



INTERVIEW

By JEFF GUNN, Atlantic Regional Manager, Valacta



Sunrise Dairy Ltd., Olive and Jeff Greening, Musgravetown, Newfoundland

Top Herd Performance Index in Newfoundland



Olive and Jeff Greening from Sunrise Dairy Ltd., NL

Q1 TELL ME A BIT ABOUT YOUR FARM/HERD. HISTORY, EVOLUTION OF OPERATION, ETC.

Olive and Jeff: "In 1994, we purchased our first quota and started milking 60 cows in a tie-stall operation. In 1999, we purchased our (Jeff's) father's quota and herd, moving to a larger tie-stall barn housing 86 stalls and keeping the prefix JeffreyDale. We raised some heifers and purchased the remaining we needed. In 2005, we built a free-stall facility and purchased more quota and cows, all the while focusing on genetics and nutrition. As soon as genomics became available, we started testing all heifers born on the farm, even though the industry was still unsure and still learning about genomics. We felt it could help wean out the less productive animals at an early age, helping with heifer raising cost. It also helped us build a better breeding program, focusing on longevity and profitability. We transferred our prefix to our children's names JessieJoe and worked with HC to register the entire herd. In 2008, we built an extension on to the free-stall barn, making room for a larger milking herd and designating a special needs area for our far-off and close-up dry cows. This expansion brought the herd to 200 head. We continued to raise heifers and built a calf barn and later a heifer barn to house them all. Living on an island like Newfoundland, we had constraints on purchasing good quality cows so there was a lot emphasis put on raising top notch heifers which, in turn, would help us have a better milking herd for the future."

Q2 WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY GOALS FOR YOUR FARM? AREAS OF FOCUS?

Olive and Jeff: "Our ongoing goal is to be the most profitable family farm possible, while balancing the herd's success with that of our loyal family and employees. We also focus on perfecting the dry cow management program, which we believe leads to a trouble-free and profitable lactation. Keeping the milk herd comfortable, healthy, and contented is very important and will ultimately improve and optimize our herd performance. Another key goal for us is optimizing forage quality and quantity by continuing to clear land each year, while realizing that buying excellent quality forage for the milk herd is also a must, if you can't produce it".

Q3 WHAT FACTORS/ MANAGEMENT PRACTICES DO YOU ATTRIBUTE TO BEING A TOP-PRODUCING/PERFORMING HERD?

Olive and Jeff: "We never stop learning and stay persistent at all times. We are constantly adopting new technologies, but never forget that the cows still need the attention and the hands-on approach of the farmer. We surround ourselves with knowledgeable, successful companies and people to aid in our own success. We believe that today's decisions are tomorrow's results, always planning and always improving whenever possible. We always treat decision-making in a professional way because farming is a business. Finally, we treat employees well, never asking them to do anything that we would not do ourselves."

Q4 WHAT DO YOU FEEL ARE YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGES?

Olive and Jeff: "Finding dedicated, qualified employees. Also, our location - living on an island can be challenging and expensive at times. Whenever there is an equipment issue or breakdown, it can mean days before parts arrive."

Q5 WHY ARE YOU A VALACTA CUSTOMER? WHAT DO YOU NEED AND EXPECT FROM VALACTA TO HELP YOU MEET THESE CHALLENGES AND ENSURE THE FUTURE SUCCESS OF YOUR OPERATION?

Olive and Jeff: "It seemed to be the next logical step. We made improvements in all the areas we felt we could, but the next step was that we needed more information. Years of collecting individual samples and entering them manually just for SCC was very time consuming with little information obtained. We knew we had areas of weakness and we felt Valacta could help us with that... udder health, transition, maintain milk records. Having a non-biased, practical opinion from Stirling (our Valacta Advisor) whenever we need it, is beneficial. We need Valacta to continue to help us improve. We also like to see Valacta visiting more often in NL with workshops, when the opportunity arises. We can see Valacta being helpful to the NL industry, if it could be around more." ♦



"Our ongoing goal is to be **the most profitable family farm possible**, while balancing the herd's success with that of our loyal family and employees."

- Olive and Jeff Greening