

# La Revue

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# Holstein Québec

## 2022 Holstein Québec Convention

A healthy dose of inspiration!

## Wilvoc Holsteins

A fast-developing prefix

## Ferme Desleduc GMS

Profitability and good quality milk!



©Ella Wright

## Ferme Desleduc GMS Profitability, longevity, and good quality milk!

Farming has always been an integral part of life for the Leduc family. Steve Leduc and his brother Serge represent the family's fifth generation on the farm they acquired from their parents, Georges and Monique, in 2008. It was Louis Leduc who initially charted the course for the family's future in Lochaber, nearly 125 years ago. The herd was a happy mix of Holsteins and Ayrshires until the 1950s, and Georges acquired his first purebred cow in the 1970s. He was able to pass on his love for Holstein breeding to his sons, and after transferring the farm to them, he continued to work as an inseminator from 2008 to 2018.

### Ferme Desleduc GMS

**HERD:** 120 head, including 64 lactating cows

**PRODUCTION :** 12 635 kg of milk, with 4.4% fat and 3.4% protein

**BCA:** 280-326-296

**CLASSIFICATION:** 8 EX – 37 VG – 23 GP

**QUOTA:** 92 kg BF/day

**CULTURE:** The farm has 425 acres under cultivation, with 200 acres devoted to hay, 100 to soybeans, 100 to corn, and 25 to wheat. All the forages fed to the farm animals are produced on the farm. The herd's cows are each fed a daily TMR composed of mixed rations of corn silage, haylage, hay, high-moisture corn, and supplements and minerals.

Devoting all their efforts to breeding strong milkers with good quality milk, Steve and Serge Leduc are now focusing their attention on animal comfort, providing the herd with adequate ventilation, good quality feed, and glycol for the first 20 days of lactation. Ferme Desleduc GMS also grows all the forages they feed the herd.

Georges Leduc kept his herd in open housing for 18 years, a practice that was somewhat rare at the time. "We came back to tie stalls in 1985, because we were getting a lot of visitors and it was more practical," Georges recalls. "For us, there was no question of going back to free stalls later on." As Steve Leduc explains: "The cows always have good ventilation, mattresses, and wood shavings. The yearling heifers have a slatted floor, and they also go out on pasture in the summer. For example, just by adding glycol for our cows in early lactation, we've increased production by 1000 kg. For the past 25 years, production has always met our expectations!" His greatest challenge now is maximizing production to be as efficient as possible. For Steve and Serge, free-stall housing could be a viable option in the future, but only if a next generation were interested in taking over the operation.

Ferme Desleduc has won several awards in the Lait'xcellent competition, in 2014, 2015 and 2016, for the outstanding quality of its milk. "Our priority is milk quality," says Mr. Leduc. "We're at 70 000 somatic cells in our milk, we aim for short calving intervals, below 400 days, and we're always buying quota, on top of taking advantage of all the additional days." The breeders began buying quota again with the aim of producing 95 kg with only 60 lactating cows.

### Longevity is top of the list!

The diligent care the herd receives naturally leads to solid cows with sturdy frames. According to Steve Leduc, feeding is a key factor. "I'm looking mainly for longevity in my cows, and good udder texture, as well as good feet and legs. As for embryos, I only use them for our needs on the farm. We've chosen to invest in our own bloodlines," Steve explains.

With longevity a top concern, *Desleduc Star Marie* became one of Ferme Desleduc GMS's leading ladies. Today, fully 80 per cent of the animals in the Desleduc herd stem from that



A great-granddaughter to *Marie*, the breeders' star cow, *Desleduc Dempsey Maria*, EX-93 2E, is a name to remember.

cow, classified EX 2E CAN and EX-96 3E 4\* USA; *Marie* was sold to Phantom Farm in New York in 1994. "We've been able to develop some lines and sell embryos or live animals from them in the States. It's great to see them do well there later on." For the Leducs, there's no doubt that their *Marie*, nominated All-Canadian 4-Year-Old in 1994, bred exceptionally well!

Three of *Marie*'s descendants stand out in particular: *Desleduc Dempsey Maria*, EX-93 2E; *Desleduc Dempsey Monianne*, EX 2E 2\*; and *Desleduc Dempsey Mia*, EX-92 2E. *Maria* distinguished herself in 2019 with a Super 3, three Superior Lactations and a Longtime Production award for over 60 000 kg, for a lifetime production of 62 830 kg of milk, with 5.2% fat and 3.7% protein. *Monianne* also received a Longtime Production award for over 60 000 kg, in 2018. "For us, efficiency and profitability are at the core of how we look at breeding. The fat percentage, for example, is important for us, as is seeing that percentage increase continually in the herd."

### Fewer shows, more production

Long in charge of the agricultural fair in Papineauville along with Charles Ménard of



*Desleduc Cousteau Maxima* is at the head of a very promising line for Ferme Desleduc GMS. *Leanne* is one of the top representatives of that family right now.



Ferme Rubis, Steve Leduc acknowledges that the organization of that flagship event for the Papineau Holstein Club was a time-consuming responsibility, in addition to working on the farm. "Since the end of the Papineauville show, I've stopped taking part in shows," he says. "This year, with the Laurentides Breeders' Cup, it was new, and I quite appreciated the experience. It takes place on the farm, and you don't have to move your cows. At one point, we wondered if we might show our animals elsewhere. How much would it cost? Do we have time for it? After that, we kind of let shows fall to the wayside," he adds.

But that doesn't stop Ferme Desleduc GMS from having some extremely high calibre animals in its barn, however. One of those is *Desleduc Cousteau Maxima*, EX-92 4E 7\*, a cow that transmits her genetic traits to her progeny with exceptional ease. Her daughter *Desleduc Fever Leanne* is proof positive. Classified with 91 points, *Leanne* is the dam of *Desleduc Delta-Lambda Alena*, VG-87, and *Desleduc Delta-Lambda Louane*, GP-83, offspring that enabled her to triumph in the Progeny of Dam class at the Laurentides Breeders' Cup last March. *Leanne* has a



**At the Laurentides Holstein Club's Breeders' Cup last March, Ferme Desleduc GMS won the Progeny of Dam class with two daughters of *Desleduc Fever Leanne*, EX-91 4E 3\*, namely, *Desleduc Delta-Lambda Alena*, VG-87, and *Desleduc Delta-Lambda Louane*, GP-83.**



## An all-round duo

Steve and Serge Leduc are the perfect team! "Serge takes care of the machinery, farm mechanics and field work. I see to barn management, sire selection, dairy profitability. We complement one another really well," Steve explains. Georges Leduc no longer comes to the barn because he mostly takes care of the maple stand, where they tap 1850 trees. A foreign worker joined the team a few weeks ago to help with the farm work.

lifetime production of 100 827 kg of milk, with 4.7% fat and 3.3% protein. This line is clearly one to keep an eye on in the future.

With their desire to be as profitable as possible, Ferme Desleduc GMS is extremely proud to rank among the Top 1% Herds for HMS in Canada every year. In 2019, the farm's best year, the herd ranked 12<sup>th</sup> out of 3164 Quebec herds (and 21<sup>st</sup> in Canada) – profitability that pays off and draws attention! ■



BY VÉRONIQUE LEMONDE  
Editor

## Wilvoc Holsteins

### A prefix that aspires to distinction!

Run by young owners, Wilvoc Holsteins, in Plaisance, is a young operation that has already established a solid reputation. With the support they've received over the past few years, these avid breeders are clearly going to be able to maintain that momentum and create a profitable and efficient business.

#### Wilvoc Holsteins

**HERD:** head, including 42 lactating cows

**PRODUCTION:** 12 470 kg of milk, with 4.3% fat and 3.3% protein

**BCA:** 268-284-283

**CLASSIFICATION:** 5 M EX - 3 EX - 25 VG - 14 GP

**QUOTA:** 65.5 kg BF/day

**CROPS:** To feed the herd, the farm harvests corn silage and hay, but the rest of the feed required is purchased off-farm. The daily TMR fed to each of the herd's cows is composed of corn, high-moisture corn, and hay, in addition to supplements and minerals.

That unshakable support came first from Jonathan Reilley's father. "His financial help was indispensable, and I'm extremely grateful for it," Mr. Reilley affirms. With his property as collateral, this enthusiastic young farmer's dream came together in 2019, in the Outaouais region, near Hawkesbury, in Ontario. Jonathan's entrepreneurial side was

already well developed when he graduated from McGill University in 2013, with a DCS in Farm Management and Technology. His grandfather Wilfrid, himself a dairy producer, was a strong inspiration for Jonathan's new vocation.

When the opportunity to buy 55.7 kg of quota from Patrick Daetwyler, of Ferme Blitz, and rent farm buildings from Simon Lalande and Kim Côté, on Ferme Blondin, presented itself, that dream finally became a reality for Jonathan, and, ultimately, for Julie Reber as well. As an animal health technician and daughter of a dairy producer, Julie readily joined in this emerging life and family project in Plaisance. "It wasn't something new for me, seeing as we met when I was doing embryo transfers for Ferme Blondin. I'm on the farm full time now."

#### Judicious acquisitions

The owners of Wilvoc Holsteins hope to increase their milk production in the coming years. They would also like to relocate to their own farm within the next 10 years. If those plans are achievable, it's because the operation acquired the animals it needed



Two third-lactation cows classified Excellent in December 2020: (left) *South Nation Anchorman Jello*, still EX, and (right) *South Nation Braxton Jane*, now classified EX-91. Wilvoc Holsteins co-owns both animals with Chris Ryan, a good friend of Julie and Jonathan who owns South Nation Holstein, a farm in Chrysler, Ontario.

right from the start. "In 2019, we bought about 45 animals from Patrick Daetwyler, and right then, I wanted to take advantage of the genetic potential and production capacity of the Holstein," Jonathan Reilley recalls. That period of the operation's history began with the purchase of *Jacobs Control Bricol*, VG-85, a cow that quickly became a major asset for Wilvoc Holsteins. "We bought her from Ferme Blondin just after she had her first calf," he says. "She's a really good milker, because she had a Superior Lactation when she was two, and has produced 34 790 kg of milk so far. We've already sold some of her embryos at the Holstein Québec Embryo Sale," he adds.

Another wise and profitable purchase was that of *Blondin Sidekick Loyalty* (VG-85), in September 2020, when she was a pregnant yearling heifer. Loyalty is a full sister to the popular *Legend*, a bull that is well rated for both conformation (+ 13) and mammary



The tie-stall barn at Wilvoc Holsteins.





## Time off and holidays!

Julie Reber was hoping for a balance between farm life and family life. With young Evelyne, and Thomas born just recently, on April 29, the couple is trying to find a way to organize their time intelligently. "It's pretty much just the two of us for the moment. But with Raynald, we can plan holidays for the family ahead of time. For that, we collaborate with five other families in the area. We don't see that in many places in Quebec, but really, it's wonderful to be able to count on his help, in addition to help from Jonathan's father."

system (+11). "We're counting on *Loyalty's* descendants, and we hope to sell some of her young offspring within the next two years,"



Little Evelyne swings happily in the barn!

Mr. Reilley says.

Standing out from her herdmates, *Wilvoc Lambda Ghost*, born in October 2021, tested 163 points above her parent average, with an LPI of 3591. Besides ranking second in Canada for 6 months and under, *Lambda Ghost* is the top heifer for type and at +14 for mammary system, and ranks among the top 10 GLPIs for *Lambdas* in Canada. Likewise, *Wilvoc Avenger Liberty*, a *Loyalty* x *Avenger*

daughter born in January, has an exceptional genotype and looks promising for the future of Wilvoc Holsteins. "We want to breed great animals that we'll be able to sell to become a leading farm. Let's say that when you sell an animal and your name is associated with it, it helps you make a name for yourself as an elite breeder. By working with our genetics, we're aiming to develop an efficient herd."

And that is already the case, as Wilvoc Holsteins had three consignments at the Holstein Québec Embryo Sale last February. Among them were sexed embryos from *Bricol*, a granddaughter of *Jacobs Goldwyn Britany*, EX-96 2E 27\*, Cow of the Year in 2017, and Reserve All-Canadian, Tout-Québec Four-Year-Old, and first Four-Year-Old at the RAWF in 2011. The breeders also had a top animal for sale at the Expo-Poc Sale in April, *Corrcroft Lambda Briar* (VG-86), a cow they co-own with Thouny Holstein. "We've flushed *Briar* a few times already and we'll get at least seven calves between now and the end of summer, from three different sires. We have high hopes for her," Mr. Reilly says.

## Management focused on well-being

Working hard to develop their young herd, the owners of Wilvoc Holsteins haven't much time, or labour, to devote to the show circuit right now. Nonetheless, they hope to try their

luck in the show ring this summer with two or three animals.

The couple also makes it a priority to provide their cows with comfortable tie stalls. A dome on a nearby site houses about 20 yearling heifers in a cold barn. With the services of the same veterinarian as the former Blitz herd, Marc Perras, and the same technologist, François Jacques, Wilvoc Holsteins ensures the herd benefits from continuity and optimal comfort. Thanks to Raynald Drouin, a matchless agricultural worker who divides his time among five farms in the area – a cowherd formula that has endured for 30 years – Julie and Jonathan are in more than capable hands! After only two full years in production, Wilvoc Holsteins has already climbed to the top in its region for HMS, with a final score of 880 points! A feat that will only spur these young breeders on!



BY VÉRONIQUE LEMONDE  
Editor

By  
KETSIA CROTEAU

Advisor  
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## Ferme Top Building a herd – one cow at a time!

*In 1991, Marc, aged 26 at the time, and Benoit, 20, purchased the family farm in Saint-André-Avellin. They also acquired a more recently built neighbouring barn to house their herd. The brothers then set to developing their operation, using every corner of farmland available. Steeper slopes are used to graze their heifers, reared under intensive grazing management to ensure they have constant access to young, protein-rich grass. Marc Blais greatly appreciates that system, which he credits with contributing immensely to the healthy development of his heifers!*

### Ferme Top (TOP prefix)

**OWNERS:** Marc and Benoit Blais

**HERD:** 100 head, including 65 cows  
(54 lactating)

**QUOTA:** 90 kg BF/day

**AVERAGE ANNUAL PRODUCTION PER  
COW:** 12 043 kg

**HERD CLASSIFICATION:** 3 M EX - 2 EX - 23  
VG - 34 GP

**BCA:** 288-310-299

brothers had to purchase an additional 20 kg of quota to allow them to ship all the milk they were producing. Hence the Dobbendale herd changed the course of the Top farm. Thanks to the sound advice of a friend, Marc and Benoit went from a herd without a single cow classified VG to a herd with several VG cows and even two EX, one of which is *Dobbendale Broker Andrea*, now classified EX 4E 5\*.

Today, over 70 per cent of the animals in the Top herd are descendants of *Andrea*. Not only was she the brothers' first EX cow, she is also the granddam of the first cow bearing the Top prefix to classify EX, in 2009: *Top Allen Allannah*, EX 91 2E 3\*.

Another much-appreciated member of that family is *Top Epic Aurelie*, EX-91 4E 3\*, who by the age of 9 years and 5 months had produced a total of 119 342 kg in six lactations. *Aurelie* died suddenly a short time ago, leaving behind two daughters classified EX-91, one of which is the brothers' current favourite: *Top Andre Andrea*, EX-91-4yr. A descendant of the renowned *Dobbendale Broker Andrea*, she represents the family's sixth generation of EX cows, a bloodline of which the brothers have every reason to be proud!

The purchase of a Roboléo milking robot in 2015 enabled the Blais brothers to increase production while allowing them a more flexible work schedule. Long involved in the Papineau Holstein Club, Marc joined the Laurentides Holstein Club to take part in the Club's first Breeders' Cup last March. His cows distinguished themselves in the competition with a fourth-place finish in the 60 000+ kg of milk class and a fourth in the Progeny of Dam class, with descendants of *Aurelie*, of course. These avid breeders hope for continued success and look forward to working with future descendants of the superb line of *Dobbendale Broker Andrea*! ■

Together, the Blais brothers farmed their land and managed their dairy operation until May 2003, when a devastating fire destroyed over half their herd. Despite that loss, the brothers were determined to resume production and worked tirelessly towards their goal. Six months later, to the day, they brought their cows back home. With the drop in livestock prices due to mad cow disease, they were able to purchase the Dobbendale herd, from Moorefield, in Ontario. The 42-head herd was composed almost entirely of cows, including two EX cows and some strong milkers. With this sudden expansion of their herd, the



**Benoit and Marc Blais with *Top Andre Andrea*  
EX-91-4yr (black) in front of their Roboléo  
milking robot.**





BY  
VÉRONIQUE  
LEMONDE

Editor in Chief



## Calf care

# Plenty of milk and room to move

**W**ith the revision of the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle*, and the conditions dairy producers will need to implement in the coming years, the industry is set to undergo a transformation. Our calves represent the future of Quebec dairy herds, and the care we give them won't be exempted from these changes. De facto, a well-designed nursery means fewer sick calves, a better start to life, and earlier calving. Exactly what dairy producers are looking for!

### First hours are decisive

No one doubts the crucial importance of colostrum for newborn calves. But the key to success is ensuring that calves have access to this vital liquid as early as possible.

Dr. Jodi Wallace, a veterinarian at the Ormstown Veterinary Hospital, is an advocate of "zero-zero" calf care, especially for pre-weaned 0- to 2-month-old calves. "When the newborn calf arrives alive, it should stay alive. The calf arrives in pristine health," Dr. Wallace affirms, explaining that zero-zero calf care means "zero treatments and zero mortality."<sup>1</sup> She further states although less than 5 percent mortality and 15 percent treatment rates in pre-weaned calves are considered normal, they are not. This is where colostrum comes into play. Dr. Wallace emphasizes that "the greatest opportunity of improvement and moving towards zero-zero is achieving passive transfer (PT). As soon as possible after birth, the calf needs 3 to 4 litres of clean, high-quality colostrum." Now ask yourself: Is my colostrum management adequate?

In an article posted on the site Réussir Lait.fr, in April, nutritionist and agronomist Débora Santschi, Director of Innovation and Development at Lactanet, writes: "It has long been said that a calf needs 4 litres of colostrum to ensure adequate immune transfer. Actually, a calf needs 200 g of antibodies. It's not the volume, but rather the quality of the colostrum that is critical. And quality is highly variable. A study conducted on 827 cows from 67 farms in the United States revealed that [IgG levels] varied from 2 to 200 g/l, meaning that anywhere from 1 to 100 litres is required to ensure 200 g of IgG! So it's certainly worth it to test your colostrum to find out where you're at."<sup>2</sup> **It is even recommended that the first two feedings contain 300 g of IgG to ensure successful passive immune transfer.** Immediate feeding, 200 g within the first hour of birth, if possible, with the rest stored in the fridge for a second feeding within 12 hours, but also, and most importantly, high quality colostrum so the calf absorbs as many antibodies as possible and as soon as possible. Moreover, it is important to note that the colour of the colostrum alone

is not a reliable indicator of its quality. An optical refractometer or a colostrometer will give you a more accurate reading.

Accordingly, Sabrina Caron, of Ferme Roland Caron (Savaron), in Laurierville, gives her calves three three-litre feedings of first-milking colostrum. In that respect, Ms. Santschi reports that "a study shows that simply by going from 2 to 4 litres of colostrum, ADG during the preweaning period increases from 640 g to 1030 g, and production over two lactations increases by 1000 kg."<sup>2</sup>

**The colostrum fed during the first 24 hours of life should have a Brix value above 24.5%, with total bacteria below 100 000 CFU/ml and coliform levels below 10 000 CFU/ml.** "The stomach of a newborn calf is filled with alveoli that are always open, and everything they drink is absorbed into the bloodstream. This is where colostrum is important, and it has the greatest impact during the first seven days of life, after which the calf's immune system takes over," explains Patrice Proulx, B. Sc. App., Sales Manager for Équipements

Tableau Colostrum Brix

Catégories	Cible en % des veaux par catégorie	Niveau de Brix (%)
Excellent	> 40 %	> 24 %
Bon	~ 30 %	22-24 %
Moyen – correct	~ 20 %	20-21 %
Mauvais	< 10 %	< 20 %

Source : Lactanet



3V. As an alternative to “first milk”, producers can also use colostrum in powder form, which is dissolved in warm water. “It’s the most important meal in a calf’s life, and the first milking after calving may happen in the middle of the night. In this case, some producers prefer the reliability and stability of colostrum powder,” Mr. Proulx explains. “Another trick dairy producers use is to freeze colostrum after it has been pasteurized. It’s a good idea to build up a small supply of colostrum that is always ready,” he adds.

### Post-colostrum feeding

Dr. Wallace emphasizes that, in addition to the first colostrum feedings, it is very important that newborn calves have unlimited access to water, although they may not drink it instinctively right away. Calves should also be offered milk to appetite for the first two months of life. “Feeding the calves only twice

a day, I didn’t find that normal,” says Sabrina Caron, who uses an automatic milk feeder to give her calves unlimited access to milk. Indeed, calves should be drinking 20 per cent of their weight in milk every day. An automatic milk feeder lets calves behave more naturally, consuming smaller volumes more often.

To prevent disease, however, automatic milk feeders are not recommended for calves under 14 days of age. Likewise, calves need to consume enough milk (2/3 l per feeding) to avoid a bottleneck at the feeder. “Nowadays, automatic milk feeders are self-cleaning, but human intervention is still required. We can never go overboard with hygiene where calf health is concerned. Most of the milk feeders self-clean up to 50°C. After that, you have to step in to ensure a more thorough cleaning,” Patrice Proulx explains.

Whether they use an automatic milk feeder, a milk taxi, or buckets, producers can successfully feed their calves milk as long as they follow a strict management protocol. After that, they can choose the milk that best suits their needs. “Powdered milk is very reliable and stable and contains the minerals and B-complex vitamins required for growth, elements that are lacking in whole milk. These need to be supplemented with other products,” explains Mr. Proulx, from Équipements 3V. For his part, Olivier Roy-Tanguay, from Purina, stresses that “a calf has to double its birthweight before weaning at about 2 months and double it again to reach about 200 kg by 3-4 months. It’s really important that we give a calf everything we can in the first 4 months. As the calf develops, so does its rumen. So, with whole milk, feeding needs to be rebalanced to increase energy intake, with a booster for milk, among other things.”



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**Automatic milk feeders are very practical in pens housing small groups of calves.**

Mario Martineau, of Grober, has similar advice. “Producers can use their own whole milk from their quota, but it depends on their quota and their production, and if they go over. Powdered milk, or milk replacer, is always stable, with no variations.” He also recommends that producers feed their calves a milk replacer with a high fat and protein content, to stimulate lean muscle and skeletal growth. Among their products, Excel (26/18) with Progro is specially formulated to provide the right mix of readily digestible protein, balanced fatty and amino acid profiles, and readily bioavailable micronutrients to promote optimal and sustained growth in calves. It is also designed for use in automatic feeding systems.

Automatic milk feeders that enable producers to feed both powdered milk and pasteurized whole milk also exist. Producers can thus change the type of milk they feed their calves, depending on their objectives, the price of powdered milk, or equipment upgrades. “In my case, for example,” says Sabrina Caron, “I use a richer powdered milk in winter, like

28 G and 16 P.” For every situation, a suitable milk product for your calves!

Mr. Roy-Tanguay points out that, besides milk, it’s important to pay close attention to the transition period at weaning. “After the milk phase, you need to feed good-quality grains, rich in starch and B-complex vitamins, to promote the development of rumen papillae

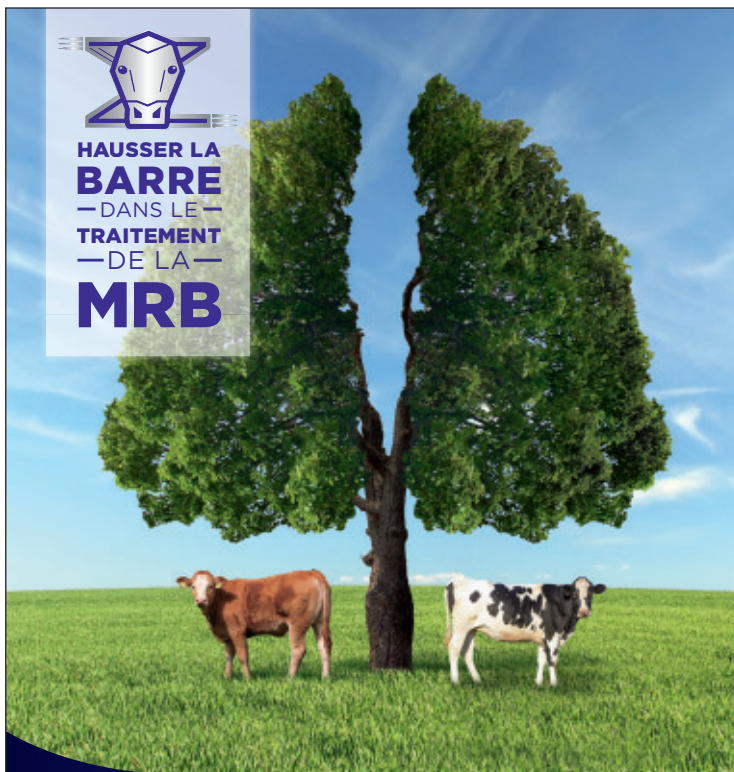
during the next 2 to 3 months. A little straw can be incorporated as well, but not too much hay, all the same. It’s important not to add forage to the calves’ feed too soon. It’s best to use mixes with extruded particles, for example, which are digested rapidly. On the other hand, calves should have unlimited access to feed until they reach 4 months.” Calves should never be fed fermented







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Calves with their nurse cows at Ferme Y. Lampron et fils.



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forages before the age of 6 months. "When we breed a heifer, the goal is to have her at about 55 per cent of her mature weight, depending on our herd. If we have elite Holsteins, we might aim for more weight. By about 6 months, a heifer is already fully functioning as a ruminant, and producers can then introduce a more economical diet, with silage, soybean meal, and a mineral mixture for dairy cows," Mr. Roy-Tanguay says.

"The greatest investment in calf feeding should really be during the first 4 months of the animal's life."

### Eat, then move!

Producers are increasingly concerned about space allowance for their calves. In the uninsulated cold barn where her calves are housed, Sabrina Caron is committed to meeting the **standard for air volume: 600 cu. ft.** "We have to think more in terms of height now," she explains. "We talk about a surface area of 42 sq. ft. per calf, but we also need to consider height to ensure a healthy air volume for each calf. The nursery needs to breathe!" On her farm, where the 170-head herd includes about 100 lactating cows, the calves are housed in a solar cold barn with translucent panels that let the sun in. Each pen contains 6 or 7 calves of the same age.

"The current trend is really to raise two or three calves together in the same pen until they're weaned. Individual hutches are losing a little of their popularity, among other reasons because visual contact between calves is very important," explains Mr. Proulx. Calves in a herd tend to begin chewing and ruminating at around three weeks of age. Through social interaction, it seems that calves are





**The Igloo and veranda system provides a roofed pen with 25 m<sup>2</sup> of living space. About 14 unweaned calves can be reared in this type of housing.**

able to learn various behaviours, like choosing their feed and how to graze. Cattle are social animals. A lack of social interaction early in a calf's life can have negative consequences.<sup>3</sup>

Ferme Y. Lampron et fils, an organic milk producer in Saint-Boniface, in the Mauricie region, has adopted this practice and taken it to another level. Using nurse cows, the Lampron producers ensure strong social contact among the 2 or 3 calves assigned to each nurse cow. "The calves are in a vast area, and they imitate the nurse cow. They begin eating feed and drinking water sooner than the others and are less likely to be sick. For the transition, we install the calf in a pen

beside the nurse cow for about a week, so it's not as hard to separate," Jean-Yves Lampron explains.

As always, calves like to be able to see! And drink and eat to appetite! ■

<sup>1</sup> Wallace, Jodi. Zero-zero calf care: A team event. *Progressive Dairyman* (11 February 2019) <https://www.progressivedairycanada.com/topics/calves-heifers/zero-zero-calf-care-a-team-event>

<sup>2</sup> Santschi, Débora. Élevage des veaux au Québec : « Le colostrum, c'est bien plus que des anticorps » (12 November 2019) <https://www.reussir.fr/lait/veaux-quebec-le-colostrum-cest-bien-plus-que-des-anticorps>

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of Dairy Science* Vol. 99 No. 4, 2016

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