



Spotlight on Ashley Egyedy, Dairy production technician — Prince Edward Island

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First, a bit of background

Born and raised in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Ashley graduated with a Bachelors of Agriculture degree in Animal Science from Dalhousie University's Agricultural Campus in 2016. During her last year, she worked on a dairy farm, milking 88 Holstein dairy cows. This job was her first real introduction into dairy farming.

After working on an undergraduate research project involving selenium in sheep, she decided to pursue a Master's degree. She was fortunate to be offered a Master's with the University of Alberta under Dr. Burim Ametaj in Edmonton. Her Master's research focused on establishing a relationship of high somatic cell counts prior to dry off to the incidence of 5 diseases in dairy cows and milk yield. Such post-partum diseases analyzed included retained placenta, mastitis, metritis, ketosis, and lameness. She was also

given an opportunity to co-author a book chapter along with her supervisor and another professor at the university. This chapter focused on the systems biology regarding lameness in dairy cows. This chapter became her very first published work. In April 2018, she successfully defended her Master's research, and graduated with a Master's degree in Animal Science with a focus on dairy cattle health.

During her time in Edmonton, she also spent a year working for the Dairy Research and Technology Center as an Animal Technician.

Her Favorite Work Memories

"I recall a producer once saying to me that I needed to start remembering who his cows were. I knew he was joking at the time, but I couldn't help thinking that it would eventually happen. Now I can look at certain cows in various herds and know exactly who they are. Either I will know their name, tag number, or if the producer has an interesting story relating to the cow. Anyone that knows me would not be surprised by this!"

The most common question from clients

"Without a doubt: What is the average and what are my top cows? based on farm test day data"

What part of the job does she enjoy the most?

"There are many positives that I can say about working for Lactanet. Firstly, I enjoy the motivation and positive work environment from my colleagues and superiors. It is those traits that are often difficult to find in the workplace. The positive work environment is also nice to have especially when the industry is going through difficult times.

My second favorite thing about my job is getting to work with the dairy producers. Growing up in the City of Halifax, I had absolutely no experience with dairy farming, or agriculture itself. In a way it makes me feel like the underdog in this industry as most either grew up farming, working on a farm, or living near one. All that I know about dairy farming was through my education and the 2 farms I worked on. I am grateful to my producers, and even colleagues at Lactanet who are willing to take a few moments to answer my questions regarding the dairy industry. "

What brought you to work for Lactanet?

"I was first introduced to Lactanet when I worked on the dairy farm during my undergraduate degree. After completing my Master's, I was looking for employment where my interests in dairy farming and animal health could be met. I found the position listed on the website for Prince Edward Island. Although it was temporary at the time, it was closer to home and my parents. The job was also related to the work that I did for my thesis. I did a lot of reading and writing on milk composition, production, and sickness in dairy cows."

What do you like to do when you aren't working?

I really have been enjoying health, fitness, and wellness within the last year. I enjoy doing hikes, swimming, or even working out at the gym or at home. I love to cook especially meals from Italian, Mexican, and Japanese origins, and also meals that are healthy and provide me with the energy for the work day. I am also a bit of a nerd so I also spend my free time either playing video games or watching movies and shows within the fantasy genre. On weekends I like to take trips down to Halifax to spend time with my family and friends.

What changes have you noticed, either in your job or the industry in the last few years?

For me, I haven't been in the industry long enough to see major changes but rather minor ones. Minor changes pertaining to the economic aspects including costs for beef cows and how they have drastically decreased.

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