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2011 NDS Graduate Dairy Production Award Presented to Pennsylvania Producer

Denmark, Wis.— Business savvy, a thirst for efficiency, and a passion for genetics that helped propel an already outstanding Lebanon, Penn., family dairy herd to even loftier heights, have earned Joel Krall the National Dairy Shrine Graduate Dairy Production Award for 2011. The award was created in 2009 to recognize, encourage and assist qualified two year or four-year agricultural college graduates to pursue careers in commercial dairying and to gain ownership of dairy cattle to grow the size of their herd. Entrants apply during their second to ninth year after graduation. Krall will receive a \$2,500 cash award from sponsor Elanco Animal Health, which will be presented this fall at the NDS Awards Banquet during World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisc.

After graduating from Penn State University in May 2006, Krall returned to the 100-cow family farm owned by his parents, Tom and Shirley Krall. The herd of grade Holsteins was already at an outstanding production level, averaging 28,000 pounds per cow on twice-a-day milking, but Joel set his sights on even more efficiency and productivity. After six months as herdsman, his parents offered to sell him the cows and he eagerly accepted. Among his first management changes was one that brought a “real world” education that could not be taught in a classroom: the “ripple effects” of switching to three-times-a-day milking. Milk production thrived, but the family workforce did not. Nor did cow stress levels due to increased holding pen times. Additional facilities were needed to ease this stress so a decision was made in 2008 to expand to 150 cows and make two smaller groups, a choice that also created an opportunity for Joel to reunite in partnership in Furnace Hill Holsteins with his college roommate, Tim Crouse, and infuse the herd with elite genetics.

Despite expansion and the steep challenge of surviving the 2009-10 dairy recession, the herd reached elite levels of productivity. Rolling herd average now stands at approximately 32,500M 1,100F and 1,000P. Use of technologies such as flushing, embryo transfer, sexed semen and genomic testing have boosted heifer numbers well above milk cow numbers and given the partners opportunities for even more genetic advancement, not to mention an additional income stream.

Krall is quick to point out that winning the Graduate Dairy Production Award was a team effort that involved many people, most notably his parents and his partner. “My parents set the stage for where we are today,” he emphasizes. “Their emphasis on cow comfort and longevity for so many years gave us a big head start, plus we’ve been fortunate to work with some really good advisors. Tim’s role has been especially important too, because the partnership allowed us to expand with both needed facilities and labor.” My experience at Penn State has also helped make me a well-rounded dairyman by providing more than book knowledge, but also industry experience and application through internships, Dairy Science Club and the Dairy Challenge Contest. Above all, though, the credit goes to my Heavenly Father who makes all things possible.”

Frequently modest and candid, he admits that the hands-on experience of making financial and management decisions that are needed to run a dairy have often brought a roller coaster of emotions. "There are some days I think I have it all figured out – and others that I wonder if I know anything at all," he laughs.

Married to his wife Christine in April 2010 (they are expecting their first child just before World Dairy Expo), Krall's vision of his dairy future starts with cow care and business stability. "I view myself as trying to balance high production and genetics. My main focus is on production, longevity and health, and I like technology that improves efficiency. Probably my main long-term goal is that I hope that God will bless me with many children of which maybe one or two of them will want to do this together with me. I think that would be something very special."

The annual National Dairy Shrine awards banquet will be held on October 6 during World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wis. For more information about the banquet or about students, producers and industry representatives being recognized by National Dairy Shrine, please contact Dr. David Selner, Executive Director, at (920) 863-6333. National Dairy Shrine membership information is also available by phone or online at www.dairyshrine.org. Dairy enthusiasts are encouraged to become a part of this important organization to help honor our heritage, inspire future leaders and promote the dairy industry.