


HERDS OF Excellence

Congratulations to the 2023 Herds of Excellence award recipients! These six exceptional herds have met rigorous criteria to earn this prestigious honor. The remarkable stories of these herds and Registered Holstein® breeders are highlighted in the following pages. It's clear every farm family is committed to delivering consistent, top notch care to their herds.

The award is divided into three herd size categories 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. The Herds of Excellence are shining examples of how Registered Holstein cows can excel in both milk production and conformation at the most elite levels.

HERD SIZE DIVISION


1 DIVISION **500+ COWS**



2 DIVISION **100-499 COWS**



3 DIVISION **10-99 COWS**




PRODUCTION CRITERIA


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


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

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

ALL HERDS RECEIVING THE AWARD MUST MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

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

 At least 70 percent of the herd is homebred

 Be enrolled in Holstein Association USA's TriStarSM program

Division 1: 500+ Cows



Back row (L-R): Dan, Janina, Jordan & Connor Siemers.
Front row (L-R): Josh, Lauren, Jake, Jenny & Paul Siemers.

Siemers Holstein Farms Inc.

The Siemers Family • Newton, WI

Staying true to their focus of making “Genetics for Cow People,” is a driving force for the Siemers family. Now in the farms’ fifth and sixth generations, the core team includes Dan and Janina Siemers and their son Jordan, Paul Siemers and his sons Jake and Josh, and Tyler Schafer.

“We very much enjoy the team we get to work with every day - we don’t take that lightly,” Jordan Siemers expresses. “And we enjoy providing the most perfect food to our local communities and helping support local businesses.”

The family chooses Registered Holstein® cows because they believe Holsteins are the business breed. They appreciate the many marketing angles and large herdbook Registered Holsteins provide, allowing for faster genetic progress.

“We run multiple angles in our breeding program but are large believers in combining genomic data with real performance,” Jordan shares. Siemers Holstein Farms strives to breed cows like Siemers Lambda Paris 27856-ET EX-91 – a current cornerstone cow in the herd that can hit the leaderboards for both GTPI and PTAT.

“Some of our goals for the future are to continue making genetics for our partner A.I. organizations and continue to keep adopting new technologies to continue refining our systems,” Jordan shares.

80.0% HOMEBRED

MILK: 34,042 FAT: 1,543 PROTEIN: 1,057

AVERAGE CLASSIFICATION SCORE – 84.7

Division 2: 100-499 Cows



Back Row (L-R): Cynthia & Lance Koester, Cindy & Kyle Koester, Alissa & Ethan Fehr, Bria & Neil Bruegger, Brent Koester.
Front Row (L-R): Levi Koester, Jordan Koester, Dan & Amber Koester, Erica & Lydia Koester.

Koester Dairy Inc.

The Koester Family • Dakota, IL

Consistency is key when it comes to breeding Registered Holsteins® at Koester Dairy Inc. in Dakota, Illinois. Dan and Amber work alongside their three sons, Kyle, Brent, and Lance; daughter Bria; and daughter-in-law, Cynthia, to care for their herd of around 400 milking cows and 400 youngstock.

“We are always trying to improve the genetics in the herd,” shares Dan. To accomplish this breeding criteria, they utilize genomic testing on their youngstock. When selecting bulls for matings, they are selecting high GTPI genomic bulls, being mindful of type, and health traits. “We are breeding for high-producing, good functional cows,” states Dan.

Two homebred cow families currently comprise the bulk of their embryo transfer flushing program. K-Star Renegade Affect (EX-91 EX-93-MS) has numerous high genomic offspring. Affect is also the dam of a Peak Atlamagnifique-ET son in the Holstein Marketplace Sires program, K-Star AFTERMATH-ET. The Koesters also have two Gameday daughters that trace back to K-Star Supersire Limelite VG-88 (who reached over 2,000 pounds Fat four times) that has made a big impact with many daughters and a son in AI.

Working together as a family to make sound management decisions and continually improving the operation are driving components to the success of the farm.

99.8% HOMEBRED

MILK: 34,013 FAT: 1,519 PROTEIN: 1,086

AVERAGE CLASSIFICATION SCORE – 85.2



Back Row (L-R): Tom, Chris, Jennifer & Gin Kestell.
Front Row (L-R): Cole & Will Kestell.

98.9% HOMEBRED

MILK: 37,653 FAT: 1,609 PROTEIN: 1,170

AVERAGE CLASSIFICATION SCORE – 87.6

Ever-Green-View Holsteins, LLC

The Kestell Family • Waldo, WI

Grounded in the philosophy of prioritizing cow well-being above all, the Kestell Family of Waldo, Wisconsin operates with a clear focus.

“We don’t try to win any awards or set any records – we try to do everything for the cows,” Tom explains.

Alongside his wife Gin, son Chris, and daughter-in-law Jennifer, the family manages their herd with a focus on maximizing udder health and function, boosting production efficiency, and providing meticulous feeding and care. They leverage Holstein Association USA programs like pedigrees and classification to achieve genetic advancements year after year.

This strategy has yielded significant success for the Kestells. Most recently, Ever-Green-View Heidi-Ho-ET distinguished herself as the second-highest all-time national production record holder for two-year-olds, producing 58,080 pounds of milk in her first lactation. The first-place record is held by another Kestell-bred cow, Ever-Green-View Aptitude-ET, who set the record five years ago.

Beyond improving their own herd, the Kestell family’s program influences dairy farming globally. Tom actively engages in international outreach, sharing insights with dairy communities worldwide in countries including Kazakhstan, Israel, Pakistan, and South Africa, helping to improve dairy operations globally by sharing effective farming practices and knowledge.



Left to Right: Malachi, Philip, Lana, Valerie, Kurtis, Jeriah, & Samuel Oberholtzer.

94.0% HOMEBRED

MILK: 35,636 FAT: 1,477 PROTEIN: 1,131

AVERAGE CLASSIFICATION SCORE – 85.8

Kal-side Holsteins

The Oberholtzer Family • Hillsboro, WI

For Kurtis and Valerie Oberholtzer and their five children at Kal-side Holsteins, dairy farming is more than just a business—it’s a way of life. Nestled in Hillsboro, Wisconsin, their 60-cow operation thrives on the foundation of family, from those who care for the cows to the cow families they meticulously breed.

Married for 17 years, Kurtis and Valerie have dedicated 16 and a half of those years to farming together. Their children, aged 15 to 6, are actively involved in all aspects of the farm from calf care to breeding and heifer management.

By utilizing programs from Holstein Association USA, the Oberholtzer family can minimize inbreeding and know what to breed for from past experiences. They emphasize the importance of maintaining strong cow lineages known for high classification scores and robust milk production records.

Valerie finds joy in tracking the pedigrees of their cows, noting, “It’s fun to follow cow families because good cows tend to make more good cows.”

Looking ahead, Kurtis and Valerie are excited to continue advancing their herd genetically and to sustain the farm as a place where their children can grow, learn, and possibly take the reins in the future.



Left to Right: Dan, Julie, Austin & Bridget Vandertie.

100.0% HOMEBRED

MILK: 37,252 FAT: 1,503 PROTEIN: 1,160

AVERAGE CLASSIFICATION SCORE – 89.3

Doorco Holsteins

The Vandertie Family • Brussels, WI

The Vandertie family calls Brussels, Wisconsin home, with their Registered Holsteins® that carry the Doorco prefix. Dan and Julie Vandertie have been dairy farming since they purchased the farm from Dan's parents in 1987.

Today, they are happy to be transitioning the farm to their son, Austin. This summer, a new heifer facility and manure storage area will be constructed, and they are excited to see what other changes Austin makes as he forges his own path.

Austin has taken over daily farm management and all breeding selections. The group of two-year-olds beginning to calve in are the result of his breeding selections. Dan says "they should score Very Good" the next time they see the classifier. When breeding for the next generation, the family strongly believes in complete cow families and pedigrees with no holes in them.

This breeding philosophy has worked well for them as they have garnered a BAA of 112.0. They are exceptionally proud to have received the Progressive Breeder Registry (PBR) award for 49 consecutive years and the Progressive Genetics Herd Award for 19 years. Their goal is to achieve 50 consecutive years of the PBR award in 2024.



Left to Right: Suzie Benoit, Brooks, and Michael Maier.

78.3% HOMEBRED

MILK: 35,515 FAT: 1,514 PROTEIN: 1,119

AVERAGE CLASSIFICATION SCORE – 88.1

Lazy M Farm, LLC

The Maier Family • Stitzer, WI

Michael Maier farms at Lazy M Farm, LLC along with his parents Herman and Peggy, his girlfriend Suzie Benoit, and their six-year-old son Brooks. The family strives to maximize production from their cows by growing and feeding high quality forages.

"I've always felt like the biggest thing for getting good production out of cows is getting your forages done right," Michael explains. "I also do all the feed mixing, so it's nice knowing what's going into the ration every day."

Most of their high type Registered Holstein® cows trace back to a cow Michael purchased out of Canada – Fraeland Doorman Barbados-ET EX-90. Currently, many of their high scoring two-year-olds trace back to Barbados. Michael says he uses classification as a tool to discover which cows he needs to improve and what changes he needs to make when it comes to mating decisions.

The family also enjoys marketing high type heifers each spring. They hope to continue breeding cows that excel in their herd, and in others.

"I get more enjoyment out of selling one and having it go on and do well for others than I do out of showing it myself," Michael says.