

THE PULSE

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WHAT'S THE VALUE IN A NATIONAL SHOW DESIGNATION?

“The show ring is where many Holstein breeders — as they watch the 4-H calf they worked so hard to prepare for this moment — first feel the satisfaction of raising a fine dairy animal. There, in front of a cattle judge and a crowd, all the work and effort comes into focus” — Richard H. Mansfield, *Progress of the Breed: The History of U.S. Holsteins*, 1985.

Shows have been the heartbeat of breed associations for generations. The very first national showing of Holsteins took place at the 1893 rendition of The World's Fair dubbed “The World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.” Breeders and exhibitors alike came out to showcase their best calves, heifers, cows, and bulls and see how they ranked among the very best on the continent. Thomas B. Wales, executive secretary of the Holstein-Friesian Association, was the judge of that first event as breeders traveled from as far away as New York, Kansas, and even Canada.

Since that very first North American gathering, Holstein members have been debating the best way to run shows. It stands to reason that some spirited conversations, both in-person and online, took place this past fall following our opportunity to gather once again at our familiar show venues. The health pandemic that scuttled many traditional events in 2020 allowed all the perspective to more easily compare and contrast our experiences during the past two years.

What a national show means today

In some conversations, people questioned the need for “national show” status. In more direct dialogue, others flat out asked if the national association provides any services outside of creating a set of rules that must be followed. Still others questioned why a show must follow

the national judges list.

All are fair questions.

We discussed those narratives and more at both the Show Committee Meeting and Fall Board Meeting.

Holstein Association USA's “National Show Program” is a document that members can download from www.holsteinusa.com for answers. I'll go through a few highlights.

In this fast-paced world where we all are stretched for time, the National Show Program documents the Showring Policy to create ethical guidelines for a show. It's the playbook for all of us to abide by at the show. It's been updated over the years to include standards for ultrasound testing, changes to hair and coat color, and even topline hair length. Published in black and white for all to read, these rules provide the framework for exhibitors. In the same vein, these rules also remind all of us that the animals we are about to exhibit have a greater purpose — to provide food, in the form of milk and meat, for our fellow man.

The National Show Program also lists uniform classes so we can all compete under the same guidelines and compare animals from coast to coast. Additional guidance is provided for Bred and Owned, Premier Breeder, and Premier Exhibitor rules.

One of the more consistent questions this fall was whether or not Holstein Association USA provides any staff power for national shows.



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WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED AND HOW HAVE WE CHANGED?

In my message from the Spring 2020 edition of *The Pulse*, the first I wrote after the COVID-19 pandemic undercut the world, I quoted the late British bishop, Brooke Foss Wescott. He stated, "As we wake or sleep, we grow strong or weak; and at last some crisis shows us what we have become."

As we embark in the new year of 2022, the COVID-19 virus and its variants are far more widespread than in the Spring of 2020, and it looks as if the virus and/or variants of it will be with us for some time. So, I ask ourselves and the dairy industry at large, "What have we learned and how have we changed?"

The website www.eatthis.com has a list of the 15 Worst Grocery Shortages of 2021. Two dairy items were included in that list of food shortages.

Ben and Jerry's ice cream was number three on the list. Why Ben and Jerry's ice cream? Many flavors of this Vermont ice cream went out of production temporarily during 2021 because of labor shortages. According to USA Today, "The company pivoted to production of its most popular flavors, curtailing output of many options."

Number eight on the list of the top 15 food shortages was Lunchables. Cheese is a part of the Lunchables package and the reason this snack or lunchtime staple was in short supply was because of an all-time high surge in demand. Quite simply, supply could not meet demand for this product.

Where's the cream cheese?

The shortage of cream cheese received lots of media attention prior to the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday seasons. In the December 16, 2021 edition of the *Washington Post*, Jenna Thornton, a spokeswoman for Kraft whose Philadelphia brand is the country's largest cream-cheese producer, pointed "to strong retail demand – up 18% from 2019, though steady over the last year. She attributed the rise to an increase in the number of people eating breakfast at home and making easy desserts like cheesecake. Demand from bagel shops and other food providers has risen even more sharply, up 75% compared with a year ago."

Thornton went on to say, "As consumers feel more comfortable leaving their homes and commuting into their offices, we've seen food service demand, such as bagel shops, skyrocket this last year."

In the *Washington Post* article, Dr. Christopher Wolf, a professor of agricultural economics at Cornell University, suggested several issues may contribute to the shortage of cream cheese. To quote from the article, "A

lack of workers to staff the usual shifts at manufacturing plants; a scarcity of truck drivers to transport milk from farms to factories and the finished products to their destinations; and lagging production of cream cheese packaging. Disruptions at a Schreiber Foods plant from a cyberattack in October also may be a factor."

The article continued, "Supply-chain issues have become so common this year that Wolf feels about them the way he feels when someone calls a weather disaster a 'black swan' event. Once it happens enough times, he said, it is no longer unusual. At some point, it's not the perfect storm, it's the new weather pattern."

So what's one of the things Kraft did to deal with the cream cheese shortage? They launched a promotion to reimburse some people \$20 for making a non-cheesecake dessert during the holiday season. Let's hope those longing for cream cheese don't lose their appetite for it while they're waiting. Hopefully, Kraft or others who make cream cheese can start satisfying consumers' demand for it.

Supply chain woes

As I see it, supply chain problems aren't likely to ease soon. The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, California, which together handle more than 40% of all U.S. imports, are two of the big reasons retail store shelves are not only in short supply of some food items but other everyday essentials. A 2020 World Bank study ranking port efficiency placed Los Angeles, 328th and Long Beach, 333rd in the world.

When the ships finally get off loaded, there just aren't enough trucks available to move their containers to their ultimate destinations. Information from the American Trucking Association indicates that there is a nationwide shortage of truck drivers of approximately 80,000 and growing.

The beef supply

Meanwhile, according to a December 27, 2021 article in the *New York Times*, "America is consuming more beef than ever, while prices have climbed by 1/5 over the past year – a primary driver for the growing alarm over inflation." You know better than I if you're getting your fair share of that increase when you sell animals for beef.

Currently, Tyson Foods and Cargill and two companies controlled by Brazilian corporate owners, National Beef Packing Company and JBS, command the beef packing industry. Since the 1980s, those four largest meat packers have increased their share of the market from 36% to 85%, according to information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



The *New York Times* article suggests, “Today’s record high beef prices are most directly reflective of scarce stocks, another manifestation of the great supply chain disruption accompanying the pandemic. The initial spread of the Coronavirus swept through slaughterhouses, killing scores of workers, sickening thousands and halting production. That caused shortages of beef.”

The article went on to say, “But the shock landed atop decades of takeovers that closed slaughterhouses. The basic laws of economics suggest what happens when the packers cut their capacity to process beef: The supply is reduced, increasing consumer prices. At the same time, fewer slaughterhouses limits the demand for live cattle, lowering prices paid to ranchers for their animals – an advantage for the packers.”

In what I believe is a wise move, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced the Federal government will spend \$655 million on loans and grants to help launch new meat-processing facilities to help compete with the four major corporations that control the market. Included is a \$500 million program aimed at establishing new or expanded operations. The money will come from the American Rescue Plan Pandemic Relief Bill.

Vilsack states, “I think it sends a strong message to those who are currently in the business that they are not necessarily going to have that capacity, that they need to be sensitive to the needs of producers. It’s not in their best interests, it’s not in the best interest of the nation, to seek future consolidations or to drive people off the farm. We have to expand the processing in this country. We can no longer rely on four packers. We are breaking new ground today.” The Secretary’s announcement came the same day President Joe Biden signed an Executive Order requiring the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Vilsack’s agency, to write rules under the Packers and Stockyards Act to give farmers more of a say in the price they get for their livestock.

The consumer vulnerabilities that arise from the big four meat packers controlling the market like they do became crystal clear during the COVID-19 pandemic. I’m pleased the beef industry is getting this needed attention. This should ultimately result in more regional meat packers, which in theory should create more opportunities for those of you who sell beef.

It behooves the dairy industry to watch the new meat packing initiative. Perhaps other parts of the food processing chain, including dairy, might consider a similar approach.

All of these issues should have made us painfully aware that if we use or consume it here, we’d better be able to make it here. Furthermore, while local farmers’ markets and other neighborhood food options are important and play a key role in America, there is an urgent need for more regional food processing and distribution systems that operate in the market space between local markets and the conglomerates that dominate the dairy and meat processing industries today.

What may be on the horizon?

While not pleasant to think about, the death toll COVID-19 has caused in the United States has given me pause to think about our preparedness should a foreign animal disease outbreak hit the United States. Most of you reading this know your Holstein Association has championed the need for a national mandatory animal identification program in this country for years.

Back in 2004 and 2005, bills were written in both the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House called the “FAIR (Farm Animal

Identification and Records) Act”. Three bills in the House and one in the Senate calling for national mandatory animal identification, were sponsored by Senators Patrick Leahy (VT) and Arlen Specter (PA), Senate Bill S. 2008; Congressman Collin Peterson (MN) introduced H.R. 3787, H.R. 1254 and H.R. 1256.

While those bills never came to fruition, other animal identification initiatives have taken place. Currently, each state is to have their own plan in place with regard to how to handle an animal disease emergency. Frankly, I question if the United States at large is adequately prepared to contain and eradicate a future animal disease outbreak.

Fortunately, the State of Michigan has, what I believe is, an outstanding cattle identification mandate that could and should be the model for a national program. Michigan’s mandatory cattle traceability system has been in effect for well over a decade and has been highly effective.

We had the pleasure of working with Kevin Kirk, of the Michigan Department of Agriculture’s Veterinary Office, and other State of Michigan leaders on the development of their program. As I see it, now is the time to transform the Michigan system into a national mandatory animal ID program.

Reason for optimism

I’m optimistic over the findings by David A. Ostrov, Ph.D., an Immunologist and Associate Professor in the University of Florida College of Medicine’s Department of Pathology, Immunology and Laboratory Medicine that lactoferrin, a protein found in cows and human milk in conjunction with diphenhydramine, an antihistamine used for allergy symptoms show effectiveness against the COVID-19 virus in early testing. Yes, University of Florida health researchers have found that diphenhydramine, when paired with lactoferrin were found to hinder the SARS-CoV-2 virus during tests in monkey cells and human lung cells.

According to Dr. Ostrov, “We found out why certain drugs are active against the virus that causes COVID-19. Then, we found an antiviral combination that can be effective, economical, and has a long history of safety.”

According to Ostrov, the recent findings are a first step in developing a formulation that can be used to accelerate COVID-19 recovery. It also raises the prospect of further academic-corporate partnerships for human clinical trials focused on COVID-19 prevention.

This news from the University of Florida is some of the most encouraging I’ve heard pertaining to the COVID-19 virus. As some of you know, I’ve been talking about milk’s potential pharmaceutical applications for some time. This great news has the potential to bode well for all of you who produce milk, the most nearly perfect food, on your dairies.

In closing, while we’ve had our share of obstacles since March of 2020 and challenges remain, it’s heartening to know that we’ve learned some things that should help to strengthen our future.



**John M. Meyer, Chief Executive Officer
Holstein Association USA, Inc.**

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The short answer is yes.

At every major national show, I've witnessed there often is a flurry of transfer activity as potential class winners get bought and sold. Someone must manage that paperwork, and Holstein Association USA provides expertise to verify eligibility of both animals and exhibitors as well as on-site assistance regarding any check-in questions or follow-up.

In addition to press coverage, Holstein Association USA provides a number of awards including Grand Champion, Champion Bred and Owned, Bred and Owned Class Winners, and ribbons for nearly every Junior Holstein Show that calls upon a donation from the Holstein Foundation. The Association even provides many National Shows with a list of animals entered by class, including name of animal, registration number, birth date, and name of exhibitor(s) so that cattle logs can be created.

In return, Holstein Association USA asks that the eleven National Shows... that's the total for 2022... select a judge from the Holstein Association USA National Show Judges List and select associate judges from either the National or Qualified List.

Born in 2010

I was a rookie Holstein Association USA board member when President Larry Tande and Show Committee Chair Jim Burdette put in countless hours to gather input and develop consensus on the very first National Judges List. To be fair, it has become more than a list... that list provides an opportunity to gather the most experienced and aspiring judges each year to discuss the ways in which we could improve shows. The first year, Show Committee Chair Burdette and the Holstein Association USA staff held three judges' conferences in Utah, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

I went to that first conference, not with the goal of judging a national show, but rather to experience what

Jim and Larry developed. The conversations were impressive. Aside from mentorship on giving show ring reasons, North America's very best judges started talking ethics, stature, and other showing topics.

The end results?

Our shows began to show improvement. The tallest didn't always win. And Holstein Association USA built upon the ethics standards first started by World Dairy Expo when it came to ultrasounding udders. That also led to improved udders throughout the breed.

The Judging Conferences have continued every year since. Holstein Association USA leadership ask that those aspiring to judge a national show simply attend a judges' conference once every five years.

The National Judges list continues to grow. The 2010 meeting minutes indicate that the original standard was to "Limit the National Judges List to no more than 40 judges." That total has grown slightly to 47 individuals in 2021. If the eleven national shows selected one unique judge each year, it would take over four years to go through the entire list. Of course, individuals can judge more than one show in any given year . . . except for the International Holstein Show as World Dairy Expo places an additional requirement upon the judges.

Each year, the Holstein Association USA Show Committee and Board of Directors reviews the entire process.

As for this coming year, there will be two judges' conferences — one at the New York Spring Show and the other at the Oklahoma Spring Show. If you are 22 years old or older and would like to be considered for either the National or Qualified Judges list, consider attending one of these events.

Hats off to past President Tande and past Show Committee Chair Burdette for their great work over a decade ago.



**Corey Geiger, President
Holstein Association USA, Inc.**



Holstein enthusiasts practice their skills at the judges conference held in Columbus, Ohio in 2019. Individuals on the Holstein Association USA Judges List must attend the conference at least once every five years and receive a satisfactory rating.



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CHARTING A COURSE

Arizona Dairy Company reaches new heights through improved genetics and IVF.

After a decade in the U.S. Navy as an air traffic controller, Justin Stewart is well-versed in communication and management. Making fast decisions and giving instruction were part of his everyday routine as he charted an ever-changing course.

Today, he applies the same skills while managing the 6,500-cow Arizona Dairy Company in Mesa. It's an enterprise built on details, commitment, and teamwork.

"This is a large dairy. To make it feel like one unit, with everyone working together, takes a pretty good coach," Stewart says. "I felt like if we could get each department and team working together for the common goal of making high-quality milk — that's success every single day."

Located just east of Phoenix, Arizona, one of the country's largest cities, the dairy looks much different than when it was built nearly 50 years ago.

The story begins with two brothers farming together post-World War II. Kenny (who would become Stewart's father-in-law) and Marvin Morrison managed cropland and sold commodities to the region's dairy producers. They thought, why not put the crops to use themselves?

Arizona Dairy Company was formed in 1973 and grew at a rapid pace. Within 10 years, they doubled in size and were milking 5,000 cows. They expanded infrastructure and facilities, and hired more people. The region's population was on the rise, too.

"When we started out, there wasn't anything around us," Stewart says. "As time went on, the city grew and has surrounded us in every way. We have a freeway half a mile south of the dairy."

The location brings its own set of challenges. They have to haul all of the manure out, and all of the feed in. As a result, trucking expenses add up quickly. Appealing to urban concerns over dust, noise and the smell are constants, as well.

The plus side? A close proximity to large populations means there's strong demand for dairy products. Arizona Dairy Company markets their milk — some 50,000 gallons per day — to a unique set of processors, including Coca-Cola's Fairlife.

Their fluid milk makes its way to retail shelves at Safeway and Kroger's. They also market kosher milk, which requires facility and animal inspections to ensure specific quality standards are met, Stewart says. The kosher milk is powdered and shipped to New York.

"To have large and well-known companies come to Arizona and say, 'We want your milk,' that means a lot to me," Stewart says. "That says the future is pretty bright."

Moving forward

Behind the wheel of his truck, Stewart's Arizona Dairy baseball cap sits perfectly positioned on the dash. He's driving the pens and reflecting on how the herd has changed over the years.

"It can take a long time to make a difference," he says. "But little by little, when you see the individual cow performance increase and start to move the needle in the bulk tank, that is really helpful."

In the past year, they've seen some of the highest milk peaks in the fresh cow, breeding cow, and young heifer pens. The highest they've ever seen, Stewart says, reaching 95 pounds per cow and at times a 3.8% butterfat and 3.5% protein.

"And then to have those cows breed back right away, coming into their second and then third lactation, then you see the performance staying or getting better," he says. "That's what makes a difference. It really pays to have good genetics."

Like many dairy cattle breeders would agree, Stewart says the history and pedigree information available with U.S. Registered Holsteins are what sets the breed apart. Knowledge is power, and they use it to make continuous improvements around the farm. It starts on classification day.

"How can you have a better cow if you don't identify them," Stewart says. "Classification is the one day, whether you do it once a year or more often, where Holstein Association USA comes in as a third party and says, 'This is what the animal looks like and this is where she scores,'" Stewart says. "And so when you document that, now her pedigree has that forever."

The classification scores offer unbiased benchmarks Arizona Dairy Company can use to monitor herd improvement. They are always striving to breed the next perfect cow, Stewart says. The quiet cows. Ones that are low-input and long-lasting. Ones that breed back every year and perform in the milk parlor, day in and day out, three times per day.

"And one that produces high-quality butterfat and protein, and the high milk volumes Holsteins are known for," Stewart adds. "That's the goal, to make the very best cow we can for us here in Arizona."

IVF impact

Classification scores, pedigree information and genomic data all play a role in determining the future path for an individual animal at Arizona Dairy Company. The top 5-10% are used in the herd's in-vitro fertilization program. The state's only dairy with on-site IVF capabilities, they are able to complete the entire process — from collection to implantation — right on the farm.

"Sometimes we are running up to 40 animals per week in our IVF lab to make embryos to implant into all of our cows

and heifers," Stewart says. "When we can take those top genetics and use them in all of our recipients, then our genetic progress goes that much faster."

The technology is incredible, he explains, often allowing you to create four or five calves out of a young heifer even before she's had a natural calf.

Stewart likens IVF to being on a jet aircraft. There's start-up investment to get the airplane ready, and may take some time and effort to climb up to altitude. But once you are there, you can fuel back and the plane moves extremely fast to the destination.

"It is very, very rewarding when you land," he says.

The IVF program has impacted the herd through improved milk production, higher butterfat and protein, better feet and legs, and improved udders. They are seeing results in the first and second lactation cows from where they started five years ago.

"It's fun for me and my family to walk our two-year-old pens and say, 'Wow, this looks a lot differently than it did before,'" Stewart says. "The cows are absolutely stunning."

Together

True to its roots, Arizona Dairy Company is a family-run business.

Justin's wife, Dawnie, says she is proud to have the next two generations continue her family's legacy. Sons Dustin and Denton Ross are a major part of both the day-to-day operations and long-term decision making for the dairy.

Their grandchildren take great delight in the farm, as well. Hadley Ross works in the IVF lab while attending Central Arizona College, and Nate Ross delivers feed on his off days from Grand Canyon University. Two additional grandchildren, Ty and Jacey Ross, work with the show string and compete during show season.

"When you are heavily involved in raising these calves, there becomes a bond and an attachment," Stewart says. "The kids love to compete and show our animals, make new friends and have those relationships."

Because at the end of the day, the Holstein cow brings people together. Whether it's dairy producers and farm families, or city shoppers and suburban neighborhoods — the black-and-white animals serve them all.

"Together we are always stronger," Stewart says. "This family operation is really important and a lifelong lesson that working together is beneficial."



Justin Stewart



CHEESE, “COWLEBRITIES” AND CONVERSATION

TMK Creamery engages consumers in creative ways.

Miss TMK stands proudly with her head held high as Holstein Association USA classifier Mike Weimer gives the breakdown of her classification score. The eight-year-old cow gives 140 pounds of milk a day, has had six calves, and was classified Excellent 94 just an hour earlier.

As the October rain falls gently on the roof of the barn, a crowd is gathered inside to celebrate Miss TMK and the rest of the Registered Holsteins® in the “Cowlebrity Showcase” at TMK Creamery in Canby, Oregon. Just a 35-minute drive from Portland, TMK Creamery is operated by siblings Todd Koch, Marc Koch, and Shauna Garza and Todd’s wife Tessa.

The family milks 20 cows, operates a farmstead creamery, and frequently hosts their community for farm tours and events. “We want to create a platform to start a conversation,” Todd says about his family’s business.

Back at the Cowlebrity Showcase, the audience receives a general overview of classification and learns how dairy farmers use it when making management decisions. After the main event, visitors pose for pictures with Miss TMK, wander over to the creamery for a treat, and visit the cows and calves in the barn.

These experiences are all part of TMK Creamery’s mission to open the conversation about where food comes from. Classifier Mike also hopes visitors walk away with a new appreciation for dairy farmers. “I hope they understand all the hard work and care farmers take to have these good cattle,” he said.

First generation farmers

The multi-faceted business started as Todd’s 4-H project. He purchased his first heifer, KAECH MANDINGO RAN JESS, when he was just 12. Todd was following the advice of his grandfather, who told him raising springers to sell would be a good way for Todd to earn some money.

There was just one problem with his grandfather’s plan – Todd never sold that first heifer he purchased. Instead, he started milking cows in 1997 while still in college. Jess’s registration paper is framed in the window of the creamery today, a nod to where Todd started. Now two of his five siblings are involved in the operation, along with his wife Tessa.

The idea for TMK Creamery was born out of necessity. In 2016, the Koch family found out the creamery they had shipped milk to for 23 years was dissolving. Instead of getting out of the dairy business, they decided to get creative and forge ahead with a new endeavor together.

“I think that we all have such different backgrounds and have done different things, so we work really well together,” Shauna said about working with family. She and Marc were advocates for keeping the farm going and their support encouraged Todd to think about ways to make it possible.

TMK Creamery officially started making cheese in April of 2017. Shauna is the cheesemaker, and uses her previous

experience in quality control, processing, and sanitation from her work on fishing vessels. “My parents had a meat shop as well growing up,” Shauna adds, “so it’s kind of weird how it came full circle.”

Although Shauna is relatively new to making cheese, she has already found both enjoyment and success in her work. TMK Creamery received a silver award for their garlic dill cheddar curds at the World Cheese Awards in Italy in 2019.

In addition to a variety of cheeses, they make ice cream and whey vodka. TMK Creamery sells their cheese to restaurants, directly from the farm creamery, and in a local grocery store. In March of 2021, TMK Creamery launched a food truck with a menu featuring ingredients from both their dairy and beef operations.

Platform for conversation

The Cowlebrity Showcase is one of numerous events the Koch family hosts throughout the year. Special holiday events, normal creamery hours, and behind the scenes opportunities all provide the chance for consumers to see where their food comes from. The creamery can also be rented for parties or other events.

“It’s open in the sense that everyone is welcome,” Tessa shares. “It doesn’t matter what background someone has.” They have seen visitors from every walk of life and from ages two to 102. This includes hosting 4-H and FFA members and college students.

“We need to focus on our young people and make sure we are getting that demographic excited [about the dairy industry],” Todd says. “There are a lot of opportunities for young people beyond milking cows.”

TMK Creamery encourages students to take their involvement a step further than a typical farm tour. “Engineering students from the Oregon Institute of Technology have been really interesting to try new things with,” Tessa shared. Some of the equipment in their creamery was designed by these engineering students for their senior projects.

They also welcome dietician students from the Oregon Health and Science University each year. “Many of them who come out are vegetarian or vegan,” Tessa explains. “We just start the conversation with, ‘we are open to any question.’”

While opening their farm up to the public always comes with potential risk, it also leads to incredible conversations.

Reflecting on their experiences thus far, the Koch family says the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

“I would say 99.95% of the people that come out here just want to know what’s going on,” Todd says. “They crave good information.”

Sometimes this means using a hands on approach to bring their guests closer to the farm. “We had a culinary class call us about doing a cheesemaking class. We said, ‘Yes, we would love to do a cheesemaking class with you, but you have to milk cows with us afterwards,’” Todd says.

The real hero

At the center of their award-winning cheese, creative marketing ventures, and conversations with consumers is the Registered Holstein cow. Todd’s passion for dairy farming started with a Holstein heifer named Jess and continues with cows like Miss TMK.

“The dairy cow is an amazing animal,” Todd says. “The cow is the real hero of our story, that’s why we call them cowlebrities.”

Like other dairy farmers, the Koch family cares about their cows, strives to be a resource for their community, and uses their skills to pursue their passion. They even admit sometimes they would prefer to be spending time with their cows rather than people.

“TMK is our extraverted side,” Tessa says with a smile. “You have to be comfortable being uncomfortable.”

While it may be uncomfortable at first, the Koch family says they encourage anyone farming to share their story. Tessa suggests starting by trying one thing: whether that’s making cheese, giving a virtual farm tour, or something else.

“When you are doing things right, when your cows are comfortable and living their best life, there is nothing you should be afraid of,” Todd added, emphasizing the importance of showing people that cows are well taken care of.

“We want to create value in our product through transparency. We want people to trust everything that happens with the animals,” Todd said. “We want people to trust what happens with the milk and how it gets into the creamery.”

TMK Creamery’s larger goal is to build consumer trust in the entire dairy community. Todd says, “We’re not just building fans of TMK, we’re building fans of the dairy industry.”

Todd, Tessa, and Marc Koch with Miss TMK



Classifier Mike Weimer explains Miss TMK’s classification score

