

Wayside Dairy: Good people important to success

“NorthStar offers really good people, not just good products. The people on farm are very helpful and professional. They care about our success,” said Dan and Jeremy Natzke of Wayside Dairy, LLC. Because of that, the Natzkes have trusted NorthStar Cooperative for many aspects of their Greenleaf, Wisconsin dairy since 1970. Along with using the Select Mating Service (SMS) and Program for Genetic Advancement (PGA) for many years, the farm started using large herd technician service in 2001.

Jason Ossmann and Jim Neuser, NorthStar A.I. technicians work together to provide reproduction services for the 1,230-cow Holstein herd. When asked what all they do for the farm, Jeremy simply said, “Jim and Jason get all our cows pregnant for us, or at least those that can be pregnant.”

Getting cows pregnant at Wayside Dairy includes service 363 days a year. Together Jason and Jim are responsible for locking up cows, tail-chalking, insemination and working with the dairy management software to enter data and generate reports.

Averaging a 30 percent conception rate, the breeding program at Wayside Dairy begins with breeding based on tail-chalk results. If cows need to be timed A.I., a Presynch/Ovsynch program is used in which the first breeding is between 74 – 81 days. Cows with three or more services and cystic cows are moved into a CIDR synchronization program.

“In any business, you have to have a passion for what you do,” stated Dan. “Jim and Jason care about what they do. They are open to trying new ideas to continually improve our reproduction program,” added Jeremy.

One recent change to the reproduction program at Wayside Dairy is the use of gender SELECTed™ semen. “Last January we started using sexed semen (gender SELECTed) because Jason and Bob (Sabo, SMS evaluator) encouraged us to and there were several producers in the area having good success,” noted Jeremy.

Currently all heifers showing good heats are bred with gender SELECTed semen on first and second service, which averages 2.2 services per conception, compared to 1.9 with conventional semen. To date, gender SELECTed semen has resulted in 45 heifer calves and only three bulls. “If Jason doesn’t feel the heifer is in good heat, he won’t breed her with gender SELECTed semen,” said Jeremy.

While Jason and Jim are responsible for much of the reproduction success at Wayside Dairy, nutrition and cow comfort also play big roles. “Foot health is critical in tail chalk herds,” noted Jim. “If a cow is uncomfortable on her feet, she won’t show good heat activity.”

Every six weeks a consulting meeting with the veterinarian, nutritionist and several other industry professionals is held. “At the meeting we review key performance indicators which our veterinarian provides,” noted Dan. “We use these meetings to monitor the herd’s progress and see if we’re meeting our goals,” added Jeremy.

Along with technician service, Wayside Dairy also utilizes the SMS. “SMS helps out the next generation of cattle. You can see the improvement in type,” commented Jeremy. “Bob (Sabo, SMS Evaluator) knows cows and that’s huge. He has a good track record and we



Dan and Jeremy Natzke count on NorthStar technicians to manage the reproduction program.

feel fortunate to have him mating cows here,” added Dan.

Sire selection at Wayside Dairy starts with sorting bulls based on a formula Dan and Charlie Will, Select Sires, Manager, Holstein Sire Selection, developed several years ago. The formula includes criteria for daughter pregnancy rate and somatic cell count, as well as milk, udder composite and foot and leg composite scores. After each sire summary the Select Sires’ lineup is sorted based on this formula, and then qualified bulls are included in the SMS report.

“We use a bull for a couple of months and then evaluate their conception,” noted Dan and Jeremy. “If the conception of a particular bull is below 27 percent, he’s removed from the breeding program.”

Wayside Dairy initially began using NorthStar’s professional technicians because of time and labor constraints, however it’s the expertise and service they receive that has become the real key. “We have a lot to do, so we let the professionals take care of the breeding program,” noted Dan and Jeremy. “Jim and Jason do a good job. They work together to cover the needs of the farm. NorthStar is a piece of what helps us be successful. They care about helping us reach our goals.”

Jim and Jason are very interested in helping Wayside Dairy be successful and appreciate the excellent relationship that has been established. “Dan and Jeremy are truly great people to work with. They make my job very enjoyable each and every day,” noted Jason. ★



Jim Neuser (left), 2006 Technician Super Achiever and Jason Ossmann (right), 2003 Technician Super Achiever are responsible for reproduction at the farm’s 1,230-cow herd.