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Nicki Fletcher

The next generation

The girls claim their place

Ferme Fleury

A three-dimensional operation



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Ferme Fleury et fils inc.

A focus on production, conformation and genomics

The breeders at Ferme Fleury et fils inc., in Saint-Christophe-d'Arthabaska, near Victoriaville, make their decisions based on a threefold philosophy that focuses concurrently on developing Holsteins that excel as both show cows and milk producers, on Red and White Holsteins, and on high genomic animals. Purchased by Adrien Fleury in 1952, the farm was awarded a Master Breeder shield in 2004.

To achieve this three-way goal, Ferme Fleury has a 230-head herd that includes 85 cows, classified 10 EX, 51 VG and 23 GP, that produce an average of 11 716 kg of milk, with 3.9% fat and 3.29% protein, for BCAs of 252-266-262. Working on these three aspects within their herd enables Jean-Claude Fleury and his father, Jean-Albert, to meet their clients' needs and also increases their chances of marketing their livestock and their genetics.

The herd's recent history begins with *A Valiant MARS S-W-D Prize*, VG-87 2*, a cow of American origin that Jean-Albert Fleury purchased in June 1988, on the advice of Albert Cormier. Prize earned one Superior Lactation and produced nearly 100 000 kg of milk in nine lactations, a remarkable yield at the time. In acquiring Prize, Jean-Albert Fleury, who took over the farm from his father, Adrien, in the late 1970s, intended to expand

into the foreign market. That plan proved successful for this breeder who was already using embryo transfers. Although few of the descendants of this cow were available in Quebec and Canada, they became widely available abroad, especially in England. The breeders say that it is thanks to this cow that the Fleury herd has been able to develop its reputation. One of her daughters is *Fleury Leadman Prima*, VG 3*, a cow that produced 86 319 kg of milk in eight lactations.

Some prolific Holsteins

Fleury Aerostar Lausa, VG-87 22*, also played an important role in the herd, in terms of both production and conformation. Born in 1993, *Lausa* was sold at age of 4 to a Japanese buyer; prior to that sale, however, she had two lactations, earning BCAs of 261-265-269, and produced a prolific total of 95 embryos in 5 flushes. In Canada alone, she has 24 daughters classified 96% GP or better, including 3 EX and 10 VG, and 10 of them have

achieved a lifetime production of more than 60 000 kg of milk. Among them, *Fleury Juror Lys*, EX 5E 2*, produced over 100 000 kg of milk in eight lactations.

Another of *Lausa's* daughters, *Fleury Formation Lauria*, EX-95 3E 6*, was sold as a 10-month-old at the Sale of Stars, in 1998, and, in 2003, in the 5-year-old category, became the first cow bearing the Fleury prefix to obtain an All-Canadian nomination. The Fleury family purchased some of her embryos and she continues to shape the herd through *Brainwave Goldwyn Lauren*, EX-92 2E 1*, second Senior 2-Year-Old in Victoriaville, in 2009. Lauren is also an excellent milk producer, with a four-lactation yield of 66 948 kg, with 4.1% fat and 3.4% protein (258-276-269). She recently left the herd following an accident, but her influence will continue to be felt

At Ferme Fleury et fils inc., the herd has as many cows with good genomic proofs as it does good-looking, high-producing cows and Red and Whites.



through the daughters, 4 cows and 8 heifers, she left behind. *Lauren* is a full sister to *Brainwave Goldwyn Lauramie*, EX-95 2E Canada and EX-92 US, a very popular cow on the show circuit that won, among other titles, Honorable Mention All-American Junior 2-Year-Old and Junior 3-Year-Old, in 2009 and 2010.

Finally, *Fleury Sanchez Lorilee*, classified EX-91 in April 2015, in her third lactation, is at the head of another family on which the breeders are pinning their hopes. Nominated All-Canadian and Honourable Mention Tout-Québec Intermediate Heifer Calf, in 2010, second Intermediate Yearling in Victoriaville, in 2011, and third 3-Year-Old Senior in Victoriaville, in 2013, *Lorilee* produced a second-lactation yield of 11 269 kg of milk, with 4.1% fat and 3.3% protein, for BCAs of 242-269-249. She is the dam of *Fleury Fever Lee*, GP-84-2yr, a cow that produced 11 216 kg of milk in her first lactation, earning BCAs of 292-301-282.

A knack for good numbers

Where genomics are concerned, the focus is on *Calbrett Shottle Lisamaree*, EX-91 16*, a daughter of the famous *Lylehaven Lila Z*, EX-94 20*. Purchased as a 2-year-old by Ferme Fleury and Yvon Chabot, in 2008, the early days of genomics, *Lisamaree* now has three Superior Lactation titles to her name and a lifetime production of over 54 000 kg of milk in three lactations. She is the dam of 24 daughters, all classified GP or better, including 1 EX and 15 VG, now spread among a number of herds. Indeed, after transferring many of *Lisamaree*'s embryos from various matings and having the resulting heifers genotyped, the breeders put her best daughters up for sale at numerous auctions. Naturally, the Fleury herd includes some of her descendants, one of which is her great-granddaughter *Fleury Gen Sudan Marisol*, VG-86-2yr, featured on the cover page of this issue. In her first lactation, at 1 year and 10 months, *Marisol* produced 11 033 kg of milk, with 3.7% fat and 3.1% protein, for BCAs of 289-286-283.

Lisamaree is also the dam of two Superior Type sires, *Fleury Aztec* and *Fleury G Mega Million*, in addition to *Fleury Gen Le Plan*, EX-91, a bull owned by Select Sires GenerVations Inc. that was returned to service in 2014. Moreover, one of her daughters, *Fleury Gen Baxter Lisa*, EX-92 3*, is the granddam of *RockyMountain Lottomax*, a genomic young

A family affair

At Ferme Fleury, the Holstein story begins with Adrien, Jean-Albert's father. Interested in breeding purebreds, Jean-Albert had already opted for registration and classification as ways to improve his herd. In the late 1970s, he took his father's place at the helm of Ferme Adrien Fleury et fils inc. After completing his diploma in zootechnics, at the ITA's Saint-Hyacinthe campus, and working off the farm at various jobs, Jean-Claude joined his father and his mother, Ginette, in 1999, as a third shareholder in the family operation. Since then, he has been in charge of the herd, while his father, who was a director of Holstein Québec for 11 years, sees to the farm's management and field work, and his mother, who also works in accounting for Réseau Encans Québec, takes care of the bookkeeping.

Today, in addition to the herd, the farm has 202.3 of its 212.5 hectares under cultivation, growing wheat and soybeans, which are sold except for the straw, and high-moisture grain corn, silage corn, and a mix of alfalfa, timothy, and brome grass, harvested in wrapped, round, high-moisture bales and in small hay bales, which is used to feed the animals. The forage ration is complemented with a mixture of high-moisture grain corn and supplements fed individually to each cow, by automatic feeder, based on the animal's production, with five feedings per day.



Jean-Albert and Ginette Fleury with their four children, Marie-Ève, Marie-Pier, Chantal and Jean-Claude.

sire owned by The Semex Alliance. *Lisamaree* is still in the Fleury herd and has produced 250 embryos to date.

Fleury Emerson Meline, VG-87 7*, is at the head of another influential family in the Fleury herd. With six lactations, an impressive lifetime production of 129 795 kg of milk (3.7% fat and 3.2% protein), three Super 3 titles, and five Superior Lactations, she has a proven track record for milk production. Reproduction was also a strong suit for her, with seven daughters classified 86% GP and one son by Goldwyn, *Fleury Mathys*, a proven Semex sire. Her descendants also include *Fleury Sudan Mon BB*, VG-87-3yr, who, with a GLPI of 3225, ranks ninth on the Top GLPI Cow

Report (April 2015). Still in her first lactation, *Mon BB* has already earned a Superior Lactation certificate and is still harvested for embryos, many of which are sold abroad. Moreover, she is already the dam of four heifers in the Fleury herd.

Red and Whites

Red and Whites have been a part of the Fleury operation since the 1980s; as Jean-Claude says, "We love them and we'll always breed them." Although the market for Red and Whites isn't comparable to the Holstein market, and the number of breeding sires is limited, Red and Whites nevertheless represent a significant part of their operation

H HERD PROFILE



Calbrett Shottle Lisamaree, EX-91 16*, is a daughter of the famous **Lylehaven Lila Z, EX-94 20***. **Lisamaree** has two Superior Lactations and has produced 54 000 kg of milk in three lactations. She is also the dam of 24 daughters, all classified GP or better, including 1 EX and 15 VG.

with her best production at 5 years and 2 months, a yield of 14 149 kg that earned her BCAs of 284-296-293.

Choosing the right sire

For the Fleury breeders, choosing a good sire depends on a number of criteria. Production and components are important, as are conformation, health and fertility. But Jean-Claude prefers to focus on the strong points for these traits rather than on the final score, so that he can select a sire that best corresponds to the specific needs of each individual cow. Generally speaking, for all traits, he insists on at least the breed average, with a score of at least 1000 for milk and -3 for somatic cell count.

Since selling animals and embryos generates 20 to 25 per cent of the farm's revenue, Jean-Claude and his father also take into account the realities of the marketplace, such as the USA TPI, when choosing sires. In this regard, they always rely on the expertise of two advisors, Yvon Chabot and Albert Cormier.

The breeders also take advantage of co-ownership opportunities. As Jean-Claude explains, co-ownership is good way to acquire animals that would be difficult to purchase alone. It is also a good way to develop the market, because each of the co-owners doesn't always have the same network of clients, which is advantageous for all the owners.

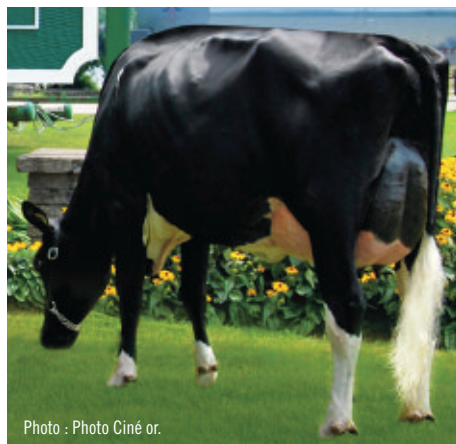


Photo : Photo Ciné or.

Fleury Sudan Mon BB, VG-87-3yr, ranks 9th on the Top GLPI Cow Report (April 2015) with a GLPI of 3225. At more than 305 days in milk in her first lactation, she already has a Superior Lactation and continues to provide embryos.



Brainwave Goldwyn Lauren, EX-92 2E 1*, second Senior 2-Year-Old in Victoriaville, in 2009, is an excellent milk producer, with a yield of 66 948 kg in four lactations, with 4.1% fat and 3.4% protein (258-276-269).

and enable then to diversify the herd. As Jean-Claude explains, "[It's] a specific market that attracts different buyers, but once they're in the barn, they may discover other animals that interest them among the other families of our herd."

Two cows in particular, both co-owned with Deslacs Holstein, offer good yield potential. One of them, Deslacs Glacier Alika Red, VG-88, is a daughter of Parile Kite Alicia, EX 2E 6*, My Favourite Cow 2014. Jean-Claude Fleury thought this cow stood out among the rest, and he did not hesitate to acquire a 50 per cent interest in her when she was put up for auction by Deslacs Holstein. Alika won Red & White Junior Champion at both the QIHS and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto, in 2010, and Red & White Reserve Junior Champion, in Toronto, in 2009, as well as All-American Red & White Junior Heifer Calf, in 2009, and All-Canadian Red & White, in 2010. Since then, she has had two lactations, including one Super Lactation, and produced many embryos. Among her descendants, Fleury Acme Alys Red, VG-2yr (MS-87), was second Red & White Junior 2-Year-Old and Best Udder in her class at the new Québec Spring Show held this past April.

The herd's Red and White sector also relies on Sunnyslodge M B Gabrielle, EX-93 2E, first Mature Cow and Best Udder in her class at the 2015 Red & White Québec Spring Show. She is the dam of 7 young cows, including 2 VG and 5 GP. Now in her fourth lactation, she has already produced 58 508 kg of milk,

When it comes to genomic young sires, which are used for about 50 per cent of their matings, Jean-Claude prefers to select bulls that have at least one parent with a confirmed score, either a dam who has demonstrated her worth or a proven sire. That way, he says, "the numbers are more valid." ■

Picnic on the Fleury farm

Following the initiative of the Bois-Francis Holstein Club, the upcoming Holstein Québec Picnic will take place at Ferme Fleury et fils inc., 1350 Jutra Boulevard East, in Saint-Christophe-d'Arthabaska, on 10 July. With the farm's facilities in good condition, Jean-Albert and his son Jean-Claude thought it was a good time to accept the Club's invitation. As Jean-Albert explains, "The picnic is an important activity for the Association and, seeing as this club has the most members but hasn't organized the picnic since 2000, it was time to take the plunge."

This year's event, with the theme "The Winds of Change", will take place on Friday, 10 July. Visitors will have the opportunity to see one of Val-Bisson Doorman's first daughters shortly after her first calving.



By
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The next generation

The girls have taken their place

When asked if they had heard the question “The farm isn’t the place for a girl, is it?” all five women interviewed by La Revue said they had not. It is indeed a sign that times have changed. And although succession problems haven’t disappeared, the good news is that the experiences of these women weren’t any more complicated than if they had been men.

Nancy Duchesne (Duchesne prefix), in Saguenay, acquired her first shares in the family operation in 1997, and the transfer took place gradually over the next decade. Unable to imagine herself anywhere else than on the farm, she acknowledges that although her father understood that she would be the one to take over the farm, there was some hesitation on his part. Nancy recalls that he often reminded her that it would give him much more peace of mind if his daughter had a partner at her side that he could count on. In his mind, a girl alone on a farm was just too difficult. And Nancy acknowledges: “My father was right.” But she also adds proudly: “A woman can do it, but if she has support, it goes much better.” And since it was at the time she acquired her first shares that a man showed up in her life, one that had her father’s trust, the conditions for success were all there.

She worked as a team with her father until 2005, as the family took the time to plan the farm transfer. When her father suddenly learned that he had only two to four months left to live, however, the family put those discussions aside to live as serenely as possible. On 1 January 2006, a few months after he passed away, in keeping with his wishes, Nancy’s mother transferred her shares to her daughter, making Nancy the sole owner of the farm. The transfer, Nancy recalls, “was straightforward, because we knew where we were going.” Her partner, Éric Savard, became a co-owner of the operation in 2009.

For Cindy Routhier (Routina prefix), who has owned the family farm in Coaticook since 2004, taking over the farm was her childhood



Nancy Duchesne took over the Duchesne Holstein family farm.

dream. Nonetheless, after getting an Attestation of Collegial Studies in agriculture, she was hired by a private agricultural firm as a financial and business turnaround advisor. She worked there full time for a year and half, and then part time for another year and a half while splitting her time between the office and the family farm. Doing two jobs was becoming more and more difficult, and so she opted for the farm, forming a company with her father, Bernard Routhier. In 2006, her brother Steven joined the team.

Cindy recalls that the transfer went smoothly. She says she was lucky that her parents always had faith in her, and they made the transfer easy, simply wanting to ensure they had enough money to live comfortably. The farm was thus handed over gradually, with her mother pulling out first, so the children weren’t required to pay down a large sum of money.

Andrea Hodge (Hodgdale prefix), in Ulverton, near Richmond, had known for a long time that she would earn her living working with cows, but she just didn’t know how she would do it. When she finished her bachelor’s degree in animal science at Macdonald College, the employee working on the Hodgdale farm resigned. She quickly took his place, as her father was looking to sell the operation if the children weren’t interested in taking over. In 2007, Andrea acquired the farm by forming a company with her brother Darren, and her parents then retired. Andrea, who is also a director of the Richmond Holstein Club, as well as an aspiring judge, emphasizes that she has never encountered any problems in her various occupations because she is a girl. “When I was little, it didn’t matter; we had work to do and we did it. That’s still the way it is today. My brother and our employee help me out when I need it,” she says.

Mélanie Laberge has been at the helm of Ferme Bergelait (Delaberge prefix), in Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague, since 1997. She enjoyed taking care of the herd when she was younger but didn’t see herself as a farmer. “I’m a woman, I wouldn’t be able to have a boyfriend,” she thought, as she started a university degree in special education. Two years in, while she was doing an internship at a school in a neighbouring town, she realized she was racing back to the farm after her day’s work. It was clear that the barn was where she wanted to be. She abandoned her university education to study agriculture at Alfred College, in Ontario. Her father had been saying for a long time: “You’re good, you should stay.” And that is indeed what she did in the end. Today she co-owns the farm with



In the first row, Mélanie Laberge and her partner, Brent Watt, with Mélanie's brother Geoffré and their parents, Louise and Luc Laberge.

her brother Geoffré, her partner, Brent Watt, and her parents, Louise and Luc Laberge. The operation took on a new dimension in 2009, when the owners acquired the herd that belonged to the Watt family (Wattcrest prefix), bringing the herd's head count to 250.

It's even easier today, adds Mélanie, now that there are women everywhere in agriculture, as nutritionists, advisors of all sorts, veterinarians, etc. No one ever questions anymore if it's alright to be a woman in agriculture, she says. When something negative happens, it's not related to gender.

Patricia Moreau joined her parents as a co-owner of the Morelle farm, in Saint-Agapit, in 2006, after completing a DVS in dairy production, at the Centre de formation agricole in Saint-Anselme, and a DCS in Farm Management at Cégep de Lévis. She had 21 per cent of the shares at the time, but she and her brother Guillaume took over the farm as equal shareholders in 2014. For Mélanie, and likewise for all the women consulted here, her parents had complete confidence in their daughter and didn't see why she couldn't take over the farm. Nothing out of the ordinary has happened to her, she says, and she has never felt that she lacked credibility because she is a woman. On the other hand, she adds, "If I felt victimized, then maybe people would take me for a victim."

All of these farmers agree that when it comes to negotiating financing, the fact that they are women hasn't caused any problems, with one exception. When a new sales rep comes to the farm and asks to see their partner because he wants to talk to the owner, they

feel duty-bound to point out: "I am the owner."

Attention to detail

Another pattern emerges from these interviews as well: all of the women interviewed are in charge of their herds. For Nancy Duchesne, sole owner of the farm for a long period of time, this was a given, but the situation could have been different for those in partnership with their brother and/or parents. All of the women have a passion for dairy farming and think that it is probably because girls are more meticulous, more thoughtful towards the animals, and more attentive to detail that they tend to be more interested

in the herd. As Cindy Routhier points out, that trait is an advantage on larger farms, where the herd requires an almost constant presence. It makes things easier when each of us has our own specialty and we can work at what we like, she adds. "My brother doesn't like the cows and is very happy to be in the fields or taking care of the machinery." It's perfect that way, she says, "We work well together."

Andrea Hodge is in a similar situation, but isn't sure that attention to detail is exclusive to women. "My brother is like that in the fields, so it may not be related to gender." Nancy Duchesne thinks that the trait is more frequent in girls, however, and she points to her personal experience with her employees

as proof. Previously, she used to hire men, but she now has a girl assisting her in the barn. "She is more responsive to my needs and we understand each other more easily when it comes to caring for the herd," explains Nancy.

This attention to detail also leads the girls to take on the administrative tasks, all that paperwork that has to be dealt with, in addition to the bookkeeping, two jobs that require patience and diligence. So perhaps it's not without reason that women traditionally took on these responsibilities, even in the days before they had the opportunity to become owners. All things considered, says Cindy Routhier, a good part of farm work requires thoroughness, so it's fortunate that girls take an interest in it.

While their meticulous nature is widely recognized, girls can also be successful in other fields. Mélanie Laberge, who, among other pursuits, has been involved with the Huntingdon-Ormstown-Beauharnois Holstein Club, in particular on the Vente Élite committee, has never felt that being a girl has been any difference. But she does hasten to add that she would never agree to be secretary. The situation is the same on the farm as well. "I don't like doing the paperwork," she says, so her partner and her mother share that responsibility.

Discussion and communication

Like the other women interviewed, Patricia Moreau is in charge of the herd and makes all the herd management decisions on her own. But, she explains, there are sometimes



Cindy Routhier, of Routina Holstein, with her partner, Benoît Laperle, and their two children, Alice and Antoine Laperle.



Andrea Hodge, of Hodgale Farm, co-owns the operation with her brother Darren.

bigger decisions that need to be made on a farm, decisions that affect the operation as a whole. If she and her brother are unable to come to a consensus after discussing an issue, she says, it means "that we aren't ready, and that we'll have to delay the decision until later, when we're both comfortable with it. So there's no great pressure; it's a matter of mutual respect." For her and her brother, it is clear that the girl's idea is just as important as the boy's. Patricia stresses that she and her brother understand each other well. As proof, she points to the fact that among strangers their complicity is so obvious that many people are under the impression they are a couple. Cindy Routhier adds that it is also important to trust oneself and to acknowledge and congratulate oneself for the good decisions one has made.

Andrea Hodge points out that since money issues are always important on the farm, they require a great deal of energy and discussion and can often be a source of potential conflict. Fortunately, she adds, one can be one's own boss and work at what one likes in agriculture. That helps make up for the long hours of work and the less-than-impressive revenue that are often part of the package. In agriculture, she concludes, you have to be prepared to work for low wages.

Nancy Duchesne is able to count on her partner, who works off the farm as a computer technician, to lend a hand. He wasn't familiar with farm work, but he learned quickly, she says. Now he

is actively involved with both the field work and the machinery, along with a part-time male employee.

Tools for success

Patricia Moreau stresses that it is important to surround oneself with the right people, people who share similar interests, who are driven by the same motivation. Patricia also works as a publicist for the Lotbinière Holstein Club and has been very active with the young farmers' organization in her area. "It is

important to have people around you. That's the key to developing a network and learning from the experiences of others."

Nonetheless, for many, the presence of a man is indispensable. As Nancy Duchesne points out, "I don't know a lot of women with a passion for farm mechanics." Moreover, physical strength is often an advantage. On a small farm, says Cindy Routhier, "you can manage as a girl," but on the Routina farm, she says, she and her brother complement one another in terms of their likes and dislikes and their skills. That view is shared by Andrea Hodge, who takes care of the herd while her brother handles the field work. But he also comes to the barn, she explains, and they discuss everything together. Cindy underlines that it is also a question of mutual respect between men and women. "If a boy says a girl can't do such and such a job, the girl can

easily respond: 'A guy can't do this other job.'"

Mélanie Laberge thinks that nowadays girls are physically able to do the work like a man. Muscle power doesn't matter as much anymore, she explains. As proof, she points to the fact that many dairy farmers today are looking to hire a girl. "It could be that we're more careful, more attentive," she suggests. But, in Mélanie's view, on the Bergelait farm, everyone does everything, because everyone needs to be informed about all aspects of the farm; it's not a matter of gender. She even helps out in mechanical matters, but doesn't make any of the decisions in that regard, contenting herself instead with managing the herd, her main area of interest.

Finally, Nancy Duchesne points out that to get started in agriculture, whether you're a girl or a boy, strength of character is a must. Having been told, "It was much easier with your father," she explains that it is probably because she is young and more of a negotiator than her father that makes the difference rather than the fact that she is a girl. Andrea Hodge adds one last piece of advice: "When we bought the farm, we put a lot of things in writing, but there were a few things left out. Ideally, it's important to put it everything in writing."

Work-life balance

The reconciliation of work and family life is a reality on many farms, with both fathers and mothers faced with the dilemma. Cindy Routhier and Mélanie Laberge find themselves in that situation, organizing their work schedules to account for the needs of their children. They need to have an understanding and co-operative partner to be able to do that. For Mélanie, raising children is more difficult in agriculture, because the work is so demanding. On the other hand, with a partner who comes from an agricultural background and who understands the realities of farm life, it's easier to find ways to make it doable. Cindy's partner works as a farm mechanic but is also very involved on the farm, and she is happy to be able to count on him and on her parents to answer the needs of their family. ■



Patricia Moreau and her brother Guillaume took over the Morelle family farm in Saint-Agapit.