

Dairy Cattle Reproduction Council Rewards Reproductive Excellence

The Dairy Cattle Reproduction Council celebrated the winners of the 2015 Reproduction Awards at its Annual Meeting in Buffalo, New York, November 11 – 13. This year, DCRC partnered with *Hoard's Dairyman* for the Reproduction Awards Program.

The six Platinum Award winners for 2015 all emphasize quality, compliance, cow comfort, proper nutrition and consistency on their dairies. As a result, the Platinum-winning farms reached annual 21-day pregnancy rates from 32% to a DCRC Reproduction Award contest high of 39%.

Awards were also given for Gold, Silver and Bronze winners. In total 24 awards were granted this year, six in each category.

Little Things Matter

As noted in the *Hoard's Dairyman* roundtable, while attention to detail has remained steadfast, what has changed since the inception of this contest nearly a decade ago is the level of competition. In those early contests, pregnancy rates (PR) in the high 20s would have earned Platinum honors. This year, Platinum level herds ranged from 32 to 39 percent. All 24 award winning herds achieved PR higher than 26 percent.

Positive Changes

The dairy producers extensively detailed their reproductive programs, including which changes they've made in recent years that have had positive impacts on performance.

Ayers: In 2003, we built a new close-up barn with cows housed in sand-bedded freestalls and we reduced overcrowding. Also, we move cows into the close-up pen only once a week now. In 2005, we built a 420-cow barn which allows us to be around 120 percent capacity without sacrificing cow comfort. We have always had fans over the headlocks and stalls. All barns have soakers; we switched from misters four or five years ago.

Burns: Harvesting of forages at a proper time, for the best quality, pays big dividends. We also work closely with the nutritionist once or twice a week and run dry matters once a week or more.

Dry cow comfort was enhanced when we added a bedded pack. Cow comfort also improved when we changed to sand bedding. We also try to keep cows standing in the holding area to a minimum, trim feet on each cow twice a year, and use water misters to keep cows cool in the holding areas.

Collins: In 2012, we built a new heifer barn that includes sand stalls and natural ventilation. Cows are housed in two tunnel-ventilated barns with misters, alley scrapers and waterbeds. Another barn has circulation fans, scrapers, misters and waterbeds. We have rubber in our drover lanes, holding pen and return aisles from the parlor.

Holmes: All cow breeding pens have grooved floors, lots of fans and misters over the feed rail, and headlocks for easier handling. Shade cloth has been added over our prefresh bunks. We feel this has helped enhance our first-service conception rates in the summer.

Kloppe: We have sprinklers and fans in our freestall barns and sprinklers in our holding pen to help with heat stress in the summer months. This practice, which was implemented nearly 15 years ago, has relieved stress in hot weather. This, in turn, leads to improved conception rates. We now feel that this is a critical component to our operation.

Schilling: We feel cow cooling is critical to maintain conception rates during the summer. Changes we have made the last several years to improve cow cooling include adding three rows of fans per pen 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 outside feeding of dry cows to help keep them cool. We feel that the improved cooling of our dry cows has helped produce healthier follicles which has led to higher first-service conception rates.

A third water well was added recently to help maintain water pressure demand for the sprinklers and waterers. We also feel the exceptional cow comfort from sand bedding with adequately sized freestalls has been critical to minimize lameness and allow maximal heat expression.

You can learn more about each of the farms in the roundtable discussion published in the November issue of [Hoard's Dairyman](#).

Here is the complete list of 2015 DCRC Reproduction Award Winners.

2015 DCRC Reproduction Award Winners

Platinum Winners	Gold Winners	Silver Winners	Bronze Winners
Jesse Ayers <i>Perrysville, Ohio</i> Nominated by David Hill Alta Genetics	Brett Danyow <i>Ferrisburgh, Vt.</i> Nominated by Thomas Frangione Merck Animal Health	Joe Barman <i>Black Earth, Wis.</i> Nominated by Humberto Rivera Accelerated Genetics	Leonardo Barozzi <i>Canneto Sull'Oglio, Italy</i> Nominated by Dario Filillini BouMatic
Jonathan Burns <i>Hornell, N. Y.</i> Nominated by L. Scott DeGroff Perry Veterinary Clinic	Denis Dunlop <i>Kuna, Idaho</i> Nominated by Garth Millard Vet Logic Inc.	Mark Cary, Jenni Cary, Jim Sheldon and Dan Sheldon <i>Salem, N. Y.</i> Nominated by Bob Ceglowski Dairy Health and Management Services	Willard DeGolyer, Meghan Hauser <i>Castile, N. Y.</i> Nominated by L. Scott DeGroff Perry Veterinary Clinic
Kevin and Lisa Collins <i>Greenleaf, Wis.</i> Nominated by Scott Hecker NorthStar Select Sires	Roger and Kerry Dunn <i>Coudersport, Pa.</i> Nominated by Tyler Wagner Alta Genetics	James, Kurt and Justin Magnan <i>Fairfax, Vt.</i> Nominated by Thomas Frangione Merck Animal Health	Earl and David Fournier <i>Swanton, Vt.</i> Nominated by Thomas Frangione Merck Animal Health
Jill Gering <i>New Haven, Mo.</i> Nominated by Scott Pooch University of Missouri	Dennis and Jean McKeen <i>Albion, Maine</i> Nominated by Thomas Frangione Merck Animal Health	Jeff Rainy <i>Deming, Wash.</i> Nominated by Brett Mackay All West Select Sires	Jeffrey Paulen <i>Howard City, Mich.</i> Nominated by Jeremy Howard Simplot Animal Sciences
Tim and Penny Holmes, Travis and Stephanie Holmes <i>Argyle, Wis.</i> Nominated by Katie Martin Zoetis	Mike Meier <i>Monett, Mo.</i> Nominated by Scott Pooch University of Missouri	Mark and Mike Stanton <i>Coeymans Hollow, N. Y.</i> Nominated by Steven Chuhta Zoetis	Tucker Purchase, Richard and Bonnie Hall <i>E. Montpelier, Vt.</i> Nominated by Thomas Frangione Merck Animal Health
Schilling Family <i>Darlington, Wis.</i> Nominated by Katie Martin Zoetis	Kevin Schrack <i>Loganton, Pa.</i> Nominated by Bob Cloninger Centre Herd Health Services	Mark and Jason Torrey <i>Elba, N. Y.</i> Nominated by David Keller Genex	Wickstrom and Nyman Families <i>Chowchilla, Calif.</i> Nominated by Steven Rosa Arm & Hammer Animal Nutrition

For more information about the Reproduction Awards Program and DCRC, visit www.dcrcouncil.org.