

Constant Improvement at Co-Jo Dairy

Fifteen years after graduating from Ridgewater College and returning to his family's farm northwest of Grove City, Joe Jans has seen a lot of change in the dairy operation he owns and manages with his dad, Greg.

Back in 1999, the father-son duo doubled their herd from 250 to 500 head. In 2009-2010, they doubled the herd again. Co-Jo's dairy herd now totals 1,100 cows, with 800-900 in milk.

Despite the growth, certain basic values have not changed. Those values include a commitment to produce and feed only high-quality rations, a predisposition to using emerging technology to improve production, and an emphasis on teamwork.

Comfort boosts production

In 2009-2010, they constructed a new cross-ventilated barn with 486 free stalls and sand bedding. Today, the dairy has a running herd average of about 90 pounds of milk. "We believe our increase is due to a couple of things—the quality of the feedstuffs we're putting up and cow comfort," says Joe, referring to the sand bedding and improved ventilation.



Joe in the calf barn constructed in 2012.

But they did not stop there. In 2012, they built a new calf barn and installed an automatic feeding system for 100 heifer calves. Their calves had been fed in hutches, so the automatic feeding system both saved manpower and made it easier for their employees to work with the calves in the wintertime and in the summer when it's rainy and wet.

"Nutrition-wise," says Joe, "the automatic system allows us to feed the calves more accurately, and we can watch them closer on a day-to-day basis to see what they have consumed." As a result of their investment in this technology, Joe and Greg hope to see perhaps a 1,200- to 1,500-pound increase in the first lactation of these cows.

Through this automated feeding system, Co-Jo Dairy feeds Land O'Lakes® Cows Match Milk Replacer, an intensive calf program supplied by Munson Lakes Nutrition.

More changes on the way

Joe and Greg are committed to producing and feeding only high-quality rations to their herd. "We take great pride in how we make the feed we deliver to our cows," he stresses. "We try to put up optimum-quality silage." To maintain that quality, they cover each bunker with a double layer of plastic less than 12 hours after completing the pile. Now, they are in the process of putting up bunker walls between their corn silage and haylage to better utilize the asphalt base on which these feedstuffs are stored. "We were running out of space for the haylage and by putting up these walls, we can go higher with the piles and store more," Joe explains.

Another unchanging value of this dairy is their emphasis on teamwork. Joe and Greg are further tweaking their team approach this spring by changing the milking shifts. "We just switched from 12-hour shifts to 8-hour shifts so our employees don't get so tired," says Joe, who hopes the change will result in a better flow of cows through the parlor and an even better job of milking them.

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“We just started these new shifts a month ago,” he states. “We’ll run with this schedule another month and then review it.”

Joe is very complimentary of his staff of 15 employees (12 of them are milker technicians) and the outside consultants he also considers part of Co-Jo Dairy’s team.

“Our success in recent years is directly related to our team,” he states. “This team includes everyone from our milking technicians to our herd person, Jenessa Thompson, who has been with us 16 years and my cousin, Seth Beckstrand, who joined Co-Jo five years ago.” Seth divides his time between being a second herdsman, a mechanic, and farming, according to Joe. “Whenever we need a spot filled, he’s there,” says Joe.

Joe is also appreciative of Munson Lakes Nutrition’s dairy nutrition consultant, Jeff Thorpe, who balances the dairy’s rations, does a walk-through of the dairy every week, and body scores their animals once a month. In addition, Jeff keeps them on top of price changes in their commodities. Munson Lakes Nutrition calf specialist Melissa Holtz also helps Joe and Greg with their calf program. “Jeff and Melissa have worked hard to take calf measurements and heights to see if we are getting the desired weight gain from our calves,” says Joe.

“We contract a lot of soybean meal through Munson Lakes Nutrition, and they keep us up on the newest technology,” he states. “They provide us with the best rations possible.”

Future of the dairy

Later this year, Joe and Greg plan to add to their milking parlor, converting it from a double 12 to a double 18. “We’re also going to expand our dry cow facility and make it a combination dry cow/heifer facility,” says Joe, adding that their dry cows are overcrowded right now. At the same time, they want to look at the benefits of bringing their heifers back early from their heifer raiser. “It would take more labor and land for feed, but we could keep better control of heifer size, weight, and gain, and we could use some of the feed that is not as high quality as we want to feed the cows and put it into the heifers,” says Joe.



Calves in the foreground enter an automatic feeder in the rear to get Land O’Lakes® Cows Match Milk Replacer.

As for future herd expansion, Joe says, “It will probably happen at some point in time, but not anytime soon.”

Editor’s Note: Co-Jo Dairy is owned by Greg and Nickie Jans and Joe and Krista Jans. The latter couple have two children: a daughter, Liberty, age 9, and a son, Piper, age 1-1/2. Liberty helps feed calves during the summer months when she is not in school. In addition to his role on the farm, Joe serves as chief of the Grove City Fire Department. ●

Manage Heat Stress From the Inside With Rally™

By Dr. Andy Mueller and Jeff Thorpe, Field Dairy Nutritionists

We typically address heat stress in cows on the outside by strategically locating fans and sprinklers, especially in the holding pen. Occasionally, we’ve added yeast to the ration and increased DCAD levels to help cows deal with summer heat.

Now, Purina® has come out with a way to fight heat stress from the inside, with a product that has been around for almost 15 years. Rally™ has three patents for decreasing Non-Esterified Fatty Acids (NEFAs) by 40% in prefresh cows, for increasing early lactation intakes by 3.8 lbs and take off milk by 5.1 lbs, and for increasing total milk production 3.5 lbs.

What is new with Rally is that over the last three summers, it has been tested in University of Missouri heat stress chambers and on numerous farms in Mexico and the U.S. This research showed that in the presence of heat stress, cows fed Rally maintained intakes and milk production better than cows not fed Rally.

Rally works by changing the cows’ metabolism to use energy/glucose more efficiently, which is unique to this product. Other summer heat stress products try to increase water intake or reduce the cow’s body temperature in hopes of keeping her eating, but they do not affect her energy balance and



metabolism. Energy/glucose is what keeps your cows healthy and milking year-round, but especially during heat stress.

For more information on how Rally can work to increase your dairy’s profitability, contact your Munson Lakes nutritionist at 320-543-2561 or 800-245-7717. Also, ask them how to download the FREE Purina Cool Cow™ App to monitor and manage heat stress. ●

Increasing Rumen Digestion Adds Milk and Health

By Steve Kallinen, Dairy Production Specialist

At Munson Lakes Nutrition (MLN), we continue to search for new products with sound research that we can comfortably promote as tools to increase the efficiency of your dairy cows. Of each product, we ask an important question, “How will this improve the dairy’s profitability?” Often we look at products for their protein or energy value that will affect milk production the quickest. However, cow health (and specifically rumen health) is critical to maximize digestion of the quality feedstuffs in the TMR.

Feed additives are available in abundance but few have enough research to prove their effectiveness. One product, Dairyman’s Edge PRO, has passed the test. At MLN, we’ve added Dairyman’s Edge PRO to our list of rumen enhancement products.

Dairyman’s Edge PRO contains high levels of live yeast, yeast culture, microbials, enzymes, and the salt of glutamic acid. This product is designed to augment the fermentation rate by providing nutrients for the rumen microbes and by assisting in the liberation of carbohydrates from fibrous feeds, thus making more energy and metabolizable protein available to the dairy cow. This product’s strategy for

increasing production seems to fit some of the needs we saw in last year’s high fibrous, low digestibility feedstuffs.

Dairyman’s Edge PRO increases dry matter intake and improves feed efficiency. A healthier rumen keeps cows on feed during changes and transitioning by reducing the negative effects of stress. Research trials are showing 3-5 pounds more milk, plus slight increases in component percentages.

I now have a few herds on this product and feel the production responses outweigh the investment! I’m seeing some herds with cleaner and more consistent manure, indicating better digestion, and the results I see indicate a 4:1 or 5:1 return on investment from milk sales!

For more information on how Dairyman’s Edge PRO can increase your dairy’s profitability, contact your Munson Lakes sales nutritionist at 320-543-2561 or 800-245-7717. ●



Fresh Legs on the Bag Truck

He’s only been driving a truck for Munson Lakes Nutrition (MLN) for one month, but Tyler Gruenhagen is already a familiar face to many of our retail and commercial customers. Tyler delivers bagged feed on a route that ranges in distance from dairies a few miles from Howard Lake to feed stores in Wisconsin.

“My goal is to help our company be efficient in getting our bagged feed products out to end users,” says Tyler, who refers to himself as “young blood” and “a fresh pair of legs” for this well-respected feed company. His cousin Nathan also works for MLN.

Tyler grew up on a beef farm north of Howard Lake. His dad and mom, Brian and Rena, manage 35-40 cow-calf pairs, and for many years Tyler milked cows on his Grandpa Elton’s place.

In 2011, Tyler graduated from Howard Lake–Waverly–Winsted High School (his sister Gabby is a senior there now) and went on to study agronomy technology at Ridgewater College at Willmar. During that

time, he interned with Centra Sota Cooperative. When he graduated from Ridgewater, Tyler spent a year working for Pioneer® Seed.

Now, as a route driver for MLN, Tyler counts the day successful when he has correctly filled a customer’s order as efficiently as possible and is headed down the road to his next stop.

One day, Tyler hopes to have a family and increase the size of his family’s farm. To do that, he knows he must have an off-the-farm stream of income, and that’s where his work for MLN comes in.

“My job here is first, and my goals for the future are second,” he states. “Being the best at what I do for Munson Lakes Nutrition will help me meet my goals.”

Off the truck, Tyler tries to spend as much time as possible on the water. A passionate ice-fisherman, he tries to get his dad and the rest of the family involved, too, but that isn’t easy. “Dad has a strong work ethic,” he states, adding, “I strive to be like my dad.” ●



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