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Krause and Burken families recognized as Dairy Shrine Progressive Producers

Two outstanding dairy operations have been selected to receive the National Dairy Shrine's prestigious Progressive Dairy Producer award for 2011. Those two farms represent herds less than and greater than 300 milking. In the 300 or less category, Krause Holsteins, the Krause family from Buffalo, Minn., are being honored. In the 300 and more category, Blue Hyll Dairy — the Burken family of Clinton, Iowa are recognized. Both herds embody what the award seeks to recognize. Each utilizes progressive management practices to optimize their operations and have a proven track record of continuous improvement.

A passionate spokesperson for the dairy industry, Charles Krause, a managing partner at Krause Holsteins, Buffalo, Minn., says that animal care takes priority on their farm. "From the minute a calf arrives on our farm to her last day on earth, the welfare of each individual animal is of utmost importance," says Krause. Their 165-head grade and Registered Holstein herd has responded well to this animal-care-first approach. The current herd milk production per cow averages 26,426 M 926 F 782 P with 2-year-olds peaking at 94 pounds per day, and second and greater lactation cows peaking at 117 pounds. The farm is owned and operated by an s-corporation including Charles and Robyn Krause, and Charles' parents Warren and Carol. They are assisted by Charles and Robyn's children Andrew and Morgan. Besides the dairy herd, 475 acres are operated by the farm to produce all of the farm's feeding needs. Cows are housed in free stall barn in addition to a small compost barn for special needs cows.

Upon graduation from the University of Minnesota in 1991 with an animal science degree, Charles Krause has made effective, successful changes to their family farm coupled with gradual herd growth. A snapshot of these improvements includes a new double-8 parallel parlor as well as a new heifer shed – both of which center around their goal to keep animals dry and comfortable. The Krauses also pride themselves in finding efficient ways to keep production costs low. These measures include growing all of their own feed, maximizing manure use as a fertilizer, and taking adult farm management courses to keep them on track for the future. Lastly, the Krause farm is actively engaged in multiple activities to promote their way-of-life to the community and beyond. Located just one hour from the Twin Cities, they often host local and international groups while also being spokespeople for the industry throughout the state.

Attention to detail, monitoring, and measuring are part of the daily activities at Blue Hyll Dairy LLC, Clinton, Iowa, who is recognized in the 300 cows plus category. The LLC was formed in 1999 by brothers Martin and Mike Burken. Seeking to divide responsibilities, today Martin manages the 774-head dairy operation while Mike manages the 3,500-acre cropping operation. Martin Burken didn't start out solely in the dairy business; he grew up on a large beef and hog operation with 60 dairy cows. But when he graduated from Iowa State in 1991, they decided to concentrate solely on dairy and increased to 100 cows. Those 100 cows eventually became 250, which became their current size of 768 in the cow herd. Cows are housed in a 6-row, 500 cow free stall barn and milked in a double 12 parlor. The herd RHA currently stands at 23,685. While Martin manages the dairy portion of the operation, he credits his dad for still helping with "whatever needs to be done." Martin's wife Lisa and their children Hannah, Haley, and Hillary are all engaged in the farm, as well.

Martin says that one of their first priorities is always milk quality. The farm maintains a high standard for bacteria, somatic cell, and PI counts that is assisted by an excellent pipeline washing system. He also utilizes PC Dart software to closely monitor the progress of his herd, both pregnancy rate and calving interval statistics, for example are watched closely. The farm also has developed their own benchmark to determine the cost of freshening a cow into the milking string. On a monthly basis, they calculate the dollar amount that is spent on fresh cow problems to dictate any changes in cow care. Martin says that during extreme costs of freshening cows, they have increased the voluntary waiting period to give these cows a little extra time before their next pregnancy. Lastly, Martin says that as their herd increased in size, accurate records in all areas of the farm and the use of good genetics has been the key. Martin says, "My intention is to improve genetics and hopefully have more progeny that are such quality that they can improve the overall genetics of my herd and possibly improve the entire breed." And while the Burkens spend ample time managing the details of their own farm, they also are active members of their local dairy promotion board which hosts on-farm events to educate consumers on modern dairy production.

Both the Krauses and Burkens will be recognized at the annual National Dairy Shrine awards banquet set to be held October 6, 2011 at World Dairy Expo. 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.