

## From Pennsylvania to a Minnesota Dairy with Robots

Norm and Nicole Guisewhite took possession of the former H&JJ Johnson Dairy in September. Milking 250 cows with four robotic milking machines after milking 100 cows in a traditional double-6 parallel parlor is a challenge for this young couple with two young daughters: Hanna, 8 and Alexis, 5. But their closeness as a family is one reason the Guisewhites decided to purchase this farm near South Haven, Minnesota.

“We realized that we could double our herd size without doubling our labor and be able to spend more time with our family,” states Norm.

To understand their readiness to tackle robotic milking, you need to understand the passion Norm and Nicole have for dairying. This passion began in Pennsylvania where they both grew up—Norm on a dairy farm and Nicole the daughter of a butcher.

Fresh out of high school, Norm and Nicole went to work on a 400-cow Virginia dairy farm owned by Norm’s uncle, Ken Leber. They returned to Pennsylvania to farm on their own; but they couldn’t compete for labor and land with the growing natural gas industry. So in August 2014, the Guisewhites moved to Minnesota where Norm found work as herdsman on a 250-cow dairy.

### Guisewhite Dairy, South Haven, MN.



**Norm and Nicole Guisewhite with Hannah and Alexis, in front of their calf hutch collection.**

Certain they wanted to stay, the couple bought a 100-cow herd at Mayer, leasing the barn and milking equipment.

“We owe our initial success to Mike Foust, the Munson Lakes nutritionist working with the farm where Norm was a herdsman, and to Lyle and Wanda Honebrink, the previous owners of the herd,” says Nicole, adding that Mike was the Honebrinks’ nutritionist, as well.

Fast forward to today: the H&JJ Johnson Dairy came up for sale and the Guisewhites jumped at the opportunity. Bringing their best cows with them, they arrived this fall to take possession of the South Haven

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Alexis Guisewhite with a baby calf.

dairy. Now they rely on MLN dairy nutritionist Jeff Thorpe to help them learn the fine points of feeding cows that are being milked robotically.

“Most dairies have a one-month course before robots are installed,” says Norm. “We went from a conventional parlor to robots overnight.”

Nicole manages the milking while Norm takes care of the crops and feeding. She admits switching from conventional milking to robots has been hard. “I don’t have the hands-on experience with the cows that I really liked,” she says.

Calf-raising has been another learning process. At first, Nicole planned to switch from hand-feeding calves in hutches to a calf barn with automatic feeders. Now, to address ventilation and disease challenges, the

Guisewhite’s will divide their calves between the barn with auto feeders and a new complex of calf hutches.

“We can manage their health better if we spread out the calves,” says Nicole.

Norm and Nicole will address the challenges presented by their new dairy as they arise. Another challenge will be to acquire or rent enough land to raise all the forage needed by this 250-cow milking herd. The 250 acres of arable land that came with the dairy is not enough.

Also in the future, the couple will consider expanding their milking herd, building a new heifer and dry cow barn across the road.

“Milk prices may not rise much,” observes Norm. “We need to get more efficient.”

For now, the Guisewhites are just happy to have a place to grow their business and their family, and good friends like Munson Lakes Nutrition to walk alongside them.



Merry Christmas  
& **HAPPY NEW YEAR**  
From the Employees of Munson Lakes Nutrition

Kyle Adams  
Daryl Adickes  
Lee Arnhold  
Kirk Bengtson  
Tom Bobrowske  
Elroy Boehlke  
Mark Dahlman  
Austin Davis  
Jeannie Decker

Nate Dressel  
Andrew Estrem  
Tim Fiecke  
Gerald Fistman  
Mike Foust  
Shawn Gebhardt  
Nathan Gruenhagen  
Tyler Gruenhagen  
Todd Jopp

Robbie Kadelbach  
Paul Kartak  
Tyler Kosek  
Curtis Larson  
Brian Luebke  
Eric Munson  
Ray Munson  
Kraig Noerenberg  
Everett Nowak  
Maureen Ogle  
Matt Olson  
Lane Otto  
Charles Peterson  
Elise Quast

Ted Radintz  
Doug Sawatzke  
Lisa Schlechter  
Paul Schleif  
Wade Serfling  
Jordan Snell  
Jeff Thorpe  
Jim Toenies  
Paul Wackler  
Dusten Wilking  
Gary Wilking  
Brian Yager  
Sue Zachmann  
John Zander



Left to right: Norm and Nicole Guisewhite and MLN nutritionist Jeff Thorpe.

“Dairying to us is not a job, it’s a lifestyle,” explains Norm. Nicole nods her head and adds, “We can’t imagine ourselves doing anything different, which is why we packed up and moved away from everything and everybody we knew in pursuit of our dream.”

“Unlike most people,” she smiles, “the topic around our dinner table is our cows and what we can do for them.” ●

“Milk prices may not rise much. We need to get more efficient.”

## Skilled Feed Maker Joins Howard Lake Mill



Kyle Adams in the Howard Lake warehouse.

Munson Lakes Nutrition recently hired Kyle Adams to work at the Howard Lake Mill.

A native of Marshall, Kyle worked construction after high school. Then he took a job with Ralco Animal Nutrition, a manufacturer of feed additives and supplements. Kyle spent four years making dry feeds and three years making liquid feeds for Ralco. He started as a production worker and was later named manager of Ralco’s liquid plant.

After his wife Kristin accepted a position with the Twin Cities Orthopedic Clinic in Chaska, Kyle and his family moved to Winsted. Kyle and Kristin have two children: a 3-year-old daughter named Iris and a 6-month-old boy named Ike.

Kyle was attracted to Munson Lakes Nutrition because of his knowledge of feed. “You just get good at the job you’re doing and go from there,” he reasons.

As he learns MLN’s business, Kyle values those times when he can contribute to the manufacturing team. “I feel I’m succeeding at what I was hired to do when I shoulder some of the weight, especially when someone is gone,” he says. “As long as I can be a help so the work isn’t on just one person’s shoulders, I’m good with that.”

“I’m happy to have someone with Kyle’s qualifications moving to our area,” says general manager John Zander. “Kyle fits in perfectly with our company.” ●

## Calf Care Starter Kit Discounted

For a limited time, Munson Lakes Nutrition is offering a Land O’Lakes Calf Care Starter Kit for just \$195 per kit – a \$40 savings.

The kit includes: One eight-pound bag of Land O’Lakes Calf Insure, three single doses of Land O’Lakes Colostrum Replacement, five single doses of Land O’Lakes Electrolyte Complete, a mixing pail, a 12-inch whisk, and an esophageal tube feeder.

Stop into the MLN Country Store or call your sales representative to purchase this starter kit at the special price above. This offer is good while supplies last. ●



PO Box 549  
 Howard Lake, MN 55349



**MLN Calf Meetings**  
 featured speaker TBD

10:30 a.m., March 7  
 B's On The River,  
 Watertown

10:30 a.m. March 9  
 Classic Event Hall,  
 Annandale



# Radintz Named Sales Team Manager

By John Zander, General Manager



**Ted Radintz** has been with Munson Lakes Nutrition (MLN) for four years as a calf and heifer specialist. We have promoted Ted to the position of sales manager. He will head up our team of sales nutritionists, while continuing to work with MLN as a calf and heifer specialist. In addition, Ted will be responsible for managing promotions, educational events for our producers and training for our sales team.

Ted has shown great leadership skills in his short time with us. He will be a mentor to our younger sales team members and has the respect of our more experienced team members

We look forward to Ted guiding the MLN sales team into the future.

## 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.*

## Logistics changes

Long-time trucker **Elroy Boehlke** will retire at the end of this year. Elroy has delivered feed to Munson customers for 43 years.

I want to thank Elroy for a full career of great service to our customers. They will certainly miss him.

We've added to MLN's fleet of drivers and their training will be complete by the end of the year. Hopefully, we'll be able to provide our customers with a seamless transition as Elroy moves on to the next stage in his life.



## Holiday greetings

Thanks to all MLN customers for the opportunity to work with you in 2018. On behalf of the employees and directors, have a wonderful time with your families this holiday season.

We look forward to serving you in 2019. As always, we will continue to honor Our Mission, shown at right. ●

**MUNSON LAKES NUTRITION DIRECTORY**

**HOWARD LAKE OFFICE**

800-245-7717  
 320-543-2561

**THE COUNTRY STORE**

800-663-9177  
 320-543-3517