

All Hands Keep Dream Alive

It takes a whole family to make the Dale and Linda Gapinski dairy farm work. The Gapinskis milk 70 cows just north of Maple Lake, MN. “We have seven kids and they all pitch in whenever they can,” says Dale. “It’s a lot of work, but a nice way of life.”

Three sons still live on the dairy farm: Dominic, 17, Daniel, 15, and Donald, 11. Dominic and Daniel do the morning milkings with their dad, who works full-time at the Veolia Es Rolling Hills Landfill. Dominic also manages the calves. On weekdays, Donald shares the evening milkings with his sister Jessica, who has been married for three years. “On weekends, Linda does Saturday mornings and I do the rest with the three youngest boys,” says Dale. Douglas, the Gapinskis’ oldest son, got married this year but still helps on the farm. All share in the fieldwork. Only daughters Angela and Kristina, both married with children, do not participate in the dairy operation. But Angela and her husband, Jake Marquette, care for the Gapinskis’ 21-head BueLingo beef cow herd on a family farmstead near Buffalo.

“It’s really a whole family operation to be able to function the way we do,” says Linda, who until four years ago stayed home with the kids and participated in both morning and evening milkings. Today, she works as office manager at Monticello Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine.

Dale grew up on a dairy farm outside Buffalo. Linda grew up on a dairy farm near Corcoran. They met in high school, got engaged shortly after graduation in 1979, and married in 1981.

Dale’s dream was to farm full-time. Since 1974, he had worked for the Bergstrom Brothers farm equipment in Buffalo. Dale continued to mechanic there while purchasing cows and milking on shares with his Dad in 1982. In 1983, Dale and Linda rented a farm west of Corcoran, and in 1986, they rented their present day farm at Maple Lake. Dale realized his dream in 1989 when he quit his job with Bergstroms to concentrate on the Maple Lake farm, which he and Linda purchased in 1990.

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The Gapinski Family: Front, left to right: Jake and Angela Marquette, Steven and Kristina Berg, Donald Gapinski, Amelia and Douglas Gapinski, and Jessica and Dusten Wilkeng. Back, left to right: Dominic Gapinski, Linda holding grandson Evan Berg, Dale holding grandson Zach Marquette, and Daniel Gapinski.

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Then, in July of 1993, lightning struck the haymow of their tie stall barn and burned the entire structure to the ground. “We rebuilt, but the insurance didn’t cover everything,” recalls Linda. Realizing it was not plausible to continue in the dairy business without some outside income, Dale again took a job off the farm.

Finding good in bad

Instead of stewing about the lost dream, Dale and Linda have chosen to focus on the amazing stories of grace which resulted from this change in plans. For instance, they still marvel over neighbors Brad and Brian Pauman who let the Gapinskis rent their barn until a new free-stall barn could be built. They also remember Ronnie Kohnen who brought up a load of hay from Corcoran to feed the Gapinskis’ cows after losing all their hay in the fire. And they remember the generous people who came over with food and offers of other help at a time when they really needed it. “We hadn’t really realized the community atmosphere around here,” recalls Linda. “It was so welcoming.”

Then there was the miraculous discovery that may have saved Dale’s life. Looking for work after the fire, Dale landed a job at Wright County Compost but was required to have a physical before he could start. During the routine examination, the doctor

found a melanoma on Dale’s back. Further testing revealed the disease had been discovered just in the nick of time. A surgeon operated and removed all of the cancer before it could spread.

“If Dale wouldn’t have had to take a job off the farm, he would probably never have caught this illness in time,” says Linda.

Extended family helps

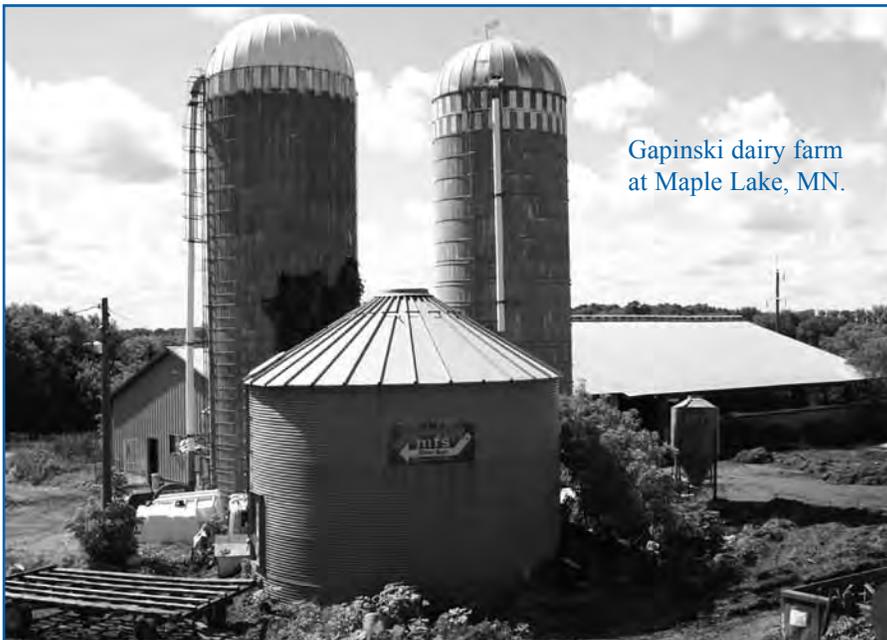
Munson Lakes Nutrition has been privileged to be a part of the Gapinskis’ extended family, even before this couple got together. Both Dale’s and Linda’s parents bought their protein supplements from Munson’s Quality Feed. Even Linda’s grandfather, Gilbert Scherber, bought dairy and turkey feed from the Munsons. So it’s no wonder Dale and Linda continue to rely on Munson Lakes Nutrition for quality feed products and advice.

“Munson’s is a wonderful company,” states Linda. “They worked with us when the barn burned down and we were going through a financial crisis—they never abandoned us.”

Munson Lakes sales nutritionist Doug Sawatzke has known the Gapinskis ever since they moved their dairy herd to Maple Lake, first delivering their feed and then consulting on their rations. When the barn burned and Dale had to work off the farm, Doug would collect information on herd performance from Linda, who was then supervising the milking, and relay his recommendations to Dale. “With Dale not involved in the milking at that time,” says Linda, “it was helpful to have someone who would communicate with us the way we needed to.” Dale now supervises the morning milkings before leaving for his job off the farm.

Today, Doug continues to monitor nutrition for the Gapinskis and suggest changes when needed. “He is not just our feed man,” says Linda. “He and his wife have become good friends with Dale and me over the years.”

“But,” she points out, “Doug knows that if something isn’t going right with the rations, we’ll be the first to step up and tell him.” It’s all part of belonging to the family (and in some cases the extended family) that makes this Maple Lake dairy farm work. ●



Gapinski dairy farm at Maple Lake, MN.

Setting New Milling Records

By John Zander, General Manager

The manufacturing and delivery crew at our Howard Lake mill has set at least two records in recent months. In March, they manufactured over 10,000 tons of feed—a new record for monthly feed production. In May, they broke that record by manufacturing over 12,000 tons. We would like to thank you for choosing Munson Lakes Nutrition to partner with your business. We will continue to look for ways to improve our operation to be as efficient as we can be.

We are adding to our sales staff. Steve Kallinen, with 25 years of experience in dairy nutrition consulting, will join us in July. (See Steve’s story on page 4.) We’re expanding our staff to take advantage of opportunities for growth, while continuing to take good care of our current customers.

Thank you for your business, and please accept my best wishes for a safe and prosperous summer. ●





Preparing Your Rations for Summer

By Dr. Andy Mueller, Field Dairy Nutritionist

Last summer was one of the hottest on record in Minnesota, and we are still seeing its effects on our farms. Many dairy producers are preparing for an increase in cows calving this month, due to lower reproductive rates last summer.

Although we cannot prevent the heat, we can adjust the cows' rations to help them cope. Heat stress for cows starts as low as 68°F, so they are dealing with it every day starting in May and running into September. One nutritional strategy to help cows deal with heat stress is to positively DCAD the ration. [DCAD = dietary cation anion difference or the difference between the sodium and potassium levels in the ration versus the sulfur and chloride levels.] Research shows that raising the DCAD level of the ration to 38-42 mEq/100 g can help maintain dry matter intake, production, and butterfat yields under heat stress conditions.

To do this, you first need to have the minerals in the forages checked using wet chemistry. This is a more accurate way to measure them than traditional NIR. Also, make sure to have both the sodium and the chloride levels checked in the forages, as the levels can vary widely from farm to farm and both of them affect the DCAD level of the ration. Raising the DCAD level can be done by increasing the amount of buffer fed and by adding DCAD Plus™ if the potassium level is under 1.8 %. I recommend using DCAD Plus™ over potassium carbonate or potassium chloride, since potassium carbonate can cause the ration to

heat in the presence of fat or excess moisture and potassium chloride does not increase the DCAD of the ration. Finally, when DCADing a ration, I recommend increasing the level at least 10 mEq/100 g to see the best response in the cows.

Another feed additive that can help in the summer is yeast culture. Yeast culture can increase fiber digestion along with supplying nutrients to maintain a normal, healthy rumen population during heat stress. Also, ask your nutritionist about feeding Rumensin™. Rumensin will increase your cows' feed efficiency, which allows more milk to be produced per pound of feed.

Besides dealing with the heat in the summer, cows also have to combat flies and the discomfort that they cause. A new feed-through larvicide product called ClariFly™ is available for all stages of cattle growth and lactation. ClariFly™ is an insect growth regulator that can control house flies, stable flies, face flies, and horn flies from developing in the manure of treated cattle. Land O'Lakes Animal Milk has it available in both milk replacer and pasteurized milk balancer products to help control flies in and around the calf growing area. It is the only feed-through larvicide available for calves on milk or milk replacer.

Contact your Munson Lakes nutritionist for more information on summer feeding strategies for your herd and for ClariFly™. ●

George and Crew Stock Warehouse

Last fall, George Elsenpeter joined the production crew at the Howard Lake mill. Operating the bagger and working in the warehouse, George considers it a good day when he's filled all the bags on the schedule and nothing broke down.

"The guys in the mill are fun to work with," says George. "I try to keep a good attitude and help wherever I can," he adds.

George grew up on the family farm west of Buffalo. He milked for 20 years before disbursing his herd in 2009. Today, he continues to crop farm while raising a few head of cattle to butcher.

He has little free time, but when he can get away, George says he enjoys pan fishing on area lakes. ●



George Elsenpeter

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



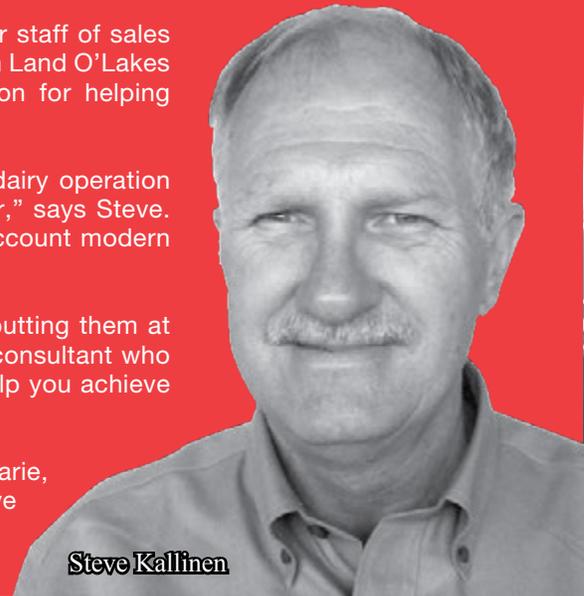
Meet Our New Consultant

Munson Lakes Nutrition has added dairy production specialist Steve Kallinen to our staff of sales nutritionists. With 25 years of nutrition consulting experience and certification by both Land O'Lakes and the American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists, Steve has a passion for helping individual dairy producers reach their goals.

"It has taken me years to build the calf and cow sense needed to evaluate each dairy operation and formulate diets that address the health and production goals of each producer," says Steve. He notes that, "Balancing dairy nutrition is both an art and a science, taking into account modern genetics, unique facilities, and management practices on each individual farm."

Steve emphasizes personalized service. "That means listening to your needs and putting them at the forefront of our conversation," he states. "In tight economic times, you need a consultant who cares about your goals." When economics are better, he adds, a nutritionist can help you achieve even greater profitability.

Steve has been married to his wife, Aila, for 32 years. The couple's daughter, Annmarie, attends St. Cloud State University and will be married in July. In his spare time, Steve enjoys outdoor activities like hunting, motorcycling, canoeing, and hiking. ●



Steve Kallinen

Tribute to Floyd Munson

Floyd Munson passed away on Tuesday, May 22, 2012. Floyd and his father, Ray E. Munson, founded Munson Quality Feed in March 1935, and in June that same year, it moved to Howard Lake.

In 1996, the Munson family sold its interest in the company to farmer-owned cooperatives. Recognizing the founders'

reputation in the country, the new owners named the company Munson Lakes Nutrition.

Today, the feed business Floyd Munson started with his dad supplies livestock producers with over 120,000 tons annually. **Like our founders, we continue to manufacture a great product at a fair price, give great customer service, and base every decision on fairness and decency.** ●