

Dairy Traces Beginnings Back Seven Generations

Randy Dahlheimer milks cows just two miles from the old village of Dayton, MN. All his neighbors have jobs in town.

It wasn't that way 72 years ago when Randy's grandpa, Merlin Dahlheimer, who is 99, bought an 80-acre farm in this township. The back 40 of that 80 acres was adjacent to a 40 on the farm where Merlin grew up. Merlin farmed that 40 with his dad, Phillip. Phillip was already the third generation of Dahlheimer to farm. Valentine Dahlheimer settled in the area a couple years before Minnesota's statehood and served in the Civil War. Phillip's father, John, was Valentine's son.

Eventually, Merlin bought Phillip's 40, giving him 120 acres. At the start of this farming/dairy operation, Merlin milked about 18 head of cows. He milked some by hand and some with the one milker he owned.

After World War II in 1946, milk prices dropped, so Merlin went to work for Honeywell in Minneapolis. He sold all but a couple milking cows and concentrated on crop production in the evenings and on weekends.

The fifth generation

At 14 years of age, in 1953, Randy's dad, John, the oldest of his 12 siblings, wanted to milk more cows. So John and

Merlin began to grow the herd again. Cow numbers rose to 20 head in 1953 and to 30 head in 1956.

John graduated from high school in 1957 and spent two years in active duty with the Minnesota National Guard. When he returned home, John and Merlin added to their barn and grew their herd to 65 cows.

In 1966, John took a job working evenings at Hoffman Engineering in Anoka. He would come home and milk cows in the mornings with help from his siblings.

The sixth generation

Randy grew up in this family business and got involved in the dairy at an early age. When Randy graduated from high school in 1981, he began milking full-time. "I never had outside employment," he says. "With Dad working off the farm, there was room for me." Randy's mother, Janet, helped by feeding cows and calves as well as assisting with milking during the busy seasons, and his dad would help before work and on weekends.

Randy was the second oldest of five siblings. Todd, the fourth oldest, joined the dairy as a partner after graduating from high school in 1987. From that point, the brothers and their dad grew the milking herd to 110, where it is today. Todd takes care of the crop production, which has expanded from Merlin's original 120 acres to about 550 acres of owned and rented land. Randy manages the milking side of the farm. The brothers' dad and granddad are now retired, but both still live on the farm they helped build.

Living with the neighbors

Over the 72 years the Dahlheimers have farmed here, the surrounding countryside has changed. Small farms have given way to large residential neighborhoods and Dayton River Road, which dissects the family's property, has turned into a busy highway. "The traffic slowly increased before but in the last 10 years it has grown greatly," says Randy, as he tried to talk over the noise of passing cars, trucks, and motorcycles.

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Four generations of Dahlheimers: Left to right, Xander, Todd, Merlin, John, Randy, and Zack.

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The Mississippi River provides a buffer on the north side of the farm, but on the other three sides, Randy has had to address the issue of how to live peacefully with his neighbors who may not understand agriculture.

He does it with a combination of diplomacy and involvement. For instance, whenever a neighbor wants to bring family or friends to see the cows or calves, he tries to accommodate them. Also, the Dayton River Road is curvy and slippery in the winter. Randy regularly pulls urban friends and neighbors out of the ditches of the highway that winds through Dahlheimer Farms. "It takes time, but it's good PR, and it's the right thing to do," he states.

Randy has also served for 15 years on the City of Dayton's planning commission. On that board, he acts as an unofficial ambassador for agriculture as well as a watchdog for issues that could affect his few fellow farmers.

"So far, we haven't had any complaints from people living around the farm," he states.

The next generation

In 2012, Randy's son, Zach, graduated from Champlin Park High School in a class of 781. "That I know of, no one in my class grew up on a farm," says Zach.

The youngest of five siblings, Zach has expressed interest in continuing to improve the family dairy farm. Zach, together with his older brother Josh, 31, now helps with the milking.

"Dad is already doing a lot of things I like by making sure the cows are fed well," says Zach. Future priorities for Zach's generation may involve reducing physical labor by automating the feeding process and putting up hay in big square bales instead of small squares.

Munson as a partner

Over 72 years, the Dahlheimers have had the satisfaction of watching their all-Holstein herd increase its milk production from 40 pounds per head per day to around 70 pounds. The factors driving this change, says Randy, include improved genetics, putting up better hay, and working with an off-farm partner like Munson Lakes Nutrition.

The Dahlheimers contacted the Munson Feed Company in 1978 in search of a way to increase milk production. "We chose Munson because an uncle fed with them and reported good results," states the Dayton dairyman.



Zach (left) and Randy (right) work with the first set of Holstein triplets born on Dahlheimer Farms June 17. The smallest of the calves weighed around 45 lbs at birth. The third lactation dam is doing fine.

"Before contacting Munson, we fed soybean meal and linseed oil," says Randy. The family's first Munson nutritionist, Don Westphall, recommended 38 Dairy. Later, the Dahlheimers switched to Milkmaker, and today they offer their milking herd a custom blend.

In 2011, the Dahlheimer's current sales nutritionist, Doug Sawatzke, assisted in switching Randy's dairy steer ration from soybean meal to 39 Beef. "We saw a great improvement," Randy says. "The dairy beef animals filled out better and finished much quicker."

"Munson's prices have always been reasonable, and they always provide good service," says Randy of the company they've considered a partner for 36 years. "If I have a question, I call Doug," he continues. "Doug either knows the answer or is willing to find it for me."

Editor's Note: Randy and his wife, Tammie, have been married for 32 years. Besides their sons, Zach and Josh, they've also raised three daughters: Jessica, Morgan, and Mandy. Each daughter has been crowned Hennepin County Dairy Princess at least once. Mandy, the youngest, is in her third year as the county's dairy princess. Tammie works as a nurse practitioner at the University of Minnesota. ●

Working Toward HACCP Certification

By John Zander, General Manager



At Munson Lakes Nutrition, we continue with our quest to become HACCP certified, as Brian Yager stated in the October 2013 issue of the *Munson Lakes Advisor*. The aim of the Hazardous Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) program is to address potential contamination points in the food production process. The reason we're involved in HACCP is to prevent contamination from happening and, if it

does happen, to have the capability of tracing the problem back to its origin. We have scheduled our HACCP inspection, which is our final step toward certification, for August of this year.

We've made several improvements to our Howard Lake mill this year and there are more to come. As part of our preparation for the HACCP inspection, we've poured concrete and asphalt on much of the space around the mill, which coincides with the project we completed last year: the expansion of our loadout and receiving areas.

Still to come, in July and early August, we'll be installing a new corn receiving drag

and rebuilding the walls around the receiving driveway. We need to completely enclose this area so that, during non-operating hours, no one is able to come in and harm the integrity of the feed.

So far, we have manufactured just over 74,000 tons in the first six months of this year. This total is up about 10,000 tons over last year, with dairy and beef feeds making up most of that increase.

Thank you for allowing us to work with you through the first half of 2014. In everything we do, our goal is to make you more profitable. This is consistent with "Our Mission," which has not changed in 78 years. Read it on page 4. ●

Newest Addition to Our Night Crew

The night shift at the Munson Lakes Nutrition feed mill in Howard Lake tries to manufacture as much feed as possible in advance of the next day's delivery. "We get all the trucks loaded so the drivers are ready to take feed out right away in the morning, and if possible, we fill all the bins," says Shawn Gebhardt, the newest addition to our night crew.



Shawn has lived in Winsted all his life. After graduating from Lester Prairie High School in 2012, he worked for RAM Buildings in Winsted and Randy's Sanitation in Delano.

Shawn joined Munson Lakes Nutrition in February of 2014, working on the mill floor and mixing ingredients with the day shift. He moved to the night shift in April 2014 and says he has already learned enough about the process to take charge if the night shift supervisor is gone.

"I applied because I heard this was a hard-working job, and I like the fast pace," says Shawn. "We're constantly moving, whether it's making feed, loading a truck, or bringing in ingredients—there's always something to do."

"I work with a lot of great people," Shawn adds. "Everyone is looking to help or answer any question I may have."

Shawn describes himself as a hard worker who will do his best to accomplish any task. "I'm always willing to learn something new so I can step in when someone else needs help," he states.

Editor's Note: Shawn has served in the Minnesota National Guard since 2012. He has a strong passion for the outdoors and is out hunting or fishing whenever he can. ●



Shawn adding and recording ingredients to a dairy ration manufactured at Munson Lakes Nutrition.

Better Treatment for Scouring Calves

By Melissa Holz, Land O'Lakes Animal Milk Products Co.

Land O'Lakes® has made some exciting updates to a couple of your favorite calf care products: Land O'Lakes Electrolyte System and Land O'Lakes Electrolyte Complete.

Land O'Lakes Electrolyte System is a two-part, cost-effective program designed to address the effects of scours, electrolyte loss, nutrition, and dehydration in calves. This product has been reformulated, based on research by Dr. Geof Smith at North Carolina State University, with sodium acetate as the alkalizing agent to better meet the needs of scouring calves.

It is essential that oral electrolyte solutions have an alkalizing agent of bicarbonate or acetate. At right are the benefits of sodium acetate:



- Acetate produces energy when metabolized.
- Acetate does not increase abomasal pH.
- A volatile fatty acid, acetate stimulates sodium and water absorption in the calf intestine.
- Acetate inhibits the growth of Salmonella and other bacteria; E. coli and Salmonella are killed at a pH around 3.0.

Land O'Lakes Electrolyte System is one of the only U.S. electrolyte products made with sodium acetate.

Designed for cost-effective early intervention, the Electrolyte System **BASE** features sodium and potassium for correcting electrolyte imbalance, high dextrose for quick energy, and zinc to assist in tissue healing. This product is ideal for use at the first sign of scours, during times of heat stress, and as a part of a receiving protocol for shipped calves.

The Land O'Lakes Electrolyte System **ADD PACK** is designed to be added to the BASE to treat calves that are showing clinical signs of dehydration. It features glycine to assist in electrolyte transport, sodium acetate to help correct acidosis, and malic acid to reduce D-lactic.

Finally, **Land O'Lakes Electrolyte Complete** has also been given a formula upgrade with the inclusion of malic acid to help reduce D-lactic acidosis.

For more information on these and other calf care products, contact your Munson Lakes sales nutritionist at 320-543-2561 or 800-245-7717. ●



Livestock Equipment at Country Store

By Paul Schleif, Outdoor Equipment Sales Specialist

Ever catch yourself saying something like, “I can buy that as soon as I have time to go to (name any big box store)!” Why drive all that way when you can pick up almost anything you need for your cattle operation at The Country Store in Howard Lake?

For instance, we have a full line of Richie® Fountains, a large inventory of Smidley® steer stuffers and feeders, and all the HiQual® gates and bale feeders you’ll ever want—plus hog panels, horse panels, and any kind of round pen.

Think you’ll need to replace a waterer this winter? Do it now, instead of waiting until the ground is covered with snow and ice.

We’re The Country Store and we’ve got everything you need—or we can get it! ●

601 Highway 12
 Howard Lake, MN 55349
 320-543-3517

Weekdays 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.
 Saturday 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.
 Closed Sundays



Paul Schleif with a Trail Hand® bale feeder.



Our display of Richie Livestock Fountains.

OUR MISSION

Some things never
 change—even
 after 78 years.

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.

**MUNSON LAKES
 NUTRITION DIRECTORY**

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