

2014 DCRC Reproduction Award Winners Honored for Excellence

Six dairies have been singled out for their exceptional reproductive performance and honored as platinum winners by the 2014 DCRC Reproduction Awards. Now in its sixth year, the prestigious program featured nominations of top-notch dairies of various sizes and management styles located throughout the United States and across the globe.

This year, 19 dairies from four countries are being honored for their herd's outstanding reproductive performance.

To be considered for the award program herd data for all nominees was analyzed by a panel of experts and an independent analytic program. The analyses evaluated raw data on every cow that calved on the participating dairy between January 1, 2013, and December 31, 2013. After the assessments were completed finalists were ranked based on critical reproductive parameters and selected to receive Platinum, Gold, Silver or Honorable Mention honors.

The award winners were recognized at the 2014 DCRC Annual Meeting November 13 – 14 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Here's a complete list of the 2014 winners.

Platinum	Gold	Silver	Honorable Mention
Dutchland Dairy <i>Rolf, Iowa</i>	Columbia River Dairy <i>Boardman, Oregon</i>	Azienda Agricola SANT'ELENA <i>Canneto sull'Oglio, Italy</i>	Pagel's Ponderosa <i>Kewaunee, Wisconsin</i>
Fonterra Y2 Dairy Farm Co. Ltd <i>Tangshan City, Hebei Province, China</i>		Breitenmosers Family Farm <i>Merrill, Wisconsin</i>	
Holmesville Dairy <i>Argyle, Wisconsin</i>	Darnen Dairy <i>Morris, Minnesota</i>	Darlington Ridge Farms <i>Darlington, Wisconsin</i>	Paulen Farms <i>Howard City, Michigan</i>
Moor House Farm <i>Penrith, United Kingdom</i>		Homestead Dairy <i>Plymouth, Indiana</i>	
New Dawn Dairy <i>Huntington, Indiana</i>	District 45 Dairy <i>Hancock, Minnesota</i>	Rock Bottom Dairy <i>Rock Rapids, Iowa</i>	Pride-View Dairy LLC <i>Randolph, Wisconsin</i>
Schilling Farms LLC <i>Darlington, Wisconsin</i>		Weaver Homestead Farm <i>New Holland, Pennsylvania</i>	
		Woodnotch Farms Inc. <i>Shoreham, Vermont</i>	

Dutchland Dairy is located in Rolf, Iowa, and consists of 1,150 Holstein and crossbred cows that average 24,000 pounds of milk, 1,022 pounds of butterfat and 788 pounds of protein with a 98,000 SCC. The dairy achieves a 36 percent pregnancy rate. The dairy is owned and operated by brothers Dave and Dan Duitscher and their father, Dean. The dairy emphasizes healthy cows and tapping the expertise of knowledgeable people as the underpinnings of their success.

Fonterra Y2 Dairy Farm Co. Ltd. is located about 70 miles from Beijing, China. The 2,577-cow dairy averages 60 pounds of milk a day with a 150,000 SCC. Cows are milked in a double-50 parlor and are housed in freestall barns. The dairy focuses on getting cows pregnant in a timely fashion.

Holmesville Dairy is a 500-cow Holstein herd from Argyle, Wis. The herd averages 27,800 pounds of milk, 936 pounds of butterfat and 781 pounds of protein with a 141,000 SCC. The dairy is owned and

operated by the Holmes family—Tim, his wife, Penny, son Travis and daughter-in-law Stephanie. The dairy credits the team approach to herd fertility for its reproductive achievements.

Moor House Dairy is located in northwest England. The 250-cow Holstein Friesian herd breeds 81 percent of the herd using chalk-based heat detection. The remainder go through an Ovsynch[®] protocol. This dual strategy yields a 75 percent “in-calf” rate at 100 days postfresh.

New Dawn Dairy is a repeat winner located in Huntington, Ind. The herd of 1,500 crossbred cows, mainly with a Holstein, Montbeliarde and Swedish Red crossing system, maintains a herd average of 27,000 pounds of milk, 1,016 pounds of butterfat and 810 pounds of protein with a 68,000 SCC. Owner Henk Knevelbaard underscores the importance of adhering to reproductive protocols with everyone on the dairy.

Schilling Farms LLC from Darlington, Wis., is another repeat winner. The 625-cow Holstein herd averages 28,766 pounds of milk, 1,122 pounds of butterfat and 897 pounds of protein with a 78,000 SCC. Owners Bill, Andy and Brian Schilling say cow comfort, foot health, cooling and nutrition are key to their success.

Keys to Achievement

Here's a brief look at how each of the Platinum winners approaches reproduction in their herd. One thing to note as you review each dairy's philosophy—the emphasis remains on the cows and cow comfort while stressing that each dairy team member does the little things right each and every day.

What does your reproductive program include?

Dutchland Dairy maintains a 60-day voluntary waiting period (VWP) for lactating cows and begins breeding heifers at 13 months of age. The dairy utilizes a Presynch/Ovsynch[®] program for first services and also a tail chalking system to monitor for heat. Ultrasound is used weekly on the dairy to perform pregnancy checks between 30 and 36 days after breeding. Cows are rechecked between 61 and 66 days and checked again at dry-off. The dairy also closely monitors transition cows, as well as its nutrition program, to ensure cows get off to a good start and consistently receive a high-quality diet during every stage of lactation and the dry period.

Fonterra Y2 Dairy Farm Co. Ltd. uses a tail painting protocol and cows are observed for heat 24 hours a day by farm staff with the aid of an electronic activity monitoring system. Cows that are not observed in heat go through an Ovsynch[®] protocol.

Holmesville Dairy recently increased its VWP by 10 days to help capitalize on peak milk production. Heifers are bred at 13 months. The dairy uses PreSynch and synch protocols to aid in efficient reproduction. In addition, they also employ tail chalk and other heat detection methods to find cows in estrus. Ultrasound is used for pregnancy diagnosis beginning at 32 days following insemination. Fresh cow protocols and an emphasis on consistent nutrition are also essential components of this dairy's reproductive program.

Moor House Dairy uses a tail chalk program for heat detection for the majority of the herd while the remainder of the cows progress through an Ovsynch[®] protocol as needed. The dairy stresses teamwork to attain its 35 to 36 percent pregnancy rate.

New Dawn Dairy follows a 60-day VWP for all lactating cows and heifers are bred at 13 months of age. The reproductive program features a PreSynch/Ovsynch[®] protocol and dairy personnel also visually observe heats. Tail painting assists with heat detection and ultrasound is used to diagnose pregnancies—usually about 35 days postbreeding. Transition cow care and nutrition, as well as a good nutrition program throughout lactation, are critically important to success.

Schilling Farms LLC uses a 68-day VWP for cherry-picked heats, but most cows are bred with via an Ovsynch[®] protocol between 80 and 86 days in milk. The dairy does not use a formal PreSynch protocol.

In addition, visual heat detection—aided by tail painting—is practiced every day. Ultrasound is used at day 33 postbreeding to diagnose pregnancies and to confirm pregnancies at day 60. The dairy focuses on ration consistency and an emphasis on quality feedstuffs, noting that nutrition plays a key role in reproductive success. The dairy also monitors blood beta-hydroxybutyrate levels in fresh cows as part of its detailed transition cow management strategy.

Have you implemented any changes recently?

Dutchland Dairy has not made many changes in its program the past few years. The consistency of having the same people doing the reproduction for the past several years has contributed to the dairy's success. Also, it uses sprinklers and fans, noting that cooling is very important to reproductive success.

Holmesville Dairy has made several improvements over the past few years to help cows and heifers get bred. It has headlocks in all milking-cow freestall pens, prefresh and postfresh barns, along with heifers starting at 12 weeks of age.

For heat abatement the dairy added misters in the freestall barns along with lots of fans to keep the cows cool. For animals that need to eat outside at headlocks, it added a shade cloth over the bunks, as well as added in fans for dry cows and prefresh cows. Dairy ownership feels that adding sand bedding over mattresses has also led to improved foot and leg health.

New Dawn Dairy has not made significant changes; most everything remains the same. The dairy always uses a lot of fans and misters. Cooling is among its most important assets with water and air movement.

Schilling Farms feels that cow cooling is critical to maintain conception rates during the summer. It has made a number of changes over the last several years to improve cow cooling including adding rows of fans over each row of freestalls, feed line water sprinklers and additional water sprinklers in the holding area. In 2014 additional fans were added over cross alleys. Dry cow cooling is also stressed with fans over the freestalls. Shade cloth has been added for the dry cow outside feeding to help keep them cool.

To learn more, access the complete roundtable with the 2014 Platinum winners that appeared in [Hoard's Dairyman](#).