

Editorial

The Most Successful Program Ever

The Equity Project is the most successful program ever undertaken by any breed association in history.

What did Equity do?

Simply stated, it changed the way milk is priced in this country—a simple statement, but a profound change.

It shows that a relatively small group of people can make major change, if they fully support that change (in other words, put their money where their mouth is) and that change is based on sound economics.

It revitalized the Jersey breed. In the late '70s, the Jersey breed was at its lowest point in history. Registrations were in the 30,000 range. Cow prices were relatively low, if a buyer could be found. Equity gave the breed hope for the future when the future did not look very bright for the breed. It created excitement for Jersey breeders.

Equity brought Jersey breeders together regardless of their breeding philosophy, something desperately needed during the late '70s.

Why was the Equity project successful?

It had grassroots support. It was the rank-and-file Jersey producer who supported Equity. Look at the early Equity roll on page 22.

800 in '80. In one year—1980—over 600 new Equity participants were added. It is still amazing how we accomplished that. If there was a show, sale, or meeting, we were there pitching *800 in '80*. There were many ads and articles published in the Journal, and we had the excellent *Equity Handbook* to hand out. Reaching the goal of 800 gave the program credibility. *800 in '80* also gave credibility to key Jersey leaders and the staff members who were working in the trenches for Equity. There were some among the leadership, including staff, still not sold on Equity. We made believers out of many skeptics by getting 800 investors.

Equity was based on sound economics. Research showed it to be true. We showed cheesemakers and milk producers and, finally, the agencies regulating milk pricing that it was true.

Equity reached across breed lines. The *Equity Handbook* reprinted an ad from Over-View Farms Registered Holsteins, in which owner Don Trocinski wrote, "We sell our milk and breed for protein. Every dairy farmer must sell his milk to a market paying on protein. Protein is not really a breed issue." One of the greatest supporters of the Equity program was Arnold Knight and the Wisconsin Guernsey Breeders Association. They gave up a financially lucrative Golden Guernsey program for Equity.

It had excellent leadership from the National All-Jersey Board of Directors. They had vision. Stop and think where the breed would be today if the NAJ Directors had stayed with All-Jersey® fluid milk program.

Do not let up.

The philosopher George Santayana observed that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. History repeatedly shows that milk pricing plays a major role in the breed of cow that dairy producers milk.

Times are good now for the Jersey breed. Equitable pricing has allowed the Jersey breed to compete on a level playing field. If the breed is to continue to prosper, it must always insure that the playing field remains level.

Something will come up that will again make the playing field uneven. Jersey producers must have the vision to see what is down the road. They must be ready to respond. That is why National All-Jersey will always be needed.

—Calvin Covington