

UPPER MIDWEST REGION PRODUCER SPOTLIGHT

Doug & Tina Suhr Zumbro Ridge Farms

By Sue Keiser-Niesen, field representative

There are some people who are reluctant to try new technology and then there are those who embrace it. Doug and Tina Suhr of Zumbro Ridge Farms in rural Kasson, Minnesota (about an hour south of the twin cities) are dairy farmers who not only embrace technology, they keep searching for more to grab on to. NFO members since 1960, this appetite for technology runs in the Suhr genes starting with Doug's grandfather, Dean Suhr. Grandfather Dean started the family farm in 1947 and in 1951 built the first double two, head to toe parlor in the state of Minnesota. To keep the family tradition going, in 2008 Doug and Tina made major improvements to their dairy operation by installing new state of the art milking equipment and two Lely Astronaut A3 robotic milking units. Here is technology at its finest! Each cow is fitted with a collar that identifies her to the robot. Once identified, the robot preps the cow for milking by washing her teats and then automatically attaches the inflations. While milking each cow, the robot can keep track of such information as time of milking, milk temperature, body weight, time of last milking, somatic cell counts, etc. With all this information, Doug and Tina can then generate various reports that help in the herd management.

Even though Doug and Tina handle most of the day to day work on the farm, there is no doubt that their farm operation is a joint effort. Doug and Tina have two daughters, Sierra (13) and Gabrielle (9), that help in the barn with the cows, help with chores, and collect eggs from their chickens. Sierra enjoys playing golf and Gabrielle plays hockey and along with their mom, enjoy scrapbooking when they can find time.

Staying busy even though "someone else" is milking their cows doesn't mean they are standing idle. In addition to the 110 Holstein dairy cows, they also grow 525 acres of corn and alfalfa and feed out 50 steers a year. Doug is a board member of Dodge County DHIA and is the First District President and on the Minnesota State Board for the Minnesota National Farmers Organization. Tina serves as treasurer of the Dodge County ADA board. They are also active members of the Zumbro Rockets 4-H Club.

Recently, Doug and Tina have been recognized as the 2009 Dodge County Farm Family of the Year by the Dodge County Extension Service. The Suhrs, and other farm families from other counties, will be officially recognized in a ceremony during the annual Farmfest celebration near Redwood Falls in August.

CALENDAR OF NFO MEETINGS / EVENTS

May 15 – NY State Meeting
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Syracuse, NY
Brittonfield Office

They will also have an open house May 2, 2009 at their farm to show the public their robotic milking equipment.

You can also check them out on their own website:

www.zumbroridgefarms.com

NFO CONGRATULATES THE SUHR FAMILY ON THEIR FARM FAMILY OF THE YEAR AWARD!



L to R: front Gabrielle & Sierra, back Tina & Doug

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profit. Whether it is a system similar to Canada's, a base and excess program, or some other type of program that can be implemented. It is a necessary measure now.

The CWT organization has provided a supply management system. That same organization could develop a pricing system to make all dairy farmers prosper. When farmers prosper the whole world prospers. We don't need a stimulus package for the banking or auto industry to bring prosperity back to the nation. We just need fair commodity prices. This will create more jobs than the government's stimulus program will ever do.

SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

National Dairy Shrine scholarship applications due May 1. National Dairy Shrine (NDS) is again seeking nominations for its annual scholarships. Applications for the student scholarship awards must be submitted by May 1. These scholarships include Kildee Graduate & Undergraduate Scholarships, Dairy Student Recognition Award, NDA/DMI Milk Marketing Scholarships, McCullough Scholarships, NDS/Klussendorf Scholarships, NDS/Iager Scholarship and the new Maurice Core Scholarship. Scholarship applications are available on the revised National Dairy Shrine website. www.dairyshrine.org/students.asp

Last year NDS provided over \$30,000 in scholarships and awards and plans to do so again in 2009.

Winners will be announced in the summer, with the awards to be presented at the annual NDS Awards Banquet in Madison, Wisconsin on October 1, 2009.