

★ Herds of Excellence ★

Congratulations to the 2022 Herds of Excellence award recipients! These ten herds have achieved extremely rigorous criteria to qualify for this honor. Each of these outstanding herds has a unique story highlighted in the following pages. It's evident each farm family shares a love for U.S. Registered Holstein® cows, and are dedicated to providing consistent, high-quality care to their impressive herds.

The award is broken down 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

Division 1: 500+ cows



Production Criteria

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 meet the following criteria:



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



At least 70 percent of the herd is homebred



Be enrolled in Holstein Association USA's TriStarSM program

Division 1: 500+ Cows



Back row (L-R): Dan, Janina, Jordan & Connor Siemers.
Front row (L-R): Josh, Lauren, Jake, Jenny & Paul Siemers.

Siemers Holstein Farms Inc.

The Siemers Family • Newton, WI

Staying true to their focus of “making genetics for cow people,” is a team effort for the Siemers family. There are several team members involved on the farm, including Dan and Janina Siemers and their son Jordan, Paul Siemers and his sons Jake and Josh, and Tyler Schafer.

“Being named a Herd of Excellence is a nice honor for our team,” Jordan Siemers says. “We are very team based in everything we do, and it is nice to share with our team that everybody’s hard work is paying off.”

The family runs an IVF program and believes in combining genomic data with real performance when making breeding decisions. They say Holsteins are the right breed for their business because they provide many marketing angles, have the most pounds of combined fat and protein, and have a large herdbook, allowing for faster genetic improvement.

The family also appreciates the strong youth programs offered by the Holstein Foundation and Holstein USA.

“They did a really nice job educating and getting the next generation at Siemers Holstein Farms interested in dairying and genetics,” Jordan explains. “The programs were also a great gateway to meet other young, like-minded people who we are still in contact with.”

79.8% Homebred

Milk: 35,673 Fat: 1,553 Protein: 1,101
Average Classification Score – 84.3

Bomaz Inc.

The Zwald Family • Hammond, WI

Two overarching genetic goals guide the team at Bomaz Inc. First, the Zwald family strives to produce profitable, trouble-free Registered Holsteins® cows. Bob Zwald says he appreciates a good, high-producing cow that’s healthy and lives a long time. They also aim to produce high genetic bulls for AI.

“Registered Holsteins have been a part of our success,” Bob shares. “I do like working with Registered Holsteins rather than just producing milk. It adds a little more excitement.”

Whether working towards improving their herd’s efficiency or genetic progress, the family uses a variety of tools available in the industry. This includes programs from Holstein Association USA.

“We regularly classify the large percentage of the cattle, we are on Holstein COMPLETE®, and on TriStarSM for production testing,” Bob explains. “We utilize those programs to the best we can.”

Reaching the goals they have for their farm is a team effort for the multigenerational farm. Bob and Kay Zwald farm with their daughter Annette and her husband Steve Schalla, and son Tom and his wife Ashley. “It’s gratifying for my wife and I that we have another generation to carry on the farm,” Bob says.



Back Row (L-R): Steve & Annette Schalla, Kay & Bob Zwald, Ashley & Tom Zwald, and Claire.
Front Row (L-R): Abby, Matthew & Katelyn Schalla, and Hannah, Emily, Luke & Noah Zwald.

94.6% Homebred

Milk: 32,546 Fat: 1,323 Protein: 1,055
Average Classification Score – 85.3

Division 2: 100-499 Cows



Back Row (L-R): Brent Koester, Neil & Bria Bruegger, Lance & Cynthia Koester
Front Row (L-R): Dan and Amber Koester

Koester Dairy Inc.

The Koester Family • Dakota, IL

Providing good cow comfort for their herd of Registered Holstein® cows is important to the Koester family of northern Illinois. Dan and Amber work alongside their three sons, Kyle, Brent, and Lance; daughter Bria; and daughter-in-law, Cynthia, to care for their herd of around 400 milking cows and 400 youngstock.

A seventh time Herd of Excellence recipient, the honor is something they share as a family. “It means a lot, and we’re honored to receive it,” Dan says. “The award includes performance and conformation, which are both very important to us.”

They say it’s exciting to work on improving their herd’s genetics, using tools such as genomic testing and the GTPI® formula.

“We have a young two-year-old Renegade scored VG-86 that is near 3,000 GTPI that we are very excited about and have flushed successfully,” Dan shares. She’s also the dam of their bull in the Holstein Marketplace Sires program, K-Star Aftermath-ET.

A testament to their herd’s genetics, the family has had over 100 cows named Gold Medal Dams. They’re also able to consistently sell over 100 head a year to other farmers, including many repeat buyers.

99.5% Homebred

Milk: 35,283 Fat: 1,518 Protein: 1,114

Average Classification Score – 85.3

Koepke Farms Inc.

The Koepke Family • Oconomowoc, WI

The team at Koepke Farms works each day to make sure their 360 cow Registered Holstein herd reaches its full potential. The dairy is owned by John and Kim Koepke. They concentrate on feeding high quality feed, providing good cow comfort, and moving animals through the parlor in a stress-free manor. Genetics are also an important piece of the equation.

“We select on a balance of pounds of milk and components,” the farm’s herd manager Becky Cook explains. “We tend to lean towards proven bulls.”

They aim to breed moderately sized cows that are mobile and strong with good udder attachments. Programs from Holstein USA, such as RedBook Plus MultiMate and the inbreeding calculator, help them reach their genetic goals.

This strategy has worked well for the six-time Herd of Excellence. They appreciate cows with good longevity, such as Koepke Bruin Lena. The tenth lactation cow has over 365,000 pounds of lifetime milk.

“She is scored Excellent 94, and she’s a powerhouse,” Becky says, adding that Lena is a moderately sized cow. “She also has the ability to pass good genetics to her offspring. She has several daughters and granddaughters in the herd and milking well.”



Left to Right: Becky Cook, Kim & John Koepke.

100% Homebred

Milk: 35,245 Fat: 1,406 Protein: 1,070

Average Classification Score – 85.0

Division 2: 100-499 Cows



Left to Right: Chris holding Lila, Heidi, Deb, Larry, Dane, Kelly, & Max Pollack.

Pollack-Vu Dairy, LLC

The Pollack Family • Ripon, WI

The Pollack family has been milking cows on their Ripon, Wisconsin farm since 1909. Today, their herd of 150 Registered Holsteins® is cared for by Chris Pollack, his wife Kelly, and his parents Larry and Deb. Chris and Kelly's four young children also enjoy life on the farm.

"We've always tried to be very progressive in breeding for production and very respectable type," Chris explains. "While we don't spend our time in the showing, we are very hands on, so we appreciate good cattle."

A first-time Herd of Excellence recipient, Pollack-Vu Dairy focuses on breeding for components. The family has a deep appreciation for old, proven cows that last for multiple lactations with good production. "Those kinds of special cows are the ones we want to see thrive and we want to see offspring out of," says Chris, who places an importance on building good pedigrees.

"I think one of the things I enjoy the most is seeing cows develop and families develop," Chris remarks. "When I can sit down with dad and talk about this cow family and that cow family, and how far back some of those cow families go, that's really kind of special."

99.4% Homebred
Milk: 34,589 Fat: 1,406 Protein: 1,094
Average Classification Score – 85.3

Hilrose Dairy, LLC

The Brantmeier Family • Sherwood, WI

Breeding a herd of balanced cows with high type and good production is a team effort at Hilrose Dairy. Joe Brantmeier farms with his sons, Andy and Jeff, and his wife Chris also plays a vital role handling the bookkeeping of the operation.

"We spend a lot of time with the cows, and at the end of the day, that pays off," Jeff says. "We all enjoy different aspects of the dairy, but in the end, it comes together and it's pretty successful."

The family appreciates the marketability of Registered Holsteins. Their popular cow, Hilrose Advent Anna-Red EX-95, is a perfect example of this. They have marketed her daughters from coast to coast and sold numerous embryos from her.

"Having the ability to have a cow create that excitement and enthusiasm, not only for us but for our kids and other people, is why Registered Holsteins are important for us," Jeff shares.

Andy and Jeff are the fourth generation on the farm and enjoy watching their children's interest in the dairy industry grow. "Seeing the next generation step up and take a little bit of responsibility, or be involved in showing or dairy judging, is exciting for us to see," Jeff says.



Left to Right: Andy, Jeff & Joe Brantmeier with Hilrose Advent Anna-Red-ET EX-95 GMD

100% Homebred
Milk: 36,735 Fat: 1,410 Protein: 1,081
Average Classification Score – 88.8

Division 3: 10-99 Cows



Left to Right: Chris, Gin, Jennifer & Tom Kestell.

Ever-Green-View Holsteins, LLC

The Kestell Family • Waldo, WI

Staying true to their breeding goals year after year has yielded success for the Kestell Family of Waldo, Wisconsin. Named Holstein Association USA's Elite Breeders in 2018, Ever-Green-View Holsteins is a name synonymous with elite Holstein genetics on a global scale.

"We stick to the program – we never throw in low component or low production bulls just to get something to show at the fair," Tom explains.

Tom and his wife Gin farm with their son Chris and his wife Jennifer. Tom appreciates working alongside his son, and everything he contributes to the operation. "He pays very close attention to detail, and he brings that skill with him every day to work," Tom shares.

The family enjoys having a healthy herd of cows that perform well. This means doing things the right way, such as maintaining their facilities, always feeding high quality feed, and breeding for a balanced group of cows with both good components and production.

"We don't necessarily set goals, but we set the goal of doing a good job," Tom says. "You can't cut corners and expect things to work out. Consistency in everything you do on a dairy farm is very important."

97.8% Homebred

Milk: 40,822 Fat: 1,705 Protein: 1,288

Average Classification Score – 88.3

Doorco Holsteins

The Vandertie Family • Brussels, WI

Constantly striving to improve their herd's genetics is a focus for the Vandertie family of Doorco Holsteins. "We always try to make the next generation an improvement from the last, and try to get a little better milk and type on them all the time," Dan Vandertie explains.

Dan and Julie took over the farm from Dan's parents in 1987. Now, they are in the farm transition process with their son Austin, a recent graduate from the University of Wisconsin Madison, who has taken over daily management and the breeding program.

As they look forward to the future of their farm, the Vanderties hope to grow from the impressive base of the 100 percent homebred genetics in their herd.

"We haven't bought a cow or outside genetics in almost 40 years," Dan shares. "I used to say every mating was to try to improve that cow enough to stay in the herd."

This strategy has garnered success for the family. During their last classification, they had 14 Excellent cows in the barn. The herd has also been honored with Holstein USA's Progressive Breeder Registry award for 48 consecutive years and the Progressive Genetics Herd Award for 18 years.



Left to Right: Dan, Julie, Austin & Bridget Vandertie.

100% Homebred

Milk: 36,491 Fat: 1,425 Protein: 1,117

Average Classification Score – 88.7

Division 3: 10-99 Cows



Left to Right: Bret, Brenda & Bruce Long.

B-Long Holsteins

The Long Family • New London, WI

At B-Long Holsteins, the little things add up to make the Long family's herd successful. Bruce and Brenda Long and their son Bret milk 55 cows in a tie stall barn. They focus on breeding for balanced cows with the complete package.

"I breed for cows with good production and type," Bruce explains. "I breed for cows that are deep, wide, and open." In addition to genetics, the way the family cares for their cows makes a difference in the herd's performance.

"I always tell people there are three c's to raising good cows," Bruce Long shares. "You have to have good cows genetically speaking, keep them comfortable, and make sure they consume a lot of high-quality feed." He adds that consistency, which is part of cow comfort, is important for keeping cows healthy and producing their best.

The Long family also finds satisfaction in the small, everyday moments that come along with dairy farming. Things like watching calves develop into nice cows or having repeat buyers come back for show calves make the hard work more enjoyable.

"When you get your cows out on pasture on the first nice day of spring, it's hard to beat that," Bruce adds.

100% Homebred

Milk: 36,168 Fat: 1,452 Protein: 1,166

Average Classification Score – 88.4

Show-Mar Holsteins

The Brantner Family • Saegertown, PA

The past year has brought exciting changes for the Brantners and their 70-cow herd. In August 2022, they moved to a newly purchased farm in Saegertown, Pennsylvania. The cows are now housed in a sand bedded freestall barn and milked in a parlor three times a day.

"I breed for type and strength," Mark Brantner shares. He uses the aAa method to help guide breeding decisions and tweaks it to meet his needs. The Brantner family also enjoys showing and places an emphasis on type.

"I take a lot of pride in my homebred animals," Mark explains. "I don't have to go out and buy something fancy, I can do it myself."

Mark is grateful for the support of his family, especially his son Austen, who drives four hours to come help on the farm, and his daughter Shianne, who is always a phone call away. He is also thankful for the mentorship of his friend Dr. Richard, who taught him about veterinary medicine.

Being named a Herd of Excellence is an honor for the family. "I think it's a nice pat on the back, for a job well done," Jelena Brantner says. "It's the reward of many years of hard work."



Left to Right: Mark & Jelena, Briana holding Presley, & Austen Brantner.

100% Homebred

Milk: 38,394 Fat: 1,562 Protein: 1,181

Average Classification Score – 88.9