

celebrating Longevity

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The Kessel Family Farm has been farmed by four generations and registering since 1966.



Memorable Mylyn - pictured in August 2023, admired for amazing production and little trouble.



The Kessel Family. (L-R) Shaun, Amelia, Saydee, Brendan holding Wrenlee, Amanda, Ray, Cecilia.

My Oh Mylyn!

Tars Cheema

A first 160,000 kg

An uncomplicated calving at 13 - 02 with twin angus calves, saw KESSEL BLITZ MYLYN VG 86 starting a healthy tenth lactation. With one Superior Lactation and one 140,000 Kg Longtime Production certificate, Dairy Manager Amanda Kessel was very optimistic that Mylyn, who already had nine lactations averaging 317-297-280 BCAs, would be their herd's first 160,000 Kg cow. "She had no milk fever, no RP and hit 60 litres a day. She never skipped a beat," Amanda shares. Her last test day showed 21,000 SCC, and her first repro check a month fresh was great - making her unexpected death, sleeping in a stall, all the more surprising. Nonetheless, Mylyn's lifetime production reached 162,109 kg with 3.5%F and 2.8%P.

Farm Background

The first members of the Kessel family immigrated to Canada in the early 1900's, making their way to Saskatchewan where they tilled and toiled, growing the family and farm over the decades. They began milking in 1954 and Anton and wife Anna Mary began registering the herd in 1966 under the 'Raylloyd' prefix. The Kessel Brothers (Ray, Lloyd and Wes) took over the farm, located near McLean (about 40 km east of Regina), and prefix in 1983. When Lloyd left the dairy in 1993 and Wes in 2003, Raymond continued the farm under the name 'Kessel Family Farm' and began registering with the Kessel prefix. Today, parents Ray and Cecilia farm with their children Amanda, Brendan and Shaun, milking 100 cows and cropping 3000 acres with the help of four staff.

The herd is on DHI and Classifies but has not ventured into genomic testing so far. Amanda chooses bulls for production, F/L and udders, while emphasizing longevity in the mix. "We've grown our herd from just within and have lots of surplus cattle for sale," Amanda explains. Beef semen is increasingly used on the lower end of the herd and on problem breeders. The herd most recently had a BCA average of 252-258-249, feeding home-grown feeds consisting of high-moisture barley, barley silage, alfalfa/barley silage and purchased corn distillers and supplement.

Not a 'Memorable' Cow

Amanda says Mylyn is not 'memorable' because she just doesn't have problems.

"You always remember the cows that give you trouble." Amanda had to consult records to see what treatments Mylyn may have needed - if any. "Her SCC tests were mostly between 30,000 and 40,000, with an occasional spike that came down by next test," Amanda describes.

"We let the cows loose from their tie-stalls every day, and Mylyn was friendly enough, but you got out of her way when she was headed back to her stall - she was a confident cow!"

Calving issues were non-existent, despite producing seven live bull calves. Although all 3+ calvers get a calcium bolus, Mylyn never had any risky fresh-cow health issues.

It was due to her extremely persistent lactations that she got some additional breedings on her first, eighth and ninth lactations. "She didn't always show strong heats when she was really working hard, but I was prepared to keep breeding her 4-5 times because she was working so hard!" Indeed, this cow produced 16,000 - 20,000 kg lactations from her third calf onward. Her top record was 359-342-322 BCAs as an 8-year old; 350d 19,707M 697F 564P. "Even though I knew she had good production, I was blown away every time I looked at her records!"

The whole herd is regularly hoof-trimmed which helps with maintaining good hoof-health but Mylyn did get blocked a couple times in her later years. "It never held her back - she was in and out every day with the rest of the cows. Her legs have never been a problem."

Though not tall, Mylyn was a big-framed, open-ribbed, dairy cow with excellent udder texture and really strong suspensory ligament. "She was no trouble milking even as she got older, but her udder did continue to get deeper which is why she never moved up from 86 points," Amanda suggests.

Pedigree Ponderings

As I look for hints to explain Mylyn's extraordinary longevity in the Kessel herd, I see her 87 point dam made 208-251-229 BCAs over five lactations, and the next dam made 231-236-232 over seven lactations! That's a pretty good foundation in my books.

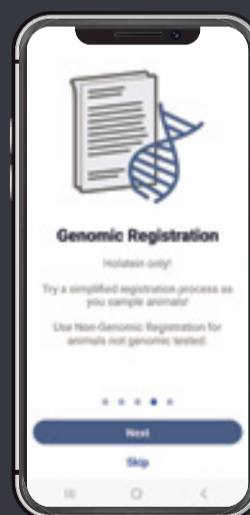
The dam was sired by Grand-Dell Winch Lou - a Winchester (Aerostar x Cleitus) out of a Luke dam. The next dam with seven lactations was sired by Progress

(Prelude x Chief Mark), and the third dam was by Formation (Leadman x Chief Mark). The prevalence of Prelude and Chief Mark in the pedigrees of many cows with longevity suggests they imparted some genes of value. Preludes calved easily, had good fertility, good legs and just persisted. Chief Mark always brought a no-nonsense hard-working attitude into the mix.

Mylyn's sire, Fustead Emory Blitz (Emory x Tesk) was known for super-productive cows

with low solids, and good barn traits - fertile cows with good temperament and calved easily. Behind Blitz, we find a couple crosses with Blackstar and Chief Mark again. You can't ignore the value of Blackstar's udder texture, fertility and great legs, and Chief Mark's tough barn character.

"I'm passionate about the dairy industry and I'm passionate about my farm and cows. It's cows like Mylyn that make doing this every day that much more exciting!"



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