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R-Z Baxter Caramel

A reputation built on her daughters

Ferme Antélimarck

For the sake of superb udders



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R-Z Baxter Caramel

Her daughters are a credit to her

Last August, a total of 26 of *R-Z Baxter Caramel's* daughters were listed among the top 1000 GLPI cows. *Caramel* topped the list of dams in that category and then pulled it off again in December, with 19 daughters. In addition to the outstanding results obtained in Quebec and Ontario, this cow of American origin has already garnered 14*.

Born on 28 January 2008, *Caramel*, a descendant of the family of *Ralma Juror Faith*, was acquired by the Gilette and Maryclerc farms, at the Patriarche Sale, in August 2010. Ferme Maryclerc then sold part of its share to the Bonaccueil, Cleroli and DPR farms. Before she was purchased, *Caramel* had been classified VG-88 in the United States. After 100 days in lactation, she classified VG-89-2yr in Canada. As Armand Leclerc, of Ferme Maryclerc, recounts, he and his friend Louis Patenaude (Ferme Gillette) were impressed by this young cow and her remarkable family when they first saw her a few days prior to her first calving. Three months later, they were eager to buy her.

Two reasons motivated their interest. First, her pedigree included a lineup of bulls that have shaped the breed, among them, *Baxter*, *Goldwyn*, *Oman* and *Durham*. Second, they were impressed by the depth of her bloodline with regard to conformation, with dams classified EX-92, VG-89-3yr and VG-88-2yr. Without a doubt, *Caramel's* pedigree reveals a family strong in both conformation (six generations of EX or VG cows) and production, in addition to good indexes. *Caramel* upholds that standard with a GLPI of 3052 and a Pro\$ index of 1807.

In her first lactation, at two years, *Caramel* recorded a production of over 15 000 kg, for BCAs of 391-472-432, clearly following in the footsteps of her dam, *Ralma Goldwyn Carmel*, EX-92 2E-US, a cow that produced 13 925 kg of milk in her first lactation. Good production is obviously a solid trait of this family, since *Caramel's* nine daughters have an average projected mature equivalent production of 13 180 kg. For all these reasons, says Armand Leclerc, "*Caramel* is the ideal cow, one that should please everyone."



R-Z Baxter Caramel

Caramel's new owners quickly realized they had made a wise purchase. They could have sold her for a good profit shortly after acquiring her, explains Armand Leclerc, but they preferred to keep her for themselves. What followed seems to indicate they made the right choice. *Caramel* is now the dam of 37 young cows, all classified GP or better, including 25 VG. Moreover, adds Armand Leclerc, the first 17 of her daughters were classified VG at two years, three of them with 87 points.

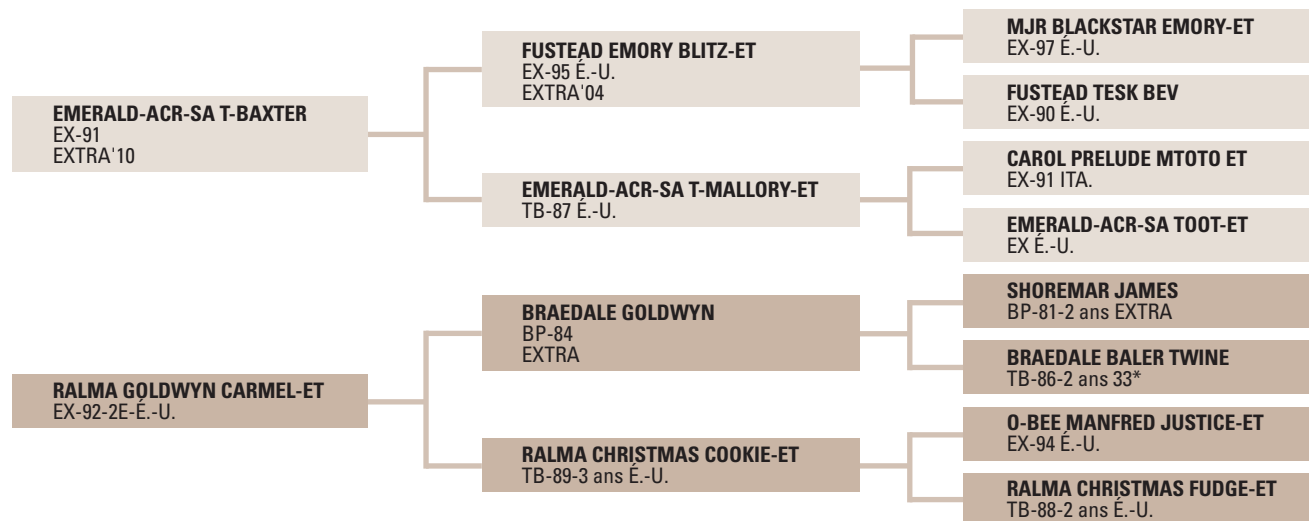
Many of her daughters have also earned Superior Lactation awards. Moreover, her 35 daughters enrolled on official (publishable) milk recording have an average mature equivalent production estimated at 14 344 kg, for BCAs of 271-320-290. *Caramel* is also the dam of 14 heifers. To date, she and her

daughters have produced a total of 107 registered animals.

In addition to her 37 daughters born in Canada, *Caramel* is the dam or granddam of a large number of animals throughout the world, since more than 300 of her and her daughters' embryos have been sold outside of Canada.

Sire selection

In 2010, when *Caramel* was acquired, genomics was not as commonly used as it is today. *Caramel's* new owners thus chose sires among the best available at the time, based on their proofs. They were particularly inclined towards *Snowman* and *Iota* but were open to using other sires. As Marie-Christine Leclerc points out, "*Caramel* transmitted well,



regardless of the sire.” She adds that *Caramel’s* daughters have often ranked among the top daughters of many bulls, for GPA LPI. They are generally exceptional animals that draw attention, and *Caramel* has often been in the spotlight, explains Armand Leclerc, “because she produces outstanding offspring time after time. You can’t help but notice them.”

Well-known daughters and granddaughters *Gillette Iota Carmen* was one of the first of *Caramel’s* daughters to attract attention. She was acquired by Ferme Gillette at the Génibeq IV Sale, in October 2011. With a GPA LPI of 2844, she was the best of Iota’s heifers. She was later classified VG-86 at one year and then VG-87 at three years. She now has a GLPI of 2992 and has recorded two Superior Lactations.

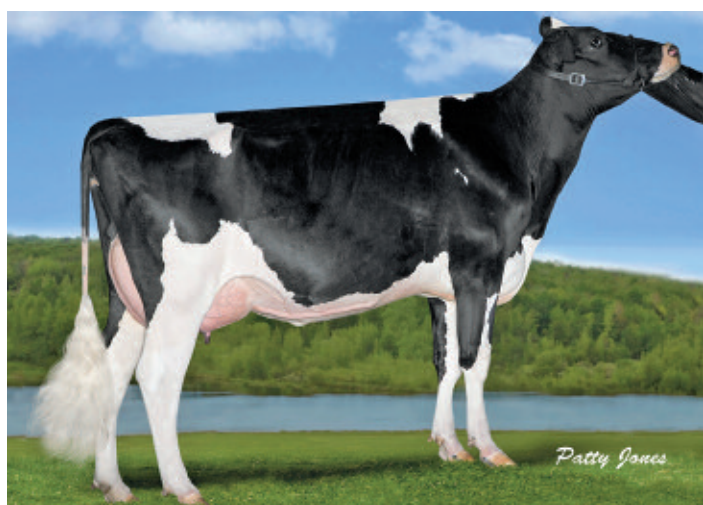
Maryclerc Snowman Cristal, VG-86-2yr, is another of *Caramel’s* illustrious daughters. She is owned by Ferme Maryclerc, where she recorded her first lactation and earned a Superior Lactation. With a GLPI of 3161 and a Pro\$ index of 2175, she is ranked 28th for GLPI and 43rd for Pro\$.

Back in the fold of the *Gillette* and *Maryclerc* farms, *Cleroli Snowman Caramilk*, VG-86-2yr and a GLPI of 3021, is the dam of *DPR Mardi Gras Aero*, a heifer that at the age of only five months sold for the highest price at the Holstein Québec National Sale, in April 2015. Finally, *Gillette Mascales Celeste* won third Intermediate Yearling at the Supreme Dairy Show in 2014.

Caramel’s granddaughters are now calving, and their breeders and owners have high hopes for this new generation, as many of them have high GPA LPIs in their pedigrees.

An exciting future

In December 2014, *Caramel* was acquired by Ferme L. Campbell et fils inc. (Camphols) and Charles Campbell, after the latter, a hoof trimmer and genetics enthusiast, convinced his brother Simon and his wife, Caroline Hébert, owners of the Camphols herd, to share in the purchase. After that, recounts Caroline, *Caramel* made a few trips to Boviteq for in vitro embryo collection. Since April, three conventional embryo harvests have been performed on farm. Most of these embryos were implanted, some were sold, including four by *Gold Chip* at the Holstein Québec Embryo Sale last November, and some are still available. Two heifers were born on the Campbell farm in early December, one sired by *Doorman* and the other by *Absolute Red*. Time will tell if the numbers will be as impressive as those of the last round of proofs, but the future indeed looks promising for *Caramel’s* new owners. ■



Gillette Iota Carmen



Maryclerc Snowman Cristal



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Antélimarck

For the sake of superb udders

Two events in particular led to the beginnings of the Antélimarck herd. First, in 1984, Marc Leblanc and his father, Élie, bought a few young animals from a breeder in their area, who owned a herd of cows that were particularly well known for the quality of their udders. Inspired by the encounter, Marc set his sights on developing the same kind of herd.

The seller also recommended that the Leblancs have the animals classified in due course. When he followed up on that advice, Marc discovered the world of breeding, and he remembers how coming into contact with the classifier opened up new horizons. Both those experiences, explains Marc Leblanc, “kindled a spark”, one that inspired the Antélimarck herd.

Justifiable pride

Although many of those first Holstein animals became excellent milking cows, they produced few heifers, and so were not able to leave

their mark on the herd. The Leblancs had to wait for a descendant of another cow, acquired at an auction, to find their first brood cow, namely *Antelimarck Dalida Storm*, EX 2E 3*. The breeders began experimenting with embryo transplants, and *Dalida Storm* is now the dam of nine daughters, including three EX and six VG.

Among them, *Antelimarck Dalida Morty*, EX-93 4E, distinguished herself by winning Honourable Mention Grand Champion in Bécancour, in 2008 and 2010. As the Leblanc family explains, *Dalida Morty* is the cow that introduced their herd to the breeding world. She is also the first cow they exhibited at a show, giving them a taste for the show circuit. Indeed, Marc and his son Jean-Michel remember that period well, when the many visiting representatives from CIAQ and other service providers were encouraging them to “get her out.” *Dalida Morty* and her descendants also attracted the first buyers to the farm in Nicolet.

Dalida Morty gave birth to 18 daughters, all classified GP or better, including 2 EX and

13 VG. With 96 points for her mammary system and 91 points for feet and legs, she is also an excellent example of longevity, as she started her last lactation at the age of 10 years and 5 months and continued to produce for 445 days. She certainly meets the goal Marc Leblanc set for himself in looking to develop a herd that excelled in conformation, particularly the mammary system. “A good udder makes up for a lot of weaknesses,” he says.

The herd also includes *Antelimarck Lidym Goldwyn*, EX-95 2E, considered by her owners as their best cow. A good milk cow, she has so far produced 54 298 kg in four lactations, with 3.6% fat and 3.1% protein (251-243-245). Her show career has been remarkably successful as well. Among other titles, she won Reserve Tout-Québec and Honourable Mention All-Canadian in 2013, at the age of five, and was also crowned Grand Champion in Bécancour, in 2012 and 2015.

Her bloodline goes back to her granddam, *Antelimarck Lidy Igniter*, VG-88 3*, a cow the Leblancs decided use for breeding only after discovering the quality of her daughters.



Photo : Ferme Antélimarck

At Ferme Antélimarck, the breeders' high regard for fine udders has made that an important criterion for sire selection.

Fortunately, *Lidy Igniter* demonstrated good longevity, with a last lactation at 10 years and 1 month, giving her ample time to produce 40 embryos. She is the dam of 4 classified daughters, 2 EX and 2 VG, in addition to 9 heifers. Among her progeny, *Antelimarck Lidy Lewiston*, EX-93, won Grand Champion in Bécancour in 2013 and 2014, and *Antelimarck Lidy LH Modest*, EX, a good milk producer with a lifetime yield to date of 76 000 kg of milk, is now in her 6th lactation (236-237-242). The latter is the dam of *Lidym*, herself dam to 3 VG daughters, including *Antelimarck Lidym Sid*, VG-87-2yr. Following in *Lidy Igniter's* footsteps, it is now time for her daughters and

granddaughters to become prolific embryo donors.

Obviously, working with a cow by Igniter over the past years has not been a popular choice, explain both father and son, since the current trend is to focus exclusively on younger bulls. "But to ensure the development of our herd, and knowing that she breeds well, it's what we needed to do," they affirm in unison. Using a baseball metaphor, Marc Leblanc adds, "We're not aiming for a homerun, we'd rather make solid base hits."

A penchant for proven bulls

Proven bulls continue to be of interest to the Leblancs, despite the fact that young bulls with genomic results are now used for half of their matings. They consider proven bulls to be a safer choice and so prefer to alternate between proven sires and genomic young bulls. For example, *Lidy Igniter* was bred with a proven bull for a first embryo flush and then with a young bull for the next. In keeping with that philosophy, the breeders ensure that a heifer sired by a young bull is bred with a proven bull; likewise, a heifer whose sire has already demonstrated his worth will be bred with a young bull. "Proven families give us some protection, and a more homogeneous herd," says Jean-Michel. With this approach,

this misfortune of having a less impressive sire in a pedigree will have little effect on the value of the breeding line, the Leblancs explain. The father adds, "No matter which cow needs breeding, we've always chosen a good bull, and the price of the semen has never been used as a selection criterion." With a few more days in milk or even an extra lactation, the price difference is quickly forgotten, he explains.

A taste for the show circuit

The Leblanc family developed an interest in the show circuit with *Dalida Morty*, a cow they first exhibited at their regional Bécancour show, held in Saint-Pierre-les-Béquets. Following their debut there in 2007, they won their first Grand Champion title there, in 2010, and have repeated that performance many times since, winning top honours at every show for the past six years, with four different cows, all bearing the Antelimarck prefix.

But it is *Lidym* that has created the most excitement for the breeders. Indeed, she was the herd's first animal to compete at the provincial level and then go on to Toronto, where, in 2013, she finished fifth 5-Year-Old but won first Bred and Owned in her class. It is with some pride that the breeders say that *Lidym*, a cow graced with good feet and legs

Growing soybean forage

Because Jean-Michel is allergic to alfalfa, his family cultivates forage soybeans to feed the herd. They grow a late-maturing variety that is harvested in September, when the plants are slightly yellowed but have yet to reach maturity. The crop is mowed with a combination mower-conditioner, with open rollers to avoid crushing the plants. The plants are then left in the field for a day or two until their dry matter content is between 35 and 37 per cent. Stored in a silo, the soybean forage is incorporated into a TMR with corn silage, in a ratio of 10 kg of forage soybeans to 40 kg of corn. A ratio of 15:35 is sometimes used as well. The milking cows receive no hay, except when being prepared for a show.

A supplement is also added to the herd's ration. While supplements are expensive, the breeders say the cost is largely offset by the value of the cereals they grow on land made available owing to their limited hay production. Hence the Leblancs devote 24 of their 90 ha of cultivated farmland to corn silage, 16 to forage soybeans, 16 to grass hay, and 10 to pasture. The other 24 ha are used for commercial grain production.

Photo : Ferme Antelimarck



The team behind the Antelimarck farm and herd: Marc Leblanc, his wife, Marthe Lemire, with their son Jean-Michel, and his partner, Katherine Lefebvre.



BREEDING PROFILE



Antelimarck Dalida Morty, EX-93 4E, Honourable Mention Grand Champion in Bécancour in 2008 and 2010, was the first representative of the Antélimarck herd to enter the show ring. This is the cow that introduced the herd to the breeding world and gave her breeders a taste for the show circuit.



Antelimarck Lidy Lewiston, EX-93, was crowned Grand Champion in Bécancour, in 2013 and 2014.

as well as an outstanding udder (96 points in both cases), aptly characterizes their herd. They say they look after her the same way they look after all the animals in the herd. "We're lucky she doesn't require any special treatment," adds Jean-Michel.

Jean-Michel shows all the animals himself, because he thinks it is important that "people associate the face with the farm." He says he has often been congratulated for that decision, and explains, "We have to show the second-rate cows ourselves, so why not do the same with the best?"

Plans for the future

The buildings at Ferme Antélimarck no longer meet the operation's needs. A case in point, the animals are housed in three different places during the winter months. The milking cows and the heifers are kept on the farm, while heifers over the age of eight months are boarded at a second site and the dry cows at a third. To ensure better follow-up and tighter management, the Leblanc family is planning to build a new free-stall barn, possibly with an automatic milking system, an option they are now exploring. The project will also be an opportunity to integrate Jean-Michel as a co-owner of the operation. He has been working on the farm since completing his degree in agroecconomics in April 2014.

The herd now comprises 160 head, including 80 milking cows. In addition to their construction project, the Leblancs are looking at increasing the number of cows in milk, as the herd now has a large number of young cows. As Jean-Michel explains, it would be consistent with their strategy, since young cows adapt more readily to a milking robot or a milking parlour, not to mention free stalls. At the moment, the milking cows, which include 8 EX, 39 VG and 33 GP, have an average annual production of 10 258 kg of milk, with 3.86% fat and 3.38% protein, for BCAs of 235-237-232. ■

Antélimarck To rightly embody the herd's origins

In 1981, the year he married Marthe Lemire, Marc Leblanc joined his father, Élie, in operating the farm that his grandfather Antonio had acquired in 1919. When the question of breeding purebred Holsteins came up, the prefix was created so as to incorporate the family's origins. Antélimarck thus refers to the three generations of Leblancs that have been actively involved in the operation since its beginnings. At the time, they had even thought to include Patrick, Marc's brother, who could have joined the team. Although he often lends a hand on the farm, Patrick decided instead to pursue a career in teaching.

The four family members handle all the farm work. Marc and Marthe take care of the morning milking, while the evening shift is in the hands of Jean-Michel and his partner, Katherine Lefebvre, who has a college degree in animal production from the ITA, in Saint-Hyacinthe. Marthe, who has a degree in administration, manages the accounting, and Marc and Jean-Michel tend to the rest of the work with Katherine's help. Marc and Marthe have three other children as well: Véronique, a pharmacist, Benoît, an agroecconomist, and Marilyne, who has a college diploma in arts and literature. Marc is currently vice-president of the Centre-du-Québec Holstein Club.