

Herds of Excellence

Holstein Association USA is proud to present our 2021 Herds of Excellence award recipients. These eight herds have all achieved the rigorous criteria to qualify for this honor.

The award is broken into three herd size divisions based on the number of cows included in production averages. Each herd size division has specific criteria that must be met to qualify for the award.

Herd Size Division

Production Criteria

Division 1: 500+ cows



15 percent above breed average
Mature Equivalent for milk, fat
and protein

Division 2: 100-499 cows



20 percent above breed average
Mature Equivalent for milk, fat
and protein

Division 3: 10-99 cows



25 percent above breed average
Mature Equivalent for milk, fat
and protein

All herds receiving the award must also meet the following criteria:

Have classified within the last year and have an age adjusted classification score of 83 points or higher

Have at least 70 percent of the herd homebred

Be enrolled in Holstein Association USA's TriStarSM program

Division 1: 500+ Cows



Back row; Dan, Janina, Jordan & Connor Siemers. Front row; Josh, Lauren, Jake, Jenny & Paul Siemers.

Siemers Holstein Farms Inc.

The Siemers Family • Newton, WI

Now in the farm's fifth and sixth generations, the Siemers family strives for excellence with an unwavering focus on being good cow people. Their mission is simple: to make every generation better than the last.

The Siemers family says they feel blessed to have worked with several of the industry's best cow families including Roz, Hanker, Bombi and Paris. They say these families make their best conformation and performance cows and are responsible for placing more than 50 bulls in AI per year.

"My advice to other breeders is to find the type of cow that you like, and make sure she can be profitable and sustainable for several generations," Dan Siemers says. "Figure out what niche you want to shoot for, and make sure it's going to make the right kind of cows that will accomplish your long-term goals."

When making breeding decisions they look for strength in the cow's conformation, so their herd will produce more pounds of combined fat and protein for longer periods of time. They have bred thousands of Excellent cows over the years, and annually breed more than a hundred new Excellent and a few hundred new Very Good two-year-olds. They have achieved 30 Progressive Genetic Herd honors.

98.5% Homebred

Milk: 35,865 Fat: 1,511 Protein: 1,100

Average Classification Score – 84.8

Bomaz Inc.

The Zwald Family • Hammond, WI

Bob and Kay Zwald of Bomaz Inc. farm alongside their daughter Annette and her husband Steve Schalla, and son Tom and his wife Ashley. "We call ourselves Team Bomaz," Bob Zwald said. This reflects the emphasis they place on teamwork when working with each other, key employees, and consultants.

Teamwork played a role in their expansion from 700 to 1,500 cows. Bomaz Farms started milking in a 40-stall rotary parlor in 2020, which helped them achieve their goal of more labor efficiency. They also improved cow comfort through a hybrid ventilation system in their new freestall barns.

"It's been a very good transition," Bob said. "It was the next generation's project, and they did an excellent job."

The family strives to continuously improve the genetic progress of their Registered Holstein® herd. They converted their old milking parlor to an IVF facility and oocyte collection center and average 20 animals a week on an accelerated IVF program. The Zwalds focus on breeding profitable, trouble-free cows that stay healthy and live a long time.

"Every piece of the puzzle has to work together," Bob said about their herd management. "Every part of the program has to click to make it work right."



Back Row: Steve & Annette Schalla, Bob & Kay Zwald and Tom & Ashley (holding Emily) Zwald Front row: Kately, Abby & Matthew Schalla, and Luke, Noah & Hannah Zwald.

92.9% Homebred

Milk: 32,882 Fat: 1,319 Protein: 1,046

Average Classification Score – 85.6

Division 2: 100-499 Cows



Left to Right: Cynthia & Lance Koester, Brent Koester, Bria & Neil Bruegger, Ethan & Alissa Fehr, Erica Koester, Kyle Koester, Cindy Koester, Dan and Amber Koester in center, and Lydia & Levi Koester, children of Lance & Cynthia, in front.

Koester Dairy Inc.

The Koester Family • Dakota, IL

Improving their Registered Holstein® herd gives the Koester family a constant sense of purpose and pride. Dan and Amber work in tandem with their three sons, Kyle, Brent, and Lance; daughter, Cindy; and daughter-in-law, Cynthia. Together, they care for 420 cows, and place emphasis on breeding for superior production. Five of their heifers now have more than 3,000 GTP1®, with two of those having over 3,100.

What the Koester family enjoy most about raising Registered Holsteins is making good matings and seeing the results. Genomic data influences everything they do. “I enjoy watching calves grow up and turn into cows,” Dan says. “With good feed and a good environment, the Holstein cow has unlimited potential.”

Holstein Association USA services that have helped them include genomic data, Enlight® and performance rankings to measure how their herd is doing compared to others across the country. For the future, the Koesters hope to continue what they’re doing, and get a little better each year.

“My kids’ work ethic is just incredible,” he says. “If something needs doing, they’ll get it done. We’ve honestly just enjoyed always working with these cattle.”

98.8% Homebred

Milk: 35,221 Fat: 1,465 Protein: 1,110

Average Classification Score – 85.0

Koepke Farms Inc.

The Koepke Family • Oconomowoc, WI

Throughout the years, the Koepke family has enjoyed seeing the full circle of dairy production. From the soil to the table, they are involved in every step. It all begins with a plant, John Koepke says, fed to a cow. From the cow comes milk that is transformed into beautiful wheels of LaBelle cheese.

“Keeping our herd registered means we can better manage their genetics,” says Becky Cook, herd manager. “It gives our buyers the confidence they need in the quality of the animal they are purchasing.” In the last year, the Koepkes have sold more than 80 young cows as breeding stock to other farmers.

Managing cow comfort, rations, and the breeding program all play a part in the profitability and sustainability of their herd. Holstein Association USA programs like Redbook Plus allow them to select bulls meeting genetic criteria for TPI, cheese merit, udder composite, and feet and leg scores. The resulting calves are all registered with the help of EasyID.

At the end of the day, John says it is always nice to be recognized among the Herds of Excellence: “It is a pat on the back from our peers.”



Kim, John, Dave & James Koepke.

100% Homebred

Milk: 35,002 Fat: 1,433 Protein: 1,060

Average Classification Score – 84.9

Division 3: 10-99 Cows



Dan, Julie, Austin & Bridget Vandertie.

100% Homebred

Milk: 35,466 Fat: 1,397 Protein: 1,085
Average Classification Score – 88.4

Doorco Holsteins

The Vandertie Family • Brussels, WI

“As a Registered Holstein breeder, you strive every day to have the cows do their best,” says Dan Vandertie of Doorco Holsteins. “You have to do all the big things right, but you have to do all the small things right too,” he adds. This includes details like making sure cows are comfortable and growing and feeding high quality forages.

Dan and his wife Julie took over the farm from Dan’s father in 1987. Now, they are beginning the farm transition process with their son Austin, a recent graduate from the University of Wisconsin - Madison.

When it comes to their breeding program, the family uses many of the tools available to them, such as Holstein USA’s Redbook, pedigrees, and some genomic testing. “We enjoy seeing improvement in each generation, deepening cow families through long lasting animals with the will to milk,” Dan says.

As they look toward the future of their farm, the Vanderties hope to grow from the impressive base of homebred genetics in their herd. They currently have 14 Excellent cows in the barn and have been honored with Holstein USA’s Progressive Breeder Registry award for 47 consecutive years.

B-Long Holsteins

The Long Family • New London, WI

Bruce Long has been involved with Registered Holsteins® since he was 12 years old. The young 4-H’er set a tradition in motion that continues in the family business today. Nearly every animal in the herd traces back to two original cows from his childhood.

Mastering the fundamentals is key to be successful in the dairy industry, Bruce says. It comes down to being consistent in your management style, keeping your cows comfortable and giving them the best feed possible.

“The more they eat, the more they milk,” he says. Together with his wife, Brenda, and son, Bret, the family milks 50 cows twice a day. Because of their commitment and attention to detail, they generate large volumes of milk from their herd.

Using Holstein USA programs like Red Book Plus™, Bruce says he breeds for wide and deep-framed cows, with good legs and udders. Profitable selection decisions like these, as well as taking exceptional care of their cows, are the reasons B-Long Holsteins have consistently been named among the Herds of Excellence.

“It puts us in elite company, and we are proud to be a part it,” Bruce says. “The Registered Holstein cow has given us many friendships and opportunities.”



Bret, Brenda & Bruce Long.

100% Homebred

Milk: 35,059 Fat: 1,377 Protein: 1,122
Average Classification Score – 88.2

Division 3: 10-99 Cows



Mark & Jelena Brantner.

100% Homebred

Milk: 36,662 Fat: 1,622 Protein: 1,141

Average Classification Score – 89.5

Show-Mar Holsteins

The Brantner Family • Evans City, PA

Attention to detail and going the extra mile are key to raising the ideal herd at Show-Mar Holsteins. It's the small things that count, adding up to create an efficient operation, Mark Brantner says. Things like getting up at midnight to check calving cows, always having clean water and not cutting any corners.

Since the beginning, this philosophy has helped the Brantners raise 70 Registered Holsteins® from the ground up. "Winning this award means a lot to us," Mark says. "We started with only five cows back in the 90s."

Today, the Brantner family milks three times a day, with an average of 97 pounds of milk per cow. Over time, they've raised several cows scoring over EX-90, with one scoring at EX-95 and have a current BAA of 112.2. "The first excellent cow we bred peaked at an Excellent 94," Mark says. "Now 75% of our cows go back to her."

Registration and classification are the foundation for raising high-performing animals, he explains. With the goal of owning their own farm this year, the Brantners look positively toward the future. From more milk production to winning future shows, they hope to continue improving their herd through consistent hard work, every day.

Ever-Green-View Holsteins, LLC

The Kestell Family • Waldo, WI

The Kestell family practices consistency in every aspect of their farm, from their breeding strategy, to caring for cows, to providing high quality feed. Tom and his wife Gin farm in a partnership with their son Chris and his wife Jennifer.

"We enjoy seeing the cows perform well, but we also enjoy having a healthy herd of cows. We want to take care of them so that they can reach their potential," Tom explains.

The Ever-Green-View herd is known for tremendous production and components, and high type. Their BAA of 111.6 is sixth in the country for herds of their size, and they have had several cows receive national milk production record status.

They continue to utilize embryo transfer and in turn sell their genetics to foreign markets. While fulfilling the needs of buyers is important, Tom says the focus must be on the home farm and the type of cows that work well for their operation.

"It's the most prestigious honor that we are able to win," Tom said, referring to the Herd of Excellence award. "Of course, you do it not by trying to win, but as a result of what you do and what your help does every day."



Chris, Gin, Jennifer & Tom Kestell.

97.7% Homebred

Milk: 40,588 Fat: 1,698 Protein: 1,267

Average Classification Score – 88.6