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Herd Profiles

Ferme Pellerat

Future-oriented innovation

Ferme Rayon D'Or

A keen interest in embryos

Vente mentorat 2013

An initiative that produced results



Photo : Camille Maloney



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Ferme Rayon D'Or More than just milk

After graduating with a DCS in Farm Management, Steve Moreau and his brother Serge, who had completed an attestation of collegial studies in agriculture, took over the family farm. At the same time, Steve also worked as a consultant with producers. His business experience gave him a different perspective on farming, motivating him to develop the operation in such a way as to ensure a constant income. In 2004, the farm really began to flourish when Steve left his consulting job to devote himself exclusively to the herd.

When Steve's father bought the farm in 1967, he acquired a herd of crossbred cows. The Moreau brothers, who took over in 1998, made some significant changes to improve herd management and animal comfort. As Steve had developed an interest for shows and breeding, the brothers decided to buy a few purebred Holstein cows as well.

One of that group, *Comestar Lauhanna Rudolph*, VG-86 6*, a descendant of the family of *Laurie Sheik*, opened their way to the embryo market. The brothers' growing interest in embryo production prompted them to acquire a number of other cows from different families known for their LPI and conformation. There are about 20 such cows in the herd now.

Among them, *Wendon Goldwyn Allie*, EX-95 2E, is the cow "that boosted the farm's name," says Steve. A model of outstanding conformation, Allie was crowned Grand Champion at the Holstein Québec Spring

Show, in 2013, and earned All-Canadian and Tout-Québec Five-Year-Old titles in 2012 and Honourable Mention All-Canadian and Tout-Québec Four-Year-Old in 2011. She is the dam of five daughters classified VG and has earned two Superior Lactation awards, producing 69 606 kg of milk in four lactations, with 4.3% fat and 3.6% protein.

The herd also counts on *Wabash-Way Shottle Ember*, VG-88 3*, a cow that has produced more than 40 000 kg of milk in two lactations. With an LPI of 2650, she is the dam of 15 daughters classified 93 per cent GP or better and is a bull dam as well. Five of her daughters, sired by different bulls, are currently in the herd. Another of them, *Rayon D'Or Chevrolet Esmaralda*, brought in the highest bid at the Holstein Québec National Sale in April 2014, when she was only six weeks old.

Rayon D'Or Goldwyn Adonial, EX-94 2*, a daughter of *Comestar Adonia Lee*, EX-92 4E

Ferme laitière Rayon D'Or inc.

Number of animals: 165

Number of cows: 85, many of which have prolonged lactations to allow for numerous embryo flushes.

Average production per cow: 12 578 kg, with 3.9% fat and 3.3% protein

BCA : 272-288-285

Quota : 58 kg

Classification : 10 EX, 51 VG, 20 GP

Crop acreage: 100 ha, with 15 ha seeded to silage corn and the rest to alfalfa and a little timothy harvested as silage and hay.

6*, is another of the cows the Moreau brothers are currently using to develop their herd. She has two Superior Lactation awards to her name in addition to a Tout-Québec Five-Year-Old nomination, in 2013, and a Grand Champion title in Saint-Anselme, in 2016.



Ferme Rayon D'Or is owned and operated by brothers Steve and Serge Moreau. In the photo on the left: Anne-Marie Bissonnette and Steve with their three children, Allyson, Tommy and Jason. In the photo on the right: Serge and his partner, Sandra Simard, with Serge's children, Amélia and William.



Rayon D'Or Goldwyn Adonial, EX-94 2*, was nominated Tout-Québec Five-Year-Old in 2013, has earned two Superior Lactation awards, and is the dam of 21 daughters classified 86 per cent VG or better.



Wabash-Way Shottle Ember, VG-88 3*, produced over 40 000 kg of milk in two lactations and has an LPI of 2650. She is not only dam to 15 daughters classified 93 per cent GP or better, she is also the dam of the bull **Rayon D'Or Eternel**, offered by Bull D'Or génétique inc.

On the Red and White front

Morrill Talent Cookie-Red, VG 1*, has also made her mark in the herd, particularly as the dam of *Rayon D'Or Sterling Coukounne*, VG-87-2yr, Reserve All-Canadian Intermediate Heifer Calf in 2011. *Coukounne* earned a Superior Lactation award with a 305-day yield of 13 274 kg of milk in her first lactation (332-372-365). She is the dam of *Rayon D'Or Addict Country Red*, third Junior Calf at the Royal in 2015.

Finally, *BBM CP Candy Red*, VG-88, a descendant of the family of *KHW Regiment Apple-Red*, EX-96 3E USA 13*, was also awarded a Superior Lactation, producing 14 056 kg of milk in 305 days (363-330-382), at 1 year and 11 months. Among other showing honours, she was crowned Red and White Grand Champion at the Quebec Spring Show in 2016. One of her daughters, *Rayon D'Or Lotus Corail Red*, was first Junior Calf at Expo BBQ and second Junior Calf in Rimouski in 2016.

Embryos and more embryos

Convinced that their cow families would attract buyers, the Moreau brothers chose to make embryo production one of their main sectors of activity. To that end, Steve spends two days a week on the road and has put together warranty programs for his buyers. By way of explanation, he recounts that a client once told him that he would really like to be sure to get a heifer. That idea didn't fall on deaf ears, and the farm now offers two warranties, the first assuring a pregnancy rate and the second guaranteeing that at least one calf will be a heifer.

The farm currently harvests embryos from two or three cows a week, with an average of seven embryos per flush, for a total of

about 1000 embryos per year. Prior to the drop in milk prices, which is driving down producers' earnings and investments, the farm was collecting embryos from five or six cows a week.

A rigorous selection process

The Moreau brothers continue to make good-looking cows their priority. They select their sires from good families that include prize-winning show cows, and maintain a fifty-fifty balance between proven sires and young bulls with genomic evaluations. "You have to see the daughters," explains Steve Moreau. But indexes are also important, ideally + 15 for conformation, if the plan is to eventually use the females as embryo donors. Sire selection is also based on feet and legs, particularly heel depth, in addition to various health criteria.

Off to the show!

The Moreau brothers' first experience in the show ring dates back to 2001, in Saint-Pascal (Kamouraska), but it only took a year before they came home with the Grand Champion ribbon. Taking part in shows brings economic benefits, says Steve, adding that for that reason he brings only three or four cows to the show but aims for the Grand Champion title. He initially showed animals he had bought, but he now gives precedence to the Rayon D'Or prefix.

Developing males as well

On 1 August 2014, Steve Moreau and his wife, Anne-Marie Bissonnette, launched a new business aimed at marketing semen from Rayon D'Or bulls. Bull D'Or génétique inc. now offers dairy producers semen from 18 of their bulls.

With the recent changes in the bull market, Steve Moreau sees this approach as a way to make the most of the herd's cow families. In this business as well, the idea of reassuring the client prompted the couple to set up a pregnancy warranty program. ■

On the farm and on the road

In 1998, brothers Steve and Serge Moreau each acquired an equal share in Ferme Rayon D'Or, the family farm located in the Kamouraska region. Since then, Ferme Rayon D'Or inc. has made a name for itself not only for its success in the showing, but also for its presence in the embryo market.

On the farm, Steve manages the herd while his brother sees to crop production and machinery. They are supported by two permanent employees who hail from Guatemala. The team also counts on a permanent secretary and on Anne-Marie Bissonnette, Steve's wife, who works as an administrative assistant.

When on the road selling embryos or bull semen to producers, Steve is assisted by a salesperson and a delivery employee. This segment of the operation is an important one, as embryo and animal sales account for 75 per cent of the farm's income, while the other 25 per cent comes from milk sales.

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Vente mentorat 2013 2 EX and 16 VG: What more could one want?

*O*n 30 January 2013, a special sale, the Vente mentorat, was organized as part of the Holstein Québec Convention held that year in Saint-Jean. The aim of the event was not only to sell animals from renowned families, that could become brood cows in their new herds, but also to present the consignors as mentors, willing to advise buyers, should they wish, on ways to develop the different cow families.

All of the 21 animals up for sale at the event found a buyer, with an average price of \$9 562. Two of the animals have since been classified EX and 16 VG, many of them at 2 or 3 years of age. Moreover, four of them have earned Superior Lactation awards. The cows for sale were from recognized herds and were descendants of families that had proven their worth. The majority of the consignors had already earned a Master Breeder shield.

Although the animals were not actually present when the auction took place in the

hotel where the Convention was held, they had all been presented by video prior to the sale. Prospective buyers were thus able to assess the quality of the animals; they also had the opportunity to visit them on the consignors' farms and find out more about each one.

Stéphane Tardif, who was an advisor for Holstein Québec at the time and who spearheaded the project with the Convention's Organizing Committee from the St-Jean Holstein Club, remembers that the

organizers had a specific goal in mind. As he explains, breeders that have just begun to take an interest in genetics are often reluctant to invest money in a cow without being sure to be able to develop the animal to its full potential. Many were reassured by the idea of having a mentor who was willing to offer support. Some of the buyers had considerable breeding experience, but about 15 of them had only recently become interested in genetics and were thus able to benefit from their mentors' knowledge and expertise. ➔



The conference room at the hotel was jam-packed when the Vente mentorat took place on 30 January 2013, in Saint-Jean, as part of the Holstein Québec Convention.





Some highlights of success

Ferme Bergelait inc. obtained the highest selling price at the sale, \$25 200, for *Delaberge Bronco Rêve*, VG-2yr, a descendant of the family of *Delaberge Shottle Regine*, VG-89 1*. Purchased by Ferme Lesbertrand. *Rêve*, who represents her family's 12th generation of VG or EX cows, has since earned a Superior Lactation award, with a total production of 49 546 kg of milk in three lactations, with 4.1% fat, 3.2% protein (BCAs of 277-310-309). She is also the dam of six daughters, including one VG and four GP. Among them, *Lesbertrand Hatley Princesse*, VG-86-2yr, was second Intermediate Yearling at the Montréal-Vaudreuil-Soulanges Holstein Club's Expo champêtre, in 2015, and second Senior Two-Year-Old in Ormstown, in 2016. Currently in her first lactation, *Rêve* is expected to produce 11 385 kg of milk.

Jacobs Goldwyn Lesly, EX-91, is another fine example of the cows on offer at the 2013 sale. First Junior Three-Year-Old and Honourable Mention Grand Champion in Bedford, in 2013, *Lesly* is the dam of two classified daughters, one VG and one GP. In her third lactation,



***Myosotis Windbrook Lindsey*, VG-2yr, a daughter of *Jacobs Goldwyn Lesly*, EX-91, is now in her first lactation, which is expected to yield 10 958 kg of milk, with 4.2% fat and 3.5% protein (285-320-309).**



***Lesbertrand Hatley Princesse*, VG-86-2yr, a daughter of *Delaberge Bronco Rêve*, VG-2yr, was second Intermediate Yearling at the Montréal-Vaudreuil-Soulanges Holstein Club's Expo champêtre, in 2015, and second Senior Two-Year-Old in Ormstown, in 2016. She is now in her first lactation, with a projected yield of 11 385 kg of milk.**

Lesly produced 11 513 kg of milk in 305 days, with 4.7% fat and 3.5% protein (241-302-262). Purchased by Ferme Myosotis, she became an asset to the herd. According to Olivier Ostiguy, *Lesly* was the cow he was most interested in at the sale, particularly because acquiring an animal from Ferme Jacobs was an appealing prospect. Olivier mentions that he had visited the Jacobs farm prior to the sale and was thus able to see the cow at the end of her lactation and discuss her potential with Yan, who was generous with his advice both before and after the sale. Once on the Myosotis farm, *Lesly* produced embryos on two occasions. Two of her daughters are now in production, another is due to calve soon, and a fourth is pregnant. Among her milking daughters, *Myosotis Windbrook Lindsey*, VG-2yr, is in her first lactation with a projected yield of 10 958 kg of milk, with 4.2% fat and 3.5% protein (285-320-309). Although *Lesly* unfortunately died following two weeks of special care at the veterinarian hospital in Saint-Hyacinthe, Olivier intends to make the most of her daughters to develop the family.



Yan Jacobs, for his part, says he appreciated the concept of the sale. He considers client satisfaction to be an important factor, so being able to keep up with his cow and discuss her with the buyer was a plus. "*Lesly* did well in Bedford and I was happy for the Ostiguy family, even more so than if I had shown her myself," he says.

Karona Shottle Flash, EX-91, the second of the cows sold at the 2013 sale to be classified EX, is now co-owned by Marco Rodrigue and Marie-Claude Marcoux (Marico) and Mario Koolen (Koolait). *Flash* earned a Superior Lactation award and, in three lactations, produced 54 308 kg of milk, with 3.8% fat and 3.2% protein (308-311-296). Her third lactation yielded 18 308 kg in 305 days (346-386-336). As an embryo donor, she is the now the dam of three classified daughters, two VG and one GP, and three heifers.

On the production front, *Canado Fever Terry*, VG, has done particularly well. Acquired by Ferme du Galet, she earned a Superior Lactation award, producing 39 676 kg of milk (279-298-284) in three lactations. Not only did she always calve within 12 months, expounds Normand Chevrier, but she was also endowed with remarkable fertility, an attribute she passed on to her daughters, he says. "She was my favourite," he adds, "and enabled us to diversify our herd." Normand wasn't well acquainted with Terry's breeders, the Couture family from Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle, prior to the purchase, but the transaction gave him the opportunity to establish ties with Claude Couture, who generously shared his expertise and often made the trip to Rigaud to see Terry. Normand Chevrier thus had the opportunity to talk to him about the particulars of this descendant of the family of *Canado Igniter Olivia*, the family that earned 27% of the points towards the Master Breeder shield awarded to the Canado farm in 2011. Although Terry regrettably died at her fourth calving, three daughters follow in her wake: two classified VG and a third awaiting her first calf.

Louise Ferron, a director of Holstein Québec, was also present at the sale in 2013. Since then, she and her family are the proud owners of *Mystique Baltimor Atlanta*, VG-88. "We already knew François Paiement, from Ferme Mystique and, in fact, we chose the animal's



***Karona Shottle Flash*, EX-91, has one Superior Lactation award and, at 5 years and 1 month, produced 18 308 kg of milk in 305 days, with 4.2% fat and 3.1% protein (346-386-336).**

mentor as much as the animal itself," she explains, adding that François Paiement certainly hasn't let them down. "My daughter Sandra and he confer every time something comes up in Atlanta's life." Louise believes that Atlanta will probably become the top cow in their herd. She has produced embryos every year and is the dam of two daughters and two heifers, and a number of calves are on their way. *Atlanta's* daughter, *Mystique Windbrook Atlantis*, VG-87-2yr, will probably be used as an embryo donor as well.

Jean Van Wijk, who owns the Arwijk herd in Saint-Valentin, is another breeder who says, in a message sent to *La Revue*, that he is very pleased with the animal he bought at the Vente mentorat. He was looking for a female sired by *Shottle*, mainly because he had had only males by this bull and also because the younger generation on his farm was very interested in the bull's genetics. He settled on *Jolibois Petunia Shottle*, VG-87, a good milking cow that has produced 57 752 kg of milk in four lactations (243-269-252). Used as an embryo donor, she has given birth to three daughters classified GP at two years and two

heifers. The breeder also mentions that *Petunia* has enabled him to make good contacts, since a young farmer acquired one of her daughters at the Vente Distinction last August.

An experience worth repeating?

Stéphane Tardif recalls the excitement the sale generated at the time. Those who attended will also remember that the hall was so packed that even standing room was at a premium.

It is safe to say then that many people appreciated the event. Does that mean another similar initiative is possible? Not every year, agree Yan Jacobs and Louise Ferron, but every now and then, this kind of sale would certainly be appreciated, as much by consignors as buyers. ■



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Ferme Pellerat A farm focused on the future

Building two barns in less than 10 years is certainly a knowledge-building experience. After expanding the Pellerat herd in 2001, brothers Gervais and Jean-Guy Pelletier learned how to choose their animals. After the fire in September 2007, they fine-tuned their selection process to make it more efficient.

After purchasing a 45-head herd that had been housed in a conventional barn, the Pelletier brothers built their first free-stall barn in the early 2000s. The herd was housed in two buildings at the time, and Gervais recalls that only half the cows adapted easily to the new housing.

After 180 cows perished the fire in September 2007, the brothers needed new milking cows to resume production. Buying cows that were not accustomed to free stalls was out of the question. With the help of their brother Dominique, who works for Semex, Dominique Nault, and the farm Richard Blanchette et fils (La Presentation), Gervais and Jean-Guy were able to acquire many cows acclimated to this type of housing, some of which came from Ontario and the United States.

The group of fifty yearling heifers that were housed in a different building and so survived the fire were also used to rebuild the herd. Some of them calved while others were used as recipient cows for embryos the breeders



The two Pelletier families, left to right: in front, Jenny Frappier, Francis Pelletier, Carl Dubois and Lysanne Pelletier; standing, Sophie Nicole, Gervais Pelletier, Daniel Pelletier, Jean-Guy Pelletier and Lucie Poirier.

had bought (the breeders did their first embryo transfer in 1983). Among the first group, *La Presentation Leona*, VG-89-4yr 19*, a daughter of *La Presentation Daurel*, has made her mark. She has two Superior Lactation awards and is the dam of 37 daughters classified 97 per cent GP or better. Her three EX daughters include *Pellerat Baxter Lady Di*, EX 4*.

Another daughter of *Daurel*, born from an embryo transfer, is *La Presentation Goldwyn Dahlia*, VG-86-2yr 10*. She has one Superior Lactation award and is the dam of 30 daughters classified 97 per cent GP or better. Her three EX daughters include *Pellerat Baxter Sarie*, EX-91 2E 5*, a cow with a lifetime production of 66 798 kg of milk and a Superior Lactation award. Of her 17 daughters, 10 are classified VG. Another of *Dahlia's* daughters, *Pellerat Superstition Dune*, VG-86-2yr 1*, became an embryo donor as a heifer and is already the dam of six daughters, classified four VG and two GP. *Dahlia* is also the granddam of *Pellerat Dark*, a bull with a GPA LPI of 2677, sold to Semex in June 2013.

The daughters of *Favreautiere Goldwyn Gaiety*, VG-2yr 2*, have also proved outstanding. *Pellerat Jasper Ginger*, VG-89-2yr USA, won first Senior Heifer Calf in Bellechasse, in 2011, before she was sold to

Impressive figures

Number of animals: 600

Number of cows in milk: 275

Average production: 10 908 kg, with 3.95% fat and 3.3% protein

BCA : 245-253-247

Classification : 4 multiple EX, 5 EX, 93 VG and 163 GP

Quota : 390 kg

Crop acreage: 510 ha, 24 of which are rented. Of that total, 206.5 ha are devoted to silage corn and grain corn with a dual-purpose hybrid, 121.5 ha are seeded to soybeans, 32.3 to rye, 10 to winter wheat, 10 to spring wheat, and the remaining 129.5 are used to grow alfalfa, harvested as silage and hay.

Photo : Air Photo inc.



Ferme Pellerat, in Saint-Roch-des-Aulnaies.



La Presentation Goldwyn Dahlia, VG-86-2yr 10*, has one Superior Lactation award and is the dam of 30 daughters classified 97 per cent GP or better, including 3 EX.

an American buyer and went on to place third in the Senior Yearling class in Madison, in 2012. Two of *Ginger's* full sisters, *Gracia*, first Senior Yearling in Saint-Pascal, in 2012, and *Grace*, first Junior Yearling at the same show, are still in the Pellerat herd.

Present in the showing

The Pelletiers have been taking part in shows since the inception of the Montmagny-L'Islet-Kamouraska Holstein Club. Gervais says the shows are an excellent way for them to promote their herd. Jean-Guy's daughter Lysanne now takes care of this sphere of their operation. This year again, one of their protégées, *Pellerat Day Bolivie*, VG-86-2yr, shone at the Kamouraska show, winning first Junior Two-Year-Old, Best Udder and Best Bred and Owned in her class. But when it comes to going further afield, the breeders prefer to sell their more promising show animals, as they did with *Ginger* (mentioned above).



Pellerat Baxter Sarie, EX-91 2E 5*, has a lifetime production of 66 798 kg of milk and one Superior Lactation award and is the dam of 17 daughters, 10 of which are classified VG.

A contemporary family farm

Gervais and Jean-Guy's parents', Lauréat Pelletier and his wife, Thérèse Leclerc, laid the foundations of the present-day farm in Saint-Roch-des-Aulnaies in the early 1970s, when, among other things, they became founding members of the Montmagny-L'Islet-Kamouraska Holstein Club. "It was our mother who was interested in breeding," recalls Gervais. The herd flourished when couple bought 10 cows and began to take part in the Montmagny Expo. "We went because we loved it," recalls Gervais, "even if the animals were ordinary." But they gained experience from one year to the next. Gervais remembers the first animal bearing their prefix that drew attention outside of the Quebec, namely, *Pellerat Kid Wendy*. Not only was she crowned Grand Champion at the Ontario Spring Show in 1991 and 1992, she was first Two-Year-Old, Three-Year-Old and Five-Year-Old in Toronto in 1989, 1990 and 1992, and collected a few All-Canadian titles, including Five-Year-Old in 1992, in addition to All-American Junior Two-Year-Old and Junior Three-Year-Old, in 1989 and 1990. More recently, in 2012, the Pellerat farm placed second in the Ordre national du mérite agricole Silver Medal competition.

Today the farm is owned by six shareholders. They are supported by two full-time employees and a few casual workers hired for milking, including the children of both brothers. Gervais and Lysanne are in charge of the herd while Jean-Guy and Daniel manage crop production and machinery. Francis and Carl, who also help with the herd, are the most multitalented members of the team. Sophie Nicole, Gervais' wife, handles the accounting.

Developing functional animals

Because the owners of Ferme Pellerat strive for efficient dairy production, breeding animals with good conformation is paramount to ensure longevity. The sires selected, both proven bulls and young bulls with genomic evaluations, must have good health trait scores and produce daughters that show good conformation and are strong milk producers.

Taking into account the characteristics of each of their cows, the breeders use only sires that have a score of +10 or better for conformation, at least 1500 for milk and are also A2A2 carriers. They might opt for a weaker bull, but only if the animal has the polled gene. And last but not least, milking speed is an important selection criterion since the cows are milked three times a day in a carousel. The breeders are thus looking for cows that milk out in five minutes or less, so that 120 cows can get through the carousel in an hour.

Room for the next generation

Gervais has been involved in the family operation since 1973 and his brother Jean-Guy since 1981. They each acquired a fifty-



La Presentation Léona, VG-89-4yr 19*, has earned two Superior Lactation awards and is the dam of 37 daughters classified 97 per cent GP or better, including 3 EX.

fifty share in the farm in 1996. Now a new generation is taking on an ownership role: Gervais' son Daniel and Jean-Guy's son Francis became co-owners in 2015, and it will soon be time for Lysanne, Jean-Guy's daughter, and her partner, Carl Dubois, to join them.

To satisfy the needs of this younger generation, and also to improve animal comfort, particularly at calving, construction began this past summer on a new barn, adjacent to the one built in 2008. ■