



'Best Phone Call to Get - EVER!'

Three New Producers to Enter BC's Dairy Industry

The BCMMB received 33 NEP applications and five NEPO applications this spring, conducting seven interviews after the lottery process. The successful NEP candidates are eligible to receive 15kgs of Continuous Daily Quota (CDQ) as incentive quota to start milk production, which must begin by December 31, 2027, plus up to 8kgs of matching CDQ provided on a 1:1 ratio basis during the 10 years of the program.

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

Amanda Poelman

Brent & Cheryl Posthumus

Cheryl grew up on her family's dairy in Abbotsford and attended Olds College to earn her Veterinary Assistant diploma. Following school, Cheryl spent eight years working at Corner's Pride Farm in Chilliwack, where she milked and was involved in the heifer raising program.

Although Brent didn't grow up on a farm, he began working for local dairies in Abbotsford as soon as he was old enough to drive. His family moved to Saskatchewan to dairy farm in 2000 but moved in back in 2003 and got into the poultry industry. Brent completed his Agriculture Livestock diploma at

University of the Fraser Valley, followed by a degree in Ag Business. Since then, he has continued to work on various dairies, covering for producers going on holidays, doing some custom field work, and driving grain truck for Lindsey Dirks Grain.

"We always knew we wanted to dairy farm," say Brent and Cheryl, who were married in 2014 and have six kids ranging from 1 - 10 years in age. "With the high price, it doesn't make sense to just buy," says Brent, "so we've been applying since the new version of the graduated entry program began." The couple was short-listed three years ago, so they knew what to expect during the interview, diligently updated their business plan and "tried not to get our hopes up!"

Brent and Cheryl purchased a 50-acre

vacant dairy farm in the Sumas Prairie in 2025. "It hasn't been operational for a long time, but the bones are there," says Cheryl, "We'll need to overhaul the parlour and put stalls back in, but already owning our own place is a blessing." The Posthumus' plan to match their quota allotment right away and start production in November with 25 cows, sourced from neighbours in the area.

"I was just getting ready to clean out the barn when the call came in," says Brent, "I called Cheryl, and we immediately told our kids; the older ones are very excited!" Brent and Cheryl quickly reached out to their families and to the producers who wrote reference letters on their behalf. Brent says, "It's been nice to work for others and of course you do your best for them, but we are thrilled for the



opportunity to do it for ourselves now and drink our own milk!"

James (Tadhg) & Dee Howard

First time NEP applicants, Tadhg and Dee Howard were over the moon to hear they were successful in their quest to join BC's dairy industry. "I was inappropriately not calm," laughs Dee.

The couple have been making hay in the Creston Valley since 2012 and now farm 200 acres of Timothy Hay, mainly sold as export to Japan. "We have to rotate our crops and are currently growing grain at a loss because there is no market for it in Creston," explains Tadhg. "Adding a dairy operation complements what we are already doing on our farm - it provides a place for the grain and legumes to go, and the manure produced by the dairy will help to reduce the cost of synthetic fertilizer as well."

"We were encouraged to apply by the local dairy community in Creston," says Dee. There are less than 10 dairy producers in the area, but "it's a fantastic and supportive group." Both have been working on local dairies during harvest



and Dee is currently serving as the Creston Wildlife Coordinator, which focuses on wildlife conflict, mainly grizzly bears. They have also been attending dairy meetings to learn as much as they can in preparation. "Producer Steve Vanderloos is the closest to us in proximity and has helped a lot," shares Tadhg, "But everyone has been amazing and has offered to sell us cows at various stages in lactation to get us started."

Tadhg was born on a dairy farm in England that was originally established by his grandparents in the 1960s. When BSE hit in the '90s, the family sold their 160-cow

herd and moved to New Zealand where they raised sheep and beef. In his 20s, Tadhg became a licensed helicopter pilot and used his skills across Canada from Newfoundland to BC working in wildlife management for the government.

Dee was born in Ireland. She worked in sand and gravel quarries which led to her studies in minerals and waste. In the early 2000s, Dee earned her Master of Environmental Management and Technology at Oxford University, and stayed in the UK, where she worked on planning and managing environmental assessments. During this time, Dee met

Tadhg and after several years in the UK, and some adventures to North Africa, the couple immigrated to Canada in 2014, landing in Maple Creek, SK.

In Saskatchewan, Dee and Tadhg built up honeybee and custom fencing businesses, but when Tadhg got a helicopter job in Cranbrook, they moved the bees (400 colonies) and their two children, Willow (12) and Kingsley (11), to Creston. Dedicated beekeepers, the couple developed a heat-treating system to kill mites in lieu of using chemicals, which makes for a very pure product. Dee taught beekeeping at the College of the Rockies and still gives talks on the subject when asked. In 2024, with staffing a challenge, the couple sold the bees and bought a baler when they purchased their hay business.

Plans are currently being finalized for the Howards' dairy operation, and they hope to have their facility nailed down by Christmas this year. "We'd love to be putting milk in the tank by next spring," says Tadhg, who is looking forward to the day when their first genetically-selected calf is born.

Kiana Newton

"It was the best birthday present EVER," says Kiana Newton, who learned she was the successful NEPO candidate on her birthday! "It's been a lifelong dream of mine," she adds.

Kiana was born and raised in Abbotsford. Her parents purchased their farm on Sumas Mountain in 2002, and the family relocated there in 2006.

"My dad and I are very passionate about organic and ethically raised animals," says Kiana. The farm originally started with a herd of Hereford cattle which came with the purchase. In 2009 they became Certified Organic and were one of the only farms in the area to hold SPCA certification as well. They still maintain their humane certification with the Certified Humane Organization. Sumas Mountain Farms now raises certified organic beef, sheep, chicken

and pork, providing a delivery service of their products direct to your door on Thursday and Friday, and allowing for on-farm purchases on Saturdays.

"I have always loved the farm and helping to raise the animals," says Kiana, "I've wanted my own milk cows for a while, and have been begging my parents for dairy cows for years!" To feed her love for cows, Kiana has been working on smaller-scale dairies in the area to get familiar with the dairy lifestyle and has spent the last three years working at Frank Dutra Dairy in Abbotsford. "I help with milking, feeding calves, cleaning stalls and scraping the barn," says Kiana, "Basically I can do everything except run the mixer wagon, which I have to learn!"

This is the first year that Kiana has applied for NEPO, and says, "Staying with organic was an easy choice since our farm is already set up for it." Her parents are incredibly supportive of her

plans, and she has also received a lot of advice and encouragement from her best friend, Nelliese Klop (Lorenzetti Acres).

Although NEPO allows three years for candidates to get their operation up and running, Kiana hopes to be in production by early spring 2027. "We have a good barn on site, so the infrastructure is basically there," she says, noting that some modifications will need to be made, including the addition of loop stalls and a parlour. Kiana has been sourcing some animals around the Fraser Valley already and has been transitioning them onto the organic program. "Having some cows here already eliminates the big up-front cow cost and it gives me time to set up the parlour while the cows transition and meet the organic requirements."

Kiana is excited to build onto the family farm with her new dairy venture. "Getting



the opportunity to raise and milk happy, healthy, and humanely treated cows, and then providing a nutritious, organic product in the Lower Mainland is a dream come true."