



These teams reach top-notch reproduction

Good people and healthy cows help these farms keep the herd breeding back.

IN THE 15th year of the Excellence in Dairy Reproduction Awards presented by the Dairy Cattle Reproduction Council (DCRC), 105 herds from around the country and the world were nominated to have their reproductive performance judged against some of the best of their peers. The six farms pictured here took home top honors this year as Platinum winners. While they each have different tools and approaches that best fit their farms, they share a commitment to their cows, their people, and their goals that help them keep their animals and their businesses thriving.

The winning farms are determined by a panel of reproduction experts, who, without knowing the identity of the herds, evaluate metrics such as heat detection, culling, breeding intervals, conception rates, and more from herd software offloads. Those rankings are compiled to recognize the Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze winners. The other top herds in this year's awards program are listed at the end of this round table. We congratulate all of these farms on an outstanding performance! Now, read on for more details about our Platinum recipients.

How do you detect heats?

Davis: Heats in cows and heifers are detected once daily using tail paint by our A.I. technician, Tim Heiring. Both cows and heifers are bred as soon as they are identified in heat.

Emerald Spring: All cows are synchronized for their first service. After that, cows are visually observed for heat. Cows are locked up once a day, and a Select Sires technician uses tail paint to find cows that have been in heat. We breed once a day, so if a cow is in heat at that time, they are bred then. Our heifers are custom raised off-site.

Felling: We detect cow and heifer heats with a tail chalking program and visual heat detection. The same herdsman team that breeds the cows does heat detection. We breed cows within 24 hours of noticing a heat. It is also crucial the herdsman team pays close attention to details, such as looking at which cows were bred the day before because sprinklers may wash off tail paint.

Fetzer: On the milking herd, we have been using the Allflex SCR activity ear tags for a year and a half. We typically follow the easy-to-read heat index breeding window graphs of that program. We also use visual detection as needed.

For heifers, we use visual detection and breed eight to 12 hours following a standing heat.

High Noon: We detect heat using tail chalk for both cows and heifers. If there's any doubt about whether an animal has been in heat or not, the breeders palpate it to look for more signs of heat. Our breeder team walks behind the animals every morning, so each animal detected in heat gets bred right away.

Riddell: All cows are enrolled in a double ovsynch program and bred off of the timed A.I. program. Open cows are re-enrolled into a standard ovsynch or GGPG (GnRH, GnRH, prostaglandin, and GnRH).

Heifers wear SenseHub activity collars and are bred in the "green" window of the bar graph, usually 10 to 12 hours after the activity alarm occurs.

When do you begin breeding?

Davis: Our voluntary waiting period (VWP) for cows is 88 days in milk (DIM). We begin breeding heifers when they reach 13 months of age.

Emerald Spring: Heifers are custom raised and have a VWP of 13.5 months. On cows, the VWP is 70 days. The first service on all cows is synchronized and occurs at 70 to 76 DIM.

Felling: Our VWP is 76 DIM for cows second lactation and older. For first lactation cows, it is 90 DIM. We begin breeding heifers at 415 days old.

Fetzer: Our VWP is 70 days for cows, but we are currently doing a four-month trial of using the SCR program entirely and not presynching with prostaglandin. Still, if they get to 75 to 80 DIM without being bred, they go on the list for our Tuesday vet check and are enrolled into an ovsynch program.

High Noon: Our VWP is 70 DIM for cows. However, all cows receive their first service no later than 86 DIM because we use timed A.I. for all cows for their first service. We do use double ovsynch for first timed A.I., but any cow that

shows heat after the first GnRH from the ovsynch (or third GnRH) will be bred right away instead.

We start breeding our heifers after 395 days. We heat detect with daily tail chalk. Heifers that don't show a heat after 14 days in the breeding pen receive prostaglandin. If they still don't show a heat, we put them on the vet check list and then follow veterinarian diagnosis.

Riddell: All cows are enrolled in the double ovsynch protocol from 50 to 58 DIM. This protocol is strictly followed.

Heifers are bred after they reach 1 year of age and are bred based on height. Activity collars are put on at 10 months of age. If no heats are recorded, they will be enrolled into a Controlled Internal Drug Release (CIDR) synch if tall enough.

Do you use synchronization protocols?

Davis: All lactating cows get enrolled into a presynch program starting at 54 DIM when they receive their first prostaglandin. Fourteen days later, they receive their second prostaglandin. All heats observed from these treatments are recorded and entered into Dairy Comp 305.

Eleven days after the second prostaglandin, on Monday morning, they are started on an ovsynch 48-hour program protocol and given GnRH. The following Monday morning and the Tuesday after, they receive prostaglandin. GnRH is given Wednesday morning, and breeding occurs approximately eight to 10 hours later on Wednesday evening. Any open cows are resynched at pregnancy check if a corpus luteum (CL) is present. If no CL is present, GnRH is given and the cow is enrolled in the following week's ovsynch 48-hour program.

Heifers are ultrasounded prior to first service. If a CL is present, the heifer receives prostaglandin and is monitored for heat. If no CL is present, the heifer receives GnRH and is rechecked the following week. Any open heifers at pregnancy checks are handled the same way as the cows.

Emerald Spring: We use a double ovsynch protocol. All cows receive their first service on the second ovsynch. We do not resynch cows. Cows that are checked open get enrolled in ovsynch or



The team at Davis Family Farm cares for about 600 Holsteins that are averaging 32,394 pounds of milk on 3x milking in a double-12 herringbone parlor. Brothers Jayme and Brad Davis also farm 4,400 acres near Darlington, Wis. They believe that doing the little things on the dairy every day adds up, and they put up a third freestall barn last year to reduce overcrowding and improve cow comfort. Pictured in the new barn is the team that helps the farm achieve its standards and goals. They are, from left to right, Tim Heiring of Heiring's Heat Detection and A.I., Jeremy Davis, Garrett Davis, Brad Davis, Steve Fleming of Nicolet National Bank, Jayme Davis, Wyatt Davis, nutritionist Lonnie Krebs, and veterinarian B.J. Jones.



Consistency is the culture at Emerald Spring Dairy in Plainview, Minn., and the farm's efforts to provide a comfortable cow environment has landed them in the Platinum winner's circle multiple times, including last year. The farm's 1,370 cows enjoy sand bedding and heat abatement through the dry period as well as separate far-off and pre-fresh rations. Darrin Young, who owns the dairy with his parents Maurie and Rita, and his team also recognize the value of improvement over time. Just this year, they have begun genomic testing calves to make better culling and, eventually, mating decisions. Young is pictured with breeding technician Brian Dick of Minnesota Select Sires (left) and herdsman Javier Prieto (right).



Felling Dairy in Sauk Centre, Minn., highlights forage quality as a critical component of their reproductive success, especially as they have moved to a higher forage diet and focused more on digestibility. The farm makes its own feed for the herd of 1,400 Holsteins that are housed in sand-bedded freestalls and milked in a rotary parlor, averaging 26,500 pounds of milk. Jason and Marie Felling own the dairy with Jason's parents, Cyril and Deb. Pictured here are, in back from left to right, Hilarion Torres, Marco Gomez, Saul Hernandez, Simeon Barrios, Jason Felling, Marie Felling, Cyril Felling, and Andrew Krause of STgenetics. In front from left to right are Victor Ledesma, Nicolas Gomez, Dominic Felling, and Gabe Felling.



Activity ear tags have made a big difference at Fetzer Farms in Elmwood, Wis., said Steve Fetzer. The program allows the team to catch heats, breed more accurately, use less hormones, and respond earlier to health concerns. The family operation has also been trialing using the activity data to cut out the need for presynchronizing cows with prostaglandin. In total, the farm houses 1,600 Holsteins in recycled sand-bedded freestalls and milks 3x in a double-20 parallel parlor. The herd is averaging 30,390 pounds of milk, 4.2% fat, and 3.3% protein with a somatic cell count of 85,000. Above, from left to right, are herdsman Tim Hullopeter, assistant herdsman Abby Larson, and Steve Fetzer.

CIDR synch, if there is no CL present.

Felling: We use double ovsynch for first service and resynch open cows after a pregnancy check. We breed on standing heats after first service.

Fetzer: We were using a presynch but are trying out not using it. Prior to the trial, our standard was double prostaglandin after 50 DIM for first-lactation cows and after 65 days for second lactation cows and older.

High Noon: We use double ovsynch for the first service and ovsynch-56 for resynchronizing open cows. For the last prostaglandin in both programs, we use two treatments 24 hours apart (Days 7 and 8).

Riddell: We do, as mentioned above. We start with double ovsynch, then standard ovsynch or GGPG is used to resynch cows. CIDR synch is used to resynch heifers.

Do you use beef or sexed semen?

Davis: All of our heifers are bred to sexed semen a minimum of two tries. If a heifer does not become pregnant to sexed semen by the age of 16 months, beef semen is used.

We currently do not use any sexed semen in our lactating cow herd but have been increasingly implementing beef semen. Prior to a cow's first service, we evaluate each cow based on current and previous lactation records, udder conformation, mobility, health events, and age to determine whether it will receive conventional Holstein semen or beef semen. Typically, all first-lactation animals get bred twice to Holstein before beef.

Emerald Spring: Currently, 85% of heifers receive sexed semen and the other 15% receive beef semen. On the cows, about 80% of all breedings are to beef semen and 20% to sexed. We select which cows or heifers to mate to sexed semen based on parent average. Of the animals mated to receive sexed semen, heifers will get three chances with sexed semen, first-lactation animals get two chances, and older cows only get one.

Felling: We use both beef and sexed semen. Mating decisions are made with our STgenetics representative, Andrew Krause, and the management team. We evaluate these decisions based on net merit, cow health, and facility availability.

Fetzer: Currently, we are using a limited amount of sexed semen on our higher ranking animals that are above +500 Net Merit (NM\$) or +700 Dairy Wellness Profit (DWP\$) and using beef on our lower ranking females that go beyond three breedings. We are strongly considering a

complete sexed and beef semen protocol.

High Noon: All heifers receive their first three services with dairy sexed semen. After that, they receive two more services with beef male sexed semen. If they're still open, we cull them.

All first-lactation cows receive their first A.I. service with dairy sexed semen. Then, they get bred with beef sexed semen for four services. We use two more services with conventional beef semen if necessary. If they haven't conceived yet, we put them on the do not breed list.

The older milking cows receive five services with beef sexed semen. They get another two services of conventional beef semen before we would put them on the do not breed list.

Riddell: We use both. We rank mature cows, 2 year olds, heifers, and calves on the Pro\$ index, Lifetime Performance Index (LPI), component production, and conformation score. The top animals in each profile are bred to sexed as a first choice, and the bottom animals in each are bred to beef. Conventional semen is used for the middle profiles. We use the OptiMate program from Semex to determine mating recommendations.

Who handles protocols and breeding?

Davis: Cows and heifers are tail painted and bred via once-a-day service by our A.I. technician, Tim Heiring. Our herdsman, Jeremy Davis, administers all hormones.

Emerald Spring: Breeding is done primarily by a Select Sires technician, Brian Dick, and me (Darrin). My herdsman and I do the hormone administration. We try to be consistent week to week regarding when everything gets done.

Felling: Our breeding is done by an in-house team of primarily four individuals. We train with and with STgenetics as needed. The breeding team takes a high level of pride in their responsibilities and hold each other accountable. We monitor team and individual breeding results weekly.

Fetzer: Our Select Sires A.I. technicians do all of the breeding. Hormone administration is done by herdsman Tim Hullopeter or Steve Fetzer.

High Noon: We have a breeding team of one in-house breeder (Santos Gutierrez) and two Genex employees (Pedro Bellido and relief technician Joaquim Paulin). Gutierrez has been trained by Bellido, who has been working with us since the beginning, seven years ago. Hormone administration is done by the same three people most of the time. They were trained by our manager, Jody Cole, and our veterinarian team at Progressive

Dairy Health Services on good practices of handling medicines. When it is necessary, we hold a meeting to discuss results and motivate our team.

Riddell: All breeding is performed by Travis Riddell, who also administers hormones.

How do you check pregnancy status?

Davis: All cows are pregnancy checked at 30 to 35 days and again at 54 to 61 days, where the fetus is also sexed if they are bred to Holstein semen. We do a confirmation check at 152 days carried calf and a final check at dry-off to make sure no cows aborted. Heifers are checked at 30 days and rechecked at 54 days, when the fetus is sexed.

Emerald Spring: We use ultrasound at 32 to 38 days after breeding. Open cows with a CL are given GnRH and enrolled in ovsynch. Cows without a CL are treated the same way, with the addition of a CIDR implant. Pregnant cows are rechecked at around 60 days after breeding and again two to three weeks prior to dry-off.

Felling: We check pregnancy status with a veterinarian from Freeport Vet Service. Each Monday, we check cows at 32, 60, and 200 days. If a member of the team notices a cow in heat that should be pregnant, it is added to the following Monday's vet check as well.

Fetzer: We have vet check every Tuesday morning, and cows that are at least 29 days postbreeding are ultrasounded. They are also checked again at 60 days carried calf to confirm pregnancy, sex the fetus, and check for twins.

High Noon: Pregnancy checks are done weekly by the vet team for all cows, and one of the Genex employees does the heifer work. Cows are checked between 32 and 38 days since last heat, and heifers between 37 and 43 days since last heat. Both are checked with ultrasound and rechecked between 81 and 87 days carried calf. A final dry check is done for cows between 180 to 187 days carried calf.

Riddell: Herd health is every two weeks, and our veterinarian ultrasounds any animals that are 27 days since last breeding and beyond. Re-checks are performed at 55 or more days.

How do you handle problem cows?

Davis: Typically, any cow found open at pregnancy check or observed in heat that is over 200 DIM is made a "do not breed" and culled. High-producing cows may get bred one more time, depending on previous lactation records.

Emerald Spring: Cystic or noncycling cows



are given a CIDR. Most cows that are not pregnant by 200 DIM will be considered "do not breed." Also, cows bred five or more times will be "do not breed" candidates. Other factors are considered as well, such as low production, high somatic cell count (SCC), and poor feet and legs.

Felling: We created a set of standards based on overall cow productivity and profitability and use that as our checklist. Culling decisions are made by our management and herdsman team.

Fetzer: We are fairly aggressive on our do not breed cows and have become more aggressive with the help of the SCR program. If a cow has had four breedings and is not confirmed pregnant, it goes on the do not breed list prior to 190 DIM regardless of production. Cows at 100 pounds of milk or less will go on the list at 150 DIM. Older or low production cows may go on the list prior to 60 DIM.

High Noon: Any cow or heifer that is found to have lost a pregnancy at vet check receives prostaglandin, and if it shows heat and has clean mucus, we breed right away. If a cow doesn't show signs of heat, it goes on the resynch program the following week. If a heifer doesn't show heat, it receives prostaglandin two weeks later.

We do not have many problem cows. We try to prevent them by achieving high reproductive performance. However, if the veterinarian found an issue on an animal's reproductive tract or they aborted/lost a pregnancy twice, then we won't try breeding again and will cull.

Riddell: If a cow is over 180 DIM and has been bred three times, it is likely the cow will be marked do not breed. For cows not at this threshold, we try staggering the time of breeding and breed 24 hours apart. We find some success with this and think it may be due to delayed ovulation.

How are dry and fresh cows cared for?

Davis: All dry cows are fed one ration until freshening. They are housed in sand-bedded freestalls until about 10 to 14 days before calving, when they are moved to a pen pack to calve in.

All lactating cows are housed in sand-bedded freestalls and fed the same ration. Fresh cows are all in one group for the first 10 DIM, where they are temperature checked every day.

Emerald Spring: Dry cows are housed in sand-bedded freestalls with fans and sprinklers for heat abatement. We have two groups of dry cows (far-off and prefresh) with different rations.

Cows are moved to the prefresh three weeks prior to calving.

Most fresh cows are given one to two calcium boluses after calving. We blood test to identify animals with ketosis. Fresh cows and heifers stay in a fresh pen for seven to 14 days prior to being moved to a larger lactating pen. We recently have added an omega-3 fatty acid product to our pre- and post-fresh pen that is supposed to improve immune function and have other health benefits.

Felling: We focus on high-quality forage for future reproductive success. We harvest our own crops to maintain the high-quality forages. We have a modified dietary cation-anion difference (DCAD) feeding program with very few additives. We have sand-bedded stalls in our far-off pens. For close-ups, we have a comfortable open lot bedded pack. We focus on our dry cow comfort the same way we would for our milk cows.

We have a dedicated fresh cow team that specializes in the maternity area. This team holds each other accountable, and we have established a proper team culture.

Fetzer: We house our prefresh heifers and cows separately, and they are also separate in our postfresh pens. We limit stocking density in these groups to maintain intakes and health.

High Noon: We all know that a cow needs a smooth transition period to be able to achieve its potential, so our goal is to provide everything we can to allow for a good transition. Our dry cows receive treatment in each quarter and then a sealant at dry-off. Also, they are vaccinated to prevent environmental mastitis and scours in the calf. They are housed in a dry lot pen from 215 to 252 days carried calf, where they receive a high roughage diet. Afterward, they are moved to a close-up dry lot pen, where they receive an anionic diet. We monitor urine pH at least a couple of times a week.

Right after calving, cows are moved to the fresh pen, which is also a dry lot. Heifers are moved to another similar fresh heifer pen. Both groups are monitored daily for any clinical signs of diseases, and their temperatures are checked daily for the first 10 DIM. If any sick animal is found, employees follow the dairy's treatment protocol, which was developed by our veterinarian team.

Riddell: Dry cows are housed in sand-bedded freestalls until 21 to 28 days to calving, at which point they are moved to a straw pack in groups. We feed a full DCAD diet. Because of the size of

our close-up and far-off dry cow groups, we have one base ration for both. We top dress our close-up ration with Animate, an anionic mineral, to reach our target urine pH of 5.5 to 6.

Fresh cows are housed in a separate freestall section for a minimum of two weeks and monitored weekly for BHB levels (blood tested).

Describe your records and analysis.

Davis: All reproduction information is entered into Dairy Comp 305. Key metrics that we watch are pregnancy rate, heat detection rate, conception rate by breeding code, and sire conception. Jeremy Davis, our veterinarian B.J. Jones, and Tim Heiring watch these numbers closely.

Emerald Spring: Pregnancy and conception rates are the two we look at most frequently. All of the cow data is entered into Dairy Comp 305. The breeding technicians enter breedings daily, and the herdsman enters pregnancy check results each week. Our veterinarian and nutritionist both are involved in evaluating the data.

Felling: We closely monitor conception rate. Breeding information and pregnancy check results are entered into Dairy Comp 305. Krause and the STgenetics team will pull the information and review the results with Jason Felling and the herdsman team. Our team reviews results internally every week.

Fetzer: I watch pregnancy and conception rates as they are inputted to Dairy Comp 305 and on our DHIA records. Our analysis is assisted by Zoetis. Twice per year, we will consult to monitor and advise on our breeding program and genetic progress. All of our females are genomic tested.

High Noon: Our veterinarian team analyzes the information weekly. They extract data from Dairy Comp 305 right after herd health check is done and get a summary of our performance. They analyze heat detection rate, palpated pregnancy rate, conception rate, pregnancy rate, percentage of cows missed in the herd health check, conception rate for cows detected in heat, and conception rate for cows bred from timed A.I. for first service. The results and comments and/or compliments from our veterinary team are sent to everyone involved by text message.

Riddell: We use Dairy Comp 305 for all event recording and review this data with our nutritionist and herd health veterinarian regularly. We pay particular attention to pregnancy rate and then drill down to conception rate based on



High Noon Dairy has only been at its Hereford, Texas, location for seven years, but this marks the second time they have been a Platinum honoree in this contest. Among their reproductive strategies are very targeted use of beef and sexed semen, including male-sexed beef semen on later services for heifers. Engaging and encouraging employees is a priority to help everyone succeed personally and professionally and achieve top reproduction levels with the farm's 4,500 cows. The team members pictured here are, from left to right, Leonardo Florez, Gonzolo Quinones, D.V.M., Fabio Teixeira, D.V.M., Jose Ledezma, Mynor Cuin, Jose de Jesus Ledezma, Pedro Bellido, Santos Gutierrez, Joaquin Paulin, Fabio Florez, and Roberto Gomez.



There are no silver bullets to maximizing reproduction, said Travis Riddell, who farms with his wife, Jaclyn, in Atwood, Ontario, Canada. Instead, the couple points specifically to doing many little things right, particularly for transition cows. Ensuring close up cows have plenty of space and not making any pen moves in that period helps keep cows healthy. Fresh cows then spend at least their first two weeks of lactation in a separate area to be monitored. The Riddells purchased their farm in 2015 and today milk 80 Holsteins in a sand-bedded freestall barn. This past January, they transitioned to robotic milking and have since been able to use in-line progesterone monitoring as part of their reproduction toolbox. Here, Jaclyn and Travis are pictured with Winston and Vera.



number of services. We also monitor based on herd events (like feed changes or weather).

What change has been the most beneficial for your reproduction?

Davis: Changing our VWP from 70 DIM to 88 DIM and allowing almost all of our first service breedings to be off of ovsynch has improved our first service conception rate by more than 10%. We also built another freestall barn this past year to help reduce the percentage of overcrowding and improve cow comfort.

Emerald Spring: In 2015, we built a cross-ventilated barn with an emphasis on cow comfort. All freestalls are deep bedded with reclaimed sand. Around the same time, we started using double ovsynch on all first breedings. Those two things have had the biggest impact, but we have also improved our forage quality and made strides in our genetic improvement.

Felling: Some of the best changes we have made include focusing on feeding for overall cow health versus individual production. We moved to a higher forage diet and pay great attention to forage quality and digestibility. Nelson Dairy Consultants has helped us achieve this goal.

We also benefited from having all milk cows on sand bedding, other facility upgrades, and using in-house breeding.

We have improved our team with more focus on company culture and a training program that sets up team members to succeed.

Fetzer: About 15 years ago, we converted from mattresses to sand bedding. That really improved cow comfort level, thus improving reproduction.

Doing the double prostaglandin as part of our ovsynch greatly improved our conception and pregnancy rates. In the last year, the SCR program has greatly contributed to catching cows in good heats and improving our timing of breeding.

High Noon: We are a fairly new dairy because we purchased the farm seven years ago. We believe everything we do affects our breeding, so we

involve and help every person on our dairy succeed personally, professionally, and with our cows.

Probably the most important aspect in these first seven years has been learning how to adapt to a new environment and a different facility. We have been working with the same team — breeders, treatment crew, on-site employees, veterinarians, and manager — since the beginning. Everyone knows what, where, when, and why we do anything. Consistency is the key.

Riddell: We provide plentiful space for close-up dry cows (greater than 150 square feet per cow) and don't regroup cows less than three weeks from calving.

The double ovsynch, DCAD dry cow diet, and feeding brown midrib (BMR) corn silage have helped. We also emphasize daughter pregnancy rate (DPR) and calving ease when selecting sires.

How might you further improve?

Davis: We are considering using sexed semen on the top tier of the lactating herd and using beef semen on the rest to create only the heifer replacements that we need and a more valuable by-product in the way of a beef cross calf versus the Holstein steer.

Emerald Spring: We started to genomic test calves this year. We are using the results to identify lower genetic animals and cull them, if we have excess for a given age group. We are also able to correct misidentified animals so we know for sure their pedigrees are correct. When these animals reach breeding age, we will be able to make breeding decisions based on genomics rather than parent average.

Felling: The program will likely always be improving as things evolve. We will continue to do internal training. We will also keep the disciplined approach with our breeding protocols. We recently delayed first service on first-lactation cows by 14 days and delayed first service on heifers by 30 days. We also closely monitor sexed semen use so we don't overpopulate.

Fetzer: We are looking at utilizing the SCR program as fully as possible to breed off natural heats and reduce our use of hormones. We may consider installing it in our heifer herd, but we have been happy with reproduction there.

We are also looking at aggressive sexed semen use on our top females and beef breeding on the lower ranking and hard to breed females.

High Noon: Technology is always changing, and the market tells us which way we are going. Also, consumers tell us what they want and we need to adapt for them. These changes could be beef embryos, use of Dopler ultrasound, individual monitoring devices, A2A2 genetics, and so on.

Riddell: With the transition to robotic milking, we now have in-line progesterone testing. We have stopped blanket enrolling all fresh cows in the double ovsynch program and are now breeding off natural heats and only selectively enrolling cows into the double ovsynch. Cows are monitored after the progesterone drop, and activity is used to determine the best time to inseminate. So far, we continue to have good reproductive success with stopping the blanket enrollment.

What advice would you give others?

Davis: It comes down to assembling the best team of people to fit your operation and management style. It doesn't matter how simple or elaborate your operation is, without the right people to execute your protocols correctly and consistently, you will struggle to get to that next level.

Find people that pay attention to detail and are willing to do "the little things" that others deem "unnecessary" or "not a big deal." Doing one or two little things each day has a cumulative effect over the course of a year.

Emerald Spring: We try to provide the cows with a comfortable and consistent environment every day. Many things go into this such as cow handling, stall management, reproduction and herd health protocols, ration formulation, and heat abatement. Our reproductive success has been the result of improving these areas over time and having a great group of people working with our cattle.

Felling: Focus on high-quality forages with a nutritionist you align closely with. We have had great success with Nelson Dairy Consultants. Second, take the process serious and give attention to the detail. Be disciplined on protocols. Utilize the team in-house to handle all aspects of breeding. They know your herd best. Provide ample time for the team to do the breeding responsibilities when each cow needs it.

Fetzer: Making the decision to invest in a heat and health monitoring system may seem like a grand cost, but we have seen the benefits of improved reproduction, earlier response and treatment of illnesses, and reduced use of hormones.

High Noon: We work for cows, but we work with people. Keeping your employees engaged, involved, motivated, and happy is the secret of success. Your cows and employees will give you signs if everything is all right. Cows lay down and make milk, and people smile!

Riddell: We've found that there are no silver bullets. Focusing on many small things all related to the transition cow period has helped us improve reproductive success. Continue to use a feedback mechanisms to monitor results regularly. For example, checking pH regularly is very important. When this is higher than our target, we usually have problems.

Setting goals is important. A few years ago, we set a goal to have a pregnancy rate of 25% and ship 1.5 kilograms of fat per cow per day, while keeping our feed cost below \$7. We discussed this with our veterinarian, nutritionist, and semen representative to ensure everyone understood what we were striving for. As we achieved each mark, we continued to push for greater success. 🐄

PLATINUM WINNERS

Recipient	Nominator
Davis Family Farm, Jayme and Brad Davis, Darlington, Wis.....	Tim Heiring, Heiring's Heat Detection and A.I.
Emerald Spring Dairy, Darrin Young, Plainview, Minn.....	Brandon Thesing, Select Sires
Felling Dairy, Jason and Marie Felling, Sauk Centre, Minn.....	Andrew Krause, STgenetics
Fetzer Farms, Steve Fetzer, Elmwood, Wis.....	Cole Mark, CentralStar Select Sires
High Noon Dairy, manager Jody Cole, Hereford, Texas.....	Fabio Teixeira, Progressive Dairy Health Services; Kim Egan and Mauricio Garcia, Genex
Riddell Farms, Travis and Jaclyn Riddell, Atwood, Ontario, Canada.....	Kristen Edwards, Tavistock Veterinarians

GOLD WINNERS

Recipient	Nominator
Boernview Farms, Roger Boersen and family, Gadshill, Ontario, Canada.....	Ian VandenBerg, Genex Canada
Britannia Dairy, Ben and Kevin Pearson, Flandreau, S.D.....	Brandon Thesing, Select Sires; Corey Caraway, Zoetis
Kieler Farms, Daniel Kieler, Platteville, Wis.....	James Galstad, CentralStar Select Sires; J.P. Martins, University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine
Maier Farms LLC, Pat Maier, Waunakee, Wis.....	Brian Kelroy, CentralStar Select Sires
Maly Farms, Butch, Kelly, and Ron Maly and Alicia Sippl, Bryant, Wis.....	David Schroepfer, Alta Genetics
Mercer Vu Farms Inc., Rod and Rick Hissong, Mercersburg, Pa.....	Scott Umble, STgenetics

SILVER WINNERS

Recipient	Nominator
Belldale Farms, Mike and Eric Colopy, Danville, Ohio.....	Dave Watt, COBA Select Sires
Blue Star Dairy Farms, Brian and Craig Meinholz, DeForest, Wis.....	Scott Earnest, ProAGtive Dairy
Full Flo Dairy, Mark Rauls, DeForest, Wis.....	John Ambrosy, Waunakee Veterinary Service
Ryzebol Dairy, Brant Ryzebol, Mantorville, Minn.....	Brandon Thesing, Select Sires
Trailside Holsteins, Michael and Jon Johnson, Fountain, Minn.....	Brandon Thesing, Select Sires
Valewood Dairy, Zane Itle, Loretto, Pa.....	Dave Watt, COBA Select Sires

BRONZE WINNERS

Recipient	Nominator
Burk-Lea Farms, Clint Burkholder, Chambersburg, Pa.....	Scott Umble, STgenetics
Crosswinds Jerseys, Stefan Temperli, Elkton, S.D.....	Brandon Thesing, Select Sires
Holmesville Dairy, Travis and Stephanie Holmes, Argyle, Wis.....	Tim Heiring, Heiring's Heat Detection and A.I.
Riverside Dairy, Andy Fisher, Reedsville, Wis.....	Taylor Wittmus, Parnell Living Sciences
Ruedinger Farms, John Ruedinger and Dave Zappa, Van Dyne, Wis.....	Kim Egan, Genex
Scheps Dairy, Ken and Dan Scheps, Almena, Wis.....	Kyle Westaby, Genex