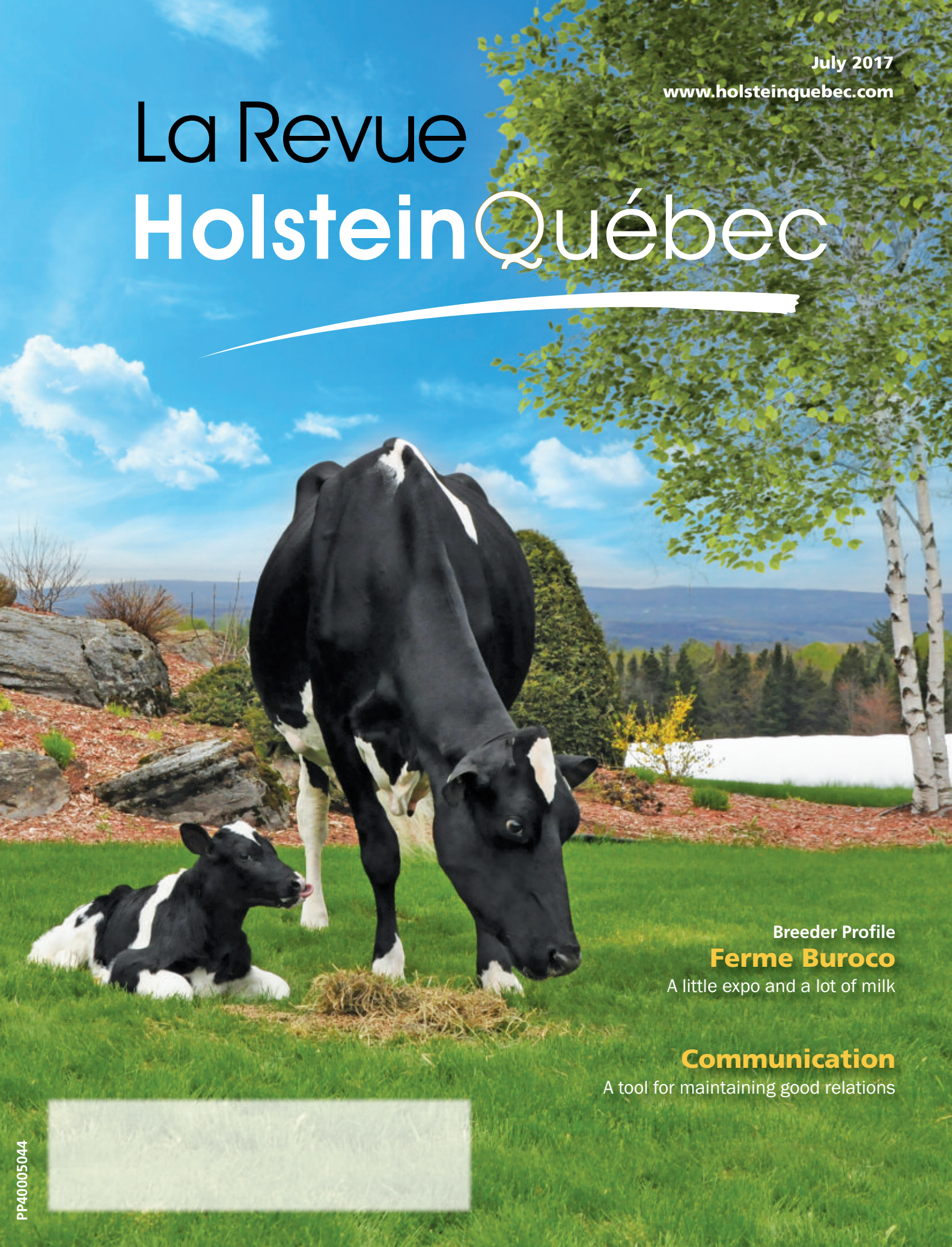


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# La Revue Holstein Québec



Breeder Profile

**Ferme Buroco**

A little expo and a lot of milk

**Communication**

A tool for maintaining good relations





BY  
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## Ferme Buroco A little expo and a lot of milk

*A*gricultural school and the contacts made there often inspire an interest in breeding. This is exactly what happened to Yvon Rodrigue while he was studying animal production at the agricultural college (ITA) in Saint-Hyacinthe. His courses and the regular visits to Les encans de la ferme, where entire herds were often up for sale, stoked his emerging interest.

After three years of study, Yvon convinced his father, Paul-Henri, to buy two cows and a heifer registered under the Beau Site prefix. Shortly thereafter, they took advantage of the sale of the Dominique Savio herd to acquire two more cows. These five animals became the foundation of the Paron herd for Yvon Rodrigue and his father. On 1 March 1976, Yvon became the new owner of that herd.

In its early years, the herd was also influenced by a number of cows that Yvon purchased from Robert Paquet (Roquet), a breeder in the Beauce area with whom he was acquainted.

In 1981, after five years of marriage, Yvon Rodrigue and Thérèse Busque founded Ferme Buroco inc., and gave the herd a new prefix. The family grew, and the couple's three boys, Marco, Martin and Daniel, began taking part in shows in 1987, participating in about ten such events every year.

A decade later, that interest intensified unexpectedly when Yvon and Thérèse joined forces with René Houde, an auctioneer and owner of the Transit prefix, to purchase high-calibre show animals. Up until 2004, the partners took advantage of René Houde's good eye for show potential to acquire many excellent cows that were housed on their farm on Saint-Gaspard road, in Beauceville.

That partnership came to an end on 27 May 2004, with the sale of all of their animals. Martin clearly remembers the occasion, and the emptiness of the barn the next day. The herd needed to be rebuilt, and fortunately the Busque-Rodrigue family still owned or co-owned a few cows that would have a strong influence on the developing Buroco herd.

*Glenrapha Brittany*, EX-94 4E 6\*, is one of that original group. She was purchased in co-ownership at the 2004 sale, and the family acquired full ownership in 2008, to use her for embryo production. Many of her 55 descendants are in the Buroco barn today. Daughter of *Aeroline*, *Brittany* was not only a good dairy cow, with a production of over 90 000 kg of milk in seven lactations, but is also the dam of 20 daughters classified 95 per cent GP or better, including *Buroco Duplex Bertha*, EX-91 2E. *Brittany* also won many first place ribbons in the showring, in addition to three Grand Championship titles, two at the Beauce show, in 2007 and 2008, and one at Bassin de la Chaudière, in 2008. Her great-granddaughter, *Jacquard Sid Baya*, VG-89-3yr, was second Senior Three-Year-Old at the Quebec Spring Show last April.

### Ferme Buroco inc.

**Number of animals:** 156 head, including 88 cows in lactation

**Age at first calving:** 23 to 24 months

**Average production:** 13 152 kg of milk, with 4.2% fat and 3.3% protein

**BCA:** 280-318-291

**Quota:** 104 kg BF/day

**Classification:** 5 EX, 40 VG, 38 GP

**Crops:** 80 hectares, of which 20 are seeded to corn for silage, 20 to alfalfa and 40 to grasses. The farm also buys some hay for feed, which is complemented with a grain corn mixture and a supplement. An automatic feeder delivers feed five times a day to the cows that produce over 35 kg of milk per day.

**Ferme Buroco, where the work is organized to ensure that cows can take full advantage of their rest time.**

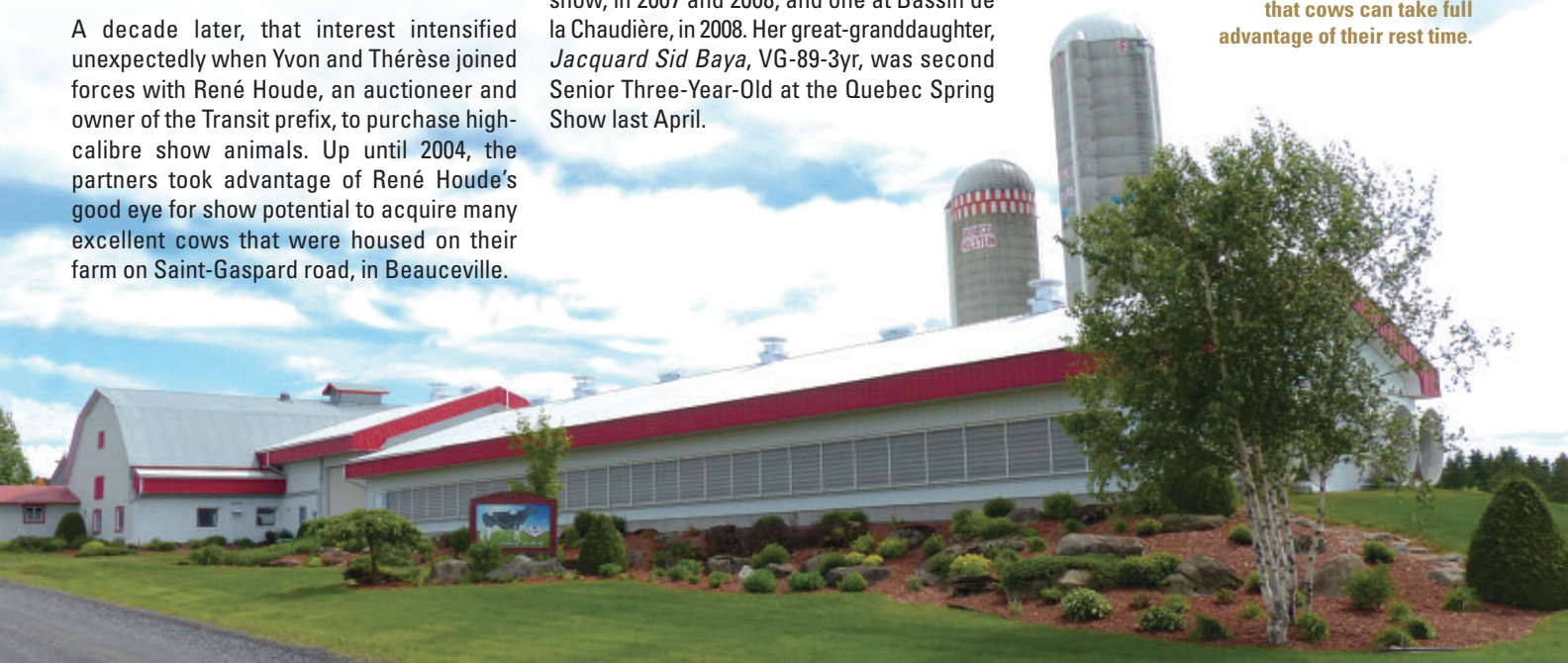




Photo - Jessie Poulin

**The extended Rodrigue family, from left to right: back row, Isabelle Duval, Martin Rodrigue with Camélia, Thérèse Busque, Isabelle Hamel, Emy, Daniel Rodrigue, Yvon Rodrigue, Marie-Claude Marcoux and Marco Rodrigue with Lexy; front row, Alexia, Miguel, Loïc, Thomas-James, Meadow, Joey, Leyla and Jayden.**

The Busque-Rodrigue family also retained shares in *Cobequid General Dean*, VG-86-2yr 3\*. One of her daughters, *Buroco Astronomical Dania*, VG-87-2yr 2\*, was crowned Junior Champion at the QIHS, in 2005, in addition to winning Tout-Québec and Reserve All-Canadian Senior Heifer Calf that same year, and Reserve Tout-Québec and Honourable Mention All-Canadian Senior Yearling in 2006. Among her three daughters currently in the herd, *Buroco Goldwyn Diva*, EX-91 3E, first Five-Year-Old at the Beauce expo in 2014, is now in her fifth lactation, with a lifetime production of nearly 75 000 kg of milk so far. *Diva* is the dam of three daughters, including *Buroco Windhammer Danie*, VG-87-3yr.

*Comestar Laudie Outside*, VG-86 5\*, a descendant of the family of *Laurie Sheik*, was also influential. Although many of her daughters were sold in 2004, a few of them earned a place in the Buroco herd. Among them, *Buroco Goldwyn Love*, VG-86-2yr 1\*, is already the dam of six daughters classified GP or better.

Ferme Buroco also owns a few other cows that are drawing attention. Among them, *Fairisle Lheros Roxanne*, EX-93 5E 1\*, won first Senior Three-Year-Old and Honourable Mention Grand Champion at the Beauce expo in 2006. She recorded a lifetime production of 87 342 kg of milk and is the dam of 13 daughters classified 85 per cent GP or better.

Martin also mentions *Chantal Helsa Blackjack*, EX 2E, a cow that he and his mentor, Donald Dubois, bought in co-ownership in 2010. She is dam to six daughters classified GP or better.

The breeders also own *East River IL Chatty*, EX-92 3E, a cow with two daughters and two Superior Lactations. Well-known in the showring, she captured the title of Grand Champion at the Bassin de la Chaudière expo in 2014.

Ferme Buroco is now counting on *Jacobs Windbrook Delaway*, VG-86-2yr, a cow that Martin and Daniel acquired with high hopes for her show potential. Her career as a Junior Two-Year-Old got off to a good start in 2016, with a second at the Quebec Spring Show and a first at both the Beauce and Bassin de la Chaudière expos, in addition to the title of Intermediate Champion at the Beauce show. *Delaway* is also used as an embryo donor.

Finally, in 2016, Ferme Buroco acquired the heifer *Gen-Com Brokaw Hailstage*, a granddaughter of *GF Goldwyn Hailey*, EX-97 4E 5\*, Grand Champion in Toronto and in Madison in 2012 and 2014. *Hailstage* is already being used for embryo production.

### More emphasis on production

Martin explains that the Transit-Buroco partnership focused not only on rearing show

## A long-planned transfer

Over the years, Thérèse Busque and Yvon Rodrigue always had the same answer for those who worried the farm wasn't growing. "We'll do that with the boys if they want to," said the parents. And their sons have indeed shown an interest in dairy farming. Martin obtained his first shares in 2000, and Daniel has been a shareholder since 2004. When the transfer is finalized in 2018, the brothers will each own a fifty-per-cent share of the farm. But real retirement doesn't seem to be the plan for their parents, who intend to take part in the farm's continuing development. Martin and Daniel's brother Marco operates the Marico herd in Saint-Valérien-de-Milton.

In addition to Martin, Daniel and their parents, the farm also hires four part-time employees, two primarily for milking, and an additional two during the summer months to help with the field work.

animals but also on marketing. "We reared a lot animals for sale and we sold the best, so our herd developed more slowly," he says. As an example of those that were sold, he mentions *Buroco Charles Oline*, VG-88-3yr, Reserve All-Canadian and Honourable Mention All-American Senior Two-Year-Old in 1999.

In planning the transfer of the farm to the younger generation, the marketing aspect was put aside to better focus on production. To prepare for the transition, the breeders consulted an agro-economist, who showed them that they would first need to sell more milk to increase their earnings, and could get involved in marketing later. His message was well received and the family set to work with that advice in mind.

In addition to making the most of the genetic potential of their animals, brothers Martin and Daniel, now shareholders, began to pay more attention to field management, which has become Daniel's main focus. Knowing that good quality forage would increase milk





**Glenrapha Brittany, EX-94 4E 6\*.**  
With 55 descendants to her credit, this *Aeroline* daughter produced over 90 000 kg of milk in seven lactations and won three Grand Championship titles, two at the Beauce show, in 2007 and 2008, and one at the Bassin de la Chaudière show, in 2008.

production, the brothers implemented a crop rotation plan and invested in machinery to improve production. As their father recalls, it was then that Daniel and Martin developed a closer relationship and learned to work together better. Their complicity was especially evident in 2009, when after visiting the Salon de la machinerie agricole de Québec, the two put together a plan to replace round bale storage with a silo. After gaining their parents' confidence, they invested close to \$200 000 in that project. Martin and Daniel were convinced that improved silage quality would have a direct and positive effect on milk production. At the same time, they also began producing corn silage. Likewise, the use of satellite imagery allows them to manage their fields more efficiently.

### Selecting sires accordingly

The emphasis on higher production has also influenced the way these breeders select their sires. Initially, their passion for marketing and shows prompted them to base their sire selection on conformation alone. Nowadays, however, they aim for more balance. Firstly, Martin says, they now give precedence to proven sires. They choose bulls with a milk proof of +1500 and strong positive proofs for components. They also look for +14 for conformation, and pay particular attention to scores for the udder and feet and legs.

For the past two years now, they have been using genomic young sires for 25 per cent of their matings. These sires are subject to the same rigorous selection criteria and must be

from a well-known family and have at least one proven parent.

The breeders also make the most of their top females through embryo production, with eight to ten flushes per year, mostly to meet the needs of their own herd.

While the brothers continue to take part in local shows, they prefer to sell any animals that show potential for success at higher levels. This was the case of *Buroco Aftershock Alana*, a heifer sold at the Quebec Spring Show, in 2016, after she won first Intermediate Heifer Calf.

### Management focused on the needs of the cows

Martin remembers learning about the 3R theory, specifically, that Ruminants Require Routine. This motto guides the way the breeders organize their work today. Martin explains that when the cows are lying down, no one goes into the barn, because that's when they ruminate and make milk. Hence the Rodrigue brothers now do all their barn work during milking, when the cows are standing up. Afterwards, the animals are left in peace so they can rest and ruminate.

To be successful, however, it's also important that the cows eat their entire ration. To ensure that, explains Martin, a Juno is now used to push feed automatically, so that the cows are never disturbed. Martin estimates that the system has increased forage consumption by 11 per cent. A Pasture MatTM system has also been installed to enhance cow comfort. ■



**Buroco Goldwyn Diva, EX-91 3E, first Five-Year-Old at the Beauce show in 2014, is the dam of three daughters, one of which is Buroco Windhammer Danie, VG-87-3yr.**

## A farm to visit on 15 July 2017

The Beauce Holstein Club, of which Martin Rodrigue was president in 2013, was asked to organize this year's annual Holstein Québec Picnic. Ferme Buroco was approached, but the Club was initially unable to interest its owners in the idea. Daniel, however, saw it as an enticing challenge, and was able to convince his brother Martin and the rest of the family that it would be a worthwhile experience. His father agreed, saying "Okay, but I'm not doing a thing." He didn't keep his word, of course. He and Thérèse Busque took part in all the meetings with the organizers, putting their shoulders to the wheel.

After a first meeting with Holstein Québec to ensure that the site and the herd met the Association's requirements, the family applied to host the event. Their application was accepted in February 2014. Barbara Paquet, a dynamic and well-known personality in the dairy world, was invited to chair the organizing committee. Gilles Boutin, an advisor and family friend, with a reputation for good people skills and a mind teeming with ideas, assumed the role of vice-chair. Five subcommittees were also set up, with a member of the host family sitting on each of them to facilitate follow-up.

To end the year 2017 on a high note, Isabelle Duval, Martin's partner, proposed the idea of entering the farm in the Ordre national du mérite agricole competition. As Isabelle explains, it was a great opportunity to take advantage of all the preparations for the picnic and participate in the competition before the transfer was completed, an initiative the parents happily approved. Having already taken part in the first two categories of this competition, the farm is now entered in the gold medal category.

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## Communication between generations Key to maintaining good relations

**T**alk to each other, for crying out loud! Easier said than done, of course, since human nature tends to erect barriers that impede communication. On the farm, where intergenerational relationships are not only those between parents and children but also those between employer and employee, in addition to between owners, keeping the lines of communication open is not just useful, it's essential!

The influences that tend to thwart communication – generalisations with regard to age groups and the stereotypes that go with them – are the same ones that justify making a determined effort to break down the barriers. There is only one option: We have to learn to talk to one another.

As is the case in many businesses, some farms have three generations working alongside one another. Their needs and values many differ, leading to incomprehension on all sides. The older generation may be considered out-dated while the younger generation may sense a lack of trust. Although young farmers have less experience, they are active collaborators skilled at using new technology, which should be regarded as an asset. For those giving up their place, the situation may be more difficult than it was with their parents, since the differences between generations today are more pronounced than they were in the past.

Obviously, young people use the new communication tools a great deal more than their parents, even if almost everyone now has a cell phone, if not a smart phone. The flip side however is that social networks have the potential to create a void in communication by reducing face-to-face contact. It's not a question of denouncing social media, but it is important to recognize that these new technologies may not be the best option when it comes to serious discussions. As Carol Allain, an adult education specialist and speaker, points out, experts maintain that 55 per cent of a person's message is conveyed nonverbally, expressing feelings through facial expressions and body language, which need to be interpreted correctly. The rest of the message is conveyed through words (a mere 7 per cent) and intonation (35 per cent). This reality underlines two important points:

on the one hand, face-to-face contact is the best option when discussing important issues; on the other hand, it's vital to verify one's understanding of the message before jumping to conclusions.

### Prejudices and perceptions

A single word or letter is often used to describe a generation. That symbol tends to be all-encompassing, sending the message that individuals of a same generation are all alike and, as a result, very different from those of another generation. But life is not that simple, and many people are unable to identify with this categorization. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that there are indeed many similarities among members of a same generation, since they have all been influenced by the same events and values.

And when it comes time to transfer the farm, these different perceptions may have an impact. The five to ten years required to

complete a farm transfer may not seem too long to the parents, but for a young person today, five years is a lifetime. To tolerate what seems like a long waiting period, young people need to feel that they have an important role to play in the operation. Good communication is the only way to ensure that.

The need to overcome prejudices and be able to understand one another also applies to the relationship between farm owners and their suppliers. Indeed, the various advisors whose responsibility it is to monitor herd performance or field production are often of a younger generation. It is important to establish a climate of trust and respect at this level as well.

### Room for change

It is often said that baby boomers fear change, while the younger generation generally seems to embrace change. While it often gives rise to feelings of insecurity,

**Although passionate about what they do, young people aim for a good quality of life beyond work.**



Photo : iStock





change is a necessary phase between generations. Parents, who acquired their experience in another time, are not necessarily motivated in the same way as their children are. They are used to working hard, without counting the hours, and often to the detriment of their family. Most young people value success at work as well, but they also value their quality of life, their partner and their family, to an extent that may antagonize their parents. This reality isn't likely to disappear anytime soon, and it's a safe bet that the younger generation is not going to change its outlook on life just to please mom and dad. A dialogue between generations is the only way to find a middle ground.

Such conciliation will require some compromise on both parts, in addition to an acceptance of the needs expressed by the younger generation, those who represent the future of society as well as the farm. Similarly, young people need to show some understanding and respect for their parents and make sure they are sending clear messages.

## A little appreciation please

Regardless of the generation concerned, both Pierrette Desrosiers, psychologist and speaker, and Carol Allain underline that the need for appreciation is universal, and communication problems often arise when that need goes unmet. Although the baby-

boomer generation is known for its strong work ethic, that doesn't mean they don't appreciate a pat on the back from time to time. If either parent feels that their children involved in the farm operation see them as outdated and useless, their self-worth will take a knock and communication will always be difficult.

Likewise, young people need to know not only that what they are doing is acceptable, but also that they have something to contribute or can even teach their father or mother something. Moreover, they don't want to have to battle to put their ideas to work. This attitude runs contrary to some of the old, one-way communication habits, where father knows best, period. Authoritarian parenting continues to exist, but as Carol Allain points out, "It doesn't work anymore."

So young people need validation as well as recognition. Members of the younger generation are generally more emotional and expect to hear words of appreciation. They live connected to social media, where emotion is tangible and has become hip. The experience is different for parents, who grew up in a time when there was little tolerance for emotion. That didn't mean emotions didn't exist; they just weren't talked about. Farmers expended a lot of physical energy, and anything regarded as sentimental was put aside.

A beautiful, freshly seeded field full of healthy seedlings or the birth of a heifer from a long-planned mating are good examples of esteem-building occasions, but for young people, hearing it said aloud probably enhances the effect. This desire for appreciation is intensified by social media and the influx of "likes" received after posting personal information on one's Facebook page.

This emotional life also encourages young people to work in partnership. As a result, in the context of a farm transfer, mother and father are not just the ceding party; the children also need to be reassured and sense that their parents are behind them. They want to hear: "Go ahead, we have faith in your project." This may be news to parents who think their children want to be rid of them. According to Carol Allain, good communication in this respect will probably bring children and parents closer together, as they often want to work together but neglect to say so outright.

It is also vital, says Pierrette Desrosiers, that parents avoid showing any favouritism towards one of their children. On the farm, where everyone works together, it can be easy to compare and it's important to avoid that trap. One of the children may also curry favour by suggesting that he or she has more responsibility than the other members of the team. Parents need to clearly state their

Spending time with friends and family and taking vacations are as important as work.



Photo : iStock

position when faced with this type of conflict. To prevent such a situation, Pierrette Desrosiers explains, everyone needs to develop their emotional independence.

### Does my life have meaning?

Looking to give one's life meaning and discussing work time has become a societal phenomenon, explains Carol Allain. Work hard? Certainly. Do it passionately? Obviously, yes. But not at any price, say young farmers. In addition to work, they are looking for a purpose in life – and they aim for happiness above all.

A certain level of comfort also defines the success young people intend to make of their lives. In this sense, they may want to spend more than their parents would to hire outside help, to ensure they have enough time to enjoy life.

### Know where you're going

Communication problems also arise when instructions are vague, says Pierrette Desrosiers. It is very important that agreements be clear to all parties. On many farms, breakfast is often the time for discussion, and while that is certainly a plus, the dialogue mustn't shy away from the essentials. Deciding who is going to cut hay or pick up parts at the garage is not dealing with the essentials. In-depth discussions serve, for example, to determine not only who is responsible for what but also the extent of everyone's independence. Should the person in charge of crops decide on his or her own to buy a new tractor? Of course not. But how much independence does he or she have? Everyone needs to know these things, not only for the sake of efficiency, but also to be sure that the work is done well. Here again, recognition is important.

The same difficulty can arise when defining the goals for the farm. If the different stakeholders are not clear about what they want to achieve, the likelihood of misunderstandings and questionable decision making increases considerably.

### Know how to communicate

Communication means pooling ideas, necessarily a two-way experience. Moreover, says Pierrette Desrosiers, communication leads to a mature group. In order to get there, explains Carol Allain, we have to be able to talk about

## The generations – letter by letter

Defining the personality traits of the different generations in a few words is no easy task, and researchers often temper those descriptions. Nonetheless, it is possible to sum up the traits that distinguish one generation from another. Obviously, a description of this kind can open the door to stereotypes. The point is to use these characteristics to understand the important issues and not to create ghettos in which to confine people of different ages.

Born between 1945 and 1965, baby boomers are considered to be optimists. Post-war development led them to believe that everything was possible, but they have had to work very hard to carve out a place for themselves because there were so many of them pursuing the same positions. They have influenced society and created the Quebec we know today, one that many are unwilling to see disappear.

Generation Xers (1965 – 1980), also known as the lost generation, have had to follow the path beaten by their predecessors, and it hasn't been easy for them to carve out a place for themselves. They trust more in themselves than in institutions. They want their freedom and rely on their skills and their ability to adapt to the complications that life throws in their way. They attach a great deal of importance to work-life balance, because, for them, work is not the only thing that counts.

Generation Y (1981-1999) represents those who – thanks to the Internet that they've been using since childhood – are convinced the world is small. They are well acquainted with change and aren't afraid of a challenge, which is actually more of a stimulus for them. Their lives have been programmed since childhood (arena, music lessons, extracurricular activities, etc.) and they are now able to multitask with ease. They feel equipped to take on new challenges but are also looking for the rewards. In short, they need to know their work makes a difference.

Generation C (2000...), for communication. Born in the age of information and communication technology (ICT), this group of young people is active on social media. They are considered to be as creative as they are ambitious. They regard the Internet as an important source of information, one they don't hesitate to consult before making a decision. Although they may need guidance, they want to know about the issues, the objectives and the means of action, and they want to take part in the decision-making process, even if they are not yet farm owners. While traditional hierarchy leaves them cold, they are respectful of those who demonstrate competence, courtesy and kindness.

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our concerns, but listening is just as important. In the agricultural milieu, the presence of family often has a positive effect in that regard.

Pierrette Desrosiers emphasizes that when a farm transfer fails, it's generally due to problem at the human relations level rather than a lack of technical knowledge. Everyone knows how to do their job; knowing how to talk about it is the challenge.

Learning how to communicate and develop emotional independence may be difficult to achieve. As is the case for all the other aspects of agriculture (financing, legal issues, management problems, etc.), families can rely on the help of experts to facilitate communication. Choosing to take advantage of them is a sure sign of maturity. ■