

La Revue

Holstein Québec

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Animal care

Everything you need to know

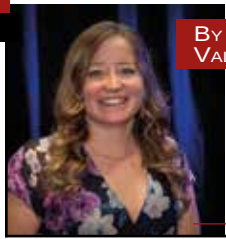
JM Valley Holstein

Diversified, with perfect balance!

A voyage through the Valley

The program for the Holstein Québec Picnic





By
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agr.

Advisor for
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JM Valley Holstein

Diversified, with perfect balance!

*J*oël Lepage and Mireille Lavoie are the couple of ambitious and dedicated dairy producers who drive the name JM Valley Holstein. Located in Amqui, in the magnificent Lower Saint Lawrence region, the farm is set to host the 2023 Holstein Québec Picnic on July 15th. It will be well worth the extra mile to take part in this wonderful family-friendly day on their farm!

JM Valley Holstein

HERD: 150 head, including 65 lactating cows

PRODUCTION: 12 000 kg of milk, with 4.1% fat and 3.3% protein

BCA: 264-271-274

CLASSIFICATION: 10 EX – 42 VG – 26 GP

QUOTA: 90 kg BF/day

CROPS: 580 acres (corn silage, wheat, seed wheat and hay)

A successful non-family transfer

Having both grown up on dairy farms in the same region, Joël and Mireille left their family farms in the hands of other family

members. With their unwavering passion for dairy production and support from their families, they were able to acquire a farm through a non-family transfer. They have since been pursuing the dreams that have brought them to where they are today.

Prior to acquiring the farm, Joël worked for the Coop for more than 10 years as a dairy and crop production advisor. During one of farm his visits, two of his clients, Ghislain and Normand Couturier, confided that they were thinking of selling their farm, as they had no one to take over their operation and health problems were becoming a concern. Little did they know that sharing that news with their Coop rep would spark an interest, leading him to buy the farm with his partner Mireille.

When the transfer was made official in December 2011, the couple took possession of a 50-kg quota and 250 acres of farmland. The Couturiers were present throughout the transfer process, providing support and answering the couple's questions to ensure a successful takeover. With ample experience in dairy production, whether from working on dairy farms for Mireille, or 13 years as a cattle fitter for Joël, the couple quickly improved the herd, which was no longer registering or classifying when they acquired it. In 2012, they began registering their animals, creating the JM Valley prefix, a well-known name in the dairy world today.

Since then, there has been no shortage of projects for JM Valley Holstein: refitting the barn for the lactating cows in 2012, the *Tag Sale* and construction of a freestall barn for



Mireille Lavoie and Joël Lepage at the provincial show at the 2018 Supreme Dairy Show.

the younger generation in 2014, the expansion of the yearling heifer barn in 2017, the construction of a tower silo and the JM Valley Sale in 2021, and the construction of bed-pack pens in 2022. When asked about their plans for the coming years, they jokingly reply: "Our next project would be to have no projects!"

Opportunities to diversify

In addition to dairy production, the operation now includes a poultry division as well. In 2015, a few years after Joël and Mireille acquired the farm, they had the opportunity to purchase their first poultry building, with a capacity to house 5000 laying hens. In 2016, this visionary couple built a second facility, with a capacity for 10 000 free-range hens, that met animal welfare standards. That building was expanded in 2018 to house a total of 15 000 laying hens. Lastly, in 2020, a new building was added for pullet production, housing 19 000 pullets. "Diversifying gives us some security, should one segment be more at risk than another. The timetables for dairy and poultry production are completely different, so they work well together," Joël points out.

Thriving on challenge, Joël and Mireille haven't stopped at only two lines of business. In April 2022, a post on social media about the sale of a business caught their attention. "It was a place we used to go to and that we liked a lot, we wanted it to con-



***Idee Windbrook Lynzi*, EX-95 4E 3*, owned by JM Valley Holstein, Stéphane Gendreau, Richard and Shannon Allyn, and Frank and Diane Borba, was crowned Grand Champion at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto, in 2019.**

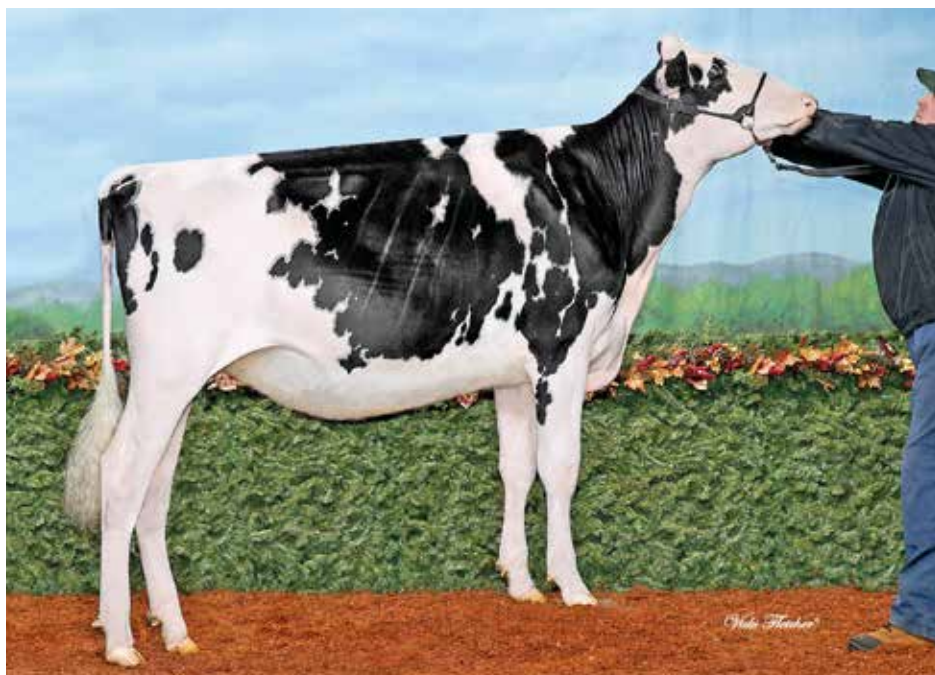
tinue," they explain. *La Banquise*, a popular dairy bar located on the way into the town of Amqui was up for sale. Uncommitted but curious nevertheless, the couple approached the sellers for more information. Mireille's younger brother, Étienne Lavoie, was also interested in getting involved. That project materialized sooner than they might have expected. They have been the owners of the

La Banquise creamery for a little over a year now, employing a staff of eight that keeps the business running smoothly.

Breeding: purchases and progress

While the current herd still includes a few cow families from the original Couturier herd, a number of new additions have been purchased over the years. Among them are *Suntor Man-O-Man Jelena*, VG-87 1*, and *Metdale Goldwyn Kathleen*, EX-92 5E 1*, both of which have endowed JM Valley with a significant number of descendants. *Kathleen* alone has produced 6 classified daughters, including 2 EX and 3 VG, in addition to producing over 100 000 kg of milk in 7 lactations.

Another cow that has contributed greatly to the reputation of the JM Valley herd is *Idee Windbrook Lynzi*, now classified EX-95 4E 3*, purchased in co-ownership with Stéphane Gendreau, Rick and Shannon Allyn and Frank and Diane Borba, in Prince Edward Island in 2015, when she was only a year old. An indisputable queen in the showing, *Lynzi* has made her owners proud, winning Grand Champion at the Quebec Spring Show in 2016, Intermediate Champion and Honourable Mention at the RAWF in 2017, and Grand Champion at the RAWF in 2019, to name only a few of her titles. In 2020, she was named Holstein Québec's Favourite Cow and Holstein Canada's Cow of the Year.



***JM Valley Dempsey Lyzara*, daughter to the well-known *Idee Windbrook Lynzi*, EX-95 4E 3*, was named Reserve Tout-Québec Summer Calf in 2017 and Tout-Québec Summer Yearling in 2018.**



In addition to making her mark in the showring, *Lynzi* has also bred remarkable daughters. Her first, *Idee Doorman Lysa*, EX-94 USA, was named Tout-Québec Junior 3-Year-Old, Reserve All-Canadian and Reserve All-American in 2019. Her other two daughters are *JM Valley S Stella Lynzi*, EX-93, and *JM Valley Sidekick Lady*, VG-88, the animal sold for the highest price at the JM Valley Sale in the summer of 2021.

Notable heifers in the JM Valley herd include *JM Valley Atwood Agadou*, first Junior Calf at the RAWF in 2013. Her breeders affirm that winning a first place at the RAWF with their prefix has been one of the high points in their career. *JM Valley Doorman Lexie* is another heifer that has marked the herd's history, with both Tout-Québec and All-Canadian Junior Yearling titles in 2017, in addition to Reserve Grand Champion at the RAWF the same year. Another of *Lynzi's* daughters that has made a name for herself is *JM Valley Dempsey Lyzara*, named Reserve Tout-Québec Summer Calf in 2017 and Tout-Québec Summer Yearling in 2018. *Lexie* and *Lyzara* were also part of the top Junior Breeder's Herd at the RAWF in 2017, an unforgettable moment for these breeders. The JM Valley prefix also won the Junior Breeder banner at the RAWF in 2018.

Breeding philosophy

Selection criteria at the JM Valley Holstein farm are not only important for the breeders on a day-to-day basis, but also for potential buyers. Years of selling animals and embryos have taught the breeders that the choice of sire is crucial when considering a future sale. They don't hesitate to use sires that have proven themselves in the industry and with which they have had successful matings in the past. The economic aspect of production is also a consideration, and the breeders attach a great deal of importance to mammary systems.

Rewarding experiences as a judge

In addition to the couple's other achievements, Joël is also an official Holstein judge and has had the opportunity to officiate at many shows in Quebec and other provinces, as well as on the international stage, in Argentina, Belgium and Switzerland. He was also a judge at the most recent edition of Swiss Expo in Geneva, in 2020. Mireille has accompanied him on many occasions as ringmaster, most recently in France, last year, where they



***JM Valley Doorman Lexie*, now classified VG-87 1*, was Tout-Québec and All-Canadian Junior Yearling in 2017 and Reserve Junior Champion at the RAWF the same year.**

had a wonderful time together. "I'm so proud of him!" Mireille exclaims, her pride evident as she talks about Joël's career path in judging.

Joël's experience as a judge has given him a look at the other side of the medal in terms of shows. He has gained confidence and self-assurance through his work, which in turn has helped him become a better exhibitor, because he understands what the judge is looking for.

Work-family balance – a source of pride

Joël and Mireille have three children: Rosalie, aged 9, Philippe, 6, and Alice, 3. The couple forms a well-balanced team with complementary strengths. Together, they manage to combine all the different segments of their business and, above all, maintain a balance between their family life and their professional life. The children are often at the farm, a routine that has developed naturally since their birth. The parents take great pride in being able to enjoy the little moments of happiness with their children on a day-to-day basis. When asked about their wishes for the future, their response is simple: more of the same...

In the Valley...

If you don't already know the people of the Valley, you will be impressed by the warm and supportive ambiance there. The owners of JM Valley Holstein are infinitely grateful to the caring people around them who are always ready to lend a hand. It is in this atmosphere that the Holstein Québec Picnic will be held and is the reason why Joël and Mireille agreed to open their doors to the Quebec Holstein community on July 15th. So come and share in the celebration with the people of the Valley! ■

Pique-nique
Holstein Québec

2023



By
ALYCIA CHABOT

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Hâtée and Jendro : working together to improve their performance

In 2017, a non-family transfer made Myriam Côté and Tommy Chénard the new owners of Ferme Jendro, in Rimouski. They were thrilled to have the chance to acquire a farm located less than 10 km from Ferme Hâtée, the Chénard family farm owned by Tommy's brother Jérôme. Thus began an ongoing story of collaboration between the two farms, in both crop production and cattle breeding.

Ferme Hâtée

OWNER: Jérôme Chénard (3rd generation)

HERD: 240 head, including 100 lactating cows

PRODUCTION: 10 672 kg of milk, with 3.9% fat and 3.3% protein

BCA: 230-252-250

QUOTA: 140 kg BF/day

CLASSIFICATION: 11 EX – 62 VG – 31 GP

CROPS: 550 acres (corn silage, hay, cereals)

Ferme Jendro inc.

OWNERS: Myriam Côté and Tommy Chénard

HERD: 220 head, including 96 lactating cows

PRODUCTION: 10 600 kg of milk, with 4.2% fat and 3.2% protein

BCA: 240-265-249

QUOTA: 140 kg BF/day

CLASSIFICATION: 4 M EX – 1 EX – 56 VG – 50 GP

CROPS: 660 acres (corn silage, hay)

two farms also buy many of their animals in co-ownership, giving them access to good cow families at reasonable cost.



Jendro Impression Madra, EX-92 2E 2*, won two titles in 2017: first Junior 2-Year-Old at the Spring Show and second Junior 2-Year-Old at the Rimouski show.

Jendro Impression Madra, EX-92 2E 2*

Madra represents the first collaborative effort in breeding between the two farms. Purchased as a calf by Ferme Jendro, *Madra* soon enchanted owners Tommy and Myriam. They decided to transfer her to Jérôme's farm, where she could benefit from better conditions for the rest of her breeding period and maximize her potential. Her first calving convinced them that *Madra* was a cow worth developing! In 2017, when Tommy and Myriam decided to put her up for sale at the Québec Spring Show, Jérôme was the lucky buyer. Thanks to *Madra*, Ferme Hâtée has since been able to develop an international embryo market, namely in Korea. Ferme Jendro has since purchased some of *Madra's* embryos as well, at a Holstein Club sale. Now both herds include some promising descendants of *Madra*.

Cooperation in the field

Most of the machinery used for seeding and harvesting is co-owned by the two farms. Each farm has its own tractor, but both are used on both farms. The tractor best suited to a particular task is the one that is used for the job. Harvesting is a joint endeavour, with labour and machinery moving from one farm to the other.

Cooperation in the barn

As regards breeding, the farms work together, exchanging animals and buying embryos from the top families in their respective herds. When preparing animals for shows, the fitting takes place on Ferme Hâtée, where the setup is better equipped and more practical. The

Why is this form of collaboration successful?

- Despite their proximity, the farms have different soil types and slightly different growing conditions. The forage stands at the Hâtée farm are always ready a week earlier than those at the Jendro farm. In the fall, frost comes later to the Jendro farm, so the harvest operation naturally starts at Ferme Hâtée;
- The farms have similar acreage and similar-sized herds;
- At harvest time, everyone puts their shoulder to the wheel to achieve their common goal: to produce good quality forages as quickly as possible;
- The shareholders are willing to make concessions but don't hesitate to express their views or their discontent. They bear no grudges and advance in the same direction.

How does the alliance benefit both farms?

- Shared machinery costs give both farms access to the equipment needed for efficient field operations;
- Skilled labour is available in the fields and in the barn;
- The strengths of each of the shareholders and of each farm can be used to advantage;
- Ideas and differing points of view are shared openly;
- Access to volume discounts and an extensive supply network enables them to ask for price quotes and to compare costs;
- They have someone to count on in the case of an emergency or unforeseen circumstances;
- Services are exchanged to their mutual benefit.

Expanding in a totally different way!

The farms may save on costs, but the work is doubled. "After a year or two, we realized that although the machinery we had was sufficient for both farms, performance was lacking. It was wearing out faster because it was working twice as much. That's not a reason not to collaborate, but I don't think we really grasped that point when we started!" Jérôme explains. Since then, the brothers have gradually upgraded the complementary fleet of machinery they had when they began working together, to make field operations more efficient.

The benefits of that modernization are now apparent on both farms. In Jérôme's words, the best part of the way they do things is that "you always have support when something unexpected happens, that you can't control, when you just need some help, but especially in situations where you need to challenge yourself as a manager, to get an outside perspective. It pushes us to improve!" All reasons why this trio works so well together! "We never see a situation the same way, whether it's an obstacle or an opportunity. When we're thinking about investing, buying, or how we do something, we don't hesitate to say what we think. After that, we do what we want on our own farms, but at least we don't have to regret not having said what we thought," he adds.

« If there's a philosophy that has been passed down through the generations, it's the importance of working for what we have. »

- Jérôme Chénard

That being said, the "I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine" principle is always relevant in this type of partnership. There are endless stories where one gives more than the other and it all ends badly. The Chénard-Côté alliance has managed to avoid that problem thanks to their family values. These are people who don't count their hours and who know how to work to get what they want. They are simply driven by their passion – an attitude that makes their parents proud!

It goes without saying that their ability to work together has enabled them to expand to an extent that would not have been possible for each of them alone. Today, they have 200 cows milking in two separate operations and grow enough forages to produce 280 kg of quota. Over time, these three dedicated farm operators have capitalized on their complementary strengths to stay the course and achieve their mutual goals: to ensure the perennity of both operations, to continue to adapt to a changing environment, and, most especially, to preserve their tight-knit family! In and around their work, family and farming are their top priorities. ■



Hâtée Crushtime Mojito, TB-87 2 ans, a daughter of Madra, is shown here with Jeanne and Raymond Chénard, Myriam Côté, Ginette Brisson and Laura and Tommy Chénard. To her right are Mélanie Dubé and Jérôme Chénard, with their four daughters: Clara, Éloïse, Béatrice and Anaïs, as well as their trusted employee, Jonathan Lavoie, along with Laurence, Camille Proulx and Juliette.



By
GENEVIÈVE DROLET,
agr.

Editor

Animal care: everything you need to know

As announced last April, the new Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle will come into effect April 1, 2024, with the exception of certain requirements for which producers will be granted additional time to comply. Although many of the requirements in the updated version of the Code are the same as those in the current Code, there are some points that Canadian dairy producers will need to consider.

While many dairy farms are already complying with all the requirements in the updated version of the Code, others will need to adapt their everyday practices or, in some cases, undertake major modifications requiring significant investment in their buildings. To help producers navigate the process, Les Producteurs de lait du Québec have already met with industry stakeholders to inform them of the upcoming requirements and ask them to support producers during the transition. There are many resources available to dairy producers who want to change the way they operate in connection with the new regulations.

Likewise, producers who have already adopted some of the practices required in the upcoming Code can be a source of information for others in the dairy community. La Revue met with two dairy producers who were willing to share their experiences related to some of the requirements in the new Code.

Terminology

The Code highlights the requirements imposed by the dairy industry regarding acceptable practices. These are measures that must be implemented by all persons responsible for farm animal care. The Code also presents recommended practices that are intended to complement the requirements. While these practices are expected to enhance animal welfare, producers are not required to implement them.¹

Freedom of movement

Requirement 2.2.3: Effective April 1, 2027, cows must not be tethered continuously throughout their entire production cycle (calving to calving)—they must be provided sufficient regular opportunity for freedom of movement to promote good welfare.¹

While the new Code of Practice points out that free-stall housing offers no benefits over tie-stall housing with regard to lameness and foot and leg injuries, greater freedom of movement is nevertheless associated with improved cattle health and welfare, in addition to better behaviour and higher productivity. Conversely, tie-stall housing is associated with reduced competition and increased opportunity to observe individual animals, thus enabling producers to intervene more rapidly when a problem is detected. Based on current research, it seems that both types of housing present advantages and disadvantages, but allowing cattle more opportunity for movement is clearly beneficial.¹

While further research may establish standards for the frequency and duration of freedom of movement for cattle, no specifications in this regard are included in the updated Code. Nonetheless, dairy producers who are planning to build new barns should comply with the requirement for daily, untethered freedom of movement. This requirement does not apply to expansion projects.²

Calving

Requirements 2.3.1 :

Calving areas, whether for group or individual calving, must provide the cow and calf an area that is clean, safe, and separated from the lactating herd, and that provides enough space for the cow to be assisted.

Effective April 1, 2029, or for barns newly built as of April 1, 2024, cattle on all farms must calve in loose housed maternity pens, yards, or pastures that permit them to turn around.

Newly built barns must allow cows to calve in loose housed maternity pens, yards, or pastures that permit them to turn around.¹

At La Ferme Pittet inc., in Saint-Tite, owners Claire Désaulniers and Jérémie and Alphonse Pittet move their closeup cows to a large pen three weeks prior to their expected calving date. The cows are kept there until they calve to avoid any isolation-related stress. The pens provide sufficient space for a cow to move to a corner, away from the other animals, thus minimizing the risk of a calf being crushed. As Alphonse Pittet explains: “We have nearly 350 calvings per year, and since we’ve put the cows in this environment, we intervene about 25 times a year with cows that are calving. We let nature run its course. As soon as a cow has calved, we go get the calf and we open a gate to bring the cow into a pen that holds only cows that have calved in the past four days.” He adds, however, that experienced personnel need to watch for any signs of aggressive behaviour among fresh cows. But in a calm herd, everything goes relatively well. Competition when a new cow joins the fresh cows is minimized, since only a gate separates the two groups and they were all in the same pen during the three-week pre-calving period.

Alphonse Pittet sees a number of benefits to this system. First, less intervention means less work and less stress for workers. The cows are more at ease calving in a familiar environment, which means there are fewer complications, and the animals get through this critical period and recover more easily.

Stocking density

Requirements 2.6 :

Stocking density must not exceed 1.2 cows per stall in free stall systems.

Effective April 1, 2021, stocking density must not normally exceed 1.1 cow per stall.

Effective April 1, 2031, stocking density must not normally exceed 1 cow per stall.

Resting areas in group pens must provide at least 9.3 m² (100 ft²) per Holstein cow.¹

Numerous studies have highlighted the consequences of overpopulated stalls in open housing. Reduced resting time, particularly among dominant cows, is one of the main effects of increased stocking density, and it thus runs counter to animal care criteria.

At La Ferme Pittet inc., the freestall facilities renovated in 2016 had a stocking density of one cow per stall. With the purchase of additional quota, the herd is now close to 1.1 cow per stall. After analyzing the productivity and technical aspects of their herd, the owners determined that while herd productivity had increased slightly since 2016, it was not in line with the improvement in the herd's genetics over recent years. Since the quality of the herd's diet had not changed, Mr. Pittet concluded that the loss of potential was due to overstocking in the barn. The owners are thus planning to expand the building to reduce density in the stalls, but also in the feeding area, which is just as important in his view.

Handling or moving down cattle

Requirements 4.1.1 :

Apparatus that are designed to lift, move, and support down cattle must be used according to the manufacturer's specifications. Hip lifters must only be used to lift an animal for a short duration to help an animal stand on its own—they must never be used to move down cattle.

Down cattle must not be moved by hoisting by chain, dragging, or lifting without adequate body support. Personnel must not repeatedly encourage a down animal to rise if it has demonstrated it cannot get up or move.

If an electric prod is used, it must be used in consultation with a veterinarian and only applied on the rear flank and upper rear leg (twice at maximum) when absolutely necessary to determine if the animal can rise or if euthanasia needs to be considered.¹



At La Ferme Pittet inc., clean calving pens provide adequate space, improved comfort, and reduced stress for cows preparing to calve.



At Ferme Bergitte, calves as of three weeks old are placed in groups of two or three. Adjustable calf pens facilitate grouping.

Calves: grouping, hutches, colostrum and weaning

Requirements 2.2.1 :

For all calf housing systems:

Housing must allow calves to easily stand up, lie down, turn completely around, stand fully upright (without touching the top of the enclosure), adopt sternal and lateral resting postures, groom themselves, and have visual contact with other cattle.

The bedded area for group-housed calves must be large enough to allow all calves to rest comfortably at the same time.

Where tethering of calves is permitted, the tether must include a collar.

For indoor calf housing:

Calves must not be tethered as part of normal indoor housing.

Producers raising calves individually must develop a plan to transition to pair/group housing methods, in consultation with a veterinarian or other qualified advisor.

Effective April 1, 2031, calves that are healthy, thriving, and compatible must be housed in pairs or groups by 4 weeks of age.¹

Studies show that grouping two to eight calves together as soon as they are strong enough presents several advantages: calves spend more time feeding, are less fearful, experience less stress, and are better able to cope with novelty, all of which reinforce their immune system and improve growth. This is indeed what Marie-Christine

Leclerc has observed at Ferme Bergitte, in Saint-Georges. “Before, our calves were fed with an automatic feeder, in groups of six to eight calves,” she explains. “But nine months ago, we set up individual adjustable pens. We can remove one or two separators to group three calves together when they’re three weeks old.” When grouping calves, it is vital to pay close attention to the health status and compatibility of each calf before integrating the animal into a group. “We make sure that they have feed and hay to appetite. That way, they’re always busy and are less inclined to suck at the other calves. They become more resourceful, and competition subsides rapidly. We keep the calves in the same groups after weaning, which reduces stress during that period.” At Ferme Bergitte, the all-in/all-out approach is applied not only to calves but also to heifers, yearling heifers, and dry cows. The same animals change pens together, at the same time, which lessens the competition associated with pen changes. “With this method, the calves continue to gain weight quickly after weaning, and we notice they’re sick far less often,” Ms. Leclerc adds.

When asked to name the chief drawback of this method, she laughingly answers: “We need to be there to give them milk! On the other hand, it gives us more opportunity to observe them, contrary to before. Plus, they’re close to the barn entrance, so we go right by them more often.”

The Code mentions, however, that calves in poor health should be housed individually to give them a chance to recover. Likewise, calves that are grouped together should ideally be of similar age and size to reduce competitive behaviour. If numbers are insufficient, grouping can be delayed.¹

Hutches and other outdoor housing:

Calves housed outdoors, including in hutches, must have physical contact with another calf unless they need to be separated for health reasons or they need to be protected from inclement weather.

Calves may be tethered only if housed in hutches that provide access to an area outside the hutch.¹

Requirements 3.3 :

Calves must receive a diet that promotes satiety and maintains health, growth, and vigour.

Newborn calves must be offered a minimum total daily intake of 15% birth weight (6 L for Holsteins) and from 7–28 days of age must be offered a minimum total daily intake of 20% birth weight (8 L for Holsteins) in milk/milk replacer.

The quantity of milk/milk replacer offered to calves at risk of cold stress must be increased.

Calves must be gradually weaned over a period of at least 5 days, and they must be at least 8 weeks old before weaning is completed.¹

Disbudding and Dehorning

Requirements 4.2.2 :

Horn bud removal must be done by 2 months of age. Only in exceptional circumstances can individual cattle be dehorned after 2 months of age.

When removing buds or horns, local anesthesia and systemic analgesia must be provided.

Banding is not an acceptable method of dehorning.

If larger horns must be removed, bleeding must be controlled.¹

Euthanasia

Requirements 7.3 :

Cattle euthanized using gunshot or euthanasia drugs must be assessed to confirm that they are unconscious immediately after application. If an animal is not immediately unconscious, then a repeat application must be immediately delivered.

Cattle euthanized using a penetrating captive bolt must be assessed to confirm that they are unconscious immediately after application and before the secondary step to cause death is applied. If an animal is not immediately unconscious, then a repeat application must be immediately delivered.

Before moving or leaving the animal, death must be confirmed.¹

Although every breeder would like to bypass this step, euthanizing an animal is at some point unavoidable. In cases where it is necessary to put an end to suffering or when there is no possibility that an animal's condition will improve, cattle should be euthanized immediately by

trained and qualified personnel (Code: Requirement 7.1) Speaking at the *Colloque sur la santé des troupeaux laitiers* in 2022, Dr. Brandon Treichler indicated that once a cow has been down for 24 hours, the likelihood of recovery is cut in three. He recommended that breeders make quick and coherent decisions in these situations, despite their attachment to their animals. He also presented a euthanasia decision tree for participants at the conference. By following the diagram, producers can make more rational decisions in difficult circumstances.

DECISION TREE FOR EUTHANASIA - BRANDON TREICHLER DVM

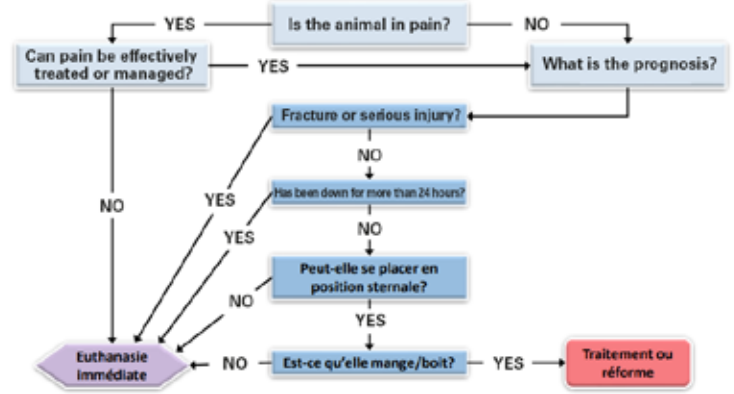


Diagram presented by Dr. Brandon Treichler at the 2022 *Colloque sur la santé des troupeaux laitiers*.

At Ferme Bergitte, Ms. Leclerc says the owners make their decision collectively when there is little chance that a cow will recover. They recently bought a penetrating captive bolt gun after consulting with their veterinarian on the use of such a device; they also follow the instructions provided on the reference sheet. Ms. Leclerc adds that if their veterinarian is already on site to confirm the animal's diagnosis, he is the one who performs euthanasia. They restrict the use of the bolt gun to cases where they cannot wait for the veterinarian to carry out the procedure, over the weekend, for example. As mentioned in the Code, they repeat the procedure a second time to ensure the animal has died.

A proper method of euthanasia must result in rapid loss of consciousness followed by death to avoid causing fear, pain, or distress in animals.

Foot and leg health and hoof trimming

Requirements 5.7 :

Personnel must regularly observe cattle for signs of lameness or leg injuries, to diagnose and treat them quickly.

To minimize lameness and leg injuries, producers must set thresholds for the occurrence of lameness and leg injuries and take corrective actions when the thresholds are exceeded.

Infectious hoof lesions must be treated to control the infection.

Therapeutic hoof trimming must include strategies to relieve pain and pressure on the injured area and promote healing.¹

It goes without saying that hoof trimming and treating lameness are basic components of animal care. For cows to be able to move around and go about their business, they need to move easily on their four legs. Producers and their employees thus need to react quickly when a problem is detected. When personnel responsible for hoof trimming are suitably equipped, they are much more likely to deal with cases of lameness.

Such is the conclusion Alphonse Pittet has arrived at after years of experience. They recently installed a series of gates that make it possible to select individual cows as they exit the milking parlour, directing them into a circular corridor that takes them to the trimming stall, without having to use a halter. This way, only one person is needed for hoof trimming, so the intervention takes less time. “Modifying our existing facilities and buying the hydraulic chute required a considerable investment, of course, but if you take into account the losses associated with delayed treatment and the cost of the labour when more than one person is needed to intervene, I think the investment is worthwhile,” Mr. Pittet says.

To complement these requirements, as of next year, dairy producers will be encouraged to consult with their veterinarian regarding a pain management procedure for cases where a trim has impacted internal hoof tissues.²

Concrete application of the Code

The *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle* is the foundation of the proAction Animal Care module. As Chantal Fleury, Assistant Director of Economic Research at Les Producteurs de lait du Québec, explains: “Most of the requirements indicate the outcomes expected from producers and not the means to achieve them. The proAction program establishes how to verify that all farms are effectively implementing the Code requirements.” This means that cattle assessors doing proAction validations will check producer compliance with the Code.

The Code was updated by a committee composed of dairy producers, researchers, and industry stakeholders. Numerous consultations were conducted, and all led to conclusions aimed at promoting the welfare of dairy cattle. You only need to be attentive to the needs of a herd to realize that a comfortable cow is one that produces more and for a longer period. And that’s key to profitability for every dairy farm!

1. Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle – 2023
2. Webinar on the updated version of the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle, UPA ■

Tail Injuries

Requirement 4.2.4 :

Cattle must not be tail docked unless medically necessary for an individual animal, and the procedure must be done using pain control.¹

