

## **To see it is to believe it!**

### **Pennsylvania Holstein brings the auction ring to the buyers**

**By Karen Knutsen**

Winter sales present challenges to sale managers, consignors and buyers alike. All have to wrestle with potential severe weather problems that affect travel and attendance, as well as the struggle to have a lineup look “summer show” ready with winter coats in place. The Pennsylvania Holstein Association (PHA) has seen its share of winter challenges, like many other states, with their state convention and sale typically being held in late February. While the dates avoid the busy spring show season, they sometimes conflict with Mother Nature. PHA Executive Director Ken Raney and Director of Sales David Lentz are two men that never rest on their heels when it comes to creative ways to work around a challenge. The 2010 PA State Convention Sale was another example of this, as they introduced the sale in a total multimedia format, with online and on-site screens used to present the auction. It proved to be a successful concept as 43 lots averaged \$3,938. Raney and Lentz worked with well-known photographer Randy Blodgett on the sale preview and real-time video presentations. “Several of our sale committee members and I talked about the idea,” explained David Lentz. “We thought it would be a great way to avoid weather difficulties for a sale in February. Some consignors were reluctant to participate, even the owner of the animal who topped the sale! But after explaining how we thought the video would expose their animal to more potential buyers, they were convinced.”

#### **How’d you do that?**

It all sounds good in theory, but what does it take to “move” an entire sale lineup from the familiarity of a cold winter barn to the comforts of an indoor video presentation? “We promoted the sale with five print media ads and a banner ad on two Holstein websites that get online traffic,” David commented. “We also used our Facebook fan page to get the word out. We directed them to our sale website to view video, pictures and catalog pages on all lots. Buyers were definitely impressed with online and sale-day presentations.”

Photographer Randy Blodgett agreed. “The catalog consisted of video, photos and a catalog page on a website that was created specifically to be just like a traditional catalog, so it was familiar and easy to follow. In fact, we provided more pre-sale information to potential buyers than in a regular sale format and had 3,755 visitors check out sale coverage.”

The real leg-work of the sale rests on David and Randy for pre-sale video work. In order to standardize each lot and provide the same amount/type of video, all clips were taken by PHA staff on site at the farms, except for one late entry. Sale managers caution that animals still need to be properly groomed and handled so that the video captures the most potential for that animal. Just because they’re not physically going to the sale doesn’t mean they don’t have to be prepared as if they were.

Once the video was edited for each lot, the entire package was put online, as David mentioned. On sale day, web page was displayed on two video screens, all coordinated by Randy. There was no online

bidding component added this time. After the sale, trucking is coordinated just like choices get picked up. “The buyer makes arrangements to have someone pick the animal up and/or they go to the farm to pick up the animal themselves. PHA assisted in coordinating some of the transportation. In all, it went off without a hitch. This was made possible by the network of quality truckers that we have,” said David.

### **Definitely valuable**

“This sale added the value of seeing all the lots online two weeks before the sale, and the format would work with or without cattle on site. The key is to give buyers something to look at before sale day,” said Randy.

David agreed. “Having this sale format was more profitable. We certainly had a larger audience on the sale website, and because of the bad weather that we did have that day, our live audience was smaller, but it didn’t affect the sale itself. It was definitely the way to go. It was also comforting that we did not have live cattle to put on trucks that afternoon. This sale format allowed us to have a great event despite the weather.”

With video becoming a bigger and bigger part of breed promotion, don’t be surprised to see more video sales in the future of Registered Holsteins. “We will absolutely be adopting this format for future PHA sales,” stated David. “It’s been a great experience for us!”

### **For more information**

To learn more about the Pennsylvania Holstein Association, or to contact either David or Randy with further questions:

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Check out the May issue of *Holstein World*, page 47, and [www.allbreedsblog.com](http://www.allbreedsblog.com) for more sale coverage!