

Using Tech to Boost Milk and Educate

Co-Jo Dairy, located north and west of Grove City, MN, started with two cows and today milks 540 on the way to 900. “As the world’s population grows, we have to feed them,” states Greg Jans, co-owner of the dairy. “If we don’t increase technology and produce as much as we can, we’re not going to feed the world—and we’re so close to not keeping up now. Demand will only increase.”

Greg’s dad, Alvin, started the dairy with two cows back in 1952. He moved to the current site of Co-Jo Dairy in 1959 and formed a partnership with Greg in 1976. At that time, they milked 40 cows. By the time Alvin retired in 1992, they were milking 80 cows in a tie stall barn.

Growing the dairy

In 1995, Greg built a 200 free-stall barn and parlor. He added 240 stalls in 2000 and expanded the milking parlor from a double 6 to a double 12.

In 2002, Greg formed a partnership with his son, Joe. Father and son place great value on the use of emerging technology, both to grow their milk production and to educate the non-ag world about the dairy industry. Just this year, they began construction on a new cross-ventilated barn with 486 free stalls and sand bedding. They are in the process of finishing and filling that barn.

Greg explains the new technology built into the new barn. “In the past, whenever we expanded, we basically did what we thought was best for the cows,” he states. “The barn we are building now is designed to be the most optimal cow comfort building there is today.”

“I’m excited about the sand lanes and cross ventilation,” says Jeff Thorpe, dairy nutrition consultant with Munson Lakes Nutrition. “Their herd health is going to be dramatically improved, and it should increase production.”

“Joe and Greg are forward-thinking producers that plan for the future,” Jeff adds. “Part of their strategy was to wait until milk prices dove before going into this construction project, and be ready for the next wave with more cows that will generate additional cash flow.”

The barn also features a state-of-the-art manure removal system, which separates the manure from the sand in a “sand

lane” and provides a “beach” to dry the clean sand before it is brought back into the barn. “They’ll recover and reuse 98%-99% of the sand,” says Jeff.

“Another thing the Jans do well is bunker management,” continues Jeff. “They cover each bunker less than 12 hours after they complete the pile with a double layer of plastic—an oxygen barrier and a regular plastic on top of that. This keeps spoilage down, reducing shrink and giving them top-quality feed.” It’s high-quality feed and the attention paid to cow comfort that allows Co-Jo Dairy to coax maximum milk production from their herd, according to Thorpe.

The dairy began with Munson Feed Company in the early 1970s and for most of the years since then has relied on Munson for nutrition advice and high-quality dairy feeds. “Jeff Thorpe works the rations for us and Munson delivers all of the protein mineral mixes for our cows,” says Greg. He also appreciates the specialists Jeff has brought to Co-Jo Dairy to assist in the move to the new barn. “Steve Wilke, Land O’Lakes® large herd specialist, has given us advice on building design and on how to handle the cows as we move them in,” says Greg. “Curtis Harms of Diamond V has helped us manage our milk quality as we increase our herd size.”

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Left to right, Greg Jans, Joe Jans, and assistant herd manager Jenessa Thompson in the new barn at Co-Jo Dairy.

Invest in Minerals to Improve Returns

By Jake Reed, Ph.D., Dairy and Beef Specialist



There are three basic ways for the beef cattle producer to reduce breakeven price and improve returns: a) reduce costs without reducing pounds produced, b) hold costs steady while increasing pounds produced, and c) increase costs while greatly increasing pounds produced. Investing money to increase returns (that's c) is often overlooked. Investing in better mineral nutrition could greatly improve overall returns through improved reproduction, increased health status, and higher weaning weights.

Improvement of return through mineral nutrition hinges on improvement in reproductive performance, herd health, and heavier calves.

- 1) Reproductive Performance** - can be significantly improved through a high-quality mineral program. Such a program can improve ovulation rate and conception rate and reduce retained placentas—all of which greatly reduce annual cow cost.
- 2) Herd Health** - longevity is a very important factor influencing annual cow cost and is affected greatly by reproduction. In

many herds, replacement heifers lose money for the first three years, so reducing replacements through improved longevity improves return.

- 3) Heavier Calves** - improved reproductive performance will also improve pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed, by getting cows bred earlier and by increasing numbers of live, viable calves.

Improved calf performance through mineral nutrition starts in the uterus! Recent research in the field of fetal programming shows that cow nutritional status during pregnancy can affect subsequent calf performance. High mineral status also leads to improvement in calf health through improved colostrum quality, better vaccination response, and lower incidence of scours. Heavier calves are obtained through increased milk production, improved health, greater feed efficiency, and tighter calving intervals.

Investing in high-quality Land O'Lakes® Purina beef minerals with Zinpro Performance Minerals® could be an opportunity for you to become a high-return producer by improving reproduction, health status, and weaning weights. ●

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Educating the world

With around 10 full-time employees responsible for daily milking and managing the cow herd and crop production, Greg and Joe have taken a leadership role in the community and in the dairy industry.

Joe serves on the local American Dairy Association board, as well as the Grove City volunteer fire department.

Greg is vice-chairman of the Minnesota Milk Producers Association, with the dual goals of educating producers and lawmakers. He is also a director with United Farm Credit based at Willmar.

Recently, Greg and other agriculture leaders from across the United States met in St. Louis to form an organization called AFACT—American Farmers for the Advancement and Conservation of Technology (<http://itisafact.org>). AFACT uses the Internet and social media to educate consumers about modern agriculture.

“We try to watch for misleading information in the media and counter that information on Facebook and Twitter, where more and more people are getting their facts. “We just started doing this six months ago,” says Greg. At last count, we were talking to about 460 people on AFACT’s Facebook site and about 900 on Twitter.” ●



Giant fans mounted on the north side of the Jans’ new barn sends sprinkler-cooled air across the cows.



Pumps in the foreground draw liquid from the barn to a lane where sand bedding is separated from manure and dried on the distant beach.

Ed Brabec Will Be Missed

After 28 years working for Munson Lakes Nutrition, Ed Brabec is retiring on Dec. 31, 2009. Ed started his career in feed manufacturing almost three decades ago. In 1981, he was working on a construction crew that built the first cement tower at the Munson Feed Company. When the construction company moved on, Ed asked Bob Munson for a job. The rest is history.

"It was close to home," says Ed, when asked what attracted him to the Howard Lakes mill, "and there were no layoffs—like in the construction business or the machine shop where I worked before that." The job also paid well, and the idea of working in agriculture again attracted Ed, who grew up on a dairy farm south of Waverly.

After serving in the U.S. Army, Ed married and farmed for a year or two. Then he and his wife, Dorothy, moved to an acreage north of Waverly, where they raised their children: Karen, Daniel, and Scott. All the children and Ed's six grandchildren live within 10 miles of home. Dorothy passed away five years ago.

Over the years, Ed bagged feed, loaded feed for customers, unloaded ingredients in the warehouse, dumped corn, and occasionally ran the mill. "I have been a Jack of All Trades and a master of none," he states. Well, that's not quite right. Ed has apparently perfected the art of putting a smile on his co-workers' faces. "We like to tease around the mill," he explains. "If someone comes to work with a sour face, we tease him till he smiles." Ed reasons, "What's the use of coming to work if you can't smile?"

"Ed is the kind of person you take for granted because they know what they're doing and they have been doing it for so long," says John Zander, general manager at Munson Lakes Nutrition. "Ed will definitely be missed, and we wish him the best."

"We know Ed will be busy in retirement," grins John, as he sets up the opportunity to tease his old friend one more time with one of Ed's favorite phrases, "because he will always have ONE MORE THING TO DO." ●



Ed Brabec

Facing the Other Way

By Wade Serfling, Howard Lake Country Store

Many customers walk into the Howard Lake Country Store and immediately face the counter. They place their order, pay for it, and walk straight out the door. They never turn around and look into the store, so they don't see many of the brands we carry.

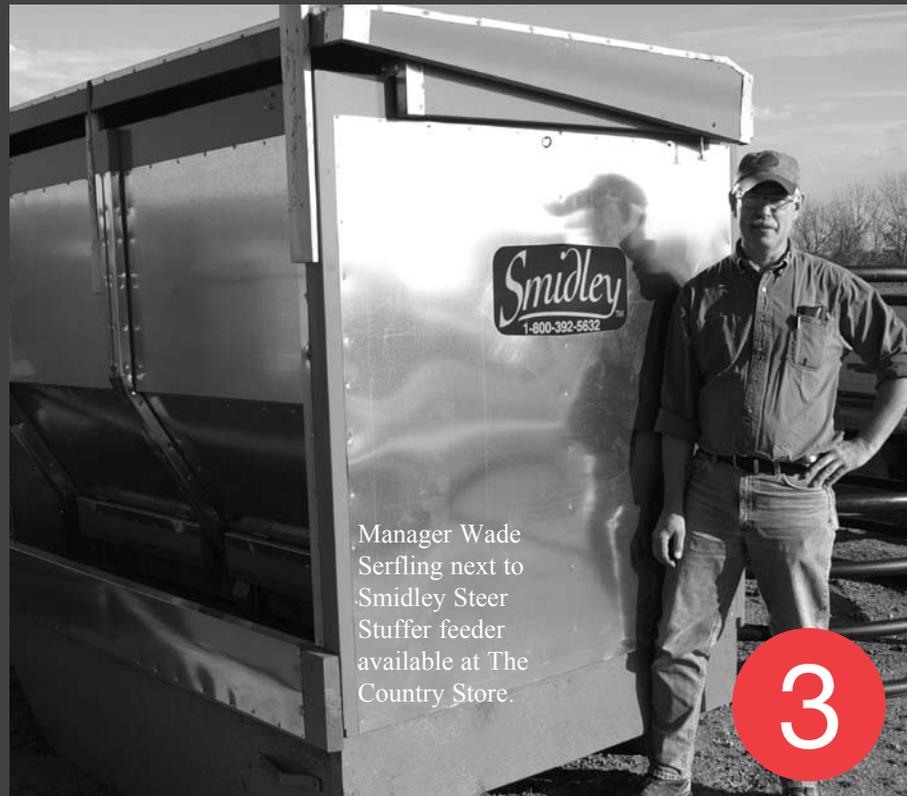
This explains my recent conversation with a farmer who has been picking up his feed at The Country Store for years and wasn't aware we carry several models of Ritchie Waterers and a good selection of parts.

Below are some other brands you might not know we handle:

- **Red Wing Shoes®** – Within the last year, we've taken on a rather extensive inventory of Red Wing boots.
- **Carhartt®** – We stock several styles of Carhartt jeans and 12 styles of coats, plus bibs, flannel lined jeans, and hooded sweatshirts.
- **Farm-Oil** – We've recently begun stocking Premier 2000, Farm-Oil's popular synthetic blend multi-grade engine oil.
- **Smidley™** – We've been special ordering Smidley Feeders for years, but we've recently started inventorying their Steer Stuffer and Calf Creep Feeders.

Here's another thing you may not know. Since The Country Store is owned by Munson Lakes Nutrition, there's a good chance we can put whatever you need on a bulk truck and deliver it to your farm. That's service.

But most of the time, you'll want to come to the Howard Lake Country Store and explore what we've got. So, next time you walk in and face the counter—turn around and you'll see us in a whole new light. ●



Manager Wade Serfling next to Smidley Steer Stuffer feeder available at The Country Store.

PO Box 549
 Howard Lake, MN 55349

MUNSON LAKES
 NUTRITION DIRECTORY

Howard Lake

Office 800-245-7717
 320-543-2561

The Country Store 800-663-9177
 320-543-3517



To Our Great Customers

We are well aware that you have a choice, and we are honored you have chosen Munson Lakes Nutrition as your nutrition partner. As we move into the future, some things will change for the good—like new technology and ways of delivering that technology. But some things will never change. The values that shaped our heritage will remain. We will continue to:

- Manufacture a great product at a fair price
- Give great customer service
- Base every decision on fairness and decency

May this season remind us of our blessings and may 2010 hold wonderful prospects for your family and ours.

John Zander

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR From the Employees of Munson Lakes Nutrition

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| DARYL ADICKES | KEVIN LENT | DOUG SAWATZKE |
| TAMI BANGASSER | KEN LOEBERTMANN | PAUL SCHLEIF |
| KIRK BENGTON | BRIAN LUEBKE | BARRY SCHMIEG |
| GLEN BERGLUND | CATHY MAYNARD | WADE SERFLING |
| ELROY BOEHLKE | MAYNARD MOEN | JEFF THORPE |
| ED BRABEC | ERIC MUNSON | JAMES TOENIES |
| MARK DAHLMAN | RAY MUNSON | DUSTEN WILKING |
| GARY FOEDE | LISA NYGAARD | GARY WILKING |
| MIKE FOUST | MAUREEN OGLE | BRIAN YAGER |
| TREVOR GOTTSCHALK | BRECK KRUGER | DAN ZACHMANN |
| NATHAN GRUENHAGEN | MATTHEW OLSON | SUE ZACHMANN |
| MATHEW HART | ROB PAINSCHAB | HARLAN ZANDER |
| DARYL HOOF | JOEL PETTIT | JOHN ZANDER |
| DANIEL KEEHR | JAKE REED | |

