

October 2017

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La Revue Holstein Québec

Breeder Profiles

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Photo : Carl Saucier

BY
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Translation by
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Ferme Garay High-end genetics in the pipeline

Horses were the catalyst for the emergence of Gaspar Fillion's new passion. He was enjoying exhibiting his eye-catching Belgians at shows. So why not enjoy the same experience with his cows, he wondered. That shift in focus prompted the transformation of his Holstein herd. Today his son Daniel ensures the continuity of the operation.

After graduating from CEGEP in Sherbrooke with a DCS in Farm Management and Technology, Daniel worked for six years as a milk recording technician while lending a hand on the farm. He then made the decision to work full time on the family farm. At the time, Daniel explains, the herd included a few good cow families, "but we were missing one element: marketable families recognized worldwide."

In a first step to address that concern, the breeders purchased nine embryos from the family of *Broker Elegance*. Unfortunately, that endeavour resulted in only one heifer. The purchase of *Stanhope Dellia Goldwyn*, VG-88 15*, shortly thereafter, marked the true beginning of the herd's transition. Acquired at the age of 16 months, *Dellia* is now dam to 28 daughters, including 9 EX and 18 VG. She made her mark in production with a Superior Lactation and a yield of 49 731 kg of milk in three lactations, with BCAs of 285-321-286. She also produced at least 200 embryos, sold largely to international buyers. In 2015, *Dellia* was a finalist in the My Favourite Cow contest for the Beauce Holstein Club.

Her best-known daughter is *Garay Alexander Destiny*, EX-94 USA. Sold at the Holstein Québec National Sale in April 2010, at the age of seven months, *Destiny* won first milking yearling at the World Dairy Expo the following year and was awarded the All American and Honourable Mention All Canadian titles shortly thereafter.

A dozen of *Dellia's* daughters, including *Destiny's* full sister, *Garay Alexander Deluxe*, EX-93 2*, are now ensuring the future of her lineage. Her granddaughters are currently stealing the attention, particularly in the United States, Daniel says.



Three generations of the Fillion family live on the farm: grandparents Gaspar and Raymonde Fillion; Laura Campeau and Daniel Fillion; and their daughters, Béatrice and Juliane.

Garay Awesome Beauty is another source of pride for these breeders. Born in March 2016, this descendant of the family of *Rainyridge Talent Barbara*, EX-95 USA 15*, is owned by a group that includes Alana McKinven of Lookout Holstein. Among other titles, *Beauty* won Reserve All American and All Canadian, Junior Heifer Calf, in 2016. Her dam, *Willowhaven Goldwyn Bliss*, VG-87-2yr, a red factor carrier the Fillion family acquired at the age of 10 months, is now supplying embryos to the international market. In the eyes of her owners, she represents security for the future.

Another heifer that is drawing attention to the Garay herd is *Garay Archrival Anita*, a descendant of the family of *Apple*. Also American owned, *Anita* won a Junior Show event in Madison, one that included two animals bearing the Garay prefix. "It was pretty nerve-wracking," Daniel reports. *Anita* is a daughter of *Angelinas Angela*, a cow that

has produced four other heifers as well, three of which are now in the herd.

Finally, *VT-Pond-View Gold Allure*, EX-91 3*, a granddaughter of the famous *MD Delight*

Ferme Fillion and
the Garay herd

Number of animals: 125, including
48 cows in lactation

Average production per cow: 11 190 kg,
with 4.2% fat and 3.35% protein

BCA: 249-273-256

Classification: 15 EX, 33 VG and 3 GP
Cropland: 100 hectares, 30 of which are
rented. Only alfalfa, clover and timothy
are grown.

Woodland: 100 hectares, including a
maple stand with 10 000 taps.



BREEDER PROFILE



Photo : Odrey Caron

Daniel Fillion with *Stanhope Dellia Goldwyn*, VG-88 15*, a cow that is dam to 28 daughters, including 8 EX and 18 VG, and a prolific embryo donor, with about 200 embryos sold mostly on the international market.

Durham Atlee, EX-92 USA 10*, All American Senior Three-Year-Old in 2005, arrived on the Garay farm at the age of nine months. This top Junior Three-Year-Old at the Beauce show in 2012 produced enough milk to qualify for a Super 3 award and is the dam of nine daughters, including one EX and eight VG. Among them are *Garay Alexander Allie*, EX-92, third in the Four-Year-Old class at the Beauce show in 2015, and *Garay Doorman Adele*, a heifer co-owned with Ferme Karobert inc. that garnered attention in 2017 after winning Reserve Junior Champion at the Beauce show and first Senior Yearling at both the Bassin de la Chaudière show and Expo BBQ Bellechasse.

Daniel Fillion explains that all the investments they make to acquire cows or heifers must show a return within the first year. To that end, the farm sells heifers and embryos on a regular basis.

High-performance sires

Most of the bulls Daniel chooses to maximize the genetics of his cow families are proven sires. His selection criteria include a conformation proof of at least +15 and positive milk components. He prefers proven sires because they represent sound market value. He also uses genomic sires for about 30 per cent of matings, choosing bulls that not only have high genomic indexes, but are also

descendants of proven sires and dams. Daniel's focus on good sire lines also applies when purchasing cows or heifers.

Semen from these different bulls is used extensively for embryo production, with transfers done two or three times a month. Most of the embryos are sold, largely on the international market. The donor cows come from well-known families and are the top classifying cows in the herd. This reproductive method requires buying about 15 recipient cows every year; these animals are sold for milk production right after calving. Most of the yearling heifers are used for this purpose as well. Should they fail to fulfil the farm's requirements for breeding after calving, it is best they not have any descendants in the herd, explains Daniel.

Management matters too

For the Fillions, animal comfort and feeding are key to achieving their objectives for genetic improvement. All their cropland is used to produce forage crops, alfalfa-timothy and clover-timothy mixtures, which are mostly harvested in wrapped round bales. The most fibrous hay is fed to the heifers and dry cows while the best quality hay is fed to the cows in early lactation. The animals also receive a commercial meal. ■

The Fillion family and farming

Gaspar Fillion and his wife Raymonde are the original team behind the Garay herd, in Saint-Sébastien, in the Beauce region. The herd began registering with Holstein Canada in 1987, and the family bought its first show-worthy animal in 1990. Today, the operation is run by their son Daniel, who currently holds 30 per cent of the farm's shares. The transfer is expected to be finalized before the end of the year.

Gaspar Fillion continues to play an active role on the farm, taking care of the field work and machinery, and occasionally helping out in the barn, while his wife does the bookkeeping. Daniel is in charge of the herd. A permanent employee and a summer student complete the team.

The long-term goal for the Fillions is not to increase the size of the herd, but rather to breed good-looking cows and exhibit the best of them on the show circuit. As well, they intend to continue to improve the genetics of their herd to meet market requirements, as much for good milking cows to respond to local demand as for embryos and breeding stock.



VT-Pond-View Gold Allure, EX-91 3*, first Junior Three-Year-Old in the Beauce, in 2012, earned a Super 3 award and is the dam of nine daughters, including one EX and eight VG.



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Troupeau Jeanlu

Where genetics and first-rate management go hand in hand

At Ferme J.P. Poulin et fils inc., the breeding agenda really got underway in 1986, when brothers Simon and Daniel Poulin and their mother, Lucille Labbé, purchased *Karona Anthony Mariane*. Since then, the genetic value of their animals has increased steadily, as has their participation on the show circuit.

Jeanlu Stardust Fidele was the first heifer to put the spotlight on the Jeanlu herd, when she was acquired by Comstar Holstein in the spring of 1997. *Fidele* certainly attracted attention, winning the Junior Champion title in both Toronto and Madison in 1998, and All Canadian and All American Senior Yearling Heifer in 1997 and 1998. From there on, explains Simon, they developed the herd by buying animals from well-known families, such as those of *Barbie*, *Apple*, and *Debutante Rae*, to name a few.

Brigeen Rudolph Glinda, VG-86-2yr 18*, acquired in co-ownership with Gileva Holstein, was one of that initial group. In three lactations, *Glinda* produced over 59 000 kg of milk (285-277-267) and earned a Superior Lactation. She is the dam of 26 classified daughters, including 3 EX and 12 VG.

Assomption Charles Bianka, EX 11*, is another of the herd's brood cows. She is the dam of 23 daughters classified 96 per cent GP or better, including 6 EX and 6 VG. Among them, *Jeanlu Rudolph Black Rose*, EX 4E 15*, now owned by Ferme Yveclair, was a My Favourite Cow finalist in 2015. Her granddaughter, *Jeanlu Stormatic Bora*, EX-94 2E 1*, Reserve Grand Champion at the Bassin de la Chaudière show in 2012, produced over 68 000 kg of milk in four lactations and is the dam of 11 daughters, including 3 EX and 6 VG, one of which is *Jeanlu Sid Brina*, EX.

With a lifetime production of 86 430 kg of milk and numerous Grand Champion ribbons, *Twinlea Elevation Louise*, EX 5*, has also been influential in the herd. Dam to 14 daughters, including 5 VG and 6 BP, she is the grandmother of *Jeanlu Champion Laurine*, EX-91 7*.

The younger cows in the herd include *Speak-Nj Observ Fandango*, VG-86-2yr 2*, from a line of eight dams classified EX; she is already



Maxime, Simon, Jeannine and Sarah, with *Jeanlu Sid Brina*, EX, one of the Jeanlu herd's 4th generation of cows to classify EX.

dam to 7 VG and 5 GP daughters. She is also the dam of *Jeanlu Fix*, a young Semex-owned bull with the A2 milk gene. His official proof is expected to be released soon.

Finally, the owners point out the herd's current leading light, *Henkes-Brook Gold Bikini*, a cow that swept up first Junior Three-Year-Old, Intermediate Champion, Grand Champion, and Best Udder at the Beauce show in 2017.

Selection based on conformation

To capitalize on these maternal lines, the breeders use proven bulls with at least +15 for conformation, and study the overall performance of any potential sire's family. They are also interested in genomics, and Simon's son, Maxime, is in charge of this component. Genomics are factored in not only when selecting the young bulls they use for 85 per cent of their services, but also when purchasing females. Even so, good numbers are not enough. In addition to

meeting the same requirements as the proven sires, Sarah emphasizes that these young sires must also come from well-known paternal and maternal lines, and this applies to their show cows as well. ➔

La Ferme J.P. Poulin et fils inc.

Number of animals: 300, including 130 milking cows

Average production: 11 320 kg of milk, with 4.1% fat and 3.4% protein

BCA: 245-267-260

Quota: 157 kg BF/day

Classification: 26 EX, 90 VG, 7 GP

Cropland: 303 hectares, 81 of which are rented, with 20 ha devoted to silage corn, 20 ha to alfalfa, and 12 ha to cereals. The rest is grassland, composed of legumes and cereals. A small section is also used as a night pasture for the show cows.



BREEDER PROFILE



Jeanlu Stormatic Bora, EX-94 2E 1*, Reserve Grand Champion at the Bassin de la Chaudière show in 2012, produced more than 68 000 kg of milk in four lactations and is the dam of 11 daughters, including 3 EX and 6 VG.

Embryo transplants are also among the tools they use, since embryo sales are an important part of the farm's activities. Brood cows, show cows and, occasionally, high-potential heifers are used as donors, with about 20 embryo flushes per year. With that purpose in mind, the breeders recently acquired *Sandy-Valley Audacious* (GPA LPI 3286 and GTPI 2784 – 08/17) and *Sandy-Valley Duk Brynkly* (GPA LPI 3262 and GTPI 2677 – 08/17), two young females that are already under contract with SelectSires.

In addition to good conformation and high indexes, Sarah, who is in charge of genetic improvement, also aims for a low somatic cell count and takes into consideration the various weaknesses that need correcting in each cow.

With a reputation for quality, Ferme J.P. Poulin is able to sell about 60 dairy cows every year. The farm also sells young animals from time to time, at specialized sales. Likewise, beginning with the Tag Sale they held during the Holstein Québec Picnic last July, the owners plan to organize a sale every five years.

A passion for shows

Sarah fell into the show world at the age of six as she followed in her father's footsteps. As Simon recalls, the Jeanlu herd generally did well. The farm won its first Premier Exhibitor Banner in 1989, at the Bassin de la Chaudière show, and repeated that feat almost every year for the next decade. The farm is also a regular participant at the Beauce show, winning the Premier Exhibitor Banner there last year. In July of this year, they won the Premier Exhibitor Banner at the

Jean-Paul Poulin and his wife, Lucille Labbé, launched their dairy operation in Saint-Georges, in the Beauce, in 1956. In 1982, their sons Simon and Daniel took over the farm with their mother, under the name Ferme J.P. Poulin et fils inc. Lucille Labbé retired in 1999, the same year that Daniel left the operation, selling his shares to Jeanine Busque, Simon's wife. As Simon recalls, the period that followed was challenging, as much in terms of money as work. But the members of the family rolled up their sleeves to ensure the farm's future. Sarah is now continuing that work and has been a 50-percent shareholder in the operation since 2012. After graduating with a diploma in Farm Management, she worked for a year on two farms before returning home.

On a day-to-day basis, Simon generally takes care of the field and barn work while Jeanine Busque sometimes helps with milking and sees to the milkroom maintenance and bookkeeping, with the help of her mother-in-law, who has remained active in the business. While their daughter Sarah manages the herd, their son Maxime, who works for Blondin Sires and Cogent Canada, devotes time to the genomics component and helps out at shows, as does his partner, Ariane France. The family also counts on two permanent employees from Guatemala and on René Sylvain, who takes care of the machinery. The eldest of the couple's children, Karine, works as a quality control coordinator at the Agropur plant in Beauceville.

The herd is currently housed in two locations, with the show animals on the new site acquired in 2011. The owners plan to build a freestall barn to house all their animals in one place and put an end to milking on two sites.

Besides taking care of their farm, Simon and Sarah are also involved in the community. Simon has been a director and a sales agent for the Beauce Holstein Club and a director of Coop l'Alliance. He says he misses the contact with other breeders these days, but it's now Sarah's turn to make herself available. She sits on the board of directors for Les Producteurs de lait du Québec - Chaudière-Appalaches-Sud and the Syndicat de l'UPA de Beauce-Sartigan.

Bellechasse Expo BBQ as well. The farm has also brought home the Breeder Banner a number of times over the years.

Good management is a must

Both Simon Poulin and his daughter Sarah are convinced that genetics alone are not sufficient to ensure the success of their animals. Management plays a key role as well. "We pull out all the stops with the herd," Sarah explains. From quick colostrum delivery to preventive medicine and close attention to cow comfort and nutrition, nothing is left to chance in their efforts to make sure their heifers reach their full potential.

The focus on good feeding is shared by Simon, who says he is very thorough and takes pleasure in producing high-quality hay. A necessity, he says, "because it's the forage that makes the milk." And as Sarah hastens to add, "Milk is money." ■



Jeanlu Champion Laurine, EX-91 7*, has two Superior Lactations and a lifetime production of 68 389 kg of milk (309-300-297). She is at the head of a good family of show cows.

BY
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Quebec A land of work placements

Quebec enjoys an enviable international reputation where the Holstein breed is concerned. As proof, we need only to look at the number of Quebec-bred bulls whose semen is distributed throughout the world, the large number of embryos exported from here, and the fact that Quebec judges and fitters are invited to work in other countries. Quebec's appeal plays out in the other direction as well, with European students eager to come and learn from Quebec breeders.

Thanks to the wonders of technology, in particular email and Facebook, *La Revue* was able to contact some of these former trainees to learn more about their motivations and their experiences on our farms. One young woman and seven young men share their impressions with us here.

Why Quebec?

For many, coming to Quebec was a long-time dream. Nicole Matt, from Austria, who did a work placement with Ferme Petitclerc, explains that after following the major cattle shows on social networks, especially the Toronto show, "it seemed obvious that Quebec breeders did things well." She thus wanted to come here to learn.

Alexandre Gallard, a trainee at JM Valley Holstein, was for his part motivated by a desire "to discover other ways of working and living," but also to see first-hand the things he was seeing in magazines and on the Internet. He was very interested in show preparation as well, a subject he says he was able to learn far more about than he expected, thanks to Joël Lepage and Mireille Lavoie. For Alain Hogge, from Belgium, who worked at Comestar, it was the association that employed him that wanted to develop expertise in classification and judging. "Quebec and Canada are leaders in that area, so that naturally brought us to you," he writes. Jeremy Bazaillacq, a young man from France, says he fulfilled his dream to cross the Atlantic when the Chabot family welcomed him to Belfast Holstein. That dream was inspired by all the

beautiful cows he was seeing in magazines and the many good bulls that hailed from Canada.

A work placement that delivered its promises

All of the former trainees say they are happy to have come here and that their work placements fully lived up to their expectations. This was particularly true for Thomas Ender, who came to Quebec from Switzerland almost by chance, as his intention was to come to Canada to learn English. Having seen Callum McKinven in action as a judge, he wanted to work on his farm, Lookout Holsteins, but he wasn't aware that the breeder lived in Quebec. His experience there was so fulfilling that he left school to extend his stay.

Michel Rohrbach, from France's Alsace region, came here in 1998, to work at Ferme Despointes. He wanted to learn more about small herds, with good genetics, operating "in



Alain Hogge, official judge, presided in Quebec City and in Trois-Rivières in 2011.

extreme weather conditions." He wanted to acquaint himself with the work methods used in Quebec and study the economics of production here. He was impressed by the cleanliness of the facilities, the sanitary measures that influence milk quality and, finally, by the place of dairy producers in society, noting that the community seemed proud of its farmers.

Bruno Toussaint came from Belgium to do his first work placement at Ferme Fleury, after a first-place finish at the European Young Breeders School. He was especially struck by the quality of the cattle here, as well as the passion and professionalism of the breeders, in the marketing sector, for example. Jonas Pussemier, who had long been dreaming of a visit "to the cradle of the Holstein breed," did a first work placement at Lookout and then a second at Ciaq. Although he already knew a little about Quebec breeding, since his father, Eddy Pussemier, was a co-owner of Comestar Laurie Sheik, he frankly admits that he



Nicole Matt with *Petitclerc Lotus Spyro*, second Junior Yearling and Best Bred and Owned in her class at the 2017 Quebec Spring Show.





Jonas Pussemier leads *Lasid de Bois Seigneur*, VG-89, Grand Champion at La Nuit de la Holstein, in March 2017, in which six European countries took part. His father, Eddy Pussemier, holds the red banner.

could write a book with everything he learned here, particularly about genetics and dairy shows. "What's remarkable," he adds, "is that there were no taboos; people wanted to share their passion with me, and I benefited greatly as a result."

"I experienced some of the best moments of my life," affirms Nicole Matt, who says she is very happy that the Petitclerc family put their trust in her and gave her responsibilities "beyond what she had hoped for, especially the opportunity to take part in some of the world's major dairy shows."

Alain Hogge also says that what he learned exceeded his expectations. He particularly benefited from specialized training in classification, judging and mating, so much so that when he returned to Belgium, he wanted to motivate breeders in his country, stressing the importance of morphology for longevity, and promoting breeding decisions based on classification and production, a new idea in Belgium at the time," he explains.

In addition to learning English, Thomas Ender mentions that he also learned a great deal about cattle care, fitting and showing, by joining a 4H group and taking part in shows across North America. He even won a few showmanship competitions.

Experiencing the difference

In Europe, particularly in his native Belgium, says Alain Hogge, there are a lot of family farms, as is the case in Quebec, a perception

shared by Jonas Pussemier. Nonetheless, there are many differences at other levels. Besides climate and supply management, feeding systems often differ considerably. Some cheeses, for example, require that the cows eat only hay as forage. This is the case on Nicole Matt's family farm, where they have special hay-drying facilities to maintain quality, equipment she says she did not see in Quebec.

Bruno Toussaint noticed that a great deal more energy is devoted to the show circuit here, although cattle fitting has evolved considerably in Europe over the past years. Thomas Ender, who is also a show enthusiast, mentions that, with regard to the cows, he noticed that in America "the aim is to have them as dairy as possible, almost lean (...). In Switzerland, that is (fortunately) less the case." He acknowledges however that "the texture of Quebec cows is perhaps superior to that of Swiss cows."

Jeremy Bazaillacq, who has good memories of his experience and learned a lot from visiting breeders and returning to the Royal, was most impressed by the work methods that differed from those used in France.

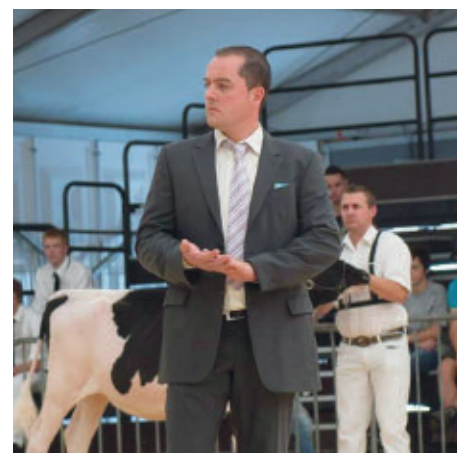
Impact on the career path

All the former trainees agree that their experience here definitely had a big influence on their career. First, those interested in cattle fitting and showing all acquired skills that they are now putting to use. They are all active in the show world, and a number of

them return to Quebec from time to time to work with different breeders at major shows. Alexandre Gallard goes further, saying his work placement "didn't just influence his career, but completely changed its path." Since his return home, he says he has fitted cattle for large farms taking part in a number of European competitions.

The same holds true for Alain Hogge. On his return to Belgium, he organized workshops on classification and judging, which led him to his current position as marketing manager for the Walloon Breeding Association (AWE) and that of director of the Belgian Blue Group. He has also judged many shows in Europe and the Maghreb countries, and, he says, "to top it all off, in your country, at the Trois-Rivières show and at Expo Québec (...), a great honour for me obviously." Bruno Toussaint, who in addition to refining his cattle-fitting techniques, says that the expertise he acquired opened doors for him to market the genetics of the major insemination centres for the AWE.

In addition to being a breeder, Thomas Ender is also Switzerland's head classifier for the Holstein, Swiss Fleckview, Simmental and Montbéliarde breeds, managing a team of 16 people, a job he says he was able to land because of everything he learned during his work placement. Since his return to Switzerland, in 2004, he has also been in charge of the breeding and show sector at Hellender Holsteins. It is on this farm, which he co-owns with his brother Andréas, that he has been able to develop a high-calibre herd, leading them to become "Switzerland's first Master Breeder." The farm has also bred a number of national winners, including *Hellender Huror Jurgolin*, EX-92 32 *. ➔



Bruno Toussaint, official judge at the 2014 Open Show Génisses, in Ettelbruck, Luxembourg.



Alexandre Gallard with heifer *Gold Lancome*, crowned Supreme Junior Champion at the Printemps des génisses show in 2017.



Thomas Ender is co-owner of Hellender Holsteins, in Switzerland. The operation won the first Master Breeder title in Switzerland and owns a number of European prize winners, including *Hellender Huror Jurgolin*, EX-92 32 *, a well-known cow in Europe.

Jonas Pussemier, who has taken the reins of his family farm, Bois Seigneur Holstein, says “the people taught me so much that I have been able to refine our selection program.” He goes on to add: “It’s by combining everything I learned that I have been able to forge ahead with no regrets”.

Developing friendships and business ties

All those who spoke to us established friendships with breeders and others in the industry during their time in Quebec. Alexandre Gallard, for example, became friends with, among others, his training supervisors, Joël Lepage and Mireille Lavoie, whom he visits each year to lend a hand at the Supreme Dairy Show and at The Royal, in Toronto. Alexandre also co-owns a few animals with Quebec breeders, a great way to maintain the friendships he developed during his work placement.

Jeremy Bazaillacq finished his work placement with the intention of integrating Quebec animals into his herd. He already owns an 8-month-old heifer by *Goldchip* and two of the heifer’s brothers, and he also co-owns a 14-month-old red and white heifer. Bruno Toussaint, for his part, has since made a dozen return trips to Quebec to meet with breeders. He explains that he comes “to help them during sales or at shows,” particularly in the fall.

Alain Hogge has also maintained ties with Quebec, visiting at least once a year. He highlights the close collaboration established between the AWE and Holstein Québec, with

regard to the European Young Breeders School. Moreover, he mentions that they “also continue to do business on a daily basis with Canadian genetics companies like Semex.”

Michel Rohrbach has returned to Quebec a few times, including a trip this past summer. For him, there have been some major changes in Quebec since his first visit, 19 years ago, particularly with regard to herd size. He has also been listening to producers’ recent questions about the possible dismantling of the quota system and declining milk prices, among other concerns.

Thomas Ender, for his part, writes: “I’ve been back to North America often since then, especially to Quebec. And every time, it feels like I’m coming home.”

Takeaway message

Finally, all are glad to have had the chance to do a work placement in Quebec, and they thank the breeders who welcomed them. Unsurprisingly, many of them encourage all young people to go abroad, as the experience is extremely rewarding.

As Jonas Pussemier concludes: “It’s important that the sector continue to grow, and seeing that there are still so many enthusiasts just reaffirms the decisions I’ve made.” ■

We were unfortunately unable to present the planned feature article on embryos sold to foreign buyers.



Jeremy Bazaillacq at a departmental show.