

MUNSON LAKES Advisor

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Hinckley Dairyman Tells Agriculture's Story

In the early 1930s, Nathan Nelson's grandfather, Ed, and great uncle, Vern, moved from east of Sandstone to the 120 acres east of Hinckley they bought at a dollar per acre. Since then, family members who've moved away always refer to the Pine County farm as "the home place." And that is how Home Place Dairy received its name.

Nathan, who was born in 1979, was raised on the home place. After high school, Nathan decided he didn't want to farm. He liked carpentry, so he moved to Wichita to work for a cousin in the construction business. It was there Nathan met his wife, Suzanna. In 2001, their daughter, Leah, was born.

It was also in Wichita that Nathan recognized he had taken a lot of things about his upbringing for granted. Living in a big city, he realized a farm was a good place to raise a family. He also noticed friends who grew up in Wichita were taking jobs with little other motive than to earn money. Nathan recalled being raised in a lifestyle that valued work and ownership, and one that yielded more than a monetary reward.



Nathan Nelson holds his youngest, Zeb, with MLN sales nutritionist Charlie Peterson on Home Place Dairy.

"I want to raise my kids so they see accomplishment at the end of the day," Nathan said.

When his parents, Howard and Diane, came to Wichita to see their first grandchild, his dad asked if he would be interested in coming back to farm. Nathan accepted. Six months later, the young family moved to Pine County.

Two weeks after moving back, the Sept. 11 attack rocked our nation. "We were glad to be out of the city and back in the security of what we knew," states Nathan. "Especially at a time when there were a lot of unknowns in life."

For two years, Nathan worked for his dad. During the second year, the two men began formulating a transition plan with the help of accountants and attorneys. In 2003, they entered an official partnership designed to gradually transfer assets and land from father to son.

"It was at that point, 15 years ago, when we were signing all the documents necessary for the partnership that the farm officially became Home Place Dairy," says Nathan. The partnership will dissolve in January 2018 when Howard officially retires.

Since forming this partnership, not a lot has happened on the dairy side of the operation, other than switching to TMR in 2005 and starting to bag haylage in 2006. Their Holstein milk herd consists of about 60 milking cows and a similar number of replacement heifers, which the Nelsons raise themselves. They also raise their bull calves to 400-500 lbs. before selling them. Home Place Dairy also consists of a 60-head beef cattle herd.

On the crop side, they now have additional land and grow all the feed they need for their livestock, in addition to some cash crops. "We needed some additional income for me to come back to the farm, so we rented land and worked up some underutilized pastures, putting both into row crops," Nathan explains.

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Nathan's other jobs

Nathan and Suzanna now have five children: Leah (16), Esther (11), Ruthie (8), Johannah (2½) and Zeb (1½). You'd think with a growing family and all the farm work to do, Nathan would spend all of his time at Home Place Dairy. But he actually spends considerable time, especially during the winter months, telling the story of agriculture to anyone who will listen. He's spoken to elementary and high schools in Hinckley, Cambridge, Isanti and several civic groups. Most recently, he addressed three food industry classes at Duluth East High School about dairy farming and farm life.



Nathan Nelson, holding his son, Zeb, samples chopped hay with his MLN sales nutritionist, Charlie Peterson.

"At a Farm Bureau Leadership Conference, I was encouraged to spend one hour a week engaging and informing the public about my business," says Nathan.

When his grandfather established the farm in the '30s, the general population was either involved in agriculture or understood what was going on in the farm community. "Today, with only 2% of the population active in agriculture, a lot of people don't understand what is happening and those are the individuals who are voting and setting the regulations we (farmers) have to live by," he states.

For this reason, Nathan speaks to any group that will have him about farming and its values.

The value of Munson Lakes

In one of his classes at Duluth East, a student asked about cow nutrition and then commented, "Your cows have a better diet than I do."

The Nelsons just made a change in their milking ration. Nathan and his Munson Lakes sales nutritionist, Charlie Peterson, pulled feed samples. Charlie worked to tweak the ration to get his milking herd back to a diet they appreciate.

"That's one of the things I've appreciated about Munson Lakes for the last 10 years," says Nathan. "They've been a good company to work with, whether it's pulling feed samples or exploring how we can switch up the ration to address lower milk prices."

Home Place Dairy depends on MLN for their milk replacer, calf starter, heifer mineral and the protein-mineral mix in the dairy's TMR. MLN also supplies feed for the beef cattle.

Because of Munson's size, Nathan says he's able to draw products from more sources.

"At the same time, Munson gives lots of attention to the farmer," says Nathan. "You get the best of both worlds—individual help with options you can only get from a bigger company."

Having a partner like MLN makes it a lot easier for Nathan to farm and, at the same time, have an impact in the larger community.

"He's very active in the community," says Suzanna, who teases that Nathan's hobby is meetings. "But, we think it is important for him to do these things."

Nathan nods, "Telling our story and advocating for agriculture is a huge part of my job." ●

Don't Get Caught in the Hype

By Doug Sawatzke, Munson Lakes Sales Nutritionist



Many years ago, a producer said to me, "If every additive you brought would get me 2 to 4 lbs. of extra milk, each of my cows would be milking 200 lbs. per day."

That statement caused me to scrutinize and sort through vendor claims. I wanted MLN to provide

the "missing link" to issues that producers were facing back then and continue to face today. Keep in mind: These products are here to supplement on-farm forages and grain, not replace them.

When weather prevents timely harvest, we may use products to offset mold and wild yeast pressure and then add yeast or a probiotic to aid in digestion.

Wet environments may soften hooves, which could possibly result in lameness.

Using chelated minerals or adding biotin may help.

ALL of these products may be a benefit, when positioned properly.

There are many ways to measure success: bulk tank averages, reproductive performance, growth rates and components, to name a few.

Please share with your Munson Lakes Nutrition representative any issues you're facing. We will suggest which of our vendor products can help. ●

Learning to Make High Quality Feed

Lee Arnhold started working on the mixing floor of our Howard Lake feed mill in October. He recently learned how to run the pellet mill, and he's looking forward to being shown how to operate the computer that controls the entire feed manufacturing process.

"I'm a quick, hands-on learner," he states. "If I'm involved in a process, I can learn it."

Lee was born in Bloomington and lived in Waconia and Jordan before growing up on his stepfather's dairy farm in St. Benedict.

After graduating from Jordan High School, Lee started building wheelchairs and warehousing for various companies, including Kmart. Most recently, he worked 14½ years for Cardinal Health in Champlin.

About seven and a half years ago, Lee bought a house in Howard Lake. Now working for MLN, he appreciates

not having to drive a long distance to work.

"I like the work," he says of manufacturing feed. "I'm always moving in this job and that suits me fine."

Lee brings a strong work ethic to his job, which was recognized by his previous employers. Whenever he traveled for a company, locations where he worked would say, "If you can ever give this guy up again, we'd like to have him back."

Now Lee is working for you at Munson Lakes Nutrition. Please welcome him.

Editor's Note: Lee has two grown sons. Austin, 22, is currently attending Normandale Community College and preparing to transfer to the University of Minnesota to study sports writing. His other son, Riley, has just joined the Minnesota National Guard. ●



Building Calf Barns That Work

Maynard Moen, our calf and heifer specialist, is retiring this spring. Maynard has been mentoring his replacement, Ted Radintz, for the past year. He will hand over his responsibilities to Ted by April 1.

"I'm leaving my clientele in very good hands," says Maynard, who took his first job with a local cooperative in 1972.

Since 2009, Maynard has worked with the Munson Lakes Nutrition sales team to help customers make decisions on building or remodeling calf and nursery facilities. He has 30 years of experience in facility construction and consultation. Over that time, he has lent his expertise to hundreds of dairies.

"We see thousands of facilities out there," says Maynard, speaking of the proficiency MLN and Purina bring to the country. "We know what works and what doesn't. You can have the best nutrition, but other factors such as spacing, lighting, ventilation, bunk access and bedding packs can diminish calf health."



Maynard Moen with Juli, calf manager at Haubenschild Dairy.



Maynard (shown here with his wife, Dawn) has ridden in all 50 states, all Canadian provinces and into Mexico.

MLN sales nutritionists and Purina's specialists work together as a team, with the customers' success at heart, observes this calf expert.

What will Maynard do in retirement? He plans to slow down a little, spend more time with his wife, Dawn, and their three grown children and perhaps do a little cycling.

"I want to thank Munson Lakes and Purina for giving me the opportunity to have such a long and rewarding career," says Maynard. ●

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VFD in Force and Enforced



By John Zander, General Manager

The veterinary feed directive (VFD) that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) put into effect on Jan. 1 has been a smooth transition so far. The FDA has already stopped at one of

our customer's farms. Brian Yager and Doug Sawatzke attended the inspection on behalf of Munson Lakes Nutrition. Since there were no violations, just a couple of things that needed to be corrected on the paperwork, we all viewed it as an instructional visit.

FDA rules prohibit MLN from preparing any feed for a customer without a VFD. Our software will not allow us to sell any products that need a VFD without having a VFD on file. If you need any assistance in obtaining a VFD, please contact your MLN sales nutritionist or our Howard Lake office. We will walk you through the required steps.

By the same token, if the FDA stops at your farm, please call us immediately. We will have someone stop and sit through the meeting with the inspector.

REMINDER: Not all feeds require a VFD. Any feeds containing Tylan®, AS-700® or any products containing chlortetracycline need a VFD. However, calf feeds containing Bovatec® or Rumensin® are not affected by the FDA ruling.



Supplying a better product for calves

We hit a milestone in our milk replacer sales. Two years ago, we were approached with a challenge to increase our sales of premium-quality milk replacer to 1,000 tons. At that time, we were selling 350 tons.

In 2016, we sold 1,088 tons of premium-quality milk replacer. Thanks to all of you who upgraded your milk replacer purchases with the goal of helping your calves attain their potential. Congratulations, as well, to the MLN sales team for putting in a lot of extra work to make this happen.

Saying goodbye to a valuable team member

Finally, while all of our sales associates were involved in the milk replacer sales increase, one individual stands out: Maynard Moen, our calf and heifer specialist.

Maynard has done a wonderful job for us in that capacity.

He has also done a great job of teaching Ted Radintz to carry on once Maynard retires on April 1. Please join me in thanking Maynard for his service and congratulating him on his retirement.

Maynard's wisdom and work ethic is a clear reminder of Our Mission, at right. ●

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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