Previous
Recipients of the Kansas Distinguished Dairy Family Award

2011  Bob & Marcella Seiler  Ed & Florence Fellers
2010  Christy & Ron Ratliff  Dale & Mary Bodenhausen
      Tom & Judy McCarty  1992  Lauren Enns
      Carrol & Jeanie Campbell  Frank Anderson
      Hiss Family Dairy  - 1989  Paul Seiler
      Whitehill LaPar Dairy  Harlan Page
      Lloyd & Evalina Klassen  Luther Shetlar
      Duane & Ronda Meier  William Beezley
      Reno County DHIA  Kenneth Kraus
      Gary & Lynda Foster  Harry C. M. Burger
      Jerry & Sue Spielman  Chester Unruh
      Warren & Jean Winter  Kenneth Hubbard
      Bob & Norma Ohlde  Ivan Strickler
      Kurt & Elaine Forsberg  John Heersche
      Ron & Kathy Funk  Harold Scanlan
      Harvey & Vada Whitehill  1978  Elred Burkhart

Co-Sponsored by:
K-State Research & Extension
&
Kansas Farmer
Dave Lane, owner of Lane Holsteins located near Colwich, is the Kansas Distinguished Dairyman of the year. Dave is a fourth generation dairy farmer and the youngest child of Loren and Elenora Lane. His involvement in the dairy industry began at an early age. By age 10, he was the primary calf feeder on the family farm. One of his memories of this experience occurred during the 1976 summer Olympics. To keep calf feeding interesting, he identified calves as various countries and held daily races to see which calves would drink the fastest. He even kept records, despite his dad’s insistence to “just feed the calves.” This interest in numbers resulted in a keen interest in DHIA records, and during high school, he developed a computer program that would output cows to calve, cows to dry, breeding dates, etc. years prior to the development of PCDART and other computerized record programs.

Following graduation from high school, he attended Hutchinson Community College to learn more about the “why” behind the way he and his father operated the farm. He was encouraged to transfer to K-State after 2 years at HCC and planned to attend starting in the fall of 1985. However, Loren passed away due to complications following a knee replacement, and Dave abandoned his plans to attend K-State to stay on the farm. He and his mother teamed up to operate the dairy together until the early 1990s when Dave and his bride, Dawn, accepted the majority of the responsibilities of the dairy. Since that time, the herd has grown from about 70 cows to over 110. Their family has also grown to include four children, Loren, Cecilia, Clara and Madeline.

Many facilities have changed as well. The herd is milked three times daily in a double four herringbone parlor that was constructed in 1977. A new eighty-eight cow freestall barn and manure separation system was added in 2001. This solved several problems for the dairy including manure management, cow health (mastitis) and cow comfort (resting area and heat abatement). By removing major road blocks forced on the cows by the facilities, he felt the cows would respond with improved reproduction, increased body condition score, greater milk production, lower somatic cell counts and an overall improvement cow health. Without significant improvements to facilities, the cows would never be able to overcome these production challenges. At the same time as building the freestall barn, the dairy barn was modified and a crowd gate was added to improve cow handling and efficiency at milking time. A special-needs barn was constructed in 2004 to provide a pre-fresh pen, calving pen and recovery pen.

The old freestall barn was converted to a calf and young heifer facility in 2008. The current rolling herd averages are 29,010 pounds of milk, 1,059 pounds of fat, and 891 pounds of protein without the aid of supplemental production enhancing hormones. Over the past year, the herd maintained an average somatic cell count of 210,000 cells per milliliter.

In addition to the cows, Dave operates about 475 acres of row cropland including 125 acres of corn, 125 acres of soybeans, 125 acres of wheat for certified seed, and 50 acres of grain sorghum. This year, 50 acres was converted from wheat to winter barley to provide a replacement for straw in the diet of the dairy herd. He is always looking for options to keep his dairy profitable. In the late 1990s he began to look at his farm operation, deciding that he wanted to focus on what he did best – dairy farming. With the dairy as the primary focus of the farm, he decided to shed some the equipment needed for a hay operation, moved the heifers to a nearby heifer grower, and expand the dairy herd. Income generated from the sale of hay equipment was utilized to purchase a vertical TMR mixer which transformed the feed delivery on the farm as well as the switch to purchasing hay rather than relying on home raised hay. About three years ago, he stopped harvesting corn silage and instead feeds wet corn gluten feed, purchased alfalfa hay and a mix of home raised corn and grain sorghum in the lactation ration. All other grains are sold as a cash crop.

The dairy operation is very labor efficient with only a single full time and one part-time employee in addition to Dave. Dave has been very active with DHIA, serving on the Sedgwick county board for many years and for the last eight years on the Heart of America DHIA board where he has served as secretary for the last three years. In the local community, Dave was heavily involved in the leadership of the local farm coop for 12 years and for three years as the vice-chairman of the board. The farm has been recognized by the Sedgwick County NRCS for its nutrient management facilities and as the Kiwanis Outstanding Farm Family in 2002.

Lane Holsteins provides an excellent example of how a small dairy can remain viable with a focus on production efficiency.

Congratulations on a job well done.