

celebrating Longevity

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Karla's Longevity – More than Irish Luck

BENBIE SHAMROCK KARLA EX-92 7E

Tars Cheema

With over 135,000kg milk, 4.5%*f* and 3.3%*p* lifetime in nine lactations so far, BENBIE SHAMROCK KARLA EX-92 7E has more than the luck of the Irish on her side! The oldest cow in the herd, Karla's extraordinary persistency, moderate size with extreme balance and correctness ensures profitable production – currently with 29.9kg milk per day of cow life! Her best record at 7-08 305d 14,895kgm resulted in BCAs of 295 365 304 and deviations of +29 +61 +25 over herd average.

Background

Established in 1988, the Benbie prefix was an amalgam of Blaine, Elizabeth and Neil Crosbie, when they started registering in Caron, Saskatchewan, about an hour west of Regina. Today, fourth generation dairyman Ian Crosbie and wife Nicole are partners with Ian's parents – Neil and B.J. Four employees, including Ian's sister Nadine, round out the team. It's too early to say if Elle (10) and Kade (13) will be fifth generation producers, but they help with chores and enjoy 4-H.

Breeding a profitable herd using breed improvement tools has been second nature. Registering, milk recording, classifying and always using the top AI sires (including some genomic), the herd numbers 180 milking with a high herd production average and classifications. They have been genomic testing calves since 2016, and ET/IVF is used on the top 1% of their herd. "We've used significant beef on dairy since 2018 – especially Wagyu to make our Saskatchewan Snow Beef," Ian says.

Two thirds of the herd is in a sand-bedded freestall barn, while the fresh/TLC cows are on a pack. They milk 3X in a double-12 parallel parlour and importantly, all cows have access to outside sand lots for about seven months of the year. Between sand grit and time off concrete, hoof health/mobility is extremely good, requiring mostly maintenance trimming and light hoof-baths. "Cow comfort matters, but I also believe breeding the right cow with chest width and straight front leg view contributes to avoiding bad claw shape and hoof issues," Ian believes.

Breeding Right

"She's the ideal cow – moderate stature but with width and depth, excellent mammary attachments and texture – great heal

depth, correct set, always mobile – so well-balanced!" Classified EX-92 and 7E definitely reinforces Ian's assessment of correctness with balance. He admitted Karla was not real big when she calved at 1-11 and was a bit underdeveloped but still made 85 points. By her third lactation, it all came together and she jumped right to 91 points! "Karla has definitely helped change my philosophy on breeding for moderate stature," Ian acknowledges.

Karla's Employment Record

She shows up early to work (1-11, 2-11, 3-11), likes to be first in the parlour, produces long steady lactations and comes back year after year (last calved at 11-05). She's not the "crazy peak" production cow but is very persistent and finishes off with good body condition, Ian notes. On her sixth lactation, she completed over 20,000kg in 429 days – averaging 46.9kg daily with 4.7%*f* and 3.4%*p* and calved back after a normal dry period. In fact, all Karla's dry periods are roughly two months, and she's averaged 14.25 month calving intervals over her life. She's fertile – typically only needing one or two services per pregnancy. Having no twins and several Wagyu calves in later years has helped with easy calvings. Her health record shows no transition illnesses, no mastitis and no foot issues.

Pedigree Lucky Charms

Ian recalls Karla's 87-point dam was a huge frame cow (by Mr Derry Promotion), making four lactations with high solids. Behind the Promotion are Gibson, Mason and Astre – bulls with capacity and production but not necessarily known for longevity.

On the top side of the pedigree is Ladys-Manor PI Shamrock, one of the earliest Planet sons. Ian's decision to use Shamrock was partly for the lower stature/smaller frame. "Stature is really heritable, and in one generation, Karla got modest stature but kept the capacity," Ian explains.

Shamrock's proof shows many advantages in persistency, fertility, calving ability, hoof health and mastitis resistance – all beneficial to longevity. With his dam sired by Shottle and Rudolph a bit further back, I think we have uncovered the strongest sources of Karla's health and trouble-free traits! Both of these sires appear repeatedly in the pedigrees of numerous Longevity cows.

Searching further back, we find Starbuck, Blackstar and Chief Mark, who could be credited for some dairyness and toughness traits, but those bulls show up in most of our Holstein population, I would guess.

"She's a sweetheart – docile and a smart cow that's calm in the barn – never gets hurt," Ian describes. It's interesting that Longevity cows don't seem to reliably transmit their unique combination of traits to their daughters. But

the pattern of modest size, easy-calving, fertile, good udder/foot/health traits are very common in these cows. Personality, on the other hand, is more variable. While many Longevity cows have a tough **'don't mess with me'** attitude, others are more like Karla – friendly and still confident to be first in the parlour and quick to the feed bunk. "She's my favourite cow in the barn and she's due back this summer," smiles Nicole.

Include Holstein Canada in your management strategy!

Holstein Canada's services offer producers additional data to make more informed decisions to improve performance and profitability in their herds.

"We registered our herd and started using Holstein Canada's Services in the spring of 2025. We have been using sexed and beef semen for several years already and wanted to be more selective on which animals to breed either sexed or beef. Genomic testing has really helped give us confidence in making those breeding decisions. Toby has been extremely helpful in answering our questions and getting us started. We are really excited to see the improvements in our animals in the coming years."

– Kevin Bisschop,
Kelsa Dairy, Chilliwack, BC



Reach out to your Field Service Business Partner today to ask how Holstein Canada's services can impact performance and profitability in your herd!

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