

Kellers Named Progressive Dairy Producers

Kip and Robin Denniston-Keller of Byron, N.Y., will be honored by the National Dairy Shrine as the 2008 Progressive Dairy Producers in the small herd division on October 2, 2008, at the World Dairy Expo, Madison, Wis. The Kellers own and operate Den-Kel Jerseys, a herd of 90 Registered Jerseys™ in western New York.

Den-Kel Jerseys is nationally recognized for its strong production and genetics. The herd achieved a 2007 AJCA lactation average of 22, 418 lbs. milk, 1,030 lbs. fat, and 808 lbs. protein, ranking fourth for milk and ninth for fat among herds 40-79 cows. Following the August 2008 genetic evaluations, the herd is ranked 12th in the nation for Jersey Performance Index (JPI).

Though they both grew up in eastern New York, they became involved with Jerseys through different upbringings. Kip, a graduate of the State University of New York at Cobleskill, was raised on a Holstein farm where he housed his own small Jersey herd amongst the larger black and whites. While Robin grew up showing her Jersey 4-H projects, she gained valuable experience working at Dutch Hollow. After graduating from Cornell University, Robin then took a consulting position with High Lawn early in the couple's marriage.

Coming from diverse backgrounds, has enabled this young couple to overcome many changes to achieve the success they have today. The Kellers began Den-Kel Jerseys on Kip's family farm in Valatie, N.Y. Upon outgrowing the facilities, they moved their operation to a neighboring farm. Again in 1999, another change would occur, as the couple moved their herd across the state to the small town of Byron, where they began renting the facilities. Just recently the couple was able to purchase the facilities and own their own dairy.

The facilities are complete with a three-row free stall with a double-seven milking parlor.

While renting Kip and Robin were continually looking for ways to maintain a high level of production. The couple recognized that cow comfort could be improved while they were renting their facilities. With the approval of their landlord, they removed the mattresses and the stalls were converted to hold sand

bedding. The couple credits the sand with reducing the incidents of mastitis and enhancing cow comfort. A second modification to the barn included the removal of the solid side walls, which were replaced with a curtain system to allow for improved air flow and additional light. The final change to the barn was the recent addition of box fans and a misting system at the feed bunk to improve cow comfort during the summer months.



Robin and Kip Keller

The couple set goals early on to assist them in rising to high levels of production they wanted to obtain. As they have achieved or outgrown these goals, new goals have been established for the farm and herd to meet. The young couple credits establishing farm goals and having evaluation sessions as the success of their farm. These sessions occur while working side-by-side milking, fixing fence or while completing other everyday tasks. As a business they look at payment of their bills on time and utilizing cash discounts as a simple measure of meeting their financial goals.

Recognizing smaller dairies need to develop innovative management tools, they have developed a secondary revenue source by establishing their herd as a source of polled genetics. The additional revenue provides support when milk prices are low and assists in paying down debt. In total, they have sent more than 20 bulls into A.I., as a result of the high genetics and pooled genes in their herd.

After the August 2008 evaluation summaries were released, Den-Kel Paramount Mygent-P-ET ranks 16th on the Active A.I. Jersey Bulls List with a

JPI of +203 and a PTA of +1,659M, +61F, and +49P. Also present on national lists after the summaries is Den-Kel Impuls Julie Too, Very Good 87%, ranked on the Top 200 JPI Cow list with a JPI of +234. Den-Kel Jerseys is also home to 12 cows on the Top 1½ Percent list.

The pair also works side-by-side off the farm through community service activities. Robin was elected as director from the Second District of the American Jersey Cattle Association in June and is serving as the fundraising chair for the 2009 AJCA-NAJ Annual Meetings to be hosted in New York next summer, and also serves on The All American Jersey Sale Committee.

Kip is a past member of Columbia County DHI Association and New England Jersey Young Sires, both of which he served in leadership roles.

These young breeders are both active in the New York Jersey Cattle Club, where Robin is currently serving as president. Kip and Robin both value the time they offer to local dairy youth through coaching quiz bowl and hosting judging clinics on the farm.

In May, the couple traveled to the World Jersey Cattle Bureau Conference held on the Isle of Jersey. At the conference Robin contributed throughout the meetings with a paper and presentation as one of the International Young Jersey Educational Travel (JETA) Award recipients.

The Keller's accomplishments were also recognized by the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA) when they were awarded the 1999 Young Jersey Breeder Award.

The Progressive Dairy Producer award recognizes dairy producers 21-45 years old who have introduced and applied effective management and business practices that have helped to achieve a more profitable dairy business. Kip and Robin will receive a \$2,000 award to use for educational travel for being named a Progressive Dairy Producer

Past Jersey recipients include C.A. and Kirsten Russell, Yosemite Jersey Dairy, Hilmar, Calif. (2007); Scott Bohnert, Bohnert's Jerseys, East Moline, Ill. (2006); Leroy C. Clark and Michelle Wieghart, Cave Creek Jersey Farm, Wis. (2002), and Kelvin (Kelly) Moss, Mountain Shadow Dairy, Litchfield, Ariz. (2001).

Progressive Dairy Producer

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