

New England Green Pastures Connecticut Dairy Farm of the Year 2020

It is indeed a pleasure to announce that Ben and Tim Learned, owners of Valley View Farm, in North Stonington, CT, are the 2020 Outstanding Connecticut Dairy Farmers of the Year for the New England Green Pastures Award Program. Ben and Tim have accomplished the unique achievement of establishing a very successful new dairy farm in only 10 years. The brothers both worked for area dairy farms as they were growing up. Their passion for farming and dairy cattle became even clearer as they attended college and they easily decided that dairy farming would be their vocation rather than pursue other ventures. The brothers, together with their parents, Edward and Belinda, purchased a 130 acre unoccupied dairy farm 10 years ago in the beautiful rolling hills of North Stonington, CT.

Ben and Tim started the farm with eight purchased cows and developed the herd through internal growth and strategic purchases to the current 120 cow herd. The herd is fed 100% BMR corn silage and round bale haylage produced on the farm and rented land and their rations are completed with purchased concentrates. They milk the herd in a flat parlor that they designed and built for cow comfort, cow flow as well as labor efficiency. They have recently completed a barn renovation to convert a tie stall part of the facility to a sand-bedded freestall that the cows fully utilize. The primarily Holstein herd is a high producing herd with high levels of protein. In addition, they have received awards from their dairy cooperative, Dairy Farmer's of America, for achieving and maintaining high quality milk, which truly demonstrates their commitment to dairy farming.

Tim and Ben enjoy working together in all aspects of the dairy farm and they genuinely believe that having fun should be a component of dairy farming. It is truly a family farm with help from family members. Ben's wife, Catherine, who helps out on weekends and before her full time job as a physical therapist and Catherine's sister, Liz, as well as Ben and Tim's sister, Marcia. In addition, they open their farm to students from the University of Rhode Island so that students can gain hands-on education on dairy farming. Tim and Ben, along with their mother, also have a grass-fed beef operation that yields 24 steers per year.

Together, Ben and Tim have built a dairy farm that is an excellent representation of the viability and sustainability of the New England dairy industry and gives us confidence for the future. Again, congratulations to Tim and Ben Learned for being named the Connecticut Outstanding Dairy Farmers for the 2020 New England Green Pastures Program.

The New England Green Pastures Program has a rich history starting in 1947 with a challenge from the New Hampshire governor as to which New England state dairy farmer produced the best pastures. It has continued with the additional focus on total management and viability of the farm as well as contribution to the agricultural community. This tradition lives on with recognition of the Learned brothers in North Stonington, Connecticut. We also thank the selection committee that consists of former winners and agri-business members.

Respectfully submitted,

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