

THE PULSE

Spring 2024 • Holstein Association USA, Inc.



U.S. REGISTERED HOLSTEINS[®]

THE WORLD'S PERFECT COW

The Pulse is proudly sponsored by



REFLECTING ON MILK COMPONENT PROGRESS

I would like to share a story with you that caused me to reflect on significant progress in the Holstein breed.

I have a monthly formal meeting with my nutritionist where we talk about the challenges, concerns, and progress of our herd, Oakfield Corners Dairy. He led off a recent meeting (perhaps trying to beat me to the punch), with the comment that he acknowledged and was disappointed that our butterfat dropped to 4.3%. He intended on making some adjustments to get it back up closer to 4.5%. Our corn silage analysis had changed, and our cows were telling us we didn't have the formulation quite right.

Although I didn't verbalize it out loud, I thought what a bizarre comment that would have been just a few short years ago. To think that I could be complaining about a Holstein herd making 97 pounds of milk per day fall to 4.3% butterfat seems almost surreal – but that reflects the progress we have made in percent milk fat. This upward trend is illustrated in Figure 1.

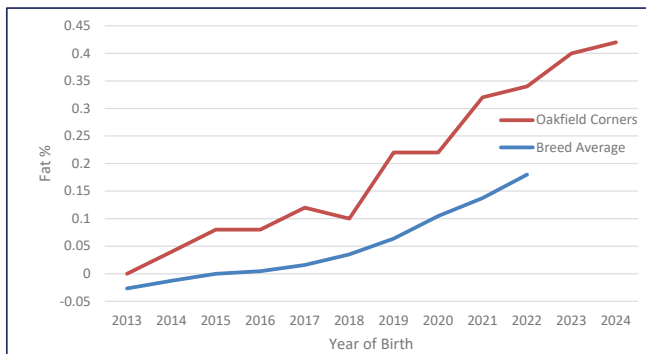


Figure 1: Component (Fat %) Genetic Trends by Birth Year

Around eight years ago, my fellow milk cooperative members and I were getting complaints from management that they were struggling to balance our excess milk supply and market that milk profitably. Eventually, our co-op instituted a base excess program where we would be paid less for any milk we produced above a rolling three-year average. I was not a huge proponent of that scheme because our approach to battle inflation is to make a little more milk than we made the year before – genetic progress is a main strategy in making that happen.

It didn't take long to realize that we needed to ship more pounds of solids per cow, and the best way to accomplish that without triggering a base excess penalty was to increase the percentage of solids in our milk, particularly percent fat. I had a neighbor employ a strategy of moving toward crossbreeding as part of their plan, I thought that plan was short sighted and ill advised.

Around the same time, I contacted Dr. Tom Lawlor, Director of Research and Development at Holstein Association USA, about my perceived need to place direct selection emphasis on percent solids in the TPI Formula instead of relying solely on pounds of solids to make genetic progress. After some analysis, Tom assured me that we were making progress both in percentage solids and pounds and he didn't feel a change was needed. I was skeptical but accepted his explanation.



I am happy to report he was indeed correct, as the Holstein breed has made great genetic strides in percent fat, and as dairymen we have also made phenotypic (environmental) progress. We've also made significant progress increasing percent protein, as illustrated in Figure 2. Our breed is versatile, changing with breeding strategies allowing dairymen to breed for the traits they desire.

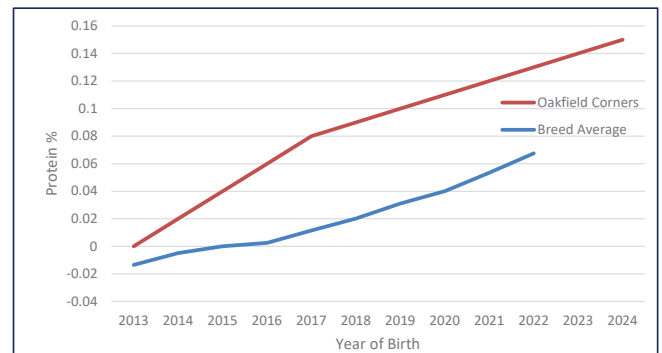


Figure 2: Component (Protein %) Genetic Trends by Birth Year

Ultimately, the Holstein breed is unmatched in production, feed efficiency, and converting nutrients to human food in a profitable manner. The Holstein cow, the breeders, and dairymen from across the world continue to impress me with how we coalesce and take the breed to new heights to meet consumer demands.

Sincerely,

**Jonathan Lamb, President
Holstein Association USA, Inc.**

REASONS TO CELEBRATE AND PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE



The Spring issue of *The Pulse* is always one of my favorites because it features the annual Holstein Association USA Herds of Excellence and the Star of the Breed award winners. Both of these coveted awards feature Holstein breeders, cows and herds that are truly all-star performers.

All Herds of Excellence have classified within the last year and have an average age adjusted classification score of 83 points or higher,

at least 70% of the herd is homebred and enrolled in HAUSA's TriStarSM production records program. Each of the three herd size divisions have different production criteria in order to be included, which is as follows:

Division 1 – 500+ cows

15% above Mature Equivalent (ME) for milk, fat and protein

Division 2 – 100 – 499 cows

20% above Mature Equivalent (ME) for milk, fat, and protein

Division 3 – 10 – 99 cows

25% above Mature Equivalent (ME) for milk, fat, and protein

This year just six herds meet these stringent criteria. As you can see on pages 9 through 12, we have two first time award winners. Additionally, we have one herd that has won the award 14 consecutive times.

That herd produced 37,653 pounds of milk, 1,609 pounds of fat and 1,170 pounds of protein. The herd not only has tremendous production, its type is outstanding as well with an average classification score of 87.6 and 98.9% of that herd is homebred.

In this edition of *The Pulse* you will also read about a 100% homebred herd with an average classification score of 89.3 and a production record of 37,252 pounds of milk, 1,503 pounds of fat, and 1,160 pounds of protein. All of the Herds of Excellence whose stories appear show what can be accomplished with our beloved Registered Holstein® cow!

Star of the Breed

You'll enjoy reading about Budjon-Vail Drm Sunshine-ET, the 2023 Star of the Breed on pages 6 through 8! Bred by Peter Vail and Budjon Farms and owned by Chandler and Calvin Bening of Arlington, Minnesota, Sunshine truly is a cow for all seasons!

A cow like Sunshine who has excelled in the showing, has a classification score of EX-95 2E and has a production record of 42,130 pounds of milk, 2,244 pounds of fat and 1,508 pounds of protein, is a prime example of how excellent type and production can be found in the same package!



Division 3 Herds of Excellence winners Chris & Tom Kestell, Ever-Green-View Holsteins, LLC, Waldo, WI.



Austin, Julie & Dan Vandertie, Doorco Holsteins, Brussels, WI, Division 3 Herds of Excellence winners.

While this next topic takes a different turn, it warrants attention nonetheless. The Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) cannot be taken lightly. It is important for you to have good biosecurity practices in place on your dairies in order to try to diminish the spread of the bird flu.

Fortunately, at the time of this writing, it appears as though the bird flu is low risk to humans. It is also important to know and to reassure the public that the commercial supply of milk is safe because pasteurization inactivates bacteria and viruses, including influenza, in milk, according to the United States Food and Drug Administration and the United States Department of Agriculture.

The Holstein Association USA's website has a good video interview with Dr. Keith Poulsen, Director of the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, who provides key information on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. Visit <https://www.holsteinusa.com/news/HPAI.html> to hear Dr. Poulsen's interview.

As many of you know, the Holstein Association USA is a pioneer in animal traceability. Approximately, twenty years ago, we launched a pilot project with USDA called National Farm Animal Identification & Records (FAIR) that proved the concept on 24-hour animal disease traceability using electronic RFID ear tags in cattle, and RFID readers in cattle markets and slaughter plants nationwide. Our involvement in the State of Michigan as part of their tuberculosis eradication program is a successfully proven blueprint for a national animal identification and traceability system. We lobbied hard for national, mandatory animal disease traceability program and believe strongly in its need today.

The current bird flu situation is a clear example that a national mandatory animal identification program in the United States is long overdue. The Michigan model could be and should be the blueprint for an effective national program. Doing so should insure free markets for United States dairy cattle and products throughout the world for long into the future.

Sincerely,



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



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

Holstein Association USA is thrilled to recognize Budjon-Vail Dm 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.



© Lea Jordan
Light Lab Photography



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



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

“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,

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 TriStarSM 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


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.

Cutting-edge
technology



Unmatched
service



Reliable
expertise



SenseHub[®] DAIRY

FULLY POWERED TO EMPOWER

Whether you knew us as SCR Dairy or Allflex dairy monitoring, you can now call the dairy industry's leading monitoring solution SenseHub[®] Dairy. Fully integrated within Merck Animal Health, SenseHub Dairy delivers the best of all worlds for a full-solution monitoring approach that is fully powered to empower you to do your best.



See the full story at
SenseHub-Dairy.com