

# 2023 ★ ★ ★ STAR *of the* ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ BREED

Image © Lea Jordan



**BUDJON-VAIL DRM SUNSHINE-ET EX-95 2E**

★ 2ND AGED COW MIDWEST SPRING NATIONAL HOLSTEIN SHOW 2023 ★  
5-10 2X 365D 42,130M 5.3%F 2,244F 3.6%P 1,508P

BRED BY: PETER VAIL & BUDJON FARMS, LOMIRA, WISCONSIN  
OWNED BY: CHANDLER AND CALVIN BENING, ARLINGTON, MINNESOTA



**H**olstein Association USA is thrilled to recognize Budjon-Vail Drm Sunshine-ET EX-95 2E as the 2023 Star of the Breed. The highest honor presented to a Registered Holstein®, the award recognizes a cow who excels in both type and production. Sunshine is bred by Tom and Kelli Cull of Budjon Farms and Peter Vail. She is currently owned by Tom and Kelli's nephews Chandler and Calvin Bening, of Arlington, Minnesota, who have found success with Sunshine in the Junior show ring.

Sunshine calls Budjon Farms of Lomira, Wisconsin home. The seven-year-old cow has a lifetime production record of 145,590 pounds of milk with 7,387 pounds of fat and 5,370 pounds of protein. With a classification score of Excellent 95 2E and much show ring success, she also has exceptional type.

The 2023 Star of the Breed is a cow who turns heads at any time, anywhere. Those who have worked with Sunshine say her name truly fits her radiant personality, along with her extreme uphill run, beautiful shoulder, and eye-catching udder.

"Sunshine is a gem of a cow to work with," says Chandler Bening as he describes her, "She's a low maintenance cow that makes showing look easy. She has a tremendous amount of 'ring presence', her head is always high, and leads flawlessly and sets up beautifully."

## A STRONG BEGINNING

Sunshine is a Val-Bisson Doorman daughter out of a 95-point cow Tom purchased in Canada, Petitclerc Sid Sunkiss, who is also EX-95 2E. Born in September of 2016, Sunshine already stood out as a calf on milk. Kelli recalls noticing her as she cared for calves that fall. "She had this look about her that made her appear she could be something very, very special," she remembers.

As she developed, Sunshine proved to be a high type and high producing cow. She qualified for the Star of the Breed award

with her fourth lactation production record of 42,130 pounds of milk, 2,244 pounds of fat (5.3%); and 1,508 pounds of protein (3.6%).

Tom and Kelli describe Sunshine as a cow with a wonderful and docile demeanor, which made her an ideal Junior show cow. Because of this, she's been shown by a few Junior Holstein members over the years, including Tom and Kelli's nephews Trevor Tuman and Chandler Bening and Budjon Farms intern Emma Paulson.

"Sunshine is the true definition of a gentle giant and is one of those cows that you never need to worry about," Emma Paulson says. "She does her job every day, whether it's at shows or in the barn."

## SHINING IN THE SHOWRING

Sunshine made her showing debut as a heifer, winning the Fall Yearling Heifer class at the Junior Show at World Dairy Expo in 2018 and taking home third place in the Open Show later in the week, led by Trevor. Sunshine also earned the honor of Reserve All-American Fall Yearling Heifer in 2018.

The attention-grabbing Registered Holstein® was also shown as a young cow, placing fifth in the Senior two-year-old class at the Midwest Spring National Show and being nominated All-American in 2019. Sunshine continued to get better with age and was named Grand Champion Bred and Owned at the Midwest Spring National in 2021.

"I think the day she was Champion Bred and Owned at Spring Show was a huge highlight for her and a highlight for us, because anytime you can have a Champion Bred and Owned of a show, that's awesome, especially at a national show of that caliber," Kelli says.

Sunshine found more success in 2022, placing second in the five-year-old class at the Midwest Spring National Show. That fall, Sunshine made the trip to Louisville, Kentucky for the North American International Livestock Exposition

(NAILE). It was an exciting week leading up to the show, the Budjon team recalls, noting that many people stopped by their string to compliment Sunshine.

When the Junior show day came, Chandler was on the halter, leading Sunshine around the green shavings to Grand Champion and Reserve Supreme of the Junior Holstein Show.



L-R: Jill, Calvin and Chandler Bening, Kelli and Tom Cull pose with Sunshine after her Grand Champion win during the Grand National Junior Holstein show at NAILE 2022.





Chandler on the halter parading Sunshine to Grand Champion honors at NAILE in 2022.

“It was a surreal moment that will definitely be a memory I will never forget,” Chandler reflects on the experience. “Having this amazing opportunity that day was fun, exciting and electrifying.”

“He did such an incredible job showing her,” Kelli adds. “Chandler is a tall young man, so along with his stature and Sunshine’s extreme height and up hill run to her front end, it was destined to be a complementary pairing.”

Sunshine capped the thrilling week by once again outshining the competition, winning Senior and Grand Champion at the Mid-East Fall National Holstein Show, before being named Reserve Supreme Champion.

## CONTINUED SUCCESS

Sunshine qualified for the Star of the Breed award with her second-place finish in the Aged Cow Class at the Midwest Spring National Show in 2023. She had an exciting run in the Junior show, with Junior Holstein member Emma Paulson parading her around the ring.

“Being able to lead Sunshine to Grand Champion of the Junior Show at the Midwest Spring Show in 2023 was an unforgettable experience,” Emma Paulson reflects. “I must thank Tom and Kelli for trusting me with Sunshine and for allowing me to be a part of her story. She truly is a remarkable cow who deserves to be noticed.”

Back home on the farm, Sunshine has four daughters, including two Delta Lambda fall calves and two Chief winter calves. “They are very similar to her, really nice conformation, incredible side profiles, just like Sunshine,” Kelli says.

The team at Budjon is eager to watch Sunshine’s story develop and hope to calve her in to be shown again in 2025. They note that she’s always been a youthful cow and continue to see potential as she ages.

For now, they’re soaking in what it means to have not one but two cows recognized for Star of the Breed. Sunshine follows in the footsteps of another cow owned by Tom, Kelli, and Peter,



Trevor receiving first place honors in the fall yearling class during the Junior Holstein Show at WDE in 2018.

Blondin Goldwyn Subliminal-ETS, who was named the 2021 Star of the Breed.

“It means the world to us to have two cows named Star of the Breed,” Kelli says. “What makes this time unique and special is because she’s bred by Budjon-Vail.”

Kelli says they appreciate that the award recognizes the whole picture of the cow, combining milk production, classification and showing success.

“To see Sunshine develop from Trevor showing her as a winning Fall Yearling at the Expo Junior Show in 2018 to myself leading her to Champion in Louisville in 2022 to now being named the 2023 Star of the Breed for my aunt and uncle, has truly been a full circle moment for our family,” Chandler says.

## 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.)



Budjon Farms intern Emma Paulson receiving Grand Champion honors in the Junior Holstein Show at Midwest National Spring Show 2023.  
Image © Wisconsin Holstein Association