



Terry & Jean Nugent MSU Dairy Farmers of the Year

For Terry and Jean Nugent, being a part of the dairy industry has always meant more than just milking cows every day. The Nugents learned early on in their dairying career that if they looked beyond their own farm gate there was a whole world of opportunity waiting for them and their family.

The Nugents' ability to see past their own operation and embrace outside thoughts and opportunities has earned them the prestigious title of 2009 MSU Dairy Farmers of the Year. The Nugents received this honor at the Michigan Dairy Industry Recognition Banquet held in conjunction with the Great Lakes Regional Dairy Conference on February 6 in Grand Rapids, Mich.

The Nugents humble beginnings into the dairy industry started in the early 1960s with three cows Jean brought from her home farm. Shortly after they were married, they purchased the farm Terry had been working on and started their own operation. With Jean's wealth of knowledge about dairy cattle and breeding, they began a registered

herd—Nugentdale Farms. By the late 1960s they were milking 30 cows. They continued to add cows and facilities until they reached a herd size of 150 in the 1990s.

"Raising and showing registered cows has always been my life," Jean says. "I never knew anything else. One of my neighbors, Frank Stevens, got me interested in the cows and 4-H. He was one of the first around here to use A.I. He was the one that taught me about breeding good cows."

Today the Nugentdale herd consists of 190 registered Holstein cows and 193 young stock. The farming enterprise includes 1,475 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and alfalfa.

Through the years, Jean has maintained her interest and involvement with the cows and can identify individuals and retrace their lineage back through the herd. Over the years they have developed several "Excellent" or "Very Good" cows.



Dr. Karen Plaut, Chair of the MSU Department of Animal Science, congratulates the Nugents on their award.

They have also won numerous show awards including state futurities, Premier Breeder and Premier Exhibitor.

"Going to the shows has always been the fun part of having cows—the fun part but the expensive part too," Terry says. "Jean shared her love of showing with the kids. We used to go all over, including the State Fair, with the cows."

Jean and son-in-law Moss McCauley use DHI records to monitor the herd production. Their current rolling herd average is 24,081

pounds of milk, 3.7 percent butterfat and 3.0 percent protein. They also use NorthStar Select Sires mating service to help build the genetic base of the herd.

“We are working with the breeding and the feeds to get more production out of the herd,” Terry says. “At one time our herd average was over 27,000 pounds. We would like to get back there again.”

Their involvement in the dairy industry also includes being active members of the Michigan Holstein Association and the National Holstein Association. Terry has served as a delegate to the National Holstein Convention and as past president of the state association. They have received many leadership awards through the associations including Master Breeder from the Michigan Holstein Association in 2007.

One of the greatest assets of their Holstein membership has been the many friends they made through the years at cattle shows and sales and member meetings. They have also done a lot of traveling going to National Conventions and other activities.

“We have made some really great friends over the years through the Holstein conventions and shows,” Terry says. “We still hear from people we met over 20 years ago.”

In addition to Holstein activities, Terry served on the NorthStar Cooperative, Inc. board of directors for 17 years. He is also a member of the MMPA Advisory Committee. In 2006 and 2007 they received the Highest 5-year Increase in Production Award for the Kent County DHI.



The Nugent family was at the Dairy Industry Banquet to celebrate Terry and Jean's accomplishments.

Locally, he served for 12 years as a Trustee on the Grattan Township Board and 12 years on the Kent County Farm Service Agency Committee.

Jean has also been active in the Holstein Association and has worked locally with the Project Rural Education Days (RED) and the Kent County Milky Way 4-H Dairy Club. She works as a Registered Nurse on a part-time basis.

The Nugents involvement in the dairy industry doesn't end with Jean and Terry. All of their four children are involved in agriculture. Mike (and wife Betsy) and Renee (and her husband Moss) work on the farm with Terry and Jean. Renee serves as the State Dairy Youth Assistant at MSU and is editor of the *Michigan-Indiana Holstein News*. Their daughter, Sheila Burkhardt, is the director of Member Relations and Public Affairs for Michigan Milk Producers Association and son, Tom, is director of Field Operations for Michigan Farm Bureau.

“The Nugents are one of the most involved farm families in Michigan,” says Bill Robb, MSUE Educator who nominated them for the award.

Putting a top priority on family continues today as grandchildren are added to the family. Once again, young people are leading out Nugentdale cattle in the showing. In accepting their award at the banquet, Jean recognized all their children and their spouses and the grandchildren, proving that Nugentdale truly is a family operation.

“It has really been the kids that led us,” Terry says. “When they started in 4-H and wanted to get involved we worked with them so they could do the things like showing and judging.”

To accommodate the kids' busy schedules, the Nugents switched their milking times to later at night so as not to miss a school activity. Today the herd is milked three times a day.

In addition to all the farm activities, Terry and his son, Mike, still find time for stock car racing which they have done locally for more than 25 years.

“Green and White ties run deep in this family,” Robb says. “Their four children all attended Michigan State University and the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, which meant 13 consecutive years of having a student at MSU.”

The Nugent family expressed their appreciation to their parents for their support over the years by making a contribution to the Michigan Dairy Memorial and Scholarship Foundation in their honor.

As recipients of the Dairy Farmer of the Year, a citation and framed photo of Terry and Jean will hang in Anthony Hall.