



THINKING GLOBALLY

Quality genetics provide export opportunities for RuAnn and Maddox Dairy.



Steve Maddox, Riverdale, Calif.

At the center of California's San Joaquin Valley, towering palm trees welcome guests to the barns at RuAnn and Maddox Dairy near Riverdale. Thousands of Registered Holsteins® call this place home — a region known as the most productive agricultural area in the world.

More than 300 commercial crops are grown in Fresno County, and on the Maddox family farm, rows of corn, grapes, almonds and olives extend for miles.

Back in the barn, the herd's first-lactation heifers are grouped to be evaluated through Holstein Association USA's classification program. It's a practice they do three times per year, allowing them to study each animal individually.

Shouts of identification numbers echo through the barn's long alley, while the Holstein Association USA classifier assesses 20 linear traits in five major breakdowns. He watches as the cows walk down the pens and quickly punches rankings into a hand-held computer.

"It gives them a score that we can compare with other cows, not just in the United States, but around the world," Steve Maddox says. "It helps in establishing values and priorities, of not just what they bring to our herd, but to the entire industry."

Classification plays a pivotal role in how the Maddox brothers, Steve and Patrick, evaluate their herd's genetics. They review the linear data alongside genomic results gathered from genetic testing — every female that's born on the farm is genomically tested, Steve says. This insight allows them to prioritize cows for specific traits and determine each cow's future market potential.

It's the first step in an important process of producing efficient milk cows, high performing bulls for commercial customers and elite embryos for export worldwide.

"We're safeguarding the genetics for the whole industry," Steve says. "Our efficiency has improved by 70 percent in the last 70 years because of our genetics promoted by the Holstein industry."

Whether it's milk production or better use of resources, better cow comfort, or better management practices for our families and communities — it's all been led by the genetic efforts of the Holstein Association."

It Starts with One

Patrick and Steve explain that their love of the Holstein business was instilled in them by their father, Doug.

"Our dad was always very progressive," Patrick says. "A lot of people will come to California and stop by RuAnn, because of the legacy my father left."

Doug Maddox was a teenager living on the family's farm near Laton, California, when a neighbor gave him a Holstein calf. It came with a promise that he would go to college, which sparked a passion in him for the dairy industry.

After graduating from the University of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, where he had a lot of dairy judging success, he started gaining interest in the Registered Holstein business.

In 1957, Doug and his father established RuAnn Dairy with 28 Holsteins and 500 acres of farmland.

"There was a big demand back in the 50s and 60s for fluid milk in the state," Steve explains. "They were able to expand, and with financial institutions help, export milk to the world."

Thirty percent of the current milk supply in California is for export, Steve says, mainly to the far East: "It's cheaper to ship our dairy products to China than it is to Chicago."

As a result of their ability to provide quality milk and consistently breed higher performing animals, the family's dairy herd has experienced outstanding growth through the years.

Now, after more than six decades, the RuAnn and Maddox herds consist of more than 4,000 Registered Holsteins and 10,000 acres of farmland. That places them among the nation's largest registered dairy operations.

"There's nothing like showing cattle and taking a little extra interest in breeding better Registered Holsteins," Steve says. "The eternal optimists that dairymen are, purebred people are even more so, because they visualize what mating that semen with that cow will give you, three and four years down the line. It's forward thinking."

Promising Future with Registered Holsteins®

Patrick runs operations at the original RuAnn Dairy home place today, while Steve manages Maddox Dairy, 10 miles down the road.

Much of their success can be credited to diversifying beyond milk sales. They've been involved in all sides of the industry — from providing registered bulls for the commercial producers to exporting high-quality embryos worldwide.

"That's probably the most exciting thing; what you can do for other parts of the world," says Patrick, who explains that they've been exporting embryos for 25 years. They sell anywhere from 1,500 to 3,000 embryos per year and have their own in-house in vitro fertilization lab.

"Our biggest opportunity is genetic gain," Patrick says. "Through embryo transfer, through genomics, we can make tremendous gains making a more profitable cow — a cow that's more efficient, more fertile and a higher producer."

The Maddox family relies on Holstein Association USA programs like Holstein COMPLETE® and Enlight® to better collect and manage the herd's performance data. The value of that information allows them to continue moving forward with each generation.

The potential, as the Maddox family has discovered, is limitless.

"Registered Holsteins secure my future mainly because my future is in my kids and my grandkids," Steve says. "We have a tremendous asset in the genetics and there's a demand for it around the world. If customers want the highest quality dairy products and the best genetics available, they come to the United States."