



Dean and MMPA member Burke Larsen discuss Dean's findings following a lengthy detailed check of the Larsen Farm's milking system.

Dean Letter

Michigan's Dairy Fieldperson of the Year

When he was 12 years old, MMPA Member Representative Dean Letter interviewed his neighbor, MMPA Member Representative Preston Cole, for a class project on different types of jobs. At the time, he thought Preston's job was interesting, but had no idea that he would be doing the same thing someday.

Years later, after Dean graduated from Michigan State University, Preston called Dean up to let him know there was an opening at MMPA. Dean interviewed for the position, beginning his career with MMPA in 1995 as Member Representative serving MMPA members on the west side of Michigan.

The same year Dean started with MMPA, Preston was named Michigan's Dairy Fieldperson of the year. This year, Dean followed in Preston's footsteps, being chosen as the 2007 Dairy Fieldperson of the year by fellow field reps. and dairy industry representatives in Michigan. Dean was presented with the honor on May 24 during the Michigan Dairy Industry Conference in Mt. Pleasant, Mich.

"I am very pleased that Dean

received the 2007 Fieldperson of the Year award," says MMPA Member Services Director Gary Trimner. "His outstanding ability and knowledge to help producers achieve their goals was instrumental in winning the award. Those abilities lead to Dean's promotion to Milking Systems Specialist this past year."

As a Milking Systems Specialist, Dean no longer calls on farms to perform farm inspections or discuss problems, two things that weren't his favorite to do.

"My least favorite part of the job was doing inspections because it is hard not to offend people when you are discussing something like how clean the milkhouse is," Dean explains. "When you tell a producer the milkhouse needs to be cleaned up, maybe his definition of clean is different from yours."

Dean was able to continue one of his favorite parts of being a Member Representative – conducting Milking Systems Performance Assurance Program (MSPAP) checks for members.

"My favorite part of being a field rep is doing the MSPAP checks because it is good for the farm and

the co-op," Dean says. "For the farm, it means better quality milk, which brings more premiums. For the co-op, higher quality milk just makes MMPA products more marketable."

As a MSPAP Specialist, Dean spends hours on a single farm performing vacuum checks, graphing pulsators, checking wash temperatures and any other items required to closely analyze the entire milking system.



As an MSPAP Specialist, Dean performs detailed checks and tests on MMPA members' milking systems.

On a recent MSPAP inspection, MMPA Member Burke Larsen of Scottville expressed concern to Dean about recent elevated PI bacteria counts. During a careful inspection of the bulk tank, Dean noticed a bit of milk residue that was not cleaned off the agitator following the bulk tank's wash and sanitize cycles, something that could be the source of the varying PI counts.

"Dean treats things like they are his own – he finds things that I might have overlooked," Burke says. "He just does a good job and cares a lot – that is something nice to see."

"I enjoy being able to catch a problem on the farm before it turns into a loss of premiums," Dean says.

Dean also thinks the MSPAP program, a fee based service offered by MMPA, is great for the members because of the flexibility it offers. It is set up ala carte – members can choose what services they want and the frequency of the service.

"Many of the farms I service, I go to every other month," Dean says.

Dean's duties in his new position as Milking Systems Specialist at MMPA will include working closely with Mastitis Management Supervisor Tom Herremans to conduct MMPA's popular Milker Training Schools. He will also be organizing mastitis pathogen resource materials for the Member Representatives as well as writing semi-regular articles on milk quality and mastitis management for the Messenger.

"Dean is truly an asset to all dairy people in MMPA," fellow MMPA Member Representative Preston Cole says. "He can do it all, from diagnosing milking and wash systems to member education."

MMPA's MSPAP service is available for a fee to all members who wish to receive optimum performance from their dairy's milking system. Contact your MMPA Member Representative or the Member Services Department in the Novi office for additional information on the MSPAP Service.



Dr. John Partridge, of Michigan State University's food science program, presented Dean with the 2007 Fieldperson of the Year Award, and told the audience: "As a fieldperson, Dean has worked tirelessly to assist producers who want to produce superior quality milk. He worked directly with three of the top 16 National Dairy Quality Award recipients for 2006."

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