

Markus Hehli Wins 2023 Curtis Clark Achievement Award

Bonnie Cooper,
becooper2010@gmail.com

Markus Hehli of Mosnang Holsteins & Jerseys, Rimbey, Alberta, was named the 2023 Curtis Clark Achievement Award winner on November 10th at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto, ON. Hehli is the 35th recipient of this national award which was established in 1988 by the Alberta Holstein Association to honour the late Curtis Clark of Acme Holsteins, a respected Alberta Holstein breeder, cowman and showman.

Markus Hehli, 41, is a selfless, hardworking, personable young Holstein and Jersey breeder "dedicated to all things cows." A "sponge for information," Markus has taken the knowledge he has learned from his fellow Western Canada breeders and peers to do things right and make them better. His parents, Heini and Ruth Hehli, established Mosnang Holsteins in 1980 after emigrating from Switzerland. Today, Markus and his wife Amanda, along with their four children, Wyatt, 11, Adair, 10, and twins, Sawyer and Georgia, 7, are partners in the Mosnang farm corporation with Markus's parents, Heini and Ruth. They milk 110 Holsteins and 10 Jerseys in a herd which includes 10 Multiple Excellent, 12 Excellent, 75 Very Good and 29 Good Plus cows.

Hehli began showing cattle when was 10-years old. While in 4-H, he was Grand Champion Showman at the 2003 Western Canadian Classic (WCC), and then in 2007 was selected by Holstein Canada and Semex to represent this country in the Canada/Australia-New Zealand Young Adult Exchange Program. Hehli started clipping and fitting cattle at shows and sales in Alberta as a young teenager. He would go on to travel throughout North America, as

well as Australia and Switzerland, helping to prepare cattle. He has worked as a fitter for such well-known Western Canada showstrings as Stanhope-Wedgwood, Morsan and Westcoast Holsteins, as well as clipped cattle at many sales including the RockyMountain High Sales series.

Hehli was just 15 when he took his family's first showstring all by himself to Olds Fair. He has been exhibiting Mosnang cattle ever since at major shows across Western Canada, as well as the Royal Winter Fair and World Dairy Expo. It is not unusual to see him with up to 30 animals in his showstring at Westerner Dairy Showcase in Red Deer, AB, where he is often assisted by 4-H members eager to help and learn from him. Every year he supplies animals to many 4-H members looking for a project calf to show and in 2022 lost three of his best heifers in that tragic cattle liner accident following WCC in Manitoba.

Mosnang Holsteins has been Premier Breeder and Premier Exhibitor five times at Alberta Dairy Congress, twice at Westerner Dairy Showcase, and once at Calgary Dairy Classic Championship Show. At the 2022 National Holstein Show at the Royal, Mosnang was runner-up for Overall Premier Breeder. Several generations of the farm's famed "L Cow Family" have provided the Hehlis with their greatest Holstein show achievements with members like MOSNANG SALOON LIQUOR, MOSNANG SOLOMON LIQUIFY, MOSNANG UNIX LIPSTICK and MOSNANG BRIDGESTONE LIVE WIRE earning a host of top awards at major shows in North America as well as in the All-Canadian and All-American contests.

Hehli acquired his first Jersey, BRAMVILLE GOLDEN BOY ZIPPY (EX-93-2E), as a yearling heifer in 2007. She won many

top show ribbons for him including Grand Champion at Western Canadian Livestock Expo in Saskatoon, SK, in 2011. While small in numbers, the Mosnang Jersey herd has enjoyed great success too at the shows with BATESDALE TOPKEA JADE OF FUN (EX-90-2E) being Grand Champion at this year's Westerner Dairy Showcase. In 2022, Markus and Amanda were presented Jersey Canada's Young Achiever Award.

Hehli is an Official Judge and has judged shows in Canada, the United States, Brazil and Mexico. He served on Holstein Canada's Show & Judging Committee from 2013-19. He is a member of the Westerner Dairy Showcase Dairy Cattle Committee and is treasurer of his local Central Alberta Holstein Club. For several years, he managed the Central Alberta Holstein Club's Showcase Sale that was held at Westerner Dairy Showcase. Mosnang Holsteins has been Alberta Holstein Breeder of the Year three times.

A quiet gentleman with a passion for cows, Markus Hehli is humbled to receive the Clark Award and to be following in the footsteps of those Western Canada exhibitors who started from the grassroots, loved their cows, and travelled thousands of miles to exhibit animals at shows across the West and to the Royal.



Markus Hehli is surprised but elated to be presented with the Curtis Clark award by Orville Schmidt. Markus was chosen by a panel of peers/past winners.

The Curtis Clark Achievement Award is presented at the Royal to a Canadian dairy cattle exhibitor respected for his ability, sportsmanship and dedication. The winner is chosen by former recipients of the award. Along with having his name engraved on the distinctive Clark trophy that bears a bronzed version of Curtis Clark's hat, Markus Hehli received a gold belt buckle as a personal keepsake of this honour.

For more information, contact Bonnie Cooper, Secretary, Curtis Clark Achievement Award Committee, e-mail: becooper2010@gmail.com.

Observations From the Field

Open Industry Sessions on Genetic Evaluations

The industry gets together virtually, from coast to coast, twice a year to listen to updates and provide grass-roots input via Open Industry Sessions (OIS) to the Genetic Evaluation Board who meet a few days later to provide recommendations to be considered by the Lactanet board. The OIS meetings are a real success story, offered virtually in a completely bilingual setting and making it possible for people who live far from central Canada to participate in discussions. Previous to the virtual format, in-person meetings were held twice a year in Guelph and St Hyacinthe with generally only local farmers, industry stakeholders and researchers participating. If you are passionate about our Canadian genetic evaluations, consider participating in these meetings in 2024!

October 2023 OIS Meeting Sexed-Semen Fertility Evaluations

Lactanet's published conventional fertility evaluations are based on insemination records from AI technicians (CIAQ, EastGen and WestGen) and from Milk Recording data. Sexed semen and conventional semen records are separated so that they do not influence the other rating. The Milk recording collected data is more prone to some mislabeling or having data entered only by sire name, thus for sexed semen, only AI technician submitted data is used for these evaluations.

The evaluations for sexed and conventional semen follow a similar pattern for distribution, separated by a Fertility Rating difference of approximately 6%.

One of the interesting graphs presented debunks one of the myths we tend to have

on sexed semen: that sires with good conventional fertility also generally have really good sexed fertility performance. There are bulls that perform much better with conventional and also some bulls that have almost equal performance with sexed as conventional.

Expect to see the sexed fertility ratings appear on the Lactanet website in early 2024.

Update on Calf Recumbency (or Early Onset Muscle Weakness Syndrome) in Holsteins

Everything is still unfolding including the naming which has not yet been finalized. The World Holstein Federation has yet to officially declare this as a recognized genetic recessive. There continues to be a large collaborative effort of the industry from researchers, AI organizations, USDA/AGIL, HO USA, CDCB, breeders, vets and labs. Affected calves are unable to stand at birth or lose the ability to stand shortly after birth (usually

within the first six weeks of life). Calves are otherwise healthy. Herds can expect to have varying degrees of Muscle Weakness gene frequency depending on bloodlines that have been used. Also, severity varies



Paul Meyer,
Sales Manager, WestGen
and Member of Genetic
Evaluation Board

with some affected calves able to recover. A Haplotype test is being created in order to trace pedigree back to the source animal (Robust) to distinguish carriers of the mutated haplotype (HMW) from the unmutated original haplotype.

All organizations have been testing active bulls and most bulls now have their Muscle Weakness status known. Producers are advised to check the pedigrees of females to avoid mating a carrier sire to females with a carrier close up in their pedigree.

