

Lardinois Farms, LLC



With a 500+ cow dairy, 1,400 acres and a custom chopping business Lardinois Farms, LLC just didn't have the necessary time to dedicate to reproduction, so they started working with Dan Zernicke, a NorthStar Cooperative A.I. technician.

"Dan does the tail chalking and breeding in our herd and it's the best thing we've ever done," said Randy Lardinois, co-owner of the Pulaski, Wisconsin dairy. "As we expanded we found we had too many other things to do. NorthStar had better priced bulls and very good service, so we switched about five years ago from breeding our own to using Dan."

Responsible for the breeding program Zernicke is at the herd every morning to walk pens, check for heats and breed. The reproduction program at Lardinois Farms starts with a voluntary waiting period of 55 days. Cows are tail chalked and bred on observation. After 70 days in milk if they are showing no visual signs of heat, cows are enrolled in a modified Ovsynch program.

"They used to run a 48-hour Co-synch, which meant cows were bred on Thursday morning," noted Jay Krull, NorthStar Cooperative Reproductive Solutions Specialist. "About two years ago we switched to the Ovsynch 56 program, where we give the GnRH shot Thursday afternoon and breed on Friday morning. This is one of the biggest changes that have helped this herd reach a 20 percent pregnancy rate."

Lardinois agreed, "When we extended the Ovsynch program by one day we saw an increase in conception."

Sire selection for the cow herd focuses on improving feet and legs and udders. Special attention is also given to pedigree, so there are no more than two sons from any one sire used. Current service sires include Blitz Jinx, Artic, Grand, Flash, Moscow, Flint and Lyle to name a few. Proven bulls are used on the first two services with young sires from Select Sires' Program for Genetic Advancement (PGA) young sire sampling program used on third and subsequent services.

In addition to working with the cow herd, Zernicke also breeds the Lardinois heifers which are custom raised from six months to freshening at Bankers Scenic View Farms in Black Creek. Heifers are bred with gender SELECTed™ semen first and second service and conventional semen is used after that based on recommendations from the Select Mating Service (SMS).

"We started using gender SELECTed semen right away because we wanted to increase our numbers," said Lardinois. "About 50 percent of our heifers are confirmed pregnant to gender SELECTed semen and we're running 95 percent females when they calve. We are happy with the results."

Along with reproduction services Lardinois Farms uses AntelBio for Johnes and Salmonella Dublin testing. Working with their veterinarian Dr. Jack Hansen with Valley Vet Clinic in Seymour, all cows are blood tested between 20 – 27 days in milk and samples are sent to AntelBio. When test results are available they

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are entered into Dairy Comp 305 and management steps are put into place.

Cows that come back with a strong Johnes positive test are allowed to complete their lactation and are then sold. Cows with a weak positive Johnes test result are bred back and tested again for Johnes the next lactation.

"We recently changed our program to keep high Johnes positive cows from going dry and getting in the dry cow barn," said Lardinois, "since that's the easiest place to spread the disease."

"NorthStar offers quality bulls with a good supply of semen," noted Lardinois, "along with a knowledgeable technician and quality relief help. We're happy with the work NorthStar does here. Making the switch from breeding our own cows to letting someone else do it is one of the best decisions we've made." ☆