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LA REVUE

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Holstein Québec

Judges from other countries

Their views on Quebec Holsteins

Ferme Sicard

Home of three passions



Photo : Jean-Philippe Proulx



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Ferme Sicard

Three areas of passion that explain it all

The ingredients of Yvon Sicard's success are without doubt his love for good-looking animals, the pleasure he gets from taking good care of them, and his enjoyment in the business of buying and selling them. Representing the fourth generation on this family farm in Saint-Justin, near Maskinongé, Yvon and his family operate the Sicy herd.

Although he spent 11 years working as a cheese maker for Saputo, in Maskinongé, young Yvon Sicard was no less interested in the farm and its good-looking animals. At the time, he owned a few hectares of land and a herd of Hereford beef cattle that he exhibited at shows. His father, Réal Sicard, was more interested in field work than animals, but he kept a herd of crossbred cows just the same. "They were fine cows," recalls Yvon. Mr. Sicard could always count on Yvon's support on the farm, and it was his son's involvement that prompted him to hold on to his quota.

Celebrating his 30th birthday in 1990, when his father was 65, Yvon changed the course of his career, leaving his job to take over the farm. After concentrating on improving the family's herd, Yvon's love of purebred animals quickly came to the fore. Putting the invaluable advice of his neighbour, Yves Lefebvre, to good use, and often bringing him along, Yvon Sicard attended a good many auctions and visited numerous herds, including those belonging to Bertrand Boisclair (Clairbois) and Ferme Jatton et Gremion (Provetaz). Little by little, the Sicy herd took shape.

Attractive show cows

At Ferme Sicard, the passion for fine animals is the primary focus, and they take part in at least 10 shows per year. In 2001, after some of the land was sold and the acreage devoted to field crops was reduced, Yvon had more time and decided to transfer his interest in shows, first developed with his Herefords, to his Holsteins. In 2008, the Sicard family decided to give it their all, a course made possible by, among other factors, the help they got from friends Laurent Lambert, Simon Lalonde and Martin Roberge.

Since then, the herd has met with success, winning a number of big titles at the Spring Show over the past few years, including several Intermediate Championship wins: in 2010, with *Idee Goldwyn Lynley*, EX-93, a cow sold to Ferme Blondin just prior to the show; in 2011, with *Donnanview Damion Lyza*, VG-88-3yr, then co-owned with Ghyslain Demers; in 2012, with *Cookview Goldwyn Monique*, VG-89-3yr, then co-owned with Ferme Blondin and Jeff Butler; and, in 2013, with *Desnette*

Alexia Roseplex, VG-89-3yr, co-owned with Ferme Desnette.

Another animal that has done well in the showring is *Roggua Dundee Evelyne*, EX-93, a cow that earned two Superior Lactation certificates, one for a yield of 13 393 kg of milk, at 2 years and 5 months, for BCAs of 340-303-326. From her first-place wins in the calf classes in Stanstead, through to her All-Canadian and Tout-Québec Senior Two-Year-Old nominations in 2010, her title as Reserve Grand Champion at the Ontario Summer Show and Grand Champion at Exposition Rive-Nord in 2012, and then her triumph, in 2014, in the Mature Cow Class in Trois-Rivières, the Grand Championship in Maxville, and the Lifetime Production Over 50 000 kg Class at the provincial finals in Montmagny, Evelyne continues to be a great source of pride.

Petitclerc Sid Sunkiss, VG-88-2yr, co-owned with Ferme Blondin, is also turning heads, having finished the 2013 show season with the titles of Reserve All-Canadian and Reserve All-American Junior Two-Year-Old.

The success of the Sicard farm is attributable as much to a love for attractive animals as to a passion for trading.



Photo : Michel Dostie

For both showing and breeding purposes, Ferme Sicard can also count on *Cityview Shottle Ace*, EX-93, a cow they co-own with Ghyslain Demers. With a Superior Lactation for 12 460 kg of milk, at 2 years and 1 month, and BCAs of 320-295-337, Ace snapped up a first in the Junior Two-Year-Old Class in Trois-Rivières. As for her reproductive performance, she is already dam to 10 heifers, including 8 by *Goldwyn*, 4 of which have already been sold.

The farm also breeds with *Cobequid Goldwyn Leno*, EX-94, an animal co-owned with Pierre Boulet, Ghyslain Demers and Butz-Hill Holsteins. With a Superior Lactation for a production of 15 115 kg of milk, with 4.2% fat and 3.2% protein (313-350-313), at the age of 4 years and 5 months, Leno, in 2012, was Reserve Intermediate Champion at Expo Québec, Reserve Intermediate Champion and Honourable Mention Grand Champion at the Ontario Summer Show, and Reserve Grand Champion in Maxville. Moreover, she ended the 2013 show season with an All-Canadian Four-Year-Old nomination. She continued in that fashion in 2014, winning first Five-Year-Old and the title of Grand Champion in Trois-Rivières, in addition to a second place at the Spring



In 2014, *Cobequid Goldwyn Leno* won both the Five-Year-Old Class and the title of Grand Champion in Trois-Rivières. She is the dam of *Sicy Aftershock Lemone*, Junior Honourable Mention at Expo Rive-Nord and Reserve Junior Champion in Trois-Rivières.

A team effort

For the Sicard family, whether they're going to a show or operating the farm, it's a team effort. As much as Yvon Sicard enjoys going to shows, it's with his exhibit and outside the show ring that he is most comfortable. Preparing his animals is what he likes to do best, so don't count on him to present the animals before the judge. He doesn't even watch, he admits. But he's not alone to do the work. Since he began competing with his animals, he has always been able to count on Jacques Lacoursière, Mathieu Chartrand, Kelly Hardy and Audrey Lafortune, his constant allies who follow him everywhere, not to mention his two sons and his spouse, Christine Desrosiers. But you won't see Christine near the animals during the show. Instead, she follows the action from the bleachers, listening and taking note of the judges' comments.

On the farm, Yvon Sicard relies on his eldest son, Charles-Antoine, who works full time for the family operation, and his employee, Jim Trudel, in addition to Christine, who has been taking part in the milking for the past fifteen years as well as doing the bookkeeping. For her, this was quite a change in vocation. The daughter of a veterinarian, she began her career as a figure-skating coach. At the time, she was leaving the house morning and evening to train her skaters, a schedule hardly compatible with farm work. But as Yvon's father began to withdraw from the business, she took her place discreetly, making the most of her father-in-law's experience. The couple's younger son, Julien, an electrician by trade, also helps the farm work.

Together, this team takes care of the herd's 50 milking cows, which include 7 EX, 35 VG and 10 GP. The Holsteins produce an average of 9100 kg of milk, with 4.3% fat and 3.31% protein, for BCAs of 221-247-224. Taking into account the ups and downs of the business, the herd generally comprises between 100 and 150 head. The animals are housed in a tie-stall barn, except for the show cows, which are kept in large box stalls. The herd is fed hay and commercial feed. According to Yvon Sicard, this type of feeding

is ideal for animals that are likely to be sold and will then have to adapt to a new ration. According to the breeder, a cow fed this way "develops a great capacity to eat anything." Moreover, he adds that using a complete feed means that each cow gets personal treatment, which is advantageous, even if, as he says, "it takes more time."

Hay is produced on half of the 162 ha cultivated by the Sicard family and is harvested in small bales or large wrapped bales. The rest of the acreage is seeded equally to small grain, soybeans and corn.



Yvon Sicard, Christine Desrosiers and their family all take part in the work involved in the Sicy operation. Charles-Antoine, on the right, works full time on the farm, and Julien, an electrician, helps out as his schedule permits.

Photo : Michel Dostie



BREEDER PROFILE

Show and in Maxville. She is the dam of *Sicy Aftershock Lemone*, a heifer born in December 2013 that Yvon Sicard co-owns with his son Julien. In 2014, *Lemone* won first place in the Intermediate Calf Class at both the Rive-Nord and Trois-Rivières shows, as well as Junior Honourable Mention at Expo Rive-Nord and Reserve Junior Champion in Trois-Rivières.

The animals bearing the Sicy prefix are also making a name for themselves on the show circuit. The cows that stood out this year are *Sicy Sydney Goldwyn*, VG-89, first Senior Three-Year-Old and Grand Champion at Expo Rive-Nord, *Sicy Ballet Atwood*, first Junior Yearling and Junior Champion in Trois-Rivières and Reserve Junior Champion in Maxville, and *Sicy Alisson Goldwyn*, first Senior Yearling at both the Rive-Nord and Trois-Rivières shows.

Yvon Sicard also bred *Sicy Knowledge*, VG-87 Extra, a bull now owned by Semex, and whose dam is *Ferre James Kelly*, VG-88 3*.

It goes without saying that good management is essential to Yvon Sicard, who maintains that for an animal to win at a show, “whoever keeps the cow does more than half the job.” Hence, it’s not without reason that he likes to spend his days in the barn. For that matter, at Ferme Sicard, there is always someone in the barn taking care of the animals, washing them, and seeing to all the little details that can make a difference in the show ring. Yvon Sicard acknowledges, for example, that he pays particular attention if a cow always lies on the same side, because it can lead to an unbalanced udder. Because of that, he won’t hesitate to make her get up and then

persuade her to lie down on her other side.

An eye for selection

Although he does consider cow families, Yvon Sicard always focuses on conformation for his sire selection. That means that before choosing a bull, he pays close attention to the animal’s daughters as well as its family origins. And when it comes to evaluating a young bull, he looks first at the dam’s conformation traits to make his choice. While his approach leaves little room for genomics, Yvon Sicard prefers his more “down-to-earth” method.

Trading is also a must

The business of buying and selling also features high on the agenda for Yvon Sicard, and that applies to both good show cows and commercial milk-producing cows. Financially speaking, year after year, trading accounts for at least 60 per cent of the farm’s revenue. And there’s a strong connection between that business and the herd’s presence at shows, which draws many visitors to the farm.

When he spots a good one, says Christine Desrosiers, his spouse, Yvon Sicard’s reaction is instant: “He wants to have her.” But she hastens to explain that “he has sound judgement, he’s a visionary.” As Yvon Sicard points out, “Everyone can point out a cow’s weakness, but a comment made by Jocelyn Côté stands out for me. He said: ‘It’s important to look for the qualities and then make do with the faults.’” And because Yvon likes good herd management and attending to details, that is just what he spends a good part of his time doing when he’s in the barn. It’s also the reason he attaches a great deal of importance to the well-being of his animals.



This year, *Roggua Dundee Evelynne*, EX-93, won first in the Mature Cow Class in Trois-Rivières, was crowned Grand Champion in Maxville, and won first in the Lifetime Production Over 50 000 kg Class at the provincial finals in Montmagny.

Because trading keeps him on the road a good part of the time, however, Yvon is fortunate to be able to rely on the presence of his son Charles-Antoine and Jim Trudel, a permanent employee, in the barn. That way, he explains, both the animals and the barn are kept clean at all times.

And when he sells good animals, it’s likely that the buyers will also get good results in the show ring. That’s fine by Yvon Sicard, who explains that “it’s important to enjoy the successes of others.”

A little bit of room for the Jerseys

When Charles-Antoine was 12, he fell in love with a Jersey cow, so his parents decided to buy one. And then they did a little breeding. As Yvon Sicard explains, there was no question of trading with this breed, but doing a few shows? Why not! And the family is very proud of the performance of this little dozen-head herd, in particular, that of *L’Ormière Fusion Christine*, who, in 2011, was crowned Grand Champion at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, in Toronto, as well as at Expo Québec, a first for their prefix. *Christine* is now owned by River Valley Farm. The family is also delighted with the success of *Hawk Pond Midnight Maestro*, EX-93, who won the title of Grand Champion in Trois-Rivières, in 2014. ■



Under the guardianship of Yvon Sicard, Ferme Blondin and Jeff Butler, *Cookview Goldwyn Monique* won both the Intermediate Championship and the Grand Championship at the Spring Show in 2012.



BY
MICHEL DOSTIE
Editor



Judges from other countries talk about Quebec

Mr Alain Hogge's answers have been translated by Nicole De Rouin

In this issue, La Revue Holstein Québec presents the views and comments of different judges from other countries who are well acquainted with Quebec Holstein breeding and have judged shows here. These experts share their appreciation of our dairy breeding and explain some of the differences between the way things are done in Quebec and the Holstein breeding practices in their respective countries. As well, through their analysis, they explain how Quebec breeders can make themselves better known in other countries. Overall, these judges represent a good part of the international market. For the purpose of this report, we linked up with Claudio Aragon, in Brazil, Toshihiko "Tommy" Araki, in Japan, Alain Hogge, in Belgium, Brian Leslie, in Australia, Giuseppe Quaini, in Italy, and Mark Rueth, in the United States.

How would you define Quebec Holstein breeding?

Claudio Aragon (Brazil) I have had the opportunity to visit Quebec Holstein breeders since 1987. At that time, Brazil was importing numerous cattle from Canada and I was in charge of selection for many breeders in Brazil. It is absolutely amazing the huge progress that Quebec breeders have made since my first trip in 1987. I would say that a great deal of focused breeding has put Quebec amongst the top places for high quality Holsteins. The majority of Quebec breeders have a well defined objective and philosophy in mind and persist in achieving their goals. The constant use of top quality bulls, along with aggressive female selection, has transformed the Quebec Holstein into one of the best in the world. It is not a surprise that we find world prominent herds such as Jacobs, Comestar, Blondin, Lehoux, Rotaly, Delaberge, Provetaz, amongst many others. The concept of fine functional, high producing cows is very strong in the minds of the Quebec breeder. The will to breed cows that will produce large amounts of quality milk and last several lactations is visible in the breeding philosophy of the Quebec breeder. This has enabled them to use the best quality genetics and, along with top management, produce the kind of cow that I very much appreciate.

Tommy Araki (Japan) I know Quebec is the most prosperous dairy area in Canada. I consider that Quebec stands in the core of

the industry in Canada. Quebec has a climate similar to that of Hokkaido, which is the most active dairy area in Japan, and also it seems to be a common point that there are so many family farms in both areas.

Alain Hogge (Belgium) "Balanced breeding" is the right term, an outstanding combination of production and type.

Brian Leslie (Australia) Wonderful balance of production and type.

Giuseppe Quaini (Italy) Selection is extremely balanced.

Mark Rueth (United-States) Quebec is a standard for breeding type. If someone from the US travels to Quebec and buys a cow, you know she will be a good one. Eastern Canada is a hotbed for good cows and I would have to say that is a testament to its breeders.

Claudio Aragon (Brazil)

Claudio Aragon developed his passion for dairy genetics on his grandfather's farm, where he worked for 12 years. He embarked on his professional career in 1985, after completing a degree in veterinary medicine in Brazil, where he focused his studies on animal genetics. He then worked for various artificial insemination centres in his country, and is currently a technical director for Semex Brasil.



Mr. Aragon has been judging Holstein, Jersey and Brown Swiss animals since 1991, and has officiated at the four major dairy events in his country, among many others. His international judging career has taken him to Australia, Uruguay, Ecuador and Canada. In 2013, he judged the Jerseys at the Ontario Summer Show and the Jersey Futurity Class at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. In Quebec, he judged the Holstein Show in Trois-Rivières, in 2011, and the Jerseys at the International Dairy Showcase, in 2012.

Tommy T. Araki (Japan)

Tommy Araki studied veterinary medicine at Rakuno Gakuen University, in Japan, and graduated in 1977. He then began his professional career with Japan Holstein Breeding Service Co. (which later merged to become Genetics Hokkaido Association), where he worked until 2013. He now works for Tommy Hill International Ltd. and Animal Genetics Japan Co., Ltd.



Since 1980, Mr. Araki has judged over 400 shows in Japan, including the Hokkaido Black and White Show (2013) and the country's most important event, the Hokkaido Holstein National Show (1999). He has also had judging assignments in Australia, Korea, and North America. In the United States, he has judged in the states of Maine, Iowa and Vermont. In Canada, his services were retained by the Rockton Holstein Show in 1996, the Maxville Holstein Show and the Atlantic Summer Classic Show in 2011, and the Trois-Rivières Show in 2013.

Which aspect of Quebec breeding most attracted your attention?

Claudio Aragon (Brazil) The importance that the Quebec breeders give to the development of cow families in the herds. Invariably the breeders have two to four major cow families in their herds from which they develop their breeding program. It is clear that the importance of these cow families is the basis for the breeding program of the Quebec breeders.

Tommy Araki (Japan) Holstein selection in Quebec is correct and precise. There are so many good cows which have good type, superior mammary systems and high milk producing ability. I am greatly attracted to such elements of the Quebec Holstein.

Alain Hogge (Belgium) Definitely the conformation of the animals.

Brian Leslie (Australia) My first visit to Quebec was back in 1985 to look at the daughters of Tempo, Mark Anthony and Enhancer. It was obvious to me back then that Quebec had very milky cows but not the type of those from Ontario. Wow! Hasn't there been great progress with type now leading the world.

Giuseppe Quaini (Italy) Over the past 10 years, the breed has improved in terms of

femininity while maintaining great strength, a super combination for production potential.

Mark Rueth (United-States) The pure domination by Quebec cattle at the World Dairy Expo for many years really gets your attention. Probably the best thing for the US is that Quebec is so far away because many really good cattle do not get to come because of the distance. When you look at a herd like Jacobs and what they have done over the last few years, it's incredible. There are great show strings around the country and many breeders buy the nice cattle to make the string. Then they just have to breed them and they're good.

What element of Quebec Holstein shows stands out the most for you?

Claudio Aragon (Brazil) The environment! Aggressive competition in the show ring but extreme friendship amongst the breeders. The environment is contagious! Friendly people, always willing to help and share information, great knowledge of their cattle and very proud of what they have. At the same time these breeders are extremely competitive and go as far as possible to get the animals in their best shape in the ring. What also stands out for me is the attention and care dedicated to the youth. I always see the dedication that the breeders and show

organizers put into having a good program for the youth at the shows. This is very impressive and without doubt a great way to tune in to the interest and expertise of the young people.

Tommy Araki (Japan) It is obvious that Quebec Holstein shows stand out as being of the highest level in the world. Both heifers and cows are great, and cows especially show impressive size and powerful body shape. They have fine ribs and abdomens, with overwhelmingly superb dairy strength and mammary systems as well. The show cows' body conditions are undoubtedly of the best quality in the world. We must learn from their expertise.

Alain Hogge (Belgium) I've drawn a great deal of inspiration from the Quebec judges with whom I've had the opportunity to work. The element that stands out the most for me is of course their knowledge of dairy cattle, but also the positive way in which they always give their feedback.

Brian Leslie (Australia) Without doubt, the element that stands out most for me, apart from the outstanding quality of the animals, is the amazing crowds you draw to watch [your] shows and the real interest shown in the judging.

Giuseppe Quaini (Italy) The elements that characterize Quebec shows are: organization, conformation level, professionalism and marketing capabilities.

Mark Rueth (United-States) Quebec has dominated heifer shows for years but lately Quebec has been dominating the cow shows too. When you look at the young cows the depth is unreal. Nice cows down toward the bottom and the kind of cows I like, youthful and great udders.

What are the major differences between Quebec dairy production and production in your country?

Claudio Aragon (Brazil) Brazil has no quota system in place. That makes a huge difference in almost all aspects of dairy production between Quebec and my country. Milk prices fluctuate more and at the same time we see more and more herds expanding



and becoming larger. It is not uncommon to see many 300 to 500 cow herds in Brazil. With a very important agriculture base, forage production is efficient and the base of nutrition in most dairies. Brazil has several different dairy production systems, with plenty of pasture-based cows in large areas. But we have a large number of producers with free stalls and high production cows. Efficient corn production makes for the majority of our farms being on a corn silage diet, with more and more producers using rye grass or oat haylage, plus cotton seed, soybean meal, and on occasions some citrus pulp. Hay is not as common as what we see being used amongst Quebec producers. What makes another big difference is that we pay much higher interest rates for financing equipment, facilities, cows, etc. This is a limitation to expansions and efficiency for our dairy producers. Another important characteristic of the dairy production in the central to northern parts of Brazil is the use of the crossbred animals (Holstein x Zebu cross). These animals are a big part of the dairy herds in these areas. We have great challenges with our tropical climate, where in some months the heat and humidity are very limiting to the efficiencies of reproduction. Extra care has to be implemented to control (minimize) heat stress.

Tommy Araki (Japan) There is no big difference between Quebec and Japan. The breeders' methods, the breeding approach, and the size of the breeding facilities are very similar, but I feel the strong commitment to Holstein improvement in Quebec is more aggressive than in Japan.

Alain Hogge (Belgium) First, the price of milk is much more stable in Quebec. Next, the difference in housing facilities, with a much greater proportion of tie-stall barns.

Brian Leslie (Australia) Well clearly the housing of the cows; we are on pasture and outdoors all year.

Giuseppe Quaini (Italy) In Italy, over the last 10 years, breeders haven't followed a consistent pattern in selecting for conformation.

Mark Rueth (United-States) I think the difference is that in the US, they want a lot of milk right now and what you see is our young

cows really milk but don't last. I would say in Quebec that the cows milk consistently and last longer. More lactations and more calves mean more profit.

How do Quebec dairy shows differ from those held in your country?

Claudio Aragon (Brazil) There are not many differences. Our regional and major shows are run very similar to the ones in Quebec. Numbers may not be so high, but quality is very solid. We have been using genetics similar to what Quebec breeders use and we have very knowledgeable cow people in the country. One big difference is that we do not have a youth program similar to the one in Quebec. Only specific areas of the country promote a solid youth program, but is limited to a few areas. This is something we could definitely learn from the Quebec system.

Tommy Araki (Japan) Japanese dairy producers love shows. They hold lots of shows in Japan. Recently, however, the total number of exhibitors has decreased, so the number of head must be dropped as well. I am not so familiar with the Holstein shows held in Quebec, but there seems to be a

variety of events during the shows and so not only the breeders but also the general public can join in and enjoy them.

Alain Hogge (Belgium) The differences in terms of show organization are less evident today than they were 20 years ago. Not surprising, since we used Quebec shows as a model to organize our own. Nowadays, the differences are in the quality of the animals' conformation, and this is true for all the sections.

Brian Leslie (Australia) Classes are much the same.

Giuseppe Quaini (Italy) All of the aspects mentioned in the third question above are more advanced and better developed in Quebec, but Quebec dairy shows don't differ much in terms of production.

Mark Rueth (United-States) Where you really notice the difference in the shows is in the depth of the classes. The year I judged the World Dairy Expo, I judged St-Hyacinthe too [QIHS]. At the World Dairy Expo, there were like two fall calves from Quebec. In St-Hyacinthe, the class was full of beautiful fall calves that could have done well at Expo

Alain Hogge (Belgium)

Alain Hogge grew up on his family's farm near Herve, in Belgium. He studied agricultural informatics, and subsequently worked at developing dairy herd management software. He later completed training in classification and took part in Canada's National Judging Conference. He worked for 10 years with Holstein Belgium, where he applied the Canadian classification system, and then for 5 years for the Walloon Breeding Association (AWÉ), with the classification and breeding programs. He later became head of the Milk Marketing Department for the AWE. Today, he divides his time equally between his position as marketing manager for the AWE and that of director of the Belgian Blue Group (BBG), an organization that manages the export of Blanc Bleu Belge animals. His passion for breeding prompted him to become involved in setting up the European Young Breeders School, in Battice, and in training Belgian judges.



Over the course of his career, Mr. Hogge has judged more than 40 shows in various countries, including Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Morocco, Switzerland and Tunisia. He also travelled to Quebec in 2010, to judge the Trois-Rivières Show, and in 2011, to officiate at Expo Québec.

[WDE]. I think that in the US, the better shows will have one to three real nice animals in each class, but then the quality will go down. Quebec will have more depth of good cattle and that would be the result of good breeding and breeder care. Just more emphasis on showing and breeding for type.

Is genomics stirring up as much interest in your country as it is here in Quebec?

Claudio Aragon (Brazil) For sure! Genomics is becoming more and more used on our dairy farms. Producers are very much interested in using the high end genomic bulls with philosophies that run from high TPI/LPI bulls or high type bulls or high health trait bulls. Many producers are now genotyping their calves and the selection process is gaining very rapidly. It is safe to say that in the past 18 months, there has been more semen sold from genomic bulls than from proven bulls. When we consider that Brazil could only import semen from plus proven bulls in a recent past, this is huge progress. We have farms that vary from 20% to 100% usage of genomic bulls. It is very rare to find a herd that will not use genomics nowadays.

Tommy Araki (Japan) I understand that genomics has already led to improvements in the breed in Canada and the United States and plays a leading role in breeding technology, but unfortunately it is not yet generalized in Japan. Progressive-minded Japanese breeders are however most interested in the field of improvement with genomics. Many of them have already started to use high genomics semen and embryos imported from Canada and/or the U.S.

Alain Hogge (Belgium) It's hard to say. I don't know the percentage of genomic sires used in the Quebec population, but, in Belgium, it's increasing constantly. Genomic sire use is at about 50 per cent in the red and white Holstein population, and about 40 per cent with the black and whites.

Brian Leslie (Australia) Not anywhere to the extent it is in your part of the world with the females, however I'm sure the semen side is rather big now.

Giuseppe Quaini (Italy) Yes, but perhaps there is a little too much interest in genomics.

Brian Leslie (Australia)

Brian Leslie grew up on the dairy farm that is home to Pooley Bridge Holsteins. The herd includes 400 milking cows and has won 15 Breeder and Exhibitor banners in addition to the title of Grand Champion at the International Dairy Week (IDW) show, the most important of its kind in Australia. Brian Leslie has devoted his entire career to Australia's dairy industry. As a shareholder in Dairy Livestock Services, he now travels throughout the country selling dairy cattle. His responsibilities in the business have given him numerous opportunities to visit Quebec since 1985.

In his capacity as a judge, Brian Leslie has judged all the dairy breeds at the national shows in Australia and the Holsteins at the IDW. He has also judged in Argentina, Ireland, Jersey Island and New Zealand. In Canada, he has officiated at a dozen shows, mainly in Ontario, British Columbia and Prince Edward Island, where he judged at the National Holstein Convention in 2007.



Brian Leslie (left), at Australia's International Dairy Week, in 2011. Beside him are Carl Saucier, from CIAQ, and Matt Templeton, owner of the IDW Grand Champion, Fairvale Morty Lady 51.

Mark Rueth (United-States) Yes, genomics is stirring up interest. It is what it is; it's something that is here to stay but nothing I get too involved with. The AI industry got genomics started and they are the pushers of genomics. They also have the most money to play the game. Once you have a high number of animals, you have to mass produce through IVF to find one good one that is worth some money, but the others are worth nothing. Also

the bull studs [AI centers] control the young [bull] semen. It's funny how some bull studs [AI centers] are coop, and some members get early semen but you can only get it after they have what they want; it's a race with time. Calves are worth a lot of money but by the time they are cows, they are old news. They talk longevity, but older cows are a waste of time. You will not see breeding herds like Jacobs using genomics.



How can Quebec genetics serve breeders in your country?

Claudio Aragon (Brazil) In the past, we imported numerous live cattle from Quebec. This gave our breeders a tremendous advance in their breeding program. Since the borders were closed we have been importing embryos from Quebec breeders. In a very recent event, Semex Brasil promoted an auction sale with calves born from embryos brought down from Quebec breeders. The sale was a huge success and many of these calves are now donor animals on the farms that purchased them. It is a fact that we have much to gain from the good breeding programs in Quebec. The last few years saw many embryos coming from the prominent cow families in Quebec moving to Brazil. I see this embryo movement being even stronger if we can regulate the possibility of importing frozen IVF embryos. This is still a barrier that could be overcome with the assistance of the Quebec breeders pushing the Canadian Ministry of Agriculture to develop more dynamic relationship with the Brazilian Agriculture Department.

Tommy Araki (Japan) I am sure Quebec genetics greatly serve breeders in Japan. For example, the embryos produced by cows active in Quebec shows or by the famous cow families or by high genomics donor cows are

very popular in Japan. Moreover, Japanese breeders are fond of using semen produced by sires that have had good results in Quebec.

Alain Hogge (Belgium) Through insemination and embryos, of course, but more and more Belgian breeders are turning to genetics, where functional trait indexes will play a significant role in sire selection. I think that those criteria, which they'll be able to find in Quebec, will be the most important ones for developing the genetics of tomorrow in Belgium.

Brian Leslie (Australia) Quebec genetics have served our country very well for several decades now and as long as you continue to breed the balanced kind I'm sure this will continue.

Giuseppe Quaini (Italy) Quebec genetics can serve our breeders by providing good bull semen and embryos.

Mark Rueth (United-States) There is always a need for good type cattle. Good looking cattle will always have value. The really good ones bring top money. It seems that since [the advent of] genomics, we have more people looking for nice young cows and a lot of people looking for breeding bulls from those good cows.

How can Quebec breeders establish or improve their business relations with breeders in your country when it comes to genetics, genomics and dairy shows?

Claudio Aragon (Brazil) We have a large group of breeders that travel to the Royal Winter Fair every year. This group starts the trip in Quebec, with the Quebec International Show. After the show we travel with them to visit farms in the area. This has created a very good relationship amongst the breeders from both countries. Lots of interest is generated for embryos and flushes. These kind of trips are very beneficial and I believe that the other way around would also be important. That is, Quebec breeders being able to visit breeders in Brazil to get a better feeling of the dairy business in the country, the needs and interests of our breeders. Another important factor is the possibility to have Brazilian trainees on Quebec farms. Creating easier access to Quebec farms for these trainees would allow more and more interested people to see what can be gained with Quebec genetics. As for shows, we have been bringing Quebec judges to our main shows and this has allowed a good exchange between our breeders and those from Quebec.

Tommy Araki (Japan) I am sure that Quebec-Japan business relations are well established and improving. Japanese breeders and all the parties concerned are always focusing on Quebec shows. At the same time people are visiting shows held in Quebec whenever the opportunity arises. Furthermore, lots of judges are invited from Quebec to attend the shows held in Japan to deepen the relationship between the two countries. Japanese breeders support the opinions of the judges from Quebec. I firmly believe that the embryos and semen originating from Quebec will contribute greatly to future Holstein improvement in Japan. Young Japanese farm successors get long-term training on the excellent farms in Quebec every year.

Alain Hogge (Belgium) In this regard, I think that the diffusion of Quebec's know-how in the various sectors is excellent. We just have to keep doing what we've been doing in the past. Actually, I think it's in the other direction that improvements need to be made, and that, once again, we need to draw inspiration from

Mark Rueth (United States)

In the town of Oxford, Wisconsin, Mark Rueth and his spouse Nicky Reape have been managing Rosedale Genetics since 2001. Despite the farm's short history, their animals have already brought home nine Grand Champion, three Supreme Champion and two Reserve Supreme Champion titles from the World Dairy Expo, in Madison, Wisconsin. The Rosedale herd has also distinguished itself with a number of All-American titles.

In addition to America, where he has judged both Holsteins and Jerseys at the World Dairy Expo, in Madison, and at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, in Toronto, Mr. Rueth's career has taken him to many other countries, including Germany, Australia, Brazil, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Sweden and Switzerland. In Quebec, breeders had the opportunity to appreciate his judging skills at the Quebec International Holstein Show (QIHS), in November 2009.



your expertise to promote the genetics developed in Belgium.

Brian Leslie (Australia) I always found when buying embryos that the breeder who was kind enough to follow up when asked for pictures etc. were the ones I was happy to continue dealing with later on down the road. It's good to make a sale but I feel follow-up keeps the relationship strong.

Giuseppe Quaini (Italy) I think there should be increased relations and cooperation between the two associations.

Mark Rueth (United-States) Through the Internet, it is nice to see Quebec shows, farms and members online. The farmers in Quebec are good breeders of cattle, but also great managers of the crops and new technology. The US has a big push on for large farms and they are pushing a lot of smaller farms out. I like Quebec because the farms are a part of the country and it is nice to see how they are successful. It's getting harder to find good young cows nowadays and type will be an asset in the future. Smaller farms have to be specialized to be successful. If you can produce milk and sell genetics, it's a plus.

Can Quebec breeders answer the needs of dairy producers in your country who are not interested in high calibre genetics but who would still like to attain high levels of production and profitability? If so, in what way?

Claudio Aragon (Brazil) I am sure that Quebec breeders can fulfill these needs. What I do see however is that most of our dairy producers that are focused on production have more confidence in US genetics when it comes to high levels of milk. This is obviously due to the exceptional marketing that is done by US breeders in general. I would very much like to see focused marketing from Quebec breeders to show that they have very high production herds, with different management systems and cows that produce high levels of quality milk, and demonstrate the profitability of the Quebec Holstein cow. Our producers do not see this as a trait coming from the Quebec

Giuseppe Quaini (Italy)

Giuseppe Quaini breeds Holsteins in the Cremona region, in Italy, where he has a herd of 500 Holstein cows. With over 40 years of breeding experience, Mr. Quaini has long focused on improving productivity, conformation and longevity in his animals. Animal and embryo sales make up a significant portion of the farm's revenue. The herd has won many Grand Championships, including the one in Europe, as well as numerous Exhibitor and Breeder banners.



Since he began judging in 1978, Giuseppe Quaini has officiated at all the major shows in Europe, including five assignments at the Italian National Show. In addition to judging in Argentina and Brazil, Mr. Quaini has visited America eight times, with six visits to Canada. In the United States, he officiated as assistant judge at the World Dairy Expo, among others. In Quebec, he has judged shows in Coaticook, Trois-Rivières and Victoriaville, as well as at the Quebec International Holstein Show (QIHS), in Saint-Hyacinthe.

dairy producer. I have had the opportunity to visit numerous Quebec herds with extremely high production and high quality management. I am sure that these herds have everything required to answer the needs of our commercial dairy producers in Brazil.

Tommy Araki (Japan) I believe that Quebec breeders do have an influence on Japanese dairy producers who are less interested in high caliber genetics. Every breeder in Japan can use the inexpensive semen originating from Quebec that is imported to Japan. Using the genetics of the semen first introduced from Quebec to Japan, Japanese breeders have produced sires from the top cow families in Japan. Such semen is widely used in Japan now. It is common to see Holstein daughters or granddaughters with pedigrees originating from Quebec born on the more advanced farms in Japan.

Alain Hogge (Belgium) Obviously yes. I think that Quebec breeders, like breeders throughout the world, all have something to contribute that will help our breeders progress. The reverse is true as well, of course. Dialogue on the subject is always valuable, be it through magazines or forums, for example, but it's even better to

communicate directly, through shows, symposia or other activities that provide opportunities to meet and talk with people.

Brian Leslie (Australia) Well yes, there are many great maternal lines that may not be the highest genomics etc., but are still the balanced Canadian kind that made your Holsteins so popular. I'm sure if the price is right there will be demand.

Giuseppe Quaini (Italy) Here again, Quebec breeders can answer our needs by providing good bull semen and embryos.

Mark Rueth (United-States) Keep breeding real nice cows and people will come and buy them. Today, a lot of the shows are televised or online. We get to see the cows you show and with advertising you build a network of people looking for your genetics. Goldwyn has been a great bull and what the industry needs is something to breed Goldwyn daughters to or the next great type bull for the Goldwyn daughters. ■