Recipients of the 2012 National Dairy Quality Awards (NDQA) were announced during the National Mastitis Council (NMC) 52nd Annual Meeting, January 27 - 29, 2013, in San Diego, California.

Now in its 19th year, the NDQA program's goal is to honor dairy producers from across the United States who have successfully placed top priority on producing milk of the highest quality. NMC, Hoard's Dairyman, Merial, GEA Farm Technologies, Ecolab Inc., IBA Inc., Select Sires and Elanco sponsored the awards.

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 and Extension personnel. Nearly 200 dairy farms were nominated in 2012.

Finalists from this year's program were judged by milk quality experts who looked at quality indicators, such as somatic cell count, bacteria count and incidence of mastitis. Applications were also evaluated for milking routine, systems of monitoring udder health, protocols for detecting and treating clinical and subclinical cases of mastitis, record keeping, strategies for overall herd health and welfare, and adherence to drug use regulations.

Platinum, Gold and Silver winners were designated from the group of finalists.

Top-rated Platinum winners, honored during the NMC Annual Meeting, are pictured below. Scroll down or click here for photos and brief bios.

For a complete list of all Silver, Gold, and Platinum winners and nominators, click here.

Read the "round table discussion" article from the January 10, 2013 issue of Hoard's Dairyman, featuring the seven NDQA Platinum winners and their day-to-day strategies to produce high quality milk [click here].
The 315 cows housed at Beattie Farms, Holton, Mich., are producing 25,500 pounds of milk each year, with an average somatic cell count of under 80,000. Don Beattie, owner of the operation, is pictured at the left with herdsperson Jennifer Saxton. Beattie Farms’ standard plate count averaged just 1,080 during its application year. The farm has a double-16, rapid-exit, herringbone parlor. The cows lie on either free stalls bedded with sand or a bedded pack. Sand is added to the free stalls once each week and the alleys are scraped twice daily. In the bedded-pack area, chopped straw is added twice per day. “They work very hard to make sure they are shipping the best quality milk possible, consistently throughout the year,” said nominator Ben Chapin of Michigan Milk Producers Association.

Tollgate Farm is owned by Jim and Karen Davenport, of Ancramdale, N.Y. The Davenports currently own 64 Holsteins and Ayrshires, along with 14 dry cows and young stock. Their Holsteins average 24,000 pounds of milk, with the Ayrshires at nearly 15,000 pounds per year. In 2011-2012, their somatic cell count reached only 67,000 in its worst month, averaging 46,750 for the year. The cows are in a tie stall barn bedded with kiln-dried pine sawdust. Nominator Ruth McCuin of Agri-Mark Cooperative said, “This farm has been Agri-Mark's top-quality producer for the last six years. Jim and Karen know that producing quality milk adds value to their milk check, benefits cow health and makes them better producers.” Pictured are Jim and Karen (center), with daughters Laura (left) and Kristen (right).

As repeat winners, the Dellar family maintains milk quality success in their herd with over 30,000 pounds (a 3,000-pound jump from last year’s winning application) of milk from 200 milking cows. Ryan and Charina Dellar are pictured with their children, Gavin and Carmen, near their Harrisville, Mich. facility. This year, Dellar Dairy lowered its somatic cell count from 53,000 to 43,333 as a 12-month average. Cattle are housed in a sand-bedded free stall barn where alleys are scraped three times per day - during each milking. The herd is milked in a double-10 parallel parlor. “Ryan and Charina pay close attention to even the finest details while constantly researching and implementing innovative ideas,” says nominator Preston Cole with Michigan Milk.

An 87,000 SCC put Circle K Farms in the 2012 National Dairy Quality Awards winners’ circle. Their farm currently has 250 Holstein cows that are milked in a double-16 parallel parlor. In the parlor, milking technicians wear gloves and follow a written protocol, with five of the six milkers being family members. The Kartes’ parlor records daily milk weights and uses conductivity to detect mastitis. Circle K is owned by Brad and Debby Kartes and achieves 24,000 pounds of milk per cow in West Branch, Mich. In addition to low SCC, the farm’s standard plate count averaged 1,170 in the 12-month period of the
Another familiar winner is the Michigan State University Dairy Field Lab, overseen by Bob Kreft. The Lansing, Mich. farm houses nearly 175 Holsteins and produces over 25,000 M. On this university dairy, students rotate through shifts in the farm's double-7 parlor. The herd's somatic cell count averaged 91,333 for the 12-month period, with a standard plate count of 1,417 during the same time. Pictured are (Front row, L to R) Dave Brady, MMPA Member representative (nominator); Todd Worden, Chelsey Clemens, Cora Watts, Shelbie Britton and Bruce Kurzhals. (Middle) Dr. Ted Ferris, Jacob Bontrager, Steven Openlander, Rob West, Randy Bontrager and Bob Story. (Back) Chad Geoit, Calvin Meyer, Jared Lyzenga, Michael Frazee, Jake Gillis, Fred Openlander and Bob Kreft, farm manager.

The site called “Farm 2” at True Farms, Perry, N.Y., is owned by Jeff, Brian and Glenn True, and it houses 380 Holstein and Brown Swiss cows, which averages nearly 26,000 M and a 78,000 SCC. Pictured are (Front, L to R) Trenten and Taryn True. (Back) Andrea, Brad, Stacia, Tucker, Jeff and Chris True; Noemi and Zeferina Garcia; Diane and Brian True. They milk in a double-10 parallel parlor and cows lie on sand-bedded free stalls with bedding added twice each week. Farm 2 has rubber belting in the entire feed alley and pushes up feed 12 times per day. Donna Walker, nominator from Dairylea Cooperative, says, “True Farms does an exceptional job balancing the production of high-quality milk. They thoughtfully create protocols and follow them for consistent results.”

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Overall Results from the 2012 National Dairy Quality Awards Program

2012 NDQA Platinum Winners

Don Beattie, Holton, Michigan
Nominated by: Ben Chapin, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Jim and Karen Davenport, Ancramdale, New York
Nominated by: Ruth McGuin, Agri-Mark, Inc.

Ryan and Charina Dellar, Harrisville, Michigan
Nominated by: Preston Cole, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Bradley, Robert and Deborah Kartes, West Branch, Michigan
Nominated by: Preston Cole, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Bob Kreft, Lansing, Michigan
Nominated by: Dave Brady, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Jeff, Brian and Glenn True, Perry, New York
Nominated by: Donna Walker, Dairylea Co-op.

2012 NDQA Gold Winners

Tim Berry and Dale Armbrustmacher, Fowler, Michigan
Nominated by: Andrew Rupprecht, Michigan Milk Producers Association
Jeremy Beebe, Whittemore, Michigan
Nominated by: Preston Cole, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Mark Boehm, Rawson, Ohio
Nominated by: Jeff Rohlf, Dairy Farmers of America

Ron Brooks, Waupaca, Wisconsin
Nominated by: Lynn Thornton, Grande Cheese Company

Brad Crandall, Battle Creek, Michigan
Nominated by: Elyse Wilcox, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Gordon Dick, McBain, Michigan
Nominated by: Preston Cole, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Randy and Cindy Dragt, Howard City, Michigan
Nominated by: Kendra Kissane, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Randy and Becky Dreier, Norwalk, Wisconsin
Nominated by: Bob Zielsdorf, Swiss Valley Farms

Larry and Nancy, Brent and Polly, Ross and Vicky Greden, Altura, Minnesota
Nominated by: Dale Heintz, Land O'Lakes, Inc.

Andy and Laura Hecht, Cumberland, Wisconsin
Nominated by: Dave Nyberg, Associated Milk Producers, Inc.

Timothy and Janice Mater, Deckerville, Michigan
Nominated by: Kristin Rawlings, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Duane and Janet Molhoek, Falmouth, Michigan
Nominated by: Preston Cole, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Charles and Julie Nelkie, and Abigail O'Farrell, West Branch, Michigan
Nominated by: Preston Cole, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Darius and Sherry Simler, Pearl City, Illinois
Nominated by: David Bergemann, Lena Veterinary Clinic

Edward, Clara, Carl and William Stakenas, Free Soil, Michigan
Nominated by: Ben Chapin, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Philip and Carol Uhlenhopp, Sumner, Iowa
Nominated by: Brian Gomer, IBA Inc.

Brent, Nancy and Tyler Wilson, Carson City, Michigan
Nominated by: Steve Lehman, Michigan Milk Producers Association

2012 NDQA Silver Winners

Nathaniel Barron, Dansville, New York
Nominated by: Walker, Dairylea Co-op

Tim, Laura and Ross Blotz, Dodgeville, Wisconsin
Nominated by: Roger Dingbaum, Associated Milk Producers, Inc.

Michael Bosscher, McBain, Michigan
Nominated by: Preston Cole, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Mark Diemer, McBain, Michigan
Nominated by: Preston Cole, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Philip Fisher, Fort Jennings, Ohio
Nominated by: Jeff Rohlf, Dairy Farmers of America

Jim and Steve Fontaine, Strykersville, New York
Nominated by: Sara Gillette, Upstate Niagara Co-op, Inc.

George Haier, Eden, New York
Nominated by: Robert Herren, Upstate Niagara Co-op, Inc.

Craig, Barb, Tom and Rob Harkins, Wyoming, New York
Nominated by: Sara Gillette, Upstate Niagara Co-op, Inc.

Curt, Maren and Jeremy Holst, Lake City, Minnesota
Nominated by: Don Schweisthal, Land O'Lakes, Inc.

Nick, Linda and Kenny Hurliman, Cloverdale, Oregon
Nominated by: Bryan Gibson, Tillamook Cheese

Paul Kehl, Waterloo, Wisconsin
Nominated by: Joshua Luth, Foremost Farms USA

Timothy Klahn, West Valley, New York
Nominated by: Robert Herren, Upstate Niagara Co-op, Inc.

Robert Koithan, North Tonawanda, New York
Nominated by: Donna Walker, Dairylea Co-op

Brad Krantz, Prescott, Michigan
Nominated by: Dave Clark, Dairy Farmers of America

Ron, Beth and Kevin Litwiller, Perrinton, Michigan
Nominated by: Steve Lehman, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Joe Machado, Hanford, California
Nominated by: Arvid Fristad, Land O'Lakes, Inc.

Mike, Cheryl and Brian Meier, Glen Haven, Wisconsin
Nominated by: Jim Schmitz, Swiss Valley Farms

Andrew Odeen, Black River Falls, Wisconsin
Nominated by: Bob Hoeritz, Associated Milk Producers, Inc.

Arne and John Peterson, Lena, Wisconsin
Nominated by: Tom McCaulley, Land O'Lakes, Inc.

Edward Rau, Winchester, Ohio
Nominated by: David Moore, Dairy Farmers of America

Mark and Robert Rau, West Branch, Michigan
Nominated by: Preston Cole, Michigan Milk Producers Association

Dean and Darin Strauss, Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin
Nominated by: Jr Neu, Sartori

**Dan Stuart, Lowell, Michigan**  
Nominated by: Nathan Lippert, Dairy Farmers of America

**David and Karen VanderZanden, Casnovia, Michigan**  
Nominated by: Kendra Kissane, Michigan Milk Producers Association

**Marco Verhaar, Bad Axe, Michigan**  
Nominated by: Steve Steely, Dairy Farmers of America

**John Verhaar, Bad Axe, Michigan**  
Nominated by: Steve Steely, Dairy Farmers of America

**Monroe Zimmerman, Liberty, Kentucky**  
Nominated by: Eddie Hasty, Dairy Farmers of America

**Jim, Jeff and Mark Rupp Families, Sterling, Ohio**  
Nominated by: Will Moore, Dairy Farmers of America