

OUTSTANDING DAIRY FARM SUSTAINABILITY

Jer-Lindy Farms LLC

Brooten, Minnesota



Creamery adds to farm's long legacy

Jerry and Linda Jennissen have a deep appreciation for their farm and are well-versed in its rich history. They can quickly name each owner from the time it was homesteaded in 1875 through 1983, when they bought the dairy. After purchasing the dairy, they named it Jer-Lindy Farms. Now that they have become stewards of that history, the Jennissens are working to keep Jer-Lindy Farms in the family and expand smartly to meet their needs and those of future generations.

The family's goal for the 200-cow operation is to be sustainable while profitable, and prove that such practices can be duplicated regardless of farm size. For example, the Jennissens use soil and crop testing to precisely manage pesticide and fertilizer use, and they created buffer strips to protect the Crow River that flows past their farm. In fact, Jer-Lindy Farms received the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification for their work to improve downstream water quality.

When the Jennissens' daughter, Alise Sjostrom, wanted to return to the farm with her husband, Lucas, the family collaborated to make her vision of starting a creamery a reality. In order to stay connected to Jer-Lindy Farms, Redhead Creamery uses milk directly from the farm and feeds the whey byproduct back to the cows. The creamery now includes a tasting room much like those found at small wineries, which provides valuable opportunities to engage with consumers. Farm tours offered on weekends build trust and understanding of dairy among the public.

Longevity and transparency are key to Jer-Lindy Farms' commitment to a robust sustainability program. Balancing profitability and responsibility is helping to ensure the Jennissens and Sjostroms will continue to be difference-makers well into the future.

The Jennissens are committed to finding many ways, big and small, to be sustainable while profitable:

- A move to high-efficiency energy systems resulted in 20 percent lower energy use.
- The soil sampling program for alfalfa fields reduced lime costs by 75 percent.
- By using manure, no commercial fertilizer is needed on their 258 acres of cropland.
- Shared learnings from a digester project help others in the industry succeed.