

An entirely home-bred herd of 41 cows has 20 Excellents in just a few years**A burning love for nice cows rewards Brantner with a 95-pointer**

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Farmshine Editor

EVANS CITY, Pa. — A relatively new name in Pennsylvania's Registered Holstein arena just had the brightness turned up a notch or two. Meet Mark Brantner, a 48-year old enthusiast for the black-and-white cow, who had one of his home-bred cows classified EX-95-2E last month.

It's been a long road; and yet also a short path at the same time. Born and raised on a common 40-cow Franklin County dairy farm, Mark got married in 1993 and stepped out to pursue his dreams. In just a few words, that dream was to breed and own a top herd of Registered Holsteins. He's well on his way; and considering that he's climbing a ladder that has his name on every rung, the achievement is extra sweet.

**"Excellence bred, not bought"** is the slogan the Brantners have lived by ever since they started dairying on their own — or nearly on their own. They aren't quite there yet, being that they have been building their Registered Holstein herd on properties that they rent. Currently, they are at the well-known Marburger Farm Dairy, near here, where Mark serves as herd manager while simultaneously building up his own herd.

Prior to the move to Evans City, the Brantners spent five years on the farm once owned by Laszlo Moses, who made a name for himself breeding Registered Holsteins near Greenville, Mercer County, Pa.

Early in his career, Mark worked for a couple of Holstein breeders in southern Pennsylvania and north-central Maryland. His passion for good breeding and high quality cattle led him to look for farms he could rent or work out an arrangement as is the case at Marburgers'.

Watching his dollars while at the same time making the challenge of breeding good cows even more challenging, Mark started his own herd with five plain, ordinary and af-



Mark and his wife Jelena are the proud parents of four children, namely Wesley and Shianne on the left and Dylan and Austin on the right. The calf is Show-Mar D-Back Uppercut, who in 2018 stood third in a very large class of spring calves at the World Dairy Exposition. Further, she was named best bred and owned at the world-renowned show.

fordable Registered Holsteins. Nothing fancy. Nothing high-priced.

Mark has an eye for what a great cow is supposed to look like and possesses the talent for breeding them even better. But he's not without help in meeting the often elusive challenges. He was introduced to animal Analysis associates (aAa) in 1998 by Amos Horst (the same man who was instrumental in guiding the young men at Triple-Hil Sires). Mark acknowledges that he is positively a confirmed believer in the aAa program. His current advisor is Bill Ile, whose name is synonymous with aAa.

The steady improvements in his herd are remarkably evident — both in terms of type, as well as production — thanks in part to aAa. Here's the latest classification breakdown as of January of this year: 20 Excellents, 18 Very Good,

3 Good Plus; for a BAA of 112.

Milked three times a day, the RHA on his cows is 36,684M 1455F 1101P. Meanwhile, Mark adds that the herd average on the Marburgers' herd has improved from around 21,000 pounds when he arrived three years ago to 29,299M 1109F 900P today.

"When I was growing up I fell in love with good cows and I wanted to milk nice cows," Mark explained. "I started at the bottom and bred'em."

So, who is this new EX-95 cow in his herd? Her name is Show-Mar Scrambled 1308. She's sired by Final Cut and out of Show-Mar Omlet, a 90-point daughter of Icepack. She, in turn is out of Show-Mar Ham (EX-91) sired by Durham. Next in descending order of the pedigree is a Charles daughter, Show-Mar Charlie (VG-86 @2y) who was lost after her first lactation. Her dam was a VG-86 Airoline and behind her is a VG-86 Cajun daughter.

"Scrambled" isn't just a great looking cow; she's a high producer as well. Check out her fourth lactation: 360d 64,924M 3140F 1793P. Over her lifetime she has produced over 213,000 pounds of milk.

As for her show record, here it is:

- 1st place production cow, open and youth, Western Pennsylvania Championship Show, 2020
- Reserve grand champion of the junior show at the Western Pennsylvania Championship Show, 2020
- 2nd place open, 1st place youth division in the production class, Western Pennsylvania Championship Show, 2018
- Reserve senior champion of the youth show and honorable mention grand champion of the youth show; PHA Spring Show, 2017
- 3rd place open, 1st youth, 5-year old, Western Pennsylvania Championship Show, 2017.
- Honorable mention senior and grand champion of the youth show, Western Pennsylvania Championship Show, 2017.
- 2017 Reserve All-Pennsylvania 5-year old

Another cow in the Brantner herd that needs to be mentioned is the EX-95 cow. Turn to page 10

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The Brantners are beyond pleased to have an EX-95 cow — especially since she was homebred for many generations back. The picture was taken right after her "committee classification" day, following her first date with a classifier on August 19th.

All photos provided



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