

Dairy & Livestock

Junior Holstein members receive state recognition

FIFTEEN members of the Wisconsin Junior Holstein Association will be honored with Younger Member Recognition awards and 13 will receive 12 and Under Member awards during the group's annual convention in January. The meeting, hosted by Dodge County, is planned for Jan. 5-7 at the Holiday Inn in Fond du Lac.

Members competing for the YMR Award must be between ages 12 and 17, be a member of the county, state and national Holstein associations, and be active in Holstein activities as well as school and community activities.

The following members will receive YMR plaques at the state convention and a chance to represent Wisconsin at the National Holstein Convention in Knoxville, Tenn., in June:

Katie Virodorf, 14, of Viroqua, Vernon County; Kayla Wright, 15, of Watertown,

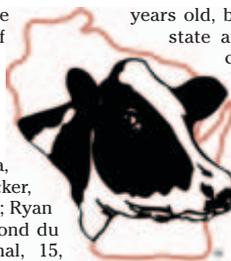
Jefferson County; Breinne Hendrickson, 14, of Belleville, Dane County; Vanna Herrmann, 16, of Cato, Manitowoc County; Jake Hoesly, 12, of Brodhead, Green County; Katie Peper, 14, of Centuria, Polk County; Macy Sarbacker, 14, of Verona, Dane County; Ryan O'Leary, 15, of Brandon, Fond du Lac County; Abbey Wethal, 15, of Brooklyn, Dane County; Jacob Brey, 16, of Sturgeon Bay, Door County; Frank Behling, 16, of Fox Lake, Dodge County; Kelly Lee, 16, of Johnson Creek, Jefferson County; Nicole Smith, 15, of Monticello, Green County; Kody Haag, 17, of Mt. Horeb, Dane County; and Carl Lippert, 16, of Pittsville, Wood County.

Members competing for the 12 and Under Member Award must be 10 to 12

years old, be a member of the county, state and national Holstein associations, and be active in Holstein activities as well as school and community activities.

The following members will receive trophies for this award at the state convention:

Jessica Pralle, Humbird; Adam Miles, Reedsville; Crystal Siemers-Peterman, Cleveland; Jordan Siemers, Cleveland; Elizabeth Sarbacker, Verona; Mackenzie Sarbacker, Paoli; Katherine Larson, Viroqua; Thomas Larson, Viroqua; Brooks Hendrickson, Belleville; Paige Hoesly, Brodhead; Amber Dammen, Argyle; Jessica James, Mineral Point; and Sean Brown, Dodgeville.



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MILLER CROPP HODORFF

To expand or not to expand?

My dad, brother and I milk 105 cows, raise 120 heifers and farm 250 acres. My brother and I would like to expand the herd to 200 cows, but Dad isn't sold on the idea. He is in his mid-50s and owes less than \$100,000 on the farm. We have to decide something soon because we have a lot of heifers due this spring. What would you suggest?

Hodorff: If you decide to grow to 200 cows, here are some suggestions:

Make sure your long-range plans include options to continue growing beyond 200 cows in the future as your equity grows.

You two sons/brothers need to find ways to bring \$250,000 of your own assets to the project. This \$250,000 could be cows, cash, etc. Do your projections, cash flows and long-term goals. It may be a little unreasonable to ask your father to foot the bill for this expansion. If you are not already an owner in the business, now is a good time to look at business arrangements.

Miller: Make an appointment with a dairy business consultant or Extension ag agent to investigate your options. Adequate planning and evaluation of multiple scenarios can allow you to make mistakes on paper rather than making an ill-advised investment.

Your plans should include: cost of investment; potential layout of facilities; analysis of livestock, feed, milking facilities, nutrient management and storage; and appropriate debt structure. This is likely a great time to address business transition between generations. Your question is more complex than having

excess heifers, which would aid in the expansion. You have many options available to you and your family. Good luck investigating which will be the best for all of you.

Cropp: Do not let the heifers force you into a premature decision! You are in the early stages of a longer-planning project than you think. First, you all need to develop and support a similar vision. When that is accomplished, use qualified advisers to study the cash-flow and profitability projections of multiple alternatives.

Research whether you and/or your brother qualify for Farm Service Agency Beginning Farmer Loans. Consider establishing an equal three-way partnership or limited liability corporation on just the dairy cattle and expanded facilities while renting the machinery and land from Dad for a while.

I encourage dairy producers to think about five systems when expanding: cow housing, the milking system, manure storage, feed storage and heifer raising. Do you have a plan for each of these systems if the herd expands?

Growing more corn

My wife, two teenage sons and I milk 80 cows and farm 100 acres. We grow all of our corn silage and haylage and buy baled hay and corn. The next-door neighbor asked if we want to rent his 80 acres. With rising corn prices, we're wondering if we're better off growing our own corn or buying it. We own our own planter, but we'd have to hire someone to harvest the corn. Please advise.

Hodorff: Some questions to ask: How much would rent be? What yields are expected? What are your plans for storing the corn? Is the land next door? Right now this may make sense with high corn prices as long as you don't have to invest in more equipment. When corn prices are lower, it may not always pencil out.

Also, having more land to spread your manure over is becoming more important. After gathering these figures

to make a budget, your answers should become clear.

Miller: With the current high corn prices, you are likely better off growing rather than buying corn for your dairy operation. Take into consideration the land rent and crop insurance costs to aid you in making this decision. Calculate the growing costs for corn including crop inputs, fuel, and a reasonable labor and equipment charge. Then add harvesting costs and crop insurance costs to determine your growing costs on a per-acre basis. Compare this number to your expected yield times local corn prices to determine the maximum amount of rent you could pay.

Your University of Wisconsin ag Extension agent can assist in determining harvesting costs.

Cropp: Do you have the necessary labor for farming another 80 acres? Do you have adequate storage for the corn grain? If the answer to these questions is yes, you need to develop a budget for an acre of corn on the proposed rental land. An example budget can be found at your local UW Extension Office or online at cdp.wisc.edu/crop%20enterprise.htm.

Research the soil fertility levels and reasonable yield expectations for this land. Compute all the variable costs including seed, fertilizer, pesticides, insurance, fuel, custom hire, repairs and interest. The fixed costs will include land rent, equipment, labor and management values.

The net returns per acre will help you decide if you want to start raising your own corn for grain.

AgriVision panel: Doug Hodorff, Fond du Lac County dairy farmer; Sam Miller, vice president of agricultural banking for M&I Bank; and Bob Cropp, Pepin County Extension agriculture agent. Send questions to WisconsinAgriculturist@farmprogress.com, 102 E. Jefferson St., P.O. Box 236, Brandon, WI 53919, or e-mail foleary@farmprogress.com.