

La Revue Holstein Québec

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Meet all 10 of our 2021 Master Breeders

87th Holstein Québec AGM



Photo Karine Leblanc

Milking three times a day

Advantageous... for the most part



Belfast Holstein inc.

Belfast, a family affair through the generations!



The Belfast prefix is synonymous with family and Holstein breeding. The Chabot family's passion for breeding is the heritage that Luc and Jeannette Chabot have passed on to their 6 children, 14 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren. The couple acquired the farm in 1959, and in 1980, two of their sons, Denis and Robert, joined forces with them. Since then, the Belfast herd has earned numerous honours, including three Master Breeder shields, in 1993, 2004 and 2021, and a fourth, in 2015, as a partner in Groupe Gen-I-Beq.

Belfast Holstein inc.

OWNERS: Robert, Vincent and Denis Chabot

TOWN: Saint-Patrice-de-Beaurivage

HERD: 230 head, including 85 lactating cows

PRODUCTION: 11 216 kg of milk, with 4.24% fat and 3.37% protein

CLASSIFICATION: 20 EX, 69 VG, 14 GP

Business partners

The Chabot family has been extraordinarily fortunate to have business partners who all share the same breeding philosophy. Through that association, they have had the opportunity to acquire some outstanding animals, backed by deep, well-known families. These families, which include those of *Glen Drummond Splendor* (VG-86 39*), *Breadale Baler Twine* (VG-86 33*), and *Lylehaven Lila Z* (EX-94 25*), have influenced the breed and enabled them to improve their herd.

Indeed, the adventure with Gen-I-Beq has had a tremendous impact on the Belfast herd. Many animals – or even their descendants – stemming from the group's transactions have been housed and/or bred on the Belfast farm. "For us, it was then easy to say that we would invest in a line, because we had seen the animals evolve in our barn," explains Robert Chabot. It was in this context that the Chabot

Photo Dominique Savary



Belfast Goldwyn Lasenza (EX-93 3E 13*)

brothers purchased, with their brother Julien and his partner Marian Jensen, *Lylehaven Durham Lekesya*, only a few months old at the time. Coming from the same family as the famous *Lila Z* and sired by *Regancrest Elton Durham*, then unavailable in Canada, *Lekesya* had all the attributes. Now classified EX-92 5*, *Lekesya* produced 61 170 kg of milk in three lactations, with 4.4% fat and 3.7% protein! *Lekesya* also produced some remarkable descendants, including four daughters by *Goldwyn* (3 EX and 1 VG), the best known being *Lasenza*.

Belfast Goldwyn Lasenza, EX-95 3E 13*

The relationship between *Lasenza* and her owners is a true love story. In the words of Robert, who often led her in the showing, "winning at the big shows like the World Dairy Expo and the Royal Fair with an animal you've bred yourself is an incredible feeling! This cow helped us become better known, because many influential people in the industry in Quebec, but also from elsewhere in Canada and even the United States, came to see her not just on the fairgrounds, but also on the farm."

According to the Chabots, *Lasenza* embodies their breeding philosophy in every way. "She's easy to work with, has a good temperament, good conformation, good milk production. She's a good embryo producer who shines in the showing and transmits her attributes to her offspring. For us, she's THE perfect cow!" Robert's son Vincent, who co-owns the operation, agrees: "*Lasenza*'s daughters are going to have a huge impact on the Belfast herd in the future. *Belfast Sidekick Luango*, VG-87-2yr, and *Belfast Sidekick Lisbeth*, VG-86-2yr, to name only two, closely

resemble their dam. They're easy to work with, they're well-rounded cows with good production and components, incredible conformation and they respond well to



Photo Famille Belfast

The Belfast team: Nicolas and Vincent Chabot represent the younger generation. Behind them, Yvan Bilodeau, who has been employed by the farm for over 20 years. Denis and Robert Chabot alongside their father, Luc Chabot.

embryo transfers." Many of *Lasenza*'s descendants are now making their mark throughout the world.

The future

For the younger generation, pursuing this same approach will be the key to success, so they'll continue to aim for quality and longevity in their cows. Robert Chabot would like to continue breeding exceptional cows and is optimistic about the operation's future. "I hope to see the younger generation get as much enjoyment from breeding cows as my brother and I have had," Mr. Chabot concludes. ■



BY MYLÈNE FOURNIER
Special contributor



Bergeroy Holstein

Our pride and joy, a herd that stands for quality and longevity!



Nestled in the beautiful Bois-Francs region, the Bergeroy Holstein farm is owned by René, Claude and Guylaine Bergeron, proud recipients this year of a second Master Breeder shield. They owe that achievement to the herd they have developed and maintained year after year, a herd synonymous with quality and longevity.

Bergeroy Holstein

TOWN: Saint-Samuel-de-Horton

OWNERS: René, Claude and Guylaine Bergeron

HERD: 800 head, including 320 lactating cows

CLASSIFICATION: 69 EX, 154 VG, 160 GP

PRODUCTION: 11 988 kg, with 4.1% fat and 3.3% protein



In front: Félix, Judith, Emmy and her partner, Hugo Blanchette. Behind: Guylaine, René, Tommy, Claude and his partner, Josée Simoneau.

The arrival of *Goldwyn* had a considerable impact on the Bergeroy herd. Indeed, that bull alone earned a total of 188 points towards this Master Breeder title. *Bergeroy Goldwyn Ambiole* (EX-91 2E 6*) is one of his daughters that has particularly influenced the herd. During her time on the farm, *Ambiole* distinguished herself with a lifetime production of 99 054 kg of milk, with 4.0% fat and 3.4% protein, in addition to transmitting her traits, such as her outstanding mammary system, to her descendants.

Among her daughters, *Bergeroy Sid Ambelle* (EX-95 4E) is one animal that has delighted her breeders. With a mammary system worthy of 97 points, this exceptional cow exemplifies the perfect balance between



Bergeroy Sid Ambelle EX-95 4E (MS: 97), is one of the Bergeron family's favourites. With a 97-point mammary system, this exceptional cow represents the perfect balance between production and conformation.

production and conformation. *Ambelle* also won honours in the showring, winning first senior Three-Year-Old and Reserve Intermediate Champion at the Wold Dairy Expo in 2015. Her achievements that same year also included the Tout-Québec, All-Canadian and All-American titles.

Bergeroy Goldwyn Lanik (EX-94 4E 2*) is another *Goldwyn* daughter that has marked the Bergeroy herd. In addition to producing over 80 000 kg of milk in her lifetime, *Lanik* distinguished herself in the showring as well, laying claim to the Reserve Tout-Québec Mature Cow title in 2016. She was also nominated for the Tout-Québec Lifetime Production 60 000 kg and over award in 2017.

Another cow that certainly left her mark on the farm is *Bergeroy Seaver Carter* (EX-94 2E 4*), a cow that drew attention to the Bergeroy herd at the provincial level. Indeed, at the Quebec Spring Show in 2017, she won first Mature Cow and both the Grand Champion and Supreme Champion titles. Her achievements that year culminated in the Reserve Tout-Québec Mature Cow title. Besides having exceptional conformation, *Carter* also stands out for her high milk production and component levels. Her last lactation yielded over 12 000 kg, with 4.7% fat and 3.5% protein.

Over the years, the Bergerons have invested their efforts in developing a high-performance herd that has won fame at the global level. Indeed, in 2021, the Bergeroy herd was recognized by Holstein International as the Quebec herd with the highest number of living EX cows, and third in Canada, with a total of 69 EX.

Looking to the future, the Bergerons intend to continue building on their success. Driven by the challenge of breeding daughters better than their dams, they will no doubt make every effort to improve the Bergeroy herd. In the coming years, these Master Breeders eventually hope to hand the reins over to the family's next generation, namely Judith and her brothers Félix and Tommy, who will ensure the future of the Bergeroy herd. ■



BY ÉMY LAMPRON, AGRONOME
Advisor for Eastern Quebec



Ferme Cloutier et fils A first title, while awaiting a second!

"We're destined for success! The herd keeps on improving, we're Master Breeders now! It's no joke, this is serious stuff!" exclaims Carmen, Yvan Cloutier's partner. Clearly, this title was eagerly anticipated.



Ferme Cloutier et fils SENC

TOWN: Saint-André d'Argenteuil

OWNERS: Yvan and Sylvain Cloutier

HERD: 210 head, including 95 lactating cows

CLASSIFICATION: 16 EX, 38 VG, 26 GP

PRODUCTION: 10 869 kg, with 4.32% fat and 3.11% protein

In 1994, Yvan Cloutier and his brother Sylvain joined forces to take over the family farm. With Sylvain's inclination for field work and mechanics and Yvan's focus on genetics, the division of labour was simple. But with a quota of only 20 kg and 60 arpents of farmland in Saint-Jérôme, and no way of expanding, they decided to buy a farm in Saint-André d'Argenteuil, thus acquiring a second herd and an additional 20 kg of quota. From then on, the Cloutiers have indeed been heading for glory! And leading the way are some strong and productive cow families, ripe with potential!



Photo Marc Buisvert

Coti Seaver Devoue (EX-93 3E 2*) was awarded her first two stars on January 31 of this year.

In 2007, Ferme Cloutier et fils welcomed its first cow to classify EX, and, in 2009, *Coti Stormatic Abby* (EX-91 3E) became the second; that number has been climbing since. Today, the Coti herd boasts 47 Excellent cows, with almost half of them descendants of the

prestigious family of *Sunnylodge Skychief Alexis*, VG-88 32*. Purchased in 2001 at the age of six, this matriarch produced 115 122 kg of milk over her lifetime, but her most impressive achievement is really her progeny. Among her daughters, three have a lifetime production of over 100 000 kg, and seven capped the 80 000 kg mark. In all, the family contributed 43 per cent of the points towards this first Master Breeder title, and *Alexis'* descendants currently make up a quarter of the herd. Among her five daughters classified EX, *Coti Leader Adorable* (EX 15*), stands out among her sisters with a 94-point mammary system. If you want to talk about a cow that breeds well and transmits her traits to her offspring, this is the one! *Adorable* produced 16 daughters, 8 of which are now classified EX. Her highest classifying daughter is *Coti Seaver Devoue* (EX-93 3E 2*), herself already dam to an EX daughter, who thus represents the family's 10th generation of VG or EX cows.

Demonstrably, Yvan's astute decisions didn't end there. In 2002, the purchase of *Dohbell Leduc Cyrena* (VG 9*) marked the start of the "C" family, that contributed 14 per cent of the points towards this title. *Cyrena's* most influential descendant was *Coti Littoral Cloclo* (EX 5*), of the family's 8th generation of cows classified TB or EX, with a lifetime production of 102 420 kg of milk. Two of *Cloclo's* daughters are classified EX and a third is expected to join their ranks soon. *Cyrena's* descendants also include *Coti Alligator Corane*, the first Alligator daughter to classify EX! Clearly the best is yet to come with this promising line!

Right from a young age, Yvan showed a keen interest in good-looking cows and genetics, obviously a natural passion for him. With

great attention to detail, this man of immediate action leaves no problem unresolved. His cows are all pampered. If you're looking for a farm where the cows wear coats, Ferme Cloutier et fils is the one! Ever vigilant, Yvan had noticed that the newly dry cows transferred to the dome without their winter hair coats were feeling the cold when temperatures dropped below -20 °C. So with the help of his partner Carmen, he had winter coats made to keep them warm!



Sylvain Cloutier, Brigitte Proulx, Carmen's daughter, Carmen Faucher and Yvan Cloutier.

These self-described wired producers have always been passionately committed to the Coti herd – a herd that will now be proudly displaying a Master Breeder shield. There is no question that this award is the culmination of the combined efforts of an entire family. Today, they take great pride in their accomplishment and hope they'll be back for a second title! Welcome to the Master Breeder clan! ■



BY KETSIA CROTEAU
Advisor for Western Quebec



Ferme Floroma inc.

Ever proud to be breeding Floromas

Florent Leclerc's breeding philosophy has been crystal clear since the day he purchased his father's farm in 1976: don't put all your eggs in one basket, and breed the better part of the cows in the herd for a balance between production and conformation.

Ferme Floroma inc.

TOWN: Pont-Rouge

OWNERS: Ghislaine Plamondon, Florent and Patrick Leclerc

HERD: 260 head, including 125 lactating cows

PRODUCTION: 13 516 kg, 1.7 kg BF/day, 300-327-319 = 946

CLASSIFICATION: 9 EX, 52 VG, 47 GP

From a very young age, Florent wanted to learn how to breed good cows first, before learning how to buy them. He later became interested in breeding his own animals and has since made that his trademark. For many years now, the entire herd has been made up of Floroma animals.

Over the years, owners Ghislaine Plamondon and Florent and Patrick Leclerc have made some major investments, but it is most certainly the decisions made in 2015-2016 that boosted the herd's 11 000 kg of milk average to the 13 516 kg it is today. At the time, the owners needed to demolish a silo and opted to build a trench silo, in addition to renovating their feed room and purchasing a motorized mixer to begin feeding a TMR to their lactating cows.

A number of bulls also contributed to developing a herd with a good solid base. *Picston Shottle* was one such sire that

marked the herd, chosen because he was a perfect fit for their balanced breeding approach. Indeed, *Floroma Shottle Bonnie*, EX-92 6E 1*, contributed the highest number of points possible towards this Master Breeder title. One of his descendants, *Floroma High Octane BackUp*, EX-91, has had two lactations so far with a composite BCA of over 1000.

Floroma Drake Florina, EX 5*, was another of the farm's leading ladies. In addition to her second-place win as an intermediate yearling at the Portneuf show in 2009, she also recorded a lifetime production of 61 552 kg of milk. She left her mark on the herd in terms of conformation as well, but especially in terms of longevity. In fact, every one of her 10 daughters recorded a lifetime production of at least 45 000 kg of milk.

Another family that stands out on the Leclerc farm is that of *Floroma Allen Béatrice*, EX-94 6E 6*. *Béatrice* is at the head of four consecutive generations of EX cows. The herd currently includes two representatives of that generation, namely, *Floroma Hampton Berenice*, EX-91, and her sister *Floroma Silver Beth*, EX. *Berenice* has earned two Superior Lactation certificates, while *Beth* is currently

in her third lactation, which is projected to yield over 15 000 kg, with 4.9% fat. This is one of the families that Fanny, Patrick' partner, who joined the team in 2015, enjoys working with the most right now.



In front: Victor and Éloi Leclerc. Behind: Fanny Vallée, Patrick Leclerc, Margot, Ghislaine Plamondon, Félix, Colin, Florent Leclerc, and Thomas.

A total of 57 EX cows have passed through this barn, where the herd currently produces 1.7 kg of fat per cow per day. Two years ago, the owners decided to move to three milkings a day. With the workforce already in place, they say it was an opportunity to increase their milk production.

Ghislaine and Florent are now looking at the future from a different perspective. They are ready and waiting to hand the reins of the operation over to the next generation. They see Fanny and Patrick's six – and soon to be seven – children playing an active role on the farm. They can rest assured that the fruits of their 35 years of labour will not disappear any time soon! ■

Photo Patrick Leclerc



BY GENEVIÈVE DROLET, AGRONOMIST
Advisor



Ferme Germec inc.

Milk, cows, and high quality!

It was their passion for agriculture that brought Daniel, Luc and François Gervais back to the family farm, which they took over in 2004, becoming the fourth generation of dairy farmers on the farm. Together, they are now the operation's greatest asset!



Photo : Ciné or

Ferme Germec inc.

TOWN: Hérouxville

OWNERS: Daniel Gervais, Luc Gervais and François Gervais

HERD: 305 head, including 125 lactating cows

CLASSIFICATION: 4 Multiple EX, 3 EX, 62 VG, 66 GP

PRODUCTION: 12 500 kg of milk, with 4.2% fat and 3.28% protein



Daniel Gervais, Thomas, François Gervais, Tristan, Antoine, Luc Gervais and Charlotte.

Daniel manages the dairy herd while his brother Luc takes care of the accounting and feeding the cows. François, their cousin, maintains the machinery and farm equipment and sees to the field work. Although each of them has his specialty, they excel in all areas to ensure the farm runs efficiently. As a threesome, they are able to optimize every hour of work they put in and thus have the opportunity to enjoy time with their families.

By aiming for cost-effective management, the awards came naturally, beginning in 2006 with the production awards from their Champlain-Lavolette Holstein Club. Then, in 2013, they were nominated in the Outstanding Young Farmers Program. In the past few years, Ferme Germec has been ranked TPI 99. They also received the bronze medal in the *Ordre national du mérite agricole* competition in 2016, ranking first in the Mauricie region and eighth in the province. And now, the ultimate award, this Master Breeder shield!

To get to where they are today, these brilliant producers have always banked on well-balanced bulls, with a minimum +10 for conformation and a solid production proof. They also pay close attention to somatic cell counts, the second most common reason for involuntary culling in Quebec. They choose an ideal sire for each individual cow, aiming to obtain productive progeny that will remain active in the herd for a long time.

Since their return to the farm, by improving herd genetics and making changes to enhance cow comfort and increase production, they have managed to increase milk production by 2500 kg per cow and fat production by 0.2%. The improvements were clearly worthwhile!

A former hockey coach, Daniel Gervais likes to compare his herd to a hockey team: a strong team doesn't depend on one or two big names but rather on the performance of each of its members. But a uniform herd hasn't stopped a few elite animals from showing up from time to time. *Germec Angele Incarne*, EX-91 5E 9*, with a lifetime production of 107 737 kg, is one such example. *Angele* also produced three daughters that recorded 110 000 kg, one of which is *Germec Agilitee Sprite*, a now 14-year-old that has produced 165 000 kg of milk! The breeders would now like to work with *Germec Arcenciel Fox*, a productive and functional VG granddaughter of *Angele*, backed by two generations of EX cows; they hope to see her reach 100 000 kg as well.

Another prominent family is that of *Germec Aureole Inquirer* (EX 2E 8*), the second cow in her family to reach the 100 000 kg mark. Five

of her daughters have each produced over 79 000 kg, including *Germec Abeille Fever*, who should reach 100 000 kg in her current lactation. *Aureole's* granddaughter *Germec Alerte Display*, VG-87, produced 12 984 kg of milk in her first lactation, with 3.6% fat and 3.3% protein, and a BCA of 334-338-362. Another promising young cow for Ferme Germec inc.!

In addition to breeding numerous cows that have produced over 100 000 kg, these producers take pride in seeing how their animals evolve from one generation to the next. And speaking of generations, they take even more pride in the generation of young farmers who have already become involved in the operation. They look forward to reaching new heights together. ■



BY KETSIA CROTEAU
Advisor for Western Quebec



HERD PROFILE - MASTER BREEDER

Ferme Mercury inc.

Scripting a story of excellence, one page at a time



Yvan and Luc Mercure represent the family's fourth generation of Holstein breeders on Ferme Mercury, located in Ange-Gardien. Their herd has stood the test of time and will continue to stand out thanks to the solid conformation and impressive longevity of the animals. A herd worth knowing that deserves recognition.

Ferme Mercury inc.

OWNERS: Yvan and Luc Mercure

TOWN: Ange-Gardien

HERD: 140 head, including 72 lactating cows

CLASSIFICATION: 26 EX, 44 VG, 9 GP

PRODUCTION: 11 800 kg of milk, with 3.9% fat and 3.3% protein



Behind, standing: Vicky Gagné (Luc's partner), William and Anthony Mercure (Yvan's children).
In front: Elizabeth and Edouard Mercure (Luc's children), Luc and Yvan Mercure, and Julie Parent (Yvan's partner).

The story began in 1948-1949, with the purchase of the farm's first purebred Holsteins. Over time, the Mercures have been able to develop a herd of cows with functional conformation. Brothers Yvan and Luc, partners in the operation, form a solid and cohesive team. They can also count on help from their partners, Julie and Vicky, and their children, Anthony, William, Elizabeth and Edouard.

A breeding philosophy centred on longevity

One of the favoured families that contributed to this prestigious title is that of *Mercury Coquette Dundee* (EX-91 8E 3*). *Coquette* produced 2 EX daughters, *Mercury Natalie Seaver* (EX 3E) and *Mercury Columbia Chelios* (EX 3E). Many of her granddaughters are also showing great promise for the future. In this same family, *Mercury Cachemire Sanchez* (EX-91 3E) stands out with a yield of 76 200 kg



Mercury Monaco High Octane (EX-93-4yr), the herd's leading lady, is notable for her dairy capacity, feet and legs, and mammary system.

in six lactations, in addition to her first-class progeny, which includes *Mercury Cynthia Tonka* (EX-92), a four-year-old with impressive dairy strength and an outstanding mammary system. *Mercury France Laurier* (EX-91 2*) is another of the farm's influential cows. She recorded a lifetime production of 81 036 kg and was able to transmit her attributes to her descendants. Her daughter *Mercury Fantasia Fever* (EX 4E 2*) produced 80 000 kg as well and is the dam of *Mercury Fantastique Doorman* (EX 3E 1*), a junior yearling champion in the showing.

Finally, *Mercury Flavie Prescott* (VG 3*) also marked the Mercury herd, producing 176 718 kg of milk in 11 lactations. She is the model of production and longevity on which the Mercures have based their breeding philosophy. The most promising line at the moment is that of *Mercury Minotaure Eternity*, EX-91 4E 2*. *Minotaure* represents the seventh consecutive generation with at least one star obtained by natural progeny. From this same family, *Mercury Monaco High Octane* (EX-93-4yr) is the current star. In the past two years, she twice won the title of Grand Champion in the Rouville Holstein Club's Breeders' Cup and was first 4-year-old and Reserve Grand Champion in the virtual Holstein Québec Montérégie-Est show.

Proud of their achievement and confident in the future

Yvan Mercure takes pride in the fact that all the points for this Master Breeder shield were contributed by animals bred on the farm. As for the future, his sons Anthony and William have long shared their father's passion for agriculture. Anthony works full time on the farm and William has been acquiring valuable experience working with other breeders, with the intention of returning to the family farm in time.

Hard work and attention to detail are the features that define the Mercure family. With patience and determination, they have steered a course to success, one genetic cross at a time. Today they are recipients of the highest honour in the breeding world and are inscribed in the pages of Holstein history. ■



BY VALÉRIE GIARD
Advisor for Southern Quebec



Ferme Pierriche inc.

Our pride and joy, our herd!

It was in 1959 that Jean-Paul Bédard acquired his father's farm and its few crossbred cows. In 1975, on the advice of Patrice Biron, a renowned Holstein breeder, Mr. Bédard decided to turn towards breeding purebred black and whites, a transition that spanned 15 years. It was during that time that he introduced his son Pierre to dairy shows. In the words of Pierre, who now owns the farm with his partner, Clémence Bergeron, it was that show experience that sparked his passion for genetics!

Ferme Pierriche inc.

OWNERS: Clémence Bergeron and Pierre Bédard

TOWN: Saint-Apollinaire

HERD: 135 head, including 55 lactating cows

PRODUCTION: 10 916 kg of milk, with 4.25% fat and 3.2% protein

CLASSIFICATION: 10 EX, 32 VG, 14 GP

Today, however, for a variety of reasons, the show circuit plays a lesser role in the daily life of the Bédard family. Nonetheless, whenever the Pierriche prefix has an animal that stands apart and is ready, the family doesn't hesitate to enter her in regional, provincial or even national shows. "I like good-looking cows, I like showing them and especially comparing them," Pierre Bédard says. *Pierriche Spirit Papillon*, VG-89, is an example of that type of cow. Representing a line that stands out as much in the herd as in the showing, *Papillon* thrilled her owners in 2003 when she won first Four-Year-Old and Reserve Grand Champion in Lotbinière. At the same show in 2016, her granddaughter *Pierriche Aftershock Papou*, EX-92 1*, won first Senior Two-Year-Old while her sister *Pierriche Seaver Poupa* (EX-93 2E 2*) captured the red ribbon in the same class.



***Pierriche Aftershock Papou*, EX-92 1* (MS: 93), a source of pride for the Pierriche operation!**



Clémence Bergeron and Pierre Bédard with their children, from left, Alexandre, Jean-Simon and Julien.

For the past few years, the Lotbinière Holstein Club has been holding a Breeders' Cup, and the Bédard family can be proud of their hat trick in that event, winning the prestigious trophy three times. Moreover, at each edition, their cow *Pierriche Millénium Alyx*, EX-93 (MS: 95), has won a champion title, including that of Grand Champion in 2021.

Doing better before doing more!

This is truly the philosophy of the Bédard operation, and it applies to all of its sectors: facilities, fields, herd, etc. They work constantly to improve all the facets of their operation, to avoid becoming super strong in one area and average in another. In truth, they aim for excellence across the board!

The farm initially had a tie-stall barn equipped with 46 stalls for the lactating cows. After moving out their replacement animals and housing the dry cows and close-up cows elsewhere, the building was upgraded. When they began planning the project, Pierre, Clémence and their sons wondered about the future, as much their own as that of the dairy industry. "We think the future is in freestall housing, and that's why we went that way. We opted for robotic milking for better quality of life, profitability, and flexibility on a day-to-day basis."

"Since we don't employ any workers, it's important for us to have a good work-family balance, and robotics lets us have that," the couple explains. "Two of our sons, Alexandre and Julien, are with us on the farm, while Jean-Simon now operates his partner's family farm after working with us for a long time," the proud parents add.

Breeding strategy

With the new milking system, the selection criteria for the next generation of cows have changed somewhat. Although conformation is never disregarded, the Bédards are focusing more on robot criteria, such as teat placement, feet and legs, and locomotion, which they consider key for longevity. "We also put more emphasis on production and components," says Alexandre Bédard "In the future, my brother Julien and I are looking to optimize milk per cow, buy more quota, and continue on the path set by our parents, which means doing better before doing more!" ■



BY MYLÈNE FOURNIER
Special contributor



Ferme Plainelac inc.

A passion for good breeding!

Located in Saint-Vallier, in the Bellechasse region, Ferme Plainelac is operated by Sylvie Gendron and Christian Lacasse. Driven by a strong interest in breeding and milk production, Sylvie and Christian have done the work and made the decisions needed to achieve this high level of success.



Ferme Plainelac inc.

TOWN: Saint-Vallier

OWNERS: Sylvie Gendron and Christian Lacasse

HERD: 175 head, including 80 lactating cows

CLASSIFICATION: 3 EX, 46 VG, 27 GP

PRODUCTION: 13 130 kg, with 4.4% fat and 3.5% protein

The breeders developed their breeding philosophy with a view to maximizing production and longevity. Every mating on the farm is aimed at producing strong cows with wide rumps and solid feet, legs and udders that will allow them remain active in the herd for a long time. That approach has enabled the breeders to make a name for themselves and reap a number of awards. To date, they have won Best Herd BCA in the Lévis-Bellechasse Holstein Club 15 times in the past 16 years! They have also collected 104 Longtime Production certificates, 75 Star Brood Cow awards, and 276 Superior Production awards, including 30 Super 3, 5 Super 4, and 4 Super 5 awards.

A number of influential cow families are at the foundation of the Plainelac herd we know today. Among those pioneers is *Kandu Astronomical Diamond* (EX-91 3E 5*). Purchased at the Sale of Stars as a young heifer, *Diamond* produced a total of eight daughters, including 1 EX and 6 VG. Her



Gen-I-Beq Stormatic Splendissa (EX-91 4E 11*).



First row: Mathieu, Sylvie, Christian and William. Second row: Thomas and Jonathan.

granddaughter *Plainelac Superman Dimata*, VG-87-3yr, stands out for her superior milk production, with over 60 000 kg in three lactations, with 4.4% fat and 3.5% protein. Her last lactation alone yielded a total of 16 100 kg of milk, with 4.7% fat and 3.4% protein. Those accomplishments earned her a Super 3 award, in addition to the Lévis-Bellechasse Holstein Club's trophy for Best Three-Year-Old in 2021.

Another influential cow on the farm was *Gen-I-Beq Stormatic Splendissa*, EX-91 4E 11*. Not only did she record a lifetime production of 95 000 kg, *Splendissa* also passed her talent for high production on to her progeny. In all, her descendants in the Plainelac herd have collected 14 Superior Production certificates. Among her granddaughters currently in the herd, *Plainelac Pentagon Splendida* (GP-81) won Best Two-Year-Old in the Lévis-Bellechasse Holstein Club with a first lactation yield of 15 265 kg of milk, with 4.3% fat and 3.3% protein. *Plainelac Goldwyn Saulye* (VG-87 3*) is another cow that has marked the Plainelac herd. Among her daughters, *Plainelac Duplex Saulye*, EX 3E (DS: 94), distinguished herself with phenomenal milk production, recording a lifetime production of 106 458 kg (4.4% fat and 3.5% protein) in five consecutive Superior Lactations (Super 5).

Plainelac Windbrook Albinie, EX 2E 3* (MS: 93), also graced the herd with her high-performance heritage. Her daughter *Plainelac Impression Albine* (EX 2E) is still in the herd, exemplifying a perfect balance between conformation, production and longevity. She stands out among her sisters for her high component levels and was awarded a Super 3 for her first three lactations, with an average of 4.8% fat and 3.5% protein. At the age of three, *Albinie* produced nearly 14 000 kg of milk, with 5.0% fat and 3.7% protein.

For Sylvie and Christian, this Master Breeder title is among their greatest professional achievements. They are very proud to have earned this title with the herd they have developed themselves over the years. "It's like a wonderful dream come true. It's a great reward that we accept with pride and a feeling of accomplishment," conclude the breeders. ■



BY ÉMY LAMPRON, AGR.
Advisor for Eastern Quebec



Ferme Provetaz Working diligently and seizing timely opportunities!

If you haven't yet met the friendly team of people at Ferme Provetaz, it's time to take a drive through the Eastern Townships. The Jatons family has an obvious affinity for challenges and – judging from this second Master Breeder title this year – is clearly able to handle them!



Ferme Provetaz

OWNERS: Thierry Jatons and Véronique Guay

TOWN: Compton

HERD: 350 head, including 145 lactating cows

CLASSIFICATION: 23 EX, 95 VG and 29 GP

PRODUCTION: 11 900 kg, 4.1% fat and 3.5% protein

Hailing from Switzerland, Marcel Jatons, his wife, Monique Gremion, and Jean-Nicolas Gremion arrived in Canada with their families in 1980. They chose to put down roots in the beautiful rolling hills around Compton. From modest beginnings with 80 crossbred cows, they progressed to a herd composed entirely of Holsteins within a few years. With the genetics tools available to them and ample input from Marcel, the Provetaz herd has been able to carve out a much-coveted place for itself in the Quebec breeding world. Thierry, Marcel's son, has been involved in the operation since his childhood and now co-owns Ferme Provetaz with his partner, Véronique Guay.

While working on the farm, Thierry has also managed to accumulate a wealth of experience in other areas, such as teaching at the Coaticook CRIFA (professional training centre) for more than a decade. He also became an official judge in 1995, which has

given him the opportunity to travel abroad on a number of occasions. "It's when we have the chance to see agriculture in other countries that we realize how lucky we are to be dairy producers here, in Canada," he says, appreciative of the country his parents and uncle chose as their home.

The drive to breed deep cow families

The most influential cow in the herd, and the one that contributed the greater part of the points towards this second shield, is *Provetaz Doorman Gin* (EX-92 2E 5*), a daughter of *Etoc Blitz Gin*, EX-92 6*. Of the 32 of *Gin's* girls, 29 are embryos transferred to recipient cows. That group includes *Provetaz Dempsey Ginnie* (EX-93), a cow that produced 12 228 kg of milk, with 4.6% fat and 3.4% protein. *Ginnie's* own daughter, *Provetaz Classic Gila*, VG-89-3yr, is one of the farm's favourites, with a yield of 12 254 kg, with 4.4% fat and 3.7% protein. *Gila* stands out as an elegant cow with a remarkable mammary system. Another of *Gin's* daughters, *Provetaz Chief Gloire* (VG-87), shines with her outstanding conformation and impressive milk yield, producing 13 354 kg with 4.0% of fat and 3.4% protein.

Another family deserving of attention is that of *Provetaz Endure Waleria*, EX-93 2E, a cow that represents the family's sixth consecutive generation of EX cows. Her daughter *Provetaz Alligator Wallis*, VG-88-3yr, produced 14 496 kg of milk, with 4.0% fat and 3.5% protein, and is clearly following in her dam's footsteps, having inherited her phenomenal attributes.

Daring to invest in winning families

A few times a year, the Jatons like to buy special cows that have already marked the breed. *Pierstein Bolton Roselite*, EX 8*, a daughter of the renowned *Thrulane James Rose* (EX-97 2E), is one such animal, purchased in co-ownership with Ferme Lafougère. *Roselite* has since produced 31 daughters. *Gen-Com Goldchip Indonya* (EX-93 2E), bought at the Gen-Com herd sale a few months ago, is a recent addition to the herd. *Indonya* now has



From left: Jean-Nicolas Gremion, Anthony Jatons, Véronique Guay, Thierry Jatons, William Jatons, Marcel Jatons and Monique Gremion.

two promising daughters of her own, *Provetaz Delta-Lambda Indiana* (VG-86-2yr) and *Provetaz Doorman Indy*.

Another recent purchase, *Jacobs Lautrust Shadow*, VG-86, is a full daughter of the popular *Erbacres Snapple Shakira-ET* (EX-97 2E), and the breeders are very proud of their latest acquisition.

Working well as a family

For these owners, this second Master Breeder title underlines the quality of their work and confirms that the values they instill in their children are important. "It's a tremendous reward, and being able to experience it all together is a wonderful gift. Being of three different generations, we don't always see things the same way, so that makes it even more special," Véronique Guay concludes. ■



Provetaz Endure Waleria, EX-93 2E



BY VALÉRIE GIARD
Advisor for Southern Quebec



Ferme Dave Tourigny inc.

When resilience and perseverance yield recognition



Persevering, hard-working and inspiring, Dave Tourigny and Sophie Leblanc can be proud of the long road they have travelled to obtain this Master Breeder title, an ever-present goal. Forming a brilliant team, the couple has managed to develop an exceptional herd, overcoming the obstacles on their path. There's no doubt that these dedicated breeders will be an inspiration to many!

Ferme Dave Tourigny inc.

OWNERS: Dave Tourigny and Sophie Leblanc

TOWN: Saint-Germain-de-Grantham

HERD: 120 head, including 55 lactating cows

CLASSIFICATION: 14 EX, 45 VG, 11 GP

PRODUCTION: 10 800 kg, with 4.1% fat and 3.37% protein

Both from dairy farming families, the owners of the Rightstar herd met as youngsters in the agricultural community and at shows. Having studied at the ITA, La Pocatière campus, and sharing a passion for cows, their goal has always been to own their own farm. Stopping at nothing, they put in the effort required to make that dream a reality. Dave began trading in livestock in 2000. That same year, he purchased *Deslacs Skychief Misty* (VG-87 4*), a strong cow with a good pedigree that produced a number of heifers for them to sell. Dave began working at Bergeroy Holstein in the summer of 1999, but he continued to trade until 2003, when the mad cow crisis sent prices tumbling.

"In fall 2003, I had about 40 heifers that were about to calve, so that's when they decision to get into milk production was made," Dave

explains, adding that he was encouraged to do so by those around him. After many meetings with experts to put together a solid business plan, he secured the financial support he needed to get his project underway. Thanks to the assistance programme for young farmers, which provided him with a 5 kg BF/day quota loan, he began milking in 2004. In 2005, he acquired *La Cantinière Dania Talent* (EX-94 5E 6*) when she was only a few months old. She went on to become one of the most influential cows in the herd. Her progeny includes 14 daughters bearing the Rightstar prefix, with 2 EX and 8 VG, thus contributing significantly to this *Master Breeder* title. *Rightstar Clooney Delfine* (EX) represents the family's sixth consecutive generation of EX cows.

Another purchase that marked this herd was *Claustein Lumina Rubens* (EX 4E), a red and white cow that stood out for her exceptional conformation and impressive milk production. In 2009, she reached a lifetime production of 80 000 kg and was nominated All-American R&W 4-Year-Old. *Rightstar Diamondback Lill* (EX-91-3yr), a descendant of that line, is a cow the breeders love to work with because she embodies a perfect balance between conformation and production.

In 2008, they moved their herd to Warwick, where they leased a farm for five years, hoping to one day have the opportunity to acquire their own farm. When the building became less and less functional, they looked for another site to house their herd. An opportunity finally came up in 2013, in Saint-Germain-de-Grantham. They were once again tenants for five years, until 2018, when they managed to buy the actual site



Sophie Leblanc and Dave Tourigny, with their daughter Raphaëlle, 13 years old, between them.

In the three years since they became owners, Dave and Sophie have done some work to improve cow comfort in the barn, such as installing mattresses in the freestall facility, modifying feeding by adding a TMR, and renovating the cold barn that houses their replacements and dry cows. Their average milk production increased rapidly in response to those changes.

Their breeding philosophy aligns perfectly with the criteria for the Master Breeder title. Every day, the breeders strive to combine production, conformation and longevity. Animal well-being is also important to them, to maximize the genetic potential of their herd. They continue to set themselves new goals and enjoy buying new cow families that present breeding challenges for their herd.

"People asked us if being Master Breeders was a dream. I answered that it wasn't a dream, but actually a goal for us," asserts Sophie, confident co-owner of Ferme Dave Tourigny. ■



La Cantinière Dania Talent (EX-94 5E 6*), a brood cow in the Rightstar herd, made a significant contribution towards this Master Breeder title through her progeny.



BY VALÉRIE GIARD
Advisor for Southern Quebec

BY
VÉRONIQUE
LEMONDE

Editor



Milking three times a day **Advantageous ... for the most part!**

***S*udies on the pros and cons of milking three times a day are not legion. According to figures supplied by Valacta to their client farms, fewer than three per cent of Quebec farms were milking three times a day in 2011. So how does the decision to milk three times a day change the way dairy producers work and the lives of their cows?**

Three-times-a-day milking is certainly not a new concept. Farms that have adopted the practice have often been doing it for many years. Such is the case of Ferme Pittet (Fribourg prefix), in Saint-Tite, where the cows have been milked three times a day since 1998. "At that time, it was mainly in the States that it was being done, and so there was a novelty effect here driven by some producer groups. We decided to go that route to exploit the full potential of our cows with our milking parlour," explains Alphonse Pittet. The herd is currently milked at 4 am, noon and 8 pm, with the help of five employees and a 24-stall GEA rotary parlour, installed in 2016.

"I can't imagine going back to twice-a-day milking. I'm really comfortable with this model, which has increased my milk production by 15 per cent since the start, without expanding the facilities or buying more cows," adds Mr. Pittet, whose farm has nearly 300 lactating cows housed in free stalls. A 15-per-cent increase in milk production is the figure reported in most articles on the subject and in testimonials by producers who have gone from two to three milkings per day. Generally speaking, that means 3 to 3.5 kg more milk per cow per day, regardless of previous production levels. A third of this increase is said to be attributable to the more frequent emptying of the mammary system.

Expanding from within

Expanding internally, expanding without increasing herd size, etc.: this is a major point when it comes to analyzing the advantages of milking three times a day. The producers consulted for this article were almost all in agreement in that regard: "get more milk with the same number of cows", "continue expanding the operation" and "maximize equipment and investments more quickly" seem to be the motivation for the move to three-times-a-day milking.

"For producers who have days to make up, it can be a means of obtaining that additional production. If, for example, a farm has to get back up to minus 15 days of non-deferrable production for August 1, milking three times a day can be a temporary solution, especially if the farm buildings are at capacity," explains agronomist Philippe Couture, an agribusiness strategy specialist in dairy production for Sollio Agriculture.

Gervais Pelletier, of Ferme Pellerat, in Saint-Roch-des-Aulnaies, has been a fan of the three-milkings-a-day system since 2012. "It's clear that we're getting 15 per cent more milk," says this owner of 430 lactating cows, housed in free stalls. His niece Lysanne Pelletier, who co-owns Ferme Pellerat, concurs. "At first we didn't see a huge difference, but when the cows calved again, then milk production really went up. In 2016, we expanded the barn and carried on with no problem," she adds.

Two years ago, the owners of Ferme Floroma, a tie-stall operation, also chose to move to three milkings a day, with the help of foreign workers. With the workforce already in place,



Alphonse Pittet, a director for Holstein Québec and co-owner of Ferme Pittet, in Saint-Tite, has never regretted the decision, in 1998, to milk his herd three times a day.

these newly minted Master Breeders (2021) confirm that the new schedule gave their milk production another good boost.

Whether using a milking parlour or a carousel, tie-stall or free-stall housing, every producer that has adopted three-times-a-day milking has benefited from the practice. On Ferme Clairbois, in Saint-Samuel-de-Horton,



The DeLaval herringbone parlour HB50: an example of a milking parlour that offers improved operator comfort.



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where the 80-head Clairbois herd is housed in tie-stalls, production increased easily when they switched to three milkings a day five years ago. “We operate with two groups of cows, however. The 0-150 days in milk are milked three times per day, because they’re at their peak. We also feed them a complementary ration for more complete feeding. As for our 150-305 days in milk cows, they’re on the downward trend and are milked twice a day,” explains Karine Barde, who nonetheless dreams of the simplicity of a robotic milker... one day, perhaps!

some researchers think milking three times a day improves longevity, since the mammary system is much lighter, lessening the load on the suspensory ligaments. Others, however, believe that the resulting increase in milk production induces a negative energy balance in cows, which could affect the conception rate and lead to premature culling (Hébert, 2002).

Researchers have found that “increasing milking frequency for [an] entire herd or a select group of cows will raise milk yields but will also produce lower fat and protein levels in milk. Research has demonstrated that twice-a-day (2X) milking gives you a higher fat percentage compared to three times a day (3X). Increasing milking to 3X, however, produces a greater fat yield than 2X” (Taylor, 2012). As Mr. Couture explains: “Actually, the

Cow health

According to Philippe Couture, studies are divided as to the benefits of three-times-a-day milking for overall cow health. “Yes, somatic cells counts are lower and we can assume a favourable impact on udder health. The animals also eat a little more and improve their feed efficiency, but studies are still divided.”

The literature is indeed divided with regard to the effects of three-times-a-day milking on mastitis, ease of heat detection, decrease in leukocyte counts in milk, and cow longevity. For example, Caroline Hébert points out that



The DeLaval Herringbone Parlour HB50: an example of a milking parlour that offers improved operator comfort.

fat percentage may decrease, but the quantity of fat in kilograms will increase, which is a plus for the producer all the same."

Dominic Drapeau, of Ferme Drapeau et Bélanger (Dragon) in the Lotbinière region, agrees that the fat percentage is somewhat diluted with three milkings a day. But he thinks the well-being of the cows clearly improves. "Especially the fresh cows; it reduces the pressure in the udder a lot. So somatic cell counts drop, below 100 000."

"Increased milking frequency was also found to improve udder health status, with lower somatic cell counts (SCCs) observed for 3X compared to 2X. Researchers have also noted that this improvement was reversed when cows were switched back to 2X - bulk tank SCCs gradually rose to previous levels," reports an article by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on the effect of milking frequency and herd nutrition on milk production (Taylor, 2006).

"When a cow gives 20 L of milk, that's a good milking, but sometimes we find milk in the stalls later when the milking interval is 12 h. By emptying the cows more often, they're more comfortable and more stimulated as well," says Alphonse Pittet. "That's good for their health, I think." Indeed, milking three times a day does lead to higher yields for the producer, but only if the milking interval is regular and the udders are emptied completely at each milking. "For me, my milking cows give about 17 L per milking, three times a day. So the cows are more comfortable between milkings and their udders don't get congested," Mr. Pittet adds.

In addition to all the factors related to cow health, herd genetics also play a role. "Farms with high-calibre genetics can very well get the same results with two milkings a day. In my case, however, it allowed me to maximize the use of my milking carousel. Without three milkings a day, with the same herd I would have needed about 180 more cows to get the same milk yield," explains Mr. Drapeau, whose farm milks 800 cows. In 10 years, with the carousel and three milkings a day, the Dragon herd average has risen from 8 295 to 11 136 kg per cow per year.

A question of workforce

The additional labour required to milk three times a day is a major reason – if not THE reason – why very few Quebec farms opt for this practice. "The bigger the farm, with a big herd, it's easier. Because you're already accustomed to having employees," says Alphonse Pittet.

On the Pelletier farm, six employees do the milking, which means that family members can devote themselves to other tasks. "We already had the workforce before going to three milkings a day, so it was a natural continuity for us," Lysanne Pelletier explains. For a smaller operation like Ferme Clairbois (80 cows in tie stalls), milking three times a



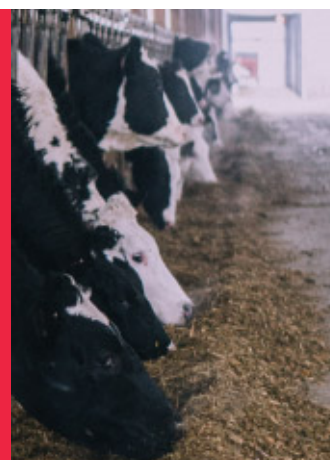
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Regardless of the milking schedule, udder health is paramount.

day is more demanding, but it can be a plus for work-family balance. “We employ two foreign workers for the noon and evening milkings, and that leaves the morning one for my husband and me. Which is perfect, because we can be with the children everyday at mealtimes and in the evenings,” Karine Barde says.

For the Drapeau-Bélangier operation, which employs a dozen workers, milking time has instead become a great opportunity to focus on herd management during the morning and noon milkings. “While our employees are at the carousel doing the milking, we can work at the sort gate, taking care of the cows that need injections or for breeding, for example. That gives us a livable work schedule and a good balance between work and family life. We can also focus on other things like harvesting, seeding, and so on,” Dominic Drapeau explains.

“In any case, you need labour to be able to milk three times a day, whether in tie-stall or free-stall housing, with a milking parlour or a carousel. At the very least, you need to be able to delegate the evening milking to get a break from work; otherwise it just becomes exhausting,” reflects Mr. Couture, from Sollio Agriculture. Moreover, the objectives and the operation of a 300-head free-stall herd will differ considerably from those of a 50-head tie-stall herd.

Whether you are looking to increase your milk production, your quantity of fat in kilograms, expand your operation without investing in new buildings, provide more comfort to your cows, or reorganize your work routine for increased efficiency, milking three times a day opens up opportunities that are well worth examining. Before embarking on this adventure, however, make sure that you have established sound herd management and that your operation and your workforce are running efficiently. The structure of the

operation also needs to be adapted to this type of system to ensure the transition is successful.

It’s up to you!

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