

Herds of Excellence

Holstein Association USA is pleased to present our 2015 Herds of Excellence. These four outstanding Holstein herds excel in production and in type—three of them are multi-year winners. All meet the criteria listed below.

HERDS OF EXCELLENCE CRITERIA:

Herds receiving the award must:

- Be 25 percent above breed average Mature Equivalent (ME) for milk, fat and protein;
- Have classified within the last year and have an actual average classification score of 83 points or higher;
- Have at least 70 percent of the herd homebred;
- Be enrolled in the Association's TriStar production records program.



DOUBLE D DAIRY

Harold and Marlene Agresti • Ceres, California

First-Year Honoree • 71.9% Homebred
Average Classification Score: 83.3
ME Averages: 37,677M 1,324F 1,121P

There's a story behind this dairy's name, Double D, which stands for "Danny's Dream." Danny Agresti, who had wanted to start a dairy, was killed tragically in a car accident in 1985. But his aspiration lived on with his father, Harold Agresti, and Harold's brother, Don. In 2005, they built a dairy facility and purchased a herd of 1,000 cows in a dispersal sale.

The dairy is now owned by Harold and Marlene Agresti (Don Agresti died last fall), with the help of their grandson, Dominic Agresti Assali, and their long-time herdsman, Manuel Botelho. With youngstock from their heifer-raising operation, the Agrestis have expanded to milk 4,000 head at two locations, one

of which opened last October down the road to milk first-lactation heifers. They raise about 5,500 youngstock along with growing corn and oats for cattle and 700 acres of almonds.

Cows are housed in freestall barns with outside exercise pens and milked 3X in a 60-cow rotary parlor, 22 hours a day. The dairy classifies and uses EASY ID and Holstein tags, as well as Enlight.

The Agrestis have been breeding Registered Holsteins for eight years, and now have 350 Registered animals, including 120 milking head. They breed for type, feet and legs, udders, and more than 1,000 pounds of milk. The bulls Deslacs Offroad and Comestar Outside-ET have had a major influence on their commercial herd, where they use about 85 percent proven bulls. For current bulls, the Agrestis rely on Canyon-Breeze At Airlift-ET, Seagull-Bay Supersire-ET, Aurora Monterey 372-ET, Morningview Mcc Kingboy-ET, Seagull-Bay Silver-ET, De-Su BKM McCutchen, and Daveco River B Farve Etm, just to name a few. The registered herd is divided between genomic and type/show animals and are bred accordingly.

The farm's foundation cow was Pappy's Goldwyn Reanna, and she was a gem. "She was a cow that just flat out transmitted," says Dominic Agresti-Assali. "If we wanted show cows, she made them; if we wanted high-numbered cows, she made them." Her highest genomic daughter is Agresti Airnet Reanna-ET TPI 2438. They're also proud of another Reanna daughter, Agresti Halogen Reanna GTPI 2535. Their showing star is Zehrview Atwood Dess, raised at Double D, now owned with the Van Exel family of Lodi, California, and just named First Senior Three-Year Old and Intermediate Champion at the 2015 California State Holstein Show.

(l to r) Harold Agresti, Dominic Agresti-Assali

Thomas J. Kestell • Waldo, Wisconsin

Five-Year Honoree • 76.4% Homebred
Average Classification Score: 83.8
ME Averages: 36,402M 1,555F 1,133P

"If your goal is to be average, you'll never achieve that," Tom Kestell says. "Our goal is not a high herd average—our goal is to do everything right and let the results speak for themselves."

Nevertheless the statistics also speak clearly about the high quality of this Herd of Excellence. This is the fifth year the farm has received the honor. Kestell himself was named one of four 2014 Master Agriculturists in Wisconsin.

Ever-Green-View Farms' main focus is on genetics, which make up 75 percent of their farm income, mostly from embryos. In 2014, they merchandised 2,600 embryos to several countries around the world, and this year they hope to sell more. They also merchandise young heifers, bulls, and milking animals.

Tom was twice awarded the Governor's Export Award. Last year he exported 1,300 embryos to a farm in Russia with which he has a joint venture embryo facility. In April, he traveled to the dairy summit in Harbin, China.



EVER-GREEN-VIEW FARMS

In 2000, Tom launched the Embryo Share program to help local Junior Holstein members and established dairy producers improve their herds. His Ever-Green-View My 1326-ET, who set a new world production record in 2009 of 72,190 pounds of milk (a record still standing today), was a product of the embryo share program.

The Kestells' top cow family traces back to Ever-Green-View Elsie-ET 2E-92 GMD-DOM, a stellar cow and the grand dam of

Chris Kestell kneeling; Gin Kestell; to her left Jennifer Kestell, Chris' wife; and Tom Kestell

My 1326-ET. One of Elsie's great-grandsons, Flevo Genetics Snowman-ET, is a top TPI bull. Tom believes in Snowman because he likes the way his daughters breed back easily and flush at an early age; they produce tremendous amounts of milk with high components and low cell counts. He also uses two bulls that are siring a new wave of Holsteins, Mountfield SSI DCY Mogul-ET and GenerVations Epic.

Tom and his wife, Gin, are forming an LLC to pass on the dairy to the next generation: their son, Chris, and Chris' wife, Jennifer. They milk 90 Registered Holsteins 3X a day in a tiestall barn. The rolling herd average is 41,500 pounds of milk, 1,694 pounds of fat, and 1,293 pounds of protein. An additional 40 cows are kept as dry donors.

Chris, Jennifer, and their son, Will, born in March, live on the nearby homestead farm. Tom credits the attitude of Chris and the other employees at Ever-Green-View Farms for its accomplishments.

The dairy is enrolled in Enlight and is on COMPLETE. They classify regularly: the Kestells' BAA is 110.9, which is top in the nation for herds of 115 animals or more.



DIRT-ROAD HOLSTEINS

Steve and Amanda Killian • Blair, Wisconsin

5-Year Honoree • 92.3% Homebred

Average Classification Score: 83.3

ME Averages: 32,862M 1,388F 1,099P

Steve and Amanda Killian milk 80 cows at their Dirt-Road Holsteins. On that size dairy, every calf counts. "We're so small that every possible pregnancy is very exciting and very important," says Amanda. Their five children share in the excitement. "If Mom isn't in the barn, the kids won't have that interest. The fact that we all love it and the kids love it, it keeps making it worth it."

She and Steve started out farming 15 years ago with a dream to market genetics, and gradually turned their grade herd into an all-Registered herd. They participate in Holstein COMPLETE, use EASY ID and Holstein Tag ID, and classify every seven months.

Today, the Killians breed for type and components. They flush their best cows and use the rest as recipients. They use almost all young genomic sires, such as Mr Mogul Delta 1427-ET, EDG Ruby Mogul 1336, De-Su BKM McCutchen, and Woodcrest Mogul Yoder-ET.

They were skeptical about genomics when they first emerged but were gradually won over, especially when they started flushing the first embryos from their cow Dirt-Road Goldwyn Cami-ET. "It became clear that was what the market was going to demand."

Cami herself is the daughter of Castleholm T Carlo-ET, one of their early good cows, from a flush to Braedale Goldwyn. "Cami's daughter, Dirt-Road Shottle Cinderella, is the best we have had. And her offspring are the best, like Dirt-Road Gerard Cleopatra, who has been in the Top 100 Females for two years and has made some really nice daughters."

Amanda grew up in a large family headed by a single mother who farmed. After Amanda's first date with Steve, he showed up two days later with a pitchfork to clean out her calf pen. "I never saw anyone who worked so selflessly, so hard, with such joy. That's how he is about all his work. He just loves what he does."

They bought her mother's bare-bones farm and with a lot of hard work and little money, they built a thriving genetics business. "Flushing and buying the best semen supported our vision and our dream, and that has made a big difference in our success," Amanda says. She also gives credit to friends and others in the industry who encouraged them along the way.

Top row: Christian & Sam, Front row: Bo, Steve, Amanda, Jack & Olivia

Randy and Jana Kortus • Lynden, Washington

5-Year Honoree • 100% Homebred

Average Classification Score: 84.2

ME Averages: 36,603M 1,544F 1,075P

Randy Kortus keeps a sharp eye on milking ability when breeding cows. "I never want to lose sight of production, which you can lose really fast using the wrong bull," he says. He breeds for high TPI as well as milk, using such bulls as Yoder-ET, Morningview MCC Kingboy-ET, Kian-ET, Halogen, Montross-ET, and Pety.

Randy grew up on a commercial dairy five miles from where he lives now. He and his wife, Jana, have four children, Melissa, Mark, and Matt, who help on the farm, and Michael, who works and owns cattle at Mainstream. They are proud of their children, and the work ethic they learned on the farm.

In February, the Kortuses sold 20 young cows to Canada and they now milk 45 Holsteins, 35 Jerseys, and five Ayrshires in a flat barn parlor and house them in a freestall.

Randy's philosophy is "Make the best of what you have." His best is pretty darn good: this is Mainstream's fifth year as a Herd of Excellence. He has received the Progressive Genetics Award for 24 years. The dairy has classified since the 1970s, and is on Holstein COMPLETE.

Randy speaks highly of the H cow family, which included cow Lor-Les Nugget Hope who had 60 offspring. Her descendants include Mainstream Manifold, who has bred 14 cows that have produced more than 300,000 of lifetime milk; most came from the H family.

An especially notable cow is Mainstream OR Candace-ET EX-93, 2E. She has two records: over 50,000 pounds of milk and 2700 pounds of fat in one lactation (365 days) and 250,000 pounds of lifetime milk. Candace has eight milking daughters in the current herd; all averaged 86 points as young cows with an average age at first calving of 1-11 months, and 38,974 pounds of milk on 2X, 461 fat and 787 protein. She has five sons in AI.



MAINSTREAM HOLSTEINS

Genomics has changed Randy's breeding decisions. He seldom used young sires in the past; today he rarely chooses proven bulls. But bulls such as Walkway Chief Mark and Ensenada Taboo Planet-ET and his sons have also had a huge impact on his herd and on his H cow family.

Randy says that part of his success comes from his international traveling and work. "But no matter where you go, whether it's from farm to farm in your community, internationally, or across the United States, there's always something you can learn."

Randy and Jana Kortus