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LA REVUE

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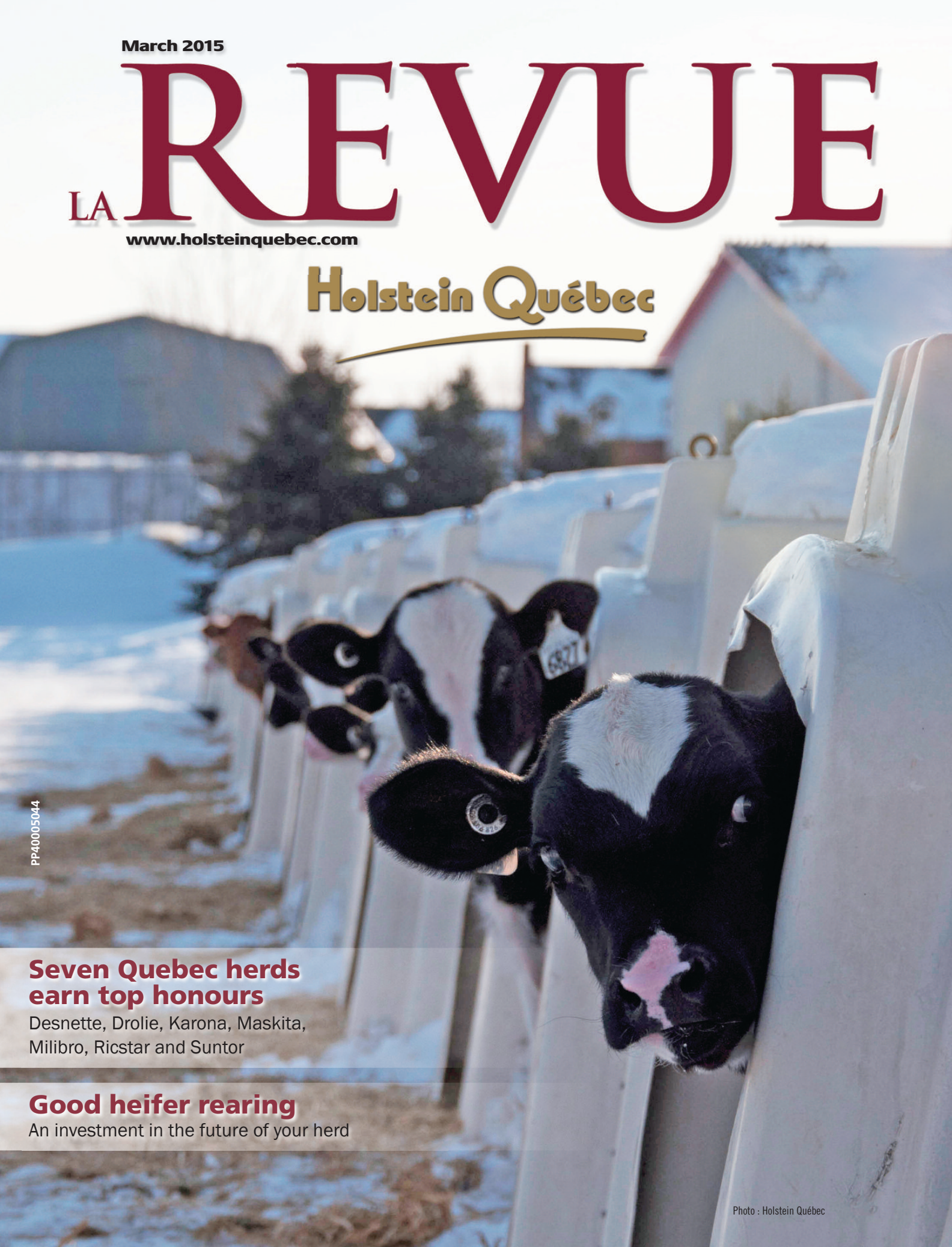

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Seven Quebec herds earn top honours

Desnette, Drolie, Karona, Maskita, Milibro, Ricstar and Suntor

Good heifer rearing

An investment in the future of your herd

Photo : Holstein Québec

By
Michel Dostie
Editor

Translation by
Nicole De Rouin

Good heifer-rearing practices

are the key to early and long-lasting milk production

The calving went well and the heifer is full of vim and vigour. And if her dam and sire are any indication, she is certainly well endowed with genetic potential. We'll even be able to confirm that as soon as the genomic results are made available. But the most important work lies ahead, specifically, ensuring adequate growth to enable the animal to fulfil her potential, with good conformation and high milk yield through many lactations.

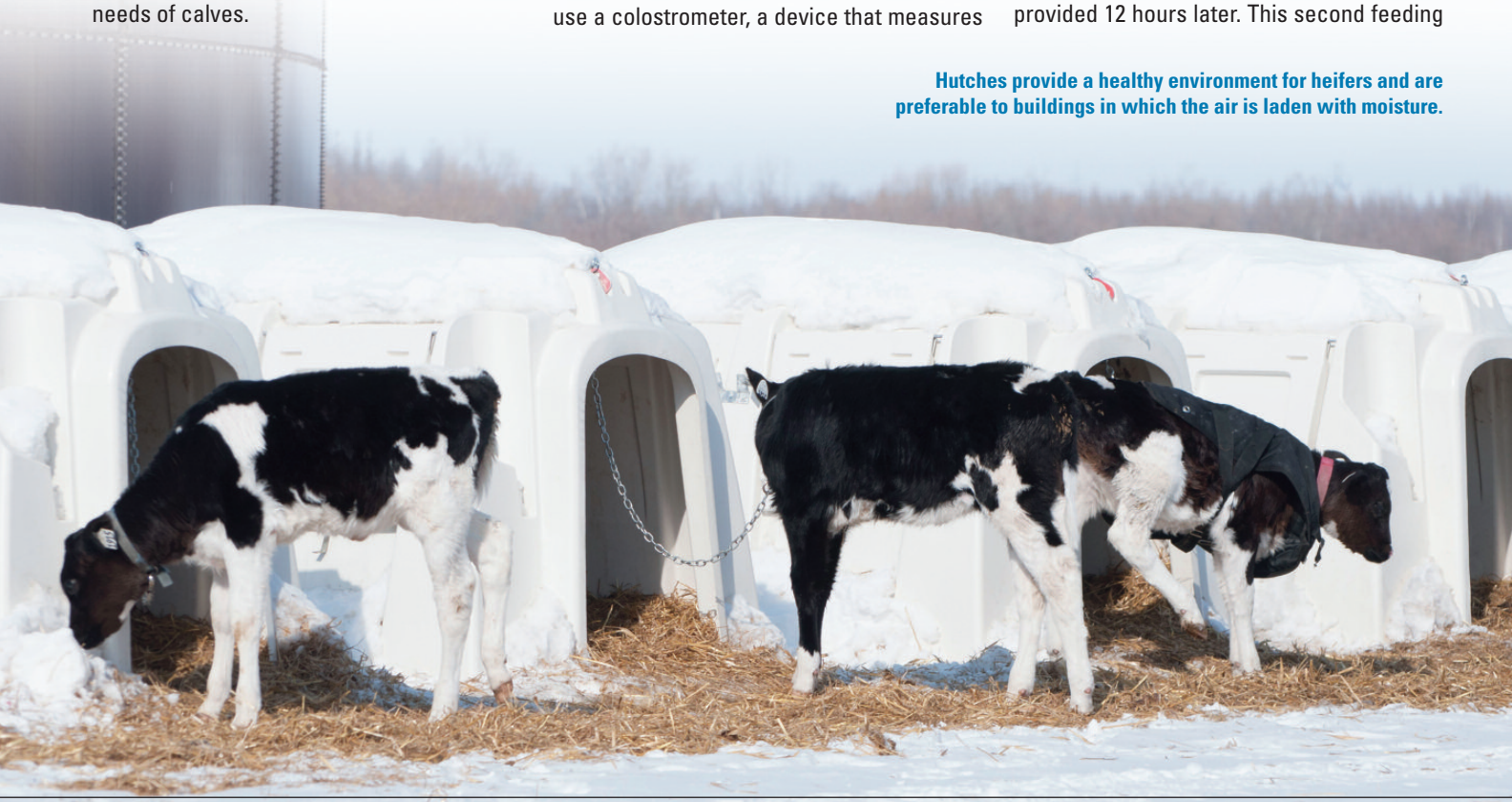
Heifer-rearing corresponds to the first few months of the calf's life, a crucial period during which the heifer develops into a healthy, mature female able to produce high milk yields at low cost. Hence it's in the dairy farmer's interest to do everything possible to maximize the animal's chances of success. The means to do that change as recent scientific discoveries provide breeders with more information about animals and their needs which help breeders making their environment more conducive to success. So the good old habits we've been relying on are now outdated, and it's up to dairy farmers to stay informed of the findings published by researchers who, it must be said, are focussing more and more on the natural needs of calves.

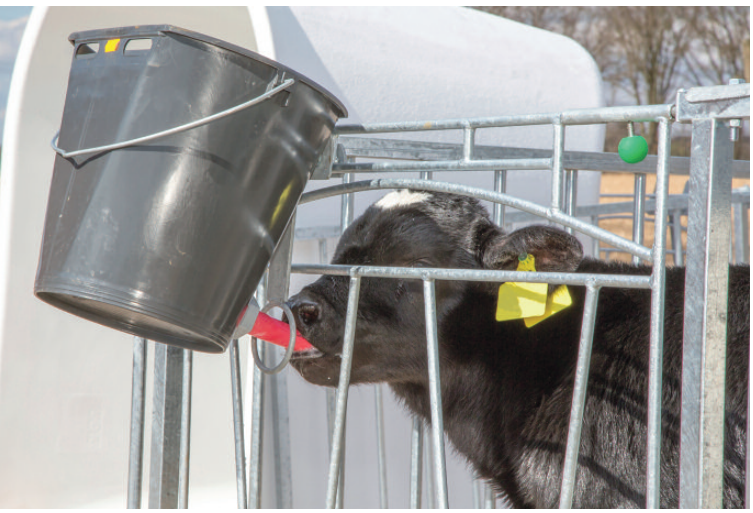
Colostrum is essential

Colostrum is the first milk the cow produces after giving birth. It is important to make sure the cow's teats are thoroughly washed and dried before collecting the colostrum. Colostrum is invaluable to calves: not only is it more nutritious than milk, but it also provides all the antibodies calves need to defend themselves against the range of viruses and bacteria that can be detrimental to their health. Indeed, unlike humans, a cow's antibodies cannot cross the placenta, which means that calves are born with little immunity to disease. Colostrum also contains hormones and growth factors required by heifers. To be on the safe side, farmers can use a colostrometer, a device that measures the level of antibodies present in colostrum, to be sure of its quality.

Because the ability of a calf's intestinal system to absorb colostrum decreases quite rapidly, it is generally recommended that calves be fed colostrum as soon as possible after birth. As Dr. Nicole Ruest, a veterinarian at Clinique vétérinaire du Centre-du-Québec, emphasizes, early feeding of colostrum is crucial, since it is the "best form of vaccination." This is why, she says, farmers have their calves drink between 2 to 3 L of colostrum, depending on the size of the calf, in the first two hours after birth. That volume may even be increased if the calf wants to continue nursing. Another 2 to 3 L feeding is provided 12 hours later. This second feeding

Hutches provide a healthy environment for heifers and are preferable to buildings in which the air is laden with moisture.





It is advisable to use a teat even when milk is served in a bucket.

is prepared with milk from the first milking that has been refrigerated to ensure its conservation. Any unused colostrum can be frozen in individual portions to be used for other needs.

Colostrum is fed at 39° C, which is the temperature of the cow's udder. This means the colostrum must be heated to a higher temperature to ensure that it is really fed to the calf at 39° C. Dr. Michel Rondeau, a veterinarian in Farnham, adds that it is important to avoid serving heated colostrum in a cold container; the container must be heated as well.

Calves can also be fed colostrum by feeding tube. This method has its limits, however, as it is uncomfortable for the calf and may irritate the animal's digestive tract, increasing the risk of infection. Tube feeding is generally used when it is difficult for the calf to consume enough colostrum in a short period of time. But, as Dr. Rondeau points out, the intestinal activity required for colostrum absorption is activated by sucking, so it is often more beneficial to encourage the calf to develop its sucking reflex rather than resorting to tube feeding. The production of meconium, the calf's first bowel movement, confirms that the animal's intestinal tract is functioning. When a feeding tube is used, it's important to wash and disinfect the apparatus. It is also important to avoid giving the calf too much liquid. A 4-L ration, for instance, is excessive, because the volume of milk exceeds the capacity of the calf's abomasum. This means that the calf's stomach will be swollen and the animal will not be thirsty for a second meal, explains Dr. Ruest.

On the second and third days after birth, calves will also benefit from receiving transition milk produced by their dams. As Dr. Rondeau explains, this milk contains molecules similar to those found in colostrum, which have a positive impact on heifer health.

Now the milk

From the fourth day on, the good old way to do things was to feed milk at a rate of 10 per cent of the calf's weight, equivalent to about 4 L of milk per day. But both veterinarians consulted for this article say the new recommendations aim for at least double that quantity, ideally with three or more feedings per day (e.g. 3 feedings of 3 L each). With a daily 4-L ration, a farmer can expect to see an average daily gain (ADG) of about 0.5 kg. On the other hand, Valacta (More milk and a teat please!) tells us that upping a heifer's ADG to 1 kg before puberty by increasing milk consumption will yield an extra 385 kg of milk in the first lactation and more than 1000 kg in her second and third lactations. Research has also been done on ad libitum feeding. Based on the documents consulted, the ideal feeding rate seems to fall somewhere between an insufficient ration (4 L) and an ad libitum ration.

The veterinarians also advise farmers to use teats to feed their calves rather than having them drink directly from a bucket. Teat feeding ensures that the milk goes directly to the abomasum, and at a slower rate. In this way, explains Dr. Rondeau, milk is ingested at the recommended rate of about 1 L per minute (with a variation between 0.75 and 1.25 L). Hence it is not a good idea to enlarge the hole in the teat to increase milk flow. Likewise, farmers may have to change the model of teat they use to achieve the desired ingestion rate. Using a teat on a bucket also frees up the farmer for other tasks while the calves feed by themselves. Calves are also less inclined to crosssuck when fed in this manner, probably because that natural need is satisfied through feeding.

On some farms, where the number of births justifies the investment, an automatic calf feeder, also called a robot or computer feeder, offers a number of advantages. In addition to preparing and warming the milk and feeding small quantities over a number of feedings, it also makes it possible to record data on total milk intake. The unit can be connected to a concentrate feeder that records milk consumption. Based on the data collected, the computer can calculate average daily gain as well as feed efficiency. This latter piece of information, says Dr. Rondeau, will become an additional selection tool that will help farmers identify the best milk producers of tomorrow.

Dr. Rondeau also advises adding a small proportion of colostrum (5 per cent of the mixture) to the heifers' daily milk ration, a practice that is of particular benefit to weaker calves. Milk feeding can be done with cow's milk or with powdered milk that is prepared and sold for that purpose. Cow's milk is obviously the most natural product which best meets calf requirements, but to limit the health problems caused by bacteria, it is advisable to pasteurize it before feeding it to the calves. Although this practice is still not common among dairy farmers, it can be done on-farm.

Weaning

Successful weaning means that milk feeding is replaced by solid feed with minimal negative effect to the heifer. Dr. Ruest believes there is no benefit to early weaning and says that the process should never be started before 6 weeks (42 days) of age. But weaning doesn't depend on the calendar alone. The important thing, Dr. Ruest underlines, is that the heifer be able to eat enough feed to meet her needs, that is, at least 1 kg of feed per day for three consecutive days. And weaning must be extended over a period of at least 7 to 10 days, during which the farmer will gradually decrease the amount of milk fed to the heifer, replacing it with solid feed. It is important to avoid exposing the heifer to other sources of stress during this time. For that reason, it's

best to wait a week after successful weaning before transferring heifers to a new environment or, if it hasn't already been done, proceeding with dehorning or vaccination.

According to Dr. Rondeau, farmers would be well advised to delay weaning. He recommends waiting until day 65 before starting the process and taking 30 to 35 days more before discontinuing milk feeding completely. This way, the heifer will have consumed a total of about 800 L of milk at the age of 100 days. This practice, explains Dr. Rondeau, allows the heifer to reach sexual maturity by 12 months of age and at a weight of 420 kg. He points out that about a hundred Quebec farms are now using a milk feeding programme similar to the one he is suggesting, a programme that ensures a milk yield about 15 per cent higher than average when the heifer becomes a mature cow.

Feed and forages

All the animal nutrition companies offer various products, mainly feeds that are intended to meet calf and heifer requirements. Calves generally start to receive these feeds 7 days after birth. Once weaning is complete and milk has been eliminated from the daily ration, feed intake should increase rapidly up to 1.5 kg per day or more. In addition to its nutrient contribution, feed also helps develop the digestive capacity of the heifer's rumen, which will later be able to digest forages. There is no reason to rush to feed heifers hay before the age of 10 weeks, explains Dr. Ruest, since the rumen derives no benefit from it before the animal reaches 12 weeks of age. Heifers can certainly play around a little with the hay during that time, but it is important to ensure that hay intake doesn't limit their appetite for feed, which is essential, adds the veterinarian. Dr. Rondeau shares that opinion, recommending that calves be fed hay that is young and not too fibrous.

The protein content of feed is also an important factor, since protein clearly plays an essential role in promoting growth. For this reason, Dr. Rondeau recommends a ration containing 28 per cent protein, which can be lowered month by month, to 26 per cent, 24 per cent, and so on. To do this, the veterinarian advises adding soybean meal to the feed, as it generally has a 20 per cent crude protein content. The farmer can thus increase protein intake easily without overdoing it, which would be of no use and represent a financial loss.

Appropriate housing

Individual housing is certainly advantageous as it eliminates contamination between calves, but the difficulties of keeping calves in groups are not insurmountable. Good management is the key. Dr. Ruest emphasizes that heifers kept in groups from birth must have been fed colostrum containing a good quantity of antibodies. Vaccination is often recommended as well, but because the choice of product and the best time to vaccinate both depend on management practices, it is difficult to make recommendations here. Farmers are thus advised to consult their veterinarian.

Using hutches does present some advantages, reducing the incidence of disease and mortality. Hutches require only a small investment and maintenance is minimal. On the other hand, during the winter months, the farmer will have to brave the cold to feed the heifers, but, more importantly, they will need to consume about 25 per cent more milk, which presupposes at least three feedings a day. Nevertheless, hutches are a better choice for housing heifers than an overheated and poorly ventilated building, with excessive moisture in the air, a calf's worst enemy.

The hutches must be placed in a dry, well-drained area, as close as possible to the milkroom, but sheltered from prevailing winds. Ample bedding, often sawdust and straw, will ensure the heifers are kept comfortable.

Another housing option popular among breeders is to group calves together in one building, but the groups must be limited to a maximum of 8 heifers, with each provided with enough space to limit the risks of contamination. In this type of pen system, excellent ventilation is required to ensure calf comfort. Dr. Rondeau recommends a low-flow tunnel ventilation system that will maintain humidity below 65 per cent and avoid cooling the backs of the heifers. In summer, a third tunnel, in the centre of the barn, should be in operation. Likewise, Dr. Ruest advises farmers to avoid placing pens in the centre of the building, where calves will inevitably be breathing air that is somewhat polluted by the other animals. It is also important to resist the temptation to keep heifers in the oldest part of the barn without making changes to ensure their comfort and health, in particular removing multiple partitions that block air flow, because air will certainly be less fresh in a semi-closed environment.

Dr. Rondeau prefers a closed nursery with a heated floor that maintains a temperature of 20° C and is covered with a deep bedding pack. He also mentions that peat moss is an increasingly popular choice; when mixed with other products, it allows for perfect control of ammonia.

The use of automatic milk feeders is also increasingly popular, but the rules that apply to group housing are no different. Since the feeder can feed a greater number of animals, Dr. Rondeau recommends placing it in the centre of the pens and ensuring that each pen houses a group of calves with a maximum age difference of six weeks.

Time to dehorn

The horns become attached to the bone when the calf reaches 6 weeks of age. This is why it is important to dehorn calves before that biological process occurs, and it isn't necessary to wait that long. Dr. Rondeau recommends disbudding 10 days after birth. To ensure the safety of the farmer and the heifer, farmers should apply a local anaesthetic and give the calf a painkiller, a simple procedure, explains Dr. Ruest that farmers can learn to do from their veterinarian.

To learn more:

Readers who are interested in checking out any of the information provided above or learning more about the subject can consult the Internet site of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (www.omafra.gov.on.ca), as well as Agri-Réseau (www.agrireseau.qc.ca). This latter site, in French only, provides access to various publications on the subject, among others, those by Valacta or by speakers at dairy cattle symposia. Finally, a multitude of resources are available in English through the Internet search engines. Sources include European universities, in particular those in the UK, as well as universities in other Canadian provinces or the United States. Readers are advised to check the publication dates of any research results since some of the new recommendations are relatively recent. ■

By
Jean-Philippe
Proulx
Advisor for Southern Quebec

Translation by Nicole De Rouin

Ferme Desnette
A story, a dream, a passion

After earning a first Master Breeder shield in 1999, the Desnette herd was awarded a second title in 2014. Carl Desrochers, who co-owns the farm with his partner, Sandra Verville, represents the fourth generation of Desrochers on the family farm. Their herd includes 135 head of cattle, with 52 cows in milk. Classified 8 EX, 39 VG and 9 GP, the cows have an average production of 11 262 kg of milk, with 4.07% fat and 3.27% protein.

A number of cows made a significant contribution towards this latest shield and to the herd's success in the showring. First among them is *Desnette Lausane Rudolph*, EX-92 3E 5*, a cow that produced 66 601 kg in 5 lactations, with 3.9% fat and 3.2% protein. Nominated Tout Québec Five-Year-Old in 2003, *Lausane* is the dam of 10 daughters classified VG. One of them, *Desnette Lausina Gibson*, VG-87-2yr 3*, produced 84 335 kg in 6 lactations, with 4.1% fat and 3.3% protein, and has 1 EX, 3 VG and 3 GP daughters.

The family behind the successful Desnette herd: Marianne Desrochers, Carl Desrochers, Sandra Verville and Laurie Desrochers.

Lausane's granddaughter *Desnette Laynie Impression*, VG-88-3yr, represents the first generation of offspring by the bull Monument Impression. *Laynie* was among the Semex daughters on display at the World Dairy Expo and at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in 2014. *Desnette Larana Fever*, VG-89-3yr, is another of the leading lights to emerge from the Lausane family in recent years, winning second Milking Senior Yearling at the QIHS and Honourable Mention Tout-Québec Milking Senior Yearling in 2013.

The daughter one of *Lausane's* sisters, *Desnette Laurina Shark*, VG-88-3yr 8*, also left her mark on the Desnette herd through her four daughters by *Cedarwal Spirte*, classified EX-93 5E, EX-91 4E, EX 6E and EX 2E.

The family of *Desnette Bianca Leader*, EX 5*, also played a role in obtaining this second shield. In 3 lactations, *Bianca* produced 43 033 kg of milk. She was also nominated All-Canadian Senior Two-Year-Old in 1999 and Reserve Tout-Québec Senior Three-Year-Old in 2000. *Bianca* has 1 EX and 11 VG daughters, including *Desnette Brianne Shottle*, EX-92, a cow that has produced 41 388 kg of milk in 2 lactations. Although she is still very young, *Brianne* already has 3 daughters, all classified VG at 2 years, including *Desnette Brielle Lauthority*, VG-88-2yr, first Senior Two-Year-Old and Reserve Intermediate Champion at the New York International Spring Show and 9th at the World Dairy Expo in 2014.

The family of *Desnette Darling Milan*, VG-89 1*, has also put its stamp on the Desnette herd. Darling, named Tout-Québec and All-Canadian Junior Two-Year-Old in 1999, has a number of descendants in the herd. Among them, *Desnette Danie Fever*, VG-89-3yr, stands out for the quality of her fore and rear udder attachments and her impressive stature. *Desnette Darielle Artes*, VG-86-2yr, is another of Darling's descendants with a promising future in Carl and Sandra's herd.

Finally, another of the stars bred on the Desrochers farm is *Desnette Alexia Roseplex*, VG-89-3yr, a cow that won Honourable Mention Senior Three-Year-Old at the Spring Show in 2013, as well as Reserve Grand Champion in Maxville, and Honourable Mention Tout-Québec.

It goes without saying that the accomplishments of these breeders are not simply the result of good breeding; their successful management practices and relentless work also played a major role.

Breeding is one thing and showing is another, but the two often go hand in hand. There is no doubt for Carl that without shows, he would not have acquired the skills he has today, nor would not have been able to improve his herd the way he has. ■

***Desnette Bianca Leader*, EX 5*, is at the head of a family that contributed greatly to this second Master Breeder title.**

By
Geneviève Drolet,
agronomist

Advisor for Central Quebec and Advisory Services Manager

Translation by Nicole De Rouin

Ferme Drolet & fils

"We take pride in the continuity of our herd!"

Housed in Saint-Raymond, in the County of Portneuf, the Drolie herd includes 25 EX, 45 VG and 21 GP cows that produce an average of 12 062 kg of milk. The herd first reached the height of fame in 2000, when Pierre Drolet and Henriette Ghielen received their first Master Breeder title. That honour motivated them to set themselves a new goal: a second shield.

The first title brought to light the herd's top families, and these breeders have since been using embryo transfers on a large scale to develop those families with a view to a second shield. Additionally, major investments focused on animal comfort have improved the longevity of the herd. In fact, more than 13 cows in the 2014 Master Breeder report have reached the 100 000 kg threshold.

Back row: Karl Hardy Demers, Samuel Drolet, Connie McLellan, Marie-Christine Parent and Pier-Luc Drolet. Front row: Geneviève Drolet, Brendon and Zack Demers, Henriette Ghielen and Pierre Drolet.

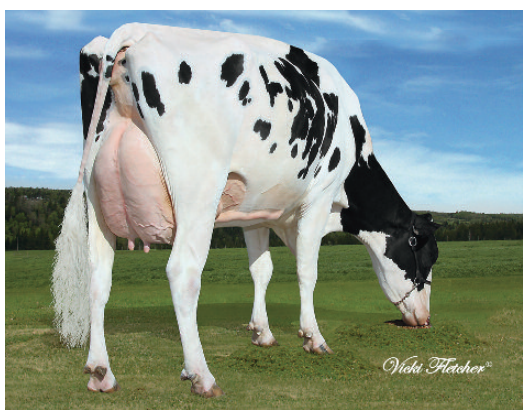
The family of *Drolie Stardom Hiris* made the most significant contribution to this second shield. *Drolie Jolt Happy*, VG-87 6*, is the most influential daughter, particularly thanks to her daughters *Habby*, VG-89, and *Happen*, EX-93 2E, both sired by *Goldwyn*. Many of *Happen's* embryos have been sold at the Holstein Québec Embryo Sale and abroad. The principal trait of the daughters of this family has not gone unnoticed in the herd: they all have high, wide udders with excellent texture. This quality is also shows up in another branch of the *Hiris* family, in *Drolie Goldwyn Excess*, EX-92, and her daughter *Drolie Sid Extase*, VG-88. They represent the 8th and 9th generations of VG or EX cows with 36*.

A family that has contributed a tremendous amount of dairy strength to the herd is without question that of *Drolie Rudolph Fantaisy*, VG-87 14*. Still alive at the age of 17, this finalist in the 2014 My Favorite Cow Contest has certainly passed on her longevity. Indeed, her daughter *Drolie Igniter Fiesta*, EX-90 6E 4*, contributed 13 points to the Master Breeder shield, with a lifetime production of more than 100 000 kg of milk. Following in her footsteps, her daughter *Drolie Morty Funky*, EX-91 6E, not only produced 115 028 kg of milk, but also distinguished herself on the show circuit, finishing second Junior Two-Year-Old and first Five-Year-Old at the Portneuf show in 2005 and 2008.

Jacobs Progress Betty, VG-88 4*, a daughter of *Cotopierre Lindy Bertha*, is at the head of a third influential family. Purchased as an embryo, *Betty* produced offspring that all classified VG or better, including *Drolie Stormatic Bentley*, EX-92 2E 6*, a cow that produced 13 660 kg of milk at the age of 4. Of her two EX daughters, *Drolie Goldwyn Benchy*, EX-91, is noted for the quality of her udder and her strong dairy character.

For the Drolet family, shows represent an opportunity to compare their animals with the best in the region. In 2008, *Drolie Jasper Spicy*, VG-87 2*, was the first of the herd's cows to win the title of Grand Champion at the Portneuf show. The breeders then brought home that same title for five consecutive years with different cows, one of which was *Bonaccueil Maya Goldwyn*, EX-95 2E 1*, an animal they co-own.

The love of agriculture that was passed on to them by their respective parents, and which they in turn have instilled in their children, has been tremendously influential in the success that Pierre and Henriette have achieved today. They have cultivated their passion for dairy breeding and the importance of working hard and well to achieve their goals. There is no doubt that the owners and their sons Pier-Luc and Samuel will ensure the continuity of the Drolie herd, with the same goals as those they established at the beginning. ■



Drolie Morty Funky, EX-91 6E, is a prototype for the cows bred on this farm, which are endowed with impressive dairy strength and an excellent mammary system designed to produce large volumes of milk.

By
Jean-Philippe
Proulx
*Advisor for
Southern Quebec*

*Translation by
Nicole De Rouin*

Karona
Always looking ahead

When we get to know the Karona herd, first named Master Breeder in 2000, we see an incredible number of cows classified EX, but some impressive milk producers as well. To combine these two attributes, there is no doubt that the focus has been on breeding balanced cows.

Today, the herd is made up of 26 EX and 30 VG, and includes 45 cows in milk with an average production of 12 981 kg of milk, for BCAs of 277-286-283. Since 1998, the year the herd ranked first in Quebec for average milk production per cow, the Karona herd has continually positioned itself among the top 10 in the Canada.

The success of these breeders is attributable to a number of factors, specifically, the skills they have worked to acquire, their passion for dairy breeding, teamwork, and especially, their focus on deep pedigrees.

The Caron family, from left to right: Odrey Caron, Charles Barabé, Louise Marcoux, Pierre, Marie-Michèle and Pierre-Olivier Caron.

A number of families and cows contributed to this second Master Breeder shield. First and foremost is the family of *Karona Emerson Bonnie*, EX-93 3E 14*, dam of the famous bull *Karona Bonair*, EXTRA'08. In 5 lactations, *Bonnie* produced 71 522 kg of milk, with 4% fat and 3.4% protein. Her daughters include *Karona Boss Boheme*, EX-91, a cow that produced 21 264 kg of milk at the age of 5 years and 7 months. One of her daughters, *Karona Shottle Breeze*, EX-92, produced 12 903 kg of milk at 2 years and 2 months.

Karona Hershel Petunia, EX-93 3E 6*, also left her mark on the herd through her milk yield and her progeny. In addition to producing 96 331 kg of milk in 5 lactations, with 3.5% fat and 3.1% protein, Petunia's many daughters include *Karona Lheros Myfair Lady*, EX-93 4E, a cow that produced 120 559 kg of milk in 6 lactations, with 3.7% fat and 3.3% protein, earning 6 Superior Lactations and 4 Super 3's. Another of *Petunia's* daughters, *Karona Goldwyn Precieuse*, EX-93, distinguished herself when she classified VG-89 as a 2-year-old.

The family of *Karona Mason Wonder*, EX 4E 3*, a daughter of *Cow-Valley Wonder Wish*, EX 3E 13*, also contributed significantly to the herd's success. With a production of 113 112 kg of milk (3.8% fat and 3.2% protein) in 7 lactations, *Wonder* is the dam of 2 EX and 2 VG daughters. Among them, *Karona Allen Winter*, EX-94 2E 3*, produced 87 190 kg of milk in 4 lactations, collecting 3 Superior Lactations along the way. The family of *Wish* not only distinguished itself for production, but was also successful in the showring. Indeed, one of her granddaughters, *Karona Leduc Kamille*, EX, was named both All-Canadian and All-American Intermediate Yearling in 2002.

On the Karona farm, the mention of deep pedigrees brings to mind *Karona Igniter Frosty*, a daughter of *Karona Storm Frost*, EX 2E 7*, that classified VG-89 at 2 years. Today, *Frosty* has 4 stars and represents the family's 14th generation of VG or EX cows. At 2 years and 7 months, she produced 14 988 kg of milk with 3.6% fat and 3.3% protein. The future certainly seems secure with her descendants, one of which is *Karona Atwood Forecast*, an animal that is preceded by 17 generations of VG or EX cows.

The challenge of breeding functional cows that are also elite animals with genetics that can contribute to improving their own herd as well as the herds of other breeders continues. In fact, animals bearing the Karona prefix can now be found in more than 25 countries.

And the future is secure with Pierre's son Pierre-Olivier, who will take over the farm with the help of his daughter Odrey. Pierre takes great pride in the fact that a sixth generation of the Caron family will be making a living from Holstein breeding. ■

***Karona Goldwyn Precieuse*, EX-93, earned the distinction of classifing VG-89 as a 2-year-old.**

By
Marie-Philip Brisson,
agronomist
Advisor for Western Quebec

Translation by Nicole De Rouin

Maskita School-Farm

When teamwork produces outstanding results!

Investigate, understand and carry out – that's the essence of the approach adopted by the team at the Maskita school-farm, a mind-set that has led them to reap top honours.

The Maskita farm is first and foremost an enriching environment where thousands of students broaden their knowledge of dairy production. Still today, service providers can be proud to pass on the knowledge they acquired from this model farm and its excellent herd, which is a source of inspiration to students.

Maskita as we know it today is a school-farm owned by a non-profit organization made up of the Institut de technologie agroalimentaire du Québec, the Centre d'insémination artificielle du Québec, the Faculté de médecine vétérinaire de l'Université de Montréal and the Salon de l'agriculture. The herd has changed a great deal since its modest beginnings and has often ranked among Canada's top herds for LPI and conformation, in addition to winning a milk quality award in 2014. The Maskita herd includes 10 Multiple EX, 2 EX, 21 VG and 9 GP cows that produce an average of 11 823 kg of milk, with 4.4% fat and 3.5% protein, for BCAs of 268-306-282.

The farm owes its success to teamwork. Marcel Bilodeau managed the farm for 25 years, during which he focussed on conformation, particularly the mammary system, while continuing to keep an eye on production. This aspect is extremely important when one considers that more than 150 milkers work on the farm each year. Sébastien Roy, who has been managing the farm for the past 6 years with his team of technicians, Rick Favreau and Jean-Sebastien Savaria, has adopted the same approach.

The herd's beginnings were influenced by the purchase of a number of heifers from the De La Présentation farm, including *De La Présentation Tina*, GP-82-2yr 2*. Her family, a model of longevity, contributed more than 46 per cent of the points for this Master Breeder shield. Among Tina's daughters, *Maskita Jubilant Trina*, EX 7*, is dam to 3 EX, 7 VG and 10 GP daughters, including *Maskita Talent Tirazie*, EX-91 4E, a cow with a lifetime production of 71 188 kg of milk.

The team at Ferme Maskita, from left to right: Marcel Bilodeau (manager from 1983 to 2008), Sebastien Roy (current manager, from 2008), and technicians Jean-Sébastien Savaria and Rick Favreau.

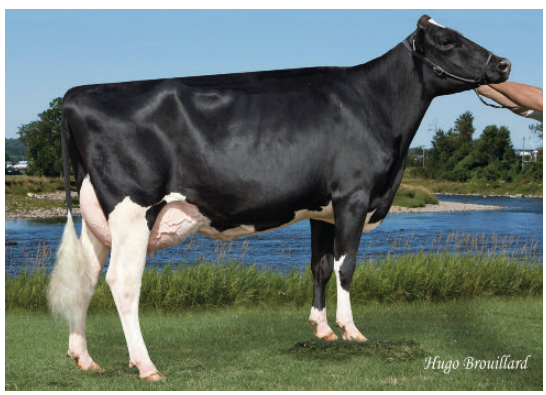
Another of *Tina's* daughters, *Maskita Astre Tirana*, VG-88 7*, has 2 EX, 4 VG and 4 GP daughters. Among them, the one closest to Marcel Bilodeau's heart is without question *Maskita Storm Tiranne*, EX-2E 1*, a cow that earned 2 Superior Lactations. One of *Tirana's* granddaughters, *Maskita Goldwyn Tassy,* EX 1*, caused a sensation at her first lactation by classifying VG-88 at 2 years and earning a Superior Lactation (302-314-290).

The second most influential family with regard to this title has been that of *Maskita Astre Lise,* VG 9*. Her descendants include 3 EX and 7 VG daughters, 7 of which classified VG at 2 years. Among them, *Maskita Storm Lausanne*, EX 5* (EX-94-MS), produced 2 EX, 6 VG and 1 GP daughters, one of which is *Maskita Goldwyn Lianne*, EX-91 2* (EX-97-MS).

An animal from another line, *Maskita Goldwyn Shadow*, EX-94 2E, represents the cow of the future for the team behind the Maskita herd.

The primary goal of the Maskita farm is to teach the best practices for animal care, an educational mandate that has included the UPA open house and hosting the Holstein Québec Picnic. For the team at Ferme Maskita, it is the collaborative effort between staff, students and teachers that leads to the breeding of even-tempered, long-lasting cows that are good milk producers and that allow students to get the most out of their training on the farm.

This Master Breeder shield only adds to the credibility and the reputation of this educational institution. ■



***Maskita Goldwyn Shadow*, EX-94 2E, represents the cow of the future for the team behind the Maskita herd.**

By
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Proulx
Advisor for Southern Quebec

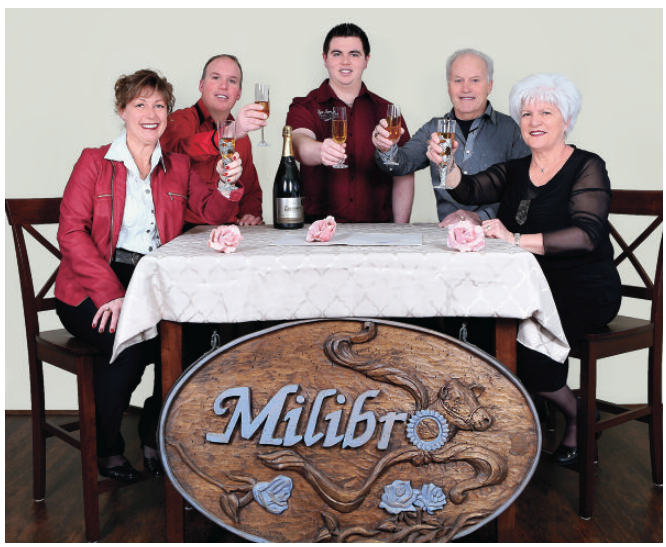
Translation by Nicole De Rouin

Milibro

The place where Holsteins become terrific milk producers

For the Milibro operation, this second Master Breeder shield is certainly not an accident. As was the case in 2000, relentless and meticulous work, combined with a judicious breeding strategy, has inevitably led these breeders to obtaining this second honour.

Today the herd includes 18 EX, 39 VG and 11 GP cows, that, in 2014, had an average production of 10 962 kg of milk, with 4% fat and 3.3% protein, and BCAs of 229-246-235. In 2001, the operation was awarded a second silver medal in the provincial Ordre national du mérite agricole competition. In addition to those achievements, 73 cows have classified EX since 1997.



The team behind the Milibro herd, from left to right: Isabelle Dubois, Daniel Brochu, Maxime Montplaisir, Michel Brochu and Lyse Girouard.

Milibro Charles Rose, VG-87 18*, is an important brood cow for the herd. In 6 lactations, she produced 70 307 kg of milk, with 4.1% fat and 3.6% protein. Her progeny includes 8 EX, 7 VG and 5 GP daughters, one of which, *Milibro Windstar Roselyne*, EX-94 4E 7*, produced 81 249 kg of milk in 6 lactations in addition to 7 EX and 7 VG daughters. She has also been successful in the showring, winning a Tout-Québec nomination in 2001 and Honourable Mention Tout-Québec and an All-Canadian nomination in 2002. *Roselyne* is the dam of the bull *Roseplex*, EX-95. One of *Roselyne's* granddaughters, *Milibro Roy Roselay*, VG-89-3yr, has been popular lately, winning the titles of Reserve All-Canadian 4H Intermediate Heifer in 2011 and Honourable Mention Tout-Québec Intermediate Yearling in 2012.

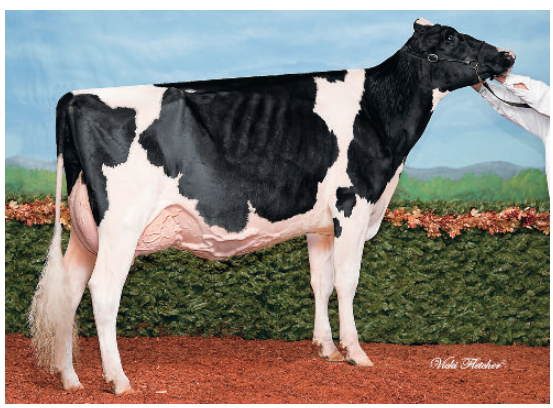
Milibro Adolph Roselilas, VG-88-2yr 3*, is another of *Rose's* daughters that has distinguished herself, earning the titles of Reserve Tout-Québec Summer Yearling in 2006 and Honourable Mention Tout-Québec Junior Two-Year-Old in 2007. *Roselilas* has 3 EX and 1 VG daughters, including *Milibro Goldwyn Roselilace*, EX-94, first Senior Yearling at the RAWF in 2010 and second Senior Two-Year-Old in 2011, as well as Reserve Tout-Québec Senior Yearling in 2010, Tout-Québec Senior Two-Year-Old in 2011, and Reserve All-Canadian in both 2010 and 2011.

Milibro Gibson Mireille, EX-91 6E 4*, is also at the head of a good family. In 7 lactations, she produced 100 086 kg of milk and is dam to 2 EX and 4 VG daughters. Her granddaughter *Milibro Dramatic Mimi*, EX-94 3E, second Senior Three-Year-Old at the 2008 Spring Show, produced 75 160 kg of milk in 5 lactations and is dam to 1 EX and 3 VG daughters.

Milibro Charles Louiselle, VG-88 5*, also had a significant impact on the Milibro herd. Nominated All-Canadian Senior Yearling and Senior Three-Year-Old, she produced 71 872 kg of milk in 6 lactations, with 3.8% fat and 3.5% protein. *Louiselle* is the dam of 2 EX and 4 VG daughters. One of them, *Milibro Magnum Louma*, EX-92 5E, produced 86 922 kg of milk, with 4.4% fat and 3.4% protein, and has 2 EX, 6 VG and 4 GP daughters.

These breeders are also extremely proud of *Milibro Cousteau Leila*, EX-94-3E (USA), first Junior Two-Year-Old at the RAWF, Tout-Québec Junior Two-Year-Old and All-Canadian Junior Two-Year-Old in 2002. She is the granddam of the renowned show winner *R-E-W Happy Go Lucky*, VG-89-2yr-USA.

For these breeders, whose story began in 1973, the formula for success is quite simple. As soon as a heifer is born, they see her as a future show winner that will earn them Master Breeder points. That philosophy is shared by their nephew, Maxime Montplaisir, who will take over the farm. The team behind the Milibro herd can thus take pride in the fact that the story will continue, and that many animals will contribute to maintaining the herd's popularity. ■



***Milibro Goldwyn Roselilace*, EX-94, Reserve Tout-Québec Senior Yearling in 2010, Tout-Québec Senior Two-Year-Old in 2011, and Reserve All-Canadian in 2010 and 2011.**

By
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Translation by Nicole De Rouin

Ferme Noterra-Ricstar

A first goal accomplished

One dairy operation, two avid breeders and two prefixes. Today the honours go to the Ricstar prefix, founded in June 1990 by Éric Breniel. For Eric and his wife, Élise Sawyer, this Master Breeder title is recognition of work well done and underlines the achievement of an important goal.

Éric began rearing heifers when he was about 10 years old. In 1993, he formed a partnership with his father, Robert Breniel. The operation was then called Gourin-Ricstar: Gourin in tribute to the village in Bretagne where his father was born, and Ricstar for Éric's stars. In 2000, Éric and his wife bought Robert Breniel's shares and renamed the farm Noterra-Ricstar, Noterra being the name of the prefix founded by Élise. The Ricstar herd currently includes 7 EX, 11 VG and 2 GP cows that produce an average of 10 973 kg of milk, with 4.3% fat and 3.4% protein, and BCAs of 248-285-261. The key to Éric and Élise's success has been to maintain a balance between production, conformation and health in the herd, a strategy that has allowed them to work with the same cows for many years.

The team behind the Ricstar herd: Éric Breniel, Élise Sawyer and their son, William Sawyer-Breniel.

Three major families were especially instrumental in earning this Master Breeder title, but 60 per cent of the points derive from the family of *Lylehaven Lead Connie,* VG-86 11*, a cow that produced 10 VG and 3 GP daughters. Among her daughters, *Ricstar James Corsica,* EX 2E 6*, had 7 daughters, all classified VG, and, in 4 lactations, produced 54 043 kg of milk, with 4.7% fat and 3.6% protein, earning two Superior Lactations. *Ricstar Aeroline Conrinthia,* VG-86 4*, is another of *Connie's* daughters that was able to transmit her merits to her progeny. Her daughters include *Ricstar Goldwyn Coraleane,* EX-91 2E, a cow that, at 5 years and 7 months, produced 18 667 kg of milk, with 4.6% fat and 3.6% protein. Her daughter *Ricstar Bolton Coriane,* VG-88-3yr, represents the family's 8th generation of VG or EX cows. *Ricstar Denzel Contesia,* VG-88, is also a worthy representative of this family. At 3 years and 3 months, she produced 13 490 kg, with 4.5% fat and 3.7% protein, obtaining a Superior Lactation. In short, it is not only her good conformation that *Connie* passed on to her offspring, but her excellent production traits as well, in addition to impressive component levels.

Lauduc Progress Winnie, EX-93 5E 5*, is at the head of the herd's second most influential family. Her progeny includes 2 EX and 3 VG daughters. Her 2 EX daughters are full sisters by *Goldwyn*. *Risctar Goldwyn Wicasso,* EX, is currently in her fourth lactation and has so far produced 49 463 kg of milk, with 4.1% fat and 3% protein. Her sister *Wibelle*, EX-94 3E 2* (MS:96), added 2 of her 8th generation VG or EX granddaughters to the herd, namely, *Ricstar Mr Sam Wii,* VG-87, and *Ricstar Planet Wibby,* VG-2yr.

Finally, the family of *Friesia Skychief Truce,* EX 2E 2*, dam to 4 VG and 6 GP daughters, is the third family that has had a positive impact on the herd.

For Éric Breniel, marketing is important regardless of the scale of the operation. He mostly sells young cows on the local market, and the first VG cows bearing his prefix have been classified by other breeders.

Éric and Élise's plans for the future don't end here of course; they intend to continue improving their herd. Unremitting work, resilience, consistency and balance are the virtues that have enabled them to make this first project a reality. Now they have their sights on a second Master Breeder shield, this time with the Noterra prefix. ■

Sixty per cent of the points amassed by the Ricstar herd are attributable to the family of *Lylehaven Lead Connie,* VG-86 11*.

By
Marie-Philip Brisson,
agronomist
Advisor for Western Quebec

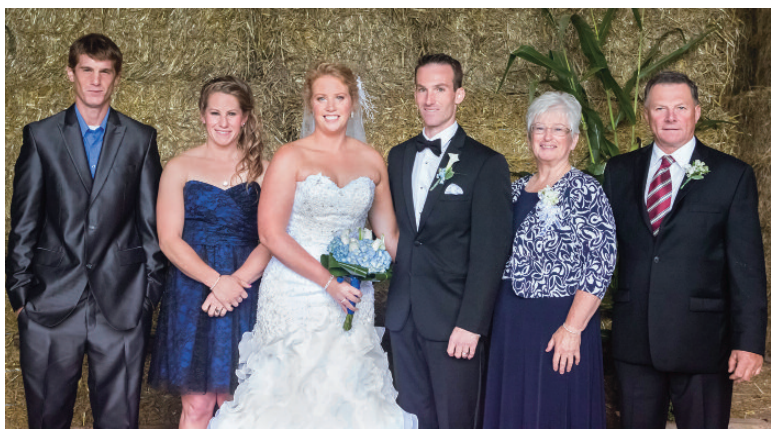
Translation by Nicole De Rouin

Suntor Holsteins

Attention to detail leads to great accomplishments!

Upon arriving at Suntor Holsteins, one immediately senses the passion of these breeders for the beautiful Holstein breed. The friendly welcome by Fred Sundborg and the determination of his son Kevin capture the attention of visitors. And both men agree when Kevin says: "We just try to do better than we've done so far."

Located in Ormstown, in the Montérégie region, Suntor Holsteins began registering its animals in 1975 and obtained a first Master Breeder shield in 2000. The 110-head herd includes 55 cows that are backed by families with 8 to 10 VG or EX dams. The herd's average milk production is slightly above 12 000 kg, with BCAs of 271-267-275. The cows are currently classified 6 EX, 29 VG and 20 GP.



The Sundborg family, from left to right: Eric Sundborg, Sheila Sundborg, Amanda Lukassen, Kevin Sundborg, Ruth and Fred Sundborg.

The family of *Suntor Aeroline Joy,* EX 5E 13*, the first cow bearing the Suntor prefix to classify EX, was a major contributor to this second title. According to Kevin, "You only breed one cow like this in a lifetime." Representing the family's 7th generation of VG or EX cows, *Joy* achieved much in her 15-year existence. She had 3 EX, 4 VG and 6 GP daughters and was the epitome of the long-time milk producers that Canada is known for, producing 143 080 kg of milk in 8 lactations. She also passed her longevity on to her offspring, as many of her daughters have achieved lifetime production levels of more than 100 000 kg.

Among her daughters, two full sisters from a divided embryo, Joan and Jean, were high achievers in both production and classification. *Suntor Igniter Joan,* EX-91 7E 1*, produced 125 358 kg of milk (248-310-271) and *Suntor Igniter Jean,* EX-91 5E, owned by Ferme Lafougère, produced 88 472 kg.

Joy's daughters include *Suntor Lightning Jelica,* EX-93 3E 7*, a cow for which the Sundborg family has had many offers – all refused. She proved to be as prolific as her dam, producing 14 daughters, including 2 EX and 11 VG, and she continues to follow in her dam's footsteps in milk production, with a yield of 102 570 kg in only 5 lactations, 3 of which were Superior Lactations.

Craigcrest Igniter Roxetta, VG-87-3yr 4*, is at the head of another family that the Sundborgs have enjoyed developing. *Roxetta* is the dam of one of these breeders' favourite cows, namely, *Suntor Income Rox*, EX-93 3E 3*, representing the 10th generation VG or EX cows of the *Roxy* family, whose cows stand the test of time and are both functional and true milk-producing machines. *Roxetta* has a lifetime production of 115 859 kg and earned 1 Superior Lactation.

And we can't go without mentioning the family of *Oconnors Goldwyn Jasmine,* EX-92 2E 1*, bought at the age of 9 months. *Jasmine* has 1 Superior Lactation, has produced 63 759 kg of milk in 4 lactations, and has 6 daughters classified 83 per cent GP or better. Among them, *Suntor Man O Man Jelena,* VG-86-2yr, was sold at the Sale of Stars in 2012. She was highly coveted for her pedigree as well as for her very promising GLPI. Her progeny includes *Suntor Joyride,* a young bull with a GPA LPI of 3065 (Dec. 2014).

The outstanding performance of the Suntor herd is the result of attention to detail, good forages and indisputable comfort. Genomics has also has a positive impact on the herd. Today, Kevin proudly affirms that 20 per cent of their animals are polled.

For Ruth, Fred and Kevin Sundborg, this Master Breeder shield is the ultimate recognition of their achievement by their peers. But in this year of a farm transfer, it is also recognition of the success of their intergenerational collaboration. ■

***Suntor Aeroline Joy,* EX 5E 13*, has had a significant impact on the Suntor herd. According to Kevin Sundborg: "You only breed one cow like this in a lifetime."**