

## Souvenirs from the 2008 Holstein Quebec Picnic

As per our tradition at the picnic, dairy producers were invited to sign on for the Valacta drawings. This year, the first prize was a copy of the **Agri-Lacta software**, sponsored by **Valacta** and **Siga Farm Software**, a value of \$800. The Agri-Lacta prize was initially won by Mr. Gaston Proulx, producer of Saint-Pierre de la Rivière Sud. Since he is already a satisfied user of the Siga-Lait software, Mr. Proulx declined his prize in favour of his collaborator **Mr. Richard Bessette**, who graciously handed it over to a producer friend, **Mr. Alexandre Loiselle**, of Sainte-Brigide-d'Iberville. (Middle picture)



Second drawing: the classic « Wide Bore – two tubes » milk meter, sponsored by **Tru-Test**, a value of \$450. Right picture: **Raymond Castonguay**, advisor, presents the milk-meter to the winner, **Mr. André Audet**, of Compton, who says: « I already have five milk meters of the same model. I presently wanted to buy a sixth! So, thanks a lot! »

This year, Valacta challenged visitors to try our daring « Cow Racetrack ». Four contestants had to quickly roll the rope to bring their cow to the finish line. The two first won a Valacta cap, the two last won a Valacta pen-marker combo. At the end of the day, Valacta had awarded about 145 caps and 180 pen-markers (several winners preferred the stylish pen).



*Thanks to Ferme A&R Boulet for this wonderful day!*

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Edited by: Annik Perron, Communication Manager and Michel Pouliot, writer-editor

Phone: 1 800-BON-LAIT, 514 459-3030 • Fax: 514 459-3020 • www.valacta.com

E-mail: Editor: info@valacta.com • Customer Service: service.clientele@valacta.com

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# Dairy Knowledge at your fingertips

valacta

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## Milk quality in Quebec Valacta, a team player within the dairy industry

Bertrand Farmer, agr., General Manager

Thanks to the constant work performed by its network of milk quality technicians (MQT) and dairy production technician (DPT), Valacta plays a key part in the improvement of milk quality across Quebec. This is more evident yet with the advent of the Canadian Quality Milk program.

Since 2006, in association with the Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec (FPLQ), Valacta's network of nine MQT provides quick support to clients with off limit results (somatic cells or bacteria). Part of their mandate is also to help increase producers' know-how in milk quality. Recently, as a part of the Canadian Quality Milk program (CQM), these specialized technicians gave 323 training sessions to 5651 persons. That's quite an accomplishment, and there is still more to come.

The implementation of the CQM program by the entire dairy sector in Quebec must be completed by August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012. By then, every dairy producer will have to document his procedures, and the corrective measures adopted in order to be certified. Valacta's milk quality technicians, as well as specially trained dairy production technicians, will provide workshops across Quebec to help producers with the technical implementation at the barn. They will then act as validators on behalf of FPLQ.

For their part, thanks to a grant from MAPAQ, organic dairy producers will benefit from a special project aimed at improving milk quality.

So, until 2012 and beyond, the Valacta network will keep supporting dairy producers in their efforts to improve milk quality, by playing our part day after day as a team player within this large action plan of our dairy industry. This is another fine example of *dairy knowledge at your fingertips*.

## Atlantic Provinces CQM update

### New Brunswick

NB is currently working towards mandatory dates for both program implementation and time temperature recorders. NB currently has 51 registered CQM producers, with many others working towards their validation.

### Prince Edward Island

CQM became mandatory for PEI producers on August 1, 2007. Currently, 179 producers are registered with the program, or just over 80%. Producers that are not validated receive a levy reduction of \$0.50 per hectolitre on milk shipped in the month.

### Nova Scotia

NS producers are on target to meet their August 1, 2008 validation deadline. At the end of June, 219 farms had been validated, of which 102 are CQM Registered.

### Newfoundland

NL has been registering producers since 2004. CQM registration is mandatory by August 1, 2009. NL has a total of 34 producers. All have been trained in the CQM program and 18 have been registered.



## A wonderful picnic!

Saturday, July 19, Ferme A&R Boulet, of Saint-François de la Rivière du Sud, in collaboration with the Montmagny-L'Islet-Kamouraska Club and Holstein-Québec, welcomed some 3000 visitors at the annual Holstein Picnic. See page 4.

## Summary

Profitability Report

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Holstein Quebec Picnic

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# The Profitability Report: money-making information for you!

René Roy, agr., agroeconomist, R&D Valacta

Whether he aims to be an elite breeder, or just wants to fill his quota, a dairy producer is first of all a business manager who needs to develop his farm in a profitable fashion. This is why Valacta offers you the herd's Profitability Report every year.

### Why this report?

The goal is simple: to determine the level of benefit of each of your cows since birth. By setting this information per day of life, individual cows can be compared. The average of individual results then provides a snapshot of the global herd performance. You can also compare your herd with other farms in the province with the percentile rank. This tool is quite useful to gauge the impact of your reproductive strategy, the effects of your breeding program or, simply, your approach to milk production (volume and components).

### How do we calculate the profit per day of life?

Before considering actual results, it can be useful to look at the items included in the calculation. Two types of information are used: key data specific to your herd and standard reference values common to all herds.

Information specific to each cow includes: age at first calving, milk yield and components, calving interval and drying off period for each completed cycle<sup>1</sup>. This is where your cows influence the end result.

The other factors are standardized values: price paid for components, rearing costs at 24 months, cost for every extra day before first calving, all the daily basic costs for a cow in lactation<sup>2</sup>, feeding costs for each kg of butterfat produced, daily costs for housing and feeding a dry cow and, finally, cost of financing the quota. All of these values are established from average results available at Valacta or in the Agritel data base<sup>3</sup>. These standard values enable us to consider all cows on the same footing, without bias in case of higher actual feed costs in your region, or because an older barn is making work organisation less efficient, etc. In 2008, we revised our calculation methods and updated our reference values. This might explain part of the difference between current and last year's results.

So, the data on the report will not be a perfect image of your reality, but it will enable you to evaluate your cows –and management– in relation to the average.

### The tool's limitations

A word of caution before beginning your interpretation of the Profitability Report: only the cows that have completed at least one lactation in the herd – and that are still present when the report is created – will contribute to calculation of the average. First lactation heifers appear with their rearing cost (as "negative profit") while all the cows that have been culled during the last year are excluded. So, part of the animals that have contributed to milk production in the previous 12 months will not appear on this report. In a well balanced herd, we should expect about 70% of actual cows contributing to the herd averages. A lower proportion will limit the accurate interpretation of the data.

## Interpreting results

### Interpretation is done on three levels

- 1- **Global herd result:** enables you to see if the combination between rearing, productivity and herd demography is profitable. This is where you can measure the impact of a management strategy aimed at longer cow life.
- 2- **Results by lactation group:** enables you to analyze data for each generation of cows and to observe the evolution from one group to the next. Examples: heifers completing their first lactation in 2008 managed to reimburse their rearing costs, while the previous group did not: great! Your rearing and selection program is doing fine! Cows in their 3<sup>rd</sup> lactation and over are super profitable, but there are almost none left in the herd: you will need to examine culling reasons and act rapidly on animal comfort!
- 3- **Herd percentile rank:** enables you to compare your herd average to the rest of the province. A high percentile rank for age at first calving means that heifers calve earlier than the provincial average. If the percentile rank for profit per day of life tends to diminish with advancing lactations, this means that cow productivity increase is slower than the average (genetic potential? management? disease? calving interval? drying off period longer than average?...).

The profitability report is a "financial" portrait of your herd at this point in time. Do you consider this portrait satisfactory? Talk it over with your Valacta advisor.

### Profit per day of life according to production and longevity

	Holstein Averages (Quebec 2008)	My herd	
		Actual	Objective
Milk (kg/cow/year)	8 622		
Butterfat (% - kg/cow/year)	3.81 – 328		
Protein (% - kg/cow/year)	3.23 – 278		
Calving interval (days)	427		
Age of heifers at first calving (months)	27.6		
% cows in first lactation	32.5		
Longevity (% 3 <sup>rd</sup> lactation and +)	39.8		
Cull rate (%)	36.4		
Profit per cow at 1 <sup>st</sup> calving (\$/cow) <sup>4</sup>	-2350		
Profit/day of life – End 1 <sup>st</sup> lact. (\$/d)	-0.57		
Profit/day of life – End 2 <sup>nd</sup> lact. (\$/d)	0.84		
Profit/day of life – End 3 <sup>rd</sup> lact. (\$/d)	2.27		
Profit/day of life – Herd (\$/d)	0,84		

Source: Valacta database

<sup>1</sup> A lactation cycle begins at calving and ends at the next calving  
<sup>2</sup> Including: vet, breeding, dairy products, salaries, amortization and interests  
<sup>3</sup> Agritel is the database of the Fédération des groupes conseils agricoles du Québec  
<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the heifer production cost at the birth of her calf

**THIS FALL'S REMINDER**  
**AUTUMN MILK**  
 Don't wait until it's too late: now is the time to make sure that herd feeding is optimal, in order to benefit from extra production days!