

GreKare Farms Resets and Surges Back

When Greg and Karen Peper started GreKare Farms in 1992, they could not have dreamed that a stray voltage problem would cause them to lose a majority of their herd—but that’s exactly what happened. So in 2000, they moved their remaining 37 cows to a new location east of Centuria, WI and started growing their dairy operation all over again. One important difference in this second beginning was that they decided to build a registered Holstein herd.

Through careful purchasing and breeding over the past 12 years, the Pepers have built their herd to 89 cows with a rolling herd average of 24,134 lbs. of milk, 899 lbs. of butterfat (3.73%), and 751 lbs. of protein (3.11%).

Despite achieving these good production levels, the Pepers do not aim to become the top herd in the county. They just want to breed quality cattle with the ability to consistently produce over time.

“We don’t want to burn the herd up,” says Greg. “We want to keep the herd healthy, keep the cull rate down, and sell some animals so they can do as well for someone else as they have for us.”

“We want longevity,” adds Karen. “It doesn’t matter how high the milk production is—its how much money you put in the bank when the day is done.”

The Peper’s philosophy is to ignore genomics and breed solely on type. “We’re after the cow with the capacity to eat a lot of forages and do it efficiently—the type we can get milk out of by feeding her right. We want cows that work hard and look pretty doing it,” says daughter Katie, who has taken a lead in improving the herd’s genetics.

The Pepers purchase most of their baled hay, but with help from Greg’s dad and brother, they raise and put up haylage, silage, and high-moisture corn on 330 acres of owned and rented crop ground. They also raise and roast soybeans, including them in the herd’s ration. “We get all the rest of our feed through Mike Foust with Munson Lakes Nutrition,” says Greg.

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Purebred Holstein Junior Champion Arora, Katie Peper, and sponsor Kevin Christianson (AgStar) at the 2012 Polk County Fair.



Picture, left to right: Karen and Greg Peper, Pinto EX-91, daughter Carole, Avery EX-90, daughter Katie, and son Justin.

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Greg and Mike function as a team to plan rations. If a problem arises, they sit down together and work it out, in consultation with the Pepers' veterinarian. "It's been a good working relationship," observes Karen.

The goal: higher capacity cows

The Pepers' rolling herd average is up 1,000 lbs. since they starting working with Mike a year and a half ago. Then last fall, Mike introduced the Pepers to a new Land O'Lakes milk replacer called Cow's Match® ColdFront™ that he believed would fit their goal to raise higher-capacity cows. ColdFront gives calves raised in colder temperatures additional energy to reach their full potential growth. Mike also recommended feeding them milk replacer 3 times a day.

Despite misgivings about more frequent feedings, the Pepers agreed to give this higher-energy product a fair try last December. "The results were immediate," says Greg. "The calves didn't scour as easily and their growth was phenomenal." Moreover, the Pepers weaned their ColdFront calves two weeks earlier. These calves didn't stall out at weaning as previous calves had. "They never stopped growing, and now the December calves that got the ColdFront three times a day are basically the same size as our September calves," says Greg.

"We used to wean our heifer calves at three months of age to get the size out of them," adds Karen. "Now we're down to eight weeks or less." Greg chuckles, "That's because they'll carry the hutch away if we don't get them out."

At a district show, other dairy producers noticed the difference. "Some stopped by and asked what we did differently between our fall and winter calves," says Katie. "They were just bigger, longer, wider."

"Everybody is so impressed with their size," agrees Greg. "I can't wait to see how these calves perform when they hit the milk string."

Family and herd shows well

The future of GreKare Farms is bright with all three of the Pepers' children (Carole, Katie, and Justin) expressing interest in the business. At ages 25, 20, and 17 respectively, the siblings continue to actively participate in the dairy operation and to show the dairy's best stock, receiving high marks for their efforts.

Most recently, Katie (in her senior year at UW-River Falls) showed a full-age December calf named Arora at the 2012 Polk County Fair and took Junior Champion honors. Katie and Justin, a high school senior, also competed in the market steer program. For the second year in a row, the Pepers' steers were both Champion and Reserve Champion Dairy Market Steers and 2012 Champion and Reserve Champion Total Performance of all market steers, beef and dairy. These animals were fed MLN's 39% Beef Program.

"With the kids out showing, people are seeing what we have, so once we start selling animals, they will remember and be more likely to bid on them—that'll be the icing on the cake," says Greg. ●

GREKARE FARMS CALF FEEDING PROGRAM

0-8 WEEKS COW'S MATCH COLDFRONT MILK REPLACER (IN WINTER)
COW'S MATCH WARMFRONT MILK REPLACER (IN SUMMER)

0-3 MONTHS FUTURE COW AMPLI-CALF STARTER

4-7 MONTHS CALF GROWER 18% PELLETS—WITH GOOD ALFALFA AND GRASS HAY

Market Highlights

By Mark Dahlman, Grain Manager

Volatility will dominate corn markets in the foreseeable future, although high corn prices currently appear to be rationing demand from feed, weaker exports, and ethanol. After reaching all-time highs in August, corn futures have flattened or inverted. This has tended to pull corn into the markets earlier.

The futures markets will initially focus on the South American weather and then to U.S. weather and 2013 U.S. corn plantings. With U.S. and global corn stocks at extremely tight levels, weather and economics will keep a certain amount of volatility in the grain markets.

Marketing options

Munson Lakes Nutrition (MLN) currently offers these four options for marketing your corn:

1. Spot Sales – Cash sale at delivery.

2. Future Delivery Contract – The producer selects bushels for a future delivery date. Price is our board price for the delivery period specified. This is currently our most popular and widely used market tool for forward pricing.

3. Price Later Contract – Corn is delivered and ownership transferred to MLN. Price and settlement occur sometime in the future. Availability, length, and fees of this contract are subject to change. Space is limited.

4. Deferred Payment – Available on settlements to all of our contracts after priced corn has been delivered. MLN can defer payment into next calendar or fiscal year.

For more details on these options, call me at 320-543-2561 or 800-245-7717. **Corn bids available at munsonlakes.com.** ●



Efficiencies Keep Costs Down

By John Zander, General Manager

In an effort to increase our efficiency, we are replacing the six finished feed load out bins on the north side of our mill with 10 load out bins. With the number of trucks delivering feed from this mill, sometimes they sit idle. We don't always have the capacity to load them out and continue to make feed. We're increasing the number of load out bins so we can have finished feed ready to load onto each truck as it returns from the country.

We'll need to dig up our ingredient loading driveway to put in footings for the bins. So while we're doing that, we've decided to expand our receiving pit to allow us to take an entire semi-load of ingredients into the pit at once. When this upgrade is finished, we'll be able to move ingredient trucks in and out within five minutes, rather than the 20-30 minutes it takes now.

The biggest benefit of all these improvements is the reduction of expense to produce each ton of feed. We're always looking for ways to keep your feed costs down.

We hope to begin this project soon and have it completed shortly after the beginning of 2013—which isn't that far away. Most importantly, you should see no interference in the delivery of your feed while this project is underway.

Two key people say goodbye

Two long-time employees are retiring on December 14, 2012: Cathy Maynard and Harlan Zander.

Cathy has worked for Munson Lakes Nutrition (MLN) for 24 years. Her primary job over these many years has been invoicing our feed customers and handling all of our human resources paperwork. I want to thank Cathy for her hard work and dedication to Munson Lakes Nutrition and wish her the best in the future.

Harlan has worked as a truck driver for MLN for almost 40 years. He is known for his reliability. Our customers knew that if Harlan delivered their feed, everything would be done correctly. I appreciated him because, when a customer ran out of feed on a Saturday, I could call him and he would take care of them. Thanks, Harlan. ●



General manager John Zander thanks Cathy Maynard and Harlan Zander for their years of service.



AMPLI-Calf® Cool Weather Starter

By Devin Hyde, Calf & Heifer Sales Specialist, Purina Animal Nutrition

Even at a temperature of 60° Fahrenheit, cold stress can impact the growth and health of dairy calves. During the cool months, calves require higher dietary energy to maintain body condition, and achieve optimal growth and health. Research confirms that AMPLI-Calf® Cool Weather Starter can improve calf growth, profitability, and support health.

AMPLI-Calf Cool Weather Starter combines two ingredients to improve energy and feed intake: Propel® Energy Nugget, a highly digestible and palatable energy source, and AppetiteMAKER™, a patent-pending, proprietary additive proven to further stimulate higher feed intake of young dairy calves.

Contact your Munson Lakes nutritionist for winter calf feeding strategies and to talk more about AMPLI-Calf Cool Weather Starter. ●



PO Box 549
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Our Mission

Some things never change—
 even after 76 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.



Happy Holidays

FROM THE EMPLOYEES OF MUNSON LAKES NUTRITION

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|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------|
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MUNSON LAKES NUTRITION & PFIZER ANIMAL HEALTH

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Purchase 1 Ton of Aureo S 700® Crumbles OR 1 Ton of Aureo 10G Crumbles
 and Receive a FREE Carhartt® Jacket.

*Offer good October 15, 2012 through December 31, 2012.