

# THE PULSE

Spring 2022 • Holstein Association USA, Inc.



**U.S. REGISTERED HOLSTEINS<sup>®</sup>**

THE WORLD'S PERFECT COW

The Pulse is proudly sponsored by





# COMPONENTS ARE A TWO HORSE RACE

**W**hat brings the most value to your milk check?  
Butterfat and protein.

That's the short answer.

Since the Federal Milk Marketing Order reforms implemented in 2000, Multiple Component Pricing (MCP) has been the mechanism to price the supermajority of the nation's milk. Fast forward two decades later and 92% of the milk we sold from our dairy farms last year was priced via MCP standards.

Only the Arizona, Appalachian, Florida, and Southeast federal orders price milk on a fluid basis due to the large Class I beverage markets served in those area. In these four markets . . . representing about 8% of the nation's milk . . . the pounds of milk still matter. Everywhere else, pounds of butterfat and protein drive the milk check.

Back to MCP pricing — what's more important butterfat or protein?

Breed for both.

That's the second short answer.

In the early days of MCP pricing, protein lead the leader board for many consecutive years as it fetched the highest pay price. Then consumer demands began to shift. That's because medical, nutrition, and public perception changed on saturated fats in foods such as butter, cheese, eggs, and meat. As this situation unfolded, butterfat has become the second racehorse on the track as both butterfat and protein began taking the lead in the milk check price component race.

Before we talk about market shifts, we must ask ourselves, "What does this have to do with Holsteins and developing the next generation?"

Everything.

Given the importance of both butterfat and protein, the Total Performance Index (TPI) formula weighs butterfat and protein equally with each component carrying a 19% weight. Just a few years ago, this "equal weight" concept was vigorously discussed at the Genetic Advancement Committee (GAC). The conclusion was that both components will likely take turns leading milk check pay prices. This important conclusion not only was endorsed by the GAC Committee, the Holstein Association USA Staff and the Holstein Association USA Board of Directors also gave their approval. Given the impact on milk checks, this equal weighting will serve Holstein breeders well in the years to come.

Here's how milk prices unfolded since those discussions.

When looking at March 2022 milk checks, butterfat outpaced protein for the third straight month when evaluating Federal Milk Marketing Order monthly pay prices. In March, butterfat fetched \$3.09 per pound and protein yielded \$2.72.

Prior to this three-month lead run for butterfat, protein pay prices led the way in milk checks from September 2019 through December 2021. Before that time, butterfat had a 48-month stretch dating back to 2016 when this milk component outperformed protein on a repeated basis.

To say the least, Holstein breeders have stepped up to the challenge. As CEO John Meyer reports in his column in this issue of *The Pulse*, the Holstein breed set a new record for butterfat percent at over 4%. Given the Holstein breed also achieved record milk production last year that means pounds of butterfat also set a new high watermark.

## LOOKING AT THE NATION'S MILK SUPPLY

Not only did the Holstein breed post a new record butterfat level, so did the entirety of the milk from the Federal Milk Marketing Orders as all shipped milk yielded a 4.01% butterfat. This new record in 2021 pushed the previous 3.98% butterfat record that stood since 1945. With over 83% of the dairy semen sold in the U.S. last year being Holstein, our breed played a major role in lifting butterfat levels in the nation's milk supply and the Holstein cow is helping meet consumer demand for higher solids milk.

Despite all our success, the U.S. largely remains a butterfat deficit market as we keep nearly all our butterfat for our domestic consumer market. Indeed, our exported dairy products, representing 17% of the U.S. milk production, is mostly low fat dairy products. Simply said, we have more room to grow butterfat production.

As for the future, U.S. Holstein breeders should consider butterfat and protein as equal partners in milk check revenue. But remember, we get paid for pounds, not percentages in milk checks. So, total pounds are more important than percentages. Keep these considerations in mind when making genetic selection decisions future generations.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Corey".

**Corey Geiger, President  
Holstein Association USA, Inc.**







**CEO's Message**

# THE HOLSTEIN BREED SETS NEW RECORDS

All of you, as Holstein breeders, have a lot to be optimistic about and take pride in today. In this column, we'll focus on some of the exiting new accomplishments you've made with your cows.

The Holstein breed's milk equivalent (ME) breed average for production in 2021 was just calculated, and you've set new records! Last year U.S. Registered Holsteins averaged 28,047 pounds of milk, 1,121 pounds of fat, 4%, and 877 pounds of protein, 3.1%, on a mature equivalent (ME) basis.

This is the first time the ME average for milk in the Holstein breed is above 28,000 pounds, and the 28,047 pounds of milk figure is a 409 pound increase compared to 2020!

The 1,121 ME average for fat represents the first time the Holstein breed has been above 1,100 pounds for fat, and is an increase of 35 pounds over last year. This is the first time in the history of the Holstein breed that we have reached the 4% fat level!

The 877 pounds of protein is an increase of 22 pounds compared to 2020. Hearty congratulations to all of you for these tremendous production increases!

These numbers for milk, fat, and protein clearly show the advantage and dominance of the Holstein breed in all three categories when compared to any other breed, or combination of breeds, which is a true credit to all of you Holstein breeders. Bottom line, more pounds of milk, fat, and protein translate to more money in Holstein breeders' pockets.



**“Bottom line, more pounds of milk, fat, and protein translate to more money in Holstein breeders' pockets.”**



Hats off to the eight 2021 Herds of Excellence whose profiles can be found on pages 8 through 12 of this issue. These outstanding Holstein herds excel in both production and in type and are examples of how you can get the best of both in one package.

This year's honorees averaged 35,843 pounds of milk, 1,478 pounds of fat, and 1,116 pounds of protein. These herds have a lofty average classification score of 86.9 points and all of the herds are well over 90% homebred, while four of the herds are 100% homebred.


The Brantner, Kestell, Koepke, Koester, Long, Siemers, Vandertie, and Zwald family herds provide excellent examples that show whatever you're interested in breeding for, the Holstein breed has the diversity in genetics to accomplish your goals.

Kudos are also in order for Blondin Goldwyn Subliminal-ETS, and her owners, Budjon Farms and Peter and Lyn Vail, as Subliminal has won the honor of being Holstein Association USA's 2021 Star of the Breed! Enjoy the story on Subliminal on pages 5 through 7 in the magazine.

Congratulations to all of the award winners and all of you reading this who breed Registered Holsteins. Your ongoing commitment to the constant-never-ending improvement of the Holstein breed is evidenced by the outstanding achievements laid out in this issue of *The Pulse*.

Without a doubt, now is a great time to be in the Holstein business!



  
**John M. Meyer, Chief Executive Officer  
Holstein Association USA, Inc.**



Presenting the 2021

# STAR OF THE BREED



Photo courtesy of The Bullvine

## **BLONDIN GOLDWYN SUBLIMINAL-ETS • EX-97 4E**

11-01 • 2X • 365D • 44,740M • 4.3%F • 1,921F • 3.1%P • 1,366P

**1st 150,000 Pound Cow and Grand Champion - 2021 Midwest Spring National Holstein Show**

**2nd 150,000 Pound Cow - 2021 International National Holstein Show**

**OWNED BY:** Budjon Farms and Peter & Lyn Vail, Lomira, Wisconsin

### **ABOUT THE AWARD**

The Star of the Breed recognition is given annually to one Registered Holstein® cow that exemplifies outstanding production combined with exceptional type. To be eligible for the Star of the Breed award, a cow must place in the top five in her class at a National Show, be in a herd enrolled in the TriStar<sup>SM</sup> program and have an official classification score.

Once the eligible cows are determined, the following calculation is used to determine the award recipient: Combined Mature Equivalent (ME) Fat and Protein + Age Adjusted Classification Score X (Breed Average ME CFP/Breed Average Age Adjusted Score.)



# A CHAMPION SPIRIT

Subliminal overcomes the odds to achieve high performance and longevity.

**T**he 2021 Star of the Breed has achieved a rockstar status only a small percentage of cows will reach in their lifetime. With just the mention of her name, this year's honoree is recognized by dairy enthusiasts around the world.

Holstein Association USA is pleased to recognize Blondin Goldwyn Subliminal-ETS as the 2021 Star of the Breed. The highest honor presented to a Registered Holstein®, the award recognizes a cow that balances exceptional production and high type.

Subliminal embodies the Star of the Breed with a classification score of EX-97 4E and lifetime production record of 310,707 pounds of milk; 12,360 pounds of fat (4.0%); and 9,869 pounds of protein (3.2%). At 13 years old, she is the oldest recipient in the award's 14-year history.

Subliminal is owned by Tom and Kelli Cull and Peter and Lyn Vail and was bred by Ferme Blondin in St. Placide, Quebec. Her owners say she has many strengths, making her an ideal cow to have in the barn.

"For the type of cow we want, she's as close to the total package as you can get," Tom Cull says. "She has extreme type, extreme reproductive power, and extreme production."

## PEDIGREE POTENTIAL

In August 2012, Tom was working with Gen-Com Holsteins at the Quebec Summer Show in Canada when a recently fresh junior three-year-old cow caught his eye. Tom thought she fit the mold of cows he and Peter had been purchasing at the time — ones with extreme type and prolific pedigrees.

"Subliminal was a young cow that had great potential," Tom says. "Not only from a type perspective, but also from a breeding and development perspective."

Subliminal's pedigree piqued Tom's interest. He had already been impressed by several other cows from the illustrious Supra family, which helped solidify his decision to purchase her with the Vails. Subliminal is out of Blondin Red-Marker Sublime EX-93, and her grandam is Blondin James Supra-ET EX-90, who is out of Blondin Skychief Supra EX-93 3E.

"Part of the reason I saw potential in her was from seeing all the other family members on herd visits to Blondin that had great promise and had gone on to do good things for them," Tom explains.

Simon Lalande and Kim Côté of Ferme Blondin say they will always remember the day Tom expressed his interest in buying Subliminal. "She was a very fresh junior three-year-old, and we were in love with her. She was still green and not ready to show, but we couldn't leave her home," Kim recalls, adding "We were very pleased that she was going to such a great home with passionate people."



Trevor Tuman leads Subliminal at World Dairy Expo in 2015. Photo courtesy of The Bullvine.

After settling into her new home at Budjon Farms in Lomira, Wisconsin, Subliminal made her World Dairy Expo debut with a seventh-place finish in the Junior Three-Year-Old Class. She topped off the year by being named Honorable Mention All-American Junior Three-Year-Old Cow and Reserve All-Canadian Junior Three-Year-Old.

## ROAD TO RECOVERY

Subliminal's story took an unexpected twist in the winter of 2013 when she slipped in the cow yard while in heat and dislocated her hip. Tom didn't waste any time calling Dr. Sheila McGuirk at the University of Wisconsin – Madison School of Veterinary Medicine.

Subliminal was taken to the UW-Madison Vet Hospital where Dr. McGuirk and her colleagues successfully performed surgery to put her hip back in place. Subliminal spent the next 90 days on the mend in a sling before graduating to hobbles.

She returned home in the late spring of 2013 and was kept in an individual sand-bedded pen made specifically for her. Subliminal was a moderately sized cow at the time, something Tom says played a significant role in her recovery. While recuperating, Subliminal made quite the impression on those caring for her.

"She's been an absolute pleasure to work with not only from a performance perspective, but also because she lets us care for her and takes care of herself," Tom says. "She's just one of those cool cows to work with because she responds so well to care and management."

Each new step in the recovery process brought the risk of slipping again, but Subliminal continued to be smart about how she carried herself. Once healed, she was bred back and calved in April 2014. It took a team of people, special care, and Subliminal's own cooperation for her to heal completely.

## THE STORY IS FAR FROM OVER

In 2014, just one year after her tumultuous fall and dislocated hip, Subliminal returned to the colored shavings and earned a respectable ninth place finish in the Five-Year-Old class. She was bred back and due to calve in 2015. This is the year she came into her own and received





Photo courtesy of Nick Sarbacker, CattleClub.com.



Subliminal was named Grand Champion of the Midwest Spring National Holstein Show in 2021. Photo courtesy of Coswmpopolitan.

an unthinkable honor - the nod for Supreme Champion of the World Dairy Expo Junior Show.

This was an emotional win, mentions Kelli, "seeing her out there as if nothing had ever happened, her mobility unquestioned and watching my nephew Trevor and her glide around the ring, it was a magical moment for all involved in her journey thus far. Subliminal definitely beat all odds."

This amazing showing accolade was only the beginning of her triumph back to the tanbark trail. Throughout the next several years, she kept up a pace in the showing many cows only dream of. She was named Junior All-American Aged Cow and Honorable Mention All-American Aged Cow in 2015, All-Canadian Mature Cow in 2016, and won the Lifetime Production class at World Dairy Expo and garnered All-American honors in 2017.

After taking a year off in 2018, she came back strong in 2019. Although she suffered from a tremendous bout of illness the week of World Dairy Expo and had to be hooked up to IV's all week, she pulled off an honorable third place finish in the 150,000 Pound Production Cow Class.

"She's a very smart, very clean, very ladylike kind of an individual to work with," comments Tom. "She's a cow that is always very aware of herself, and her surroundings. We believe those characteristics are what have given her the ability to take care of herself for eight lactations and eight natural calvings."

With no World Dairy Expo in 2020, Subliminal traveled to Circleville, Ohio to compete in the North American Open Show. Here, she battled with Butz-Butler Goldwyn Barbara in the Lifetime Production class and finished with a strong second place and Reserve All-American honor.

With over 70 daughters to date, by an array of sires, Subliminal's chapter of leaving her reproductive stamp on the industry is a continued work in progress. She has been successfully conventional flushed and IVF'ed multiple times over the years. Numerous embryos have been sold all over Europe, along with a multitude of other countries including Australia, the Netherlands, the U.K., and Japan.

## THE ULTIMATE HONOR

In May 2021, Subliminal received a distinction not many cows in the Holstein breed can boast. She was classified

EX-97. The honor came shortly after Subliminal was named Grand Champion of the Midwest Spring National show, and her owners thought it was the pinnacle of her success story.

Although hesitant at first, her owners decided to take Subliminal out to compete one more time. She took second place in the 150,000 Pound Production Cow Class at World Dairy Expo last October. Subliminal was 18 months fresh, last calving in April 2020, and in her eighth lactation — making her placing even more impressive.

Each milestone Subliminal has accomplished is made sweeter because of the challenges she overcame along the way. Tom says Subliminal's 2021 Star of the Breed award is the culmination of everything she has achieved over the years.

"After she went 97, we didn't know if we would show her again," Tom says. "After she placed second at World Dairy Expo, I thought that was her last exclamation point. Now, being named Star of the Breed is another exclamation point that never even crossed my mind."

Subliminal's story has resonated with many people over the years, and she's gathered a fan base around the globe. From those who cared for her at UW – Madison, to the team at Budjon, to those who watch her parade around the showing, Subliminal has a special place in many people's hearts.

Their cow's incredible journey is something the Culls and Vails are happy to share with others. "When we get visitors to the farm, the cow has somewhat of a 'rockstar' status. Subliminal, along with our other EX-97, Rosiers Goldwyn Blexy, live together in the same gigantic pack pen, and are always up for photo opportunities," Tom says. "It's truly neat to see people's reactions when they view not one, but two 97-point cows in one pen, happy and healthy, and mobile, at the same farm."

Subliminal's classification score, showing accolades, and milk production records speak for themselves. However, her story consists of more than ribbons on the wall or milk in the tank. Her journey demonstrates perseverance and her personality shines through in every chapter along the way.

"Subliminal can be an inspiration to other cows, theoretically," Tom says. "The Star of the Breed award isn't just about the cows that are champions, it's about the cows that are well rounded, and I think she exemplifies that as well as any cow in the Holstein breed."



# Herds of Excellence

Holstein Association USA is proud to present our 2021 Herds of Excellence award recipients. These eight herds have all achieved the rigorous criteria to qualify for this honor.

The award is broken into three herd size divisions based on the number of cows included in production averages. Each herd size division has specific criteria that must be met to qualify for the award.

## Herd Size Division

## Production Criteria

### Division 1: 500+ cows



15 percent above breed average  
Mature Equivalent for milk, fat  
and protein

### Division 2: 100-499 cows



20 percent above breed average  
Mature Equivalent for milk, fat  
and protein

### Division 3: 10-99 cows



25 percent above breed average  
Mature Equivalent for milk, fat  
and protein

## All herds receiving the award must also meet the following criteria:

Have classified within the last year and have an age adjusted classification score of 83 points or higher

Have at least 70 percent of the herd homebred

Be enrolled in Holstein Association USA's TriStar<sup>SM</sup> program



# Division 1: 500+ Cows



Back row; Dan, Janina, Jordan & Connor Siemers. Front row; Josh, Lauren, Jake, Jenny & Paul Siemers.

## Siemers Holstein Farms Inc.

The Siemers Family • Newton, WI

**N**ow in the farm's fifth and sixth generations, the Siemers family strives for excellence with an unwavering focus on being good cow people. Their mission is simple: to make every generation better than the last.

The Siemers family says they feel blessed to have worked with several of the industry's best cow families including Roz, Hanker, Bombi and Paris. They say these families make their best conformation and performance cows and are responsible for placing more than 50 bulls in AI per year.

"My advice to other breeders is to find the type of cow that you like, and make sure she can be profitable and sustainable for several generations," Dan Siemers says. "Figure out what niche you want to shoot for, and make sure it's going to make the right kind of cows that will accomplish your long-term goals."

When making breeding decisions they look for strength in the cow's conformation, so their herd will produce more pounds of combined fat and protein for longer periods of time. They have bred thousands of Excellent cows over the years, and annually breed more than a hundred new Excellent and a few hundred new Very Good two-year-olds. They have achieved 30 Progressive Genetic Herd honors.

**98.5% Homebred**

**Milk: 35,865 Fat: 1,511 Protein: 1,100**  
**Average Classification Score – 84.8**

## Bomaz Inc.

The Zwald Family • Hammond, WI

**B**ob and Kay Zwald of Bomaz Inc. farm alongside their daughter Annette and her husband Steve Schalla, and son Tom and his wife Ashley. "We call ourselves Team Bomaz," Bob Zwald said. This reflects the emphasis they place on teamwork when working with each other, key employees, and consultants.

Teamwork played a role in their expansion from 700 to 1,500 cows. Bomaz Farms started milking in a 40-stall rotary parlor in 2020, which helped them achieve their goal of more labor efficiency. They also improved cow comfort through a hybrid ventilation system in their new freestall barns.

"It's been a very good transition," Bob said. "It was the next generation's project, and they did an excellent job."

The family strives to continuously improve the genetic progress of their Registered Holstein® herd. They converted their old milking parlor to an IVF facility and oocyte collection center and average 20 animals a week on an accelerated IVF program. The Zwalds focus on breeding profitable, trouble-free cows that stay healthy and live a long time.

"Every piece of the puzzle has to work together," Bob said about their herd management. "Every part of the program has to click to make it work right."



Back Row: Steve & Annette Schalla, Bob & Kay Zwald and Tom & Ashley (holding Emily) Zwald Front row: Kately, Abby & Matthew Schalla, and Luke, Noah & Hannah Zwald.

**92.9% Homebred**

**Milk: 32,882 Fat: 1,319 Protein: 1,046**  
**Average Classification Score – 85.6**



## Division 2: 100-499 Cows



Left to Right: Cynthia & Lance Koester, Brent Koester, Bria & Neil Bruegger, Ethan & Alissa Fehr, Erica Koester, Kyle Koester, Cindy Koester, Dan and Amber Koester in center, and Lydia & Levi Koester, children of Lance & Cynthia, in front.

### Koester Dairy Inc.

The Koester Family • Dakota, IL

Improving their Registered Holstein® herd gives the Koester family a constant sense of purpose and pride. Dan and Amber work in tandem with their three sons, Kyle, Brent, and Lance; daughter, Cindy; and daughter-in-law, Cynthia. Together, they care for 420 cows, and place emphasis on breeding for superior production. Five of their heifers now have more than 3,000 GTP!®, with two of those having over 3,100.

What the Koester family enjoy most about raising Registered Holsteins is making good matings and seeing the results. Genomic data influences everything they do. “I enjoy watching calves grow up and turn into cows,” Dan says. “With good feed and a good environment, the Holstein cow has unlimited potential.”

Holstein Association USA services that have helped them include genomic data, Enlight® and performance rankings to measure how their herd is doing compared to others across the country. For the future, the Koesters hope to continue what they’re doing, and get a little better each year.

“My kids’ work ethic is just incredible,” he says. “If something needs doing, they’ll get it done. We’ve honestly just enjoyed always working with these cattle.”

**98.8% Homebred**

**Milk: 35,221 Fat: 1,465 Protein: 1,110**

**Average Classification Score – 85.0**

### Koepke Farms Inc.

The Koepke Family • Oconomowoc, WI

Throughout the years, the Koepke family has enjoyed seeing the full circle of dairy production. From the soil to the table, they are involved in every step. It all begins with a plant, John Koepke says, fed to a cow. From the cow comes milk that is transformed into beautiful wheels of LaBelle cheese.

“Keeping our herd registered means we can better manage their genetics,” says Becky Cook, herd manager. “It gives our buyers the confidence they need in the quality of the animal they are purchasing.” In the last year, the Koepkes have sold more than 80 young cows as breeding stock to other farmers.

Managing cow comfort, rations, and the breeding program all play a part in the profitability and sustainability of their herd. Holstein Association USA programs like Redbook Plus allow them to select bulls meeting genetic criteria for TPI, cheese merit, udder composite, and feet and leg scores. The resulting calves are all registered with the help of EasyID.

At the end of the day, John says it is always nice to be recognized among the Herds of Excellence: “It is a pat on the back from our peers.”



Kim, John, Dave & James Koepke.

**100% Homebred**

**Milk: 35,002 Fat: 1,433 Protein: 1,060**

**Average Classification Score – 84.9**



# Division 3: 10-99 Cows



Dan, Julie, Austin & Bridget Vandertie.

## Doorco Holsteins

The Vandertie Family • Brussels, WI

“As a Registered Holstein breeder, you strive every day to have the cows do their best,” says Dan Vandertie of Doorco Holsteins. “You have to do all the big things right, but you have to do all the small things right too,” he adds. This includes details like making sure cows are comfortable and growing and feeding high quality forages.

Dan and his wife Julie took over the farm from Dan’s father in 1987. Now, they are beginning the farm transition process with their son Austin, a recent graduate from the University of Wisconsin - Madison.

When it comes to their breeding program, the family uses many of the tools available to them, such as Holstein USA’s Redbook, pedigrees, and some genomic testing. “We enjoy seeing improvement in each generation, deepening cow families through long lasting animals with the will to milk,” Dan says.

As they look toward the future of their farm, the Vanderties hope to grow from the impressive base of homebred genetics in their herd. They currently have 14 Excellent cows in the barn and have been honored with Holstein USA’s Progressive Breeder Registry award for 47 consecutive years.

**100% Homebred**

**Milk: 35,466 Fat: 1,397 Protein: 1,085**

**Average Classification Score – 88.4**

## B-Long Holsteins

The Long Family • New London, WI

Bruce Long has been involved with Registered Holsteins® since he was 12 years old. The young 4-H’er set a tradition in motion that continues in the family business today. Nearly every animal in the herd traces back to two original cows from his childhood.

Mastering the fundamentals is key to be successful in the dairy industry, Bruce says. It comes down to being consistent in your management style, keeping your cows comfortable and giving them the best feed possible.

“The more they eat, the more they milk,” he says. Together with his wife, Brenda, and son, Bret, the family milks 50 cows twice a day. Because of their commitment and attention to detail, they generate large volumes of milk from their herd.

Using Holstein USA programs like Red Book Plus™, Bruce says he breeds for wide and deep-framed cows, with good legs and udders. Profitable selection decisions like these, as well as taking exceptional care of their cows, are the reasons B-Long Holsteins have consistently been named among the Herds of Excellence.

“It puts us in elite company, and we are proud to be a part it,” Bruce says. “The Registered Holstein cow has given us many friendships and opportunities.”



Bret, Brenda & Bruce Long.

**100% Homebred**

**Milk: 35,059 Fat: 1,377 Protein: 1,122**

**Average Classification Score – 88.2**



## Division 3: 10-99 Cows



Mark & Jelena Brantner.

### Show-Mar Holsteins

The Brantner Family • Evans City, PA

Attention to detail and going the extra mile are key to raising the ideal herd at Show-Mar Holsteins. It's the small things that count, adding up to create an efficient operation, Mark Brantner says. Things like getting up at midnight to check calving cows, always having clean water and not cutting any corners.

Since the beginning, this philosophy has helped the Brantners raise 70 Registered Holsteins® from the ground up. "Winning this award means a lot to us," Mark says. "We started with only five cows back in the 90s."

Today, the Brantner family milks three times a day, with an average of 97 pounds of milk per cow. Over time, they've raised several cows scoring over EX-90, with one scoring at EX-95 and have a current BAA of 112.2. "The first excellent cow we bred peaked at an Excellent 94," Mark says. "Now 75% of our cows go back to her."

Registration and classification are the foundation for raising high-performing animals, he explains. With the goal of owning their own farm this year, the Brantners look positively toward the future. From more milk production to winning future shows, they hope to continue improving their herd through consistent hard work, every day.

**100% Homebred**

**Milk: 36,662 Fat: 1,622 Protein: 1,141**  
**Average Classification Score – 89.5**

### Ever-Green-View Holsteins, LLC

The Kestell Family • Waldo, WI

The Kestell family practices consistency in every aspect of their farm, from their breeding strategy, to caring for cows, to providing high quality feed. Tom and his wife Gin farm in a partnership with their son Chris and his wife Jennifer.

"We enjoy seeing the cows perform well, but we also enjoy having a healthy herd of cows. We want to take care of them so that they can reach their potential." Tom explains.

The Ever-Green-View herd is known for tremendous production and components, and high type. Their BAA of 111.6 is sixth in the country for herds of their size, and they have had several cows receive national milk production record status.

They continue to utilize embryo transfer and in turn sell their genetics to foreign markets. While fulfilling the needs of buyers is important, Tom says the focus must be on the home farm and the type of cows that work well for their operation.

"It's the most prestigious honor that we are able to win," Tom said, referring to the Herd of Excellence award. "Of course, you do it not by trying to win, but as a result of what you do and what your help does every day."



Chris, Gin, Jennifer & Tom Kestell.

**97.7% Homebred**

**Milk: 40,588 Fat: 1,698 Protein: 1,267**  
**Average Classification Score – 88.6**





# CULTURED ON THE FARM

How an Iowa family got their start producing farmstead yogurt.

On a crisp winter morning in Northeast Iowa, community members can be found venturing out of their homes for a trip to Country View Dairy’s farmstead store. Here, it’s all about the yogurt. Customers browse the display case for their favorite flavors, help themselves to frozen yogurt from the soft serve machine, and watch dairy products being made through the viewing window. Just across the farmyard is the freestall barn, where the Rapson family is busy caring for their herd of Registered Holstein® cows.

Dave and Carolee Rapson moved from Michigan to Hawkeye, Iowa, in 2002 to pursue their dream of dairy farming and established Country View Dairy. For several years, the couple watched their five children and their farm grow and flourish. Eventually, the Rapsons decided it was time to diversify the family farm and create a sustainable business for future generations.

“Back in 2008 and 2009 when things were tough, we knew we had to do more than just milk cows,” Dave Rapson says. This planted the seed for what would become their farmstead creamery. Today, Dave and Carolee operate Country View Dairy alongside their sons Jesse and Seth, their families, and 15 employees.

Although Carolee had been making homemade yogurt for the family for a couple of years, the Rapsons did not settle on producing yogurt on a larger scale right away. After doing thorough research, the family discovered there were not any other dairy farms in the area making yogurt.

Yogurt’s popularity has increased throughout the past decade, and it is one of the fastest growing dairy products in the world. They also saw a growing demand for local, natural, cultured food in their community. Combined, these factors made yogurt a logical choice.

“Yogurt is the most value-added product you could use; milk goes a long way with yogurt,” says Jesse, who explained they yield higher volumes of yogurt than the amount of milk used to make the product.



Top: Just beyond the Rapson home and Country View Dairy sign in the driveway sits the farmstead store. Inside, customers can be found browsing the yogurt case.

## Diversified distribution

In 2011, the Rapsons set their plan in motion and built a brand-new, state-certified creamery and began making yogurt. Located less than 100 feet from the milkhouse, the creamery is truly a farmstead operation. “Milk comes straight over from the barn,” Dave shares. The creamery features a self-serve storefront with a viewing window, where visitors can watch yogurt being made four days a week.

In addition to their on-farm store, Country View Dairy products are found in various grocery stores, coffee shops, restaurants, and college dining halls. Their dairy products are distributed primarily in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin; but can also be found in Illinois, Nebraska, Michigan, and South Dakota.

Foodservice has been a core customer segment since the beginning. Dave says they were in contact with Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, before the creamery was even up and running. Their connections gave them insight into what is important from a foodservice perspective.





Top: Visitors can watch dairy products being made through the viewing window at Country View Dairy.

Middle: The farmstead store sells a variety of products, including yogurt (left) and handmade soap (right) made from yogurt.

Bottom: The Grade A operation pumps farm fresh milk directly from the milk house to the creamery.

To meet the needs of their varied customers, the Rapsons sell a wide selection of flavors and container sizes, ranging from eight-ounce yogurt cups for an individual serving to five-pound containers for foodservice customers. In addition to their original yogurt they offer Greek yogurt, which has real fruit on the bottom and a thicker texture.

Dave says the key factors setting Country View Dairy yogurt apart can be summed up into three words: farmstead, all-natural, and local. The yogurt is also non-homogenized, which results in cream rising to the top the old-fashioned way.

### Always adapting

As Country View Dairy's business has grown, their product offerings have expanded. The Rapsons started making sour cream for foodservice venues, followed by specialty milk for coffee shops. Country View Dairy also added frozen yogurt soft serve to the line-up, providing liquid mix in a bag for soft serve machines.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they saw a need for individual packages of frozen yogurt and began making hard pack frozen yogurt. The new treat quickly took off in their on-farm store, and they have since developed many delicious flavors. Country View Dairy recently sold their first batch of hard pack frozen yogurt to a distributor.

Over the past decade, the family has had to learn as they go. Figuring out how to best market their yogurt was a learning curve for them.

"We just hit the road and started going to stores and farmers markets," Dave recalled. "We did a lot of product demonstrations in stores," Jesse added.

Branching out from their local community presented an even bigger hurdle when it came to marketing. "You are the new guy on the block, nobody knows you," Seth explained. Today trucks are coming to the farm from around the Midwest for product pickup five days a week.

### Focus on the farm

Behind every cup of tasty yogurt, beautifully crafted latte, or spoonful of cold frozen yogurt from Country View Dairy are the cows and team that make it possible. "Surround yourself with good cows and good people. That has helped a lot," Dave said.

Country View Dairy is home to 360 cows, milked three times a day in a double-12 parlor. Milk from 60 to 70 of those cows is currently used for the dairy products made at their farmstead creamery. Dave says Registered Holsteins are advantageous when it comes to profitability, thanks to the large volumes of milk they consistently produce.

Perhaps the best marketing asset the Rapson family has is their story. From the cows supplying the milk to the people working with them every day, consumers are becoming increasingly interested in where their food comes from. The Rapson family has experienced this first-hand.

"Last summer we had our 10th anniversary celebration, and we had close to 1,500 people here for that," Dave said. The Rapsons were surprised by how many people were interested in taking the hayride through the dairy barn, as people waited in long lines for the tour.

It's the opportunity to share their dairy farm and wholesome dairy foods with others that makes their business meaningful to the family. "When you hand someone a product and see their faces light up when they taste it, that's the best part," Seth said with a smile.





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