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# La Revue HolsteinQuébec

## Moving to another region

A demanding decision, but well worth the effort

## Ferme Vert d'Or

Two generations, a single pathway

## Ferme Garondale

An interest in Red and Whites







BY  
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## Garondale Herd A soft spot for reds

*I*n 1747, Jean-Baptiste Garon, a surgeon by profession, left La Martinique and settled in the Kamouraska region, at 1 rang du Bras, in Saint-Denis-De la Bouteillerie. Representing the eighth generation of the family, Alain Garon now operates the Garondale herd in that same spot.

### THE GARONDALE HERD

**Herd:** 280 head, including 110 lactating cows, 10 of which are Jerseys.

**Holstein and Jersey production:** 10 259 kg of milk, with 4.3% fat and 3.52% protein

**Quota:** 150 kg BF/day

**BCA:** 228-256-247

**Classification:** 29 EX, 56 VG and 38 GP

**Cropland:** 200 ha, with 50 seeded to silage corn, 25 to wheat and 125 to legume and grass meadows, harvested as silage and as hay in large square bales. The animals are fed a TMR composed of 50 per cent of each silage type, in addition to soybean meal and supplements. Hay is fed to the yearling heifers and dry cows.

and his spouse, Véronique Demers, now share ownership of the farm.

The Garondale herd began taking shape in 2004. After convincing his parents of the necessity of the investment, Alain acquired *Boulet Juror Chandler*, a daughter of *Boulet Aerostar Chanel*, EX 3E 23\*, as a four-year old, now classified VG-88. Her descendants, including 13 daughters all classified GP or better, have added 10 stars to her pedigree. Overall, her progeny includes 27 cows classified EX and currently makes up 80 per cent of the farm's Holstein herd.

Among *Chandler's* granddaughters, *Garondale Goldwyn Cassista* was the first animal bearing the farm's prefix to be classified EX. On the fairgrounds, *Garondale Goldwyn Conny*, EX-94 4E 15\*, is the cow that has brought the family to the fore, in particular with her Reserve Grand Champion win in 2015 in Saint-Pascal, and then the Grand Champion title in 2017. That same year, she also won Reserve Tout-Québec and an All-Canadian nomination in the Lifetime Production class. She has distinguished herself in the barn as well, with



**Alain Garon and Véronique Demers, of Ferme Garondale, with their five children, from left: Alain, with Conny, Albert, 14 years old, Charles-Henri, 12, Rose, 15, Arthur, 9, Véronique, and Alexane, 17, at the halter of *Barbecue*.**

a Superior Lactation certificate and a lifetime production of 101 432 kg of milk, with 4.3% fat and 3.4% protein. Her daughter *Garondale 5G Covergirl*, EX-93 2E, won first Three-Year-Old and Grand Champion in Saint-Pascal, in 2018, and has just completed her fourth lactation, with a yield of over 50 000 kg of milk and BCAs of 255-265-263.

**Eight generations of the Garon family have operated the farm at 1 rang du Bras, in Saint-Denis-de-la Bouteillerie, in the Kamouraska region, where Red and Whites now make up 15 per cent of the herd.**





***Ty-D Redhot-Red Aquarel, VG-88, a granddaughter of KHW Regiment Apple-Red, EX-96 4E USA 35\*, is now in her third lactation, projected to yield 12 827 kg of milk, with 4.4% fat and 3.7% protein, for BCAs of 249-301-291.***

*Garondale Bookel Celebre, EX-92 2E, is another of the family's exemplary animals. This high-producing cow already has a Superior Lactation to her name, and her fourth lactation is projected to yield 13 680 kg of milk, with an outstanding 4.9% fat (251-332-284). Moreover, Celebre has twice topped her class at the Montmagny-l'Islet-Kamouraska Club's Breeders' Cup.*

The Garondale herd also includes a number of daughters of *Pierstein Cicero Tikki, EX-92 2E*, a cow the couple co-owns with Pierre Boulet. *Tikki* is a full sister to *Pierstein Cicero Time Out, EX-95*, crowned Grand Champion in Trois-Rivières in 2017, and again in 2019, when she was also nominated All-American and named Tout-Québec Five-Year-Old.

### A fondness for Red and Whites

Impressed in earlier times by a red and black cow, Alain went on to develop a keen interest in Red and Whites. That fascination is one of the factors motivating his purchase of *Ty-D Redhot-Red Aquarel, VG-88*, an animal he acquired as an 11-month-old, in 2017, at the Harmonie sale, where Alexane, the couple's eldest daughter, was working as a cattle fitter. According to Alain, *Aquarel* is "probably the top animal on the farm right now." This granddaughter of KHW Regiment Apple-Red, EX-96 4E USA 35\*, is now in her third lactation, projected to yield 12 827 kg of milk, with 4.4% fat and 3.7% protein, for BCAs of 249-301-291. She is already the dam of six daughters, two of which are Red and Whites.

## The whole family lends a hand

Ferme Garondale is indeed a family affair. In addition to selecting and preparing the calves for the showing, Alexane already assists her father in managing the herd. Although it's a little too soon to tell, that interest could eventually lead her to take over the farm. Meanwhile, she is also devoting time to her interest in horses, and has enrolled in the equine technology program at the ITA, La Pocatière campus, for September.

The farm also employs two foreign workers, and Véronique, who sees to the bookkeeping and landscaping around the farm, maintains good relations with them.

Alain's passion for Red and Whites, which now make up 15 per cent of the herd, is also behind *Micheret Fifa Devour-P-Red, VG-88* – a classification score that places her equal second among the daughters of Devour. A young cow from the family of *Roxy, Fifa* has "the added bonus of the polled trait," Alain explains.

### Hard-working cows

Alain initially focused his breeding strategy on improving classification in the family's herd. Even today, he says he aims to "breed hard-working, well-balanced cows with excellent mammary systems." With that in mind, conformation has always been one of his selection criteria, in addition to choosing sires backed by strong cow families. Alain acknowledges that in the early years, he insisted on a conformation proof of +15, and tended to pay less attention to production. But now that the herd has a solid base, he explains, +10 is sufficient. He'll even accept lower, on occasion, if other traits make up for it. As examples, he cites the polled gene, A2A2 milk, or the red factor.

But his requirements for conformation don't stop him from considering production as well. Obviously the bulls have to have positive proofs for milk, but Alain pays special attention to kilograms of fat and protein. That focus is motivated not only by his desire to improve the herd's productivity, but also by the strong demand by buyers for cows that have good lactations.

Genetic improvement in the herd is also achieved through embryo collection, at least 10 flushes per year. To ensure good results, all the donor cows, in addition to the other high-calibre cows in the herd, are insemin-



***Garondale Goldwyn Conny, EX-94 4E 15\*, has contributed the most to her family's reputation in the showing, in particular with her Reserve Grand Champion win in 2015 in Saint-Pascal, and then the Grand Champion title in 2017. That same year, she also won Reserve Tout-Québec and an All-Canadian nomination in the Lifetime Production class.***

nated with sexed semen. While some of these embryos are sold, most are transferred to recipient cows on the farm, predominantly yearling heifers.

### A special place for shows

Shows are also an important component for Ferme Garondale, and the couple's five children all take part in the youth shows in Saint-Pascal. The four youngest children are undoubtedly motivated by their elder sister, Alexane, who especially enjoys taking part in these events. She has also attended Holstein Québec's Dairy Cattle Fitting School. The family also shows its best animals elsewhere in Quebec, in particular at the Spring Show and fall events, and even as far away as Toronto. ■



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## Ferme Vert d'Or

### Two generations much alike

**A**long rang de La Pinière, in Sainte-Hélène-de-Kamouraska, Serge Morin and Anne Bégin operate Vert d'Or inc. with their sons Jonathan and Pierre-Luc. There they put all their energy into their passion for genetics, breeding and shows.

#### FERME VERT D'OR

**Herd:** 250 head, including 120 lactating cows housed on two sites

**Production:** 10 452 kg of milk, with 4.25% fat and 3.51% protein

**BCA:** 236-264-261

**Classification:** 20 EX, 45 VG and 29 GP

**Quota:** first site: 115 kg BF/day  
second site: 49 kg BF/day

**Cropland:** Ferme Vert d'Or inc. has 344 ha under cultivation, with 51 ha seeded to silage corn and 212 to alfalfa, timothy and brome-grass stands, harvested primarily as silage in large square bales. The remaining 81 ha are seeded to oats and wheat. The TMR is made up of 60 to 70 per cent corn silage, completed with grass silage, a little straw, and supplements.

Together they developed the Vertdor prefix, beginning with the purchase, in 2001, of the heifer *Sunnylodge Integrity Alice*. Later classified VG-88, she now has 12 stars in her pedigree. In fact, half of the animals in the herd stem from this cow. She produced 54 851 kg of milk in four lactations, and is also the dam of 12 daughters (3 EX, 5 VG and 4 G), 7 of which were born from a same embryo transfer sired by *Morty* and have been particularly influential in the herd. Among them are *Arina*, EX 4E 9\*, with a Superior Lactation certificate and a lifetime production of over 120 000 kg of milk, and *Ary*, EX 3E 10\*, with a lifetime production of over 80 000 kg.

In the same family, *Alice's* granddaughter, *Vertdor Lauthority Matrix*, EX-95 3E 7\*, has had a remarkable career and is still in the herd today. In addition to recording a lifetime production of over 70 000 kg of milk, she has also left her mark in the showring. As a three-year-old, in 2016, she won the Grand Champion title in Saint-Pascal, a first place at the Spring Show and a fourth place at the RAWF, in addition to an All-Canadian nomination and a Reserve Tout-Québec title. To date, she has produced 12 daughters, classified 3 EX, 6 VG and 3 G.

A fourth-generation representative of this same family, *Vertdor Dempsey Minou*, EX-93 3E 2\*, is upholding the family's reputation with two Superior Lactation certificates and



**Vertdor Dempsey Minou, EX-93 3E 2\*, EX-93 3E 2\*, a fourth-generation representative of the family of Alice, is upholding the family's reputation with two Superior Lactation certificates and nine daughters, all classified GP or better.**

nine daughters, all classified GP or better. With 95 points for her mammary system, she exemplifies "the exceptional udders transmitted by this family," says Serge Morin.

The Vertdor herd also includes *Petitclerc Goldchip Solange*, EX-92 4E 1\*, from the family of *Blondin Skychief Supra*, EX-93 3E 35\*. Currently in her seventh lactation, *Solange* already has a lifetime production of more than 89 000 kg of milk and good results in the showring, winning first in the Five-Year-Old and Mature Cow classes at the Saint-Pascal show in 2017 and 2018. She is also the dam of 14 daughters, all classified

As a student at the ITA, La Pocatière campus, Serge Morin not only developed an interest in breeding and genetics, but he also met his spouse, Anne Bégin, a student who hailed from Sainte-Germaine-Boulé, in the Abitibi region, where her family already had a Holstein herd. That herd is now operated by her brother Régis, under the Gis-thal prefix. In 1991, Serge and Anne took over the Morin family farm.

**The new free-stall barn with a double 10 milking parlour was inaugurated in December 2019.**

Courtesy of Ferme Vert d'Or inc.



## Continuity is ensured

Brothers Pierre-Luc and Jonathan have firm plans to take over the operation, and in fact are already shareholders. "It's a wonderful gift for us as parents," says Serge Morin, "knowing that our children want to take over the farm." In day-to-day affairs, they all share the workload, including Marie-Pier Dion, Jonathan's partner. "Everyone knows about everything," Serge explains, because they hold a meeting every morning, although that doesn't preclude some division of tasks. The couple has a third son, David, who is a heavy-equipment mechanic.



Courtesy of Ferme Vert d'Or inc.

The team behind Ferme Vert d'Or inc., from left: front row, Anne Bégin and Marie-Pier Dion; standing, Serge, Pierre-Luc and Jonathan Morin.

GP or better, 8 of which were sired by Door-man. Representing the family's third generation, the eldest of Solange's granddaughters, *Vertdor Chief Ritz*, VG-87-3yr, is currently in her second lactation, which is projected to yield 12 514 kg of milk, with 3.7% fat and 3.5% protein, for BCAs of 271-271-298.

### New facilities, changing needs

In December 2019, the *Vertdor* herd moved into a new free-stall barn, outfitted with a double 10 milking parlour. That change impacted the producers' sire selection. As it has been from the start, conformation remains a priority, and while they aim to continue breeding functional and long-lasting cows, they now try to limit the stature of their animals.



A granddaughter of *Sunnylodge Integrity Alice*, VG-88 12\*, *Vertdor Lauthority Matrix*, EX-95 3E 7\*, is following a remarkable career path, with a lifetime production of over 70 000 kg of milk, in addition to winning, in 2016, at the age of three, the Grand Champion title in Saint-Pascal, a first place at the Spring Show, a third at the RAWF, an All-Canadian nomination, and a Reserve Tout-Québec title.

First and foremost, they go through the families of potential sires with a fine-tooth comb, looking for well-classified dams with high milk yields. Although genomic young sires are used for 60 to 70 per cent of their inseminations, none are exempt from a thorough analysis. "Just the numbers are not enough," says Jonathan, "because we believe in cow families."

This penchant for novelty where sires are concerned has proved successful. As an example, they are proud to have used *Stantons Chief* early on, as they now have a dozen of his daughters in their first or second lactation.

In respect of conformation, a minimum proof of +10 is required for sires, and they mustn't show any major weaknesses. The breeders also pay special attention to udders, feet and legs, chest depth, and pin width.

As for production, sires with a proof of +1000 are preferred, but positive proofs for components are also a must. "They have to be able to improve the three aspects of production," say the breeders. Lastly, they also focus on continually improving health traits in the herd.

Embryo transfers play an important part in herd improvement as well, and they do about 10 flushes every year, with sexed semen used for 50 per cent of those inseminations. About 20 per cent of the cows and yearling heifers are used as embryo recipients or are inseminated with Angus bull semen. Thus all their Holstein heifers are raised, enabling the farm to meet buyer demand for young dairy cows, particularly those in their first or second lactation.

### Adapting to free stalls

Transferring a herd to a new free-stall barn requires some adjustment. Nonetheless, the undertaking went smoothly for Ferme Vert d'Or, with production decreasing only slightly in the first few months before returning to normal once the animals resumed calving. The few cows that were having trouble adapting were able to return to a tie-stall barn, because the Morin-Bégin family owns a second operation, Ferme Missipi (2000) inc., located about five kilometers away from the main farm, and which houses around 40 milking cows.

### What about shows?

With their parents, Pierre-Luc and Jonathan took part in young farmers' competitions, and today, they are still motivated by their passion for shows. They regularly participate in their regional exposition, in Saint-Pascal. And when the animals have the potential, they also enjoy taking part in higher-level shows, like the RAWF or the WDE in Madison. *Vertdor Sid Fugueuse's* win in the Junior Championship at the 2015 Spring Show was a particularly moving moment. Moreover, this interest in shows led Jonathan to become a cattle fitter, an occupation he pursued for about five years after graduating from the ITA. ■





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## Setting up elsewhere **A worthwhile but demanding undertaking**

*For a variety of reasons, breeders sometimes decide to relocate their farms. To hear them talk about it, however, it's clear the process isn't a picnic. But once they've made it through the first stages, they are all happy with their decision. As Dave Tourigny points out, "To justify this level of change, there have to be advantages, because it costs a lot."*

For many, the decision is motivated by a desire to finally have their own farm. This was the case for Dave Tourigny and his partner, Sophie Leblanc, who launched the Rightstar herd from scratch. They operated the herd, which currently has 120 head, including 60 cows, in two rented locations, before moving to Saint-Germain-de-Grantham, in Central Quebec. Initially established in Warwick, Dave explains that he wanted to have his own buildings to be able to make his animals more comfortable and to conform to environmental standards. He also wanted to stay close to the area he was from and was looking for quick access to the highway to be able to pursue his business lines and take part in shows. The region obviously gave him a warm welcome, as he is currently president of the Centre du Québec Holstein Club.

Courtesy of VIVACO groupe coopératif



**Nancy Boulay and Frédéric Champagne, owners of Ferme Chamboulay, with their two children, Félix, 5 years old, and Laïla, 3.**

Frédéric Champagne and Nancy Boulay were similarly motivated. They began developing the Chamboulay herd in a rented barn in Upton, but had to live in the village, travelling back and forth daily to take care of their animals. They wanted a place of their own, where they could establish and expand their operation. With a herd that has grown from its initial quota of 34 kg BF/day to its current 77, and includes 50 cows in milk, they are once again residents of Saint-Norbert-d'Arthabaska and members of the Club des Bois-Francs. The relocation project required some adjustments for this breeder, whose experience was limited to the plains of the Montérégie area, and who thus had to adapt to working on hilly terrain. The farm also owns a maple stand with 13 500 taps.

Frédéric's sister, Emmanuelle Champagne, and her partner, Marc-André Fontaine, had a similar experience as well. Operating the L'Odyssée herd in Saint-Nazaire-d'Acton, the couple wanted to expand their operation, but were limited by the space available in their rented barn, and the owner was unwilling to sell. Land prices in the area are also an impediment to young farmers hoping to set themselves up there. The couple thus opted to relocate to Danville, in the Richmond Club's region. Emmanuelle explains that having their own farm gives them more autonomy when it comes to making decisions about the buildings, as well as the fields and feed production for livestock.

The situation was different for Marco Rodrigue and Marie-Claude Champoux, who operated the Marico herd in Saint-Valérien-de-Milton. Their lease was still valid for a number of years and they had invested enough in the rented barn to ensure their animals were comfortable. They had thought about setting themselves up on their own farm one day, of course, but they hadn't yet

Courtesy of Ferme L'Odyssée



**The team behind the L'Odyssée herd: Marc-André Fontaine and Emmanuelle Champagne, with their three children, Vincent, 9 years old, Raphaëlle, 12, and Ophélie Fontaine, 6.**

made any plans. Then, after Dany Rodrigue died in an accident, they had opportunity to buy the Rodveil farm and its elite herd, which was awarded a Master Breeder shield in 2018. The couple thus decided to make the leap and move to Saint-Simon-les-Mines, which for Marco also meant a return to his home region, the Beauce.

In the case of Steve Moreau and his partner, Anne-Marie Bissonnette, the couple relocated after their Kamouraska farm was destroyed by fire in 2017. At the time, Steve and his brother Serge owned the farm, but after the fire, Serge preferred to devote his time to the crops while Steve continued to





**Anne-Marie Bissonnette and Steve Moreau, owners of Ferme Rayon d'Or, with their three children, from left, Tommy, 13 years old, Jason, 10, and Allyson Moreau, 8.**

take a keen interest in breeding and genetics. The brothers thus divided up the assets, with Steve and Anne-Marie deciding to take the quota and the few animals that had survived the fire and set themselves up elsewhere. After some searching, they opted for the village of Lemieux, in the Central Quebec region, where they found farmland, a manure pit, a few small buildings, and a house that met their needs. They bought the farm and built a free-stall barn equipped with a double 10 milking parlour.

### An impact on lactating cows

All the breeders who relocated encountered a decline in milk production. The 60 cows in Dave Tourigny's herd all produced less milk, especially those nearing the end of lactation, and this despite the fact he had taken care to bring hay over from the original farm to avoid the stress of a change in feed. In fact, he says, the situation only returned to normal as the cows calved again. It's thus important to consider that it will take at least a year, he explains, just as it does when acclimatizing cows to a new barn on a same farm.

For his part, Frédéric Champagne noted a 10-per-cent drop in production, and he estimates that it took 30 to 36 months to return to the 13 000 kg average that the cows were producing prior to the move. The L'Odyssée herd also recorded a decrease in production, and Emmanuelle points out that the stress triggered by a move can also cause mastitis, and that accidents during transport can affect productivity as well.

The situation was a little more complicated for the Rayon d'Or herd, since the yearling heifers and cows that had been housed on different farms after the fire had had to deal with a first transition before having to adapt to another new environment when the new barn was ready for them. The cows purchased in Ontario also had some serious adjusting to do upon arrival.

When he left Saint-Valérien-de-Milton, Marco Rodrigue sold his quota and most of his herd, taking 25 cows and 45 yearling heifers with him to the Beauce. The cows had a difficult time adapting, especially since the comfort level wasn't the same as on the old farm. Despite their high genetic potential, some of them had to be culled. Thankfully, he says, the 45 yearling heifers that made the move were able to fill the void left by the cows that were unable to adapt.

### Major investment

In addition to investing in their construction project, Steve and Anne-Marie also had to purchase 30 cows to build their herd, which now includes 150 head, 75 of which are cows. They also invested a considerable amount of money in machinery. The other breeders already had good herds, but they still needed to make some major investments. For example, Emmanuelle Champagne explains they had to buy equipment to harvest hay, something they hadn't need to do previously, because they had an agreement stipulating that the owner would supply hay. They also had to invest in cow comfort, since their cows were used to mattresses, and update the ventilation system in the barn.



**Marie-Claude Marcoux and Marco Rodrigue, who operate the Marico and Rodveil herds, have four children, from left: Jayden, 13 years old, Joey, 11, Lexy, 6, and Leyla Rodrigue, 9.**





For Marco Rodrigue, the situation presented an additional challenge: although they took possession of the farm quickly, it took much longer for the contracts to be signed. Because Marco and Marie-Claude were determined to make their animals more comfortable, they considered some decisions urgent, in particular the water supply. On the other hand, they were advised not to invest too heavily before the sale became official. "We were walking on eggshells for the first while," says Marco, but they did incur some expenses, none of which they regretted since the transaction was eventually finalized as expected.

In Frédéric Champagne's case, an investment was needed to refurbish the interior of the barn and the milking system, in addition to improving soil productivity.

In an effort to make the transition smoother, some of these breeders have opted to work off-farm a few hours a week. Such is the case for Frédéric Champagne, who works for Select Sires-GenerVations, while his partner Nancy works full time on the farm, a necessity given that milking is done three times a day. Dave Tourigny also has an outside job, at Bergeroy Holstein. And Emmanuel Champagne teaches at the ITA, Saint-Hyacinthe campus, while her partner works as a farm advisor for

the coop in Acton Vale. As Emmanuelle explains, working outside the farm is advantageous for the experience and the discoveries it brings.

## Expect the unexpected

Ah, the unexpected... All the things that can happen that we hadn't thought about. Referring to the decline in production that leads to a decrease in income, Dave Tourigny stresses the importance of planning financing so as to be able to deal with the issues that will undoubtedly arise. To that end, he advises negotiating ahead of time different ways to limit the impact of the tougher blows, such as a grace period for the repayment of borrowed capital.

For Emmanuelle and Marc-André, the unforeseen occurred in short order when they had to refurbish the stalls in the barn and dig a new well. "Our financing plan quickly went out the window", says Emmanuelle. Marco Rodrigue faced a similar situation. "It was the second time I experienced it, but I still wasn't immunized," he says.

One good way to minimize these eventualities is to not hesitate to seek advice, says Frédéric Champagne. "Others have succeeded," he explains, "and I want to know how and why."

*Courtesy of Ferme Rightstar.*



**Sophie Leblanc, her partner Dave Tourigny, and their daughter Raphaëlle, 12 years old, take care of the Rightstar herd.**

In that respect, collaboration from suppliers is key, but that represents an added challenge for newcomers, who need to identify available suppliers and establish a relationship of trust with them, which requires a certain amount of time.

## Room for breeding and genetics

Genetics is never far from mind when talking with Holstein breeders. Among them, Steve Moreau and Marco Rodrigue are particularly dedicated. Indeed, prior to the fire, Ferme Rayon d'Or was frequently present on the show circuit and had developed a sizeable embryo market, and had even created Bull d'Or génétique, a company that sells bull semen. But Steve Moreau and his partner weren't ready to revive all those areas of activity at once. Their first goal was to develop a new herd with a number of cows with high genetic value. That step has now been accomplished, Steve affirms, adding that he is satisfied with the levels they've attained for both production and classification. It is thus foreseeable that Rayon d'Or will re-emerge on the fairgrounds and in the genetics business.

For Marco Rodrigue, who considers himself more of a breeder than a dairy producer, the ultimate goal is to earn a Master Breeder shield. And he'll now have two chances to do that: first with the Marico herd, that he and Marie-Claude continue to develop, but also with the Rodveil herd, as Dany Rodrigue's family asked that the prefix continue in perpetuity. So in this barn, the Rodveils will give birth to Rodveils, and the Maricos to Maricos. Thus the two herds will be able to collect points separately towards this prestigious title.

## All ends well

Today, all these breeders are happy with their decision to set themselves up on their own farms, and their herds have regained their past performance levels. In fact, Marco Rodrigue says his cows are producing so much that he is considering the possibility of shifting to three milkings a day, just to protect their udders. "Any regrets we had were short-lived," he hastens to conclude. ■