

# Kevin and Cari Knapp to be honored at Winconsin National Convention

When a city boy who is determined to make it as a dairy producer meets a country girl that grew up in the business, good cows are bound to follow. Kevin and Cari Knapp, Larchwood, Iowa, may have come from different roots, but as a team they have set many goals and had successful end results. Thanks to a strong work ethic and passion for the breed, Knapp-Time Dairy has become the successful operation it is today.



Kevin started his dairy career and grew a love for cattle while working for Larry Musselman, Danvers, Ill., while he was still in high school. He later accepted a position as herdsman for a Holstein farm in Bradford, Ill., and began building his own small herd. He worked with the Holsteins for two years before the owner decided to retire, forcing Kevin to disperse his herd too. It did not take him long though to decide operating his own dairy was exactly what he wanted to do. Two years later, he was milking a small mixed herd in a rented dairy facility in Illinois. Shortly thereafter, he met his wife, who grew up in the dairy industry on a farm in Minnesota and earned a bachelor's degree in dairy science from South Dakota State University in 2000. She then managed a 320-cow dairy

herd.

When the couple married in 2002, they blended their knowledge and experiences to expand their herd to 50 cows and milked in the rented 13-stall barn. In the fall of 2003, the young couple decided to move to their current location in Iowa and focus primarily on the Jerseys, phasing out the other breeds. Realizing the Jersey cow is where their future was because of the cows' ability for high component milk and feed efficiency, it was not a tough decision.

Knapp-Time Dairy is now 95% Jerseys, with plans to eventually be all Jersey. They currently milk 95 cows in a 95 cow tie-stall barn and have a 2010 AJCA lactation average of 19,202 lbs. milk, 928 lbs. fat, 673 lbs. protein with 2,313 lbs. cheese yield on 51 lactations. The couple has set a goal for their REAP herd to be at 20,000 lbs. milk with 5.0% fat and 4.0% protein, with the fat goal already being achieved.

"Kevin and Cari's hard work has paid off as their Jerseys enabled them to win awards through Associated Milk Producers Inc., for their quality milk for two years," said Art and Harvey Metzger, Summit Farm, Lester, Iowa, in a letter of support for the Knapps. "Kevin's excitement is tangible when appraisal day rolls around and his 'Golden Girls,' as he calls them, get to put on their best show."



The Knapps utilize A.I. for 100% of their herd and embryo transfers on their best cows. Cari works as the technician, while Kevin makes the mating decisions. For the past three years, they have been incorporating sexed semen for their heifers, and are now using the technology for their milking herd. Traditionally, they have not used many young sires, but with the introduction of genomics they have started to increase their use. The breeding program at Knapp-Time strives to balance milk and type.

"Kevin has improved the genetics of his herd with an extensive flush program," wrote Dan and Connie Schweigert, Maple Lawn Farm, Tremont, Ill., in a letter of support for the couple. "They have bred many Excellent cows with lactation records exceeding 20,000 pounds milk."

In the first quarter, Knapp Time Hallmark Bessy-ET, Excellent-91%, made an honor roll record of 24,718—1,136—879 at 4-5 with a cheese yield equivalent of 3,035 lbs.

"Kevin and Cari have a very strong interest in the genetic development of their herd and have the results to show that it is working," said Eric Lyon, Lyon Jerseys, Toledo, Iowa, in a letter supporting their nomination.

With 80% of their young calves being heifers, the couple has a thriving merchandise business for breeding stock. Many of their home-bred bulls are sold to other dairies to be used for crossbreeding purposes. Cari cares for all the calves, as the Knapps place much importance on the care of these animals for the continued success of their dairy.

As for the future of their farm, they have considered the many different avenues provided by being a Registered Jersey farm, including bottling their own milk under the All-Jersey label. While they feel there is tremendous opportunity for this endeavor, the young couple is approaching this topic slowly, working through all their reservations and concerns before jumping into something abruptly.

Kevin and Cari are joined at home by their five children, Nathan, 7, Tara, 6, Angie, 4, Erica, 2, and Logan, 6 months, who are the future of Knapp-Time dairy. The proud parents hope to be able to instill the same love and excitement they have for the brown cows into their children, as they feel there is no better way to raise a family and teach valuable life lessons than on a Jersey dairy farm. They want to continue to uphold the breed and what it stands for while looking to the future for their herd and their young family.

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