

The latest news from Minnesota Milk Producers Association

## The Otte's – the next generation of farming

### Keeping family traditions.

From the county fair to working side by side with family every day, Tyler Otte and his brother are bringing in another generation to their Dakota County dairy farm. Keeping the farm's legacy while incorporating new technologies is a balancing act the brothers have been navigating since assuming the farm's management in 2016 and 2018. Since then, they have expanded the herd so they can support another family, built a new barn and added additional income streams to the farm. However, one thing remains through the years: consistent cow care and the production of good, clean milk.

"We take pride in the milk we market from our farm," Tyler says. "We keep our cows clean, the care consistent and our employees happy. Our number one goal is cow comfort; we want cows that don't need to be treated and are healthy. Our employees work hard to help us meet

this goal, and we don't have much turnover, which is phenomenal."

In addition to producing the best possible milk, the Otte's have added additional income streams to the farm to help offset the swings in milk pricing.

In 2020, the Ottes expanded their herd, built a new tunnel-ventilated barn which keeps a steady breeze around the cows, and renovated another barn, all to space out the cows more and improve overall cow comfort. At the same time, they began reducing the number of youngstock on the farm by breeding heifers to beef bulls to create animals more suited for the beef market than the dairy market. This controlled herd growth also generated more income from the dairy/beef cross animals, which are sold a few days after birth to specialized steer raisers.

They use genomic testing - by pulling just a few samples of hair and sending to a dairy technology company which processes the animal genome by finding at least 20,000 of those DNA letters, or SNPs (single nucleotide



Tyler Otte, co-owner of Square Deal Dairy, works along side his brother to ensure a quality product.

polymorphisms) - to determine which animals to breed for dairy, and which to breed for beef.

Like most Minnesota dairy farms, the Ottes also raise most of the feed for their cattle, which requires substantial investment in machinery and time. To help stretch the investment and generate additional income the Ottes run a custom harvesting business, managing an additional 1,500 acres of their neighbor's land in addition to their own.

"The choppers are so expensive," Tyler says. "New choppers can cost a million dollars, that's a tough investment to make if we are not running them at least half the year. Having the custom business also helps our neighbors save

*Continued on backside.*



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on having to buy their own equipment.” Custom farming is the term for doing someone else’s field work “hired” on a farm not owned by the operator.

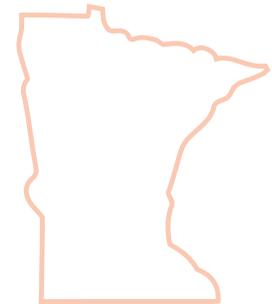
The Ottes maintain a tight connection to their community by hosting school groups and others who want to learn more about modern farming, as well as supplying milk to a local creamery, Cannon Belle’s Creamery. The local creamery produces artisan cheeses they sell throughout Minnesota. Contributing to the local food supply is especially rewarding for them.

“Our family has always taken pride in our community presence. This is just one more way we are connecting to the community.” Tyler says.

You may recognize the Otte name is Minnesota Milk’s 2016 Producers of the Year. In addition to their presence hosting community events, they’re very involved in dairy genetics, as their cattle parade at state, national and international shows each year.

For about 10 percent of Minnesota dairy farms, the sales of dairy genetics to other

farms intrastate, interstate and internationally are a significant part of both business and hobby. Farmers earn credentials by placing at well known shows like the Minnesota State Fair. After catching the interest of buyers, their offspring are sold to improve the herds across the road or across the world. Any impediments installed by the Minnesota Board of Animal Health would slow this trade and progress. This is why new requirements like electronic identification of animals will help track both genetic trade and any disease pressure. Not only do livestock producers want to keep and prove animals are healthy and appropriately vaccinated, but they are passionate about identification and tracking to ensure the credibility of their genetics. ❤️



# SAVE THE DATE!

**2025 Annual Meeting &  
Dairy Day at the Capitol**

**February  
4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>  
2025**