

# OUTSTANDING DAIRY FARM SUSTAINABILITY

## Siemers Holsteins

Newton, Wisconsin



### Forage management benefits cow care, milk production and the environment

Dan Siemers describes his family as “cow people.” His grandfather and father took the best possible care of their cows at Siemers Holsteins in Newton, Wisconsin, and that principle has carried on through Dan’s generation. Siemers says he and his family are also “land people” who understand that they need to take care of the soil as well as they do their cows. Land is expensive and also the source of the feed needed to produce milk and keep cows healthy - a primary connection between farm and environment.

Siemers has taken forage management to a new level, demonstrating how focused, long-term solutions and data-driven approaches can really pay off. Siemers’ success starts on the field with an intensive soil-testing regimen that doubles the number of samples taken over typical practices. The 2.5-acre testing grid established by Siemers and his agronomist incorporates soil sample results, manure tests, and yield and cropping practices. It also allows for finer-scale management of the type and rate of nutrients applied to the fields. With this knowledge, they are able to pick just the right hybrid forages for the microenvironment of each grid and the right combination to optimize herd health.

Siemers likes to say, “If you don’t measure it, you can’t manage it.” And he has the numbers to demonstrate the return on investment from the operation’s responsible management practices.

The farm has recorded dramatically higher crop production, with a 30 percent increase in corn silage yield and a 10 percent improvement in alfalfa silage yield. Improved nutrition has increased the dairy herd’s milk production by 19 percent per cow. Plus, the farm’s sustainable practices have avoided 715 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions.

Siemers isn’t slowing down. He views each year as a new opportunity to try new technologies, and improve production and the overall health of his land and cows.

**Siemers Holsteins has harnessed what it sees as the farm’s most valuable tool, its data, to carefully manage forage production and cow health, achieving impressive results:**

- Nutrition program increased average milk yield by 19 percent
- Field management practices gave corn silage production a 30 percent boost
- Avoided 715 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions