



**U.S. Dairy
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Blue Spruce Farm: *Elanco* Award for Outstanding Dairy Farm Sustainability

Leading the way to a sustainable future is exactly what this year's winner, Blue Spruce Farm of Bridport, Vt., is doing. The Audets shared some of their best practices during a recent visit.

Sharing their story



Marie Audet's workweek has changed since her family's Blue Spruce Farm in Bridport, Vt., has become a leading innovation model for other dairy farms. As the first farm to join Central Vermont Public Service's Cow Power™ program (CVPS) seven years ago, the Audet family made an ongoing commitment to share what they have learned with interested visitors.

"It wasn't our natural instinct to think that someone has to be out here to tell our story, but we are so impressed with people's desire to learn about dairy farming today that we are happy to do it," Audet says.

Forward-thinking perspectives like this date back to 1958 and Blue Spruce's original 35-cow dairy. Today, the farm milks 1,300 cows and perseveres to remain as efficient as possible. Achieving that efficiency requires vision, hard work, a positive attitude and family commitment. Marie and her husband Eugene never pressured their kids to join the farm, but their son returned post-college, offering fresh perspectives and expertise.

Efficiencies gained through water recycling



Blue Spruce's water recycling exemplifies efficiency. The farm's primary water supply precools the milk using a plate heat-exchanger that then brings the cows' drinking water to their preferred consumption temperature. Water used to clean the milking system is collected and reused to wash the parlor and holding area.

"It's all about sustainability. The more we know, the more we can plan, and the better job we can do. There's always new information, new knowledge and new technology," Marie Audet says.



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Digester simplifies manure management



Installation of an anaerobic digester system in 2005 was motivated by efficiency, as well. The Audets inject their post-digester liquid fertilizer through a drag line system, and they benefit from noticeably improved crop yields and weed seed control in their hay and corn silage. Working with University of Vermont Animal Science Department researchers, the Audets verified that the separated post-digester solids make a high-quality, valuable bedding material for the cows.

The digester project was a leap of faith for the Audets, one that has now evolved into a model for dairies around the country.

Contributing to quality cheese making



Blue Spruce is part of the Agri-Mark cooperative, which produces world famous Cabot cheese. "Every day, our fresh milk only has to travel 10 miles down the road to our farmer-owned cheese plant in Middlebury. Our Cabot cheese plants are economic engines that help support our surrounding rural economies here in Vermont," Marie Audet says.

Not only that, but a byproduct of the cheese making process, whey, is returned to the Audets' farm and added to the digester. The waste from the cheese making helps produce more energy than manure alone — yet another example of the sustainability of the cycle.

To learn more about Blue Spruce Farm's sustainability initiatives, visit USDairy.com/Sustainability/Awards.