

Technology Measures Mixes and Feeds These Cows

A TMR mixer mounted on a robotic feed pusher makes its way down the concrete feeding aisle of the new, but not yet full, 122-cow free-stall barn constructed next to the old tie-stall barn at Scherber's Morning Star Dairy near Corcoran. As it moves down one side, the Lely Vector pushes the TMR against the bunk where the milk cows can get at it. Simultaneously, it measures with lasers how much TMR is left and records the need to mix more. At the end of the aisle, it turns and comes back down the bunk in front of the dry cows and heifers. Again, it pushes feed up and scans the remainder.

After a complete circuit of the feeding aisle, a door opens automatically, and the Vector exits the free-stall barn. It lumbers down a concrete ramp to another automatic door, and into the old barn. In space formerly occupied by the farm's TMR mixing equipment, the Vector backs into its power supply and begins mixing more TMR for the dairy animals.

Based on the needs of the various cows and the levels it scanned in the feed aisle, this remarkable automatic feeding system begins to blend the rations. Affectionately named Alice after the character who made all the meals on the 70s sitcom "The Brady Bunch," the mixer calls for haylage, high-moisture corn and silage from three Harvestore silos adjacent to the "kitchen."



John, Quinci and Staci Scherber of Corcoran, Minnesota.

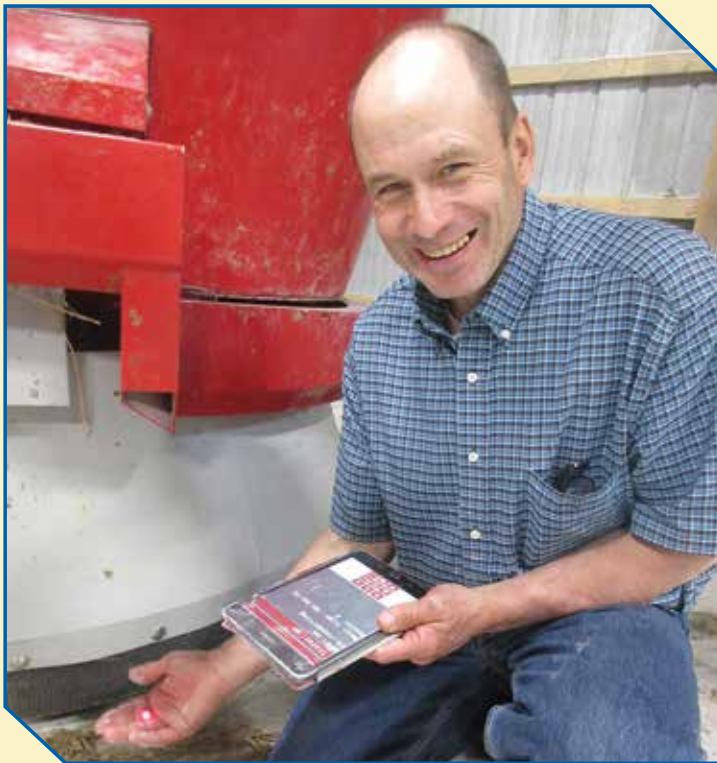
These ingredients are transported from storage and into the mixer via conveyors shielded from visitors and inquiring little hands by a security fence. If needed, small hay bales are conveyed into the mixer from the barn's mow. Protein and mineral flow into the mixer from bulk bins outside the barn via PVC pipe. A spray of water from a pipe over the mixer completes the list of ingredients.

Alice mixes the ingredients for about 20 minutes. Then the automatic door opens again, and she lumbers back to the free-stall barn where she deposits the meal in front of the animals. Right

now, she keeps track of the rations for the 110 high producers and the dry cows and heifers. In the future, she may be called upon to make four different rations for the dairy's animals—and is, in fact, capable of storing and turning out many more recipes.

"Right now, this automatic feeding system is saving us about three hours of feeding time," said John and Staci Scherber, who refer to the Lely Vector

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With an iPad controller, John demonstrates a laser on the feed pusher that measures the TMR level in the feed aisle of the Scherber's free-stall barn and determines if a new batch of feed needs to be mixed.

in front of the conveyors," says John, illustrating the dealer's concern with not only the process but with the well-being of the family.

Munson Lakes has been a partner of the Scherbers since the early 1900s when the Munson Feed Co. helped John's grandfather and grandmother, Gilbert and Susan, raise turkeys for the Minneapolis market. Later, Munson fieldman Don Westphal pointed John's father and mother, Don and Ann, to a farmstead the Scherbers now affectionately refer to as "the home place."

"Doug analyzes our feed and shows us what we need to do to make it a good ration for the cows," says John, who adds that his MLN nutritionist has the ability, via computer, to watch how the cows are doing and change the ration if needed. *Note: Munson Lakes Nutrition also supplies feed products and consultation to the dairy at Thief River Falls with a Lely Vector.*

In addition to their children, the Scherbers have help from a good friend, Pete Eiden, who saw a need after John's dad, Don, recently passed away and comes over to milk three times a week. The family expanded their herd from 50 to 110 cows, moved into their new free-stall barn, and switched to milking three times a day.

"We haven't seen any free time yet," smiles John, but he is hopeful. "I think I will enjoy managing the herd once the robots are installed." He and Staci think there may even be opportunities to use their new dairy set-up to educate the public on where their milk comes from.

"We hope to be here and part of the community for a long time to come," Staci adds. "Letting the next generation come in will be our next step." ●

Technology Measures

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as the first step in the transformation of the dairy, which will extend the couple's work life. It will also accommodate any of their ten children, ages 8 to 28, who want to join them. The next step will be installing two Lely Astronaut robotic milkers into space already allocated in the new barn.

"The grand plan is to make it feasible for us to stay here and milk into our 70s if we want to, but also for the next generation to move in," John continued. The automated milking and feeding system will extend the 53-year olds' ability to milk beyond what they could have with their tie-stall barn. At the same time, it should generate the income necessary for more than one family to be involved in Scherber's Morning Star Dairy.

Already interested is their daughter, Quinci, the fourth of their ten children. Quinci is a junior at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls majoring in dairy science with a management emphasis, and was recently honored as one of the 12 finalists for Princess Kay. This summer she is helping with the dairy's three daily milkings along with her brother, Caleb, who drives up to Corcoran from Bloomington. It's already a family affair with the younger of the Scherbers' children helping with daily milking and chores, and riding scooters in the free-stall barn. "Our youngest daughter brings books and reads to the cows," says Staci, adding that she draws pictures in the barn, too.

In this new endeavor, the Scherbers' have good partners. Leedstone, their Lely dealer from Melrose, helped the family get all their silos set up to work with the Vector, one of only three such units in the United States—there's one in Pennsylvania and another in Thief River Falls, Minnesota. "They (Leedstone) are the ones who put up the safety fence



Doug Sawatzke (left) and John Scherber stand in front of Alice as she calls for hay bales to be dropped from above.

Managing Calves During Transition Months



By Ted Radintz, Calf and Heifer Specialist

The seasonal transition from winter to spring has been longer than normal this year. The extended “brown” season has most calf producers dealing with mild and then cold temperatures, as well as increased dampness.

These stressors reveal gaps in our calf management and have us searching for answers. Let’s look at a few areas that will help our calves in the transitional months and set them up for long-term success.

Pre-calving and maternity: Getting calves off to a great start on day one is critical for high calf health and performance. Make sure close-up cows have a clean, disinfected and well-bedded maternity pen.

Housing: Adjust the barn’s ventilation frequently throughout the day (4-6 times daily) and give additional attention to calf bedding needs, including possible bed pack removal and replacement.

Sanitation: Cleanliness and sanitation are critical year-round, but gaps in sanitation protocols are amplified when combined with weather stress. Mixing pails, utensils, feeding buckets and bottles should all be cleaned and sanitized, as well as tube feeders and drenching guns.

Consistency: Whether you feed milk replacer or pasteurized waste milk, hand deliver milk or use an auto-feeder, day-to-day feeding should be consistent. Weigh milk replacer powder before mixing, check the water temperature with a thermometer before and during milk mixing, and perform routine maintenance on auto-feeders and pasteurizers.

Other practices with big payoffs: Offer clean water and a high-quality calf starter by the second day of life. Review your calf vaccination and animal health protocols with your veterinarian to reflect current concerns.

Please contact your Munson Lakes Nutrition consultant for more in-depth information. ●



Mike Junczewski

A New Face at the Mill

Mike Junczewski grew up on a dairy farm south of Howard Lake and graduated from Dassel-Cokato High School. He went on to study dairy management at Ridgewater College.

In 2010, Mike got his commercial driver’s license, and he has worked for the last seven years as a trucker in the North Dakota oil fields.

Mike and his family returned to Minnesota at the end of February. He began working at the Munson Lakes Nutrition (MLN) feed mill at the end of April.

“I’m mixing feed right now,” he states, adding that he brings a good work ethic to his job and the other employees are “easy to get along with.”

Mike hopes to work into a job as a truck driver for MLN.

Editor’s Note: Mike and his wife, Christina, have two boys: Zander, 3, and Zayden, who was born this past September. When he’s not working in the mill, expect Mark to be out on the farm, working with steers and pigs. ●

Putting Up Haylage in a Wet Year

By Jeff Thorpe, Field Dairy Nutritionist



One way to counter the wet conditions in which you and other producers are putting up haylage this year is to inoculate with SiloSolve® MC from Chr. Hansen.

The good bacteria in SiloSolve MC reduces the growth of harmful bacteria

like clostridia and butyric fermentation in silage.

Contact your MLN sales nutritionist for a supply of SiloSolve MC.

Remember to clean your applicator

If you do not follow guidelines for proper sanitation, even when you shut down for just a few hours during a weather delay or between cuttings, you risk a biofilm building up and clogging

the system—like plaque clogs an artery. I’ve heard a number of complaints of this happening in recent years.

Here is the good news. Organisms in quality inoculants (like Chr. Hansen) grow very fast. That’s good. You want that kind of action. But when they don’t get cleaned out of an applicator, they can cause problems. So you need to keep your applicator clean.

Your MLN sales nutritionist can provide you with guidelines for cleaning your applicator. ●

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PO Box 549
 Howard Lake, MN 55349

SAVE THE DATE
**Annual Pork
 Chop Dinner
 Wednesday,
 Aug. 9.**



Next Step to Keeping Food Safe

By John Zander, General Manager

As we continue to work on our HACCP certification and improve our biosecurity practices, we've decided to take another major step: adding a truck wash. Our fleet continues to grow and the time has come to have an in-house area where we can take care of this important biosecurity practice.

This summer, we'll replace the Wrightway Ag Building next to The Country Store with a combination truck wash and storage building. Right now, The Country Store uses that building for cold storage. The new building will serve both to clean and sanitize our trucks, and to provide a better cold storage space for The Country Store.

As part of our HACCP certification, we must maintain written records showing when and how

often we wash our equipment. On a daily basis, Munson Lakes has 15 trucks on the road.

We anticipate demolishing the existing building the last week in June and starting construction on the new truck wash and storage building in July. The truck wash should be operational by the end of September.

Friends of our youth

As we have in the past, we will support our youth engaged in agriculture by attending 4-H livestock sales at local county fairs and achievement days. If you would like Munson Lakes Nutrition to bid on your animal this year, please submit your organization's request forms to your MLN sales nutritionist or bring them to our office in Howard Lake.

We wish you the best this fair season, knowing the hard work you put in getting ready for your event. ●



Munson Lakes Nutrition purchased wool from Rebecca Wilts' sheep entry at the 2016 Wright County Fair. The wool is being turned into a quilt to be awarded as a door prize at our Annual Pork Chop Dinner, Wednesday, Aug. 9.

OUR MISSION

Some things never change—even after 80 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.*

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