N&N Farm: Passing The Torch to the Next Generation

- April 30, 2021

It took years of hard work for N & N Farm to become the successful farm that they are today. The owners, Lee and Alma Noel are slowly making way for the next generation.



Lee Noel and his wife Alma both grew up on poultry farms. Shortly after they were married, they purchased a dairy farm in Cormack, on the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. In those days, they had around forty milking cows that each produced an average of 19 litres per day. Many expansions and improvements later, the farm now has 260 milking cows that produce an average of 41 litres of milk per day.

The cows are housed in a six row, free stall barn, bedded with sawdust. They are milked in a GEA double-8 milking parlour that was installed five years ago.

“We also have an activity monitoring system that helps a lot with day to day herd management” says Shawn Ruby, who manages the herd for N&N Farm.

Lee and Alma Noel also rely on the work of their two children, Matthew and Julia.

Major Projects

With Matthew and Julia ready to take over, the Noel's have also purchased another farm not far from the current facilities. "It came with 200 acres of extra land which we needed badly, as well as quota for 100 more cows", mentions Shawn Ruby.

The Noel's would like to install a milking robot, which, if all goes well, will be up and running by the fall.

These new facilities could also be used to accommodate heifers, which up to now, have been raised by a partner in Nova Scotia. "Having them with us, should allow us to be much more efficient, shares Mr. Ruby. We hope to reduce our average age at first calving from 26 months to 21 months."

Management Strategies

When Shawn Ruby arrived on the farm around fifteen years ago, he brought with him a new approach toward herd management and reproduction.

"They did not participate in classification or registration, back then, so that was the first thing on my list!" He recalls. As for reproduction, they already had nice animals but "I wanted to concentrate primarily on cows that were
productive and strong, with good longevity."

Currently, N & N Farm have 16 "excellent" and 100 "very good" cows.

Shawn's objective is to have animals that continue to improve from generation to generation. "I also like to have a cow that has good numbers, that I can take to shows and turns heads", he says with a smile.

Lee and Alma Noel, now semi-retired, know that the farm is in good hands. "While our kids and our employees are caring for the herd, we can take advantage of the opportunity to spend time with our two – soon to be

four – grandchildren!” says Lee

Support is Crucial

Along with the Noel family and Shawn Ruby, the farm hires four local workers and four foreign workers from New Zealand. The latter are involved in the milking and field work, among other things.

“It is really important to have good employees, stressed Lee. It is not a 9 to 5 job. If a cow is sick, she needs to be taken care of. It requires very motivated employees.”

Progress Reports

Read Our Progress Reports



N & N Farm Profile

Owners: Lee & Alma Noel

Employees: 9

Hectares of Cultivated Land: 260

Number of Cows in Milk: 260

Housing: Free-stall