

Dairy Operation Grew Slowly With Rare Normande Cattle

Dan and Ruth Vosberg have grown their dairy operation gradually over 3 decades, calf by calf and cow by cow, into a herd that's now mostly registered Normande milk cattle. The Wisconsin dairy farmers, along with their 3 children, milk more than 200 cows with more than half of those showing 50 percent or higher Normande bloodlines. They've been "breeding up" to achieve high percentage Normande genetics for 17 years and now have the most Normande dairy cattle registered by the North American Normande Association (NANA).

The Vosbergs say it takes about 9 years from the time a cow is first bred to Normande semen to get a 94 percent Normande in the milking string. Of their 200 cows, only 2 are full blood Normande.

Early in their Normande breeding efforts the Vosbergs purchased 15 embryos before getting their first female. The Vosbergs say only about half of their cows will settle with embryos, considerably less than with AI breeding. Eventually they purchased a full blood cow and flushed embryos from her. With that effort, only one heifer was produced from 5 pregnancies. At a price

tag of \$500 per embryo and a 1 in 5 success rate, that heifer calf cost a whopping \$2,500.

The Normande breed's roots trace back to France in the 1850's. The animals are known for their versatility as a beef and dairy breed. They're low maintenance and easy foraging, with exceptional milk and carcass quality.

The Vosberg's first Normande offspring appeared too 'beefy', but they were also quiet and well-behaved. As those offspring grew into milking cattle, the Vosbergs were impressed with the fat and protein tests for the milk. Now their whole herd averages about 16,000 lbs. of milk per cow with a 4.6 percent fat content and 3.7 percent protein. The cattle are rotationally grazed part of the year and also fed a total mixed feed ration. The Vosbergs are persistent in their desire for higher Normande genetics because their top Normande cow produces about 26,000 lbs. of milk in a 305-day lactation.

The registered Normande cows in their herd weigh 1,400 to 1,900 lbs. with much of that weight in muscle. They are gentle cows with smooth, supple udders and produce milk at high levels throughout lactation. The offspring have colorful mottled coats. In addition to milking their Normandes,



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the Vosbergs are selling embryos, bulls and breeding stock. Dan says it's their way of adding value to a dairy herd rather than expanding into larger numbers that require more labor.

Another benefit of Normande milk cows is their ability to produce A2 milk, which researchers say causes less inflammation and problems with people who are lactose intolerant. About 40 percent of the Vosberg's cows carry that distinction and they are thinking of creating a second herd of just A2 milk cows. Prospective buyers of Normande stock are specifically asking for that gene, so

they see good potential for added revenue.

The Vosbergs promote their animals through fairs and shows and typically bring home show ribbons that lead to more inquiries for animals and embryos. The Vosberg's children Derek, Megan and Jared are helpful contributors at the farm, along with Derek's fiancée, Sarah Mueller.

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Quinoa Production Catching On In Idaho

When his son developed Celiac's disease and grew intolerant of gluten-based foods, Jeremiah Clark and his wife looked for diet options that the youngster could tolerate without making him sick. The Clarks discovered that using quinoa flour was one possibility, but its availability in the U.S. was limited. Clark decided to explore the possibility of raising quinoa himself and recruiting other Idaho farmers to do the same.

Clark says the fact that he owned and operated a well-known seed cleaning business made the decision all the more logical. Early on he learned that quinoa has been typically raised in the arid regions of Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Chile. In the U.S., some producers are growing it on a small scale, but seed is expensive and

managing the crop is difficult. Quinoa is heat sensitive, basically intolerant to temperatures above 90 degrees. It needs moisture to grow and thrive, but rain falling on the ripe crop can ruin the crunchy seeds, causing them to sprout on the plant. Once harvested, quinoa has to be carefully cleaned.

Clark raised a small quantity of seed the first year, cleaned it with his equipment, and took it to a food facility for further processing. From that batch they planted purified seed in 2014 and produced enough seed to plant 400 acres in 2015.

"There's a big learning curve raising quinoa compared to other cereal crops," says Clark. "But I'm confident we can produce a reasonable yield and move forward with a viable business." He hopes to supply seed to other growers and also produce grain



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for sale to food distributors. Even though there's income potential on the horizon, the initial investment is high. To help fund his enterprise Clark launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise money from outside investors. "We'll hopefully expand with more acres in 2016 along with a new set of experiences from another year growing and processing the crop," says Clark. "There's

definitely potential for U.S. growers, because retailers are getting from \$4 to more than \$8 a pound from health conscious consumers."

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Website Puts "Makers" And Customers Together

If you want something made - or have the skills to do custom work for others - the new website www.Dun4Me.com may be the place to go. It's an online marketplace where "makers" can bid on projects proposed by other people. For *BurnTables* (Vol. 37, No. 3) co-founder Kyle Riggen, the website solves a problem for that company and creates an opportunity for its customers.

"We kept getting calls from people who heard about our CNC plasma cutting tables and wanted us to make things for them," says Riggen. "We couldn't do it, or we would be competing with people who had bought our machines. So we would try to put them together with one of our customers."

Riggen and his co-founder Matt Kool realized a website was needed to put craftsmen together with people who needed their services.

"My wife is active on the website

Pinterest, where people post projects," he says. "She finds things she wants me to build, but I don't have the time or passion. She has already ordered production of 3 items from craftsmen visiting our site, and I've ordered several also."

Riggen sees it serving an important role for anyone needing special skills. "A lot of craftsmen need a part or item they can't make for themselves," he says. "Others have the skills to make stuff but need to find customers who can use their services."

Dun4Me has only been in business 4 months and has already had more than 1,000 hits. He cites one of the most unique projects yet posted as an example.

"A user wanted a Star Wars replica light saber," recalls Riggen. "It required special skills to pull it off. That's what we hope for with this site, that it will connect people with skills with people who need them."

Contact: www.Dun4Me.com.



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