

HERDS OF *Excellence*

Congratulations to the 2025 Herds of Excellence award receipts! These three exceptional herds have met rigorous criteria to earn this prestigious honor.

The award is divided into three herd size categories 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 MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA



Have classified within the last year and have an average 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

Fustead Holsteins The Fust Family • Wausau, WI



Back row (L-R): Shannon, Tyler, Wendy, Brian, Aiden, Adam
Front row (L-R): Tanner, Savannah, Sarah, Darleen, Jennifer, Connor, Bailey

Recently recognized as 2026 Wisconsin Master Agriculturists, the Fust family has 1,100 cows on their century farm. With the next generations in mind, Brian and Wendy are taking steps to transition the farm to their son Tyler and his wife Shannon. Their daughter Jennifer and her husband Adam are also involved in the operation. Six grandchildren ages 9 to 17 are growing up on the farm.

“It’s very rewarding to see the fifth generation start to take over the farm,” Brian says. “Tyler and I share responsibilities. We’re both cow guys.”

Working hand in hand, Tyler and Brian focus on providing excellent cow comfort. Details like moving the herd through the parlor efficiently, always keeping feed in front of the cows, and using sand bedding all contribute to creating an environment where their cows can thrive. Growing and harvesting quality forages themselves is another priority for the Fust family and their team of employees.

“We believe in breeding balanced cows with good udders and good feet and legs and have been using plus component bulls for 40 years,” Brian shares.

These strategies have led to a high producing herd of Registered Holsteins[®]. Brian also highlights the longevity of their herd, noting that the average cow age is four years and three months. As a result of keeping cows in the herd longer, they have been able to find a niche market selling fresh two-year olds.

The family has continued to steadily improve and expand the farm over the years. They recently moved calves into their new calf barn and are excited about the results so far.

The Fusts’ also enjoy showing their Registered Holsteins at the local county fair. In addition to Brian and Wendy’s grandchildren, 20 to 25 other 4-Hers exhibit close to 50 animals.

“It’s a great learning experience for each of them and promotes our Registered Holsteins,” Wendy says.

73.4% HOMEBRED • MILK: 32,630 • FAT: 1,524 • PROTEIN: 1,076 • AVERAGE CLASSIFICATION SCORE: 83.3

Doorco Holsteins

The Vandertie Family • Brussels, WI



8

Year
Honoree

L-R: Dan, Julie, Austin & Bridget Vandertie

Nestled between the shores of Lake Michigan and Green Bay, Doorco Holsteins is home to 40 cows. The Vandertie family has been recognized with the Progressive Breeders' Registry (PBR) award for the past 51 years and takes pride in catering to their herd. This includes providing high quality forages and ensuring their cows are comfortable.

"It's all about not only doing the big things right, but doing the little things right, too," Julie says.

Attention to detail and thoughtful breeding decisions has resulted in an elite group of cows the family enjoys working with. The 100% homebred herd has five cows that recently produced over 40,000 pounds of milk on their 305-day lactation record. Another recent milestone includes their first cow hitting over 300,000 pounds of lifetime milk.

"Production wise, our herd average continues to go up," Dan shares. "Classification scores have also taken a nice move up and we've hit a BAA of 113.2."

During their latest classification, 20 cows were scored Excellent, including five of them scoring 94 points. They averaged 90 points per cow. Dan attributes some of this success to the longevity of their herd, mentioning they currently have many older cows who are thriving.

Having a nice group of mature cows has allowed them to sell fresh two-year olds and heifers, providing an additional source of revenue. Tools such as registration papers, pedigrees, and classification scores help them market their animals effectively.

"Having records behind the cows, and showing people the dam, or better yet, sisters of a young sire that they're looking at, is a benefit," Dan says. "Sometimes we can show them three generations that are milking and people are just amazed."

Dan and Julie have recently transitioned the farm to their son Austin. With the next generation at the helm, the family plans to continue marketing their Registered Holstein® genetics.

"I'm excited about continuing to advance our genetics and creating new opportunities, whether that's selling replacements or a breeder bull to new customers, or getting into selling embryos overseas," Austin says.

100.0% HOMEBRED • MILK: 37,225 • FAT: 1,557 • PROTEIN: 1,154 • AVERAGE CLASSIFICATION SCORE: 90.5

Ever-Green-View Holsteins, LLC

The Kestell Family • Waldo, WI



16

Year
Honoree

Back Row (L-R): Tom, Chris, Jennifer & Gin Kestell
Front Row (L-R): Cole & Will Kestell

Breeding consistently good cows that perform well year after year has been a guiding principle of Tom Kestell's career as a Registered Holstein® breeder. It's one Tom and his wife Gin have passed on to their son Chris and daughter-in-law Jennifer, who farm alongside them.

The next generation, Chis and Jennifer's sons Will (11) and Cole (8), have also taken an interest in the farm.

"One thing that excites me about the future is the young people coming into the business with new ideas and aspirations," Tom says. "My grandson keeps a log of every calf that's born - it's nice to see that enthusiasm and desire to learn and put all the pieces together."

One of the goals at Ever-Green-View Holsteins has always been to have a high producing herd while maintaining a relatively high BAA. Rather than following the trends, the Kestell family has focused on breeding the type of cow that works well for them while keeping an eye on where the industry is headed.

"The motto on our farm has always been 'see, think, and do,'" Tom explains. "First you have to see what's going on, then you have to think about it, and finally, you have to do something about it, either positive or negative."

A high-performing herd by many measures, Ever-Green-View Holsteins is the longest-running Herds of Excellence recipient, and 2025 marks their sixteenth year receiving the award. Known internationally for their Registered Holstein genetics, the farm has sold over 30,000 embryos throughout Tom's career.

Tom and his family have had the opportunity to see genetics from their herd in many different countries, from Japan to Europe to Pakistan. They find it gratifying to see genetics from their herd perform well in different environments.

"It's nice to be part of something that's always striving to do better," Tom says. "Nothing has improved more in my lifetime than dairy farming."

98.9% HOMEBRED • MILK: 39,430 • FAT: 1,707 • PROTEIN: 1,227 • AVERAGE CLASSIFICATION SCORE: 87.6