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Spring 2026 Special Features

Scotiabank's
Women in
Dairy
Pages 8-9

THREE Master
Breeder
features
Pages 6-7,
10-11, 16-17

Lactanet's
Best Managed
Herds
Page 25



Kevin Plastow photo

COMING UP
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APRIL

7

Lactanet Canada Official Genetic Evaluation Release
for all dairy breeds in Canada.

12-15

Pre-Holstein Canada National Convention Tour Journey to the Pacific -
Calgary to the Coast (through the Rockies).

14-17

Best of the West Dairy Showcase Tuesday-Friday, WestGen, Abbotsford, BC.

15-19

National Holstein Convention "Spirit of the West" Wednesday-Sunday,
Marriott Burnaby Conference Centre, Burnaby, BC.

*15

Welcome Reception Wednesday.

*15

Spirit of the West National Holstein Convention Sale Wednesday 12:30pm,
Chilliwack Heritage Park.

*16

Youth Showmanship Show Thursday 9am, Chilliwack Heritage Park.

*16

Fraser Valley Farm Tours Thursday.

*17

National Holstein Show Friday 8:30am, Chilliwack Heritage Park.

*18

Holstein Canada AGM (day) and Master Breeder Gala (evening), Saturday.

19-21

Post-Holstein Canada National Convention Tour Paradise on the Pacific -
Vancouver Island.

23-24

Western Dairy Expo Thursday-Friday, Prairieland Park, Saskatoon, SK.

MAY

15

WC Dairy News Booking Deadline for Summer 2026 issue, in the mail June 16.

JUNE

3-5

Alberta Dairy Congress Wednesday-Friday, Co-operators Agrim Centre,
Rimbey, AB.

Coming Up ONLINE - www.wcdairynews.com

While the event dates were confirmed and current as of date printed, changes do happen!
Please confirm event listings on the website and check for changes or updates.

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Spring is in the Air!

Welcome to the 2026
National Holstein Convention!

Spirit of the West



MORE INSIDE:
WestGen AGM
Safety Articles
Research Articles
Dairywomen's Summit
Lactanet Top Herd Lists
Western Canadian Dairy Seminar
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JUNE	
13	MYMP Spring Social Saturday, 38009 Campbell Road, Abbotsford. For more details, contact Amy Balaban at mainlandmilk@gmail.com .
JULY	
8-10	Saskatchewan Dairy Heifer Show Wednesday-Friday, Prairieland Park, Saskatoon, SK.
9	Vancouver Island Holstein Show Thursday 9am, Cowichan Exhibition Grounds. Contact Cindy Wikkerink (cindywikk@shaw.ca) for more info.
25-26	Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Country Fest Saturday-Sunday, Albion Fairgrounds. See www.mrpmcountryfest.com for more details.
31-Aug 2	Abbotsford Agrifair Friday-Sunday, Abbotsford Exhibition Park. See www.agrifair.ca for more info.
TBD	North Okanagan Breeders Cup.
AUGUST	
7	Saccomaniacs Sturgeon Fishing Derby Friday 9am start, Island 22 Boat Launch, Chilliwack. See www.saccomaniacsgolf.com for all the details.
11	Lactanet Canada Official Genetic Evaluation Release for all dairy breeds in Canada.
13	Saccomaniacs Golf Tournament & Awards Dinner Thursday 11am shotgun start, Greentee Country Club, Langley. See www.saccomaniacsgolf.com for all the details.
18-22	40th WestGen Canadian Classic (WCC) Tuesday-Saturday, Brandon, MB.
TBD	VI and Fraser Valley Breeders Cups.



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Tars' Tale-Spins

Hope and Faith in Spring!



Tars Cheema

While most of BC experienced a milder winter than usual, the rest of the country got a cold, hard reminder of what **real** winters used to be like. And it's been a **long winter** for many provinces. My prairie friends tell me they are grateful for some snow to hopefully provide loving moisture to start the growing cycle as Spring arrives.

And thank God that Spring is just around the corner – guaranteed!
Winter will melt away as it always does... **faithfully.**

The world feels more unpredictable every week...we sure didn't need fuel and fertilizer prices to spike before Spring! Thankfully, the price of beef is expected to remain strong this year – helping to buffer the unwelcome input cost increases.

BE SAFE -please

As we look forward to Spring field work and the hope of a good growing season, it's a good time to think about safety – not just for you, but for your staff and children as well. I know everyone is trying to be safe – nobody is being intentionally reckless...but preventable accidents are still happening. Injuries are costly in downtime and worse – they could be **life-altering**. I'm certainly no safety expert, but I farmed when younger and visited many farms over my career – I've seen things go wrong in the blink of an eye. Everything in my life went better when I **prepared**. Safety in farming is no different.

I've read enough AgSafe articles to know every farm needs a documented safety plan...and training. As farms grow, there are more staff – and not enough owners to supervise each one closely. **Training is critical – follow-up is critical.**

Please – take the time to ensure your team understands that safety is important to everyone.

You are the role model – you set the expectations for your team.

Speaking of Teams...

We have had a number of farms request additional copies of *Western Canadian Dairy News* for their staff lunchrooms – what a great idea! I'd like to encourage you to share your copy of this publication with your staff – or contact us for another copy! Farm staff may like the educational articles and other aspects. Anything that helps them feel more part of the farm and motivated – is a good thing.

National Holstein Convention

The Spirit of the West will be running high from April 15-19 in BC as hundreds will gather for the 2026 Convention. While I understand this may not be everyone's 'thing,' please consider coming to at least the National Show on April 17 at Heritage Park in Chilliwack. Youth Showmanship will be the day before.

Our industry doesn't have that many really good events to gather and see friends, so take a break from the farm and come see what's up. The work will wait a day...re-filling your tank among friends will be worth it.

**Information Overload?**

I know how easy it is to be so busy that you don't open the latest dairy magazine on your kitchen table or open the last 10 email news bulletins. With so much information coming at us from so many sources, someday, you just keep scrolling. The downside, of course, is you miss out on the good stuff too when there is too much 'noise' in your inbox or newspapers. I have steadily reduced the number of dairy magazines and email news blasts so that I can keep up scanning/reading the ones with good content.

Our dairy industry is active, vibrant and continuously evolving. I'm constantly learning and looking for good content to share with our western dairy families.

If you have ideas for us, concerns or compliments, feel free to share.

Thank you! tars@holsteinnews.com

**WestGen Agricultural Experience – Japan**

**Krista Christiuk, WestGen Marketing Manager
(and travel guide/tour host!)**

Two years in the planning, WestGen's trip to Japan with 40 western Canadian travelers from February 19 – March 6 combined a multitude of unique experiences. From farms and breweries, iconic city experiences and historic/cultural sites – this adventure immersed everyone in the richly varied Japanese experience!

By the numbers:

16,954 km by air

2,265 km by bus

322 km by bullet train

189 km by ferry

10 hotels over 16 days

Highlights of the Trip**1 - Tokachi-Kato Farm, Obihiro, Hokkaido**

Kenichi Kato and his family started farming in 1975 with only 10 cows. Today they are milking 225 Holsteins and 125 Jerseys and process Jersey milk on farm, selling milk, gouda cheese and ice cream. Annual milk production: 1,470 tonnes.

2 - Takekuma Breeding Farm, Hokkaido

A progressive Wagyu operation raising over 600 head of cattle. The farm focuses on advanced reproductive technologies, utilizing both AI and OPU collection on their top-end animals to accelerate genetic progress. Their finishing program is centred on quality, with cattle grown out to approximately 800 kg over a 3-year period. Finished animals are marketed at around ¥1,300,000 (\$11,000CAD)

3 - Sapporo Beer Museum, Sapporo

Visiting the Sapporo Beer Museum was a fun and informative stop for the group. The tour walked us through the history of beer in Japan and the evolution of the Sapporo brand, giving great insight into one of the country's most iconic breweries. It was a relaxed and social experience, and the tasting at the end was a highlight for many.

4 - Sumo Experience, Tokyo

Another highlight of the trip was a sumo wrestling experience that brought plenty of energy and laughs to the group. Participants had the chance to step into the ring and learn about the traditions and techniques of sumo, making it both interactive and entertaining. A special shoutout goes to Bart Bikker of Mellowdale Dairy in Barrhead, Alberta, who proudly claimed the title of Sumo Champion of the night in an epic match!

Continued on next page ►



**5 - Himeji Castle
(Himeji, Hyogo Prefecture)**

Known as Japan's most spectacular and well-preserved feudal castle, Himeji Castle is often referred to as the "White Heron Castle" due to its elegant white exterior. Dating back to the 1600s, it has survived wars, earthquakes, and fires, making it one of the few original castles still standing today. Walking through the castle gave our group a real sense of Japan's samurai history and defensive architecture.

**6 - Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum
(Hiroshima, Hiroshima Prefecture)**

This was one of the most impactful stops of the trip. The museum shares the history and human stories surrounding the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945. Through personal artifacts and exhibits, it serves as a powerful reminder of the consequences of war and a call for peace. It was a deeply moving and reflective experience for everyone.

**7 - Nightlife in Osaka
(Osaka, Osaka Prefecture)**

Osaka is known as Japan's kitchen, but it's also famous for its vibrant nightlife. Areas like Dotonbori are filled with bright neon lights, street food, and an energetic atmosphere. Our group enjoyed exploring the bustling streets,

trying local favourites, and experiencing the outgoing, lively culture that Osaka is known for.

**8 - Mount Fuji
(Honshu Island, Shizuoka/
Yamanashi Prefectures)**

Seeing Japan's most famous natural landmark, Mount Fuji, even from a distance, was a captivating sight for the group - a monumental icon of Japan's natural landscape.

9 - Grand Finale

To cap off an incredible trip, our group enjoyed a memorable finale dinner aboard a private yakatabune, a traditional Japanese boat, cruising through Tokyo. Surrounded by the glow of the city lights reflecting on the water, it created a truly special atmosphere. We were treated to a delicious traditional Japanese meal, followed by fireworks that lit up the night sky. The evening quickly turned into a fun and lively celebration, with karaoke bringing everyone together. It was a perfect ending to a trip filled with great memories and even better company.

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WestGen Agricultural adventure -
2028 - South America!*





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Crestomere's Dream of Master Breeder Realized



Crestomere Holsteins' Master Breeder achievement truly belongs to the entire Simanton family, who over the years have contributed to the success of this Ponoka, AB, farm. From left, back row: Michael Lovich, Jessica Lovich, Reata Lovich, Lisa Simanton, Lee Simanton, Sandy Kingdon and Jon Kingdon. Front row: Renelle Lovich, Raelyn Lovich, Ava Simanton, Everett Simanton, Easton Simanton, Marylee Simanton, Cole Kingdon, Shae Kingdon and Sydney Kingdon.



The Crestomere Holsteins' show team at the 2025 Westerner Dairy Showcase in Red Deer, AB, involved both family and friends. From left, back row: Everett Simanton, Eve Luymes, Andrew Hickey, Phil Sullivan, Joey Folkerts, Morgan Wilson, Gabrielle Cheremshynski, Carson Klugkist and Clara Schlichtmann. Front row: Ava Simanton, Lisa Simanton, Lee Simanton, Easton Simanton and Marylee Simanton.

Bonnie Cooper,
becooper2010@gmail.com

For Everett Simanton of Crestomere Holsteins, Ponoka, AB, achieving a Master Breeder shield was always "a lifelong dream." On January 17th, that dream became a reality for Ev and his family when Crestomere was announced as a Holstein Canada Master Breeder for 2025. "I guess this means we bred some pretty good cows," says Ev with a smile. "But it wouldn't have happened without my wife and three kids."

Learning the Purebred Business from Scratch

Ev's parents, Ralph and Edith Simanton, purchased the farm that is home to Crestomere Holsteins in 1936. It wasn't until Ev joined 4-H in 1963 that the first purebreds were acquired. Ev's parents never encouraged him to pursue purebreds, but Ev had greater goals for himself. He took over the family farm in 1971 and then with the support of his wife Marylee, who he married in 1981, they began breeding and developing their purebred Holstein herd. "We had to learn everything from scratch," recalls Marylee of those early days. "There was nobody behind us telling us what to do or help us. And there weren't years of breeding behind our herd. We had to start fresh and build. We learned how to clip and fit animals for the shows from our friends and from sitting and watching the fitters." Fellow Alberta Holstein breeders and friends, Joyce and Ray Wedman (Viewridge), Mac and Jim Clark (Acme) and Marj and Norm Atkins (Continental), were great mentors to them. The Simantons began by investing in older cows from good cow families from noted breeders in Alberta, and then from all across Canada, to breed from. The strategy worked, resulting in a herd that is respected far and wide for its successful breeding program and showing achievements.



In 1998, ACME STAR LILY EX-2E-8* celebrated one of her three Grand Championships at the Royal Winter Fair with her breeders and owners, from left, standing: Dr. David Chalack of Alta Genetics; Ev Simanton of Crestomere Holsteins; Marj Atkins of Continental Holsteins; Jim Clark of Acme Holsteins; and Norm Atkins of Continental Holsteins. Kneeling: Marylee Simanton of Crestomere Holsteins; and Mac Clark of Acme Holsteins.

Marylee and Ev's three children – Jessica, Sandra and Lee – were an integral part of this closely-knit family farm and were very active in 4-H, sports and their church while growing up. "We gave up a lot of things to do everything we did," says Marylee. "We didn't get to travel or go camping a lot. Our holiday was a show somewhere. But it was fun."

New Generation, New Operation

Lee Simanton, now 38, came back to the farm after graduating from Lakeland College in 2008. Today he and his wife of 10 years, Lisa, who previously worked as a dairy nutritionist, and their two children, Ava, 6, and Easton, 4, are partners in Crestomere with Ev and Marylee. Lisa has a dairy background being the daughter of Doug and Kathy Wiens of Jotims Holsteins, Grunthal, MB. The Simantons own 640 acres of land, growing alfalfa, barley and corn. Over the years they have had more than 30 international students work at the farm.

In 2018, with Lee and Lisa wanting to start a family and Ev and Marylee wanting to step back some, the Simantons decided they needed a "lifestyle change" and reduced their hours in the barn. They transitioned from a 67-cow tie-stall barn to a new free-stall barn with sand bedding and two Lely robots and expanded to 100 milk cows. They have a Vector feeding system with cows getting a PMR of barley silage, corn silage and alfalfa top dressed with a protein commodity blend. The outstanding Crestomere line-up presently includes 14 ME, 3 EX, 58 VG and 36 GP cows and averages 36 kg of milk/cow/day of 4.0% fat and 3.26% protein.

Road to Excellents

The Simantons never bred an EX cow before 2005. "We started using Gibson and Cousteau and those bulls got us rolling for EX cows," says Lee. And boy did they! From 2005 through 2025, Crestomere has had one or more cows score EX on every classification visit! To date, they have bred 106 EX cows and two at EX-95!

After Gibson and Cousteau, the Simantons purchased several Triumphant daughters and then followed with Dundee. More recently they have been using Lambda and his sons and bulls like Anahita. When doing matings, Lee, who is also an Official Judge, says, "I look for bulls who can sire fore udders and loin strength because the cows will last longer, and then balance. Our herd has enough strength that it is not going to fall apart easily, but if you have a weak loin and bad fore udder your cow families can deteriorate quickly." The Simantons use 75% sexed semen, but not much beef semen because they have a ready market for breeding age bulls.

"Today," Lee says, "we want a balanced cow and are really focused on mammary systems and moderate size in our herd. Cows have to have butterfat. Longevity is the end goal." He goes on to stress, "Consistency is key. We don't bounce around from fad to fad. We use genomics, but we believe in cow families."

Cow Family Foundations

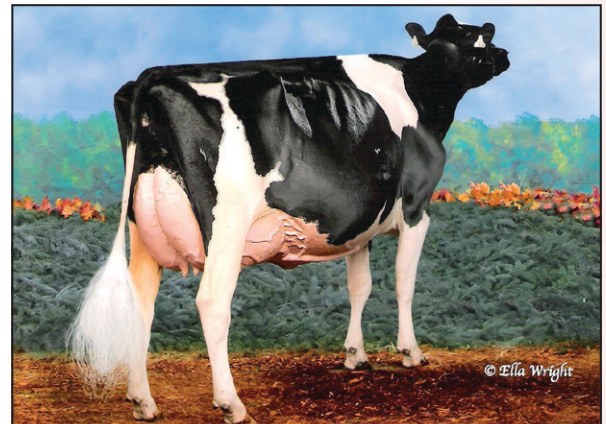
Several deep-pedigreed cow families lie at the "heart" of this Alberta herd. The first animal to really put Crestomere on the map was ACME STAR LILY EX-2E-8*, the Starbuck daughter that Ev and Marylee acquired as a calf in 1993 from Acme Holsteins. Lily went on to be Grand Champion at the Royal Winter Fair in 1997-98-99 and Supreme Champion



The kind Crestomere Holsteins likes to breed and sell, CRESTOMERE CELLULAR TWINKLE VG-88 completes 14 generations of VG/EX in the RAVENSWELL LYDIA EX-92-USA-DOM-19* family and was first Junior 3-Year-Old and Reserve Intermediate Champion at Westerner Dairy Showcase in 2024.



CRESTOMERE LAMBDA VORTEX VG-85-2YR, one of the many descendants of WEEBERLAC TRIUMPH VICKIE VG-88 bred in the Crestomere herd, was first Spring 2-Year-Old at Westerner Dairy Showcase in 2025 for new owners R&F Livestock Inc. (SK) and Walker Dairy Inc. (ON) after also being a class winner earlier at Alberta Dairy Congress.



CRESTOMERE LOU VICTORIA EX-94-2E-9*, a seventh generation EX/VG in the WEEBERLAC TRIUMPH VICKIE VG-88 family, was Grand Champion at Westerner Dairy Showcase and Reserve All-Canadian Senior 3-Year-Old in 2011 for Crestomere Holsteins and is now the dam of five EX and five VG daughters.



Crestomere Holsteins was Premier Breeder at Westerner Dairy Showcase in 2024 and contributing points to that award were these three cows who comprised their second prize Breeder's Herd at that show, from left: CRESTOMERE TATOO VEZ EX-95-2E, CRESTOMERE DOORMAN CALLIE EX-93-3E and CRESTOMERE CELLULAR TWINKLE VG-88.

at World Dairy Expo in 1998 for the Simantons and then partners Continental Holsteins and Alta Genetics (AB). All-Canadian 3X and All-American 2X, Lily had four EX, 12 VG and 11 GP daughters and left great frame and feet and legs in the herd. The Simantons' new 95-pointer, 10-year-old CRESTOMERE G D LILLIE EX-95-5E, is a Lily descendant and has over 88,000 kg milk lifetime to date.

Three Triumphant daughters that the Simantons purchased from Crasdale Farms in PEI in the 2000s have also been impactful like CRASDALE TRIUMPHANT LUSTRE EX-90-2E who traces to the RAVENSWELL LYDIA family. The most influential of these, however, was WEEBERLAC TRIUMPH VICKIE VG-88 who was acquired as a junior 3-year-old in 2004 and transmitted great udders. Nominated for All-Canadian that year, Vickie was carrying in dam CRASDALE DUNDEE VICTORY EX-91-3E-13* who had seven EX and 11 VG daughters. Among them was CRESTOMERE LOU VICTORIA EX-94-2E-9*, Grand Champion at Westerner Dairy Showcase and Reserve All-Canadian Senior 3-Year-Old in 2011. Victoria is the dam of five EX and five VG daughters including CRESTOMERE SIDEKICK VALKYRIE EX-93-2E, Honourable Mention All-Canadian Junior 3-Year-Old in 2022, and CRESTOMERE MOST VALUABLE EX-93-2E with 83,150 kg milk in four lactations. Another branch of this family has produced CRESTOMERE TATOO VEZ EX-95-2E

who went 95 in January for Benbie Holsteins (SK) and was first 5-year-old at Westerner Dairy Showcase in 2025.

Another cow whose family contributed many points to the Master Breeder is CRESTOMERE FLORIAN MAGGY EX-90-4E-2*. Backed by four VG dams, she made 120,557 kg milk lifetime.

Show. Business.

Showing is a key part of Crestomere's promotion and marketing efforts every year. The Simantons show extensively across Western Canada and have exhibited at the Royal and World Dairy Expo. They have won a multitude of top rosettes in the individual and Breeder's Herd classes, along with many banners and All-Canadian, All-American and All-Western awards. Recently, Crestomere was Premier Breeder at Westerner Dairy Showcase in 2025 and 2024. At Alberta Dairy Congress they were Holstein Premier Breeder and Exhibitor and Red & White Junior Premier Exhibitor in 2025 and earlier claimed Holstein Premier Breeder honours there in 2024 and 2023. "Showing is a great way to advertise and merchandise Crestomere Holsteins," says Lee. "We are proud to sell animals to other farms, even if they are our competition. My theory is if you are afraid to sell a good one because she is good, then you are not confident that you can breed another one next year."

Community and Family

The Simantons generously "give back" to their community and the Holstein industry. Ev is a past director, and Lee a current director, on the Alberta Holstein Branch Board. Lee and Lisa are both on the Central Alberta Holstein Club Board with Lisa the club's secretary and Ev a past president. Marylee was on the Western Canadian Classic Board for 17 years, has been a 4-H leader and was active in the Ponoka Figure Skating Club. Ev, now 75, and Marylee, 70, earned the Marj Atkins Achievement Award in 2022. Crestomere has been "Alberta Breeder of the Year" 4X (1994, 2007, 2011, 2023).

Ev and Marylee's two daughters are very involved in the dairy industry too and have families with multiple interests. Jess and her husband Michael Lovich, and their three daughters Reata, Renelle and Raelyn, own Lovholm Holsteins (prefix Lovhill) at Balgonie, SK, and are the breeders of two World Dairy Expo Grand Champions, LOVHILL GOLDWYN KATRYSHA EX-96-USA-3* and LOVHILL SIDEKICK KANDY CANE EX-96-2E-USA. Sandy and her husband Jon Kingdon, and their three children Sydney, Shae and Cole, farm with Jon's parents at Charlyn Farms, Warwick Township, ON, where they have a noted Jersey herd and own a few Holsteins.

What are the Simantons most proud of? "That we are a family farm. We are all in it together. We are all still working together and still very tied together," they reply. "The girls may have their own thing," says Marylee, "but they are still included in everything we do," be that travelling and working together at shows, owning cattle together or just supporting each other. And that, states Lee, "We attribute to our parents. They did a really good job."

With all that is going on in their lives and on the farm, the Simantons readily admit that it's usually "chaotic, but fun" around Crestomere Holsteins. It is that deep joy and passion for family and their cows that has kept the Simantons moving ahead and led them to achieving this well-deserved Master Breeder award.

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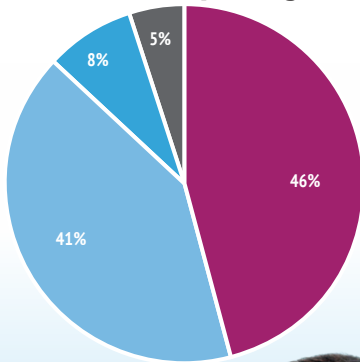


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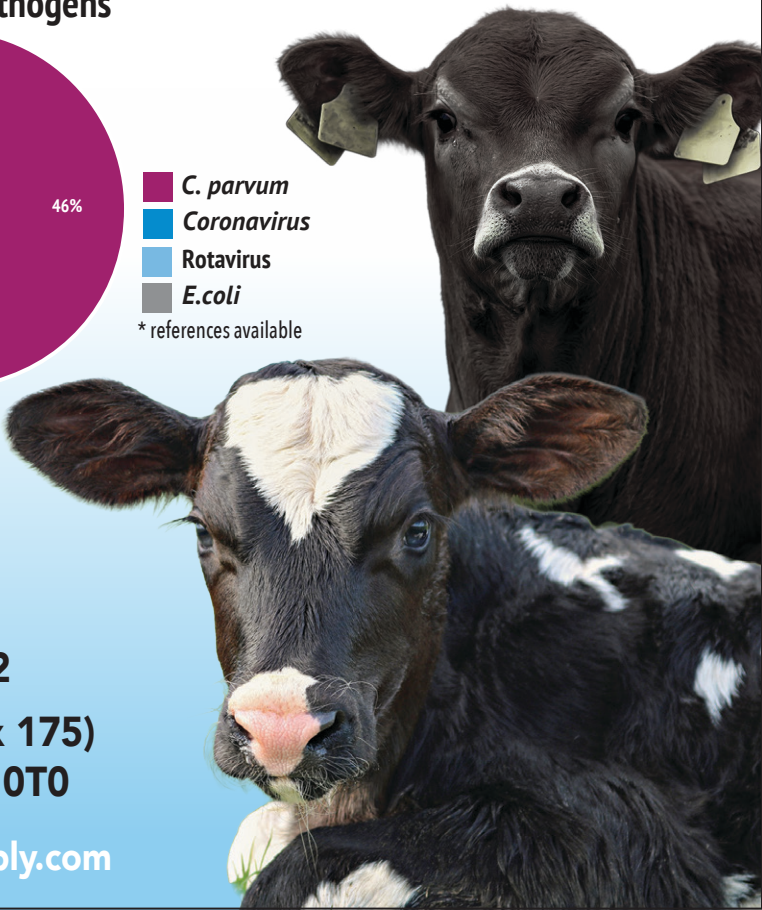
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"Joanne is a remarkable person. She is resilient and a calculated, accomplished breeder and farmer. We don't always agree – in fact, we've gone toe to toe on issues over the years, but in the end, she always has your back. She is one of the most loyal friends I have in my life. When the chips are down, I want Jo in my corner."

David Morey,
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True Grit – Joanne Edwards

The Edwards family received their 'Century Farm' award in 2004, pictured with three of four generations. (L-R): Marjorie, Albert, Joanne, Jim and Fran.

Amanda Poelman

When I think of Joanne Edwards, someone I've known for more than 20 years, the term 'true grit' comes to mind. "The intersection of passion, perseverance, and unshakeable determination – pushing through adversity to achieve long-term goals," is one very apt definition of true grit. Anyone who knows Joanne would agree true grit is in her genes. She's drawn on these characteristics through all of life's hurdles, from loss and injury to raising the next generation.

Born to Farm

Joanne is the fourth generation of the Edwards family to farm in Nokomis, SK, located just under two hours southeast of Saskatoon. "The land was homesteaded in 1904 by my great-grandfather," Joanne says proudly of the farm that was recognized by the provincial government as a 'Century Farm' in 2004. What began as a grain and hog operation has diversified through the years to include chickens, sheep and cows. While Joanne doesn't remember the pigs, she says, "My mom is responsible for the cows."

Fran got her first cow in 1970 – a Jersey. In 1976, she became a member of Jersey Canada and the BRAMVILLE prefix was born. Interestingly, the name originates with the Edwards' ancestors in England. "The original farm was in Branville," says Joanne, "But I guess they couldn't read the writing, so that's how Bramville came about. We never changed it." A couple years later, Joanne made a swift entry into the world...literally. She arrived 30 minutes after her mom made it to the Nokomis Hospital, not long after she'd finished her evening chores in the barn.

After the farm got into the chicken business in the early 1980s, Joanne recalls, "As kids, my siblings and I had to walk around town selling chicken and eggs." The chickens were fed skim milk from Fran's growing herd; they made butter and were regular cream shippers. Regulations in Saskatchewan at the time prohibited the shipping of milk if you were more than 15 miles away from another producer, so Fran delivered 30 cans of cream to town until 1989, when cream shippers were phased out.

Despite her steadfast love of the Jersey cow, Fran had some Ayrshires in the early years. "My mom started showing Ayrshires," Joanne says, "but my dad hated them! So, when the kids left the farm, so did the Ayrshires!" The initial barn was quite labour-intensive, cleaned out by hand until a barn cleaner was installed in 1989. Joanne, her sister and two brothers, had their respective farm chores to attend to, with Joanne taking care of the calves. "We fought over who had to do the chicken chores," laughs Joanne, "All of us hated the chickens."

In 1997, a year after her high school graduation, Joanne headed for New Zealand through the World Jersey Youth Exchange. The 9-month trip quickly turned into a year away, as Joanne worked on over 45 different farms during that time. "That was my university experience," she says, "I learned a lot!" After returning home, Joanne worked as a bar waitress and a grocery store clerk, in addition to her chores at Bramville.

Joanne's current herd favourite, BRAMVILLE LEMONHEAD CRICKET EX-94 3E, was Reserve Grand Champion in Saskatoon and later nominated All-Canadian Lifetime Component Cow last year.



Not long after, she hit the road again, this time working at Clanman Jerseys in Manitoba for a year, followed by four years at Robella Holsteins in Saskatchewan. She didn't know it at the time, but all of those jobs, where she gained expertise in all areas of farming from cows to field work, played an important role in preparing her for what came next.

Home for Good

During the summer of 2003, Joanne moved back to Bramville. "I asked my dad if I could come home to the farm full-time," says Joanne, who noted that her parents never expected any of the kids to come back! Her sister had moved on, working in the hog industry initially and then at the credit union. Her brothers were bull riders and pursued careers in horse training. But her parents knew that if anyone were to return to the farm, it would be Joanne, who had continuously developed her love of cows.

"My dad agreed, but said I couldn't come back as an employee, it was **all in or nothing**," she recalls, "so I signed my life away at 23!" Joanne became a full partner in the farm with her parents, which she believes gave her a lot of incentive to put in her best effort: "All the debt was sitting there staring me in the face!"

Joanne got right to work getting rid of a lot of old buildings that year and began construction on a new Cover-All pack barn, which was completed in 2004. Cow numbers had increased to 50 head by then, but milking still took place in the old tiestall facility, which meant milking 26 cows first, sending them outside and bringing in the rest. She and Fran also continued to develop the Bramville breeding program, earning their first homebred Grand Champion at Olds Fair in 2004 with BRAMVILLE D.D. JOY EX-91 3E 2*. Although she was 'Daddy's girl,' Joanne and Fran had a shared love of the cows and spent long days in the barn together. "My dad only milked cows when he had to; the sheep and the grain farming were his domain," says Joanne.

Unthinkable Loss

In the spring of 2007, Jim was diagnosed with stomach cancer. "Mom and I actually found out before he did when the doctor called the house," shares Joanne, "We milked that afternoon, wondering how we were going to tell him." Jim's cancer was

aggressive and the prognosis was grim, giving him only 3-6 months to live. Although Joanne recalls the following six months as "emotional wreckage," she says, "The bond that developed was extreme." Fran and Joanne made sure they had everything under control in the barn and outside of it, living by the motto "We've got this." Still, the emotional moments came, alone in the tractor, or when she drove her dad to naturopath appointments in Alberta. Jim passed away in October, nearly six months to the day from his diagnosis, and was thankfully able to stay at the farm almost to the end.

"My parents had a crazy amount of faith in me when we went into partnership in 2003. I took over the breeding, cropping and financials immediately," says Joanne. While this seemed like a big deal at the time, Joanne now sees it more as a blessing, "I didn't have to deal with grief AND the learning curve of taking over the farm. I already had the business in my lap."

Moving Forward

There was never any doubt that the farm would continue following Jim's passing, with highlights and big changes on the horizon. Acquired from the famed Coleman herd in Alberta, GREEN HECTARES EXTREME VALLIE SUP-EX 91 6E 3* became one of Joanne's all-time favourite cows. Vallie was named Grand Champion at the Western Canadian Livestock Expo in 2005, 2009 and 2010, and earned Bramville its first All-Canadian nomination. Vallie lived to almost 19 years old and her descendants continue to impact the current herd.

In 2008, Joanne's future spouse, Steven Dufault, arrived on the scene. "Steven was a townie, so it was a pretty steep learning curve for him, and Mom and I were pretty guarded about our space at that time, but he is proud to be called a farmer now!"

Bramville Jerseys, Nokomis, SK.



Joanne, Steven and Maddie.



Joanne was horse crazy as a child, participating in barrel racing, team roping and gymkhana as a teen. Pictured with Jim in 1983.



Joanne caught the show bug early, showing Jerseys before it was 'cool' (1985).

Steven, who worked as a miner in the potash mine when he and Joanne met, became a heavy-duty mechanic and has taken over all equipment maintenance at the farm. Although he's employed full-time off the farm, Steven helps out when needed and was able to take nine months of paternity leave when he and Joanne welcomed their daughter Maddie in August of 2017.

In 2019, construction began on a new facility for the Bramville herd, which they moved into in December that year. The pack barn included a double-four step-up parlour, a setup Joanne saw at Pleasant Nook Jerseys in Ontario. "I really liked the step-up parlour; it makes it so much easier to milk on your own."



Maddie with her cow, BRAMVILLE JOEL LUCKY CHARMS EX-95 3E, the first 95-point cow at the farm.

Admittedly not very "techy," the only automation in the new parlour is automatic take-offs. The herd has grown to 60 milk cows, and although there is room in the barn to expand further, Joanne has no plans for that. "I was able to convince FCC that the barn would be so much more efficient that we wouldn't need to get bigger!"

Because a Strong Woman Raised Me

Joanne is quick to credit her mom as her biggest supporter and her best mentor. "My mom is the toughest woman I know, both emotionally and physically. She raised four kids - three of whom had the 'need for speed' and were accident-prone!" Fran worked several years in pain, needing two knee replacements that she "didn't have time to

get because she knew that she wouldn't be able to work," says Joanne, who has already had shoulder surgery and nearly lost her foot in a farm accident in 2024. "That's where I get my 'push through the pain' attitude."

In 2017, when she turned 65, Fran retired. "She got two new knees and hasn't milked a cow since," laughs Joanne. Fran knew that if she didn't quit 'cold turkey' in the barn, she never would. Although she still helps by pushing up feed, Fran has turned her attention to her big gardens where she grows veggies, potatoes, and has a pumpkin patch with her granddaughter.

Despite being a busy cream shipper and taking care of the family and her cows, Fran dedicated countless hours to many industry boards. She served as a director of the Western Canadian Livestock Expo for 30 years and was one of the early members of the Interprovincial Committee for WCC. She was also actively involved in the Saskatchewan Jersey Cattle Club, now Jersey West. "My mom was a driving force for Jersey shows in Saskatchewan," says Joanne, noting that the Bramville herd is the only 100% Jersey herd in the province. "She loves the Jersey cow," adds Joanne, "I got teased a lot for showing Jerseys as a kid, before Jerseys were cool!" As such, it was a proud moment last August when BRAMVILLE BRIGHT KRISPIE became the first-ever Jersey Grand Champion at WCC.

Joanne continued in Fran's footsteps in the industry, serving on the Jersey Canada board for eight years in various roles, including as president in 2021. "It's important to have a voice from the west," says Joanne, "It took up a lot of time - especially in the later years - but I was passionate about seeing my term through and extremely grateful to Steven and my help at home to make that possible." Although there were ups and downs during those years, Joanne learned a lot. "Through barn tours, AGMs, genetics, and other directors, you learn so much - my time on the board was not wasted." Maddie often came along with Joanne to the meetings and was welcomed with open arms. "There is space for women everywhere; the world has evolved enough," Joanne says.

Learning and Leading by Example

The intel she gleaned while on the Jersey Canada board, coupled with experiences on other farms and her fearlessness in asking questions, has been the recipe for success for Joanne. "I'm a person who asks a lot of questions to a lot of people," she says, and has good friends and neighbours in a variety of different trades that she can turn to for advice. "I ask people who have experience and try to learn from as many people as possible," she adds, like John Welch, a friend in the beef and grain industry, and David Morey, a fellow Jersey breeder. "I believe that every failure is not a failure, but a learning experience."

Joanne has aimed to instill some of the key qualities she learned from her mom into the next generation, including her



Just like her mom, Maddie loves all critters and enjoys going out to check the herd.

daughter, who is currently eight years old and in grade three. "I want Maddie to know that she has a voice, that it's important, and that she should use it." Watching Maddie do all the things she did and raising her the same way she was raised on their farm has been incredible. Like Joanne, Maddie loves everything that moves, including her cow - BRAMVILLE JOEL LUCKY CHARMS EX-95 3E, the first 95-point cow on the farm. "I've had

the opportunity to sell Lucky Charms a couple times," Joanne says of the cow that was Grand Champion at Alberta Dairy Congress in 2023, "but I don't want to crush her spirit, so we're keeping her cow."

Joanne's niece, Cassandra Knouse, has also been an integral part of the team at Bramville. "She's spent a lot of her life with me," says Joanne. At 16, Cassandra started working for Joanne in the summers, worked full-time in 2017 when Maddie was born, went off to Lakeland College to complete the dairy program, and returned in 2022. "She is basically my right-hand, she's had to run the place almost on her own at times, so it will be a sad day when she leaves," says Joanne.

The belief that integrity is everything and a strong work ethic will get you far has shaped the way Joanne was raised, the way she runs her business, and the way she leads the next generation of strong dairy women - through passion, perseverance and determination.



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Master Breeder Honours for Current Holsteins



The Hueging family, from left: Madden, Allison, Jocelyn, Darren and Myers, enjoy time with their cows out in pasture.

Bonnie Cooper,
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Darren and Allison Hueging of Current Holsteins (prefix Missiontrail), Woodlands, MB, never imagined winning a Holstein Canada Master Breeder award in their first year nominated ("our 15th year"). That's why on January 17th they decided to attend a local fundraiser instead of staying home and watching the "Master Breeder Reveal." But as fate would have it, during a break in the evening, Allison logged on to Holstein Canada's YouTube just as Current Holsteins was being announced as a Master Breeder for 2025. They were thrilled!! And now they and their three children will fly for the first time together as a family to British Columbia in April to accept a Master Breeder shield at the National Holstein Convention.

Farm Roots Grow Family of Five

Darren and Allison, both 39, grew up on Manitoba dairy and beef farms. Darren is the son of Hermann and Audrey Hueging of Hueging Dairies Ltd., Woodlands, who, along with their other son Curtis, won a Holstein Canada Master Breeder shield in 2019 for their Aggies herd. Allison is the daughter of Edward and Bev Pylypjuk of Palladale Holsteins, Grunthal. "Darren and I met at the University of Manitoba when he was in the 2-year Diploma in Agriculture course and I was in the Faculty of Agriculture & Food Science studying animal science with plans to be a veterinarian," says Allison, who was in 4-H and competed at the Western Canadian Classic while growing up. The couple married in 2011, the same year Allison graduated from the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. They now have three children – Jocelyn, 12, Myers, 11, and Madden, 10. Allison today splits her time between the farm and the Beausejour Animal Hospital where her veterinary practice is 90% dairy and 10% beef and she focuses on preventative medicine.



Some of the outstanding cows to be found in the barn at Current Holsteins, new Master Breeder from Woodlands, MB.

The Unregistered Origins

Back in 2006, after graduating from the U of M, Darren, together with his parents, had the opportunity to purchase his aunt's nearby dairy farm and herd, thus allowing the family to expand their dairy operation and make Darren and his brother fully part of the farm. "It was pretty simple,"



Ella Wright photo

Acquired by the Hueging family in 2006, GORMUR LEADER JANNA EX-92-8E-2* went on to make three Superior Lactations, 131,801 kg milk lifetime, and had one EX, two VG and two GP daughters before completing her career at 19 years of age at Current Holsteins in Manitoba.

says Darren. "The new farm had just a dairy barn, cattle and hay shed, and a house. We renovated the tie-stall barn, changed the ventilation, and made quite a few other changes in 2006. We took turns milking there, while raising all the calves and heifers at the home farm where we also milked. We did that until Allison and I got married in 2011 when she joined me on the farm. Then I took over Current. In 2014, we added a piece on the barn. We put in a new manure pump, 20 more stalls, a better calving pen, upgraded the ventilation system, and tiled the mangers. In 2019, we completed the succession plan, so Allison and I now own the farm totally."

Darren's aunt's 50-cow Holstein herd was unregistered. After the Huegings bought it, they BB recorded the entire herd through Holstein Canada's Full Spectrum upgrading registration program. Darren took the "Missiontrail" prefix which comes from the name of a historic route which runs across their hay land and was used by settlers travelling from Winnipeg to Lake Manitoba. Today the Missiontrail herd is fully registered at purebred status. Why upgrade? "I feel you can track things a lot easier when they are registered," replies Darren. "Everything is in a database, and you can monitor progress and keep track of family lines. I grew up with registered cattle and so it just made sense to me to register the animals."

The Crucial Cows of Current

The Huegings purchased a couple purebred cows early on who would have an immense impact in the Current herd. The first is GORMUR LEADER JANNA EX-92-8E-2*. Allison tells the story: "My Dad bought Janna as a calf for my sister's 4-H project. She went EX in her third lactation and placed second twice at the Morris Show. In 2006, my Dad sold her in a sale and Darren's family, shortly after we started dating, bought her and she came to the farm where Darren was." Janna made three Superior Lactations and 131,801 kg milk, 3.6% fat, 3.4% protein (257-247-275) in 10 lactations. She left one EX, two VG and two GP daughters here including MISSIONTRAIL ASHLAR JESSIE EX-90-2E with 116,716 kg milk, 3.7% fat, 3.1% protein (321-326-314) lifetime. "Janna was a super special cow for us," says Allison. "She is pictured on our farm sign and was with us until she was 19 years old."

The other purchase, BENNER MORE JOHANNA EX-90-6E-5*, came as a fresh 2-year-old to Current in 2008. She made 128,969 kg milk, 3.5% fat, 3.0% protein (296-281-282) in nine lactations, won a Super 3 award, and in 2020 was the Manitoba Branch "Cow of the Year." Johanna had one EX and three VG daughters including MISSIONTRAIL STEADY

JULIANA EX-90-3E-3* with 82,770 kg milk, 3.9% fat, 3.2% protein (304-317-300) lifetime and MISSIONTRAIL IOTA JANESSA VG-87-3*.

Both Janna and Johanna have left solid, high producing, long living descendants so many that Darren says, "We have a problem because we have a lot of 'J' cows in our herd!" Fourteen different cows in this well-balanced herd each contributed 10+ points to the Huegings' Master Breeder shield, with many tracing to the J lines.

Breeding and Building a Business

Darren and Allison currently milk 80 cows with the line-up including 6 ME, 4 EX, 50 VG and 49 GP who average more than 13,500 litres of milk on 2X with 4.4% fat for 597 kg fat, 449 kg protein per lactation. "We feed all dry hay and have a computer feeder that feeds a prepared ration 8X/day," says Darren. The Huegings have three full-time equivalent employees. The Current farm now encompasses 4000 acres of land, 1200 of which is used for forage production to feed both the dairy herd and their 300-head cow-calf beef operation.

When Darren started in 2006, the herd had a fair bit of production, but was lacking some type, so they used bulls that had 100 kg of fat + protein combined and were +10 for feet/legs and udders. As the herd progressed, and the dairy industry changed, their emphasis moved more to butterfat. "Now we are looking to increase litres of milk again," he says. "We are a very production focused herd," Allison states.



The tie-stall barn at Current Holsteins, where attention to detail, cow comfort and providing quality feed is key to having high producing cows who last a long time.

"Our overall goal is high performing cows that last a long time. We look at individual traits and try to match the bulls with the cows when doing matings. We use Holstein Canada's 'Compass' program to compare the phenotype to genotype and ensure our first lactation animals outperform their genetics." Darren says, "We started using beef semen in the herd 15 years ago. Now we are breeding about 75% of the herd to beef and the top 25% gets bred to sexed Holstein semen. We do use genomic bulls but have gone back to using a little more proven bulls again because I like to see some lactation data and classification on the dam side." Bulls like Iota, Toystory, Baxter and Hotline were used early on here and have been followed more recently with sons of Renegade specifically Conway, Parfect and Capone.

The Huegings credit their success to "keeping a sharp pencil when decision-making, teamwork and focusing on productive animals and longevity."

"We use DHI's \$/Day, along with a cow's days in milk and reproduction, to decide how much to feed each cow. If cows aren't earning their stall, they aren't with us very long," says Allison. Good management is also essential. "Because we only produce the number of heifers we need," says Darren, "making sure we do a good job with our calves is key. In 2019, we built a calf barn with individual pens that Allison designed the ventilation for. Then in the dairy barn, we know all our cows really well. We pay attention to detail. We feed high quality feed and keep the cows comfortable."

"We also like to know the Leucosis status of our herd," adds Allison. "We screen for Leucosis and ensure that any heifer calf born to a positive mom is given negative colostrum so we can decrease the amount of Leucosis in our herd." These efforts helped Current Holsteins win a Dairy Farmers of Manitoba Excellence Award in 2024.

Definitely Not Sideline Spectators

Allison and Darren are active in many industry and community activities. In 2020, they were a BMO Manitoba Farm Family of the Year. Darren is on the Dairy Farmers of Manitoba Advisory Board and was a longtime president of the Interlake Holstein Club. Allison was president of the Manitoba Veterinary Association in 2020-21 and was involved in several of their committees, in addition to volunteering with the local hockey board and being a coach.



Their 2019 calf barn is designed to ensure the Missiontrail calves get the best possible start.

Their three children play a very active role on the farm. In the future, the Huegings hope to grow their dairy herd and perhaps build a new barn. "We want to expand the farm so if our kids want to farm we are at a size so that possibility exists for them. I loved having the opportunity to be able to farm when I was growing up, so Allison and I want to provide that option for our children too," says Darren.

While farming and life have not been without its challenges, Darren and Allison Hueging take pride in having been able to grow their farm, make their cows better and have a profitable operation, all while doing it alongside their family. Congratulations to this new Master Breeder! 🐄

It's been a busy but rewarding 15 years for Allison and Darren as they built their farm and developed their Missiontrail herd, becoming Manitoba's newest Master Breeder in 2025.



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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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Lead Field Service Business
Partner- FSBP Western Canada
tkleinsasser@holstein.ca
519-865-4367



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BC Branch News BC Holsteins

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Spring has arrived – at least here on Vancouver Island! The trees are budding and warmer weather is settling in. As we get closer to getting out on the fields and first cut, it's a good time to keep farm safety top of mind. When things don't go according to plan, it's easy for stress to creep in. When that happens, take a moment to pause and refocus – especially when working around livestock and equipment. A little patience and awareness go a long way in keeping everyone safe during this busy time.

Convention is HERE! After a year of preparations,

BC is ready to open its doors to breeders and Holstein enthusiasts from across the country. Congratulations to the entire planning committee who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to prepare for this occasion. I'm looking forward to the various events as we showcase all that BC has to offer, from stunning scenery to great cattle. I would especially like to thank the breeders who are hosting farm tours before, during, and after the convention – we appreciate your willingness to share your expertise and innovations with our guests.



Thomas Cuthbert
President

NATIONAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT



It has been a busy start to 2026 as we prepare for the Convention in our beautiful province. An excellent program has been assembled that includes farm tours, the Grouse Mountain Past President's Reception, National Convention Sale, National Holstein Show and the Master Breeder Gala. I would like to congratulate the planning committee for coming together to organize such a large event and for allowing fellow dairy enthusiasts to experience the "Spirit of the West."

Holstein Canada AGM

Each year, Holstein Canada members bring forward ideas and priorities through their provincial branches and those grassroots perspectives help shape the direction of our association. These resolutions reflect real input from producers across the country and are one of the most direct ways members can influence our programs, services and future initiatives.

By-Laws

Over the past year, Holstein Canada has conducted a comprehensive review of its By-Laws to ensure they remain current, clear, and aligned with the requirements of the Animal Pedigree Act (APA). The review was completed in collaboration with the Board of Directors, Somerglen Governance Inc., and Holstein Canada's Governance Committee, with recommendations focused on modernizing language, improving clarity and strengthening the Association's governance framework.

The By-Laws have been reorganized into a clearer ten-section numerical structure. The proposed By-Laws and accompanying comparison document are available on the Holstein Canada website. They will be presented, discussed and voted on at the AGM.

Breed Improvement Committee

There is an opening at large for the Breed Improvement Committee. This committee advises the Board of Directors and management on matters relating to the development, evolution, and delivery of the Holstein breed strategy and breed improvement programs. For more information, contact the BC Branch. The deadline to apply is April 17.



Brian Hamming
National Director

**BC is Excited to Host the
National Holstein Convention
April 15-19, 2026**

Thank You...

to all the farms that put their best on display for the
National Convention Tours! You are all great ambassadors
for BC dairy producers, and your hospitality is appreciated.

Pre-Tour: D Dutchman Dairy, Gietema Farms,
HS Jansen & Sons, Hamming Holsteins

Convention Tour Day: Lorenzetti Acres,
UBC Dairy Research Centre, Bonnie Doone Dairy,
Corners Pride Farms, Academy Farms, Wisselview Farms,
Gracemar Farms, Rosegate Dairy

Post Tour: Wedgwood Holsteins, Cowichan Milk Co.,
J. William Wikkerink Farms, Willswikk Holsteins

Congratulations

**to Oliver and
Shelley Balme**
(Balme Ayr Farms Ltd.) of
Duncan, BC, on receiving
their first Master Breeder
Shield from Ayrshire Canada.
They received their award at
the AGM in Thetford Mines,
QC, in early March.

We look forward to featuring
the Balme family in our
Summer issue.

Looking Forward
to these
COMING EVENTS

BC Branch Summer Picnic – TBA
.....
Vancouver Island Holstein Show
July 9 at Cowichan Exhibition Grounds
.....
Breeders Cup competitions
Look for dates and details coming this summer!



BC Dairy Association Bulletin Board

BC’s Farm and Ranch FireSmart Program

Glen Burgess
BC Dairy Emergency Management Specialist

Agriculture faces unique challenges from wildfire. You can increase the protection of your farm or ranch with FireSmart. Developed through decades of research and proven in real wildfire conditions, FireSmart practices greatly reduce the risk of a structure catching fire during a wildfire.

Up to 90% of structures damaged by wildfires ignite because of embers, not flames. Embers can travel kilometres in the wind, landing on roofs, in gutters, wood piles, or getting into barns through vents and cracks. FireSmart focuses on the structures and surrounding 30 metres, particularly the first 1.5 metres, to have the greatest impact on reducing the risk of catching fire.

FireSmart is proactive and doesn’t rely on last-minute defenses. A FireSmart structure and property is easier for firefighters to protect. Structures that are not FireSmart, especially those deemed a safety risk, are challenging to protect and will be less of a priority for critical firefighting equipment and resources.

Rooftop sprinklers can be less effective in high fire danger weather conditions, such as strong winds. Sprinklers are most effective when used in addition to FireSmart practices.

A Farm and Ranch Assessment is a great starting point for wildfire preparedness. This customized assessment identifies wildfire risks and provides practical, tailored recommendations to protect your property and operation. In BC, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food is providing assessor training to local authorities across the province. Through your local authority’s FireSmart coordinator, you can request a free Farm and Ranch FireSmart assessment. A trained assessor will visit your operation to look at your key structures and identify wildfire risks to your farm infrastructure. Based on your priorities, they will recommend changes that will make the biggest difference in preventing structures from catching fire during a wildfire. Some recommendations will be simple and quick to do, while others will help plan for the long term. The assessor will look at each critical farm structure and the immediate 30 metres surrounding the structure to determine risks and recommendations. The assessor will discuss the risks and recommendations with you to ensure recommendations are realistic and do-able and answer any questions you may have. The assessor will email you a completed report after the assessment.

The Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC’s Beneficial Management Practices Program’s Extreme Weather Preparedness category funds projects in four categories. One of which is the Wildfire Preparedness Stream. The Wildfire Preparedness Stream is offered in partnership with the BC Wildfire Service and FireSmart™ BC. Applicants who have completed a FireSmart™ BC Farm and Ranch Assessment will be eligible to apply for select on-farm projects to address recommendations from the assessment. Approved applicants will receive 40% cost-share reimbursements for select on-farm projects up to a maximum of \$50,000.





Ministry of Agriculture and Food



“ One of the biggest things I learned today was the importance of preparing for the ember storm.

The FireSmart coordinator emphasized the importance of keeping embers out of structures – whether that be your house, a barn, a hay shed.

I would highly recommend it. It has been a very painless process. I don’t think there’s any expectation that things have to happen tomorrow, you can do it at your own pace.”

Ralph van Dalsen.
Trinity Dairies

FireSmart, Intelli-feu and other associated Marks are trademarks of the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC).

LINKS

FireSmart BC: <https://firesmartbc.ca/farm-and-ranch/>

Farm and Ranch Fire Smart Assessments: https://firesmartbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/FireSmart_FarmRanchAssessmentForm_Example-4.pdf

Farm & Ranch Wildfire Plan: https://www.bccclimatechangeadaptation.ca/app/uploads/Guide_Farm_Ranch_Wildfire_2024.pdf & https://www.bccclimatechangeadaptation.ca/app/uploads/PlanWorkbook_Farm_Ranch_Wildfire_2024.pdf

Producer experience with the Farm and Ranch FireSmart program: <https://vimeo.com/1121952202?fl=pl&fe=cm>

Investment Agriculture Foundation: <https://iafbc.ca/beneficial-management-practices-program/extreme-weather-preparedness-bmps/#eligible>



BC Dairy 2026 Board Election Results

BC Dairy completed its 2026 Board of Directors election.

This election filled four board positions following the expiration of previous terms and as part of BC Dairy’s governance structure. Three positions were elected by all BC dairy producers, and one position was elected by producers whose farms were located outside the Lower Mainland. Voting was conducted electronically from February 6 to March 6, 2026, by the BC Council of Marketing Boards (BCCOMB), an independent third party.

The following candidates were elected to the BC Dairy Board of Directors:

Elected by producers outside the Lower Mainland



Luke Van Huizen
(Duncan)

Elected by all producers



Ron Kooyman
(Chilliwack)



Mark Van Klei
(Chilliwack)



Nico Vankeulen
(Surrey)

These board members will join Casey Pruim (Abbotsford), Sarah Sache (Rosedale), Brian Janzen (Chilliwack), and Henry Bremer (Enderby) on the BC Dairy Board. BC Dairy also thanked John de Dood for his service as his term ended on March 31.

BC Dairy thanked all candidates who stood for election and all producers who participated in the voting process. Producer engagement remained an important part of strong representation for dairy farmers across British Columbia.

A Master Breeder Shield for Mosnang



Markus and Amanda Hehli and their four children are pictured at the 2025 Western Dairy Expo in Saskatoon with MOSNANG RESPECT DANGER ZONE EX-92 (left), and the show's first 4-Year-Old and Honourable Mention Grand Champion, SILVERMAPLE LIMITED CERSEE VG-89, who they sold at the show.



Bruce Sargent photo

The Hehli family embodies the true spirit of the family farm – three generations working side by side, sharing in the thrill of this Master Breeder recognition. (Back row L-R) Wyatt, Amanda, Markus, Ruth and Heini. (Front row L-R) Sawyer, Georgia and Adair.

Bonnie Cooper,
becooper2010@gmail.com

Deservingly on the roster of Holstein Canada Master Breeders for 2025 is Mosnang Holsteins, Rimbey, AB, owned by Heini and Ruth Hehli and son Markus and his wife Amanda and their family. "The award means we are achieving our goals and getting what we want from our cows," they say humbly.

A Swiss Dream. A Canadian Farm.

Heini and Ruth Hehli grew up in Switzerland but weren't raised on a farm. "My Dad was a policeman and Ruth's was an engineer," shares Heini. "I always liked agriculture and helped neighbours who had small farms. My idea was to have an agriculture career." Between a 2-year apprenticeship and going to agriculture school, Heini spent a year working on a farm in Quebec. "I came to Canada in 1974. I was just turning 20. It was then that I realized I could farm here on my own," he says. After finishing school, Heini returned to Quebec for another year and then went to Manitoba. "I got a job with the Holtmann family at Rosser Holsteins. I was there three years. That is where I really became interested in dairy farming and was able to buy a calf or two from them every year," he continues. "I met Ruth on a visit back to Switzerland. We married in 1980. We looked for a farm. It wasn't easy. We had no money. We heard there was free milk quota in Alberta and we found this farm. It was a quarter section, came with 44 Holstein cows and a new tie-stall barn. That was our beginning. Half the cows were purebred. The other half were grades, and we upgraded them through Holstein Canada's National Identification Program (NIP)."

The Hehlis took the prefix "Mosnang" – the name of the Swiss town Heini was born in. "I fed calves and learned how to milk," says Ruth. "It was all new to me. It was quite an adventure. We raised seven children (two boys and five girls). The kids were all involved in 4-H and had their own chores on the farm. I always thought our kids had paradise on earth."

New Generations – New Excitement!

The farm grew and improved in the years to come. "We had very good counsel," says Heini, "from Ernie and Rosmary Naegeli of Roserna Holsteins and Don Chalack of Wendon



Jenna Jongenotter photo

Mosnang Holsteins' winning Breeder's Herd at the 2025 Western Dairy Expo consisted of, from left: MOSNANG ARMY DELIGHT EX-93-3E-2* and her daughter, MOSNANG RESPECT DANGER ZONE EX-92, plus MOSNANG DEMPSEY BELLINI EX-91-2E.

Holsteins, Alberta breeders we looked up to and tried to emulate." Heini became an Alberta Milk director in 2008 and eventually vice-chairman. The Hehlis' oldest son, Markus, came home while Heini was heavily involved in Alberta Milk and assumed responsibility for the herd's breeding and management decisions. In January 2011, they suffered a setback when their barn collapsed from snow load. They lost a dozen cows. Luckily, the milking parlour and holding pen were OK and they moved the remaining cows into a hay shed. By April, the barn was rebuilt.

Markus, 44, and Amanda, 40, who married in 2009, along with their children – Wyatt, 13, Adair, 11, and twins Sawyer and Georgia, 9 – are now partners in the farm with Heini and Ruth. Together this 3X "Alberta Breeder of the Year" winner has developed an outstanding herd. As Heini says happily, "It took us 45 years to get a Master Breeder shield, but I always say Ruth and I bred for 30 years and built a very good base, and then Markus came home and elevated that base the last 15 years." The Hehlis own 320 acres of land, rent another 250, and grow barley, corn and alfalfa. They grow all their own forages and feed a TMR and purchased grain. They have a couple part-time employees and over the years have had students from all around the world work here.

Very Intentional Breeding

"We want a cow that makes a lot of milk for a long time and

looks good doing it," says Markus, a strategy his parents also embraced, plus "Just that extra to be successful at the shows," adds Heini. When choosing a bull, Markus says, "I start with high typed bulls and then look for bulls that have positive production and components. I also look at Herd Life, Mastitis Resistance and a few of the health traits. And then they have to have proven cow families behind them." He continues, "I use less of more bulls. I will end up with three or four daughters of a bull and that might be it. Sometimes I go back and use the bull again, but usually by then I'm using his sons. I feel we still get consistency that way. I have a cow in mind so every mating I make I'm trying to make that cow. Presently I'm using 75% genomic and 25% proven bulls," says Markus. "We don't use much sexed semen and only 10% beef because we sell quite a few breeding bulls."

The Hehlis currently milk 110 Holsteins and 10 Jerseys in a step-up, flat parlour with a free-stall facility. The line-up includes 13 ME, 8 EX, 73 VG and 34 GP and has a Rolling Herd Average of 10,247 kg milk, 464 kg fat, 345 kg protein. In 2025, they had two cows earn 60,000 kg milk lifetime certificates, two at 80,000 kg and one at 100,000 kg, plus had six Star Brood cows recognized. Among them was MOSNANG JACOBY LEGENDAIRY VG-89-3*, a ninth generation VG/EX in the COMESTAR LAURIE SHEIK family, who was formerly #1 for Conformation in Canada and is the dam of BLONDIN LEGEND at Blondin Sires.

Starting with the Right Cows

WESTPRIDE PETULA B EX-9*, a Starbuck owned by Wendon Holsteins, had a big impact at Mosnang. "My parents bought a daughter of Petula, and I bought a granddaughter, and lots of our Master Breeder points go back to her," observes Markus.

A show winning family who contributed many points is the "L Family" who traces to a 2-year-old Brent that Heini and Ruth bought in 1985. A descendant, MOSNANG LIGHTNING BOLT EX-92-2E-6*, was Alberta "Cow of the Year" in 2016, earned a Super 4 award, and had two EX and three VG daughters. The highest scored of these, MOSNANG SALOON LIQUOR EX-94-2E, was Grand Champion at Alberta Dairy Congress and a member of Mosnang's first nominated All-Canadian Breeder's Herd in 2018 in a career that also claimed two All-Western titles and a Super 4 award. Liquor's highly acclaimed

Two instrumental members in Mosnang Holsteins' L Family, MOSNANG SALOON LIQUOR EX-94-2E, at left, and her granddaughter, MOSNANG SOLOMON LIQUIFY EX-95-3E, were pictured together a few years ago in the Hehlis' Alberta barn.



Ella Wright photo

granddaughter, MOSNANG SOLOMON LIQUIFY EX-95-3E, a fifth generation homebred EX and fourth generation with over 81,000 kg milk lifetime, has records to 21,104 kg milk, 4.3% fat, 3.3% protein (351-388-363). She was Grand Champion at Westerner Dairy Showcase and Reserve Canadian Champion Junior 3-Year-Old in 2020. Liquify, and several members of her family, are now owned by Westcoast Holsteins (BC). Under their banner in 2022, Liquify was Reserve All-Canadian and Honourable Mention All-American 5-Year-Old, while her daughter, MOSNANG UNIX LIPSTICK EX-95 was All-Canadian and Reserve All-American Junior 3-Year-Old after winning her class at the Royal Winter Fair, and another daughter, MOSNANG BRIDGESTONE LIVE WIRE VG-87, was nominated for All-Canadian Fall Yearling in Milk. Liquify and her two daughters combined to take second place in the Breeder's Herd class at the Royal (later Reserve All-Canadian) and helped Mosnang to be runner-up for Overall Premier Breeder at that Royal.

Showring Success was No Accident

Markus, who won the Curtis Clark Achievement Award at the Royal in 2023, was 15 when he took his family's



Bullvine photo

Three members of Mosnang Holsteins' L Family combined to take second place in the Breeder's Herd class at the 2022 Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and then went on to be Reserve All-Canadian Breeder's Herd that year. From left: sisters MOSNANG BRIDGESTONE LIVE WIRE VG-87 and MOSNANG UNIX LIPSTICK EX-95, and then their dam, MOSNANG SOLOMON LIQUIFY EX-95-3E.



Ella Wright photo

Judge Markus Hehli selects the Champion Calf in the Conformation classes at the 2025 TD Canadian 4-H Dairy Classic held at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair last November.

first showstring all by himself to Olds Fair. Mosnang has been showing ever since at major shows across Western Canada, as well as the Royal and World Dairy Expo. They have been Premier Breeder 5X and Premier Exhibitor 6X at Alberta Dairy Congress and had first Breeder's Herd there in 2024-25. They have been Premier Breeder and Exhibitor at Westerner Dairy Showcase 2X and were Junior Premier Breeder there in 2024 and Junior Premier Breeder and Exhibitor in 2025. "Showing gives our herd lots of exposure and has been a great way for us to merchandise animals. And if we sell a good one, and she does well for her new owner, that's marketing for us too," says Markus.

Showing today is a "family affair" with Markus being regularly joined at the shows by Amanda and their four children who are all in 4-H. It is not unusual to see the Hehlis with 20-30 animals in their showstring. A recent member, MOSNANG ARMY DELIGHT EX-93-3E-2*, was second mature cow last year at Alberta Dairy Congress and Western Dairy Expo. A sixth generation EX/VG, she traces to TOMALYNN LEDUC DELLA EX-95-2E-1*, the 3X All-Canadian. Delight has two EX daughters including MOSNANG RESPECT DANGER ZONE EX-92 who was first fall 2-year-old at Alberta Dairy Congress in 2024.

Finding Time off the Farm

The Hehlis have been very active in the dairy industry and their community. Heini, now 71, was a 4-H leader for 30 years and is currently president of the Wildrose Yodel Club. He and Ruth, 67, were very involved for many years in the local school council and soccer association and did marriage preparation for engaged couples through their church. Markus is an Official Judge and judged the 2024 National Red & White Holstein Show and 2025 TD Canadian 4-H Dairy Classic conformation classes at the Royal. Both Markus and Amanda are 4-H leaders, while Markus is also on the Westerner Dairy Showcase Committee, treasurer of the Central Alberta Holstein Club, and previously served on Holstein Canada's Show and Judging Committee. Amanda is the Alberta Holstein Branch's social media director.

The Hehlis are very proud of their cows, but more importantly that they have done everything as a **family**. Heini and Ruth's drive and ambition, combined with Markus and Amanda's passion, has brought Mosnang Holsteins a long way in 45 years and as a family has made them a Master Breeder!



Jenna Jongenotter photo

In 2024, Markus Hehli (right) had the honour of judging the National Red & White Holstein Show at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and here he congratulates Mike Deaver, leading the show's Grand Champion, PREMIUM APPLE CRISP LILLY.



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FARM SAFETY For Everybody's Benefit

Moving Towards 'Sustained Compliance' in Farm Safety AgSafe's Message: Try to Try!

Amanda Poelman

Leading off the presentations at BC Dairy's 'Lunch and Learn' session at this year's Pacific Ag Show, Emily Faykosh, AgSafe Field Representative in the Lower Mainland, shared what producers can expect as safety inspections strive towards 'sustained compliance.'

"Farming doesn't look the same as it did 50 years ago, and your safety plan shouldn't either," she said, noting that agriculture continues to be listed in the Top 10 most dangerous occupations and is now being treated like other industries when it comes to Health and Safety.

Gone are the days of minimal inspection activity, minimal administrative penalties, and minimal follow-up on outstanding orders. This is challenging because producers are used to the "wild west approach to inspections and farm safety" of the past, believing that those inspections will dictate future safety visits. "We are starting to see a lot more 'notices of compliance (NOCs)' being handed out, as well as more administrative penalties," said Emily, of the more streamlined approach being taken across all industries.

AgSafe wants safety programs to be practical for farmers. Rather than a program that you write up, shelve and forget about, Emily urged producers to create living programs that meet individual farm

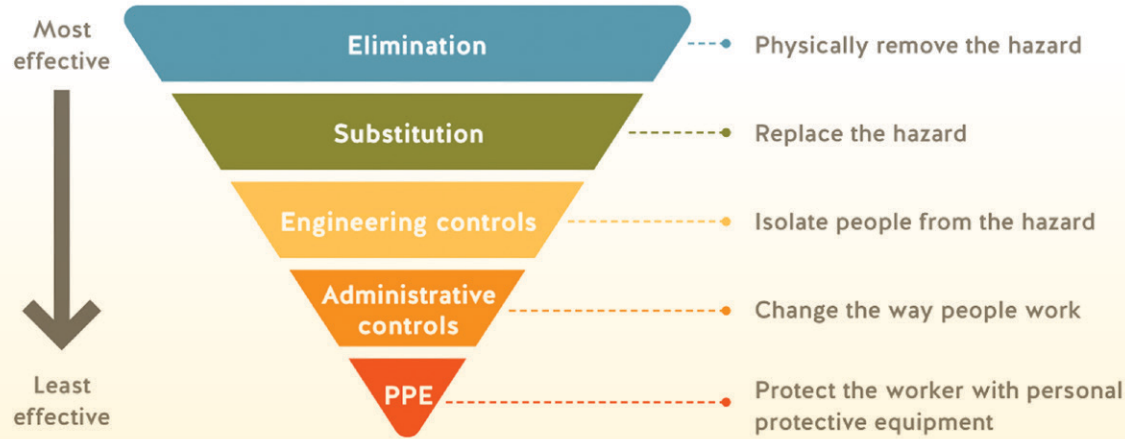


Figure 1. When considering how to reduce on-farm risks, following the 'Hierarchy of Controls' is helpful. Listed in order of effectiveness, the various controls often work best in combination with each other.

needs and aim for 'sustained compliance.'

"Adopting a program that adapts with changes in your operation greatly reduces the chances of getting into non-compliance trouble," she said.

With increased quota expected as more processing facilities come online in BC, new building projects are likely. "In a new build, the easiest way to work toward sustained compliance is to eliminate hazards," said Emily, noting five proactive steps, called the 'Hierarchy of Controls,' producers can take to protect themselves and their workers on the farm (Figure 1). Including AgSafe in the process of a new

build can help to engineer out hazards that producers might not necessarily think of first, like confined spaces.

As things change, AgSafe's main message is "Try to Try," when it comes to your safety plan. "It's important to do little things well, rather than building an intensive plan that you can't maintain," Emily said, stressing the value of being proactive rather than reactive when there is an accident on the farm. By tackling little things like worker orientation, equipment competency determinations, manure management and confined spaces awareness, keeping supervisor notes, and having monthly meetings with staff, producers will be on

the right track for sustained compliance.

Conversely, "what not to do" includes fighting with a WorkSafe officer and kicking them off your farm, telling them "everyone does it this way," or ignoring the inspection report when it arrives, which will cause setbacks and, in some cases, monetary non-compliance penalties. "AgSafe is here and happy to help," said Emily, "We can help you come up with a plan that works for your farm - but try not to call us in a panic the night before your inspection!" Getting ahead of the forthcoming inspections by being prepared will be a recipe for success.

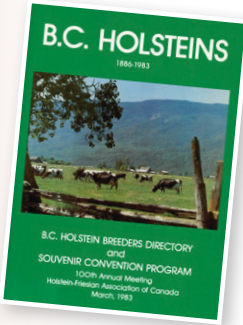


Welcome to the 2026 National Holstein Convention!



We hope everyone enjoys the *Spirit of the West*

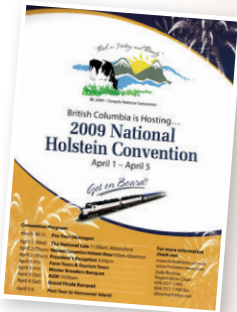
BC's fourth time hosting this spectacular celebration.



1983 - The first National Convention and 100th Holstein Association of Canada AGM. Convention Chair - Joe Taylor, Coordinator - Barb Souter, President Holstein Canada - Gordon McKay.



1995 - Come Alive in '95' - A theme championed by Chairs David Janssens, John Blair and Coordinator - Joan Wikkerink, President Holstein Canada - Joe Taylor.



2009 - Rich in History and Beauty - Convention Chair - John Blair, Coordinator - Joan Wikkerink, National President - Richard Bosma, BC Branch President - Martin Hamming.

A hearty thank-you to all the volunteers who have made these grand events come to life - past and present!



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2026 Dairy Outlook:

'Protein craze' making waves in the dairy sector



Graeme Crosbie, FCC Economist

Whether it's a shift in consumer preferences, widespread adoption of GLP-1 drugs or the growing influence of social media, there's little doubt that demand for protein and protein-added products is on the rise. In response, regional marketing boards in Western and Eastern Canada are changing how producers will be paid for milk components in 2026.

Consumers seek high-protein dairy for healthy diets

Less than a decade ago, the dairy sector was in a predicament. Consumers were demanding more products high in butterfat (for example, cream, butter). This appeared to be a positive development; after all, how could more demand for your products be a bad thing?

The problem is that at a given point in time, milk components are structurally fixed between butterfat, protein and other solids (OS). To meet that additional butterfat demand in the short term, more milk needed to be produced. However, this created a protein surplus that processors and consumers didn't want at the time.

In response, milk boards restructured producer pay for these individual components – placing a greater dollar value on butterfat – to incentivize farmers to produce more of it. The industry responded to changes in breeding strategies and feed rations. Today, the Canadian dairy herd is producing more butterfat per litre of milk than ever before.

Now the sector is facing the opposite: a protein deficit rather than a surplus. One reason is that the demand for dairy products with higher protein content, such as yogurt and cheese, grew significantly in 2025. This occurred despite the slowdown in population growth, which had been a key driver of sales between 2022 and 2024.

Why the rise in consumption?

One of the main reasons consumers are seeking high-protein diets is that, in the most recent International Food Information Council's Food and Health Survey, respondents voted "good source of protein" as the number one criteria used to define a healthy food, taking over the number one spot from "fresh" which had held the top spot for three years in a row.

Accessible, nutrient-dense foods – like dairy – are appealing to health-conscious and time-strapped consumers. However, non-dairy food manufacturers are also riding the protein craze, with added protein now appearing in products not naturally high in protein, including waffles, Pop-Tarts and even Doritos. This provides another opportunity to use dairy protein as an ingredient.

Producer pricing incentivizes more protein production

In response to changing consumer preferences, milk boards are adjusting how producers are paid for their milk components. In 2026, a greater dollar amount will be allocated to protein components in both the P5 (Eastern Canada) and the WMP (Western Canada).

What does this mean to producers' bottom lines? If the farm's average milk composition remains the same, they will see a negligible difference in gross revenue. But the pricing mechanism is arranged in such a way to reward those producers who can lower their butterfat yield and/or increase their protein yield. Conversely, it will also reduce gross revenue for those who increase their butterfat yield. The ranges vary within the many different scenarios at play but are generally between 0% and +/- 5% range, depending on the magnitude of changes to the farm's milk composition. Remember, though, that each farm's situation will be unique to their operation.

Does this protein craze have staying power?

It will take years and successive generations of breeding to shift the herd towards higher-protein, lower-butterfat-producing animals. The demand for butterfat over the last decade has had staying power. On a per

capita basis, butter consumption (and, to a lesser extent, cheese) has remained stable since 2019. While there's no guarantee the protein trend will have similar staying power, the outlook is positive.

Bottom line

There's reason to be optimistic about the dairy industry in 2026. This summer's CUSMA review will be a watch item for industry stakeholders. Still, until the details are known, producers are wise to focus on what they can control.

The new pricing structures aim to incentivize lower butterfat volumes and increase protein volumes. It will be a multi-year endeavour, but producers should begin thinking now about potential changes to herd management, breeding strategies and/or feed rations to make the most of the new pricing structure.

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Smarter Calves, Happier Cows: The Role of Social Housing in Comfort and Cognitive Development

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The current requirement for raising calves outdoors is that calves must have physical contact with another calf. For indoor calf housing, effective April 2031, calves that are healthy and thriving must be housed in pairs or groups by four weeks of age. For some producers, this shift may feel like another compliance hurdle. But beyond meeting regulations, social housing offers measurable benefits that can improve calf performance, long-term adaptability, and overall herd comfort.

Understanding the “why” behind the requirement makes the transition easier, and potentially more profitable

Raising calves in social housing, whether in pairs, groups, or even in individual pens with physical contact, fosters their natural potential by allowing them to engage in behaviors like social interaction and play, which are vital for brain development and emotional well-being. Research has shown that calves raised in social housing demonstrate enhanced cognitive abilities, reduced stress, and improved growth and welfare. These calves spend more time feeding, are less fearful, and adapt more easily to new environments compared to their individually housed counterparts.

The Science of Smarter, More Comfortable Calves

Social housing doesn't just support learning; it improves emotional stability and resilience.

When calves can interact with their peers, they mimic the social structures they would experience in nature, which reduces isolation stress. Social play, mutual grooming, and shared feeding times are all behaviors that promote physical and mental comfort. Studies have shown the benefits of social housing through the use of reversal learning testing (Figure 1). With this type of testing calves are trained to associate a specific color with a reward (e.g., a milk bottle). Once they learn this, the reward switches to a different color, and researchers evaluate how long it takes the calves to adapt to this change.

Socially housed calves adapt faster and more easily, showing their ability to cope with change, an essential skill for reducing stress in later life. Socially housed calves approach novel situations with curiosity and calmness, while individually housed calves are more reactive and fearful. This difference reflects the improved comfort levels of socially raised calves when faced with unfamiliar challenges.

The benefit of social housing extends to critical transition periods such as weaning. Studies comparing single and pair housing show that socially raised calves adapt more quickly to finding new feed and water sources, resume intake sooner and achieve greater weight gains during and after weaning. This reduced stress leads to fewer setbacks and better long-term health.

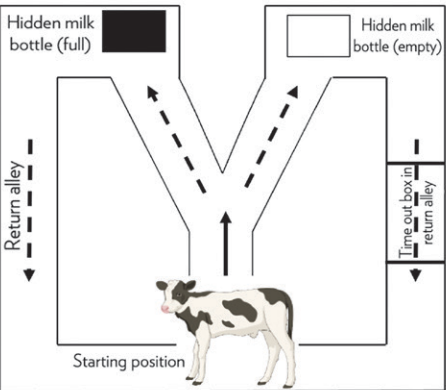
We understand that the life of a dairy cow involves numerous routine management challenges, weaning, changes in feeding environments, social regrouping, new environments, and exposure to technologies such as robotic milking systems or milking parlours. Animals with greater behavioral flexibility may adapt more efficiently to these transitions, benefiting both animal welfare and farm management outcomes.

Comfort Starts Early

By raising calves in social housing, producers support the development of cognitive skills

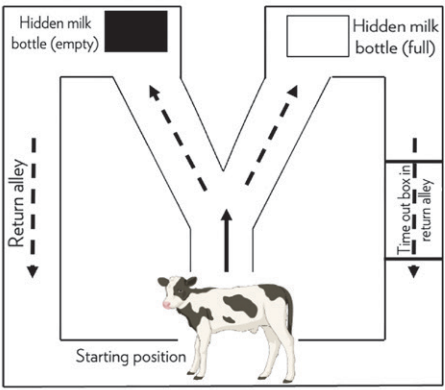
and emotional resilience that carry forward into adulthood. From weaning to milking and beyond, socially raised calves are more adaptable, less stressed, and better prepared to thrive in modern dairy environments.

Even small adjustments, such as pairing calves or implementing small group systems, can have meaningful long-term impact. Social housing is not simply about meeting regulations; it is about raising confident, comfortable animals prepared for productive, resilient lives within your herd.



INITIAL LAYOUT
Calves learn that selecting the black panel results in receiving milk, whereas selecting the white panel results in no milk and a time out box.

The black and white panels are alternated between the two arms of the Y-maze to ensure the animal learns the visual cue rather than location (i.e. left versus right sides of the arm)



REVERSED LAYOUT
The milk reward has now moved to the white panel. Researchers measure how quickly calves adapt to this change.

References available upon request.

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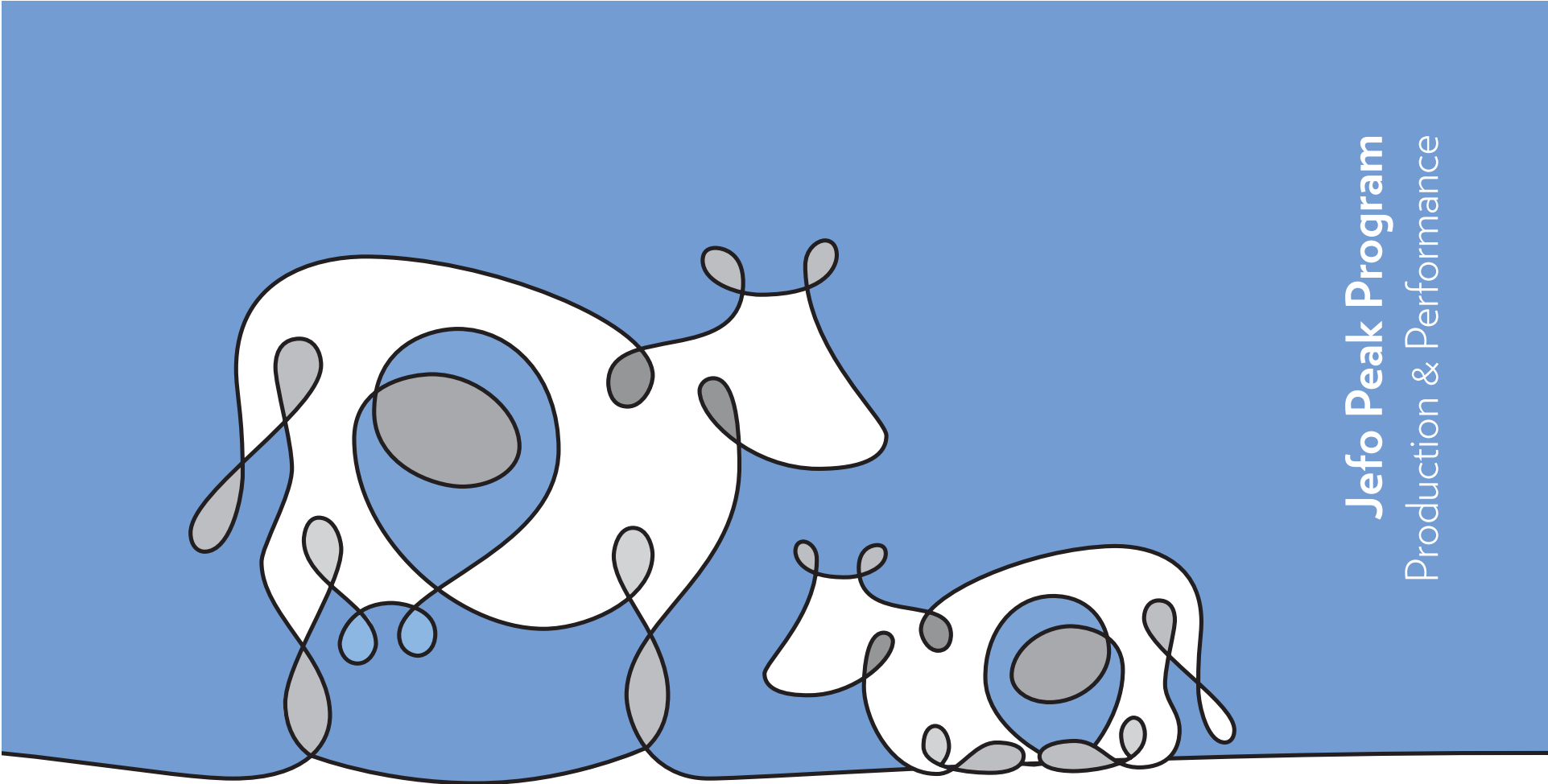
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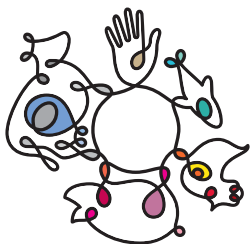
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VetFocus

Cow Comfort: Untapped Resource for Future Production

Dr. Lisa McCrea, DVM,
Agwest Veterinary Group Ltd.

Ask most people in the dairy world which group of cows is the most important, and you'll usually hear "the lactating herd." After all, that's where the milk – and the money – is coming from. But the truth is a little different. The real heroes of future production aren't the cows already milking; they're the dry cows and transition cows quietly setting the stage for the next lactation.

The dry period isn't just a vacation. It's the most influential stage for the cow's upcoming milk performance, her reproductive success, and even her long-term health. Transition cows, from 60 days before calving to roughly 30 days after, are especially sensitive. Their immune systems run lower than the milking herd, leaving them more vulnerable to problems like ketosis, mastitis, metritis and milk fever. Any stress during this time – environmental or social – can push them over the edge.

Why Comfort Matters More Than We Think

There's a simple rule: stressed cows eat less, rest less and perform worse. For transition animals, even small stressors can snowball into major issues. That's why housing conditions, cow flow and pen management deserve just as much attention as nutrition.

Take feed space, for example. You can feed the perfect dry-cow ration, packed with all the right minerals and energy levels, but if cows can't access it without being shoved around, the ration might as well not exist.

Most experts recommend 85 cm to 1 m of bunk space per dry cow to reduce pushing and competition.

Dehydration is a significant issue in cows post-calving, causing a reduction in feed intakes. Freshly calved cows can drink 20L of water or more. Aim for 10cm water trough space per cow, with one drinking point per 20 cows. This will reduce competition and stress, enabling adequate intakes. Water troughs should be clean, with a flow rate to encourage drinking.

Making Calving Pens Work for, Not Against, the Cow

Consistency is everything for cows. Grouping far-off, close-up and fresh cows in adjacent pens reduces the stress of repeated moves. Always move cows in pairs or small groups and never mix first-calf heifers with older cows in transition – the social pressure is simply too high.

There are three common calving-pen systems: just-in-time calving (moving cows with 2 feet showing), short-term stays (two days before calving), and long-term maternity housing (2 weeks or more before). Not surprisingly, research shows that every pen move causes stress. Cows need two to five days to settle into a new social hierarchy, which means every move – even one that seems minor – temporarily reduces feed intake and resting time. That's why keeping moves minimal is so important. Many farms are adopting a "just in time" approach, which



Keeping first-calf heifers separate from older cows during the transition period eliminates social hierarchy, allowing stress-free access to feed, water and essential rest during a vulnerable time.

creates fewer social disruptions. Cows moved into a calving pen only when showing signs of labour, adjust more easily than cows shifted days or weeks ahead of time.

Interestingly, calving pens appear to be more beneficial than standard maternity pens – but only when used correctly. If a cow calves in a pen short-term (eight hours or less), she avoids integrating into a whole new social group, reducing stress dramatically. Long stays, on the other hand, can cause more harm than good.

Cow-Friendly Housing: Space, Bedding and Flow

Comfortable lying space is one of the biggest determinants of cow health. Dry cows should have 10 to 12 square metres of well-bedded space, ideally with bedding around 60 cm deep. Deep, clean bedding keeps cows relaxed, encourages rumination and boosts total feed intake. Cubicles should be wide and long enough – about 1.35 m by 2 m – with at least 75 cm of headspace for lunging. If cows are lying halfway out of cubicles, that's a signal you need more room.

Cow flow also matters. Narrow, single-entry points may seem harmless, but dominant cows often guard them, preventing others from lying down or feeding. Multiple entry and exit points reduce bullying and create calmer pens, especially around calving.

Heat Stress: A Hidden Performance Killer

Heat stress in dry cows is far more damaging than many farmers realise. Even moderate heat can trigger a chain reaction that affects both the dam and her calf long after calving. Heat-stressed dry cows tend to calve earlier, produce calves that are lighter, and show poorer reproductive performance in the following lactation.

But the bigger issue is what happens inside the uterus. When a dry cow is overheated, the fetus experiences the same stress – and this alters how the calf's cells develop. Heat-stressed calves are typically smaller, grow more slowly and show reduced immune function. Studies have shown they produce less milk as adults – sometimes up to 500 kg less in their first lactation.

These effects can extend to granddaughters, because the developing mammary tissue inside a fetal heifer calf is already forming the eggs she will use later in life. When heat stress interrupts these developmental pathways, it sets off epigenetic changes that persist for generations.

In simple terms, when a dry cow overheats, she's not just affecting her own milk production – she's programming her calf's future performance.



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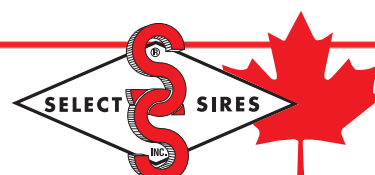


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Above: Third lactation daughters of former NxGEN sires at Destiny Farms LLC, WI. Not related to herd study.



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Wildfire Smoke Studies Spark More Questions

Researchers work to understand acute and long-term impacts on dairy cattle

Kate Ayers, B.Sc. Agr.

As North American wildfire seasons grow longer and more intense, researchers race to learn the impacts that smoke has on dairy cattle health and longevity.

Last year was the second worst wildfire season in Canadian history, according to the federal government. Over 6,000 wildfires affected nearly every province and territory, burning over 8.3 million hectares due to hot and dry conditions. Between April and October 2025, more than 85,000 people were forced to evacuate their homes with many family farms included in that total.

While research has shown the potential impacts of wildfire smoke on humans, research on impacts to cattle is still in its infancy.

Wildfire smoke contains toxic gases and fine particulate matter that have been linked to increased morbidity and mortality in humans and livestock, the Livestock Wildfire Hub says.

"We have been finding that when both cows and calves are exposed to wildfire smoke, there are some effects on health and on the immune system," says University of Idaho associate professor Amy Skibieli. "For example, in calves, we have found that during and even in the weeks following

wildfire smoke exposure, they have higher incidences of lung consolidation."

Lung consolidation means the tiny air sacs of the lungs (alveoli) responsible for gas exchange (CO₂-O₂), are filled with fluid, resulting in much lower capacity for gas exchange. This condition is commonly associated with pneumonia. During and after wildfire smoke exposure, calves also often have higher rates of eye discharge and coughing along with indications of inflammation.

"We have looked at the expression of different genes that are involved in inflammatory processes, and we see changes across the board in all of those indicative of an inflammatory response both within the lungs and systemically across the whole animal in both cows and calves with exposure to wildfire smoke," Skibieli says.

Not surprising, studies showed that cows lost milk production during and after wildfire smoke exposure.

"The cows had a drop in milk production every day that they were exposed, and that was on the order of about an average three kilograms per day drop in milk production per cow," Skibieli says. "We capped it at seven days. ... So, it's possible that persistent milk production drop continued after those seven days."

The results of multiple studies also indicate that it's not only massive long-lasting wildfire smoke events that impact milk yields – even moderate levels of particulate matter in wildfire smoke over a short duration can induce milk production changes.

Examining calves' lungs comprised part of the research done to understand the impacts of wildfire smoke exposure by the Livestock and Wildfire Research Group (Oregon State University and U. of Idaho).



Livestock Wildfire Hub photos

To help producers prepare for climate change challenges, researchers at the University of Idaho and Oregon State University are looking to offer solutions to reduce wildfire disruption to dairy production systems. A new advancement in this research uses chambers to experimentally manipulate exposure to smoke through woodchip combustion. This equipment reduces the variability and unpredictability inherent of wildfires.

"We just completed our first study using those chambers two months ago," Skibieli says. "That's really going to be the gold standard because it allows us to have more control over the exposure. It also allows us to control temperature as well so that we can dissociate the effects of smoke versus temperature on animal health."

Through their experience, the researchers have developed three pillars that producers can follow to mitigate the impacts of wildfire smoke exposure in dairy cattle:

1. Breathe less

- Reduce activity and exercise to reduce the amount of smoke inhaled and potentially prevent foreign particles from deeply invading the respiratory tract.
- Consider postponing stressful events, including weaning and transporting until air quality improves.

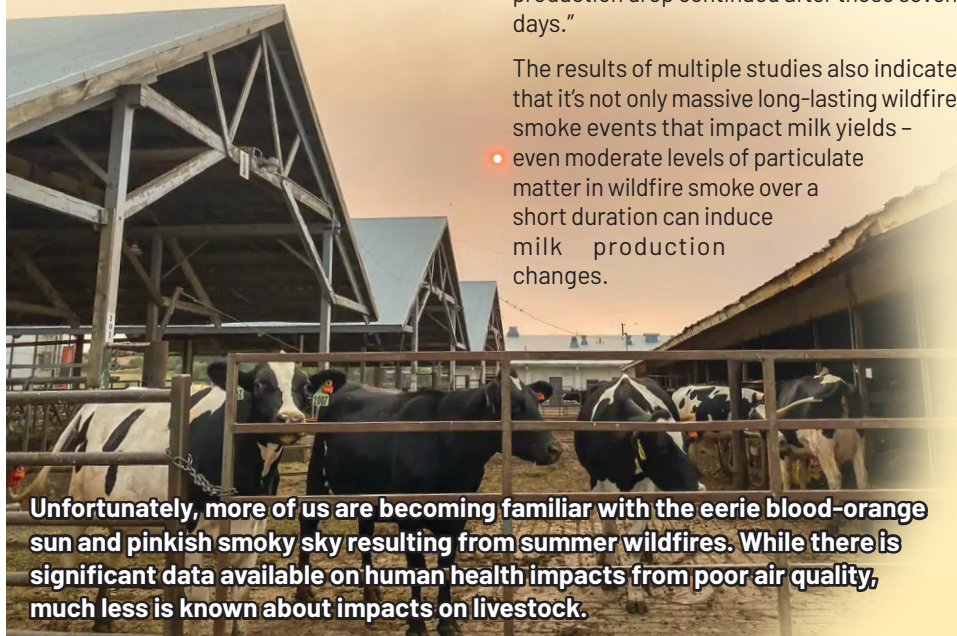
2. Basic needs

- Provide clean and fresh water as a hydrated respiratory tract is less prone to irritation.
- Provide cooling measures like shade, fans or misters to help prevent the combined onset of heat stress.

3. Block stress

- Reduce and block dust from feed or facilities.
- Minimize any other stressors and allow animals to recover after smoke exposure.

In addition, producers should generally be prepared for emergencies like natural disasters. The Government of Canada has a local air quality health index for many Canadian cities and Esri Canada's Climate Change Hub has a wildfire dashboard that provides live wildfire data feeds, including smoke forecasts. National and regional resources are also available to help producers with emergency preparedness, including Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, BC Dairy, the Government of Alberta and Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture emergency planning officers.



Unfortunately, more of us are becoming familiar with the eerie blood-orange sun and pinkish smoky sky resulting from summer wildfires. While there is significant data available on human health impacts from poor air quality, much less is known about impacts on livestock.



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RECOGNIZING THE BEST IN DAIRY HERD MANAGEMENT



TOP RANKED WESTERN HERDS BY CATEGORY IN 2025*

ROBOT

West River Farm Ltd

Grant & Gene Sache and Families
Rosedale, BC

PARLOUR

New Rockport Colony

Simon Waldner
New Dayton, AB

PIPELINE

Isaac Dairy Ltd

Brent Isaac & Reg Isaac
Kleefeld, MB

ORGANIC

Driessen Dairy #3

Tony Driessen
Abbotsford, BC

Lactanet Canada provides many valuable services to dairy farmers to help them understand their progress, identify trends, and set goals for high-impact results. One of the most popular tools is the **Herd Performance Index (HPI)**, a point-system metric that takes into account a multitude of factors from milk value to udder health.

On February 24, 2026, the top HPI were unveiled at Lactanet Canada's 2025 Best Managed Dairy Herds celebration. The event brought together dairy producers, industry partners, and stakeholders from across Canada. Congratulations to all dairy farms who made the list in 2025!

 Watch the video recording of Lactanet Canada's 2025 Best Managed Herds presentation.

 See Lactanet's list of the top Best Managed Herds, as well as outstanding herd performance by province and other categories, such as milking system and organic production.

 View Lactanet's top 1%, featuring over 50 of the very best managed dairy herds in Canada!

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Congratulations to West River Farm: Ranking 13th Best Managed Herd In Canada for 2025



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Rosedale, BC

Owners: Grant & Gene Sache and Families

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HPI CRITERIA

Lactanet's Herd Performance Index is based on the following 6 criteria:



MILK VALUE



UDDER HEALTH



AGE AT 1ST CALVING



LONGEVITY



HERD EFFICIENCY



CALVING INTERVAL

TOP 5 WESTERN HERDS FOR HPI IN 2025*

Rank	Farm Name	Herd Owner	City	HPI Score	# of Cows	Milking System
BRITISH COLUMBIA						
1	West River Farm Ltd	Grant & Gene Sache and Families	Rosedale	944	199	Robot
2	Fraser Edge	Sid Stoker	Deroche	914	176	Robot
3	Rosegate Dairy Farms Ltd	Ted De Jong	Abbotsford	891	304	Robot
4	Gifford Acres Farm Ltd	Curtis & Katelyn Delange	Abbotsford	887	115	Robot
5	Elmido Farms	John & Debbie Aarts	Sardis	883	747	Parlour
ALBERTA						
1	New Rockport Colony	Simon Waldner	New Dayton	903	128	Parlour
2	Poly-C Farms	Cor & Cathy Haagsma	Ponoka	885	512	Parlour
3	Fairville Farming Co. Ltd	Andrew Wipf	Bassano	878	155	Robot
4	Mars Dairy	Gert & Sonja Schrijver	Stettler	873	313	Parlour
5	Arco Farms	Jeff Bysterveld	Barrhead	870	118	Parlour
SASKATCHEWAN						
1	Sierra Colony Farms Ltd	Sierra Colony Farms Ltd	Shaunavon	861	156	Robot
2	Marfay Farms Ltd	Merlis & Mark Wiebe	Osler	846	769	Parlour
3	Alley Holsteins	Albert Leyenhorst	Dalmeny	833	307	Parlour
4	Fox Valley Farming Co Ltd	Don Mandel	Fox Valley	825	95	Parlour
5	Rayner Dairy - U Of Sask	Gord Hamm - Dairy Mgr.	Saskatoon	825	132	Robot
MANITOBA						
1	Isaac Dairy Ltd	Brent Isaac & Reg Isaac	Kleefeld	932	92	Pipeline
2	Fehr Farm	Jakob, Ana & Andreas Fehr	La Broquerie	893	326	Robot
3	Readore Farms	Rheal Simon	Notre Dame	876	126	Pipeline
4	Labass Holsteins Ltd	Jan & Tracy Bassa	La Broquerie	869	542	Parlour
5	Liesveld Holsteins Inc / Elbi	Peter & Astrid Dejong	La Broquerie	864	1240	Robot

* Source: Ranking is based on 2025 Herd Performance Index from Lactanet Canada.

Antares Alliance AGM Packed with Information

Producer Directed Organization on Solid Ground

Tars Cheema

Year-end results for WestGen were decidedly positive as reported at their 2025 AGM held in Abbotsford on March 17. And while there was much more good news to share over the course of a busy agenda, there was a small dent to the otherwise smooth year.

While the main office escaped flood damage in early December from overland flooding from the US (which impacted farms across Sumas Prairie), the barn, ARC centre, house and drive shed were not so lucky. With an early warning and diligent staff, all cattle were moved safely from the Advanced Reproductive Centre, the lower floor of office building was cleared of all content and sand bagging was conducted around buildings as a preventative measure to minimize potential impact.

In his President’s Report, Richard Boonstoppel characterized 2025 as a year they “moved decisively from a period of stabilization, into one defined by disciplined execution, operational maturity and strategic confidence.” With strong performance in semen sales, services and investments, he said it underscores the strength of the core businesses.

Chris Parry – CEO Report

Performance across the Antares Alliance was strong, with revenues up 7.8% (exceeding \$24.5M) and with net income of \$1.8M representing an increase of 39.5% over 2024. Chris’ theme of ‘together we are stronger’ played out in slide after slide showing positive metrics year over year – up 2% in semen doses, up 17% in total revenues and up 99% in net income. “This was the first year sexed semen became our largest category representing 38% of all doses,” Chris stated. Beef semen followed at 34% and conventional at 28%, and he expects this trend to hold through 2026.

Overall, the dairy and beef sectors were strong in 2025, when considering the general state of good crops, stable prices, excellent beef/cull prices and the

projection of increased milk quota over the next two years.

Non-semen products also grew with Heatime (SenseHub) sales showing 185% revenue increase!

Genetic technologies and planning tools are increasingly relied upon in the field as farms embrace more long-term, intentional breeding strategies. While their genomic testing platform ‘Elevate’ continues to grow in use, so too does daily management tech. SenseHub – the animal monitoring/management technology, showed record growth in 2025.

“We are very proud to invest directly in our sector and organizations,” Chris declared as he showed a slide naming some 100 organizations/events across the west which benefitted from WestGen’s financial support. WestGen had been the lead sponsor of Western Canadian Classic for decades before reaching the new 10-year agreement early in 2025, resulting in doubling of financial support and a new name: WestGen Canadian Classic.

Hosting a group from the UK this past summer on farms in AB and BC, WestGen hopes to stimulate more interest in western Canadian genetics, Chris explained. Another step in this direction, WestGen is hosting the Best in the West Dairy Showcase during the National Holstein Convention, to bring attention to genetic opportunities.

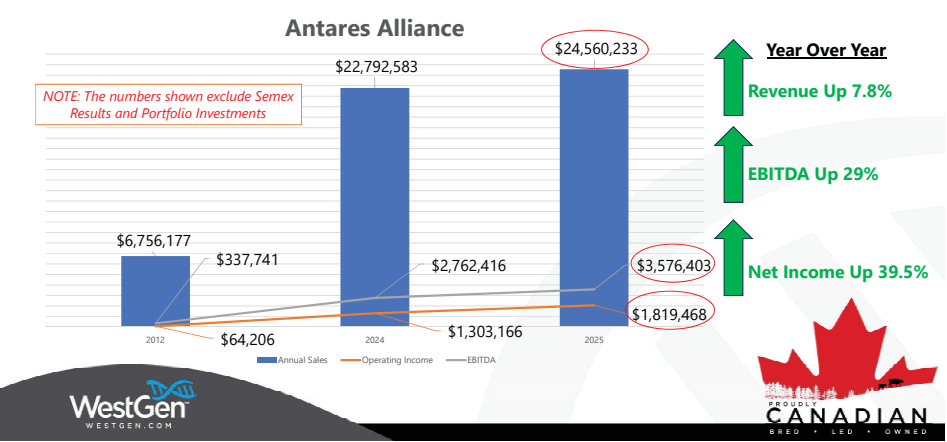
Financials

One can’t argue that focus and diligence across the Alliance group culminated in strong performance with their 2025 Net Operating Income landing just shy of \$162,000. Taking into account Semex earnings and investment returns, they finished up 2025 with nearly \$1.78M total revenue over expenses and a year-end financial position of \$45.73M.

WEF Report

Director Tony DeGroot highlighted that the Fund has returned a stunning \$2.89M

THE ANTARES ALLIANCE GROUP PERFORMANCE



through industry initiatives since being established with \$5M in 2004. Agriculture in western Canada has benefitted through the support of relevant research, valuable youth programs and extension initiatives. Over \$160,000 was allocated in 2025, including \$45,000 to WestGen Canadian Classic – the start of a new 10-year landmark arrangement – and \$20,000 to the National Holstein Convention, being held in BC in April 2026.

Semex Report

Despite the challenges in some international markets, Semex CEO Matt McCready reported strong results in 2025 from “executing a strong plan.” It was certainly an active year – acquiring business in Brazil and Semex Holland (now a subsidiary) helping to achieve 8% revenue growth. Semex subsidiaries now represent 70% of their global revenue.

With the number of doses flat for 10 years, 2025’s total of 13.5M was an increase of over 740,000 doses from the previous year. It was also notable that Brazil exceeded the USA as the largest market by doses for the first time.

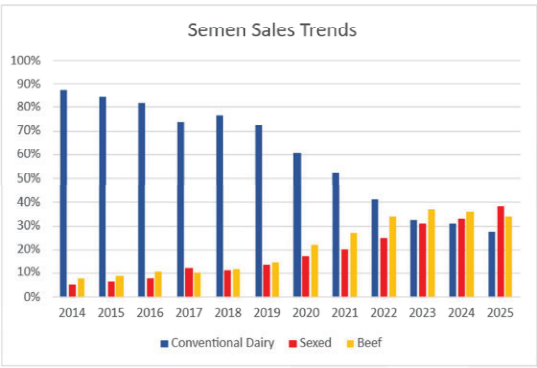
2018 was the last ‘normal’ year selling semen in China – another large market. Supplying semen through their US

locations became blocked in February 2025. With the recent easing of political/trade tensions, Canada is back on the ‘approved’ list of trading partners, but Semex can’t predict how long permit approvals will take before they can resume sending semen in.

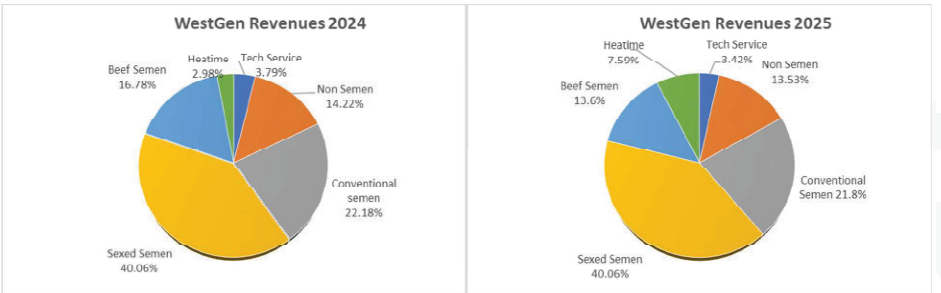
Matt showed that approximately 23% of overall revenue comes from non-semen products. In particular, Elevate genomic testing and embryos are significant contributors. Making IVF embryos with Boviteq technology is growing, with four labs in Brazil, another coming soon in Australia and licensees in Japan, NLD and Spain.

The recent advancements of gene editing in pigs were discussed in relation to potential in dairy. While the technology is available and applicable, there must be an economic reason, Matt confirmed. Consumer hesitancy remains a risk. Matt suggested the first approach is to look at the traditional genetic selection path and compare the speed of that to gene editing. While cloning is becoming more acceptable in some countries, it’s mostly done at the embryo stage – not using live calves. Today’s goal would be to accelerate the rate of genetic advancement, making more high-end genetics available sooner.

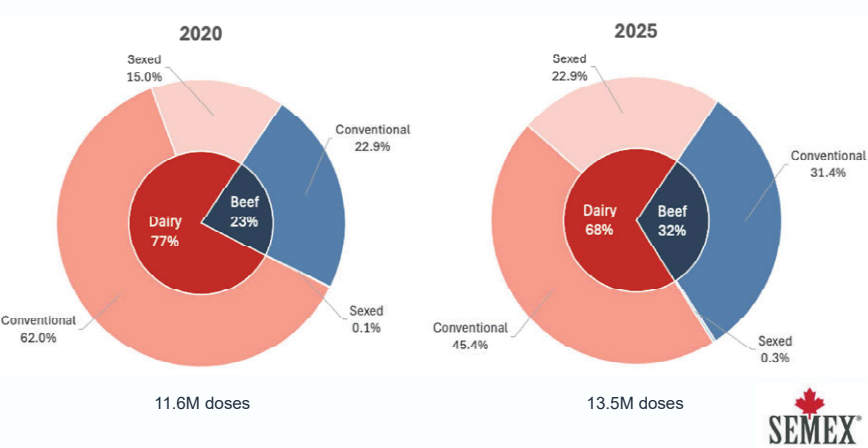
PRODUCT MIX TREND



WestGen Revenues



Wholesale Retail Sales Mix – Doses



Top 10 Countries - Doses

December 2025 year-to-date	
Country	2025 Act/R��el Doses
Brazil/Br��sil	3,167,185
USA��.U.	2,512,900
Canada	1,206,316
Argentina/Argentine	1,102,324
Italy/Italie	483,228
Ukraine/Ukraine	381,927
Mexico/Mexique	364,578
U.-K./Royaume-Uni	333,603
Germany/Allemagne	310,774
China/Chine	298,851



In Other News...

Krista Christiuk (Marketing Manager) delivered the Cryogen Annual Report, explaining that liquid nitrogen operations in Canada remain strong, and despite challenges on the US side, there is continued growth. The “evolving regulatory environment” demands focus on regulatory compliance, in addition to the other priorities of operational efficiency, leadership and strategic growth.

Stephanie Palmer, head of Vivaria Global in the UK, explained how the technology company within Antares Alliance provides data management and enables data linkage with unique expertise. “We link systems – we are an enabling company, not a disruptor,” she explained.

Using the example of developing the UK’s first equine traceability system linking many players and data systems, they demonstrated proficiency in large database management and cross-stakeholder compatibility, developing the leading global platform of its type. They continue to pursue a single global equine breeding database – particularly important with 25-30 year horse lifespans and movement, often between countries with differing health requirements.

Vivaria developed the digital platform for Toronto’s Royal Agricultural Winter Fair equine ID and biosecurity verification system. Vivaria is currently developing a new sales platform for WestGen with improved efficiency and simplified administration.

Lactanet’s CEO, Neil Petreny was on hand to present a brief update on their activities. The robotic trend remains

strong with 40% of western Canada’s DHI herds milking robotically. Lactanet has been adapting to technologies for many years already and has developed eDHI to allow collection of on-farm data generated by milking equipment sensors.

More Canadian-born registered Holstein heifers are being genomically tested every year. Ayrshire herds are using more beef on dairy proportionally than Holstein or Jersey. With the growing demand for milk protein, Lactanet is changing the LPI weighting for fat:protein from 60:40 to 40:60, as they respond to the shifting economic emphasis in milk component pricing. New management tools include the Transition Management Index, FeedComp and monthly Genetic Evaluations. Neil assured producers that Lactanet continues to adapt and provide valuable services and management tools to benefit their business profitability.

Four interesting speakers filled the afternoon agenda.

Well-known in western Canada, Dr. Kee Jim, veterinarian and beef industry/feedlot expert spoke about the beef-on-dairy phenomenon and what the future may hold.

Agwest Vet partner Dr. Lisa McCrea explained the latest findings on transition management and the corresponding effects on reproductive results ultimately impacting farm profitability.

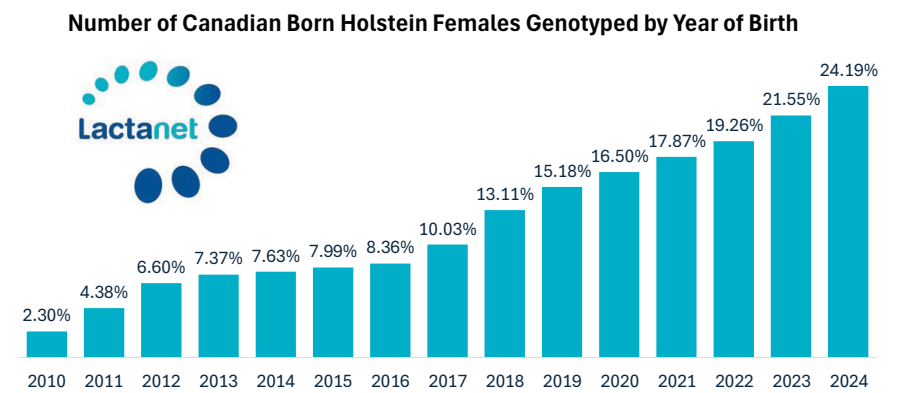
Farm business consultant with MNP, Steve Saccomano provided an interesting journey into the financial impacts/opportunities provided by the shift in component pricing from fat to protein. His reassuring message was a reminder that ‘change’ has been a constant in dairy

Robot Customer Growth...

- **+4% growth** last year
- **1,151 Herds (21%)**
- **150,000 cows (26%)**
- **130 average cows/herd**
- **37% of Western herds**
- **51% of Manitoba herds**

Province	# Farms	% Farms	% Cows
BC	54	31%	26%
AB	92	34%	31%
SK	28	37%	24%
MB	63	51%	50%
ON	427	22%	28%
QC	421	17%	22%
NB	25	31%	27%
NS	23	22%	22%
PEI	15	20%	24%
NFLD	3	38%	42%
Canada	1,151	21%	26%

Trends: Genomic Testing



forever and profitable adaptation to the latest pricing change is possible with the support of genetics and feed companies.

Dairy nutrition advisor, Iain Haig from Ritchie-Smith presented a fascinating scientific look into the cow-side of the fat/protein opportunity. Focusing on feeding

the rumen bugs to optimize the cow’s protein while ensuring her environment encourages maximal DMI through comfort, heat abatement and cow-friendly stocking rates all contribute to the best protein output. “Look for opportunities to change what’s in your control,” he concluded.

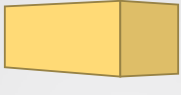
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Dairy Farms are the Most Targeted in Agriculture

Cybersecurity is now part of overall farm safety

Kate Ayers, B.Sc. Agr.

Farmers manage a myriad of risks every day, including weather conditions, market fluctuations and livestock health, to name a few. But producers may underestimate the growing risk of cyber attacks.

Dairy producers in particular are increasingly adopting technological advancements to improve efficiency and animal health outcomes. While beneficial in many ways, this connectedness can leave operations susceptible to hackers if systems are left unprotected.

Cyber criminals are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their tactics. For example, they use artificial intelligence to develop targeted and realistic attacks with deepfake emails or voice phishing.

“Dairy is the most targeted industry that we have seen in agriculture,” says Ali Dehghantanha, a University of Guelph professor and Canada Research Chair in Cybersecurity and Threat Intelligence. Dairy farms are particularly at risk due to the wide adoption of technology and larger operation sizes, Dehghantanha says.

While younger respondents under 35 years of age report the lowest incidence of attacks, the highest rates are among larger farms earning more than \$5 million annually, where 32 per cent have been targeted, according to a 2025 survey by MNP. These results suggest that larger farms with greater digital footprints and financial assets are attractive to cyber criminals, MNP says. The study also found that mixed farms with crops and livestock reported slightly higher rates of attacks compared to those specializing in one commodity. This incidence could be due to the broader range of operational technologies on these farms, including livestock monitoring systems and crop management tools, MNP notes.

Hackers often use a 'long con' approach to exploit victims, Dehghantanha says. At first, they create a backdoor into the system to secretly communicate with a machine, like a laptop for example. Then they exfiltrate or copy information they deem valuable for extortion, sale on the dark web or further criminal activity. This data could include credit card numbers or personal and business information. Then, when the hackers have all the information they want or the victim has become privy to the attack, they launch malware or ransomware.



CHECKLIST FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

Cyber security and your farming business

Search this [Checklist](#) title online and download your own copy of this very useful guide produced by Agriculture and Agri Food Canada. Cyber protection starts with understanding the threats and risks. Learn how to keep your farm's digital doors closed to hackers.

“They drop the ransomware when there's zero value left on the machine,” Dehghantanha says. “Their main goal is to try causing the client to panic to make the payments for the recovery. ... If the client sees a ransomware attack, it means the attackers have been there for a very long time.”

In 2024, Dehghantanha worked with a producer who had been hacked and discovered that the criminals had been on the network for six years, monitoring and collecting information. That same year, the first ransomware-related livestock death was reported in Switzerland. Hackers targeted a 70-cow dairy farm and asked for US\$11,000 in ransom. The farmer tried to communicate with the hacker before eventually bringing in professional services. But it was too late – the hackers permanently encrypted the calf management system and so the animals' health information was inaccessible and a calf died.

Fortunately, producers can take steps to mitigate the risks of a cyber attack. Farmers should protect their connections by keeping personal and business activities separate, says Paeter Hoogerbrug of HigherBridge Network and IT Services in British Columbia's Fraser Valley. For example, use separate email accounts for personal and farm business and separate wireless networks (Wi-Fi) for the home, barn and connected farm equipment.

“Many cyber risks on farms come from simple issues: everything running on one network, default passwords left unchanged or remote access left open longer than necessary. When systems aren't separated, a problem in one area can affect everything else,” Hoogerbrug warns.

“Practical cyber risk reduction focuses on separation, control and visibility. Critical farm systems should be isolated from office and guest networks. Access should be limited to what's actually needed and networks should be monitored so issues are identified early,” advises Hoogerbrug.

While it may cost some money, Hoogerbrug and Dehghantanha suggest farmers consider hiring professionals to conduct security checks and updates. In addition, producers should have a response plan to know who they will call, such as a Managed Security Service Provider (MSSP), and what to do in the event of a cyber attack. Cyber insurance is also available for farms.

Much like locking car doors, producers need to make it harder for criminals to attack their systems, so that the hackers will move on to an easier target. Also, hackers are opportunistic and exploit human error. If a producer or farm team member is unsure about an invoice, text message or email, make sure to call and speak to a trusted individual before authorizing payments and avoid sending sensitive information through email. “With no discrimination, [hackers] are going to attack, and they are going to reap the benefits. The main thing that the farmers should do is they should not be the easiest targets,” Dehghantanha says. “If [farmers] implement basics of cybersecurity, they could easily protect themselves against many of these attackers.”

To start, producers can visit the Cyber Science Lab's website at cybersciencelab.com/ag-security/ to access a self-assessment form and tabletop exercise framework to identify operation vulnerabilities and strengthen cybersecurity readiness or call in an IT professional.



News from Lakeland College

Updates from Lakeland's SMF Dairy Team

As a second-year Dairy student at Lakeland College, I've had the opportunity to see firsthand what makes Alberta's dairy industry so strong. From working with cows every day to learning the science behind nutrition, reproduction, and herd health, my education has shown me just how much knowledge and dedication goes into producing high-quality milk.

Being part of the Student Managed Farm has enforced the importance of animal care, teamwork, and continual learning on farm. Each day brings new challenges lessons to learn from that prepare each of us for the future of the dairy industry, whether it's returning to a family farm or building a career within the sector.

Lately, our team has been working on different projects within our unit. We recently had the hoof trimmer come to the DLC to do our routine trim and assess any problems within the herd relating to hoof

health. Our team will soon be preparing for our final presentations and delivering them in April on our performance, challenges and outcomes, which is a key part of the learning experience.

On February 25th, the farm welcomed its first donated-embryo calf, a heifer named Saffire. She is one of five heifers participating in our “Adopt-A-Calf” partnership with the local elementary school. Through regular bi-weekly updates, students follow the growth and development of the calves they have chosen, fostering agricultural learning and strengthening the connection between young learners and the dairy industry.

Alberta's dairy industry depends on passionate, well-trained individuals, and as a student, I am proud to be working toward becoming one of them. With the support from organizations such as Alberta Milk and the opportunities provided through education, the future of dairy in Alberta is something I am extremely excited it be a part of.

We safely welcomed our first donated-embryo calf – her name is Saffire!

Our group enjoyed some extra “team-bonding” at bowling night.



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Protein is the Rising Star, but Milk Fat Still Matters

Elizabeth Russell, MSc

Elizabeth is a PhD candidate in the Animal Welfare Program at the University of British Columbia. Her research focuses on dairy calf performance around the time of weaning on commercial dairy farms.



Experts at the 2026 Western Canadian Dairy Seminar discussed rising protein demands, cow nutrition strategies and the continued importance of milk fat.



Vitalus’ Dr. Chen explains where the complexity of milk goes, far beyond just fat and protein.

The Complexity of Milk

Dr. Xiaoyan Chen from Vitalus Nutrition Inc. began by walking the audience through the composition of milk and how its components are used in a range of products. Dr. Chen highlighted permeate (i.e., minerals and lactose) and its growing applications beyond traditional dairy products. Minerals, for example, are used in sport and electrolyte drinks, and lactose serves as a bulking agent in pharmaceuticals and is the primary energy source in infant formula.

She also pointed to galactooligosaccharides (GOS), a non-digestible carbohydrate derived from lactose and currently found in fermented and specialized dairy products worldwide. GOS shows promise for expanded use in products such as supplements and bakery items to deliver prebiotic effects. Among non-infant formula applications, supplements remain the leading trend for GOS.

However, the fastest-growing milk component in the marketplace is protein. Consumer demand for protein has risen steadily in recent years, creating new opportunities for protein ingredients across food products. Chen cited the evolution of the popular meal replacement shake Ensure as one example, noting that new formulations contain higher protein levels aimed at supporting muscle growth and maintenance among mainstream consumers.

Another driver is the rise of GLP-1 medications, often referred to as the “Ozempic Effect.” Chen noted protein consumption has increased by 53% alongside the growth in GLP-1 use.

With expanding demand and new applications, Chen concluded that milk’s components present ongoing opportunities for innovation. As she summarized, “milk is a portfolio for innovation.”

What about the cows?

What does growing demand for milk protein mean at the cow level? Over the years the dairy industry has seen a decrease in the number of farms, but an increase in milk production. Farms are becoming more efficient. Part of that efficiency comes from increasingly precise nutrition.

Dr. Phil Cardoso of the University of Illinois discussed how diet formulation for cows and heifers can influence milk protein concentration yield. He reminded attendees that cows enter a negative energy balance after freshening, which is

often accompanied by a negative protein balance. During this early postpartum period, cows may mobilize skeletal muscle protein to support milk production.

“The way we feed our cows may be limited in the amount of protein they are able to place into milk protein or into the mammary gland,” Cardoso said.

While diets vary by farm and region, he emphasized focusing beyond crude protein (CP) and suggested paying closer attention to metabolizable protein (MP), particularly rumen-protected amino acids, methionine and lysine.

Research shows that supplementing methionine and lysine in close-up cow diets can reduce muscle and back fat loss after calving and may increase energy-corrected milk in the first four weeks of lactation. Additional studies also found that feeding rumen-protected lysine before calving increased milk fat, protein, and casein production during early lactation.

Together, these findings suggest that managing amino acids in the diet before calving may improve both milk yield and composition.

While protein demand is growing, other milk components, like milk fat, remain critically important. Dr. Rachel Gervais from the Université Laval highlighted the complexity of milk fat production and the challenges of converting dietary lipids into milk fat.

“Milk fat is the most variable component that you have in milk. It’s a very unique and rich source of lipids,” she said, noting that what is happening on the farm can influence the properties of dairy products at the processing level.

What About Consumers?

Remember the 2021 “Buttergate” controversy? Consumers raised concerns about butter becoming harder to spread. The issue sparked discussion about how cows’ diets may influence milk fat composition and, ultimately butter characteristics.

Dr. Gervais cited research examining different dietary lipid supplements including palmitic acid, Ca salts of palm fatty acids, soybean oil, and hydrogenated and hydrolyzed tallow. While fat yield and percentage were highest in palmitic acid and lowest in soybean oil with the others in between, once made into butter, the resistance to spreadability (also known as

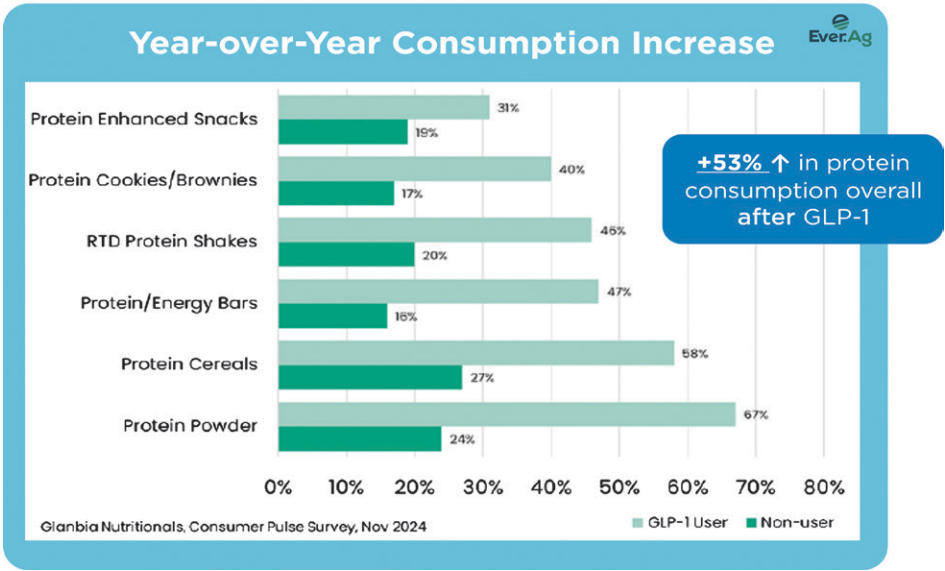
butter firmness) was the highest in palmitic acid fed cows both at 20°C and 4°C.

While this suggests that dietary lipids fed can influence fatty acids in milk, Gervais noted that butter temperature might play a larger role in spreadability than the fatty acid profile alone.

Looking ahead, she emphasized the need for more research into butter plasticity (the ability of butter to be shaped without

breaking), particularly in applications such as laminated pastries like croissants.

All three speakers shared how decisions on farms continue to shape the value and performance of dairy products. From a growing demand for protein to the complexity of milk fat, managing milk components through cow nutrition and herd management remains a key opportunity for producers as markets and consumer expectations continue to evolve.



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Young Stock Corner Mainland Young Milk Producers

Feed and Breed Night Noah Driessen, Chair

On Wednesday, February 18, MYMP hosted our first Feed and Breed night at the WestGen building with two great speakers, Carter Lamer from DairySmart Nutrition and Paul Meyer from WestGen, with a turnout that had us scrambling for more chairs! It was great to see so many young farmers come out and want to learn.

Carter was our first speaker, he covered such topics as the new pricing change, cost of feeding animals, and the best way to feed your animals to get the most money out of your milk.

Paul Meyer was next; he started with a brief talk about his background in genetics and transitioned into genomic testing, and steps that you can take in the future to breed your animals for things like a milk price change.

I would like to give a huge thanks to our two speakers that volunteered their time to come out and take part in our event.



Ritchie-Smith Tour Alex Schwichtenberg, Vice-Chair

On March 6, members of Mainland Young Milk Producers had the opportunity to tour the facilities at Ritchie-Smith Feeds in Abbotsford. The group was guided through the operation by several of the company's nutritionists, along with the plant and lab managers, who provided detailed insight into the feed production process.

The tour included the newly constructed warehouse used to supply bagged feed to local vendors, the mixing plant, pellet press, and the automated truck filling and weighing area.

Throughout the tour, it was clear that Ritchie-Smith has invested heavily in automation across their systems. These technologies incorporate multiple safeguards that help reduce the risk of production errors and maintain consistency in feed quality.

Members were particularly impressed by the scale of the operation, the cleanliness of the facility, and the highly professional working environment.

A sincere thank you to the entire team at Ritchie-Smith Feeds for hosting MYMP and providing such an informative and well-organized tour.

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You Can't Hold a Good Man Down

Few in western Canada's dairy community will recognize the name of John Skinner, and yet John had an unequivocal influence on genetic improvement in herds across the west, through his many responsibilities in genetic programs at BCAI Centre/WestGen.

But John left an indelible mark on his colleagues too, with his dedication, perseverance, consistent pleasantness and sense of humour.

We never knew him before the accident in Israel, where he was traveling and working on a kibbutz after completing his animal sciences degree at UBC. Struck by a falling machine, John was left a quadriplegic - but what he lost in physical capabilities and life choices, he made up for with unrelenting determination and deeply rooted grace.

John never complained and worked harder than one could understand - we respected his intellect, enjoyed his company and admired his character. John passed away in September 2025.

- Tars Cheema



**Sonya Klemm, retired Lab Manager,
BCAI/WestGen**

BCAI Centre's General Manager Gordon Souter was thrilled when John agreed to come work at the 'bull farm' in 1988. Barbara Souter recalls that "Gord felt so fortunate to hire someone of John's caliber and qualifications." John started making an impact on the Young Sire proving program almost immediately. His talent for tracking data, solving problems, and answering questions quickly became apparent. The programs that he wrote touched every part of the company, from the proving program to inventory, to semen processing. Keep in mind, because of his condition, all this programming was done one keystroke at a time, with a pencil in an adaptive holder. Yet he would patiently rework the programs until they were perfected.

Brad Howard, retired WestGen General Manager offered, "He pioneered BCAI/WestGen through the jungle of databases, operating systems, communication, network protocols **and** the daily issues of working with salesmen, farmers, and the realities of data collection in barn conditions."

John's contributions to BCAI/WestGen cannot be overstated and are too often not fully appreciated. He had that magic combination of passion for genetics, competitiveness and talent for computing. If you used any BCAI/WestGen program during his tenure, you benefited from his talent and hard work.

Brian Shaw shared, "The first thing that comes to mind was John's tremendous support for those of us out in the field. Quick, knowledgeable and patient replies to issues with the G-Mate program or the handheld computers. Those barn office or farm kitchen table calls were resolved quickly and saved both my and BCAI/WestGen's reputations!"

Tyson Flaman was one of the first prairie sales reps in 1998. "I really loved that John would always make time for a visit when we came to the office. I think I scared him a few times about what I was doing in the database of the

G-Mate program, but I think he had enough safeguards in there that he knew I wouldn't screw it up too much."

It's easy to talk about John's many achievements in the workplace. All his co-workers respected John's talents and would happily work with him on any project.

Perhaps it was because John was so capable, never complained and never asked for any concessions due to his condition, that most of us forgot how much more effort it took John to complete his tasks, than it did us.

Ryan Usenik notes, "John by nature was a very independent person. He had to learn to ask people to assist him with the smallest tasks we all take for granted, like picking up his pencil, opening a door without a lever knob or getting him a cup of tea."

In addition to being so stellar at his work, John was a great colleague. He had many interests and would happily be part of the typical workplace banter. Using his data skills, he even won the hockey pool one year. Even though self-proclaimed hockey aficionados made fun of his picks, he quietly waited until the end of season and picked up first prize.

A long-time colleague, Judy Hazelwood states, "He loved to joke around and always knew how to lighten the mood. Whenever things got a little too serious, you'd hear him say, 'Oh come on, Judy,' usually with a smile."

Lori Browne recalls John's patience and generosity. "John never showed anger or frustration in the workplace. I will always remember how pleasant he was. He made the workplace a better place."

John's quiet way and patience made his office a popular stop, even if you didn't have a computer-related issue. He provided a kind ear and was a great sounding board.

Andy Ness writes, "Whenever I think of John Skinner, a smile comes to my face. I believe this is because whenever I met him concerning work, or anything else, he would smile. Maybe I was fortunate, maybe it was him and I sharing jokes or quips, I don't know. But I learned

very quickly to admire this man, so much for how he handled himself with everyone, especially after what he had been through."

Sherry Toews, colleague and friend recalls, "I remember visiting him at his home after he had been retired for a while and had his thriving backyard garden. He happily showed me the adapted clippers he had so he could prune things for himself. He was always positive and never do I remember a complaint."

Though not intentional, John educated many of us about chair users. Because of John, I now look at access to buildings with a more inclusive view. Because of John, I have more patience for those with mobility issues, and more respect for the extra effort it takes to do the simplest tasks. I now have such a profound respect for anyone who faces challenges that able-bodied folks regularly take for granted.

Paul Meyer, WestGen Genetic Solutions Manager states, "John never let his physical challenges provide advantages. If anything, he tried harder to create workarounds so he could get the job done. John quietly - too quietly - retired from WestGen after the company's headquarters moved from Milner to Abbotsford in 2018. The drive would have been longer; the company and the job had changed as well. It is my regret that we never properly celebrated his long career at WestGen. He contributed a great deal - more than most people know."

It is so ironic that John would have been quite uncomfortable with this tribute - he was never one for the spotlight. He preferred to be in the background, dedicating his enthusiasm to programs, strategies, research and competitive approaches to our genetics work. But his influence on herds and colleagues alike was worthy of a Hall of Famer. His elegant work and his gracious character will never be forgotten by those who had the immense privilege of working with him.

As Brad Howard said, "**Leaders do**, others talk." And that was John - always a **doer**. 



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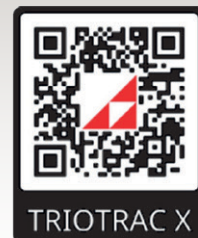
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FARM SAFETY For Everybody's Benefit

Does Your Farm Have a Health and Safety Plan?

Everyone plays a role in workplace safety

Kate Ayers, B.Sc. Agr.

Dairy farming is rewarding and fulfilling work that requires long hours, attention to detail and the management of many moving parts. Livestock care is of utmost importance for dairy farmers' livelihoods, but ultimately people are the biggest asset of any operation. It is critical that farmers, family members and staff have the knowledge and resources to keep themselves safe on the job.

"Often in agriculture, we have a very, very heavy focus on, you know, we need to look after the animals, we need to care for the animals. And yes, that is important," says AgSafe Alberta executive director Jody Wacowich. "But if we lose one of those people who's helping us do the work, that has such a bigger impact on what happens with the operation and even the sustainability of an operation."

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week in March and the hustle and bustle of spring serve as good reminders that even routine tasks can quickly become hazardous. Producers and their teams should take the time now, and every month, to review tasks and mitigate risks.

Dairy farmers face inherent risks working with cattle. Even the tamest and gentlest of cows can move in unpredictable ways. The most common mistakes made by animal caretakers include rough handling, excessive prodding and overcrowding, according to AgSafe BC. Indeed, the most common on-farm accidents in BC from 2020 to 2024 were from animal, equipment or structure contacts and falls on the same level. Other common injuries included strains, fractures and contusions.

Livestock have minds of their own, but appropriate livestock handling facilities and pen exit strategies can help keep workers safe when around cattle, says AgSafe

BC superintendent of field operations Chad Stewart. Communication, teamwork and patience are also important when working with animals.

"Good communication between management, supervisors and the workers [ensures] everybody understands the flow of things, how things are supposed to work, how cows are supposed to be handled," Stewart says.

In addition to animal handling, potential workplace

“ The most common on-farm accidents in BC from 2020 to 2024 were from animal, equipment or structure contacts and falls on the same level.

hazards include pesticides, electricity, machinery, confined spaces, working alone and working at heights. Fortunately, producers can take steps to prevent injuries and accidents on their farms.

"Employers in the dairy industry can help make their workplaces healthier and safer by conducting risk assessments with input from workers, implementing controls, monitoring the effectiveness of those controls and adapting accordingly," WorkSafe BC says.

Workers should be trained on every single task to learn the safest approach and ideally, high-risk tasks have written safe work procedures that provide workers with step-by-step guides to complete the job safely.

Producers who are interested in starting new safety



plans or reviewing existing ones can check out AgSafe Alberta's FARMERS CARE program. It is a free, simple and practical tool focused on agricultural health and safety hazards. The course has four pillars: hazard identification, communication, workplace inspections and emergency planning.

In addition, provincial AgSafe representatives can help producers work through the process of building a farm safety plan.

"We kind of try to let the producer dictate where they want to start. There's no 100 per cent right way to go about it," Stewart says of growing an on-farm safety culture.

Some on-farm changes are dictated by WorkSafe orders, some producers come in at ground zero and some have a framework in mind.

"There's a multitude of different ways to start a program," Stewart says. What's most important, is that you **get started – before anything serious happens.**



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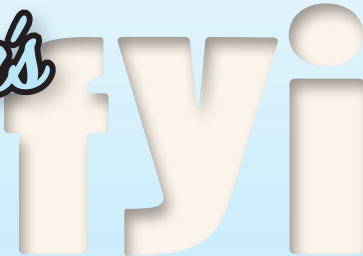


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Bonnie Cooper's



Contact Bonnie to sign up for her full monthly news email and Coming Events listing at:
becooper2010@gmail.com

- Holstein Canada announced the judges for the 2026 Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto, ON. The 2026 National Holstein Show judge will be Nathan Thomas of Triple-T Holsteins & Jerseys, North Lewisburg, Ohio, and the 2026 National Red & White Holstein Show judge will be Joel Phoenix of Dappleview Holsteins, Cannington, Ont. The Red & White Show will take place on Thursday, November 12th and the Holstein Show will take place on Thursday and Friday, November 12th and 13th.
- Christina Franc has been appointed the new CEO of 4-H Canada. Franc has over 15 years of experience leading national non-profit organizations and most recently was the national director of the Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign with United Way Centraide Canada. She was also the executive director of the Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions.
- Val-Bisson Doorman (Ex-90-ST) has surpassed 2000 Excellent classified daughters in Canada. Doorman was bred by Ferme Val-Bisson Inc., Saint-Polycarpe, QC, and was in service at Semex, Guelph, ON.
- Holstein Canada announced on February 10th the results of its 2026 National Director elections in the two electoral districts in which a vote was needed. In Western Ontario, Gerrit Wensink of Hoenhorst Holsteins, Woodstock, ON, was elected as the new National Director defeating Brad Eggink and Roy Westlake in the race. In Atlantic Canada, Luke McLellan of Lellavan Holsteins, Noel

Shore, NS, was declared the new National Director after defeating the incumbent Director, Karen Versloot of New Brunswick. The new Directors will take office at the time of the Holstein Canada Annual Meeting in British Columbia in April.

• On February 4th, Holstein Canada announced the modernization of its national production recognition awards, along with introducing 22 cows who have made 36 new Canadian Champion records. Beginning in 2026, updated production metrics will support the Superior Production and Canadian Champion awards, creating a more inclusive and meaningful framework that reflects today's production systems and farm profitability. Additional award programs including Master Breeder, Star Brood, Lifetime Production and Classification will transition starting in 2027. See Holstein Canada's website or Facebook for more information on the changes and a list of the 36 new champion records.

• Semex and Lactanet, the Guelph, ON, based companies, won the Trailblazer of Dairy Sustainability Practices Award for its Methane Efficiency Index at the Global Dairy Innovation Conference in Dubai in January. Released in 2023, the Methane Index provides dairies with a clear-cut genetic solution and faster path to a lower-methane herd. This conference attracted over 500 industry leaders, innovators and policymakers from 15 countries who are focused on dairy innovation across the value chain from farm to consumer in the Middle East and North Africa.

Make a Difference



Thank you!

Local officials and
Make a Difference
Sale volunteers at the
luncheon March 12.

To all those who bid online and supported this year's Canadian Foodgrains Bank Make a Difference Fundraising Auction!

Initial totals of the online auction and donations received to date have us close to our total last year of \$500k. This does not include cattle donations until the end of March, or any donations made direct through the CFGB Website. We are both thrilled and humbled by the deep generosity of our donors and the enthusiastic support of our many bidders!

Thanks also to our volunteers and all those who are Making a Difference through helping with this sale.

Funds raised support Canadian Foodgrains Bank's Nature+ program, which helps tens of thousands of farmers across East Africa learn regenerative agriculture practices.

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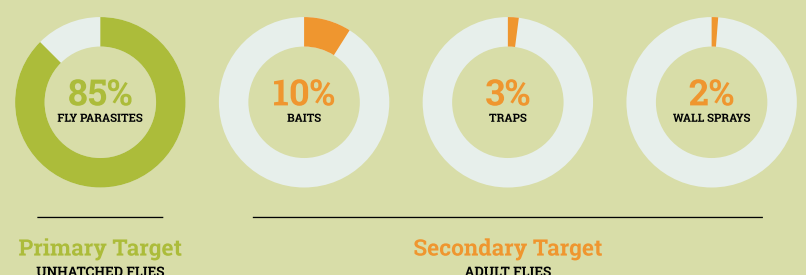
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Comfortable Cows, Productive Days: Return to Work

Understanding Cow Comfort

Christina Doelling has a master's degree in dairy cattle welfare from UBC and now works as the Community Engagement Coordinator at BC Dairy.

What does a cow need to be comfortable? Furthermore, how can we tell if she is not? If you are a producer, reading a cow's behaviour is second nature. Still, some signs of discomfort are incredibly subtle and, with standards of care continually evolving, as reflected in the updated Dairy Cattle Code of Practice, keeping up with the science behind improving cow comfort can be a challenge.

That is why BC Dairy brought three leading experts on the topic to Abbotsford, BC on February 10th for the five-hour symposium: Cow Comfort: Barns, Bedding, and Beyond. Dr. Trevor DeVries, Dr. Lisa McCrea, and Dr. Nigel Cook delivered practical, research-backed knowledge ranging from stocking density to stall design. With more than 80 producers in attendance, the day sparked thoughtful discussion and a shared goal: promoting more comfortable, healthier, high-producing cows.

What Do Cows Do All Day?

Dr. Trevor DeVries was the first speaker of the day, presenting: *What cows tell us with their time: managing space, comfort, and performance in conventional and robotic dairies*. While the main topic was stocking density and how it affects cow comfort, DeVries emphasized one key point: to understand the effects of, and effectively manage, stocking density, we must first understand how cows use their time.

Cows do not always multi-task and operate on a limited time budget. During a 24-hour period, a cow must find time for ruminating, lying down, eating, drinking, being milked, and socializing. Because cows do not live in isolation, they face time constraints based on the resources available to them and their pen mates. When resources are limited, something in the cow's time budget must give.

Cows should lie down for ~12 hours per day during lactation and 13+ hours during the dry period. If stall space is limited in an overstocked barn, lying time drops because cows synchronize their behaviour. But does lying down for less time really affect their health?

Lying Time and Lameness

DeVries explained that lying time is about more than just rest – it directly affects overall health. If a cow is not lying down, she is standing, often on hard and potentially wet surfaces. The first concern that comes to mind with prolonged standing is lameness. The longer cows stand on hard and wet flooring, the higher their risk of developing both infectious and non-infectious hoof lesions and lameness. That lameness is not only painful but also leads to reductions in cow performance. The message is clear: higher stocking density increases standing time and the likelihood of lameness.

Later in the day, Dr. Nigel Cook emphasized that once a cow becomes lame, it often becomes a recurring problem. In a study conducted by Cook and colleagues, prior lameness significantly increased the risk of future cases, with 80 percent of lameness attributed to a previous episode. Maintaining appropriate stocking density, along with comfortable flooring, is therefore a key prevention strategy.



Rumination, Feeding, and Milk Production

Lameness is not the only issue seen when cows cannot lie down for enough of their time budget. When a cow is resting, she is also likely ruminating. Rumination takes up roughly nine hours of a cow's daily time budget and is closely tied to feeding behaviour. DeVries and colleagues found that when cows spend less time lying down, they also spend less time ruminating. Reduced rumination, particularly while resting, leads to less time eating and lower dry matter intake. Conversely, more rumination time is associated with greater milk production, particularly in early lactation cows.

Ensuring cows can meet their behavioural time budget therefore starts with appropriate stocking density. The updated Code of Practice recommends a target stocking density of 1.0 cows per stall and currently states that stocking must not exceed 1.2 cows per stall in free stall systems. Further restrictions in this Code are coming – as of 2027 stocking density must not normally exceed 1.1 cow per stall, and as of 2031 stocking density must not normally exceed 1.0 cow per stall.

However, even if stall space is available, cows will avoid lying down if that stall is uncomfortable. Deep, comfortable bedding is essential. DeVries noted that more bedding also requires more maintenance; if they are not maintained well, then poor stall hygiene may increase the risk of mastitis.

Ultimately, a lot of cow comfort comes down to how well a barn allows cows to meet their daily time budget. Adequate stall space, comfortable bedding, and manageable stocking density help ensure cows can lie down, ruminate, and eat without unnecessary competition. But facility design is only part of the picture. To know whether these conditions

are truly working, producers must look to the animals themselves.

Listening to Your Cows

After lunch, Dr. Lisa McCrea focused on a simple but important message: your cows are already telling you what is working in your barn and what is not. By observing behaviour – how cows use stalls, how long they lie down, and how they interact with their environment – producers can identify opportunities to improve comfort.

McCrea introduced the "Cow Signals" framework, which highlights six key needs of a cow: light, air, rest, space, feed, and water. Within this framework, cows should be able to stand and lie down comfortably without contacting stall hardware and should have unobstructed lunge space. Signs such as hock injuries, swollen pins,



or issues with head rails can indicate where changes may be needed. At the same time, other observations can confirm what farms are doing well, for example, seeing few cows standing idly in the alleyway.

McCrea encouraged producers to take the opportunity when they return to the barn to observe their cows closely and consider what the animals may be telling them about their environment.

Heat Stress and Comfort

Dr. Nigel Cook concluded the day by discussing several additional cow comfort factors, including stall depth and heat stress. While stall design and stocking density remain critical for improving lying time, increasing dry matter intake and milk production, and reducing lameness, Cook emphasized that heat stress can also significantly affect cow comfort and productivity.

Heat stress can have long-term impacts, particularly during late gestation, when it can influence calf development through the rearing period and even into the next lactation. Even in well-designed sand stalls, cows may lose up to three hours of lying time per day during hot conditions. Respiration rate is one way to monitor heat stress. Cows breathing more than 60 breaths per minute are likely heat stressed, and ideally fewer than 25 percent of cows in a group should exceed that threshold. Cooling strategies such as feed line soakers, misting systems, and soaking nozzles in holding areas can help reduce heat load, though they require regular maintenance to function effectively. Proper air exchange and airflow at the cow level are essential, with fans directing air downward toward cows and tools like anemometers helping measure air movement, which should be 1-2 m/s at resting cow level in the stalls.

Practical Steps for Improving Cow Comfort

Improving cow comfort does not always require major renovations or dramatic management changes. In many cases, smaller adjustments can make a meaningful difference in how cows use their space and how comfortable they are in the barn.

Producers can start by maintaining an appropriate stocking density, with a target of 1.0 cows per stall in free stall systems. Stall comfort is equally important – leveling sand and providing deep, clean bedding encourages cows to lie down. Adequate lunge space should be maintained so cows can lie down and rise naturally, and effective cooling systems can help reduce heat stress during warmer months.

Just as importantly, producers should continue observing their animals. Listening to what cows are telling us about their environment remains one of the most valuable tools for improving comfort.

Ultimately, creating an environment where cows can comfortably rest, ruminate, and eat is one of the most effective ways to support both animal welfare and productivity.



Have Questions for BC Dairy? Reach out to us

Those three little words that everyone wants to hear... Return to Work

Chad Stewart is AgSafe’s Superintendent of Field Operations. The role of AgSafe representatives is to provide workplace safety education and advice to help producers achieve long-term safety goals.

Forecasts from WorkSafeBC suggest that the average base rate of 1.55%, which has been held stable for the past nine years, may be changing soon. The total cost rate sits at 1.83%, and the shortfall has been covered by a surplus from their investments. Their projections have the total cost rate increasing to 1.96% and the average base rate increasing to 1.67% by 2030. The impact will be felt by all employers in BC.

In 2021, WorkSafeBC’s funding level sat at 155%, with surplus being given back to employers in the form of reduced base rates. This is expected to drop to their minimum required funding level of 130% in the coming years. As this occurs, they will be at a reduced capacity to buffer the spread between the average base rate and total cost rate that employers experience today.

There are several reasons for these projections – unstable markets are contributing to lower investment returns, and claims costs are continuing to rise. From 2020 to 2024, there has been a 14.2% increase in the average duration of claims. This means that, on average, each claim has increased in duration by 9.7 days. This time loss means that each claim is more expensive, resulting in an increase in the total cost rate. As the total cost rate increases, so will the average base rate.

To summarize – with the funding level decreasing to a projected 130% and average claims costs increasing, WorkSafeBC will be in the position of having to increase base rates to cover the additional costs.

So, that’s the bad news. Is there any good news? Yup! You’re not completely without options. While you can’t control what’s happening with the WorkSafeBC investment portfolio, you can do something as an employer and as an industry. If, as an industry, there is an overall push toward decreasing claims costs, this will be reflected in the overall base rate. But what will most likely give you the most immediate results is managing your experience rating. Your experience rating is your company’s overall claims performance. Ultimately, if you have many claims that are never managed with a return-to-work (RTW) plan, you could potentially see your experience rating increase to upwards of 100%. Conversely, those employers with a robust health and safety program and RTW plan could see their experience rating decrease by 50%.

How does this look on farm?

1. All workers get trained on how a return-to-work (RTW) plan will be implemented on your farm.
2. If a worker gets injured, the worker notifies the first aid attendant and their supervisor.
3. The first aid attendant or supervisor provides the injured worker with an RTW package prior to going to the hospital. **This is key** – if you don’t get the package into the hands of the worker right away, you will start accumulating time loss.
4. The worker has the package reviewed by the health care provider.

5. The employer reviews the RTW package (that has been reviewed by the health care provider) with the worker and develops suitable alternate duties.
6. The employer writes an alternate duties work offer for the worker and provides it to them to review and sign. **Pro tip:** Just because a doctor recommends two weeks off does not mean the worker must take two weeks off. If you have suitable work that can be done and will not aggravate the injury, you can have a successful RTW plan in place. Make sure you inform WorkSafeBC if this situation arises.
7. The employer provides the RTW plan and alternate duties work offer to the WorkSafeBC claims manager assigned to the claim.
8. The employer checks in with the worker to ensure the RTW plan is working and that the injury is not being aggravated.
9. The employer keeps WorkSafeBC informed—let them know what is happening.

your claims manager if you are running into the issue of a worker who does not want to engage in the process.

4. **It’s too much paperwork** – I don’t have a pro tip here. Every aspect of dairy farming is becoming increasingly administrative. But at least you have AgSafe to help with this process!
5. **What if they get hurt again?** – An effective RTW plan that incorporates the health care provider’s recommendations and follow-up supervision should mitigate the potential of a worker getting further injured while on an RTW plan.
6. **The worker says they aren’t ready to come back to work** – It has been proven countless times that the sooner an injured worker comes back to work, the faster they recover and return to pre-injury duties.

Margin compression is a reality for every dairy operation. Where money can be saved, it should be.

RETURN TO WORK PLAN ON THE FARM	
STEP	DESCRIPTION
1. TRAINING	All workers are trained on how the RTW plan will be implemented on the farm.
2. INJURY REPORTING	The worker notifies the first aid attendant and their supervisor.
3. PROVIDE RTW PACKAGE	Give injured worker the RTW package before they go to the hospital.
4. HEALTH CARE REVIEW	Worker has the package reviewed by the health care provider.
5. DEVELOP DUTIES	Employer reviews the RTW package and develops suitable alternate duties.
6. WORK OFFER	Write alternate duties work offer for the worker to review and sign.
7. SUBMIT TO WSBC	Send the RTW plan and work offer to WorkSafeBC.
8. CHECK IN	Follow up with the worker to ensure the RTW plan is successful.
9. UPDATE WSBC	Keep WorkSafeBC informed on progress.

While WorkSafeBC is historically not somewhere you expect to see cost savings, it doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t take whatever you can. An effective RTW plan will help with your experience rating and will help buffer the impact of increasing base rates that are expected soon.

Reach out to your local AgSafe representative for help in getting your RTW

Common concerns and how to manage these concerns:

1. **I don’t have any light-duty tasks that an injured worker can do** – Start your RTW planning now and not when you have an injured worker you are trying to get back to work. It’s easier to come up with tasks when you don’t have the pressure of having to do so right away. Get a “honey-do” list or wish list together in advance.
2. **I don’t have time for that; just come back to work when you’re better** – This is when you will see your experience rating start to increase. Out of sight does not mean that you won’t feel the financial impact of this type of thought process when it comes time to pay your WorkSafeBC premiums.
3. **The worker isn’t cooperating; they don’t want to do modified duties** – Bill 41, which came into effect January 1, 2024, mandates that employers and employees both engage with the RTW process. Inform

plan in place – hopefully something you won’t need, but that will pay off if you do.





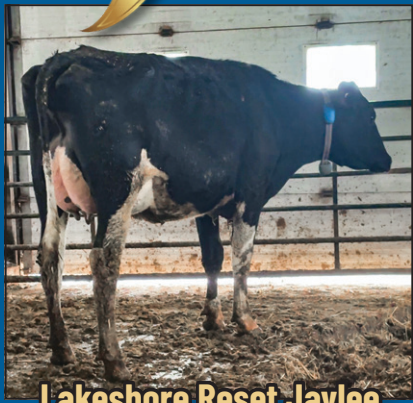
Manitoba Holstein Branch News

Carla Plett, MB Branch Secretary

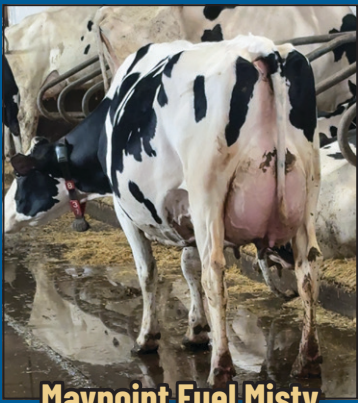
Congratulations to the winners of the 2026 Breeders Cup Competition!

Our judges, Mark Sweetnam (Sweetridge Farms) and Jon Fornwald (Lampada Holsteins & Jerseys), sorted through 160 entries from 25 different farms across the province. Thank you to all the participants, organizers, and sponsors for making this event a success again this year!

MANITOBA HOLSTEINS 2026 BREEDERS CUP



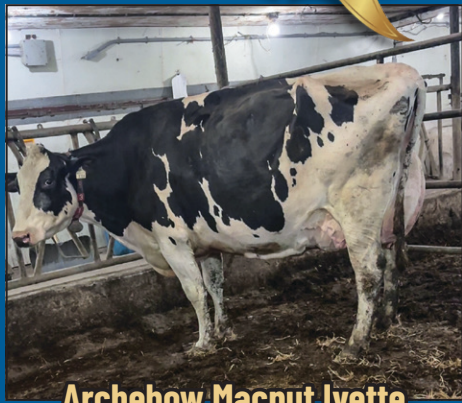
Lakeshore Reset Jaylee



Maypoint Fuel Misty



Lakeshore Awestruck Torrence



Archebow Macnut Ivette



Sunnyfarm Tobefamous Rivella



Sunnyfarm Honey I Do



Branet Chrome Jelly Bean

1st Lactation

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1. LAKESHORE RESET JAYLEE - Lakeshore Holsteins
2. FRIECREST LUGNUT GLAMOUR - Friecrest Holsteins
3. MISSIONTRAIL HOTHAND ESME - Current Holsteins

2nd Lactation

(SPONSORED BY NUTRISOURCE)

1. MAYPOINT FUEL MISTY - Mason Farms
2. BEAUROC SOLARPOWER BIJOU - Beauroc Dairy
3. FRIECREST FUEL SYBIL - Friecrest Holsteins

3rd Lactation

(SPONSORED BY SELECT SIRES)

1. LAKESHORE AWESTRUCK TORRENCE - Lakeshore Holsteins
2. RAYA ALLIGATOR APPLE - Raya Holsteins
3. GRASS RIVER SIDEKICK DEMKO - Grass River Colony

4+ Lactation

(SPONSORED BY MANITOBA HOLSTEINS)

1. ARCHEBO MACNUT IVETTE - Twinairview Holsteins
2. AGGIES EARL CARLEY - Hueging Dairies
3. LAKESHORE SONIC RAQUEL - Lakeshore Holsteins

Colour Breeds - 1st Lactation

(SPONSORED BY SOUTHEAST VET CLINIC)

1. SUNNYFARM TOBEFAMOUS RIVELLA - Sunny Dairy Farm
2. CLANMAN KAMAKAZI JILLIAN - Clanman Jerseys
3. GROUNDZERO LIGHTNING CRACK - Tri Lea Farm

Colour Breeds - 2nd Lactation

(SPONSORED BY RIPPLEVIEW HOOF CARE)

1. SUNNYFARM HONEY I DO - Sunny Dairy Farm
2. CLANMAN FERDINAND ASHCROFT - Clanman Jerseys
3. AVONLEA KID ROCK VENTI - Tri Lea Farm

Colour Breeds - 3+ Lactation

(SPONSORED BY TROUW NUTRITION)

1. BRANET CHROME JELLYBEAN - Sunny Dairy Farm
2. CRIKSID APEX CYMBAL - Crikside Farms
3. DELICHTE JOEL PEGGY - Delichte Farm

Coloured Breeds - Champion

(SPONSORED BY AGRIBUTION)

- Grand - SUNNYFARM TOBEFAMOUS RIVELLA
Reserve - SUNNYFARM HONEY I DO
Honourable Mention - CLANMAN FERDINAND ASHCROFT

Holstein - Champion

(SPONSORED BY WESTGEN)

- Grand - ARCHEBO MACNUT IVETTE
Reserve - MAYPOINT FUEL MISTY
Honourable Mention - LAKESHORE RESET JAYLEE

Premier Breeder

(SPONSORED BY MANITOBA HOLSTEINS)

1. LAKESHORE HOLSTEINS (28pts)
2. FRIECREST HOLSTEINS (23pts)
3. RAYA HOLSTEINS (21pts)
4. TWINAIRVIEW HOLSTEINS (19pts)
5. BEAUROC DAIRY (18pts)

EASTERN MANITOBA HOLSTEIN CLUB UPDATE



The EMHC hosted its Annual Dairy Seminar on February 11th, bringing together producers and industry partners for a day of learning and networking. Guest speaker Jamie Sullivan (Rippleview Hoof Care) presented on hoof health, sharing practical insights on lameness prevention, treatment, and management strategies. The seminar wrapped up with a producer panel discussion where local dairy farmers shared their own foot health practices and experiences on their farms.

The club also hosted a curling night on February 21st at the Otterburne Curling Club, where members enjoyed a fun evening of curling and socializing.



The EMHC would like to thank all our sponsors for their continued support, which helps make events like these possible. We also appreciate everyone who attended and contributed to another successful set of club activities.

Lactanet Open Industry Session

Updates for Health & Wellness Index, Monthly Genetic Evaluations

Lactanet hosted its first Open Industry Session (OIS) of 2026 on February 25, featuring several informative topics. Cindy Jatton (Director of Genetics and Traceability) provided updates from the Genetic Evaluation Board (GEB) meeting held last October, along with an overview of what would be discussed during this OIS, based on motions that were passed during the meeting.

Monthly Female Genetic Evaluations

Last October, Lactanet introduced monthly updates for female genetic evaluations (~.25 M cows). This applied to females who reached official status or had significant changes to their LPI. Starting in January 2026, Lactanet will now update ALL active females (~1.25 M cows) during the first week of each month, in an effort maintain the integrity of the monthly top lists. Further updates for females and males who have new pedigree information or genotypes will take place in the second and later weeks.

Genetic Tools: Within-Herd R-value

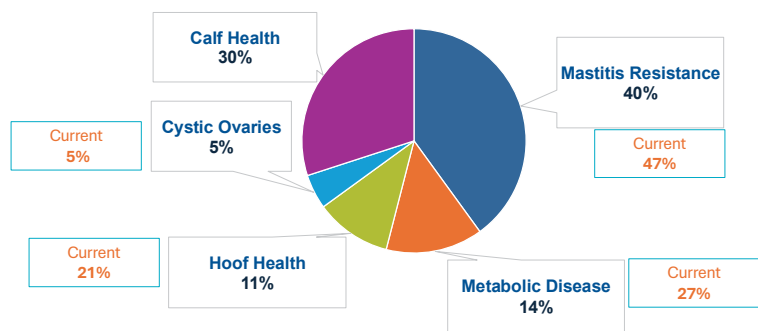
Research Geneticist, Dr. Lihong Chen shared insights on genetic diversity tools

using within-herd R-values. "Inbreeding has become more pronounced recently, especially in the Holstein breed," he shared, noting the importance of understanding what inbreeding is and why it is accelerating. "Inbreeding causes loss of genetic diversity, which reduces long-term genetic gain." Although Lactanet has available tools to show R-values for whole populations of a breed, Dr. Chen is working on developing a genomic-based within-herd R-value tool that will allow breeders to capture lists of bulls that are less related to the females in their specific herds, helping to manage future progeny inbreeding more effectively.

Updates to Health & Wellness (HWI) Subindex of LPI

First published in April 2025, Calf Health was split 50:50 for diarrhea and respiratory problems. After further consultation and studying the economic impact of each disease, breeders will see a shift to 60:40 for diarrhea/respiratory problems during the April genetic evaluation. Calf Health will also be officially introduced to the subindex for

New Holstein HWI Weights



The addition of Calf Health (30%) changes weights for other evaluated traits in the Health & Wellness subindex.

Health and Wellness, at a weight of 30%, since it has a significant economic impact, exceeded only by Mastitis Resistance in the health traits currently evaluated.

While a 30% weight may seem high, Dr. Allison Flemming (Manager, Genetic Evaluation Services) expects relatively small changes to the Top 200 LPI bulls. "There is only an 8% impact in total LPI for the top bulls, which is less than one standard deviation," she said, noting that the results will be similar for young bull lists, with only minor re-ranking.

Also coming in April, Metabolic Disease Resistance will be added to HWI for Brown Swiss, Guernsey, Milking Shorthorn and Canadienne breeds, which had previously

been made up only of one trait: Somatic Cell Count. Metabolic Resistance will be based 100% on Subclinical Ketosis (BHB) evaluations for these breeds, recognizing that high BHB correlates with poorer fertility, higher disease risk, and greater likelihood of metabolic disorders.

Genetic Trends for Fat and Protein

With increasing consumer and processor demands for protein, resulting in pricing changes for producers, the GEB has recommended that Lactanet work with breed associations on the weighting of Protein in the LPI Production subindex. Lactanet will continue to study the market trends, mindful that the goal is to align indexes with the direction the industry is going.



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Dairy Women Come Together Over the Challenging Side of Family Farming

A full house of support at the 5th WCR Dairywomen’s Summit

Ronda Payne

There was a palpable hum of excitement and togetherness March 5 as dairy women from two months old to 70-plus years came together in Abbotsford for the fifth annual West Coast Robotics Dairywomen’s Summit. The event was well-timed with International Women’s Day on March 8 and the UN’s International Year of the Woman Farmer.

Despite the camaraderie, sharing and warmth in the room, the topics weren’t always light. Elaine Froese, a farm family transition expert, took the stage to bring attention to how farms can do a better job of supporting farming families and women as they move from eager young worker to semi-involved mentor, to full-blown retiree.

Event MC, Morgan Sangster, producer services manager with BC Dairy, kept the engagement going by making use of the time between speakers to get to know audience members. Suzanne Cuthbert of Ladysmith was a first-time event attendee.

“We have just switched houses with our

son,” Cuthbert says. “He’s full time on our dairy farm and we’re now living across the road.”

Her experience of moving houses with shifting roles and responsibilities was echoed throughout the evening. Froese was peppered with questions from women wondering how they could ensure their income during both their working years and retirement. The undercurrent was that a woman’s say in farm transitions, finances and planning isn’t always equal to that of a man’s.

Froese challenged the thought processes that put the farm first, ahead of people.

“What I want to encourage us as women tonight is to think about what is the story we’re telling ourselves in our families, in our businesses, as to how we can change the mindset or the culture that’s around us that’s not working,” she says.

The event has come a long way from its first year in the West Coast Robotics board room with 40 women eager to learn and share, says Mitch McCormick, sales manager with the company.

“It started out as an opportunity to celebrate women in the industry,” he says. Over the years, we’ve seen a lot more younger women coming. Some women bringing their daughters.”

The youngest in attendance was two-month-old Janelle with mom, Brooke Post, of Woodside Farms in Agassiz, where they milk 300 cows.



Elaine Froese – farmer and farm transition expert – offered considerable guidance related to practical farm business issues – with a woman’s perspective.

Hannah Woodhouse shared her journey from dairy farm to Ph.D. in dairy science to DFC employee – showing there are other paths for dairywomen beyond the farm too.

Ronda Payne photos



The gathering has grown every year, as women find common ground and support among those who understand their farming paradigms.

“I’ve come all five years and every year it just gets better,” says Post. “To connect with other women that are in the industry in some way.”

Referring to intergenerational farm transitions, McCormick says, “As we look across the industry, it’s something we see some struggle with. Knowledge is power. Some do it really well. By giving this information to women... it’s an opportunity for them to take it back to the farm and put it on the table.”

Froese says many women know they need to act to ensure everyone on the farm is taken care of in a transition, but they don’t do it.

“The wills and estates thing is really super important because it’s the best gift you can give your family,” she says.

She stresses that young women, especially, need to have their names on assets. Because young women will have changing roles on the farm, often more than men. They will be farmers, caregivers, parents, cooks, advocates and more.

Hannah Woodhouse grew up on a dairy farm in Ontario. Now, she’s at the start of her career with Dairy Farmers of Canada as manager of sustainable production. Prior to landing at DFC, first as a contractor, then permanently, she earned her Ph.D. as a leading expert in milk free fatty acids at the University of Guelph, resulting in six peer-reviewed articles published in scientific publications. Her seventh published piece

is a case-study article giving farmers a practical look at the possible causes of free fatty acids from cow to bulk tank.

“Milk is so complex,” she says. “A bunch of milk quality issues can occur because of free fatty acids.”

She notes that free fatty acids above 1.2 mmol per 100 grams of fat is too high.

“I connect with people around the world. I feel like I’m making a real difference,” Woodhouse says. “Connections are critical and it’s so great to be able to attend events like this, talk to people, get to know more about what people are doing, where their path has led them.”

While Woodhouse has stayed in Canada to advance her career, another speaker at the event, Sue Hagenson, senior dairy consultant with inBarn, has spent a career traveling the world learning, sharing and educating about the dairy industry. From her homeland of New Zealand to Uruguay to China to Canada and points in between, she has walked a lot of farms to improve operations.

“A lot of stuff I had to learn very quickly,” she says. “I was teaching them how to dairy farm.”

Angelina Rodenburg, wife of West Coast Robotics owner and general manager, Brian Rodenburg, gave the event’s opening prayer after saying she hoped the evening would leave guests “recharged for another dairy season and ready to go again.”

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Holstein International www.holsteininternational.com

Hanover-Hill Triple Threat-Red: Enduring “Influencer” in Red Holstein Breeding

This story brings us to a true Red Holstein legend. It might then be 53 years ago that Hanover-Hill Triple Threat-Red was born, but his influence, also today, is still current via various lines. Influential sires in Red Holstein breeding like Rubels-Red, Gywer-RC, and Lawn Boy-Red all carry Triple Threat genes. And the world famous Apple-Red would never have been red & white if she did not have Triple Threat in her pedigree. Hence, this honour salute to a legendary American.

 JAN BIERMA



When Hanover-Hill Triple Threat-Red burst on the scene, all over the world people were looking for Red Holstein blood with lots of conformation. TT provided that. TT's highest sons are Jubilant-RC and E-D Thor-Red.

red factor. Another example in this eventful introduction: TT daughter Nandette Speckle-Red EX-93. She is the dam of the renowned elite cow Stookey-Elm-Park Blackrose EX-96, who is the grandam of Ladino-Park Talent-RC, the world's only RC millionaire. Talent is the sire of Apple daughter Ms Delicious Apple-Red EX-94, who in this way carries double TT blood... and is the dam of the popular RC bull Diamondback (>22,000 daughters). Before continuing, we need to mention yet another TT daughter: Tora TT Lulu EX-96. Not only Reserve Grand at the Royal Winter Fair in 1981, but also the dam of millionaire Hanover-Hill Inspiration. Another millionaire with TT genes!

NON-STOP TT

Abundantly clear: also in current Red Holstein breeding, TT's influence is still larger than life. As such, TT is likely the name of heaviest weight in global Red Holstein breeding, because since he broke through with his indexes in the late 1970s, non-stop TT has been a name of great significance in Red Holstein breeding. The ABS graduate was namely just as popular in North America as in Europe, where they were diligently looking for Red Holstein sires at the time. Of course, it should be mentioned that TT was also a carrier of the black-red factor, which did cause some confusion, but... our first paragraph gives evidence that there was no concern with TT's red & white work in elite breeding. That TT was popular from the outset, is also connected to his “royal” pedigree: his sire was the appreciated Canadian Roybrook Telstar-RC, his dam was the widely admired Tara-Hills Pride Lucky Barb EX-94, who as a six-year-old set a new world record with a sale price of \$122,000. And not insignificant: his grandam was Johns Lucky Barb, good for no less than EX-97! Precisely on that exceptional conformation front also lies TT's greatest strength: type. TT daughters conceived all over the world obtained high classification scores and show successes. We already mentioned Royal-Reserve Lulu, but what to think of Hepp-Haven Lisa of Pinehurst EX-96, Reserve Grand at the World Dairy Expo 1986? Or Uzes EX-96, national champion of France? And her celebrated country mate Rolls EX-96? Or the Swiss national champion Tulipe, who obtained the unbelievable score of EX-98? Oh, the list of remarkable TT daughters is endless... and let us not forget that their impact is already decades old. But the TT genes... they reach to this very day. Perhaps with the powerful and still popular Hoogerhorst-DG-OH Rubels-Red in the lead, who has TT no less than 3x in his pedigree. ●

Remarkable! Triple Threat (from now on referred to as TT) was born in 1972, but it is in 2012 (40 years later!) when his daughter Sellcrest Roseanne-Red EX-93 still finishes sixth in HI's Red Impact Competition. Roseanne is not only TT's highest CTPI daughter, via her Jubilant dam, at the same time she is also a great-granddaughter of TT. The winner of that same Red Impact

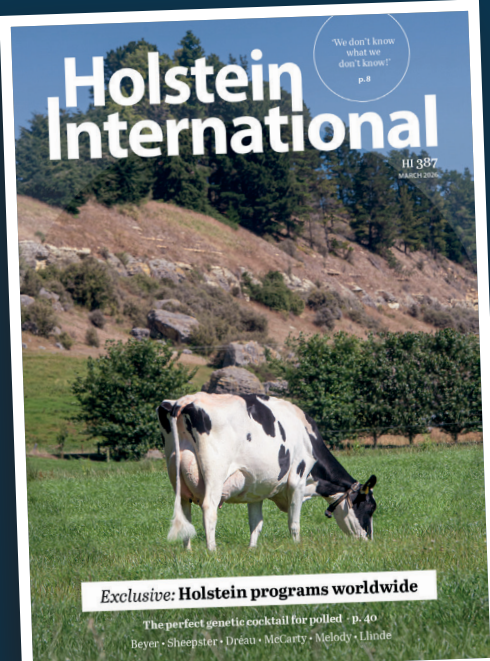
Competition is Golden-Oaks Perk Rae-Red-P; her fourth dam is TT daughter Hanoverhill Roxette EX-94. This Roxette is also the third dam of Scientific Debutante Rae EX-92, the dam of Destry-RC. By the way: also this Rae carries double TT blood, because her maternal grandsire is Meadolake Jubilant-RC, the highest son of TT. Jubilant received tens of thousands of daughters, with the dam of the just mentioned Scientific Rae being the highest one for LPI. An equally significant Jubilant daughter is Clover-Mist Augy Star EX-94: the grandam of Kamps-Hollow Altitude-RC EX-95, who was the Red Impact Winner 2009 and the dam of Advent-Red and Acme-RC, as well as the famous KHW Regiment Apple-Red EX-96. A family that is unparalleled in Red Holstein circles... but which would not have been red were it not for TT son Jubilant having passed along the



Triple Threat daughter Uzes EX-96 not only became the French National Champion (black and red & white), but also an influential brood cow for her owners, Van 't Klooster in France.

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Christine Kuo, MSc

What does the term “cow comfort” bring to mind for you? At the Western Canadian Dairy Seminar, Dr. Daniel Weary, professor from the University of British Columbia (UBC) Animal Welfare Program, shared research on hock lesions and lameness, and challenged the audience to think broadly about the meaning of cow comfort.

Hock lesions and lameness

According to Dr. Weary, cow comfort “should at minimum mean that we’re not keeping animals in environments that are causing them preventable injuries.” He focused on hock lesions and lameness, and shared research-backed strategies to tackle these challenges.

Dr. Weary summarized decades of research showing a clear link between bedding and hock lesions. For example, the results of one UBC study on free stall dairies in British Columbia found that approximately 85% of cows on farms that used mattresses had lesions on the hock joint, compared to approximately 30% of cows at farms that used deep sawdust bedding, and approximately 8% of cows at farms that used deep sand bedding as shown in

Thinking Broadly About Cow Comfort

Figure 1. “The science on this topic is clear and consistent,” he emphasized, highlighting the importance of providing deep, dry, sand or straw bedding to greatly reduce the risk of hock lesions.

Dr. Weary explained that lameness is more complex, but there are many proven strategies to “chip away at it” via improved housing and management. For example, UBC studies have shown that less restrictive neck rail position (190 cm vs. 130 cm from the vertical plane above the rear curb) can reduce lameness by reducing the time cows spend standing on wet concrete outside of the stall. Another UBC study showed how providing cows free choice access to pasture can reduce lameness.

Redefining cow comfort for the future

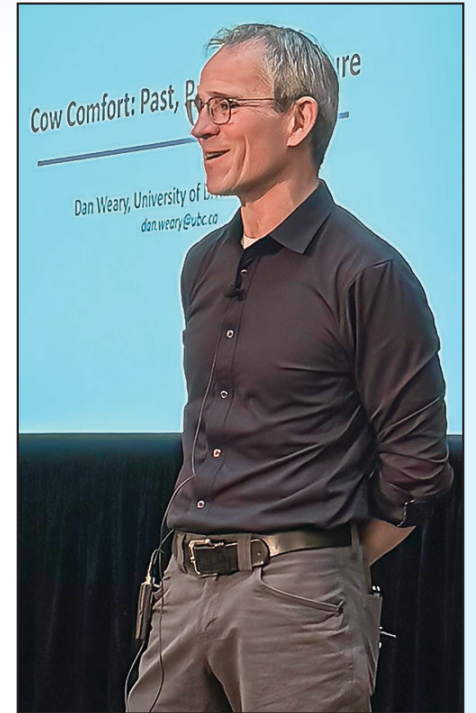
Historically, cow comfort has focused on flooring and bedding. However, Dr. Weary also encouraged the audience to consider this concept more broadly to include positive features in the cow’s environment.

One suggestion was providing cows with brushes. Dr. Weary shared research showing that cows are willing to push similar amounts of weight to access brushes as fresh TMR, showing how highly motivated they were to access a brush.

Another suggestion was giving cows the choice to access an outside environment. He shared research showing that cows are willing to push similar amounts of weight to access pasture as fresh TMR – in fact, one cow was willing to push over 60 kgs to access pasture! Research at UBC has also found that cows prefer to access pasture at night, highlighting the importance of giving them the ability to move in between the barn and pasture freely. He noted that access to a non-pasture outdoor area was also valued by cows.

Providing for cow comfort can also be “win-win for us.” For example, Dr. Weary shared research showing that outdoor access resulted in stronger estrus for heifers during hot weather.

Oftentimes, improved cow comfort can have multiple benefits, such as providing deep-bedded stalls and access to pasture can reduce the risk of both hock lesions and lameness.



UBC’s Dr. Dan Weary, long-respected in Animal Welfare research, presented solid cow-comfort strategies to attendees at the Western Canadian Dairy Seminar on March 12.

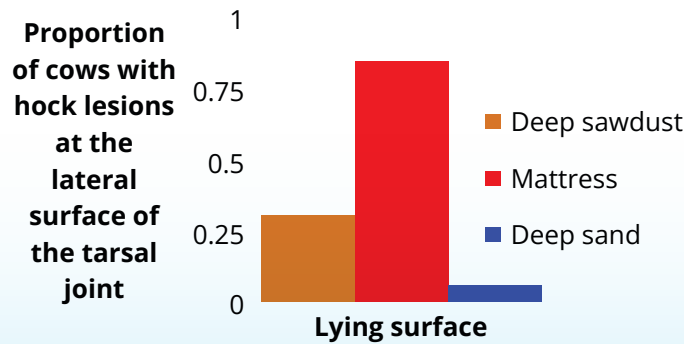
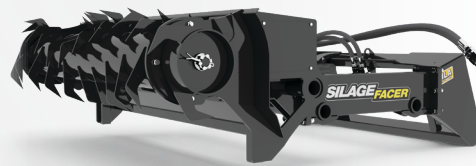


Figure 1: Bedding Type and Hock Lesions

Overall, Dr. Weary noted that “there’s things we’re already doing” to support cow comfort, but “there’s more that we can do as well.” By asking ourselves, “What could we do in our barns that work for us and also help make that cow’s life better?” we can create environments that truly provide for cow comfort.

JOB DONE RIGHT.



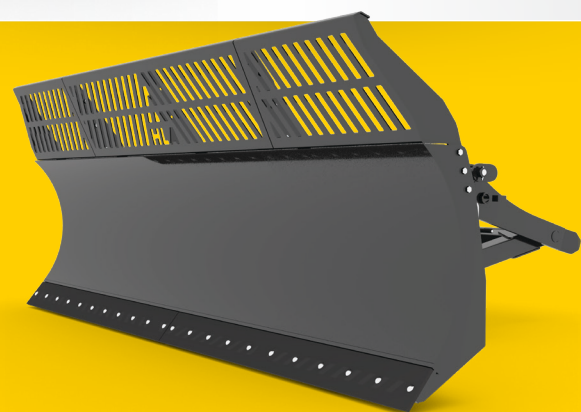
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Let’s Talk: Cows, Culls, Compost & Everything In Between

BC Dairy Producer Workshop Recaps

Morgan Sangster,
Producer Support Manager, BC Dairy

Responsible end-of-life management is an essential part of dairy farming, yet it is often one of the most difficult decisions producers face. Recognizing the need for open conversation, practical guidance, and hands-on learning, BC Dairy has just completed the second of two producer workshops titled “Let’s Talk: Cows, Culls, Compost & Everything In Between.” These workshops brought together industry experts and dairy producers to discuss the full lifecycle of dairy cattle – from culling decisions and transport regulations to humane euthanasia and responsible deadstock management.

The goal of the workshops was to provide dairy farmers with clear, practical information that supports animal welfare, regulatory compliance, and responsible farm management, while also creating a space for producers to ask questions and share experiences. With the updated requirements from the 2023 Code of Practice for Dairy, and how those requirements will be integrated into proAction, we felt it important to start the training early on this crucial topic. With funding received from SCAP through the BC Ministry’s KTCP program, as well as support from Kinder Ground, hosting important knowledge/skill transfer events is possible.



Producers that attended the workshop on-farm appreciated the safe environment in which they could ask difficult questions and gain hands-on experience with humane euthanasia techniques.

Understanding Transport Regulations

The main presentation was delivered by Jennifer Woods of J. Woods Livestock, who provided a detailed overview of Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) transport regulations. The regulations are designed to ensure animals being transported are healthy enough to travel and that their welfare is protected throughout the process.

Jennifer walked producers through the important distinctions between animals classified as fit, compromised, or unfit for transport.

- **Fit animals** can be transported without restrictions.
- **Compromised animals** may be transported under specific conditions, including shorter travel times and direct transport to the nearest suitable location.
- **Unfit animals** must not be transported and require immediate care, treatment, or euthanasia.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on the **compromised** category, which often requires careful judgement by producers. Jennifer emphasized that when uncertainty exists, producers should always err on the side of caution.

Making Responsible Culling Decisions

Culling decisions are never easy, but making those decisions at the right time is critical for both animal welfare and



regulatory compliance. During the workshop, participants reviewed decision trees designed to help guide producers through the culling process. Thought provoking photos helped to guide back and forth conversations throughout the meeting.

These tools help producers evaluate an animal’s condition and determine whether the cow is suitable for transport or if other management options should be considered. Jennifer emphasized the importance of planning ahead rather than waiting until a cow’s condition deteriorates.

One key recommendation discussed was the importance of drying cows down before shipping whenever possible, and ensuring animals are in adequate body condition prior to transport. Preparing animals properly before loading helps reduce stress and improves their chances of successfully reaching their destination.

Producers were also reminded that once animals leave the farm, the journey is often longer than many realize. Research previously conducted by Dr. Jane Stojkov has shown that animals may take **several days** to reach their final destination through the marketing and processing chain. This reality reinforces the importance of sending animals that are truly fit to travel and capable of enduring that journey.

Timing and Techniques for Humane Euthanasia

Another important component of the workshop focused on euthanasia decisions and techniques. Ensuring animals receive a humane and timely end is a responsibility that comes with livestock management, though never a decision taken lightly.

Workshop discussions highlighted the importance of making euthanasia decisions early, **before** an animal is suffering or deteriorating beyond recovery. Prompt and appropriate euthanasia prevents unnecessary pain and ensures animals are treated with kindness at the end of their lives.

Participants reviewed the correct procedures and considerations involved in performing euthanasia on-farm, including proper restraint, shot placement, and equipment selection.

Responsible Deadstock Management

Proper management of deadstock is another critical aspect of animal care and environmental stewardship. Jake Turek from the BC Ministry of Agriculture provided a detailed presentation on on-farm composting of deadstock.

Jake walked producers through the fundamentals of building and maintaining a compost system that safely and effectively breaks down carcasses. Topics included:

- **Selecting an appropriate compost site**
- **Building the correct compost base**

Financial support from Kinder Ground enabled the acquisition of the cow heads for training. Learning how to make the critical end-of-life decision is as important as knowing how to do it correctly and compassionately.

- **Achieving proper carbon-to-nitrogen ratios**
- **Maintaining adequate moisture levels**
- **Monitoring temperature and pile conditions**
- **Managing the compost pile to ensure complete decomposition**

When carefully managed, composting can be an effective and environmentally responsible way to handle deadstock, ensuring good results and preventing potential environmental issues.

Hands-On Learning

One of the most valuable parts of the workshop came at the end of the session when producers had the opportunity to practice proper euthanasia techniques.

Using model cow heads, participants were able to practice shot placement and handling using two different styles of captive bolt guns. This hands-on training allowed producers to become more comfortable with the equipment and procedures involved.

The purchase of the model cow heads used during the training was generously sponsored by **Kinder Ground**, whose support helped make this practical training opportunity possible.

For many participants, the hands-on component was one of the most impactful parts of the workshop. Practicing in a safe environment allows producers to gain confidence in their ability to carry out euthanasia procedures correctly if the need arises – as not everyone is comfortable with a firearm.

Supporting Animal Welfare

Workshops like **Let’s Talk: Cows, Culls, Compost & Everything In Between** highlight BC Dairy’s commitment to responsible animal care at every stage of a cow’s life.

While the topic of euthanasia and end-of-life management can be difficult, it is an essential part of maintaining high animal welfare standards. By providing producers with clear information, practical tools, and hands-on learning opportunities, these workshops help ensure that difficult decisions can be made with confidence and compassion.

At the heart of the discussions was a simple but powerful message: **the cows that support our farms deserve a humane and respectful end to their lives.**

Through continued education, collaboration, and open dialogue, the dairy industry can ensure that animal welfare remains a priority – from the first day of life through to the final moments.

Interested producers in the western provinces are encouraged to contact BC Dairy regarding future workshops.



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Preparing for Summer Help

R.C. Steward, M.B.,

AgSafe Provincial Ranch Safety
Specialist, Chilcotin Regional Consultant
reg@agsafebc.ca

As we amble through what remains of winter, thoughts begin to turn to the activities of spring and beyond. Part of this, for many in the dairy community, will involve the introduction of new or returning workers. As you do that, have you considered what it all entails? Have you thought through, and planned for all the implications related to the care, onboarding, orientation, training and instruction of those workers? This is true for any employee – be that a family member, a returning seasonal worker, a foreign worker or a student. The employment of a worker is serious business, and you need to ensure that you do this right.

The worker needs to receive an orientation to the site.

The worker needs to be trained and supervised.

The worker needs to demonstrate competency.

The tasks assigned to the worker need to be instructed and demonstrated, followed by the worker being able to demonstrate that they can safely and competently perform that task. **Using a “tell me, show me, watch me” approach and documenting your efforts** is a realistic and practical way to ensure worker awareness and competency, while addressing your due diligence. Safety is something producers always think about, but often formal instruction followed by documentation is lacking. The basics of due diligence to ‘Do all that you can to ensure the safety and wellbeing of a worker’ must be satisfied in your workplace.

“Once you take on an employee, and that includes people like WWOOFers (Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms) and exchange students, you are required to ensure their safety.

We live in the reality that this is a regulated world and industry. Once you take on an employee, and that includes people like WWOOFers (Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms) and exchange students, you are required to ensure their safety.

Making that reality “real” at your dairy must make sense and be a part of the way you do business. For instance, if a new worker is going to be operating a tractor, you will walk them through that operation; you will **“tell them, show them and watch them.”** The part that is often missing is the documentation to

confirm training has been done. Having a form that records your efforts ensures you do not forget anything, and that your instruction was consistent and uniform for every worker.

Integrating health and safety into the way you do business simply makes sense. Safety needs to be an intentional piece of doing what needs to be done. Not an add-on, not a something else. Don't be a slave to a binder – make safety an integrated and active part of what you do with and for yourself and your workers.

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Proper orientation, training and instruction of all workers needs to be a priority in your farm's safety plan.

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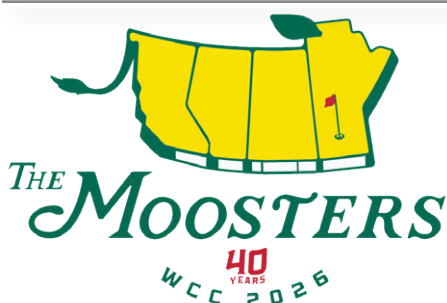
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Alberta Holstein Branch News



Submitted by Alberta Holsteins

The Alberta Holstein Branch held their AGM on February 6, 2026, in Nisku. The jam-packed day kicked off with the Noble Cup hockey game, followed by the AGM and farm tours. In the evening members enjoyed the banquet and award presentations, followed by the inaugural 'Alberta Elite' sale which averaged \$5770 on 15 lots from the heart of some of Alberta's best pedigrees.

2025 Alberta Breeder of the Year – Chubanna Holsteins

"It's very much an honour to win the Central Alberta Holstein Club Breeder of the Year Award and in turn, be a contender for the Alberta Holstein Association Breeder of the Year. 2025 rewarded us with many meaningful achievements. We were super excited to travel to the Royal in November 2024 and see two homebred animals on the big stage: CHUBANNA LUCKY DUCK EX-91 2E (R&W Mature Cow) and CHUBANNA AMAETHON DIONNE

(B&W Spring Yearling). We were also able to watch Adyson win Reserve Champion showman in the Jersey Canada Youth Showmanship contest. Our 2025 show season started off strong winning Reserve Champion R&W at the Alberta Dairy Congress with LUCKY CHUBANNA SPARKLE. Sparkle excelled through the summer, winning Grand Champion at our Achievement Day/Open show, Grand Champion at the Alberta Youth Dairy Provincials, Honorable Mention at the WestGen Canadian Classic show, then finally Reserve Champion R&W heifer at the Westerner Dairy Showcase. We

also received Honorable Mention R&W heifer in Red Deer with CHUBANNA LITE IT UP CRIMSON. We attained six VG 2-year olds, four EX, three ME, and nine Star Brood animals in 2025, as well as 46 Superior Production awards. Our current herd consists of eight ME, eight EX, 63 VG, 43 GP and seven G (61% VG or better), with an RHA: 298-357-328." - Andrew & Anna Wildeboer

To read the complete writeup from the Wildeboer family and catch up on all the latest news from the Alberta Branch, visit www.albertaholstein.ca.



Breeder of the Year – Chubanna Holsteins, Ponoka. (L-R) Fred Hofstra, Andrew and Anna Wildeboer and Melissa Hofstra.



2026 Alberta Holsteins Board. (L-R) Back: Tim Hummel, Jan van de Brake, Ard Van der Kooij, Fred Hofstra (President), Clarence Slingerland, Lee Simanton, Maxime Ten-Have. Front: Benita Hummel, Randy Slomp (Vice-President), Chad Crest, Amanda Hehli, Arjan de Lange.



President Fred Hofstra presents 'President's Club Cow of the Year' to Neil Sowerby, Herd Manager at Marsfield, home of MARSFIELD DENZEL KIMMY EX-93 8E 5*, who captures the crown for the fourth straight year!



Kimmy's Stats:
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Super 10 Award winner



Barn Cow of the Year – JAMADO ALCOVE SHIRLEY VG-87 3YR, owned by Den Oudsten Dairy, Lacombe.



Congratulations to this year's Branch Scholarship winners – Dorian De Lange and Nicole Verhoef! The awards were presented by Chad Crest and Fred Hofstra.



Congrats Rob and Sue

Sue and Rob Crest were honoured with the 'Marj Atkins Lifetime Achievement Award' for their lifelong involvement and commitment to the Holstein breed and Alberta's dairy youth.

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Assessing and Managing your People Issues

Better Morale = Better Performance

Tars Cheema

"The best people move towards the best culture." That was one of the solid take home messages delivered by veteran coach and speaker, Trevor Throness, at the Mainland Milk Producers AGM in January in Abbotsford.

Most farms today have grown gradually, adding more acres, more milking cows and more staff. But managing staff is not typically something that farm owners/managers are trained to handle with the same skill as they might manage their herd's health.

“Your company culture is a reflection of you.”

Throness' engaging style and amusing anecdotes not only kept the audience awake, there was active recognition of situations they have probably all faced. "HR problems are not unique," he mused, referring to one of his early career experiences with a 'mob-like' organization. His point was simply, that **everyone has people issues** – but there are very straightforward ways to assess and make a plan to deal with problems and set the standard for a respectful, conscientious and productive work culture.

The Four Quadrants

Throness anchored the audience focus with a four-quadrant diagram which he used to describe four types of staff – making it easy for farmers to relate their own people to these categories.

- A) Star employees – productive with great 'values' or attitudes. These are the key employees that you fear losing.
- B) Star 'potential' – invest in training/development.
- C) Wrong Fit – unfortunately, sometimes, you just have to cull.
- D) Productive but Difficult – require careful management or they could damage team morale.

The Stars

"Why do your 'stars,' the good people, leave?" asked Throness. While money is always a variable in the mix, it is not the top priority. Often it is needing to feel valued, the desire for a career change or looking for career advancement. "Getting along with your direct supervisor is the #1 most important variable," he shared. Another troubling element is that good people will often leave, rather than put up with difficult co-workers.

Star Potentials

We were all rookies once in our lives. Starting with the right attitude, potential stars can move in the right direction with the right coaching. Throness suggests this simple three point plan to establish clear communication, underscoring the need to 'tell them kindly.' Start with "I want to go through three things..."

- 1) We're going to talk about the mission.
- 2) I expect you to be coachable.
- 3) I want you to know that we are going to talk right away as needed.

This "sets the table" for open, honest discussion. It may take more than one session and follow-ups.



An excellent presentation from Trevor Throness discussed staff challenges which farmers could all relate to.

The Wrong Fit

"Hire for the right attitude – you can train them for the work." Over 80% of the time, it's an attitude issue if there is a red flag at six months in, Throness indicated.

Three questions to ask:

- 1) If I had to rehire, would I rehire them enthusiastically?
- 2) Do they reduce your stress when they are doing their work?
- 3) If everyone on your team was like them, would the team be the same, better or worse?

Like a cow with chronic health issues takes most of a herdsman's time, the same applies to the 'worst' employees – while the best staff get taken for granted. Sometimes, as difficult as it is, letting the most difficult staff go is the best decision.

Productive but Difficult

Throness amusingly referred to these staff as "brilliant jerks" – good at their work, productive, but difficult for you and co-workers to work with. Their place within the team depends on how well they understand/respect 'Team Player.' Their productivity may not be enough to balance out the risk they pose to the stability of the team. Throness suggests some might be coachable or retainable by 'quarantining' them – let them do their work isolated from the rest of the team. "You need to have a 'reality' discussion with them," Throness said, "and if they won't change, then you need to change them."

"How high do you set the standard for *passion*? Your company culture is a reflection of you. Remember, your staff will not exceed your attitude," Throness concluded with this HR wisdom.



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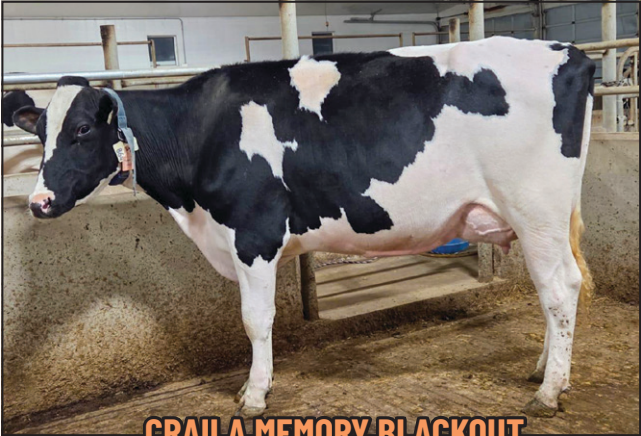
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Saskatchewan Holstein Branch News

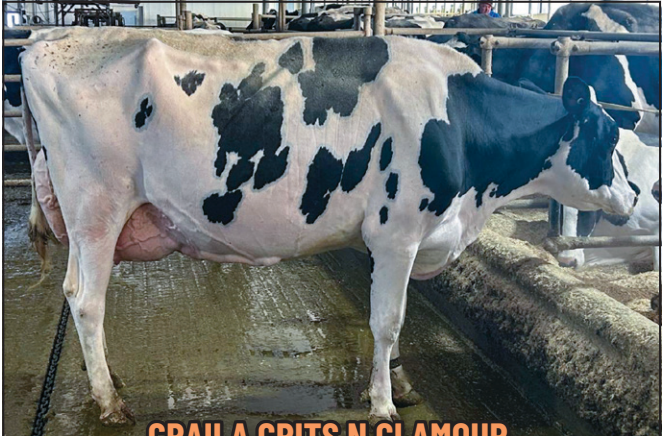
2026 Saskatchewan Breeders Cup



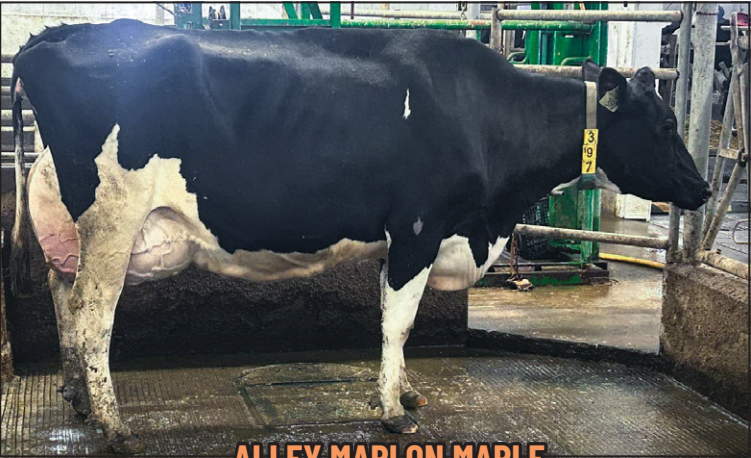
Judging for the 2026 Saskatchewan Breeders Cup took place from February 16-20, with Ryan Friesen tasked with evaluating this year's entries. Thank you to the Vandenbrinks for hosting the awards night to announce the winners on March 5 at their farm in Pike Lake.



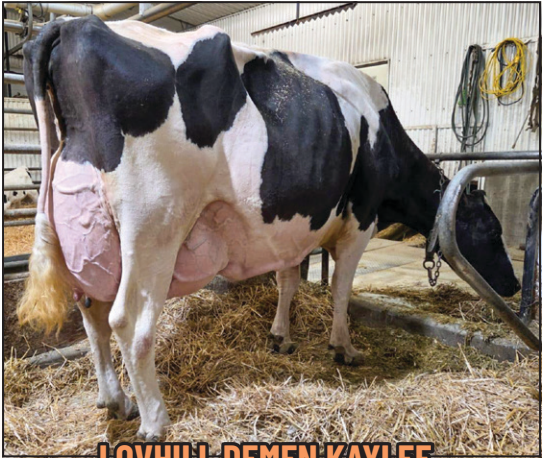
CRAILA MEMORY BLACKOUT



CRAILA GRITS N GLAMOUR



ALLEY MARLON MAPLE



LOVHILL DEMEN KAYLEE



ROBELLA CHIEF GUNPOWDER



Herdsman Award: Plumblossom Farms, Brad Pruim accepting the award from Amanda Kessel (SK Branch).



Craila Dairy, Matt Vaandrager accepting the Premier Breeder Award.

1st Lactation

1. CRAILA MEMORY BLACKOUT, Robella Holsteins
2. LAJORD ENERGY DANA, Benbie Holsteins
3. ALLEY DYLAN AURORA, Alley Holsteins

2nd Lactation

1. CRAILA GRITS N GLAMOUR, Craila Dairy
2. ROSECOLONY PARACHUT WREN 3290, Rosetown Farming Co.
3. ROBELLA DELTA LAMBDA WILDFIRE, Robella Holsteins

3rd Lactation

1. ROBELLA CHIEF GUNPOWDER, Robella Holsteins
2. HYLJON PAYDAY 5008, John E. Hylkema
3. DENHAAN FUEL PUMPKIN, Kielstra Holsteins

4+ Lactations

1. ALLEY MARLON MAPLE, Alley Holsteins
2. NIENHUIS REBEL FABLE, Nienhuis Family Farm
3. CRAILA NICKY MINAJ, Craila Dairy

Production Cow

1. LOVHILL DEMEN KAYLEE, Lovholm Holsteins
2. PROGENESIS MUSCO SCORP 2138, Kielstra Holsteins
3. BENBIE SHAMROCK KARLA, Benbie Holsteins

Grand Champion

LOVHILL DEMEN KAYLEE

Reserve Champion

ROBELLA CHIEF GUNPOWDER

Honorable Mention

PROGENESIS MUSCO SCORP 2138

Herdsman Award

Plumblossom Farms

Premier Breeder

Craila Dairy

COMING EVENTS:

- * Western Dairy Expo - April 23-24, Prairieland Park, Saskatoon.
- * Junior Ag Showcase - July 1-6 in Prairieland Park, Saskatoon.
- * Saskatchewan Dairy Heifer Show - July 8-10, Prairieland Park, Saskatoon.
- * SK Branch Picnic - August 7, Ronleen Holsteins, Vibank.
- * WCC - August 18-22, Brandon, MB.

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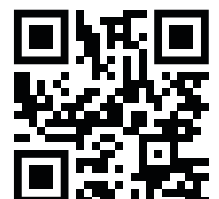


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Farming Under Fire: What “Safety” Means for Ukrainian Farmers

**Anna Klochko,
Ukrainian-based ag/photojournalist**

In Ukraine today, farm safety means something very different than it did only a few years ago. Beyond machinery hazards, livestock injuries, basic on-farm safety rules or following basic workplace protocols, safety has come to include the risk of drone surveillance, artillery strikes, unexploded ordnance in fields and the constant threats posed by working in a warzone, since Russia's full-scale invasion four years ago.

The scale of the damage reflects this reality. According to the Fifth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA5), released in February 2026 by the Government of Ukraine, the World Bank, the European Commission and the United Nations, Ukraine's overall recovery and reconstruction needs now approach \$588 billion through 2035. Agriculture is among the sectors most heavily affected, with more than \$55 billion required for rebuilding over the next decade. Estimates also indicate that direct physical damage to the agricultural sector has already exceeded \$11 billion, including significant losses to irrigation systems and other critical infrastructure. These figures, however, only partially explain the impact of the war. The real story unfolds on individual farms across the country.

Unfortunately, you don't have to scroll through the news for long to encounter headlines almost every day such as, "Two employees of an agricultural enterprise were killed in the Yampil community in Sumy region. The victims were women aged 72 and 67, whose bodies were recovered from the rubble," "Russia attacked a bioethanol production plant," "A Russian strike on a farm in Kharkiv region killed 100 pigs," and many more like these.

Behind each of these headlines are real farms and families trying to continue their work despite the danger. One of them is the dairy farm run by Yulia Kulchenko in the Sviatohirsk community of Donetsk region, roughly twenty kilometres from the current front line.

Raised in farming with cattle, Yulia simply followed this familiar path. Her parents began keeping cows in the 1990s when economic hardship forced many families in rural Ukraine to rely on small-scale agriculture for survival. Milk, cottage cheese and sour cream were produced by hand and sold at local markets to support the household. Over time the activity grew from a survival strategy into a family livelihood.

In 2014 the family began building a proper dairy farm, and by 2018 two generations had joined forces to create a small but stable operation with about twenty cows. For the Kulchenko family, the farm was never just a business venture, as most farmers can understand. It was the centre of their daily life, built on long hours, caring for their animals 24/7.

Currently, Yulia and her family continue with eight milking cows and twelve youngstock. Their cattle are primarily Ukrainian Steppe genetics crossed with Holstein, producing roughly twenty to twenty-two litres of milk per cow per day.

Rather than selling raw milk to a processor, the family processes all of it themselves and sells dairy products at a market stall in the nearby city of Sloviansk. Their product line includes cottage cheese, cream, bryndza, yogurt, butter, mozzarella and suluguni. Before the full-scale invasion began in 2022, the farm was growing steadily, purchasing milk from neighbours and planning an expansion.

Those plans disappeared almost overnight.

The shelling near their village in April 2022 became so dangerous by June, that they were compelled to evacuate, selling their entire herd quickly at a fraction of its real value, receiving roughly \$125 CAD per cow.

Later that year, Ukrainian forces regained control of the area and the family returned home to a damaged farm, a damaged house and no herd. Rebuilding was slow, starting with a single cow and purchasing more when possible. But with explosions still heard regularly in the surrounding area, the sense of risk never disappears.

With cows confined to the barn, a strike on the barn would be devastating. Even when there is no shelling nearby, the war causes frequent power outages that interrupt milking and processing. Income has also been damaged by lower sales due to the exodus of many residents of the town.

After losing everything once, the family is now considering relocating to a safer region in central Ukraine to start their farm over yet again. For a small family farm, relocating under wartime economic conditions is a daunting prospect.

Yulia's experience reflects broader challenges facing Ukrainian agriculture. Farmers in regions close to the front line often work under the threat of drones and airstrikes. In Sumy region near the Russian border, grain farmer Yevhen Vlasenko describes a similar reality. His family farm grows wheat, soybeans, corn, sunflowers and rapeseed using a no-till system and biological soil management practices developed over nearly two decades. Yet even advanced farming methods offer little protection against the risks of war. Drones regularly fly over the region and neighbouring farms have already been hit by airstrikes. After long days in the field, Vlasenko sometimes chooses to stay overnight on the farm rather than drive home in the dark, because headlights from vehicles can attract attention from Russian reconnaissance drones. Combine operators working at night are also vulnerable, as agricultural machinery illuminated by work lights can be visible from the air.

Ukrainian farmers have become so accustomed to constant danger as part of everyday life that the things they complain about most often are surprisingly ordinary – mainly the weather, says Yevhen Vlasenko.

"At the moment, the main thing we can really complain about is the weather – or rather the lack of proper conditions for harvesting since mid-September 2025. Some of the late crops are still standing in the fields because of persistent rain and fog that eventually turned into snow. Then long weeks of frost followed, with temperatures dropping to -26°C. This winter became the coldest in Ukraine in the past 15 years. Another issue is the frequent loss of satellite signal during air-raid alerts, when the sky is full of Shahed drones and missiles."

The dangers extend beyond the farms themselves. Many Ukrainian fields remain contaminated with mines and unexploded ordnance, and there have been multiple incidents in which tractors or other machinery triggered explosives during routine fieldwork. As of 2025, roughly 1.16 million acres of Ukrainian farmland remain mined or contaminated with unexploded ordnance.

Export logistics are also under constant pressure. Strikes on port infrastructure and grain vessels in the Black Sea have periodically disrupted shipping routes, driving up



Once a thriving family dairy with 20 cows and processing/marketing direct to consumers, Yulia Kulchenko has already had to start over once since Russia attacked Ukraine. The family now contemplates a relocation to a safer part of the country, just as many of their customers have already done.



transportation costs and adding another layer of uncertainty for agricultural producers.

For farmers in Ukraine, these overlapping pressures – war, logistics disruptions and weather extremes – have become part of the everyday reality of producing food. Yet farms like Yulia Kulchenko's continue operating. She rebuilt her herd from almost nothing and continues processing milk and selling dairy products even while living within range of artillery.

Her explanation is simple. Farming, she says, is not just a job. It is her life.

The remarkable resilience of farmers like Yulia is something truly astonishing to understand. We can only hope their stamina will outlast the attack which has taken so much from Ukrainians.



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Milk Quality Focus

Salmonella Dublin Surveillance in BC – Spring 2026 Relaunch



Erin Cuthbert, MSc,
Lead Dairy Inspector, BC AGRI

In 2021, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF), along with industry and academic partners, set out to better understand the prevalence of *Salmonella* Dublin (S. Dublin) on BC dairy farms and how (and if) producers were taking action to manage and control it within their herds. Using passive and active surveillance techniques along with risk factor investigation and transmission network analysis, MAF found that S. Dublin was highly prevalent and widely distributed across the province, with 30% of BC dairy farms infected, which is higher than reported in other provinces (e.g., Quebec=7%, Ontario=5.1%, Alberta=15.6%). Quarterly bulk tank testing enters its last testing period in March 2026, before MAF relaunches the surveillance program in the spring of 2026 to offer more tailored tools for producers to prevent, manage, or eradicate, S. Dublin on their farms.

What is *Salmonella* Dublin?

Salmonella Dublin (serotype D) is a cattle-adapted bacterial pathogen that can have substantial negative impacts on the dairy industry due to increased calf mortality, abortions, and reduced milk yield. Research conducted by MAF found that calves were the most at risk for severe S. Dublin infections and death, which were most commonly characterized by respiratory symptoms. S. Dublin's ability to establish lifelong infection via asymptomatic carriers that shed the

bacteria intermittently make it challenging to detect and control, compounded by the bacteria's resistance to many antibiotic therapies. Furthermore, symptoms of the disease are often consistent with other infections resulting in misdiagnosis, so establishing a farm's *Salmonella* Dublin status and conducting surveillance testing can be an important starting point for diagnosis and management.

Diagnosis and Surveillance

The Ministry's Animal Health Lab uses enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) to measure the level of antibodies in bulk tank milk directed against O-antigens of S. Dublin. The lab result ultimately measures the immune response of the cows as an indicator of previous infection – a result of greater than 35% positivity indicates that one or more animals in the herd has been infected by S. Dublin, and antibodies are present in her milk. However, due to the nature of S. Dublin (i.e., chronic vs non-chronic infections), multiple testing is required to establish a farm's status as negative or positive for the disease. Once farm status was established after the initial three tests, the program continued to monitor farm status over the course of 2023-2025, deploying surveys and risk assessments to investigate farm level risk factors (Scan the QR codes for study findings).

Salmonella Dublin Program Relaunch

In spring 2026, MAF will relaunch an enhanced "opt-in" S. Dublin program to provide support for producers and their herd veterinarians to

co-develop and implement S. Dublin control programs, and/or for additional diagnostic testing at the bulk tank and animal levels. Surveillance will continue to provide opt-in producers with quarterly bulk tank milk results, and for those looking to control or eradicate S. Dublin from their herds, enhanced testing will be available. More information to come!

Key Takeaways from our research to-date:

- Once a herd is infected, it can spread rapidly and be difficult to control. Testing incoming animals for S. Dublin is a critical control point for preventing spread.
- Calves (2 weeks-6 months) were the most at-risk population for severe S. Dublin infection, resulting in euthanasia or death.
- Farms that reported housing more than one adult dairy cow in the maternity pen were four times more likely to test positive for *Salmonella* Dublin on bulk tank milk.
- BC dairy isolates were genetically similar

to 92% of US cattle isolates, suggesting the importation of US cattle may be driving transmission.

- There is evidence of some farms having repeated introductions of genetically diverse S. Dublin strains
- Monitoring variability of bulk tank milk positivity could function as an accessible early warning tool for producers and veterinarians to predict if their herds may become positive. Of note – If your bulk tank positivity increases by 9%, further investigation is recommended.

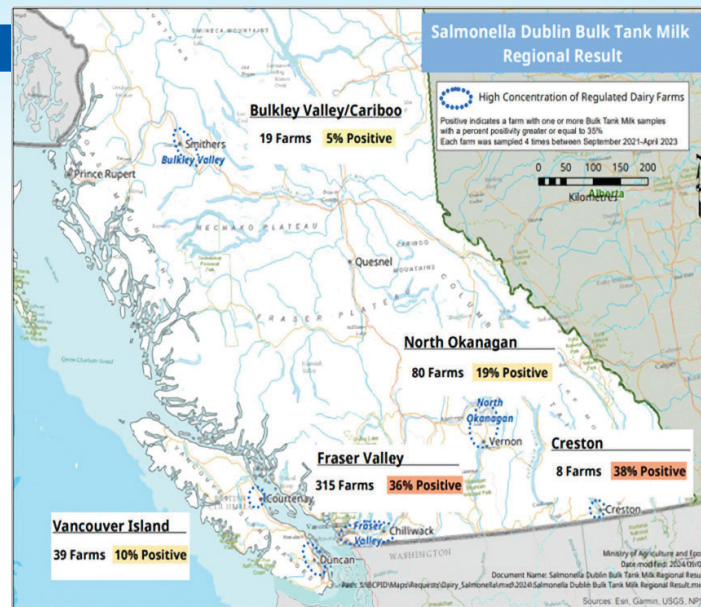


Figure 1: Map of BC highlighting the main dairy production areas with the number of individual dairy farms within the respective area along with the percentage of BTM *Salmonella* Dublin-positive farms after four samples collected per farm from September 2021 to April 2023.

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A survey of Canadian dairy producers on footbath management and perception: the results

Mélissa Duplessis, Ph. D., Research scientist, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Sherbrooke Research and Development Centre, QC

Masoumeh Bejaei, Ph. D., Research scientist, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Summerland Research and Development Centre, BC

Last year, our research team launched a survey related to footbath management and perception. We would first like to warmly thank all dairy producers who took time out of their busy schedule to respond to the survey. We obtained interesting results that we are pleased to share with you!

Survey demographics at a glance

- 246 dairy producers responded to the survey
- 82% of respondents were either owner or co-owner of the farm
- 67% of them had between 6 and 25 years of experience
- Respondents were located in 8 different provinces of Canada (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island)
- 46% had been using footbaths for less than 10 years, indicating that this is a relatively recent management practice on many Canadian farms
- 19% were using automatic footbaths (41% of users were in Western provinces and 32% in Ontario).

Footbath management

We asked dairy producers several questions about their footbath management. About 68% of them disposed the footbath solution after between 50 and 200 cow passages. The most common response for how long the footbath solution was kept before being discarded was < 5 hours (reported by 32% of respondents), followed by more than 24 hours (22% of respondents).

Producers were also asked how many times per week their lactating and dry cows and heifers passed through the footbath. For lactating cows, the majority (56%) passed through the footbath either one or two times per week, followed by three times per week (16%). In contrast, producers responded that most of their dry cows and heifers never passed through the footbath (69% and 82%, respectively).

The most commonly used product in the footbaths was copper sulfate, reported by 76% of producers, either as the sole product or with others. Table 1 summarizes both the number and type of different products used in the footbath.

Table 1. Number and type of products used in the footbaths, based on a survey of 246 Canadian dairy producers

ITEM	Proportion of producers (%)
NUMBER OF PRODUCTS USED	
1 product	73
2 products	24
3 products	3
Product type	
Copper sulfate	54
Formaldehyde	12
Zinc sulfate	3
Other	6
Copper sulfate with	
Formaldehyde	12
Zinc sulfate	3
Other	7

Safety when handling footbath products

- 46% of respondents reported that the person preparing the footbath solution wore personal protective equipment (PPE)
- The most commonly used PPE was gloves followed by coveralls
- Producers using formaldehyde were more likely to wear PPE when preparing the solution.

Although PPE may be perceived as inconvenient or slowing down work, it is important to emphasize its necessity. Formaldehyde is classified as carcinogenic, posing significant risks to human health. Moreover, the safety data sheet for copper sulfate indicates that inhalation may result in respiratory tract, skin, and eye irritation. Hence, appropriate PPE (gloves, masks, goggles, coveralls) should be available in a clean and dry location to all individuals responsible for preparing footbath solution.

Footbath perception

- 92% of dairy producers believed that footbaths were effective in preventing foot lesions
- 32% believed that footbath products were harmful to human health while 34% responded maybe

- 23% believed that footbath products were detrimental to the environment whereas 34% selected maybe

- Producers using formaldehyde were more likely to believe that footbath products have a negative impact on human health
- Producers using copper sulfate were more likely to believe that footbath products negatively affect the environment.

Producers were asked to rate their level of confidence (on a scale of 1 = low confidence to 10 = high confidence) in: 1) using the footbaths on their farm; 2) the recommended number of cow passages before discarding the footbath solution, and 3) the recommended weekly frequency of footbath use. Approximately 51%, 25%, and 32% of

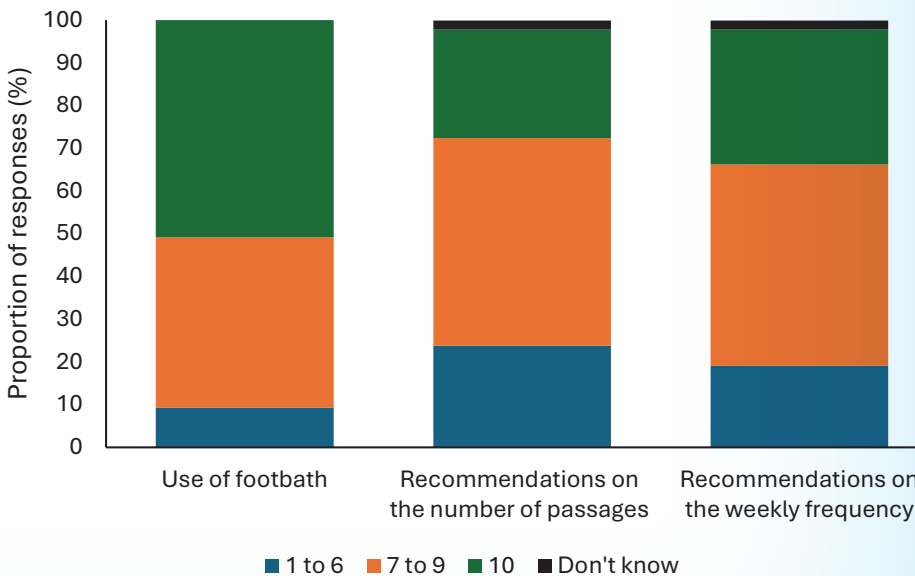


respondents respectively selected that they were very confident about these (Figure 1). Interestingly, confidence levels consistently increased with the number of years producers had been using footbath. This could suggest that experience is a good teacher!

This survey highlights that footbath management practices vary greatly among Canadian herds; but most respondents believed that footbaths are effective in helping prevent foot lesions.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to sincerely thank all Canadian dairy producers who took the time to fill out this questionnaire. We are also grateful to Dairy Farmers of New Brunswick, Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Les producteurs de lait du Québec, Alberta Milk, and Dairy Farmers of PEI for distributing the survey links to their members.



Canadian dairy producers regarding footbath use, and recommendations on the number of cow passages before discarding the solution and the weekly frequency of the footbath use. The blue bars represent producers who selected a confidence level between 1 and 6; orange represents a confidence level between 7 and 9; green, a confidence level of 10; and black, a "don't know" response. A score of 1 is low and 10 is high confidence level.



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2026 New Entrant Program (NEP/NEPO) Draw Results

The New Entrant Program (NEP) & New Entrant Program Organic (NEPO)

The objective of the New Entrant Program (NEP) and New Entrant Program Organic (NEPO) is to encourage and facilitate people to enter the dairy industry as new producers.

The BC Milk Marketing Board's NEP & NEPO programs provide successful applicants with 15kgs of allotted quota to start milk production, up to 8kgs of matching quota provided on a 1:1 ratio basis during the 10 years of the program, and priority on the quota exchange.

The program also provides successful NEPO applicants a one-time incentive allocation of 30% SCDQ (Specialty Continuous Daily Quota) up to a maximum of 9.3 kgs.

The other higher-level objectives that the Board looks to achieve through a new entrant program include:

- **Renewal – promoting innovation and new ideas within the industry (a natural outcome of the diversification of the producer base).**
- **Sustainability – ensuring the ongoing milk supply in BC; and**
- **Addressing the consolidation of farms in the province.**

The Application Deadline and Interview Selection Process

The application deadline for those interested in participating in the program was February 9, 2026. The Board received 33 completed NEP applications and five completed NEPO applications.

A random draw of 10 candidates was held for NEP applications. There is no draw held for NEPO applications, and all qualified applicants are invited to attend an interview with the selection committee, provided they submit the required documentation.

The Council of Marketing Boards (COMB) was engaged to execute the random draw on the Board's behalf. The draw was held on Tuesday, February 10, 2026, to select the ten NEP candidates who will be interviewed by the NEP Selection Committee. The ten candidates were randomly drawn by an online generator. The draw was carried out by the General Manager of the Council of Marketing Boards (COMB) and observed by both a BCMMB staff person and a third-

party observer.

The ten NEP candidates drawn on February 10, 2026, who will move to the next stage of the NEP selection process are:

Gabriel Anderson	Jordan Braun
Dallas Feragen-Forbes	Nathan Flokstra
Deirdre Howard	Ryan Janzen
Damian Klop	Jennifer Loepp
Brent Posthumus	Nel Rossouw

The following candidates who will move to the next stage of the NEPO selection process are:

Peter Bootsma	Quito Bruns
Jared Klaassen	Kiana Newton
	Keanan Witzel

Next Steps for Selected Candidates

All candidates must provide documentation, including a business plan, to the Board by May 20, 2026, to be interviewed and further considered. The Selection Committee will recommend a minimum of three NEP candidates following the interview process. NEPO candidates are recommended based on eligibility and industry need. The Board will build a waitlist for the NEPO program following the interview process.

Selected NEP applicants must begin milk production by December 31, 2027, to qualify for the program. Selected NEPO applicants will have up to three years from the time of selection to commence production.

The Board does not hold a waitlist for the NEP program; however, the Board will hold another NEP random draw in early 2027 and applicants are welcome to apply again at that time. The dates/details for the 2027 process will be announced on the Board's website in late 2026.

If you are not already signed up for BCMMB Notices, you can do so here: <https://bcmilk.com/subscribe-to-receive-notices/>

For more complete details, please refer to the NEP User Guide on the BCMMB's website: <https://bcmilk.com/new-entrant-program/>

The Board wishes to extend their appreciation to all applicants expressing interest in the New Entrant Program. 📧

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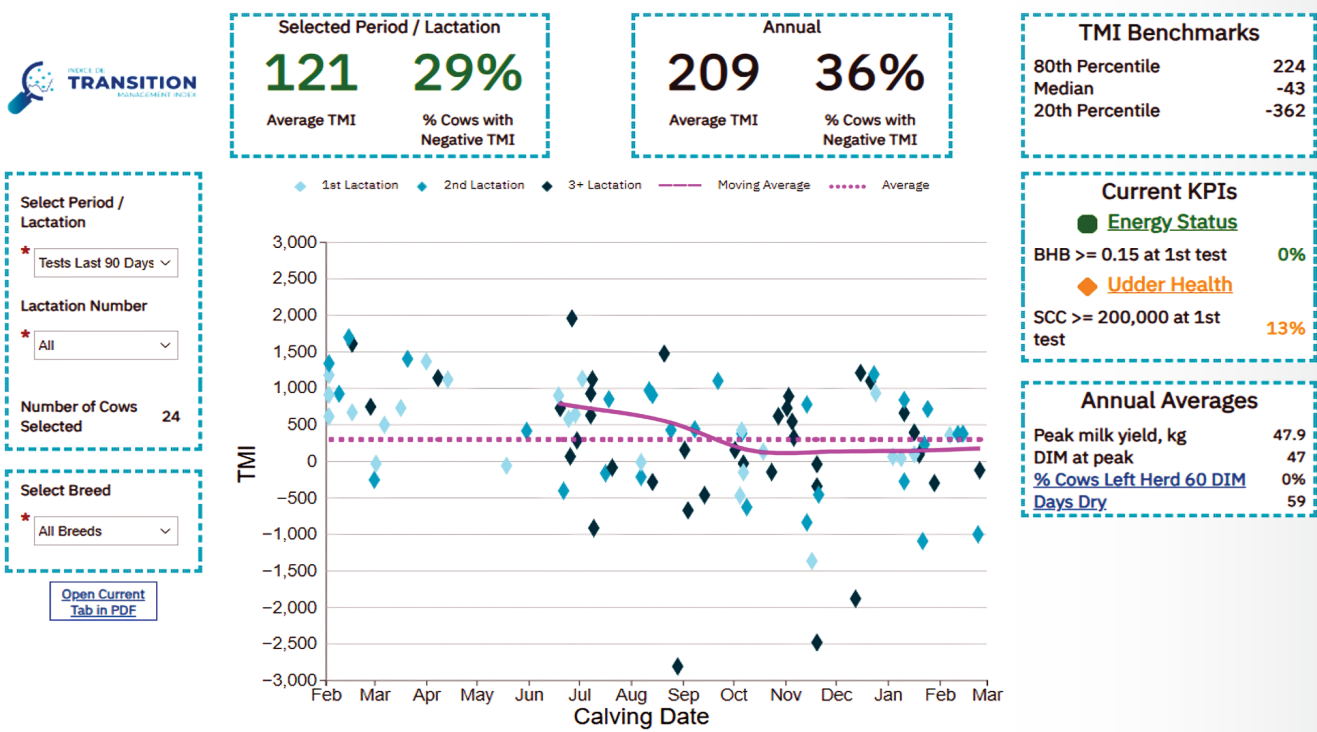
IN PURSUIT OF PROGRESS AND PROFITABILITY

Lactanet is pleased to recognize Western Canadian herds that excel in key metrics of performance and profitability. In this feature, Lactanet presents the top herds in Western Canada by Transition Management Index (TMI), an achievement that reflects outstanding transition period management. All herd data presented below are averages for 2025.

The few weeks before and after calving, known as the transition period, are a critical time when cows undergo major changes in their metabolism, physiology, and hormonal balance to successfully start their lactation. Herds that excel in this area successfully manage their dry and fresh cows to reduce challenges during this period, leading to lasting effects on production, fertility and longevity.

The TMI is an objective tool developed by Lactanet to assess the quality of the transition period. Historical milk recording data, genetic and animal information, are used to calculate the expected milk yield for each cow. A 305 d- milk projection is also calculated in the first milk test of the lactation (5-45 DIM). The difference between these values is

Transition Management Index - a new herd management tool



the TMI, whereby a positive number suggests the cow is exceeding expected production, indicating a successful transition. As illustrated by the top TMI herds for each province below, herds with higher TMIs have high butterfat and milk production. The TMI can be used to better manage the transition period of your herd. Its reports offer insights into udder health, energy status, dry period length, and culling to maximize long-term productivity and profitability. Contact Lactanet today to register for the TMI and view all your transition data together in one place!

TOP WESTERN CANADIAN HERDS BY TRANSITION MANAGEMENT INDEX (TMI)								
Farm Name	City	No. Cows*	2025 TMI Average	Milk Yield, kg/year	Fat Yield, kg/year	Protein Yield, kg/year	Days in Milk	Avg Peak Milk Yield , kg/day
ALBERTA								
DEERFIELD COLONY	MAGRATH	186	768	12957	512	420	171	49.7
CHUBANNA HOLSTEINS	LACOMBE	134	637	12445	545	445	190	54
ALJANS FARMS LTD	BARRHEAD	233	637	11756	503	399	211	48.9
NEW ELM FARMING CO. LTD.	MAGRATH	121	625	12824	518	434	162	48.9
SUNSHINE COLONY FARMING LTD.	HUSSAR	86	618	12903	510	423	177	50
BRITISH COLUMBIA								
WILLSWIKK HOLSTEINS	MILL BAY	67	581	12295	511	406	161	49.8
HAMMING HOLSTEINS LTD.	VERNON	250	568	14013	625	469	185	50.2
BENCO HOLSTEINS LTD	CHILLIWACK	149	565	11412	465	380	173	46.9
ROSGATE DAIRY FARMS LTD.	ABBOTSFORD	304	556	13572	610	460	165	49.8
WISSELVIEW FARMS	PITT MEADOWS	223	541	15057	619	528	200	55.8
SASKATCHEWAN								
SMILEY HUTTERITE COLONY	SMILEY	147	641	12710	550	425	163	50.8
MAIN CENTRE DAIRY (COLONY)	RUSH LAKE	133	565	12960	545	452	186	47.6
QUILL LAKE COLONY	QUILL LAKE	117	523	12914	578	436	161	48.9
R&F LIVESTOCK INC	CUDWORTH	98	464	10376	390	358	162	43.6
CRAILA DAIRY	LANGHAM	133	450	11952	525	409	169	45.5
MANITOBA								
DEERBOINE COLONY	ALEXANDER	57	977	14229	547	467	174	55.5
TRI LEA FARM	GRUNTHAL	110	830	12201	518	426	192	50.1
READORE FARMS	NOTRE DAME	125	612	13573	576	442	158	51.3
PLEMARK HOLSTEINS	BLUMENORT	76	583	14678	588	464	187	55.3
MAGEO POUTEAU FARMS LTD.	MARIAPOLIS	73	531	13036	543	441	168	49.2

*minimum of 20 cows



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Caring For Calves

Optimizing Calf Health: The Benefits of a Two-Stage Electrolyte Program

Jackson Matschke,
Western Canadian Sales Manager,
Grober Nutrition

Raising healthy, productive calves can begin with managing one of the most underestimated aspects of early life: proper hydration. Young calves are especially vulnerable to fluid imbalance and dehydration due to stressors like transport, heat or disease, and particularly diarrhea. Fluid intake from milk or milk replacer is insufficient to meet a calf's needs, and even free choice access to water may be insufficient during periods of stress or illness. A two-stage electrolyte program featuring products designed for different stressors can make a major difference in calf health.

Electrolytes shouldn't only be used as a reactive response to clinical dehydration. A two-stage approach recognizes that not all causes of dehydration are the same. Calves experiencing routine stress have different needs than calves suffering from active digestive disturbance. In young calves, fluid balance and acid-base homeostasis are essential for maintaining proper feed intake, digestion and immune function. Unlike adult cattle, calves have limited energy reserves and are less able to compensate for fluid loss. When dehydration occurs from stress or diarrheic episodes, growth rates decrease, recovery time increases, and morbidity risk rises.

Stage One: Preventive Support During Stress

The first stage stimulates water intake and maintains fluid balance before dehydration becomes severe. This can be done using a balanced isotonic electrolyte solution formulated for situations where water intake may decline but clinical dehydration has not yet developed.

Preventive electrolyte solutions are particularly useful during common stress events such as:

- Transportation or handling (or periods of reduced water availability or intake)
- Temperature stress
- Housing or weaning transitions

These solutions typically contain essential electrolytes such as sodium, potassium, and chloride. The goal is to encourage voluntary drinking with easily absorbable carbohydrates while supporting efficient fluid absorption through the intestinal lining. When calves stay adequately hydrated during stress events, they are more likely to continue consuming milk or milk replacer and starter. This supports rumen development, immune function, and steady weight gain.

Stage Two: Targeted Rehydration During Digestive Disturbance

The second stage is utilized when calves experience diarrhea. Diarrhea results in a rapid loss of fluids and electrolytes from the gastrointestinal tract. In addition to dehydration, calves often develop metabolic acidosis, where blood pH drops due to bicarbonate loss and electrolyte imbalance.

At this point water is insufficient. Rehydration solutions are designed specifically to replace lost fluids, restore electrolyte balance, and help correct acid-base disturbances.

These recovery-focused electrolyte formulations should include:

- A balanced electrolyte profile to replenish sodium and potassium losses
- Alkalinizing agents to support acid-base balance

- Readily digestible carbohydrates to provide energy during reduced feed intake
- Palatable ingredients to encourage voluntary consumption

Unlike products focused on preventive hydration, recovery focused solutions must actively compensate for losses already incurred. They should be used in addition to normal milk or milk replacer feedings, not as a replacement. This ensures calves continue to receive the nutrients required to maintain growth and fight disease.

Targeted and timely electrolytes at the first signs of diarrhea can reduce the severity and duration of illness. Supporting both hydration and acid-base balance helps calves regain normal appetite and activity levels more quickly.

Why a Two-Stage Approach Works

A two-stage electrolyte program is effective by ensuring prevention and intervention as separate protocols. Waiting until a calf is visibly

dehydrated before offering electrolytes often results in lost growth potential, weakened immune response, and increased labor or veterinary costs. Conversely, using only preventative support without addressing acid-base imbalances during diarrhea may not fully correct the underlying physiological disturbance.

By utilizing preventive hydration and targeted rehydration protocols during periods of stress and/or digestive upset, producers can:

- Minimize the impact of stressors
- Reduce the severity and duration of dehydration episodes
- Maintain consistent feed intake
- Support immune function



“ Rehydration solutions should be used in addition to normal milk or milk replacer feedings, not as a replacement.

Ultimately, a structured electrolyte strategy is more than supportive care, it is a proactive investment in calf performance. By aligning electrolyte support with the calf's physiological needs, producers can promote a stronger start and improved resilience in calves. 



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Are You (and Your Calves) Ready For It?

Part 2: Which system is best for you and the calves?

Jennifer Walker, DVM, Ph. D., Co-founder,
Chief Animal Welfare Officer Kinder Ground

If you checked out Part 1 on page 47 of the Winter 2026 issue of *WC Dairy News*, you appreciate that social housing (when done well) has multiple upsides for you and your calves. You may have even gotten a head start on steps 1-3, even asked your herd veterinarian to look at your current situation and started to imagine how you might transition. If so, you are ready to take the next step. Below are questions I work through with clients, and what I would choose and why. Again, don't forget my favorite resource on this topic: **Pair or group housing of dairy calves – Animal Welfare Science @ UW-Madison** https://animalwelfare.cals.wisc.edu/calf_pairing/

Step 4: It is all about you.

What are YOUR must haves? I am 100% a pasteurized whole-milk fan so that would be my first fork in the decision tree. Whole milk can be delivered 2-3 times a day by bottle, nipple bucket or in mob feeders. If you want to allow calves to feed throughout the day, that usually means automatic, "robot feeders," and that means using milk replacer, although there are some automated systems that can handle whole milk.

I loathe being cold. Even mild winters are a challenge for my hands to function without pain. Feeding and raising calves is hard enough, I guarantee that you and your staff will do a better job if you are comfortable – make sure to take that into account.

We can't ignore cost and resources. Depending on your financial situation or future labor changes, you might decide on a short-term solution while making plans for a longer-term investment down the road. Automatic feeders are not cheap, they do save time and labor in some ways, but they still require monitoring, cleaning, maintaining and very careful attention to the consistency of the milk being fed. One station provides milk for up to four feeders, each feeder ideally only feeding 8-10 calves.

Step 5: In or out?

Whether in pairs or groups, calves need a minimum of 3.3 m² of space per calf. 3.7m² is better for comfort and air quality.

Inside – Housing calves indoors has upsides and challenges. There is an obvious bonus of protection from foul weather. The parallel challenge is ensuring airflow is adequate throughout the year. Unlike cows, when it comes to calves, natural ventilation managed with the help of adjustable side curtains and positive pressure tube ventilation is best. Indoor housing also requires space to allow pens to be cleaned and therefore empty. Farms should consider having two or more small barns, where an "all in – all out" strategy can be used. Many other considerations need to be made depending on whether you plan to pair or group house. For a deep dive check out **Calf Barn Design – The Dairyland Initiative** <https://thedairylandinitiative.vetmed.wisc.edu/youngstock-housing/calf-barn-design/>

Outside – Housing calves outside generally means hutches of some sort, pre-fab or custom made. Cheaper and with the flexibility to arrange in pairs and move / orient according to season, hutches can be a great solution. Today's hutches, designed for better airflow, provide comfort in the winter and summer, although **additional shade is ideal to help**



Kinder Ground
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First, pairing younger heifers can be an excellent step before joining larger groups. Ample bedding and calf coats are extra important in colder conditions/climates.

manage heat stress for calves and caregivers during peak summer heat. The most common mistake I see is folks forcing too many calves into a hutch. The same rules apply, 3.3 m² of space per calf with the outdoor area, always accessible, allowing additional space during good weather. I don't consider the space where the calves stand to eat and drink as lying area. I calculate the number of calves based on hutch space. Pre-fab medium size individual hutch ranges from 2.4m² to 3.5m² while super hutches range from 5.4m² to 10.5m².

In and Out – Of course combining systems is an option. Depending on calf numbers you may elect to raise calves individually indoors for the first week or two and then transition to pair or group housing outside. You have lots of options!

Step 6: Buddies or Sorority House?

Each system can be designed to allow individual housing for the first few days and then transition to pair or group housing. Calves benefit from pairs or groups. My only non-negotiable is no more than ten, ideally eight, calves per group. Starting with two, removing dividers, moving individual hutches together or moving calves from an individual pen to a group are all possibilities. Much will depend on the feeding method you choose. Paired or small groups can be managed with bottles and then transitioned to mob feeders. Keep in mind, mob feeders need cleaning just like bottles! (I have seen some gross stuff growing in mob feeders.) My preference is a combination, housing calves individually, near the maternity area for the first week and then moving them with a buddy. At 14 weeks they can join the sorority.

Step 7: Start small, think big and imagine what you would like.

Calves have their own personalities and preference just like you. Allowing them to coexist benefits both and is dependent on you learning how to manage them together. Try a few pairs. Watch and learn how you and they work together. Try a small group. Small investments in experimenting with your options will help ensure success down the road and may even inspire something we have yet to imagine!



Indoor calf barns have some advantages especially where weather can be difficult. Single pens with removable partitions allow easy pairing or grouping as calves get older.



These custom group hutches for typically older heifers have ample bedding and space with efficient 'mob feeders'.

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Behind the Scenes with Dairy Farmers of Canada: 2026 Hill Day and Annual Dairy Policy Conference

Sarah Sache

Sarah is a dairy farmer from Rosedale, BC. She is a board member of BC Dairy and Dairy Farmers of Canada, as well as the co-host of 'The Canadian Podcow' podcast.

Every winter, farmers from across the country make their way to Ottawa for Dairy Farmers of Canada's Hill Day and Annual Dairy Policy Conference, held this year from February 2-5.

These events are opportunities to discuss important issues facing the industry and rural communities, and advocate for federal policies that are critical for dairy farmers and food security.

This starts with a Hill Day, where dairy farmers from every province fan out across Parliament Hill to meet with parliamentarians and government officials to share our perspectives and lobby for issues important to farmers.

One of the key priorities discussed was the importance of no dairy concessions during the upcoming CUSMA review. Beyond trade, discussions also focused on maintaining funding in the next agricultural policy framework and reducing inefficient on-farm red tape and securing funding for flood infrastructure to support farms impacted by flooding in the Sumas Prairie in British Columbia. These messages are always most powerful when they come directly from dairy farmers.

I've participated several times as a board member for both DFC and BC Dairy. It's always a privilege to represent fellow farmers and make meaningful connections between the nation's capital and farms from coast to coast. While any dairy farmer can participate in Hill Day, they need to be registered as a lobbyist by their provincial organization.

Generally speaking, dairy farmers meet with Members of Parliament or senators from their home province.

However, there are some meetings where DFC board members representing multiple provinces are present.

Together, we connected with more than one hundred parliamentarians and government officials this year, including Prime Minister Mark Carney, who shared the government's ongoing support for the industry during a brief discussion with DFC President David Wiens, Vice President Daniel Gobeil, Second Vice President Bart Rijke, and CEO Annie AcMoody.

Following the Hill Day, DFC held its Annual Dairy Policy Conference, which is open to dairy farmers (advance registration is required). The 2026 edition, themed "Foundations for the Future," focused on how our sector can lead with confidence and unity as we make real progress on the issues that matter to our industry.

Much of the program was devoted to contextualizing Canadian dairy in the current trade and economic environment. A key takeaway from these sessions was that a strong dairy sector is essential to Canada's food sovereignty and security, especially during times of uncertainty.

Another panel discussion focused on animal health and emergency preparedness. Participants emphasized the industry's need to review and test our systems while building relationships, ensuring that what we have in place stays successful.

Hill Day and the Annual Policy Conference are also powerful reminders that Canadian dairy is more than an industry, it's a vital part of our communities and our country. They show us that it's a real asset to be engaged in our national advocacy efforts.



Sarah Sache (far right), board member of DFC and BC Dairy, along with Luke Van Huizen (BC Dairy) and Tom Hoogendoorn (BC Milk), meet with Gurbux Saini, Member of Parliament for Fleetwood-Port Kells during the DFC Hill Day.



Dylan Kruger, BC Dairy's Director of Public Affairs (left) and dairy farmer Sarah Sache speaking with Ross Siemens, Mayor of Abbotsford, BC, at the Dairy Reception, which brings together farmers and parliamentarians during the Annual Dairy Policy Conference.



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Protein Boom a Boost for Dairy Sector

Pools Adjust Pricing to Incent Protein

Kate Ayers, B.Sc. Agr.

Consumers are seeking high-protein products, which presents an opportunity for the dairy sector to continue to deliver high-quality milk while capitalizing on market growth.

In 2025, yogurt consumption metrics showed a significant jump in Canada. Growth for the year averaged 8.3 per cent, compared to 0.9 per cent between 2023 and 2024, according to Farm Credit Canada (FCC). In addition, the Canadian Dairy Commission (CDC) reports that over a 12-month period, ending in December 2025, consumers increased their consumption of milk, cream, ice cream, cheese, and butter by 0.3 per cent, 1.2 per cent, 4.5 per cent, 3.1 per cent, and 5.6 per cent, respectively.

The increased domestic demand for protein has resulted in regional milk pools adjusting component pricing, which is set to change on April 1.

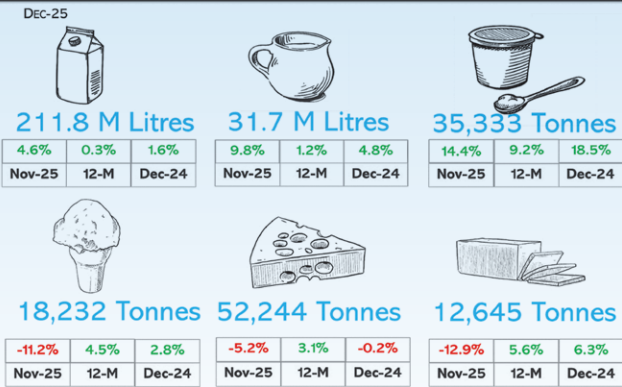
"Consumer demand continues to shift toward higher protein dairy products, and dairy farmers are responding to this evolving market reality," Alberta Milk says. "While production standards and quality requirements for Canadian dairy farmers remain unchanged, pricing policies are being adjusted to better align with growing protein demand."

As a result, producers will see changes on their monthly milk statements with a lower dollar amount placed on butterfat and higher amount placed on protein to incentivize protein production, says FCC senior economist Graeme Crosbie. In the short term, producers can expect minimal changes to their payments.

"Although the pricing of the components is changing starting April 1, ... if your average milk composition is still the same in April as it was in March, you're going to see very negligible change in your hectolitre price," Crosbie says. "In the medium to longer term, if you can achieve different composition, you could expect to see a little top up in gross revenue."

Indeed, butterfat continues to be an important component of Canadian dairy production.

TOTAL APPARENT CONSUMPTION (RETAIL, HRI, OTHERS)



Canadian Dairy Commission graphic.

Apparent consumption of many popular dairy products shows strong increases at end of 2025.

"The updated pricing approach is designed to better balance protein production with market needs, while still supporting butterfat production," Alberta Milk says.

So, the demand for high-butterfat products has not decreased, Crosbie says, but the accelerated growth in demand for high-protein products means that a void needs to be filled. Each dairy producer will approach this protein shift differently, based on their unique circumstances.

"There are several management tools available to support this transition, including adjustments to herd genetics, breeding strategies and nutritional programs," Alberta Milk says. "Ongoing research is also helping provide farmers with the knowledge and tools needed to successfully adapt to evolving market demands."

As consumer trends seem to change with the wind (or tik tok) and supply-managed

dairy production must respond to consumer demand, dairy producers must be nimble, though it's not always easy.

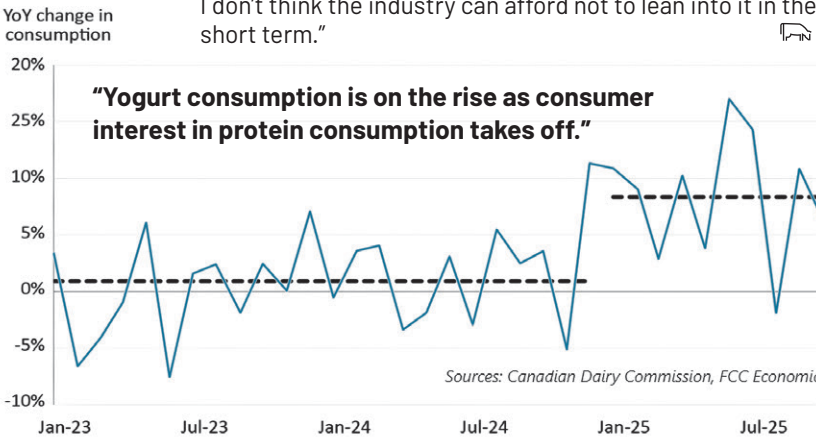
"We were in the reverse situation about 10 years ago where the demand for products high in butterfat was really growing and that created some additional protein that at the time was looking for a home," Crosbie says. "Right now, ... that growth in protein is up."

But what is the probability that the protein craze will continue? The outcomes of breeding for higher protein and lower butterfat producing animals takes multiple generations – what if the investments producers make today to increase protein production won't be realized for years to come? While not a direct indication, butterfat had staying power over the last 10 years.

"It's not a forecast of what's ... going to happen with protein, but it's just an observation," Crosbie says. "Some analysis done by a third-party forecasting outfit, ... called Euromonitor, [estimates] the medium-term growth in these high-protein and protein-added products will be quite positive and strong."

Overall, these changes could take a multi-generational effort with unknown future consumer demand.

"Will the demand be there at that time? It's a great question. I wish I had a crystal ball," Crosbie says. "At the same time, I don't think the industry can afford not to lean into it in the short term."



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AgSafe Provincial Ranch Safety Specialist, Chilcotin Regional Consultant
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Complacency, hurriedness and fatigue have historically been and continue to be contributors in agricultural incidents resulting in injury or death. It is important that you take care of yourself.

Get the rest you need for your body to function at its best: Easier said than done but for your own well-being, and that of your family, you need to try. At the risk of sounding like your momma, it is important to get a good night's sleep.

Dehydration also contributes to the potential for injury: Reducing response time, robbing energy and impairing judgment. It is important to drink plenty of water throughout the cooler days of spring and fall too, while easier to think of in the summer, and not so easy in the winter when one would rather grab a hot coffee. You need to remember that coffee contributes to dehydration and does not provide the fluids needed to stay sharp.

Breaks are still important: The long days of spring and summer work should be broken up with "micro breaks." It has been well established that a short break, even as little as 2-3 minutes, can increase your productivity and keep you more alert. Step off the tractor, away from the desk, out of the shop. Stretch, take a short walk or do a quick exercise or two.

Beware of the sun: It is still important in the winter and spring to protect yourself from the sun. Skin cancer in agriculture is a serious matter. Cover up and do all the things that you know you should – or that your spouse tells you! There is a great deal of information out there about this and how to protect yourself from the

sun, so let's be honest, it is usually much more a matter of 'not doing' rather than 'not knowing.'

Keeping Your Guards ON

During this change in seasons, field activities and functions offer a great chance to look over tools, take a walk around your equipment and facilities and see what guards are missing, then replace them. No excuses! No "I don't have time," no "they cost too much," and no "you would have to be a fool to get caught in there." Significant injuries can result from unguarded pieces of equipment. Pinch points and catch points that were designed by the manufacturer to be covered to protect you, will be exposed if guards were

removed for repairs, broke, damaged or lost, and not replaced.

A few days after a very serious PTO entanglement injury, a near fatality, I was in a bus depot in a small town. Recognizing me, the attendant asked, "What is this?" holding up a new PTO shaft cover. I told her and then inquired as to why she was asking. The attendant indicated that she had seen at least 20 of them come through in the last couple of days!

Make sure your guard is up and your guards are on.

Take care of yourself and your workers and make sure that you take the time to replace guards...before an incident, not after!

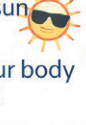
Keeping Your Guard UP



Get enough rest and stay hydrated



Take short, frequent breaks



Protect yourself from the sun

Stay alert and take care of your body as you prepare for farm work!

Keeping Your Guards ON

Replace missing or broken equipment guards

- ✓ No excuses
- ✓ Take the time to replace them
- ✓ Guard pinch and catch points



Significant injuries can result from unguarded machinery! Take care of yourself and your workers **before** an incident occurs **not after!**

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SeaValiant Calmac Perfect Emblem VG-85

PEDIGREE INFO:

Sire Name: Westcoast GD Blakely-ET

Dam Name: Valiant Calmac Perfect Emblem
2-04 2X 365d 26,630M 5.2% 1398 Fat 3.7% 983 Prot

2nd Dam: Progenesis Challen Embrace VG-87
3-07 RX 365d 40,435M 4.5% 1823 Fat 3.8% 1526 Prot

3rd Dam: Main-Drag Helix Emmitt-ET VG-87
2-06 RX 365d 25,785M 5.2% 1343 Fat 3.6% 939 Prot

4th Dam: Main-Drag Rubicon Email EX-91
3-09 3X 365d 44,440M 4.0% 1822 Fat 3.0% 1378 Pro

5th Dam: Winterhlm-WG Emotional VG-88
1-10 3X 305d 26,180M 3.2% 846 Fat 2.9% 759 Prot

6th Dam: Winterhlm-WG Bax Elated-ET EX-92
5-03 3X 365d 49,360M 3.4% 1723 Fat 2.9% 1435 Prot

7th Dam: Winterhlm-WG B G Elation-ET EX-93
5-01 3X 365d 41,730M 3.2% 1348 Fat 3.2% 1339 Prot

8th Dam: Ridgedale Emotion-ET EX-90

9th Dam: Ridgedale Emera EX-95

10th Dam: Ridgedale Emma-ET VG-88

11th Dam: Ridgedale Fond Example EX-95 GMD

Find complete data set, purchase options, and more on Bull Search at [ABSbullsearch.ABSglobal.com](https://www.ABSbullsearch.com) or contact your local ABS Representative.



KAPPA CASEIN: AB

BETA CASEIN: A2/A2

SIRE STACK: Blakely x Perfect x Challenger x Helix

REG NUM: HO CAN 000014793160

DOB: 10/8/2023

aAa: 4236

BRED BY: Valiant Dairy Genetics & Calmac Holsteins, Woodstock, ON, CAN

ACQUIRED FROM: Valiant Dairy Genetics & Calmac Holsteins, Woodstock, ON, CAN

CONFORMATION: Dtrs: 0 Herds: 0 PTAT Rel: 79%

	-2	-1	0	1	2	
PTAT						1.37
UDC						1.39
FLC						0.70
BWC						0.19
ST						0.89 Tall
SG						0.22 Strong
BD						0.28 Deep
DF						1.20 Open
RA						0.82 Sloped
TW						2.14 Wide
RLSV						0.68 Curved
RLRV						0.90 Straight
FA						0.36 Steep
FLS						0.87 High
FUA						1.18 Strong
UH						2.18 High
UW						2.19 Wide
UC						1.45 Strong
UD						0.46 Shallow
FTP						1.31 Close
RTP						1.92 Close
TL						-0.53 Short

December 2025

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Udder News

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Matt, Vanessa, big brother Korbin and big sister Kylee (Princar Holsteins) are excited to announce the safe arrival of the newest addition, Konrad David Mcquillin. He was born June 1, 2025, weighing 10lbs 1oz. Very proud grandparents are Carey and Joan Prinse (Princar Holsteins) of Chilliwack and Dave and Denise Mcquillin of Abbotsford. Delighted great grandma is Nellie Prinse, also of Chilliwack.



Congratulations to Tim (Boa-Vista Farm, Chilliwack, BC) and Alyssa (Lone Prairie Dairy, Chilliwack, BC) on welcoming their son, Carter Steven Elgersma. Carter was born January 16, 2026, at 2:51 pm, weighing 6lbs 4.5oz. He is the first grandchild for both Richard and Ashley Vander Kooi and Steve and Christine Elgersma.

Kenny and Lorna McRae of Martiann Holsteins (Delta, BC) are pleased to announce the safe arrival of their daughter, Audrey Joy McRae, on January 16, 2026, weighing 8lbs 9 oz. Ready to protect her are big brothers Nathan and Noah (2 ½ years). Proud grandparents are Perry and Angela Hamming (Martiann Holsteins) and Jim and Robin McRae (Vankleek Hill, ON). Audrey is the seventh great-grandchild for Martin and Ann Hamming!



Ian and Brianne Porter (Porter's Dairy Ltd., Chemaious, BC) are delighted to announce the birth of their second grandchild and first grandson, Walter Porter, born to proud parents Marshall and Arianna Porter on August 19, 2025. Welcome to the family little Walter!



Laurus Haralampous was born on February 21, 2026, in the Swiss canton of Graubünden. Proud parents Kaitlyn Gisler and George Haralampous were pleasantly surprised that Laurus arrived on his due date with no complications. Should Laurus become a writer, this adherence to deadlines will bode well for him. (Kaitlyn and George were past writers for this publication). Proud grandparents are Angela and Dino Haralampous of Toronto, now enjoying their retirement in Greece, and Henry Gisler from Hiding Acres Ltd. in Langley. Laurus' namesake is Grandma Laura Gisler, who we hold dearly in our hearts and miss every day. Great-grandmother Bertha Gisler has also been a great source of comfort during this special time.



Congratulations to Lee and Melissa Morey of Unique Stock Farm (Rochester, AB) on the birth of their son, Levi David Morey, on February 16, 2026, weighing 6lbs 15oz. Big sister Avery couldn't be happier with the new addition! Proud grandparents are Dave and Tracy Morey (Unique Stock Farm), Greg Gablehaus (Calgary, AB) and Gail Atha (Vernon, BC).

Gatlin Raleigh Brewster made a speedy entrance into the world on December 24, 2025, an early Christmas present for his parents Mark and Christine (Dewitt) Brewster, and big brother Rowdy. Weighing 7lbs 15oz, Gatlin is the fifth grandchild for Chris and Melanie Dewitt of Goldenset Holsteins (Sicamous, BC), and the second grandchild for AB Brewster (Bowden, AB) and the late Tanya Krough (Innisfail, AB). Christine shares, "We are incredibly fortunate to have this sweet little boy join our family." Congratulations!



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Relationship Manager
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Michele Anderson
Director
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Jeremy and Aimee Laity welcomed the first child on March 4, 2026, Redding Jeremiah Laity, weighing 6lbs 11 oz. Proud grandparents are Matthew and Deanna Laity of Brookfield Farm (Maple Ridge, BC) and Dennis and Katherine Tjernagel (Maple Ridge, BC). Redding is the eighth generation of Laitys on the family farm!



Congratulations to John Pruim and Miekie Brits on their engagement! John proposed on February 25 after a few laps around the skating rink at Boffin Gardens on the U of S campus in Saskatoon. John is the son of Art and Elaine Pruim of Plumblossom Farms (Osler, SK), and Miekie is the daughter of Nico and Elbie Brits (Saskatoon, SK). Wedding plans are pending as John continues making delicious ice cream for Twin Peaks Creamery (Warman, SK), and Miekie works as a hairdresser at Dahlia Salon in Martensville.

YES....He finally popped the question! They are ENGAGED! Justin Kampman and Kristen Boeve got engaged in November 2025. The couple share a love for agriculture and met at Lakeland College. Justin is son of Mark and Sheri Kampman of Kampman Farms (Matsqui, BC). Kristen is the daughter of Stuart and Darlene Boeve of South Prairie Farms, Taber, AB, (both grew up in Matsqui!). Kristen works for Agwest Veterinary Group and loves the dairy industry just as much as Justin. The wedding will take place in June of 2026 in Matsqui, where the couple will reside.



Ian and Brianne Porter (Porter's Dairy Ltd., Chemainus, BC) are happy to announce the marriage of their son Jack to Samantha, daughter of Janet and Todd Chwelos. Beautiful wedding took place on the family farm on July 5, 2025. The happy couple now reside on the farm, where Jack is herd manager and Sam works for her parents/family business as well as helps feed calves. Congratulations!



Congratulations to Joel Aldrich-Witt and Maia Savarella on their engagement! The couple met during the COVID era at a Starbucks drive-thru where Maia worked as a barista and Joel was a regular customer. Joel proposed in November 2025 at Sombrio Beach with the help of their 2-year-old Maltipoo, Otis. The couple is planning an intimate wedding near Otter Point, on southern Vancouver Island, with family and friends in August 2027. Joel and Maia intend to stay on the island to live and grow their family while Joel manages Farm to Garden Organics (Victoria, BC) and Maia works for Island Health. Proud parents include Jen Savarella and Glenn Sheather (Victoria, BC), Jurgen Witt (Germany) and Ridley Wikkerink (Wedgwood Holsteins, Cobble Hill, BC).



Meghan Russell and Douglas Groenendijk were married January 3, 2026, in Renfrew, ON, in front of family and friends. Meghan is the daughter of Joanne and Donald Russell of Dojo Holsteins (Cobden, ON), and Doug is the son of Chris and Henrietta Groenendijk of Greendike Farms (Chemainus, BC). After a honeymoon in Cancun, Doug and Meghan returned to Vancouver Island and Legend Dairy Farm (Chemainus, BC), where they milk 50 Jersey cows – excited to settle into the next chapter of their journey together. Congratulations!

UDDER NEWS NEXT PUBLISHING DEADLINE: MAY 15, 2026
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(Summer 2026 Issue in mail: June 16)



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Udder News *CONTINUED*

Jason Arie Herfst

March 15, 1975 – October 11, 2025

He was too young. He still had much to live for. He tried everything he could for 1.5 years to stop the cancer, which finally stopped him. He was a well-loved man.

Jason Arie Herfst, son of the late Ken Herfst, Barb Herfst, husband to Amy, father to Arianna Grace and Zachary Robert, passed away Saturday, October 11th, 2025, at 6:06am at Abbotsford Hospital under the careful watch of Amy and his kids.

Jason was born and raised in Chilliwack (Rosedale), one of six boys (Rick, Greg, Kevin, Dave, Dan). He graduated from Timothy Christian School. Jason was a dairy farmer until he sold his farm and enjoyed an early retirement. As a farmer, he was an innovator, being one of the first in the Fraser Valley to install robotic milkers and other technological advances.

Jason loved sports, especially hockey, which he played and encouraged in his son Zach, enough to build a rink in their backyard. He was always there for his kids, Ari's dance and aspirations as a chicken farmer, and Zach's hockey. He was an exemplary father with clear guidelines, but always loving and kind. He carried himself with a sense of grace that made him the type of person who was easy to like, easy to get along with, and a good friend.

He will be greatly missed by his brothers, their spouses (Clarinda, Nancy, Rebecca, Sue, Kandis) and his many nieces and nephews, as well as Amy's parents, Rob and Carol Lees, her brother Noah and Erin, and their children.

Gratitude to all those carers, health care professionals, and friends who were on the journey with the family. Donations in his name can be made to comserv.bc.ca (Chilliwack Community Services).



Elsie Hildegard (Loewen) Goerzen

August 18, 1945 – January 6, 2026

Elsie Hildegard Goerzen, daughter of Jacob and Edith Loewen, was born on August 18, 1945, in Rosetown, SK. She was greeted by three brothers, Ernie, well known to the dairy industry, being the eldest. In 1946, the family moved to a dairy farm in Matsqui, BC. Elsie often spoke of the joy of the morning milking chores as a teenager – quality time alone with her dad.

Elsie and Walt were married in May 1967 after she completed nursing training at VGH. Two years later, after Walt graduated from UBC, they moved to Creston where they enjoyed five wonderful years, Elsie worked as an RN in the local hospital, Walt as District Agriculturist. Both sons, Paul and Mark were born there. When the young family transferred to Chilliwack in 1974, Elsie chose to be a stay-at-home mother, providing strong support for the family. She enjoyed volunteering in the local school, their church and related community agencies. As the family grew, she embarked on a 40-year career, the first 20 as the founder and volunteer director of Sardis Doorway Society for single mothers. In the second part of her career, she was hired by MCC to develop and lead a program in domestic abuse. She loved the work of growing the program, was passionate about addressing issues of domestic violence and clergy sexual misconduct. She was invited to speak in many churches and community agencies, including education classes at Columbia Bible College and the UFV Nursing program.

Elsie lived her deep faith in real time by advocating for justice, supporting the abused, caring for the poor and the needy. She spoke up for mutuality in marriages, safety in the home, and equality in the church. Elsie's career ended in late 2023, when serious breathing problems required a tracheostomy. A cancer diagnosis followed with complications. When Elsie was re-hospitalized in late November 2025, she was greatly disappointed to miss the dairy conference where Walt was presented (in absentia) with the 2025 Dairy Industry Achievement Award.

She passed away peacefully into the presence of God on January 6th with Walt and Paul at her side. Elsie is survived by husband Walt, sons Paul (Rebecca), Mark (Jen) and five adult grandchildren. She is survived by all her eight siblings.

In addition, she will be greatly missed by countless women and men who benefited from her work, her ministry and friendship. She is gone to the next place, but the memory of who she was, and the impact of her life's work will continue for generations to come.



Neeltje (Nel) Poelman

September 19, 1935 – February 26, 2026

Neeltje (Oma) Poelman passed away peacefully on February 26, 2026, after spending her last days at home surrounded by loving family and dear friends.

Nel was born in Houten, Netherlands, on September 19, 1935, the only daughter of Cornelius and Johanna van der Kley. She immigrated to Canada in 1952 with her parents and younger brother Arie on board the Leerdam, where she also met the love of her life, Jannes Poelman. They were all sponsored by the same fruit grower in the Okanagan.

After relocating to the Island, Nel married Jannes on June 4, 1955, in the Christian Reformed Church in Duncan. The happy couple purchased their farm in Shawnigan Lake the day before the wedding and were blessed with four children during their time there.

Nel was an immensely supportive partner to Jannes, helping in the barn and dairy, washing bottles and carrying milk on the milk route they had for several years. In 1964, the family moved to Cowichan Bay, where Sunny Vale Farm continues today. Nel loved the cows and always eagerly awaited the results of classification day or new additions to the herd, right up to the end of her life.

She was actively involved in church life at Duncan CRC, serving with various committees and groups, and visiting. She was also an Honourary Lifetime Member of the Vancouver Island Holstein Club and the Cobble Hill Farmers Institute, participating in the Cobble Hill Fair for more than 60 years.

Nel devoted countless hours to her projects – knitting thousands of pairs of socks for family and friends, toques for the Ministry to the Seafarers, and sewing items for Canada Comfort. Her hands were rarely idle. The door to her home was always open for family, friends and strangers, and no one ever left hungry.

Nel is predeceased by her husband of 61 years, Jannes (2016), son John (1996), grandson Anthony (2001), and son-in-law Don (2016).

She leaves to mourn, but not without hope, Audrey (Ralph), Shirley, Grace (Wim), and Gerald (Shannon); nine grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, brother Arie, many nieces and nephews, treasured friends and countless others whose lives she touched.



Charles Iberg

April 16, 1942 – January 26, 2026

Charles Iberg passed away peacefully on January 26, 2026, surrounded by his family.

Charlie was born on April 16, 1942, in Murrayville, British Columbia, the son of Swiss parents Karl "Charles" and Elisabeth Iberg. Charlie grew up on the family dairy farm. As a young man, he took his teacher training at Simon Fraser University, where he began as a charter student when it opened in September of 1965. He taught at Otter Elementary for a year and was head teacher at South Otter Elementary for two years. In 1970, he decided to farm full time, shipping milk and building a Holstein herd known as Idelle Holsteins and later Iberg Farms. Charlie came to the dairy barn faithfully up until the pandemic in 2020. He continued to feed heifers at his barn until his first stroke in November 2023.

Over the years, Charlie served on many agriculture boards and committees including Director on the BC Milk Marketing board from 1997-2003, Director at BCAI Center (now WestGen) from 1981-1988 and President 1989 -1997.

In the past 20 years, Charlie's hobbies included tending his large vegetable garden and fruit trees, the harvest of which he processed, canned or shared with others. He also enjoyed cutting lumber on his portable sawmill. He built and gave away many tables, bookcases, desks, and birdhouses made from trees he cut from the farm or donated logs.

Charlie will be greatly missed by his daughter Shelley (Bill) Yarbrough and son Karl (Marianne) Iberg; grandchildren Katie Iberg (Shawn Campbell), Tricia (Wesley) van der Sluis, Jeffrey (Jessie) Iberg and Jaylin "Jayce" Iberg-Weston (Spencer Stephenson); great-grandchildren Averie and Ethan van der Sluis, Lillian and Rowynn Iberg; sister Freda Smith; nieces Wendy Smith, Kerry (Gordon) Peturrson, nephew Gordon (Bridget) Smith, many grand and great-grandnieces and nephews, his longtime friend Doris Riedweg and friend Fonging.

Charlie was predeceased by daughter Aleta Iberg, sisters Anna and Ida Iberg, niece Nancy Smith, grandnephew Spencer Smith-Copus and longtime friend John Riedweg.

No service by request, but family is planning an on-farm gathering in honour of his memory. Details to follow.



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4-H News From BC

Next submission deadline: May 15,
Summer 2026 issue in the mail June 16.

Chris Maarhuis: 604-855-1240
E-mail: Chris@holsteinnews.com

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CANADA
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AGASSIZ RAINBOW 4-H CLUB

Club Reporter: Mariah T.



The Agassiz Rainbow 4-H Club would like to honor the astounding commitment and dedication of Debbie Schwaerzle. She has served for 45 amazing years! Debbie is the kind of person that inspires today's youth by being a great example of hard work and mentorship. Throughout the years she has spent countless hours doing everything she can to support her 4-H members to succeed. Her leadership has shaped the members in our club into stronger individuals. She teaches the members to be community minded, to work hard and to keep going when life gets tough. She attends every fair, every event and does a lot of work behind the scenes. She is a woman of deep character and isn't afraid to get her hands dirty when it's required.

Thank you Debbie, for inspiring your 4-H members to work hard and make the most of each opportunity that comes their way. Well done, and you will be deeply missed!

4-H Leader standing Ovation

Debbie Schwaerzle!

We offer our profound gratitude to Deb for a lifetime of giving to 4-H and for shaping countless lives for the better in the process.

CHILLIWACK 4-H DAIRY CLUB

Club Reporter: Paige Wedler



Our club has had an exciting start to the year! We kicked things off with elections and our first meeting. This year our club members have dairy, beef, and sheep projects, and we are all really looking forward to a great year ahead. Our 2026 executives are:

President – Kirstyn Kobes Vice President – Cole VandenBrink
Secretary – Kayla Schurmann Treasurer – Chelsey Allen

We also recently held our speech night, which was a success. Everyone did a great job presenting their speeches and supporting each other. Also, thank you to our judges Cory Cassel and Shania Postma-Duncan! Our results were:

1st – Kayla Schurmann 2nd – Kirstyn Kobes 3rd – Cole VandenBrink

We are excited for all the activities, learning opportunities, and fun our club will have this year. We would also like to say a big thank you to all of our previous and continuing sponsors for supporting our club!

COWICHAN HOLSTEIN 4-H CLUB

Club Reporter: Lillian Wikkerink



Cowichan 4-H Holstein Club is excited to be starting a brand new year. We are starting the year with eight members and four leaders in our club. In January, we elected our club officers – President: Amy, Vice President: Julia, Treasurer: Mylee, Secretary: Melia, Safety Officer: Jeremy and club reporter: Lillian.

Club members are now busy selecting calves and starting the training process. At our February meeting, club speeches were held and our winning member was Julia with her speech, "What Makes a Joke Funny." We also had examples given of demonstrations and education boards so we could learn and prepare for our March meeting.

We are excited about the coming year and looking forward to a successful year.

MATSQUI HOLSTEIN 4-H CLUB

Club Reporter: Jason Kampman



Hey! My name is Jason Kampman, and I am the new club reporter for Matsqui Holstein. This year we have 14 members. We started the year in January when we had elections. The results were:

President – Charis Kampman Vice President – Michael Kampman
Secretary – Addison Dunne Treasurer – Eli Kampman
Club Reporter – Jason Kampman Corresponding Secretary – Mikaela Yoder
Safety Officer – Viv Hessels

Our next meeting was our club fun night at Galaxy Bowl where we talked about speech topics and handed out calf ID sheets.

On March 7 we held our club speeches. All of our members did a fantastic job! Our winners were:

Seniors 1. Michael Kampman 2. Addison Dunne 3. Charis Kampman
Juniors 1. Mikaela Yoder 2. Julianne Hessels 3. Jason Kampman

A huge thank you to our judges, Megan Baars and Tara Sweetnam, for doing a great job. And a huge thank you to WestGen for hosting us as well. Good luck to the members who are going on to Districts.

Next on our club calendar, we have to finalize our calf selections and begin to train our animals for the upcoming show season. We look forward to a fun 4-H season and hope to see many familiar (and new) faces!

SUMAS HOLSTEIN 4-H CLUB

Club Reporter: Mia Bouwman



The club had its first meeting on January 24 at Birchwood Dairy. A huge thank you to them for letting us use their space. In the meeting, we elected our club executives for the year and then had ice cream!

President: Kaycee Meier **Vice President:** Elinor Hammersmark

Secretary: Olivia Dueck **Treasurer:** Jenoah Winkelaar

News Reporter: Mia Bouwman **Safety Officer:** Dominic Hill

Club Newsletter: Tonia Bouwman

The second meeting that we had was a 4-H info day at WestGen. A huge thanks to them for letting us use their space. We had a recap on how to do judging, speech writing and how to fill out record books for Juniors. The Seniors went out to the barn to practice judging heifers. Sumas Holstein had a very successful berry fundraiser during the months of January and February. Thank you to everyone who bought berries in support of your local 4H club.

In March we did club speeches, also hosted at WestGen. Thank you to them for hosting two of our events in a row. Congratulations to club members that went on to districts and everyone else for doing a great job presenting their speeches to the club.

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Industry Updates

Congratulations to Dr Nina – Officer of Order of Canada!

Earlier in January, UBC's Dr. Marina von Keyserlingk was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada! We share UBC's press release:

"The Order of Canada is one of our country's highest honours, recognizing people from all sectors of society who have made extraordinary and sustained contributions to Canada.

Dr. von Keyserlingk is a global leader in animal welfare science, transforming the way people think about farm animals. Her influential work has guided animal agriculture towards meaningful change in Canada and around the world. In addition, Dr. von Keyserlingk has made a profound impact on the academic and professional development of students – last year winning the competitive Dr. Suning Wang Award for Outstanding Graduate Mentorship from the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS), and previously winning Killam Prizes for research, teaching, and mentorship."

We applaud the dedication Nina has given to animal welfare science – helping guide our industry with a defensible science-based approach to animal care standards.



Strategic Partnership Enhances Smart Irrigation and Efficiency

Earlier in February, Delta Irrigation and West Coast Robotics announced a strategic partnership bringing together fully integrated, design-driven solutions for dairy farmers across Western Canada. From their press release:

"By aligning expertise in irrigation, water management, farm automation and robotics, the partnership brings a highly collaborative approach to farm infrastructure – designing the right solution from the field to the barn.

As agriculture further evolves toward automation and resource efficiency, the partnership brings together Delta Irrigation's experience in irrigation design and project installations with West Coast Robotics' advanced dairy automation and



Delta CEO – Chris Les, West Coast Robotics CEO – Brian Rodenburg and Delta's Executive Board Chair – Larry Les.



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Probiotics Show Promise for Protecting Colostrum-Compromised Calves

Nilusha Malmuthuge, Ph.D., University of Calgary
Le Luo Guan, Ph.D., The University of British Columbia

Dairy producers know that the first hours of a calf's life can shape its health far into the future. But despite best efforts, not every newborn calf receives enough high-quality colostrum to achieve adequate IgG transfer. These colostrum-compromised calves face higher risk for diarrhea and pneumonia. Disproportionate antimicrobial use in dairy calves is a direct result of these calfhood diseases during the pre-weaning period, costing time and money. Generally, mitigation of calfhood diseases uses a treatment-focused strategy. However, new research is

shedding light on an emerging tool that may help turn the tide: **bovine-derived probiotics designed specifically for newborn calves.**



New research shows that bovine-derived probiotics designed specifically for newborn calves is helping mitigate calfhood diseases, reducing reliance on antimicrobials.

Ranga Nakandalage photo

A Targeted Probiotic for the Calves Who Need It Most

In a recent study, we used Holstein calves that received sub-optimal colostrum and supplemented them with a cocktail of five *Bifidobacterium longum* subsp. *longum* strains (Bovine-derived bifidobacteria cocktail) during the first two weeks of life and followed them for five weeks to study gut microbial colonization and health outcomes. These strains were *not generic probiotics*, they were isolated from healthy neonatal calves, meaning they are naturally adapted to and colonize the bovine gut early in life. When these organisms colonize, they are known to help calves develop better immunity and prevent enteric pathogen colonization. Calves received the probiotic only during the first two weeks of life, a critical window when the gut microbiome is still establishing.

“A healthier gut is linked to improved overall immune function. Healthier lungs mean fewer treatments, less time spent caring for sick calves, and lower veterinary costs during a period when margins are already tight.”

Even after the intervention ended, the effects were striking. One of the most encouraging findings of the study is how long the probiotic benefit lasted in colostrum-compromised calves. Calves supplemented with the bovine-derived *Bifidobacterium* cocktail maintained significantly elevated *Bifidobacterium* densities at five weeks of age, despite the intervention concluding on day 14 (Figure 1). This prolonged response shows that early-life supplementation can help set

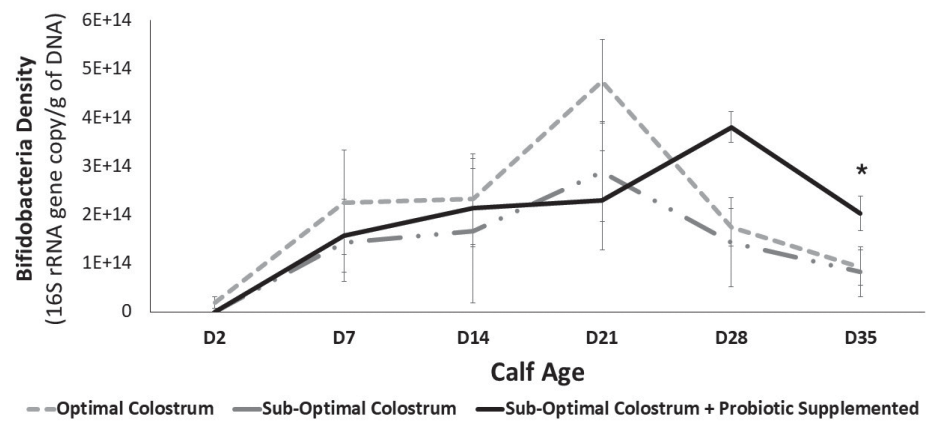
a healthier microbial “trajectory,” supporting more resilient gut development without requiring continuous dosing. For calves that begin life at a disadvantage due to low IgG intake, establishing this early microbial stability may be exactly what helps them avoid common disease challenges as they progress through the pre-weaning period.

Health Improvements Beyond the Gut

While gut health is the primary target, the study documented effects that matter directly to producers: reduced respiratory disease severity. At necropsy on day 35, calves receiving Bovine-derived bifidobacteria cocktail displayed lower likelihood of developing lung lesions due to respiratory infections than untreated, colostrum-compromised peers. Although respiratory disease is often viewed

How This Fits into On-Farm Management

Colostrum management will always be the cornerstone of neonatal calf care, but when delayed feedings, low-quality colostrum, or difficult births result in inadequate IgG transfer – and the window for passive immunity has already closed – producers need practical tools to support these at-risk calves. Even with just a 14-day feeding period beginning on day two, the bovine-derived bifidobacteria cocktail continued to shape beneficial gut microbiota establishment through at least day 35, and calves showed fewer signs of respiratory infections causing lung lesions, demonstrating a lasting and meaningful impact from an early-life intervention. Importantly, these benefits



independently from gut health, these results strengthen what many veterinarians already observe, a healthier gut is linked to improved overall immune function. Healthier lungs mean fewer treatments, less time spent caring for sick calves, and lower veterinary costs during a period when margins are already tight.

highlight that bovine-derived bifidobacteria cocktail can be strategically used not only to support colostrum-compromised calves but also as a routine supplement for all newborn calves to strengthen microbial establishment, enhance resilience, and reduce reliance on antimicrobials across the entire calf program.

WESTERN DAIRY RESEARCH COLLABORATION

2025 Review

Since 2024, the western provincial dairy organizations have collaborated to streamline research efforts and investment. This approach has funded applied and basic research and leveraged the expertise of local and national academic institutions, in response to evolving industry needs.



WESTERN DAIRY RESEARCH PRIORITIES



Animal Health, Care & Welfare

- 1. Develop effective solutions to prevent and manage diseases while supporting the responsible stewardship of antimicrobial use.
- 2. Identify and improve feeding and management practices to promote long term health and performance.
- 3. Develop strategies and tools to improve genetics and reproduction performance.

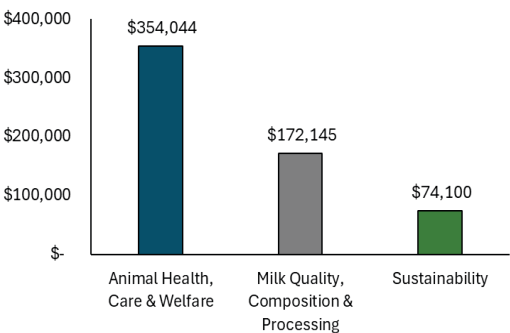
Milk Quality, Composition & Processing

- 1. Advance the understanding and management of milk quality and composition on farm.
- 2. Develop tools and practices to improve management of udder health.
- 3. Pursue opportunities to advance value added dairy products and valorize processing byproducts.

Dairy Farm Sustainability (Economic, Social & Environmental)

- 1. Develop strategies to improve dairy farm efficiency, productivity and profitability.
- 2. Develop sustainable feed crop varieties and management practices that enhance productivity and efficiency.
- 3. Manage and reduce the water footprint of dairy farms.
- 4. Develop soil management strategies to improve soil health.

Project funding committed by priority area in 2025



Thank you to our all our research and funding partners

8 research institutions across Canada
16 co-funders (government, non-profit and private)

The Western Research Producer Working Group includes two producer representatives from each province who review all proposals for industry relevance and alignment with research priorities.

Core Goals

- 1. Increase the value of research to producers through targeted knowledge translation and transfer (KTT) activities
- 2. Work collaboratively with research partners to leverage producer dollars invested in research.
- 3. Maximize impact of innovation for producers by identifying and addressing key challenges through targeted research funding.

47 proposals reviewed
12 multiyear projects identified for funding

\$600 thousand producer dollars invested
\$8 million contributed by funding partners

for each producer dollar invested in research, an additional

\$ 13

was leveraged from our funding partners



Building the Foundations of Biosecurity on BC Dairy Farms

Morgan Sangster, BC Dairy Producer Support Manager

306-290-5695 Msangster@bcdairy.ca

Protecting animal health is one of the most important responsibilities for dairy producers. In British Columbia, a series of practical, hands-on "Building Blocks of Biosecurity" workshops have been delivered to dairy farmers to strengthen on-farm preparedness against disease risks. These sessions are led by Erin Cuthbert, Dairy Inspector with the BC Ministry of Agriculture, and Morgan Sangster, Producer Support Manager with BC Dairy, and bring together local veterinarians and producers to focus on practical disease prevention strategies.

The goal of the workshops is simple: provide dairy farmers with the knowledge and tools needed to develop or strengthen their **on-farm biosecurity plans**, while reinforcing the importance of traceability and herd management practices that protect the broader dairy industry.

Understanding Animal Health Risks

Each workshop begins with presentations from **local veterinarians**, who provide valuable insight into current and emerging animal health threats facing the dairy industry. These sessions focus on diseases that can significantly impact dairy herds, including infectious diseases that may spread rapidly if biosecurity measures are not in place.

Veterinarians discuss several key topics, including:

- **Common disease threats affecting dairy cattle**
- **The potential impact on herd health and productivity**



- **How diseases are transmitted, such as through animal movement, people, equipment, feed, and wildlife**

- **Vaccination options and preventative health strategies**

These discussions help producers understand how quickly diseases can move between farms and how proactive management can significantly reduce risk. For many producers, hearing real examples from veterinary professionals helps reinforce the importance of implementing strong preventative measures.

Building a Farm-Specific Biosecurity Plan

A key component of the workshops is helping producers understand how to develop and strengthen their own biosecurity plans. Biosecurity is not a one-size-fits-all approach; every farm has different risks depending on its location, layout, herd size, and management practices.

To help producers visualize risk points on their operations, each participant is provided

with large printed Premises Identification (PID) maps of their farm. These maps allow producers to physically review their farm layout and identify areas where disease could potentially enter or spread.

During the workshop, Erin Cuthbert and Morgan Sangster guide producers through the core components of a biosecurity plan, including:

- **Controlled access points for visitors, vehicles, and equipment**
- **Designated clean and dirty zones within the farmyard**
- **Cleaning & Disinfection station set up**
- **Visitor Log – Having one – and making people use it.**

Using their PID maps, producers work through these concepts and identify potential improvements to their current farm management practices. This interactive approach allows farmers to leave the workshop with practical ideas they can immediately apply on their operations.

Strengthening Traceability

Another important focus of the workshops is traceability, a critical component of both disease response and food system integrity. Traceability ensures that animals can be quickly identified and tracked in the event of a disease outbreak or food safety issue. DairyTrace tracks cattle movement and in the event of a disease outbreak, allows authorities to quickly determine where animals have moved and which farms may be affected.

Workshop discussions emphasize the importance of maintaining an **accurate and up-to-date herd inventory**, including proper animal identification and movement reporting. Keeping records current ensures that producers are prepared if traceability information is needed quickly during a disease investigation.

Practical Tools for Long-Term Protection

The feedback from producers attending the workshops has been positive. Many farmers appreciate the opportunity to review their biosecurity plans in a practical setting and discuss real-world challenges with industry experts.

By combining veterinary expertise, farm-specific planning tools, and clear guidance on traceability and disease prevention, the Building Blocks of Biosecurity workshops are helping dairy producers strengthen the resilience of their farms.

In an industry where animal health is directly tied to productivity, sustainability, and public trust, these workshops provide producers with the knowledge and confidence needed to protect their herds – and the broader dairy sector.










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Island Milk Producers Organization AGM

Trade Uncertainty and Elk Damage add to Cost Pressures on the Island

Amanda Poelman

The Island Milk Producers Organization (IMPO) held their AGM on February 17 in Nanaimo, which was well attended by interested producers and industry partners.

In his President's Report, Luke Van Huizen highlighted some bright spots in the industry over the past year, including the continued decline of interest rates, the record high prices of dairy cattle and beef calves, and the timely rainfall that allowed for good quality forages in 2025. Despite several positives, Luke emphasized the ongoing economic challenges that Island dairy operations continue to face. This was particularly evident in the results of the Cost-of-Production (COP) study conducted by BC Dairy, which showed that 18 of 19 island producers were unprofitable in 2023, the year from which the data was collected. "The study has validated the economic pressures that we feel here," said Luke, urging producers to continue to share their data as the COP study continues. "Expanding the data set over the next five years increases our credibility and allows for stronger lobbying on our behalf." He also noted that the Island region had the highest participation in the COP study, showing that, "We lead by example."

On the national level, Luke drew attention to the continued uncertainty growing around CUSMA negotiations. The key American concern remains centred on tariff-rate quota (TRQ) allocation, a recurring friction point in the dairy

sector. "The uncertainty of the American government has forced Canada too often to focus on the chaos and challenges versus opportunities to help." Citing the recent DFC Policy conference in Ottawa, Luke noted that conference speakers believe negotiations will likely extend past the July 1st deadline, with neither Canada nor the U.S. eager to cement a new deal. Given the current US administration,, uncertainty around trade policy is expected to be a live and evolving issue for producers.

Industry Updates

Casey Pruim, BC Dairy chair, also provided updates on the recent advocacy work in Ottawa. "The BC contingent had 22 meetings with federal officials on two main topics: Trade and Tariffs and Flood Resiliency in Abbotsford," said Casey, adding, "The government has heard us and continues to hear us." The main trade message was to keep supply management off the negotiation table and explaining the implications and impact that further concessions will have on dairy farmers.

Casey also discussed the impact that the Agriculture Wildlife Program's reduction in compensation has had. "The reduction from 80% to 51% compensation for wildlife damage due to budget constraints has prompted BC Dairy to lobby the Minister

of Agriculture to reconsider," said Casey. "I urge you, especially if you are impacted by this change, to reach out to your MLA immediately."

Graeme Fowler, Wildlife Mitigation Specialist, echoed Casey's sentiment later in the afternoon, saying, "The AWP has always been a request program with a minimum claim of \$1000. Over time, hobby farmers became eligible for compensation as well, essentially eroding the budget for commercial farmers whose losses are much greater. This has to stop." Graeme suggested that raising the minimum claim and requiring income statements showing more than \$50K in agriculture revenue would help to more appropriately direct compensation funds. Graeme encouraged producers to put pressure on both the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship -

who is largely responsible for the lack of mitigation measures in place for the island's largest contributor of crop damage: Roosevelt Elk.

Milk Quality Winners

The AGM closed with the announcement of the Island's 2025 Milk Quality winners by Matt Lee of Island Dairy Services. For the second year in a row, Riverwater Farm (Duncan) topped the list with a combined SCC and IBC score of 46,587. They were followed by Viewfield Farms (Courtenay) with 54,035 and J. William Wikkerink Farms (Cobble Hill) with 59,598.



Albert Wikkerink (Riverwater Farm) receives the Island's 2025 Top Milk Quality Award from sponsor Matt Lee (Island Dairy Services), for the second straight year. Riverwater was also third in BC for 2025.



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Jersey Canada News

Congratulations to the 2026 Jersey Canada Award Winners

Master Breeder

SLEEGERHOLM

Mike & Brenda Sleepers and Family - Belmont, Ontario



Farms Ltd. in Belmont, Ontario. It was when they began adding Jerseys in the late 1990s that they introduced the SLEEGERHOLM prefix.

Today, the herd is evenly split between Jerseys and Holsteins, with 65 cows currently in lactation. After a devastating barn fire, the family built a new free-stall barn featuring 88 deep-bedded stalls and two A5 Lely milking robots and returned to milking in July 2024.

The herd currently averages 35 litres of milk per day, with a BCA of 280-290-297, and 71% of cows are classified Very Good or higher.

The Master Breeder award recognizes long-term excellence in breeding Jersey cows and is based on a points system. The points are calculated using criteria found on our website - jerseycanada.com/awards

Constructive Breeders

BELLASKA

Ferme Bellaska Jersey - La Durantaye, Québec



Ferme Bellaska is owned by Guillaume Dumais and Anne-Marie Girard in La Durantaye, Québec. With a breeding program focused on balance, they have a milk production average of 8,805 kg (301-315-325) and a classification score of 21EX, 30VG, 8GP. Bellaska has sat among the best herds at both the provincial and national level in the Herd Performance Index for several years. Their future plans include increasing quota and improving housing and cattle comfort.

This is their second Jersey Canada Constructive Breeder award after receiving one in 2020.

ELEGANCE

Ferme Elégance - St-Gervais-de-Bellechasse, Quebec



Owned and operated by Jean-Noël Labbe and Marie-France Ross and their family, Ferme Elégance is in St-Gervais-de-Bellechasse, Québec. They milk 95 kg of quota with a 50/50 Holstein and Jersey herd in a milking parlour. Elégance's Jersey production average is 8,980 kg of milk with 5.4% fat and 3.91% protein. They look forward to integrating the next generation on the farm while increasing quota and continuing to diversify the herd's genetics by introducing new cow families.

This is their second Jersey Canada Constructive Breeder award after receiving one in 2020.

CIBOULETTE

Ferme Ciboulette Inc. - St-Pierre-de-Lamy, Québec



Ferme Ciboulette Inc. is a generational farm owned by Sylvain Ouellet and Julie Gagnon and their son Maxime. They operate in a tie-stall on a total quota of 107 kg and production averages of 8,726 kg milk and a BCA of 288-302-315. Ciboulette purchased their first Jersey in 2007, and Jerseys now make up 60% of their herd. With a focus on breeding sustainable, well-balanced high producing cows with functional type, their Jersey classification is 5ME, 4EX, 32VG, 7GP.

Calculation of the Constructive Breeder Award follows the same method for point accumulation as the Master Breeder Award, within a shorter time period. Other criteria can be found on our website - jerseycanada.com/awards.

Individual Award Recipients

Every year Jersey Canada accepts nominations for a variety of individual awards. The following individuals were nominated by their peers and fellow Jersey Canada members:

Honorary Life Member - recognizes long-term leadership contribution to the Jersey breed. Nominations must be accompanied by a resume outlining the nominee's Jersey involvement through the years.

Brent & Betty Butcher
GRANCLARE/BRENBE
Ayr, Ontario



Diane Jarrell-Ray & Roger Ray
HOLLYLANE
Corbyville, Ontario



Distinguished Service Award - recognizes a unique long-term commitment to the betterment of the Jersey cow in the areas of leadership, promotion, genetic improvement, marketing - open to any member of the Jersey fraternity - few such awards have been given in the history of the association. This is the highest honour given by Jersey Canada and is therefore given when deemed appropriate.



Lorne Ella
ROCK ELLA
Milton, Ontario

Certificate of Appreciation - awarded periodically to people within the agricultural industry who render a particular service above and beyond the call of duty to the goals and the objectives of the association. Recipients have often been employees of industry partner companies.

Doug Green
Ayr, Ontario



Jersey Young Achievers - recognizes the accomplishments of Jersey breeders under the age of 40. Must be accompanied by a resume of accomplishments with Jerseys, the community and family.

Allison Bossel
LIBERTY GEN - Winchester, Ontario



Ed Cooper
WALNUTLANE - Cardinal, Ontario



Daniel Poirier
CAVA - Lefavre, Ontario



Youth of Distinction - recognizes individuals between 18 to 25 years of age that show strong leadership and involvement in agriculture, the community and the Jersey breed in Canada.



Cassidy Porteous
AYRPORTE
Winchester, Ontario

More information on all the 2026 Jersey Canada Award winners can be found on the Jersey Canada Facebook page. The awards were presented at the Jersey Canada AGM and Awards Banquet on March 28, 2026, in Ottawa, Ontario, at the Hilton Garden Inn Ottawa Airport.

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