

Organic Production

Feature Farm

Bull Ridge Farm

Henry Perkins &

Henrietta Beaufait

Albion, Me

History

Bull Ridge Farm has been in the Perkins family since 1928 when Henry's grandfather, Maurice came down from Aroostook County, with 3 sons, 4 daughters, some horses, and 5 Holsteins. His second son, Guy was one of the first artificial breeders in the state, and worked the farm until 1973, when his second son, Henry took over at the age of 21.

Henry watched his father spray their corn fields year after year. When Guy died of cancer in 1978, Henry refused to use sprays and in time, learned to grow quality corn without herbicides. Henry also increased their 65 cow herd to 110. Since that time, Henry has sold his herd 3 times, but always returns to milking.

Henry met Henrietta Beaufait in 1979 when she came to the farm for a veterinary farm visit. She continued practicing conventional veterinary medicine through the first 16 years of their marriage. In 1998, she sold her practice and focused her energies on homeopathy and alternative animal health care. She began her naturopathic practice in 1998 and continues to serve herds throughout the state of Maine. In addition, she is currently working for the Department of Agriculture as a state veterinarian inspecting meat facilities.

When the Organic Cow of Vermont came to Maine in 1996, Henry was interested but decided to wait and watch how the organic market

established itself. After 2 years, Henry signed on with Horizon Organic and began shipping organic milk in August, 1999.

Management System

Henry currently milks 70 Dutch belted, Holstein, and Dutch belted-Holstein crosses in a free stall facility with a swing 6 milk parlor. Dry cows stay in the milking herd through their dry period, with com-

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puterized collars regulating grain intake.

Once fresh, cows can visit their calves in the bonding

pen, where calves are kept for the first 2 weeks. It is a limited access system, where cows can reach over the fence to lick their calves but calves are unable to nurse. Calves are fed milk from buckets in groups of 3-5 until approximately 10 weeks of age.

Once weaned, calves are moved to a separate heifer facility. The heifer barn is a 50' x 100' free stall, housing 4 to 5 groups of 12 animals. During the winter, they are fed dry hay and 4# grain per animal per day. In summer months, the heifers are pastured in permanent paddocks, with no grain.

Nutrition and Farm-wide Practices

Henry believes in keeping systems simple and producing quality milk. He grows 200 acres of top quality forage, including corn, alfalfa, and winter triticale. During the winter, baleage is top dressed with corn silage, haylage from the bunk silo, and grain. In the summer, cows graze 35-40% of their total intake, supplemented by corn silage. Very little to no, low protein grain is fed during the summer months. Feed is supplemented with minerals in the

summer months and kelp is added to mineral supplements in the winter.

Bull Ridge Farm does not use artificial breeding. There is a Dutch belted bull that runs with the 16 month olds in the heifer barn and one that runs with the milking herd in the free stall. Cows are tightly monitored in the parlor to watch for problematic quarters. Henry keeps quality high by keeping out all suspicious quarters and getting machines on within 60 seconds from prep to achieve best milk cooperation (complete milk out due to immediate let down).

Henry has been awarded Horizon's top 10% quality award for both years of its implementation. In 2002, Bull Ridge Farm was recognized as having Horizon's top quality for all its producers nationwide.

Preventative

There are little to no major health issues at Bull Ridge Farm. No vaccinations, Ecoli, or MuSe are used. In addition to his herd's overall vitality, Henry relies upon Henrietta and his daughter, Jacki to maintain good herd health. Jacki is involved in every aspect of farm operations. Not only is she learning how to run a top notch operation, Jacki is able to learn about naturopathic aspects to veterinary medicine.

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Conclusion

Bull Ridge Farm will be the site of NODPA's 3rd annual Field Days this summer. Join us as we check out Henry's diverse forage program, healthy Dutch belted cows, and well designed, efficient heifer facility. Henrietta Beaufait will be sharing her knowledge on effective dry off protocol and dealing with reproductive problems.