show how it could be financed,

and to find the right man to supervise it."

The first action to provide on-farm service was to appoint Valancey E. Fuller, the superintendent of the Columbian Exposition herd, as "special agent" in 1895. He was occupied by writing promotional materials, organizing state Jersey breeder associations, attending meetings, and investigating fraudulent registrations. "Other representatives of the Club (also) did similar work," reported R. M. Gow, "but these were rather desultory ways of meeting the growing demand for continuous field work."

Where the 1894 Annual Meeting had "authorized" the Board of Directors to establish field service, the 1909 Annual Meeting produced a motion "instructing" the Board to take action. The Executive Committee met July 14 of that year, recommending again the special agent approach. The proposal was to allocate \$1,000 to cover the *per diem* work of qualified individuals to do "specific work in specific localities."

Defining The Job

Breeders in the Upper Midwest were unpersuaded that their needs would be served by an on-again, off-again special agent. They wrote to the AJCC Directors in October of 1909, requesting "immediate appointment of a man to take charge of the field work of the Club."

That letter did not achieve its aim, but what it did do may have been far more important. It produced the first job description for a "field man," compiled by President George W. Sisson, Jr.

"First, he should work in cooperation with, and under the direction of, the advertising committee; second, he should attend meetings of breeders' clubs, dairy conventions, and the like, prepared to present attractively the special qualifications of the Jersey cow; third, he should

organize local Jersey breeders' clubs and by occasional visits keep alive their enthusiasm and activity; fourth, he should organize Jersey cow testing associations, inducing even the isolated breeder to make yearly authenticated tests; fifth, he should do field work at fairs, shows, etc., particularly where we have exhibits of Jersey cows, as at the National Dairy Show, and have charge of such exhibits; sixth, he should endeavor to arouse interest in the man not now breeding Jerseys and create more enthusiasm in the established Jersey breeder."

The minutes record a "consensus of opinion that the man desired should be the most competent, one who would worthily represent the club and who could be looked up to by all breeders . . ." Finding a person with such qualities, however, was less a problem than finding the money to pay "a salary commensurate with his important duties (and) the paying of his traveling expenses."

Thus field service continued to be provided by "different men . . . in different sections." From 1915 to 1920, more than 1,200 events were covered by "the President, Secretary, some of the Directors and others, either volunteers or specially engaged men." The time invested by some was astounding. President M.D. Munn reported on January 28, 1916 that he had "traveled some 32,000 miles and had attended and spoken at 34 meetings, spending 58 days in doing this."

Munn would later term the efforts to provide quality field service "spasmodic," while Gow was more blunt, calling the *per diem* staffing scheme "a failure. Often (a man) was too busy at home pursuing his regular means of earning a living to abandon it on the drop of the hat" to do field work.

The idea of cooperative funding for field service emerged in March of 1919. The Southwest Jersey Cattle Breeders' Association offered to provide \$2,500 against expenses for a fieldman headquartered in Kansas City, if the AJCC would provide the balance up to a maximum of \$7,000. The Board of Directors declined to participate, but by 1921 had approved a "Regional Fieldwork" initiative structured along the same lines. The Southwest

association was first to create “an active organization for regional field work,” followed by the Tri-State Jersey Association of cooperating states Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.

The original allocation from the AJCC was not to exceed \$3,000 annually. But by August 19, 1920, more than \$10,000 had been appropriated and “it was becoming more and more apparent that the work could not be carried on very far by voluntary contributions from breeders.” The Directors sent to the Annual Meeting a request to increase transfer fees by \$1 per animal. Members voted 5 to 1 to increase fees, sending a clear signal to the leadership insisting upon significant levels of field service.

Field Service Formalized

Even so, the regional cooperative effort was dying quickly for lack of definite funding. Few of the regional units could commit to raising \$5,000 annually, and chafed under the rules providing that the size of the territory and field man’s activities were to be controlled by the Board of Directors.

“On January 27, 1922,” Gow reported, “it was resolved that the Club adopt the principle of having field men paid and controlled by the Club, and working under the direction of the Extension Department.”

It had taken 25 years for the Board to conclude definitively that a permanent professional staff was essential for effective field service. M. D. Munn was delighted that the Board was at last “carrying out the pledge we made to those 80,000 odd farmers who are breeding and registering Jersey cattle.”

Events began to unfold quickly. A total of \$24,000 was appropriated. Lewis Morley was named Director of Extension Work and “circuits” were laid out for four fieldmen. These instructions established their code of professional conduct:

The policies and broad outlines of field work must emanate entirely from the Club office, the officials therein being responsible and answerable to the Extension Committee and Board of Directors for the proper conduct and success of all extension work. Therefore field men shall carry on all work for the promotion of the breed as directed or approved by Club authority.

Field men must always remember that the interests of the A. J. C. C. should be

their interests, which therefore must not center in blood lines or families of Jerseys, or in individual animals or individual herds; but that, on the other hand, their chief and only concern shall be for the extension and welfare of the breed as a whole.

Field men shall not, under any circumstances, accept commissions on the sale of animals, nor shall they accept gratuities of any kind for their services; but hospitalities extended to them by Jersey breeders will not be considered as gratuities.

Field men must absolutely abstain from taking any part, either directly or indirectly, in Club politics.

They must not allow themselves to be used for by-bidding at public auctions, and are not permitted to trade in cattle.

Effectiveness Of Early Field Work

Munn was in the chair of the Extension Committee in 1929 when the question was raised as to whether or not “the amount being expended for fieldwork is wise and justified. Are we spending these funds so that it will do the most good?”

“We want to know what the men whose money we are spending think about it. So we prepared a very simple questionnaire to be sent out. It was their vote we wanted to hear. Of these 262 responses, all but 16 replied that they did receive direct benefit from field work,” almost half indicating that the benefit was “increased sales and better prices for cattle.”

A primary benefit was in “the educational work being carried on. One man wrote in, ‘It gives me a better understanding of the propositions and problems of the Club than I had before and shows me that the Club wants to help Jersey breeders to carry out their projects.’”

Placing economic value on field service was difficult, but one indicator of its effect was located in the change in registration market share. “We find this change,” Munn said. “The Holstein has dropped from 64.9% to 52.1%. The Jersey breed has gone up from 23.6% to 31.4%.”

“There is some reason for this. What is the reason? First we have the Jersey cow, which is all important. But no matter how good the machine may be, you have got to tell the public about it.

“In view of the above facts,” Munn concluded, “it is the unanimous recommendation of this committee that this fieldwork be continued and developed in the

most effective and efficient manner possible . . .”

Area Representative Defined

On-farm service has evolved in exactly the direction most appreciated by the Jersey farmers responding to the 1929 questionnaire: toward selling cattle and milk.

The organization of National All-Jersey Inc. is credited by J. F. Cavanaugh, Executive Secretary from 1956 to 1985, with moving toward a concept of Area Representatives. He recalls, “Fieldmen were thought to be like extension people. The fieldman was expected to go to the county, district and state meetings, hand out ribbons at the shows and attend all the fairs. It didn’t leave a lot of time for doing other kinds of work.

“Some of the breeders said, however, ‘There’s no need for him to come and see me unless he’ll make me some money. If he comes, I want him to get more money for my milk or sell some cows or help me use a program.’

For a time, field service was company specific. “In 1957, we put more emphasis on milk marketing with the All-Jersey program. We put John Jacobs in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana to see if he could generate enough revenue to make it self-supporting and he did. We had Bob Goheen for milk work in the Pacific Northwest and he generated enough revenue. (So) we designed a plan to have 17 Area Representatives. In 1961, however, the Directors decided that joint field service was more realistic.”

The flexibility required of Area Representatives as the 21st Century looms is unique to the intersecting scope of the AJCA, NAJ and Jersey Marketing Service activities. The modern concept of field service for Jersey producers was set forth in this statement adopted in June of 1987:

“Area Representatives of The American Jersey Cattle Club and National All-Jersey are dedicated to serving the best interests of the Jersey breed by helping dairy producers to maximize profits from their Jerseys.

To do this, the Area Representatives must set priorities for their work that will allow them to concentrate on helping producers sell Jersey cows, Jersey milk and Jersey milk products.

These priorities will result in the most profit for producers and will result in the generation of revenue for the Jersey associations.”