

# Dairy Industry Workshop

**Wide gamut of progressive, positive ideas and discussions**

**H**olstein Canada's annual workshop attracted over 50 branch and dairy sector representatives for discussions on a post-BSE Canada.

At the upbeat conference, attendees eager to embrace the future discussed numerous opportunities for dairy success.

## Worth Repeating

An Ontario project concluded there are many positive management applications regarding

**RFID technology** to quickly, easily, and accurately capture 1) animal identification in parlours, 2) herd health data, and 3) numerous daily events. This information can be reviewed and/or recorded into a record-keeping program or database of choice.

The *all-in-one Psion with wand* (requires software to operate) is easy to use when inspecting and treating cattle at a management rail. (Brian Terpstra, Birchlawn Farms, Atwood, ON)

When producers shop for electronic livestock systems and related management technology, they should ensure their system provider's company sells **ISO-compliant equipment**.

In addition, in the absence of national legislation specifying an ear for RFID transponders, producers are encouraged to standardize a common ear on-farm. This allows manufacturers to design and install equipment with minimal modifications (readers and transponders.)

Holstein Canada is exploring a dual RFID option, which would serve as a better *mousetrap* to enhance read

rates and provide a solution to lost tags/transponders. (Glenn Cherry, Holstein Canada)

Good **tag retention** relies heavily on placement closer to the calf's head. A 3-4% tag loss within herd [world norm] is part of everyday business. Accompanying management practices include ordering tag replacements regularly and eliminating on-farm snag sites. (Linda Markle, Holstein Canada)

**"We cannot direct the winds, but we can adjust the sails."**

*Shelley Doan, Walker Sales*

It costs a **lot of money to raise an animal to calving**. One Québec study indicates it can even be as high as \$2,500.

While more milk is obtained in a lifetime with well-grown heifers, less milk is yielded over an animal's life when calved at 30 months.

Heifers should be fed well in a lighted, comfortable space to freshen by 27 months or younger. (Jean Brisson, Valacta)

**Genetic evaluation steps** include

- 1) using all available pedigree data to establish all known relationships;
- 2) adjusting raw data for each herd to standardize variation that may change over time (production and type);
- 3) adjusting raw data to a common scale for biological factors;
- 4) establishing groups of *herdmate contemporaries* assumed to have received the same management;
- 5) accumulating contributions from parents, own performance, and progeny; and
- 6) expressing results relative to a reference group defined as the genetic base. (Brian Van Doormaal, CDN)

Coined as a great advancement, **genomics** is fast approaching. Already at birth, a calf would have a parentage average *and* genomic Estimated Breeding Value.

Because the newborn calf's reliability would automatically be higher, combined GEBVs will be used to pre-screen bull dams and young bulls.

CDN aims to incorporate genomic information into official genetic evaluations starting April or August 2009. (Jay Shannon, Holstein Canada)

Prior to BSE, Canada exported most of its Holsteins to the US and Mexico and became

dependent on these two markets. If any good comes from BSE, it is the fact that Canada is now developing **new markets**, e.g. China, Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan.

Herd biosecurity must be enhanced with programs established for EBL (leucosis) and Johne's. An IBR marked vaccine should be available soon and AI health programs reviewed. (Rick McRonald, CLGA)

If Canada wants to become involved in exporting Holsteins to new destinations, it must do its homework about what type of cattle works best in each respective country.

Canada must investigate and discover the **diseases of concern** in each country and eradicate them from export herds. Research must be supported to prove how transmission occurs and how it may be controlled—EBL, Johne's, IBR, BVD. Shipped cattle must be able to conform and remain healthy for a long life in varying conditions.

Farmers must remain highly conscientious about **herd biosecurity**. It's pointless for producers to work



*(l-r) Jeff West and Ron Bird of Alta Genetics test the all-in-one Psion with wand.*



*Dr. Larry Delver answers a question on exporting cattle abroad.*



*Shelley Doan of Walker Sales says her family maintains a positive attitude toward change in the export business.*

toward disease-free herds if they don't protect their own interests. *(Larry Delver, Calgary, DVM)*

**Crossbred animals** limit a dairyman's market. Breeders must focus on quality. Good type, registered Holsteins sell; this is why Canada is **No. 1 in exports**.

Through the BSE phase, Holstein Canada embraced internet technology instead of sitting idol. The Association has grown and modernized; it offers online services to aid exporters and farmers—fact finders, calf registrations, extended pedigrees, online transfers.

Breeders must keep **good records**. This is one of the most important issues in marketing cattle today. Not only does sound record keeping help in the selling and buying process, producers need accurate records to protect their interests.

Animals should be NLID/ATQ tagged (one component in each ear with matching numbers) at all times and particularly when moving off-farm for dairy purposes. (Tags can be backed up by photos or sketches.) This is the best way to ensure the continued identity of an animal as it makes a sometimes lengthy and arduous journey to a new destination. *(Shelley Doan, Walker Sales, Aylmer, ON)*

**Markets** exist for all types of animals. These include 1) high end, 2) show, 3) good pedigree/good type, 4) commercial, 5) red and white, and 6) retired/older cows.

A suggestion is to always have an updated herd calving list available by month; this provides handy reference for buyers.

Recommendations from mating programs should be seriously considered and as many sire

daughters as possible viewed before heavy use. It is important for every dairyman to use a percentage of young sires in his herd. *(Wayne Dickieson, Birkentree Holsteins, Hunter River, PE)*

**Cow families** are extremely important to progress a herd. Powerful female lines breed true to type, regardless of bull. Top cow lineages continually return bulls to service.

Since *Starbuck*, dairy producers have been able to combine high indexing cows and production into one profitable package.

The **highest return individuals** are 1) high-indexing heifers with correct sire stacks, 2) high-indexing, early-crop two-year-olds, which calve young, classify VG, have reputable sires, and deep pedigrees, 3) high indexing older cows, and 4) commercial breeding bulls.

Embryos are a good way to get started in high-calibre, profitable Holsteins. *(Laurie Stanton, Stanton Farms, Ilderton, ON)*

Holstein Canada **awards** have been tweaked to maintain their connection to reality and profitability. The shift has been made from milk and components to component yields only.

Now, awards better align themselves with Canada's milk payment and quota systems. *(full details December 2007 / January 2008 Info Holstein)*

The Canadian Holstein cow has never been better. There have been huge improvements in quality of udders, height and width of attachments, and overall dairy quality and strength. With her remarkable balance, she is the world's most **complete dairy package!** *(Jay Shannon, Holstein Canada)*