



Meekhofs Repeat as National Winners

Top honors for the 2001 National Dairy Quality Awards (NDQA) went to Meekhof Dairy, McBain, Michigan. The award was presented October 2 at World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin.

This isn't the first time Ken and Ruby Meekhof have been honored for their milk quality achievements. The Meekhofs captured the national award in the 1998 NDQA contest, and followed up a year later with top honors for the Midwest Region.

According to Ken, "Getting to the top level of quality was the hard part. Staying there is relatively easy as long as you stick to a few basics."

Meekhof Dairy was nominated for this year's award by Dr. Jeffrey Erdman, Airport Animal Clinic, Cadillac, Michigan. "Meekhof Dairy is marked by excellence that is consistent year after year," says Dr. Erdman. "Excellent management has resulted in milk of the highest quality and sets a high standard for our dairy industry."

The Meekhof's 143-cow herd averaged 25,580 lb. of milk, 793 lb. of protein and 1,083 lb. of fat for a 12 month period. The somatic cell count (SCC) averaged just 49,000 and the standard plate count averaged 1,167. Cows are housed in freestalls with sand bedding. When cows come into the parlor, the udders are brushed off by hand, predipped, and dried with individual paper towels. Postmilking teat dipping and dry cow therapy is also practiced. Individual cow SCC testing is conducted through DHIA. One of the Meekhof's best monthly DHIA tests had a weighted average SCC of 32,000 with 94% of the cows under 100,000.

Now in its eighth year, the NDQA recognizes dairy producers and their families who do an outstanding job of producing high quality milk every day on U.S. dairy farms. NDQA is sponsored by the [National Mastitis Council](#), [Westfalia-Surge](#), [Dairy Today](#), [AgDay TV](#), and [World Dairy Expo](#).

Dairy farms are nominated for the award by professionals in the dairy industry who work with producers, such as dairy plant field representatives, veterinarians, DHI supervisors, or extension personnel. This year, about 50 dairy operations from 16 states were nominated. Four regional winners were selected from those nominated. In addition, merit winners from each region were also recognized, based on herd size (fewer than 100 cows, 100 to 499 cows, and 500 or more cows). In addition to milk quality indicators such as somatic cell count, bacteria count, and incidence of mastitis, the farms were also judged on overall herd health and management practices which are implemented on the farm. Because the program has established a reputation for excellence, nominators typically submit just the very best operations from their areas for consideration.

The 2001 NDQA winners are listed below:

National Winner and Midwest Regional Winner

Meekhof Dairy, Ken and Ruby Meekhof, McBain, Michigan

nominated by: Jeffrey Erdman, Airport Animal Clinic, Cadillac, Michigan

herd size: 143

production 25,580 (2X)

average SCC: 49,000 (low 30,000; high 80,000)

Midwest Region

Merit winner:

Uhlenhopp Dairy, Philip and Carol Uhlenhopp, Sumner, Iowa

nominated by: Charles Kottke, AMPI, Arlington, Iowa

herd size: 45

production: 24,069 (2X)

average SCC: 72,000 (low 39,000; high 97,000)

Northeast Region

Regional winner:

Whittier Farms, John, Janice, Wayne and Todd Whittier, Sutton, Massachusetts
nominated by: Lennart Petersson, IBA, Inc, Millbury, Massachusetts
herd size: 120
production: 23,826 (2X)
average SCC: 85,000 (low 55,000; high 130,000)

Merit winners:

Bennett Farms, Inc., John Bennett, Bloomfield, New York
nominated by: Sara Gillette, Upstate Farms Co-op, Leroy, New York
herd size: 85
production: 25,397 (2X)
average SCC: 80,000 (low 38,000; high 180,000)

Magnan Bros. Dairy, Inc., Henry, Loretta, Joseph, Karen, Martin, Susan, Mark and Peter Magnan, Fairfield, Vermont
nominated by: Diane Bothfeld, St. Albans Cooperative Creamery, Inc, St. Albans, Vermont
herd size: 515
production: 26,500 (2X)
average SCC: 138,000 (low: 66,000; high: 220,000)

Southeast Region

Regional winner:

Crater's Dairy, Johnny and Jeanie Crater, Woodlawn, Virginia
nominated by: Gary Ashford, Dairy Farmers of America, Independence, Virginia
herd size: 30
production: 22,875 (2X)
average SCC: 116,000 (low 26,000; high 188,000)

Merit winner:

Green Hills Dairy, LLC, David and Kenneth Hooley, Amelia, Virginia
nominated by: Dale Gardner, Virginia State Dairymen's Association, Harrisonburg, Virginia
herd size: 140
production: 22,182 (2X)
average SCC: 159,000 (low < 100,000; high 250,000)

West Region

Regional winner:

Upper Valley Holsteins, Inc., Andy Wick, Austin, Colorado
nominated by: Kay Blackburn, Dairy Farmers of America
herd size: 305
production: 31,000 (3X)
average SCC: 137,000 (low 114,000; high 157,000)

Merit winners:

Pleasant Pastures, Keith Fagernes, Rochester, Washington
nominated by: Norman Hansen, Northwest Dairy Association
herd size: 72
production: 22,287 (2X)
average SCC: 45,000 (low 32,000; high 59,000)

McCatharn Dairy, John McCatharn, Albuquerque, New Mexico
nominated by: Richard Patton, Dairy Nutritionist
herd size: 1,059
production: 23,586 (2X)
average SCC: 188,000 (low 167,000; high 205,000)

Click on the links below to read the articles about the national and regional NDQA winners, published in the October issue of Dairy Today magazine.

Staying on Top *Meekhof Dairy, National Winner and Midwest Regional Winner*

Complete, Comprehensive and Consistent *Whittier Farms, Northeast Regional Winner*

Patience, Patience, Patience *Crater's Dairy, Southeast Regional Winner*

Quality Goes With the Job *Upper Valley Holsteins, West Regional Winner*