

## H&JJ Johnson Dairy Goes Robotic

A parlor that needed replacement and high labor costs resulted in a decision by Howard, Joe, and Jamie Johnson to install four Lely Astronaut A3 robotic milking machines at H&JJ Johnson Dairy last October. After three months, they've had less stress in finding and managing good help, and their cows appear healthier and give more milk. "They're being left alone and not chased around as much," observes Joe. Added to that, the Johnsons have cut their labor costs by 80-100 hours per week, which has dramatically improved the business' cash flow.

Joe's dad, Howard, and brother Jamie raise the dairy's young stock at their original farm near Becker. They also take care of the fieldwork and run the family's custom chopping business from that location, while Joe manages the milking herd from their South Haven location.

"We're running right around an 80-lb. tank average with an average 2.8 milkings per cow per day," says Joe of his 215 cows in milk. The milking herd is fed a protein pellet supplied by Munson Lakes Nutrition that makes them want to come into the robot more often. "Before installing the robots, a lot of our high-producing cows were leaking milk," Joe observes. "Milking more often helps them achieve a higher peak."

Milking with robotics does require more labor initially. Cows that have not been milked robotically must be manually guided into the machine, which employs lasers to record the locations of their teats. But once the cow discovers that the pellet they desire can be found in the robot, they'll milk 2-6 times a day depending on their production and where they are in their lactation. This information is all stored in the Astronaut's computer, which provides Joe with the data he needs to evaluate and manage each cow.

"If the cow comes into the robot too early, it will just kick her out," says Joe. "The computer knows if it has just milked and will refuse cows that aren't ready."

Robotic milking has required some management changes. "It's important to maintain a calm atmosphere in the barn," says Joe, who points out that he now administers all shots in the stalls rather than locking the cows up. "The key is to make sure no negative things happen to the cow in the robot and the cow comes to trust it," he notes.

Special attention also is paid to maintaining good foot and leg health when milking robotically. "Our hoof trimmer comes

out every four weeks," says Joe. "We trim before we dry them off and then three months into lactation."

Dairy nutrition consultant Jeff Thorpe and sales nutritionist Doug Sawatzke team up to provide H&JJ Johnson Dairy with expert nutrition advice and high-quality feeds from Munson Lakes Nutrition. "They do all the ration work for both farms," says Joe. "Jeff had experience with a few herds going to robotic milking, and he knew right away what had to be done."

"We pride ourselves on making ration changes quickly," says Jeff. "That's why having Doug and me as a team works well."

Stearns Vets told Joe that H&JJ's transition to robotic milking was the fastest they had seen. "They complimented us on how the bags looked and not having to sell too many cows because the bags were too low or too wide," says Joe. "Overall, we just have a healthy herd."

Joe has set a 90-lb tank average as his goal. "Once the cows are used to the robot, we'll look at the ration and start to put a heavier challenge on them," he states.

"The Lely software allows us to play with the ration," adds Jeff. "We can add a couple pounds of grain on the top end and watch the production response. If we get what we want, we'll keep going, and if we don't, we'll make other adjustments." ●



Joe Johnson (left) and Jeff Thorpe (right) with a Lely Astronaut A3 robotic milking machine.

# Knows Both Farming and Feed Milling

Daryl Adickes has seen Munson Lakes Nutrition from both sides. For more than two decades, he was a dairy producer who ordered feeds from the Howard Lake mill. Now he works at the mill, bagging feed and receiving and loading trucks. His newest adventure is learning how to operate the Fuji-Ace robot that stacks bagged feed on pallets.

Daryl grew up in the Montrose area and moved with his family to a dairy farm near Lester Prairie on his 15th birthday. After high school, they farmed until 1993, when he sold off their cow herd. He went to work for Vitran-Quast Transfer and later for a construction company before joining MLN in the fall of 2007.

Coming to work at Munson Lakes Nutrition was like coming home. "I was very comfortable with the atmosphere around the mill," he states. "I fed Munson for over 20 years, and I remember when most of these guys started work here."

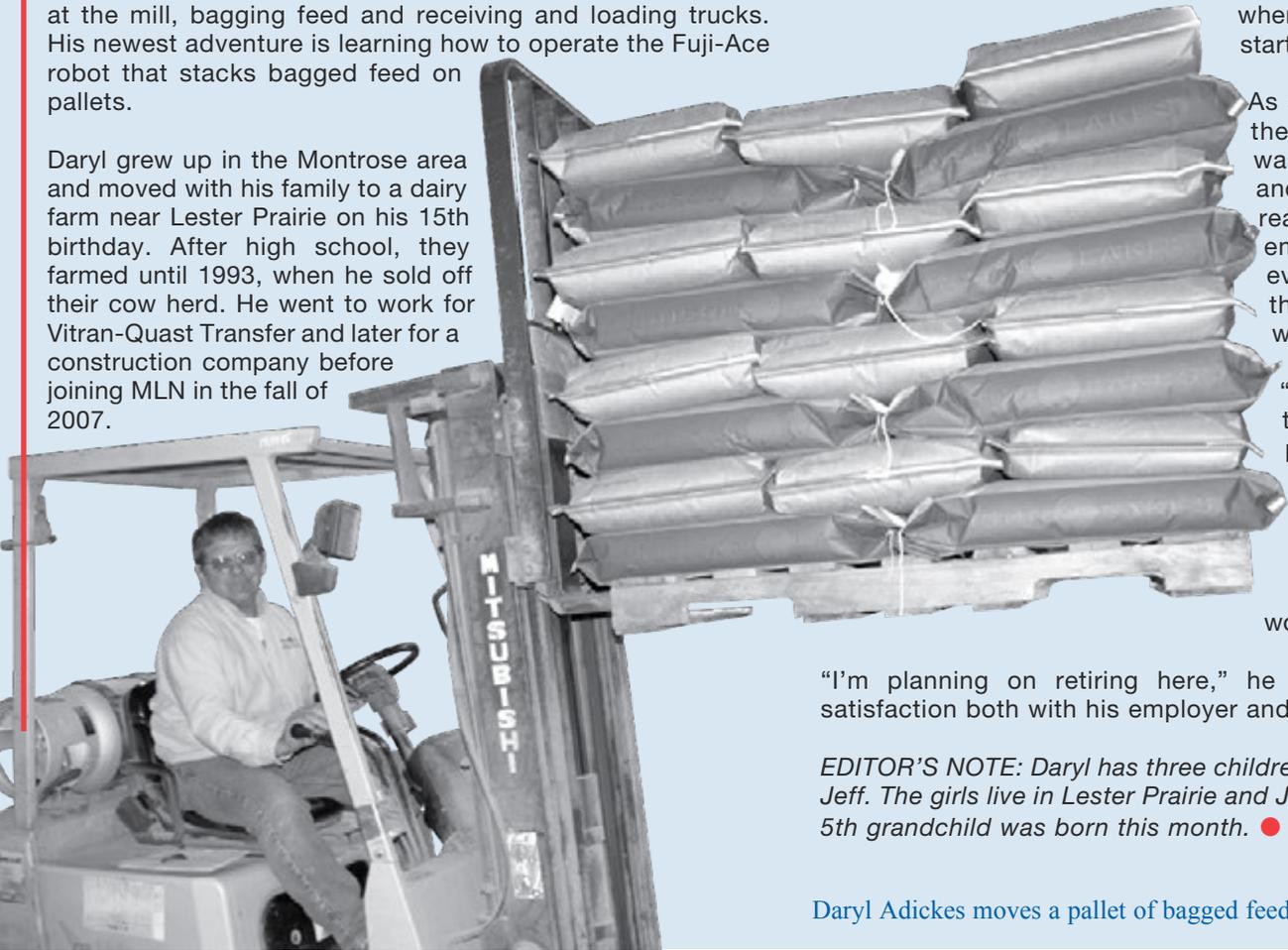
As a customer, Daryl liked the fact that the feed was manufactured locally and that it was always reasonably priced. As an employee, he appreciates everything that adds to the longevity of the MLN workforce.

"When I came to work at the mill, there were 18 people punching in, and 12 of them had worked 20 years for Munson," says Daryl. "My co-workers and management are all decent people to work with."

"I'm planning on retiring here," he adds, underlining his satisfaction both with his employer and his fellow employees.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Daryl has three children: Jennifer, Trisha, and Jeff. The girls live in Lester Prairie and Jeff lives in Winsted. His 5th grandchild was born this month. ●*

Daryl Adickes moves a pallet of bagged feed.



## All Results Point Upward in 2009

By John Zander, General Manager



Munson Lakes Nutrition just finished another solid year. Overall, we sold 97,255 tons in 2009, up from 94,883 tons in 2008.

Tons of pellets manufactured increased to 27,837 tons from 24,602 the previous year. We bagged and sold a record volume of feed in 2009—7,037 tons versus 6,494 tons in 2008.

The number of tons mixed at our Howard Lake mill in 2009 rose to 84,763 from 78,609 tons in 2008. That indicates our efficiencies in milling that feed improved to 17.01 tons per hour from 15.32 tons per hour the previous year.

Tons trucked also increased from 85,047 in 2008 to 89,520 in 2009. Our transportation crew pulled 5,565 loads and drove 608,292 miles in 2009, compared to 5,379 loads and 580,423 miles in 2008.

Here's one more statistic that should be of interest to corn growers in central Minnesota. Munson Lakes Nutrition used 1,163,542 bushels of corn in the production of our feeds in 2009.

Thank you for doing business with us and for allowing us to help you with your business. We look forward to serving you in the future. ●

### Our Mission

#### Some things never change.

The values that shaped our heritage will remain. Munson Lakes Nutrition will continue to:

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

# Issues With the 2009 Corn Crop

By Jonathan H. Ydstie, M.S., P.A.S. Dairy Technical Specialist, Prince Agri Products

Many factors have contributed to the potential for mold and mycotoxin contamination in the 2009 corn crop. Wet and cool conditions last spring led to late planting, followed by cooler-than-normal temperatures throughout summer, yielding fewer degree days for proper growth. Record rainfalls in certain areas of the Corn Belt led to a huge potential for significant mold growth and, consequently, mycotoxin production in the corn grain crop. These pathogens may significantly impact individual cow health and the overall productivity and profitability of your herd.

Three mold genera, *Aspergillus*, *Fusarium*, and *Penicillium* are primarily responsible for the production of mycotoxins of greatest concern. Several species of *Aspergillus* may produce aflatoxin while species of *Fusarium* molds produce zearalenone, fumonisin, vomitoxin (DON) and T2. *Penicillium*

mold species may produce ochratoxin and patulin, which currently appear to be of lesser concern.

Recent data reported by Dairyland Labs<sup>1</sup> indicates potential contamination by several of the primary mycotoxins impacting livestock health and performance. (See tables accompanying this story.) Samples were submitted by grain producers in the states of Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

*Aspergillus* infections start with the inhalation or consumption of *Aspergillus fumigatus* (AF) conidia. In healthy animals, the innate immune system eliminates AF conidia primarily through the actions of phagocytic cells, macrophages, and neutrophils. Macrophages and neutrophils recognize, bind, internalize, and ingest AF conidia, leading to elimination of the pathogen from the system. In stressed and immunocompromised animals, innate immune mechanisms fail to function properly to contain the fungal infection.

Building the immune system is the best strategy to allow the dairy cow to effectively deal with the immune challenges associated with the ingestion of mycotoxins and/or the inhalation or consumption of AF conidia.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Talk with your Munson Lakes nutritionist to determine a course of action for your herd. ●*

1. Mycotoxin Summary 1/8/10, Dairyland Labs

<b>Vomitoxin (DON)</b>					
Shelled Corn	<100 ppb	100 – 1,000 ppb	1,000 – 6,000 ppb	6,000 – 20,000 ppb	> 20,000 ppb
Total Samples (935)	170 (18.2%)	426 (45.6%)	295 (31.6%)	39 (4.2%)	5 (0.53%)

<b>Zearalenone</b>				
Shelled Corn	< 10 ppb	10 – 250 ppb	250 – 1,000 ppb	1,000 – 6,000 ppb
Total Samples (789)	409 (51.2%)	380 (48.2%)	21 (2.7%)	7 (0.9%)



## 64TH ANNUAL FISHING DERBY

**SATURDAY, FEB. 13, 2010**

**1 – 3 p.m. on Howard Lake**

**Howard Lake Sportsmen's Club**

**Don't Miss These Pre-Derby Events at the Howard Lake Country Store:**

- 10 – 11 a.m. U of M Raptor Center Presentation
- 11 – Noon Minnesota Wild Rice Recipe Tasting (limited supply, we'll serve 'til it's gone)

## STOCKED TO THE GILLS WITH WEAVER®



We've recently remodeled our tack department and now inventory many more Weaver Leather® items. Weaver Leather is known worldwide for its high-quality leather and nylon tack and tack-related products. Our goal at the Howard Lake Country Store is to become a gold-level destination for Weaver Leather products. ●

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



## Barrel Racer Is Country Store Ambassador

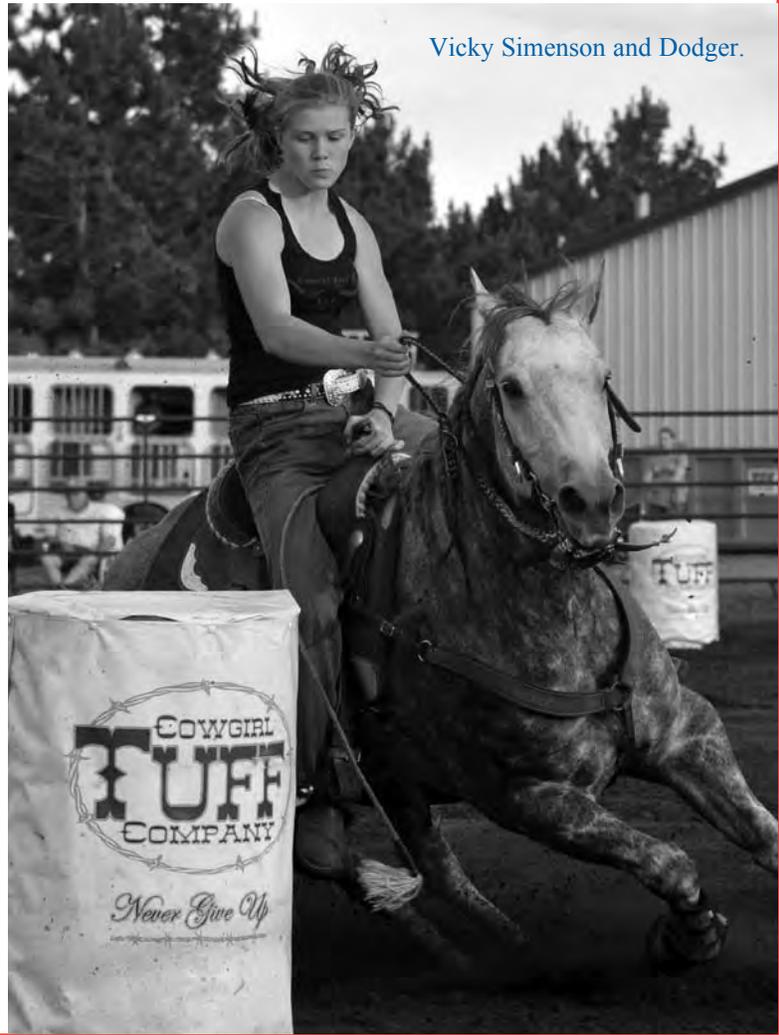
The Howard Lake Country Store proudly announces their new barrel racing ambassador, Vicky Simenson of Darwin, MN. Vicky is the daughter of Steve Simenson and Sharon Galloway.

Currently a sophomore at Dassel-Cokato High School, Vicky plans to compete next summer in several mid-Minnesota barrel racing competitions. With her previous horse, Nick, Vicky won the First Annual Buckle Series at the Kickin' Up Dust Horse Show held at the McLeod County Fairgrounds in Hutchinson, MN. This past summer, Vicky began training and competing with a new partner—a grey, four-year-old quarter horse named Dodger.

“He’s an awesome barrel horse,” says Vicky. “I just need to have him lined up in the slot and trust him to turn the barrel.” When Vicky and Dodger started competing, they were running a 20-second barrel pattern. “Now we’re down around 16,” Vicky smiles.

Vicky’s goals for the coming year include even faster times and cleaner runs. “Dodger is pretty much in his prime right now,” she explains. “Hopefully, he’ll just keep getting better and better.”

“She’s a young woman dedicated to her sport who takes very good care of her animals and has also done all the barrel training on Dodger herself,” says equine specialist Breck Kruger. Vicky, her father Steve, and step-mother Lynn, feed Dodger and the rest of their horses Purina® Strategy, which they purchase through the Howard Lake Country Store. “She’s very passionate about what she does, and we’re proud to have her as an ambassador for our store and for Purina Equine Feeds.” ●



Vicky Simenson and Dodger.