

Kimball Farmer's Career Feeding Cattle

"I believe in starting at the bottom of the ladder," says Tom Konz, who has raised dairy steers for beef for 35 years. That was the philosophy his dad Philip passed on to Tom, and it's how Tom built his agricultural enterprise, TMS Konz Farms, north of Kimball.

The only asset his dad, Phil, and mom, Lorraine, had when they were married was a team of horses. By the time Tom married in 1984, his parents had three farms. "They asked me which one I wanted and I purchased this one," Tom recalls.

Despite having a place of his own, Tom started at the bottom. He told his dad he wanted to buy his own milking herd, but his dad said no. "You milk mine." So for many years, Tom milked for his dad and raised steers on the side. Then, when his dad sold his dairy herd in 1990, Tom bought a big round baler and began custom baling. Despite his banker's reservations, Tom paid off that baler in the first year.

Besides crop farming and feeding steers, Tom and Marlene managed their own 100-sow farrow-to-finish hog operation for a time. But in 2008, they decided to quit raising hogs and focus on raising beef.

At first, the Konz's fed up to 300 steers in an outdoor lot. But in June 2012, they hired Arzen Construction, which also owns the St. Rosa Lumberyard, to build their first mono-slope barn for 120 additional steers.

"It's 48' x 122' and has a 25-foot-high roof," says Tom, explaining the high roof allows the sun to shine all the way to the back of the building in the winter, and in the summer, the high roof promotes good air flow. "If it's 90 degrees outside, it'll be 10 degrees cooler in there," he states.



Munson Lakes sales nutritionist Doug Sawatzke (left) checks the bunk with Tom Konz (right). "Munson Lakes is on my side 100%," says the Kimball cattle feeder.

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Retain Your Forages

By Wade Serfling, Manager, The Country Store

The tighter the economics get, the more important it is that your feed value is as high as possible.

The key to forage quality is management. The value of potential forage loss in corn silage may approach \$35/ton. You may also expect losses in milk production and/or greater concentrate costs when feeding poorer silage.

Part of good management is the use of a microbial inoculant. Chr. Hansen is one of the leaders in the inoculant industry. Their products:

1. Reduce forage heating quickly
2. Rapidly reduce pH
3. Improve dry matter recovery
4. Increase protein retention
5. Increase bunk life
6. Maximize forage nutrient value

Munson Lakes Nutrition offers several Chr. Hansen products. Contact your MLN sales representative or The Country Store at 800-663-9177 to zero in on the right product for you. ●



Country Store manager Wade Serfling with Chr. Hansen inoculants.

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Tom also noticed the steers inside the barn were eating less in the wintertime than the steers trying to keep warm in the outside lot. Last year, he asked Arnzen to build another mono-slope barn to house 200 more steers. The Konz's son Philip liked the concept so well, he asked Arnzen to construct a third 72' x 144' barn for his steers. Both new barns have J-bunks out front.

"The other thing these mono-slope barns have is phylon fronts to keep them warm in the wintertime," states Tom, who says this unique construction helps keep the bedding dry.

Tom, Marlene and Philip get a majority of their dairy steers at 250 lbs. from a supplier in Ohio. They also buy some calves locally and raise them to market weight. At any one time, there are 700 head of dairy steers being fed on their farm.

The Konz's market their steers as fats on contract with a processor in southern Minnesota. They also sell about 30 head a month through the Albany sales barn where the family maintains a good reputation with buyers.



Munson on his side 100%

TMS Konz Farms has been feeding with Munson Lakes Nutrition (MLN) since 2010. Today, the family purchases their calf starter (Intense Whole Shelled Corn Mixer Pellets) from MLN, as well as 39 Beef RT for their finishing cattle. MLN sales nutritionist Doug Sawatzke helps Tom balance the rations.

"I always get my order the next day and the truckers are friendly," says Tom, who likes MLN's attention to its customers. When the Veterinary Feed Directive became law in January of 2017, Tom was selected by the state for a spot check. Doug brought MLN's feed safety coordinator Brian Yager to the farm as a resource for Tom during the check. The farm's veterinarian, Dr. Art Rueck, also participated by phone.

"No violations were found—I just needed to label my bulk bins—but it was good to know Munson was on my side 100%," says Tom.

"Clean" plays a big part in Tom's success

Asked to share the secrets of raising dairy steers, Tom says he uses plenty of bedding and keeps his water fountains clean.

"One buyer told me that when my cattle come in the ring, his first impression is how clean they are," says Tom of spending a little more on bedding. Of sanitizing his waterers, Tom reasons he can prevent sickness simply by killing germs where all his animals go to drink. Tom added, "Phil has done an excellent job of marketing for our farm."

Three mono-slope barns on TMS Konz Farms keep the dairy steers cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

Yeast Ups Milk & Prevents Illness

By Jeff Thorpe, Senior Dairy Consultant

Munson Lakes Nutrition now has Peloton™ Yeast Feed Additive available for producers to use in all animal diets. The positive effect of feeding yeast has been studied for many years. When you feed a yeast, you are stimulating the production of rumen microbes which, in turn, help digest feed better. The result of better digestion is improved dry matter intake and improved milk production. The table (down right) shows a meta-analysis of the benefits of feeding yeast.

Peloton Yeast not only utilizes yeast, it also contains MOS. MOS contains Beta Glucans and Mannans which have been shown to help prevent the colonization of pathogens. If your pathogens are limited on their ability to colonize, the animals will be less likely to get sick. Also, their immune system will have more energy to go towards milk production versus attacking pathogens that may try to enter the animal.

Another benefit to the Peloton Yeast is it's a thermal-stable product. The live yeast has been encapsulated so it can survive temperatures up to 190° F. The benefit for you is that it can be pelleted if you want to use it in your calf feeds

or pelleted animal feeds. Another benefit to being thermal-stable is that you don't have to worry about the viability of the product when it is being stored in your bin on very hot days.

If you have more questions on how Peloton Yeast can benefit your dairy, please call your Munson Lakes Nutrition sales nutritionist. ●



Measure	Control	Yeast	P-value
DMI, g/kg of BW	34.6 ^a	35.0 ^b	<0.05
Milk yield, g/kg of BW	46.5 ^a	47.7 ^b	<0.001
Milk fat, %	3.80 ^a	3.85 ^b	<0.10
Milk protein, %	3.20	3.19	NS

His MLN nutritionist shares a third secret. "Tom manages his feed bunks well," says Doug. "When there is medicine in the feed, it's gone the next day. He makes sure his cattle clean up whatever is fed."

What's next for TMS Konz Farms?

Tom and Marlene have built this steer feeding business, starting at the bottom rung of the ladder. He gives a lot of credit to Marlene for its success. "She has been my partner 24/7," he states. "She's never worked off the farm.

Now that Tom is 59 years old, he's thinking ahead to the next stage in his life. He says his son Philip and wife, Siri, would like to expand their stake in the steer feeding operation and eventually take over his parents' operation.

That would give Tom more time for another occupation he really enjoys—driving an old John Deere combine down the street in area parades "auguring" candy to children along the route. For more on that side of Tom's life, go online and watch the video "Land of 10,000 Stories: Candy Combine."

Editor's Note: TMS Konz Farms stands for Tom, Marlene and Sons. Besides Philip, two other sons, Tim and Ben, also live nearby. Ben works for a large dairy and Tim is a full-time electrician, but both are involved in the farm. ●

Mill Operator Focused on Quality

One of Munson Lakes Nutrition's newest employees, Roland Epple, grew up on the Montrose farm where he still lives.

"We raised corn and fed cattle," Rollie says of his childhood.

After graduating Buffalo High School in 1981, Rollie attended Ridgewater College at Willmar for two years, earning a degree in ag production. In 1983, he married Treva, a Howard Lake graduate. The couple recently celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary.

Together, Rollie and Triva have raised four children: Elliot, 34; Calleigh, 31; Lewis, 29; and Wyatt, 25. Their children have given them seven grandchildren. "They're all within 150 miles," says Rollie. "The furthest away lives in Pipestone."

Rollie and his dad crop farmed until 2007. They continued feeding cattle until recently.

Rollie started work at Munson Lakes Nutrition the middle of March. In the evenings, he makes feed that is loaded onto the first trucks out the next day.

"I liked the fact that Munson is ag-based and close to home," he states, when asked why he accepted a job here. "I do not have to commute into the cities and the pay scale is better than other local companies.

Rollie brings a deliberate approach to his job as evening mill operator. What that means is he focuses on making quality feed for our customers.

Rollie says he enjoys manufacturing feed. "It's interesting to see what other livestock producers are doing—how they are feeding and what they are feeding," says Rollie. ●



Rollie Epple in front of our Howard Lake mill.

PO Box 549
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Replacing Willie

By John Zander, General Manager



In April of this year, we let Willie go. He worked for us, piling feed bags in neat stacks on pallets for 10 years, but he finally got tired. The stacks he created were getting a little sloppy and a little loose. We'd like to thank Willie for all the hard work he gave us over

those 10 years, but we had to replace him.

I'm talking about the piling robot at our Howard Lake Mill, which we affectionately dubbed Willie. Over the years, this robot piled around 3.5 million bags. He did the work of two men, so he paid for himself in the first three years of his decade of work.

The robot we installed in April was the same model, made by the same company, but with updated technology. The piles should be neater and tighter now, and the robot will continue to keep costs down for the end producer (that's you).

Oh, by the way, we've dubbed our new robot "Willie II."

Truck wash in use

Our truck wash, located west of The Country Store in Howard Lake, was finished by RAM Buildings of Winsted the first week in June. You



Introducing Willie II.

might ask, "Was it really necessary to build a truck wash?"

Well, before the wash was completed, we had been spending about \$1,500 per month to keep our 15-truck delivery fleet clean. Not only do we have to wash these trucks regularly, but we must document that these trucks are being washed.

It's all part of the accountability required by the Food Safety and Modernization Act (FSMA) to show that Munson Lakes Nutrition is keeping the feed we deliver to your livestock safe, which helps you keep the food you produce for the consumer safe.

Some things never change

We're half-way through another year; before we know it, harvest will be upon us. See Wade Serfling's preservatives article on page 2.

Thank you for your business. Even in tough economic times, we will always treat you and your neighbors with the utmost respect, offering great product at a fair price. See our MISSION at right. Some things never change. ●

MLN driver Jim Toenies cleans his rig in the new truck wash west of The Country Store.

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.*

MUNSON LAKES NUTRITION DIRECTORY

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