

# La Revue Holstein Québec



## Foreign labour

Valuable resource, demanding process

## Ferme de la Côte

Proud to be 100% Lanaudoise

## Ferme Forest

Dawne is the mainspring



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By  
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## Foreign labour

# A valuable resource, but a demanding process

**D**airy producers are feeling the effects of the labour shortage and many are hiring temporary foreign workers (TFW) as a result. Although this approach is increasingly popular, the international nature of the process entails a number of requirements. The governments of Canada and Quebec have set up programs that allow breeders to take advantage of the availability of foreign workers to continue operating or expand their farms. These programs also define the obligations and responsibilities of potential employers.

The UPA (L'union des producteurs agricoles), via a network of agricultural employment centres (CEA) located throughout the province, provides support services to producers seeking to hire temporary foreign workers. The centres assist farmers in preparing their applications to obtain approval as potential employers. Once that procedure has been successfully completed, farmers then take steps to obtain foreign workers under the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) or to hire workers through the Agricultural Stream of the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP). Information on the subject is available on the website [www.ptet.upa.qc.ca](http://www.ptet.upa.qc.ca) (French only), which also provides links to

Canadian and Quebec government sites for details regarding the different programs.

The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) was set up for workers from Mexico and countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean. Under the program, the governments of these countries are in charge of recruiting workers and forwarding their applications. Under the Agricultural Stream of the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP), on the other hand, there are no restrictions on the countries of origin of foreign workers, but agreements have been negotiated with Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador to facilitate the issuance of visas. In this case, workers are

recruited by prospective employers themselves or by an accredited agency mandated by them.

In both cases, foreign workers must be hired for activities related to primary agriculture. The Canadian government states on its website that "boarding, care, breeding, sanitation or other handling of animals, other than fish, for the purpose of obtaining raw animal products for market" are considered to be primary agricultural activities. Dairy producers are therefore eligible for these programs.

The SAWP requires that employers offer foreign workers a minimum of 240 hours of

**A good worker/employer relationship rests not only on a contract, but on good will as well. Mutual trust will only develop if both parties respect the commitments made to one another.**



work within a period of six weeks or less, but limits the employment period to a maximum of eight months, between January 1 and December 15. Under the TFWP, the employment period is limited to a maximum of 24 months. But Richard Brousseau, from the Capitale Nationale - Côte-Nord agricultural employment centre, explains that the contracts are generally for a six-month term, which allows workers to return to their families. Hence, employers often have two employees who share the work over the year.

### No hindrance to the job market in this country

Foreign workers are understandably given access to job postings that have first been offered to Canadians, but for which the latter have shown no interest. Before getting authorization to hire TFWs, employers must provide proof that they have indeed advertised the job. To do that, a job posting that meets advertising requirements, defining the duties and wage associated with the job, must be posted for a minimum of 14 days, and during the three-month period prior to the employer applying for a Labour Market Impact



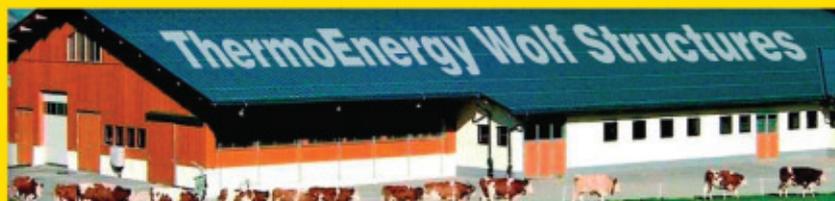
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Comfortable and affordable housing must be provided to temporary foreign workers.

Assessment (LMIA), in at least two places, including the provincial job bank, Emploi Québec. The LMIA enables the Government of Canada to ensure that offering the job to foreign workers will not have a negative impact on Canada's job market. The documentation presented as proof of compliance with these conditions must be kept by employers for a minimum of six years.

### More than providing the same wage and terms of employment

In the case of the SAWP, a standard contract is provided by the program. For the TFWP, an employment contract must be signed by both parties. In the case of a dispute, these contracts will be used to clarify the situation. When a disagreement cannot be settled, the



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## UPA recommendations

The UPA informs potential employers that employing temporary foreign workers will be more demanding than hiring local workers. On their Internet site devoted specifically to the topic ([www.ptet.upa.qc.ca](http://www.ptet.upa.qc.ca)), the Union stresses that foreign workers will require assistance throughout their stay in the country. Employers are advised that they will need to:

- make additional declarations to the CNESST;
- bring employees to the grocery store on a weekly basis;
- help employees take the necessary steps to obtain their health and social insurance cards;
- accompany employees to the doctor or the hospital as soon as possible whenever a health problem arises or an injury occurs;
- help employees open a bank account with a financial institution in the area;
- ensure that their accommodations are well maintained;
- etc.

employer or the TFW may call upon the services of the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité au travail (CNESST).

Once a temporary foreign worker has been hired, employers must pay for transportation from the TFW's country of origin to the farm in Canada, and back. Under the SAWP, a part of this amount may be reimbursed by the TFW

through payroll deductions. In this case, the maximum amount allowed is stipulated in the standard contract that governs employer/employee relations under the SAWP. According to the conditions of the TFWP, however, under no circumstances may the TFW be required to reimburse these costs. Under both programs, employers must also provide free transportation between the place of residence and the workplace.

Likewise, employers must provide workers with adequate and affordable housing that meets the requirements of the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Prior to the arrival of the TFWs, employers must produce proof that such accommodation will be provided. The inspection report must be done by an independent municipal, provincial or national authority, or by a duly authorized private agency. Employers must incur the costs associated with this inspection and under no circumstances may they be claimed from the TFWs.

Employers are also required to provide no-cost health insurance for all foreign workers until they are covered by the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ).

Lastly, it is important to note that under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), TFWs are hired by the employee specified in the application. Transferring or sharing TFWs among employers is therefore prohibited without prior authorization. Under certain conditions, however, an application for an employee transfer can be made by a farm. ➔



Increasingly, dairy producers are choosing to hire foreign workers to maintain the productivity of their operations.



Foreign workers can also work in the fields.

### Communication

Hiring temporary foreign workers also requires being able to communicate with them. Hence employers must ensure that someone is able to communicate with their employees in their language, most commonly Spanish. As a first step, explains Richard Brousseau, many producers have their internal documents, such as the different procedures used, translated into Spanish. A number of agricultural employment centres also offer Spanish courses, in collaboration with the Collectifs régionaux en formation agricole (CRFA). It should be noted that temporary foreign workers do not have access to francisation programs and are not required to learn French.

### A real employee, a real employer

TFWs working on a farm have the same rights and responsibilities as Quebec workers. To ensure that temporary workers are aware of that, the CNESST has produced a video and a brochure covering the subject in Spanish. The Commission also reminds employers that

it their responsibility to train workers as soon as they arrive and to ensure adequate supervision thereafter to prevent accidents.

One way to assure these workers that they have the same rights as Quebecers is to pay them the same wage. Standards in that matter have been established by the Ministère de l'Immigration de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion. In the dairy sector, for instance, the hourly wage is set at \$13.23, and employers are required to make the necessary payroll source deductions and pay their share for the TFWs as they would for Canadian workers.

Finally, TFWs can, of course, file a complaint against an employer who fails to respect the terms of employment. However, since it is generally acknowledged that foreign workers, who may be feeling vulnerable, are unlikely to lodge a complaint, the CNESST is now able to initiate a complaint itself, if it is informed of or identifies a situation requiring such action. ■

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## Dawne The impetus for Ferme Forest

**G**ilnor Dawne Starbuck was the first animal purchased by brothers Jean-Marc and Sylvain Forest, in L'Assomption. Acquired in April 2013, at the age of six, Dawne indeed shaped the future of their herd. Today, more than 60 per cent of their animals are descendants of that family.

First Junior Two-Year-Old at the Berthier fair in 1989, *Gilnor Dawne Starbuck*, VG-86-3yr 12\*, particularly distinguished herself by her outstanding longevity, beginning her last lactation at the age of 15 years and 10 months. In all, she produced more than 90 000 kg of milk in 10 lactations. Her reproductive performance was no less remarkable, with 91 per cent of her 22 daughters classified VG or better. She also demonstrated notable fertility and longevity as an embryo donor, right up to the age of 16, with 4 or 5 flushes per year. Prior to her death, five generations of her family occupied the barn at Ferme Forest. On top of that, her descendants include 140 EX or VG animals, adds Jean-Marc's daughter Christina.

The heifer that *Dawne* was carrying when the Forest brothers acquired her helped them make their mark at the Berthier fair in 1994, with *Gilnor Grand Dawny*, VG-86 4\*, winning first Summer Yearling. Her performance there prompted a purchase offer, one that her owners declined. Today they are extremely glad they made that decision, because *Dawny*, like her dam, turned out to be a prolific brood cow. In addition to recording a lifetime production of over 60 000 kg of milk, she is the dam of 16 daughters, a group that includes 6 VG and 7 GP.

Another of *Dawne's* daughters, *Forest Grand Dawnelli*, VG-87 1\*, yielded over 70 000 kg of milk in five lactations (238-242-226) and produced two VG and two GP daughters. Still another daughter, *Forest Rudolph Amy Dawn*, VG-86, did the family proud with a lifetime production of 109 745 kg of milk in 11 lactations, in addition to giving birth to five daughters, classified two VG and three GP. Lastly, a fifth-generation representative of the family, *Forest Goldwyn Winnie Dawn*, EX 1\*, won first Four-Year-Old at the Rive-Nord exhibition, in 2011, and produced six daughters, including two VG and three GP.

The herd has also gained from the arrival of *Brandshaven Sanchez Selina*, VG-87-3yr, a great-granddaughter of the well-known *Glen Drummond Splendor*, VG-86-2yr 39\*. Purchased in 2010 as a yearling, *Selina* has been a good milk producer, with a yield of 54 362 kg in four lactations (4.1% fat and 3.5% protein), for BCAs of 252-267-267. One of her daughters, *Forest Chipper Shelby Po*, VG, recorded a Superior Lactation at the age of 2, with a 305-day yield of 12 924 kg of milk (3.6% fat and 3.4% protein), for BCAs of 304-296-319.

The herd's future will obviously continue to be influenced by the family of *Dawne*, a line the breeders still depend on. But they also intend to work with their most recent acquisition, *Rubis Predestine Homelia*, VG-1yr, a cow that recorded BCAs of 249-273-258 at the end of her third lactation.

### Genomics feature high on the agenda

Sire selection is now in the able hands of Christina. Currently studying animal production in the certificate program at Laval University, she also completed an internship at the Ciq. She now makes good use of the selection tools provided by that centre to develop cows that demonstrate good longevity, aspiring to



**Forest Contrast Zed Dawn**, a fifth-generation representative of the family of *Dawne*, embodies the type of promising young cows the owners of Ferme Forest are looking to breed.

breed yearlings that classify VG. A convert to modern genetics, she uses genomic young sires for nearly all of the herd's matings. She also favours sexed semen, particularly for yearling heifers and second-calf cows.

Since the herd already has a solid foundation in terms of conformation, Christina wants to maintain that momentum by using bulls with a score of at least +10. More specifically, she says she values feet and legs as well as sound udders.

Regarding production, Christina says she looks for an index of at least 1000, with good results for components, ideally +100 for fat and protein combined. She also pays close attention to health traits. Her father

### FERME FOREST

**Herd size:** 96 head, including 48 cows in milk, 40% in their first lactation.

**Production:** 10 350 kg of milk, with 3.96% fat and 3.44% protein

**BCAs:** 237-254-252

**Quota:** 64 kg BF/day

**Classification:** 1 M EX, 1 EX, 21 VG and 22 GP

**Cropland:** A total of 60 ha devoted to corn (20 ha), soybeans (10 ha) and hay (30 ha).





**Forest Goldwyn Winnie Dawn, EX 1\*, first Four-Year-Old at the Rive-Nord show in 2011, is the dam of six daughters, which include two VG and three GP.**



**The modern facilities at Ferme Forest.**

acknowledges that he tended to focus more on conformation, and may have neglected health traits. As for fertility, a score of 100 appears to be the minimum.

Not all of the cows are destined to play a part in the herd's future however. The weaker cows, in terms of genetics, are instead used as embryo recipients, if embryos are available, or are inseminated with beef semen.

### **Exhibitions and young farmers**

Jean-Marc had the opportunity to acquire some show experience during his work placement at Ferme Vachalê. Thereafter, he and his brother took part in a number of different exhibitions, including Berthier, Lachute, Rive-Nord and even Trois-Rivières. While the activity still holds interest for them, they don't really have enough time to devote to it.

As for Christina, she has been active with the young farmers' group, taking part in, among others, the Classique des jeunes ruraux québécois in both Québec and Montmagny. The year 2013 was particularly exciting when she led *Forest Fever Phantee* to win an Honourable Mention Tout-Québec Jeunes ruraux Junior Yearling title. She continues to frequent the show circuit, helping other breeders with cattle fitting. ■



Photo: Ferme Forest

**Christina, Sylvain and Jean-Marc Forest form the team behind the Forest herd.**

Representing the third generation to run the family farm, brothers Jean-Marc and Sylvain Forest took over the operation in 1994, and it was under their guidance that the herd really began to take shape. Jean-Marc led the way, inspired by his training in the Farm

Management and Technology Program, and especially by his work placement at Ferme Vachalê. At that time, he also took part in a few young farmers' competitions. After that, Jean-Marc followed the sound advice of Michel Leduc and learned how to read a pedigree.

The brothers' interest in dairy breeding got a boost when a first classification visit resulted in two cows in their father's herd being classified VG. Since then, their predilection for good conformation has never let up. The brothers take care of all the farm work without the help of employees, but are able to count on Christina when her school schedule permits. For the past two years, Christina and her uncle Sylvain have been managing herd reproduction, while Jean-Marc sees to feeding and the fields.

Over the years, Jean-Marc has taken part in various activities of the Lanaudière Holstein Club, including the Basses-Laurentides sale. He and his brother are always gratified when one of their cows is acquired by a well-known breeder, relieved to know the animal is in good hands. Nowadays, Christina has become more involved in the Club, with her father taking more time to indulge his passion for motorcycles, among other interests.

By  
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## Lanaudoise through and through **A source of great pride**

**At Ferme de la Côte inc., in Saint-Esprit, in the Lanaudière region, the entire herd now bears the Lanaudoise prefix. Although a few animals have been purchased over the years, all of the cows in the herd are descendants of Lanaudoise animals. Martin Grégoire is justifiably proud of that accomplishment.**

Martin's father, Jean-Marc Grégoire, is first and foremost "an excellent dairy producer, who gives each animal the time it needs," says his son. But the interest in genetics is Martin's own, and he remembers being curious about proof sheets as early as the age of 10. After graduating from Laval University in agronomy, in 2004, he brought that passion back to the family farm.

The herd's more recent history began when the breeders purchased two-year-old *Clerinda Starbuck Amelie*, TB-87 3\*, a daughter of *Bet-Cha Mars Adonis*, VG 2\*. Today, says Martin, between 40 and 45 per cent of the animals in the herd are descendants of that family. An excellent dairy cow, with a lifetime production of 74 649 kg of milk, *Amelie* is the dam of 11 daughters, 6 of which are classified VG. The cows in this line stand out in particular for the quality of their mammary systems, says Martin. "The family is unbeatable on that score," he affirms.

*Amelie's* great-granddaughter, *Lanaudoise Bolton Anastasia*, EX 2\*, continues to make her mark in the herd and has so far produced 88 058 kg of milk (278-260-265) in six lactations. Although she is now owned by Jean Désy, *Anastasia* left two VG daughters in the herd, one of which is *Lanaudoise Doorman Anne*



**Three generations of the Grégoire family: Jean-Marc and Micheline, Martin's parents; Martin and his partner, Mélanie Gagné, and their three children, Magalie, 6 years old, Mélianne, 5, and Ménérick, 3, already at the wheel of a tractor.**

Photo : Emilie Nadeau, MAPAQ

*Sophie*, whose granddaughter *Lanaudoise Commander Atlantide* gave birth, in October 2017, to *Lanaudoise Contender Atlantic*, a heifer endowed with a GPA LPI of 3317. *Lanaudoise Stormatic Amandine*, EX-92 2E 2\*, another of *Amelie's* great-granddaughters, is also contributing to the herd's success, with a lifetime production of over 71 000 kg of milk and three daughters, all classified GP or better.

Another influential bloodline in this herd stems from *Lanaudoise Denison Arlene*, EX 2E; now in her seventh lactation, *Arlene* demonstrates outstanding longevity, with a lifetime production to date of 87 471 kg. She is also the dam of nine daughters, classified 1EX, 5 VG and 3 GP. Her combination of longevity and fertility is evidently a family attribute, one that is upheld in her daughter *Lanaudoise Lauthority Arianna*, EX 2E, a cow that began her fifth lactation at the age of 5 years and 10 months.

The herd also draws strength from the family of *Lanaudoise Storm Balerine*, EX-93 4E 1\*, another line that embodies longevity. After nine lactations, *Balerine* has a lifetime production of more than 107 000 kg. Her granddaughter *Lanaudoise Boxer Brasilia*,



**Representing her family's fourth generation of EX cows, *Lanaudoise Buckeye Electra*, EX 2E, has produced 51 135 kg of milk (271-298-277) in four lactations.**

### AN OVERVIEW OF FERME DE LA CÔTE INC.

**Herd size:** 155 head, including 75 cows in milk

**Production:** 10 560 kg of milk, with 4.1% fat and 3.3% protein

**BCAs:** 241-264-250

**Quota:** 100.7 kg BF/day

**Conformation:** 3 EX, 36 VG and 35 GP

**Crops:** 60.8 ha of alfalfa and timothy; 14.9 ha of silage corn; 5.6 ha of soybeans; and 29.3 ha of grain corn, a part of which is harvested as high moisture corn.

**Sugarbush:** 2700 taps



Photo: Emilie Nadeau, MPAQ

**Mélanie Gagné, Martin's partner, is secretary-treasurer of the Fédération des producteurs des races patrimoniales du Québec (Quebec's federation of heritage breed producers). She is proudly pictured here with her Canadienne cow.**

EX-90 2E, born in 2011 and now owned by Jean Désy, represents the family's third generation of EX cows. The quality lives on in *Balerine's* great-granddaughter *Lanaudoise Dempsey Barbapapa*, VG-86-2yr, a cow with a conformation score of +16 and a yield of 9979 kg of milk in her first lactation, at 24 months, with BCAs of 251-294-261. Her daughter *Lanaudoise Control Brinbelle* follows in her footsteps, with a GPA LPI of 2950 and a conformation score of +15.

Finally, *Lanaudoise Le Fort Eloise*, EX 2E, is at the head of a family that boasts four generations of EX cows. The youngest of them, *Lanaudoise Buckeye Electra*, EX 2E, has produced 51 135 kg of milk (271-298-277) in four lactations.

### Longevity and production

For Martin and his father, the future hinges on cows with good conformation and able to produce large quantities of milk. The breeders dream of EX cows with lifetime productions of 100 000 kg of milk. Martin continues to focus primarily on production and longevity, even with the new selection tools, like genomics, that are now available.

Accordingly, his sire selection is based on a scale that gives 30 per cent weight to production, 40 per cent to conformation and 30 per cent to health. To compensate for the inconsistencies of genomics, explains Martin, a more rigorous analysis is conducted for the younger bulls, which are used for 66 per cent of matings.

In terms of production, Martin sets no minimum threshold, but focuses on components, a factor that can offset a weakness in milk production. As for conformation, the breeder looks for moderately-sized cows with functional and solid mammary systems, paying particular attention to teat placement. Although the herd is housed in a tie-stall barn, Martin knows that robotic milking is increasingly popular, and is aware that he needs to take that into consideration. Likewise for good feet and legs, a priority in freestall systems. In that regard, he keeps a close eye out for legs that appear too straight when viewed from the side, explaining that this defect "often comes up when it comes time to choose a sire." Lastly, with respect to health traits, Martin focuses his attention on daughter fertility as well as herd life. For this latter criterion, which Martin considers crucial, the rump plays a major role, and bulls with negative scores in that regard are automatically eliminated.

The farm derives part of its revenue from sales for production at the local level. As Martin explains: "We sell what we're proud of, meaning cows that are able to produce milk with no problems."

### Creatures of habit

Martin and his father do 90 per cent of the farm work, occasionally enlisting help from a young employee and Martin's brother Benoit. For these breeders, herd management must be simple and based on an efficient routine. One way to do that, Martin says, is to never delay a treatment, and that applies to animals and fields alike.

The same principle holds for feeding as well. Since 1997, the cows have been fed a TMR composed of corn silage and alfalfa silage in equal parts, in addition to high-moisture corn and a supplement. ■



**Now in her seventh lactation, *Lanaudoise Denison Arlene, EX 2E*, has already produced 87 471 kg of milk. She is the dam of nine daughters, classified 1EX, 5 VG and 3 GP.**

## Ferme de la Côte inc.

Initially a second location for the family farm run by Martin's grandfather, Constantin Grégoire, the operation in Saint-Esprit became a separate business in 1989, under the direction of Jean-Marc Grégoire. At that time, the farm had a herd composed of Holstein and crossbred cows. Chickens were also raised on the farm, but that sector was abandoned in favour of milk production in 1994. Last fall, Ferme de la Côte inc. placed second in the Montréal-Laval-Lanaudière region in the Gold Medal category of the Ordre national du mérite agricole competition.

Today, the operation is owned by four shareholders: Jean-Marc and Micheline Grégoire, and their sons, Martin and Benoit. Martin chiefly oversees herd management, while his father is in charge of the fields and his mother takes care of the administrative side of the business. The family is also actively involved in the community. Jean-Marc is a director of the Syndicat de l'UPA Achigan-Montcalm for a number of years, and his wife is a former secretary of that organization as well. Martin was president of the Lanaudière Holstein Club from 2008 to 2010, and a director of Holstein Québec from 2010 to 2016.