

Donald Sherman

Donald “Donnie” Sherman, Hilmar, Calif., will be honored as the 61st recipient of the Distinguished Service Award presented by the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA).

The Distinguished Service Award is presented by the Board of Directors to as many living AJCA members and/or members’ families, who, in the opinion of the Board of Directors, have *rendered outstanding and unselfish service for many years and thereby made a notable contribution to the advancement of the Jersey breed in the United States.*

Formal presentation of the award will be made on June 24 at the Jersey Breeders’ Banquet held during the 2011 Annual Meetings of the AJCA and National All Jersey Inc. (NAJ) in the Wisconsin Dells, Wis.

Donnie Sherman is committed to the betterment of the Jersey breed with each decision he makes, whether decked in suit and tie in a boardroom or overalls at his dairy. His enthusiasm for the future of the Jersey breed is contagious and his leadership-by-example has earned Sherman the respect of his peers across the globe.

“In all his dealings with fellow Jersey breeders, he exemplifies the highest standards of business ethics and integrity and is an effective spokesperson for the profitability of the Jersey cow,” wrote Libby P. Bleakney and John and Allaire Palmer, Highland Farms Inc., Cornish, Maine.

Sherman’s service to the agriculture industry began at the local and state levels at an early age and then advanced quickly to the national level. He served Jersey breeders as an AJCA Director for two terms and AJCA President for three terms beginning in 2004. During his second term on the board, his peers elected him to the position of vice president. Sherman’s influence on the Jersey breed also stems from the founding of Jerseyland Sires Inc. and the Hilmar Cheese Company with several like-minded Jersey breeders from Hilmar.

Service aside, his first line of business was to establish a profitable business milking Registered Jersey cows. D&E Jerseys, owned with his wife, Elsa, has become one of the country’s premier production-bred herds and a source for some of the breed’s leading genetic males and females.

“Donnie Sherman’s impact on the breed begins with the respect he earned among



his fellow dairy producers for excellent management of his own operation,” wrote Larry Schirm, Genetics Marketing Manager and North American Jersey Business Development Manager for ABS Global Inc., in a letter of recommendation.

“In this setting, he truly leads by example, showcasing the advantages of the Jersey cow in longevity and reproductive efficiency on the way to profitability.”

Sherman is just one of 11 people in breed history to receive the national Jersey organization’s two highest awards—the Distinguished Service Award and the Master Breeder award—and the first to be presented with them in back-to-back years.

Sherman’s roots in the dairy business run deep. His great-grandfather established Pioneer Dairy and Cheese Plant in 1888. Donnie grew up on Orestimba Dairy, a highly regarded Registered Jersey herd owned by his parents and uncle, and returned to the family farm in 1970 after graduation from Modesto Junior College and a four-year stint in the U.S. Marine Corp.

He and Elsa set out on their own eight years later and established D&E Jerseys with the purchase of 75 cows.

Through effective management, cow numbers at D&E Jerseys grew quickly. Today the herd numbers 575 milking cows and 550 replacement heifers. Over the

years, surplus cattle were channeled into a second dairy, Avi-Lanche Jerseys, which is now owned by their son-in-law and daughter, Richard and Jennifer Avila, and their daughters, Sidney and Caitlin, in Dalhart, Texas. This business is 2,200 milking cows and as many replacement heifers.

Sherman has been a strong proponent of AJCA programs. D&E Jerseys is a pioneer member of the REAP program and has contributed to Equity for many decades. Most recently, he has been an advocate for genotyping.

Sherman served the California Jersey community as board member and president of the Central Valley Jersey Breeders Association and the California Jersey Cattle Association. He was a 4-H leader and member of the Merced County 4-H Advisory Council.

He was elected to his first term as AJCA Director in 1996 and his second term three years later. While a director, he chaired the Breed Improvement Committee and co-chaired the Type Advisory Committee. Later, he served on the organization’s Investment Advisory Committee, where his business experience and service on a local bank advisory committee made him a particularly effective member.

During his tenure as director and breed leader, the Jersey business flourished. He was in key leadership positions during early parts of the “Golden Decade of Jersey Breed Expansion” and helped pave the road for the record-breaking performance the national Jersey organizations experienced.

Sherman is one of the founding fathers of Jerseyland Sires and helped the organization become a successful sire-proving venue for Registered Jersey bulls. He has been a member of its sire selection committee from the onset.

“In that role, he provides real leadership for a well-defined focus on bulls genetically capable of siring cows that will be the most profitable in a commercial environment,” noted Schirm. “He has pioneered the use of emerging genomic information in the bull selection criteria at Jerseyland Sires and is making effective use of genomics in the breeding program in his own herd.”

“Sherman has been involved in the evolution of Jerseyland’s business arrangements with Alta Genetics, which provides an ex-

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