

'I've never wanted to do anything else!' Five New Producers given the Green Light

The BC Milk Marketing Board (BCMMB) selected five finalists in this year's New Entrant Program (NEP), including one new organic producer. The successful applicants include Frederick Fooks from Abbotsford, Amy Gibbs from Abbotsford, Marc & Kari Goossen from Armstrong, and Josh Telford from Enderby; with Ian Lennox from Glen Valley taking the organic spot.

The BCMMB received 29 NEP applications and seven NEPO applications this spring, conducting 14 two-day interviews after the lottery process. The successful NEP candidates are eligible to

receive 15kgs of Continuous Daily Quota (CDQ) as incentive quota to start milk production, which must begin by December 31, 2026, plus up to 8kgs of matching CDQ provided on a 1:1 ratio basis during the 10 years of the program.

NEPO offers an initial 19.5 kg Specialty Continuous Daily Quota (SCDQ) as a starting incentive for milk production, complemented by up to 8 kg of matching SCDQ on a 1:1 ratio over the 10-year program. Additionally, candidates receive a 30% organic bonus on first-year matching quota purchases, bringing the total potential quota to 40.3 kg.



Amanda Poelman

Frederick Fooks

Fred Fooks grew up on his family's dairy farm in Matsqui. After graduating highschool, Fred kept busy with custom work, while continuing to help on the home farm. In 2019, he started his own business – Fooks Pumping – which serves the Fraser Valley with manure spreading, draglining, pit agitation, and silage pushing. While that keeps him busy in the spring and fall, Fred also works on various local dairies during his off-season.

Fred married Kayla in 2014, and they have five children ranging from 9-2 years old. "I'm really looking forward to doing this alongside my wife and kids," says Fred. The couple is currently looking at renting a facility in the Sumas area, a dairy barn that is currently vacant. "We plan to be up and running before the end of 2025," Fred says, hoping to source cows from the clients he spreads for.

After applying to the NEP no less than six times already, Fred says, "I didn't want to get my hopes up when we made the short

list, but I was excited." He also didn't expect the call when it happened, "It was almost 5 o'clock," he says, relieved to have finally made it. "I'm excited to build up the operation with my family and see where it goes," says Fred, who will also continue to serve his Fooks Pumping customers regularly. "I've wanted to do this for a long time, so for us the sky's the limit!"



Amy Gibbs

Amy Gibbs didn't grow up on a farm. She had a horse, and her mom kept some chickens, but it wasn't until she took a part-time job mucking horse stalls at Vaby Farms in Abbotsford and was encouraged by Danielle Dekker to look into milking jobs, that she got her first taste of dairy farming. Turns out, that was all she needed!

Not entirely sure what she wanted to do after highschool, Amy started working at Locarno Farms for Mark and Heidi Schurmann. She began milking every other weekend, gradually took over the evening shift, and slowly moved on to other chores like dehorning and silage hauling.

Through the Schurmanns, Amy was introduced to a former employee from Germany and spent just over three months on a work exchange at their dairy, equipped with three Lely robots,

located near the city of Rostock—about two and a half hours north of Berlin. Back on Canadian soil at the end of 2016, Amy took a job milking and feeding calves for Tony Driessen in Abbotsford.

As she grew her skills and confidence, Amy slowly took over other duties at Driessens, managing sick cows, doing herd health, calf health, breeding, and coordinating cattle movement between farms. With Tony's encouragement, Amy started applying to the NEP program, hoping her name would be drawn in the lottery.

When she was unsuccessful the first few attempts, Amy says, "I always felt like I should do something else just to be certain that dairy farming was what I really wanted to do." Knowing that an office job was not for her, Amy started her pilot training out of the Abbotsford International Airport, earning her private pilot's license in 2019, followed by her commercial license in 2023, and instructor license in 2024. Amy now spends 3-4

days/week as a flight instructor, while she continues to work for Driessens part time.

Earlier this spring, Amy married Evan Schroeder, who operates his own custom work business in the Fraser Valley and has a dairy background. Evan's family were producers in Abbotsford, leaving the industry in 2018. "They sold out not long before I met Evan," says Amy of the rather unfortunate timing. Amy and Evan live on the farm and although the parlour has been gutted and some renovations will need to take place, the barn itself is in good shape. Hoping to be in production by early 2026, she says, "I plan to have a mixed herd – mainly Holsteins, but some Jerseys too." Having gotten to know many of the dairy farmers in the area, Amy hopes to source lower-end cows from them and slowly work her way up.

"I was so excited to get the call," says Amy, who admits she was very emotional to have her name pulled in the lottery and move to the interview phase. "It's a dream come true for me! I know everyone says that, but as someone who didn't grow up on a dairy, there's no way for me to get into the industry without this program."



Joshua Telford

Josh grew up in Abbotsford on his family dairy farm, Telford Farms, where they milked 65 purebred Holsteins in a stanchion facility. As a boy, Josh enjoyed spending time in the barn with his dad Jim, learning everything he could. He spent nine years in the Langley 4-H Dairy club, exhibiting homebred heifers from the 3X Master Breeder herd. Though 4-H was a great starting point, Josh fondly remembers being stalled next to Gary Booy at the Fraser Valley Fall Harvest Show, "I was 14 years old and that was when I really fell in love with cows and genetics." His passion has only grown as he's spent the last several years building up his J-A-TELFORD prefix.

In 2010, the Telford herd was sold as the property was slated to be mined for gravel. "We would have had to move for sure," says Josh, "we wouldn't have been

able to continue to farm in that location." Jim, who was in his early '60s at the time, was not keen to restart in a new location, although he has retained a portion of the original land where he has built his dream home.

Not ready to abandon his dream, Josh says, "I always knew that I wanted to farm on my own." Although he was too young to get on the "Graduated Entry Program" list which was in place before the NEP program, Josh has been applying to be a new entrant for the past eight years. In the meantime, he worked at several farms in the Fraser Valley to gain more experience in different types of operations.

In 2020, Josh moved to the Okanagan hoping that an opportunity would come available where land was much cheaper. He maintained his passion for genetics by continuing to build up his own prefix, with many of his own animals being housed

at Sunninghill Holsteins in Grindrod. He is currently splitting his time between four dairies, three with robotic milking facilities and one where he relief milks.

Josh would like to rent a barn in the Grindrod or Enderby area and hopes to be up and running by late spring or early summer 2026. "If I wait until then I won't have to buy a single cow to fill the 15kgs of initial quota," says Josh, "I'll have cows in production and a lot of my heifers will be calving around then as well."

"I was mixing feed at another farm when I got the call," says Josh, "Every possible emotion hit me at the same time – it was like an out of body experience!" While he's thrilled to finally be achieving the lifelong dream

of milking his own cows, he's even more excited to be sharing this experience with his son, Forrest (age 5). "Forrest is just as cow crazy as me, maybe even more so," laughs Josh. "I'm excited for him to have this experience, the same way I did with my dad."



Check out our introductions of Marc & Kari Goossen (Armstrong) and Ian Lennox (Glen Valley) in our upcoming Christmas issue!