

## Wrico Holsteins: Vision for the Future

At Wrico Holsteins, the home of Robert & Roberta Wright, their sons Eric and Owen and daughter Megan, the cows are in charge and they care how their feed is stored! They eat when they want, get milked when they need it, and have a snooze when they need that too. It's a laid-back and peaceful, but productive life.



Robert Wright, cares very much how his feed is stored, and he relies on Harvestore to do the job for his haylage, corn silage and high moisture corn. He milks 75 cows and farms 700 acres near Midhurst, ON, on the family farm his father bought there in 1954.

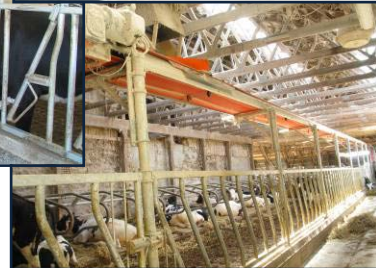


When Robert returned home after graduating from the University of Guelph in 1982, Harvestore was already part of his farm skyline. A 20x70 silo was installed in 1968, a 20x27 silo in 1970, and a 20x70 silo in 1974. He recognized the labour efficiency of two-man filling and the value of first in, first out feed that allowed continuous feeding of

fermented feed throughout the year. As he says, "High quality feed in equals high quality feed out with a Harvestore silo."



Taking over the farm from his father in 1994 was the start of a vision for Wright: an automated family dairy farm of the future. "Our primary goal was a labour efficient modern dairy barn, so



our newest 25x100 Harvestore silo with XL400 unloader fit into our auto ration system and our goal," says Robert. They also run Alliance and XL200 unloaders.

Today Wrico Holsteins is more than just a few automated conveyors to feed the cows; it's high tech from day one.

Calves start on a Delaval robotic calf feeder at two days old, receiving acidified milk replacer from a computer-controlled nipple with free-choice access to a farm-prepared grain ration.



From there, at eight weeks old and consuming 3 kg. of grain per day , they are weaned from the nursery and move to a straw-pack calf barn. At six through twelve months old they are introduced to the free stall lifestyle in a bright, airy section of the barn where they receive haylage, corn silage, HMC, barley, protein supplement and a mineral premix, and dry hay.

By one year of age they move to a straw-pack section with access to an outdoor yard as they work through the barn on their way to their milking career. After calving they spend three days in a special needs area before moving to the new 80 x 240 free stall barn with a fully slatted raceway, 140 waterbed free stalls, a De Laval robotic milker, alley scraper and auto-ration feeding system, opened in 2010.



Robert Wright with De Laval Robotic Milker

The new free stall barn is a ‘feed-first’ system: the cows cycle through one-way gates to selectively gain access to the robotic milker, where a computerized feeder dispenses a highly palatable, high-energy pelleted ration that Robert calls “chocolate”: the cows crave the sweet treat and look forward to visiting the robot.



The whole system has been designed with efficiency in mind for the next generation of both cows and people. “In the tie-stall barn we watered them, fed them and milked them; in the new barn they must do all three themselves. We have seen a huge difference in the heifers entering the new barn that have had some free-stall experience. I believe the heifers that have started on the computer feeder should excel in the robot barn. They will always have been used to taking care of themselves.”



Robert Wright beside a “Smart” Gate

While the cows look after themselves, Harvestore will continue to look after their feed. “Harvestore’s quality storage of my home-grown feed, labour-efficient filling and fast automated unloading fit into the automated labour-efficient family dairy farm we strive to be,” says Robert. His future generations will appreciate his vision.

