

## PROFIT SEMINARS

By Betsy Hicks

# Empire State Milk Quality Council's 25 year Super Milk winner roundtable

The Empire State Milk Quality Council has recognized farms with top milk quality for 25 years with the Super Milk award. Since 1990 Super Milk winners were required to ship milk with a Somatic Cell Count (SCC) below 250,000. Two years ago the standard was changed to 200,000. Most farms strive to achieve high quality milk, but because controlling mastitis can be a moving target, it can be a challenge for many producers to do this consistently. 27 farms have achieved this standard for 25 years in a row. Three of these farms share their insights on how they were able to achieve this and will form a 25 year Super Milk winner roundtable during Empire Farm Days at 1 pm, August 11 at the Dairy Profit Seminar Center. Following the roundtable the Empire State Milk Quality Council will host an ice cream social for the 25 year Super Milk winners and roundtable attendees.

#### Panelists include:

- Millbrook Farms – Ron Space and Jeremy Brown, Freeville, NY; 800 cows, 110,000 SCC
- John Richmond – North Collins, NY; 200 cows, 120,000 SCC
- Ed Geier – Sherburne, NY; 35 cows, 100,000 SCC

#### Super Milk 25 year award winners include:

John Bach, Jefferson; John Becker, Onondaga; Breezy Hill Dairy #1, Roger Almeter, Wyoming; Brockway Hilltop Farm,

## Three 25 year Super Milk winners share their winning strategies.

Kevin Brockway, Franklin; David J. Bruning, Genesee; Thurlow Cowles, Onondaga; Crest Valley Farm, Charles and Paul Campbell, Tioga; Dimock Farms LLC, Donald and Martha Dimock, Clinton; Edelweiss Farms Inc, John Borer, Cattaraugus; Ed Geier, Chenango; Gettyvue Farm, Ray Getty, Washington; Hi Hope Farm LLC, Richard and Linda Brown, Jefferson; Mark Higby, Lewis; Michael Hourigan, Onondaga; Jerome Kostanciak, Erie; Valentin Sr and Christian

Kuster, Washington; Edward Lubaczewski, Fulton; Millbrook Farm, Ronald Space and Jeremy Brown, Tompkins; Offhaus Farms, Inc, Gordon Offhaus, Genesee; Putnam Farms, Victor and Steve Putnam, Schoharie; Richmond Farms Dairy, Charles and John Richmond, Erie; Robinson Farms, Dave Robinson, Jefferson; Scholten Dairy, Wayne Scholten, Onondaga; Springdale Farms, Kerry and Allen Wing, Wyoming; Sunny Knoll Farms, Donald Butler, Wyoming; Toolite Farms LLC, Richard Tooley, Washington; and Charles and Shelley Walker, Ontario.

#### What is the history of your farm?

**Brown:** Millbrook Farms is a joint venture between the Space family (Ron and Ivy). Al and Bonnie Baker of Inspiration Farm entered into a shared milking agreement with the Space family in 2006. Jeremy Brown (Dr. Laura) became a partner with the Space family in 2013. Currently the farm has 10 full-time employees and several seasonal part-timers. The Space family has farmed in Tompkins County for over 200 years, and at the present location for nearly 60 years. Millbrook's cow numbers have steadily increased from 200 mature cows in the early 1980's to 800 mature cows currently. The cows are predominately registered Holsteins with 60 Brown Swiss, Brown Swiss cross and Jerseys.

**Richmond:** The farm was started in 1835. My brother Chuck and I are the 6th generation. We milk 200 cows now and average 120,000 SCC. In 1990 when Super Milk awards were first given we had 120 cows. We assumed ownership of the farm from our dad in 1999. Now we milk three times a day, and focus on genetics and embryo transfer work. This "hobby" has turned into a profitable venture for the farm and supplements the milk check.

**Geier:** My great grandparents purchased the farm 1911. My grandfather and then my uncle Dale Goodrich operated the farm. I took over from Dale in 2008 after coming to the farm in 1991 after Desert Storm.



Richmond farm family, North Collins, NY.

## THE MANAGER

### What type of housing do you have for your lactating and dry cows?

**Brown:** Milking and dry cows are housed in freestall barns. Lactating cows are milked in a double 10 rapid exit herringbone parlor with automatic take-offs. Pre-fresh and special needs animals are housed on bedded packs.

**Richmond:** Both lactating and dry cows are housed in freestalls.

**Geier:** Cows are housed in stalls/stanchions and are pastured when weather permits.

### What do you use for bedding?

**Brown:** The freestall barns have mattresses and are bedded with sawdust bi-weekly. Hydrated lime is applied to the rear third of the stalls when fresh sawdust is added.

Bedded packs have new paper added daily.

**Richmond:** About 10 to 11 years ago the farm went from mattresses and chopped hay to sand. Sand is the best thing we have done. Milk increased, cow comfort improved, and SCC may have been a little bit better.

**Geier:** Hay and shavings are used for bedding.

### What are your milking procedures?

**Brown:** Clean milking gloves are worn at all times. After one side of the parlor is loaded, three squirts of milk are stripped from each quarter. The stripped milk is observed for abnormalities and cows with off-milk are documented for the herdsmen. Large particles of organic material are brushed off with the hand while stripping. Iodine is applied with sprayers. Emphasis is placed on covering the teat end. This procedure is repeated for cows one through five. After the fifth cow is stimulated, the milker returns to the first cow. Then the milker cleans and dries the teats with a high quality paper towel and attaches the unit. This two-pass routine is repeated for cows six through 10.

**Richmond:** Forestrip, dip, dry, attach, post-dip. We use automatic take-offs. The parlor is a herringbone Germania/DeLaval.

**Geier:** Clean teats if soiled. Forestrip then dip with an iodine solution. Dry with a single service towel. Attach the milk machine. When done, cut vacuum and allow the machine to come off. Dip with iodine solution.

### What is your dry off protocol?

**Brown:** Dry cow tubes, *E. coli* vaccine and 10 Way vaccine. 45 to 60 day dry period depending on parity, production and body condition.

**Richmond:** We stop feeding a TMR to cows and milk cows once



Ron Space and Jeremy Brown, Freeville, NY.

a day to slow up production first. Our goal is a 40 to 45 day dry period, with a little longer for first calf heifers.

**Geier:** Treat only cows that have shown problems recently.

### What are your cull rates or cull strategy?

**Brown:** 43% culled/died. Chronic clinical mastitis cows and cows with prolonged sub-clinical mastitis are culled.

**Richmond:** Cows are cultured and a positive *Staph aureus* cow is automatically shipped, although there are hardly any of them. Because of embryo transfer work, some cows that would be culled for SCC remain until after the calf is delivered.

**Geier:** We cull as few cows as possible as I am trying to rebuild the herd after several years of 70 to 80 percent bull calves.

### How do you keep your Somatic Cell Count low?

**Brown:** By being committed to producing a quality product. We have great co-workers both in the past and present. We conduct trainings and have protocol compliance. We have a strong herd health program and pay attention to details.

**Richmond:** Through hard work and a little of everything. We have good employees, we maintain equipment, we use sand bedding and we cull problem cows.

**Geier:** We pay attention to the cows. We try to be as consistent as possible.

### How do you monitor your Somatic Cell Count?

**Brown:** Bulk tank SCC records are monitored daily. Monthly milk sampling is done by Dairy One.

**Richmond:** DHI test papers on an individual cow basis. We also use our cooperative Upstate Niagara's website for the whole herd. Access is through a smart phone so it can be monitored daily.

**Geier:** We watch the bulk tank counts. If we have a questionable cow we may use a cow-side test such as PortaSCC. □

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Ed Geier, Sherburne, NY.