

# Cumbrian herd secures top breeding accolade

Close attention to selective breeding is paying handsome dividends for one Cumbrian family, as **Jennifer MacKenzie** reports.

**T**he longevity of the 130-cow Wormanby Holstein herd enables up to 40 newly calved heifers to be sold each year, amounting to a third of the business's gross income.

The herd is run by Harry and Margaret Hodgson, with their son David and wife Louise, who are implementing a management regime which is pushing yields to over 10,000 litres.

In the short 20 years since the herd was first registered through grading up commercial cows, they have now earned the accolade of Holstein UK Master Breeder Award.

The Award was presented at the Northern Expo at Borderway, where they also won the overall reserve exhibitor bred award and first senior cow with Wormanby Leduc Anita 30, a 91pt EX93 mammary cow. They also took the production and inspection award with Primo Raider Celeste EX 94.

The herd was established at Wormanby Farm, Burgh-By-Sands, Carlisle, in 1972 and registered pedigree in 1985. In the early 1990s the Hodgsons began investing in renowned cow families each year. Among the best bought in families have been Marqi, Lustre, Dellia, Rolls and



The marketability of surplus heifers bred at Wormanby is important for David, Harry and Margaret Hodgson.

Celeste, but the Sandra family from one of the original graded up lines has also made its mark, with six EX Sandras milking in the herd and three 88pt second calvers or better.

## Home-bred

Although cow families are still purchased, 85% of the herd is now home bred. High type bulls, mostly Canadian and US, are used.

"As well as selecting sires for high type, we also place a lot of consideration on production, good butterfat and proteins. Marketability of our stock is also important as we sell around 40 surplus heifers a year," says David. This year the heifers have regularly made 2500gns a head to a top of more than 3000gns.

"We haven't gone down the numbers route because a big part of our income comes from sales of females," says Harry. The family relies on its own labour, apart from contractors.

"We have 130 cows in the herd making 160 calvings a year and so far we haven't felt the need to use sexed semen as we have been lucky in producing around 50% heifer calves," he adds.

However, by generating more youngstock than is needed as herd replacements gives the Hodgsons flexibility should they decide to milk more cows in future.

Recent AI sires used have been Bolivia Allen, Mr Sam, Shottle, Million, Mr Burns, Durham Ross, Sicy Knowledge, Baxter and Bolton.

To get the best production potential from the herd, diets have been formulated with Carrs Billington's nutritionist Gareth Brolly.

Over the last 12 months yields have been lifted by around 400 litres to a CIS recorded lactational average of 10,300 litres at 3.9 per cent butterfat and 3.13 per cent protein. Yields have risen by around 1100 litres in the last couple of years.

"The herd's genetics are coming through and while the TMR ration has remained similar for the last ten years, we are now placing less emphasis on grazed grass," says Harry.

"They are still out at grass during the summer months but we are now feeding TMR all year round," he adds.

## Production costings

■ ROLLING AVERAGE MILK YIELD:	10,014 litres/cow
■ ROLLING 12 MONTH MILK PRICE:	22.88ppl
■ ROLLING COW MARGIN:	£1566
■ ROLLING MARGIN PER LITRE:	15.64p
■ ROLLING PURCHASED FEED COST:	7.24ppl
■ FEED RATE:	0.33kg per litre.

"We're making better use of the cows' genetic potential with the type of diet they are being fed," said Gareth Brolly. "While the concentrate fed per cow has risen, it's small in relation to the increase in yield. It's down to the efficiency of feeding and breeding.

"We're looking at maximising energy intake and keeping feed protein levels as low as we can without jeopardising yield to help ensure good cow health and fertility.

"We're rationing to supply a high level of glucose energy in the cow's bloodstream firstly from home-grown barley and maize silage topped up with purchased dairy blend," he adds.

Maize has been grown at Wormanby for a decade or more on 14 ha (35 acres), now under plastic, to contribute a third of the forage element of the milkers' diet, the remainder being grass silage.

The cows are run as one group fed at M+28 litres and then concentrate is fed in the parlour to higher yielders.

The winter diet comprises first and second cut silage along with maize silage, straw, crimped barley, a specially-formulated dairy blend produced by Carrs Billington, plus standard dairy minerals. The blend is of a very high energy density including

## Award facts

HUK's prestigious Master Breeder Award is made annually to only a handful of herds.

Only home-bred milking animals are awarded points based on production, longevity and classification.

A herd which has won the award cannot be eligible again for ten years.

John Gribbon, HUK's head of field services and head classifier, said: "The Hodgsons' Wormanby herd qualified quite easily. They are worthy winners."



Cows are fed a TMR as one group for M+28 litres with high yielders topped up in the parlour.

## Herd rations

	High yielders	Mid yielders
<b>Animal details</b>		
Milk yield (kg)	45	35
Milk fat (g/100g)	3.7	3.9
Milk protein (g/100g)	3.1	3.2
<b>Feeding plan (kg/head/day)</b>		
1st cut silage	12	12
2nd cut	6	6
Maize silage	14	14
Straw	0.5	0.5
Barley – crimped	4.5	4.5
Glucos-Aid 17	7.2	3.4
Wormanby blend	5.5	5.5
Minerals	0.15	0.15
<b>Nutrients</b>		
DM intake (kg/d)	25.9	22.6
Forage DM (kg/d)	11.8	11.8
ME (M/D)	12.3	12.1
Protein (%DM)	17.0	16.5
<b>Cost per day (p/d)</b>	<b>371.9</b>	<b>294.0</b>

megalac, maize germ and wheat, with a high level of rumen bypass protein through the inclusion of Carrs' AminoMax protected protein with hipro soya and sugar beet pulp included to help maintain rumen stability.

The cows are fed an average 3.3 tonnes of concentrate which includes the home-grown crimped barley.

Costings are produced with Kingshay and while the year-on-year milk price is down by 2.7ppl on the new Arla contract – previously the milk was sold to DFB – feed rate per litre has only increased from 0.28kg to 0.33kg for a rise in milk yield of 430 litres a cow. Margin over concentrates per cow is running at 15.64ppl on a rolling 12-month milk price of 22.9p.

The summer ration is similar, with grazed grass replacing some of the silage element in the spring and early summer. However from the end of July they are fed the full winter ration.

In 2009, the cows were housed

from August at nights and there are plans to build a new cubicle house which will give the flexibility for the milkers to be housed at night year-round to maximise feed intakes.

Heifers are calving at two years old to two years three months and the ration helps them develop and milk at the same time as well as producing a very flat lactation curve.

Currently 80% of the cows are loose housed – an experiment tried 12 years ago which has continued.

"We have plans for a new 80 cubicle building. Cubicle design has improved and comfort will not be far behind the straw bedded yard," added Harry.

There are a good number of older cows in the herd with three cows' production hitting 100 tonnes of milk during the autumn of 2009.

Despite the number of older cows, the herd's cell count averages 164 while bactoscans run at an average 24.

# Sureflush™

the automated and complete cluster backflushing system



Giving you the right solution:

- Minimises bacterial cross infections
- Improves herd health and milk quality
- Automated cluster back-flushing saves labour
- Every cow- every milking
- Complete - whole cluster and milk tube
- Efficacy tested, and proven results
- Safe, simple, and reliable
- Suits most parlour systems.

For further information please contact

**GEA Farm Technologies Ltd**  
 Wylde Works, Watery Lane,  
 Bishopstrow, Warminster BA12 9HT  
 Telephone: 01985 216444  
 Fax: 01985 216692  
[info.agroserve@geagroup.com](mailto:info.agroserve@geagroup.com)

  
 agroserve  
 Quality Hygiene Solutions