## Holsum Dairies tour highlights sustainability

By Peggy Coffeen DAIRY/LIVESTOCK EDITOR

at Holsum Dairies, LLC. Reducing energy usage, reusing water and recycling nutrients back purchase it. into the soil are only a few examples of how two sister dairies near but as a way of life.

the Wisconsin Green ecological sustainabil- gives off very little odor. dance with their nutri- The cows themselves ity within Wisconsin's building and construction community. As a participant in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Green Tier program, Holsum Dairies focus on setting and achieving goals for environmental sustainability above and beyond the requirements. The tour highlighted how sustainability and profitability go hand-in-hand in many aspects at both the Holsum Elm Dairy and Holsum Irish Dairy.

"Like any business, we are here to make a profit," said Dr. Bob Nagel, farm manager at Holsum Elm Dairy. "Reduce, reuse, recycle makes us money, and it also makes us a good neighbor."

Situated on only 89 acres, Holsum Elm has reached out to build relationships in the local agricultural community to source feed and manage nutrients for the 3,600-cow dairy. "We need our community more than they need us," Nagel said. Between the two dairies, they work with 40 neighboring farmers to put up forages.

Kirk Vander Dussen, farm manager at Holsum Irish Dairy, echoed Nagel's comment, saying, "We partner with the community and with the farmers symbiotically." He went on to explain that the local land base provides ample area to apply the nutrientrich by-product of their

In fact, research has shown higher yields in hauling," he said. "Reduce, reuse, recy- crop fields that have digested manure, and there is a waiting list of local farmers wanting to

gone through what Vander Dussen calls Hilbert exemplify envi- the "big, concrete cow not just as a practice, of benefits. Unlike liquid manure, it can be recently opened up its crops, and because a doors to members of growing crop can utilize the nutrients quickly,

anaerobic digester. "People are often not ent management plan are, too. "Our cows are even aware that we are

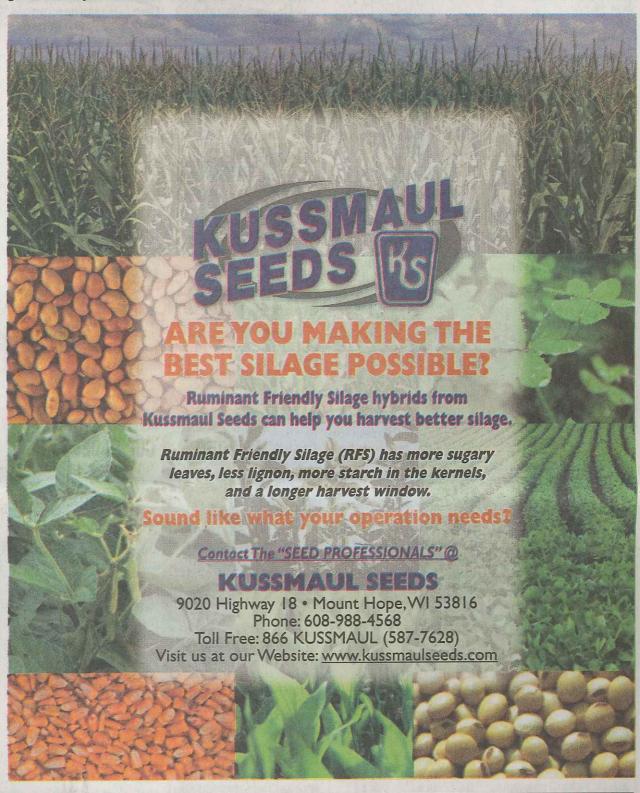
Another benefit, cle" is truly the motto been fertilized with their according to Nagel, is the ability to partition nutrients for field-specific needs. They are able to monitor the lev-Manure that has els of nitrogen, phosphorus and water that are applied. "It's like adding a shot of water ronmental sustainability rumen" offers a cache and a shot of fertilizer," he said. Throughout the year, the dairies' Holsum Elm Dairy applied to growing digesters may take in waste water from a local food processing plant, brewery and other busi-Building Alliance, a non-there is reduced risk of nesses, but any addi-the only environmen- by ethanol plant and profit educational orga- runoff. Also appealing is tions and applications tally sustainable feature brewery communicate nization that promotes the fact that this manure must be done in accor- of Holsum Elm Dairy.

established with the the greatest recyclers," Department of Natural both Nagel and Vander Resources (DNR).

dling, one of the other lage provide the bulk of main objectives of the their cows' diets, sevdigester is to produce eral other feedstuffs are electrical energy. Each included in the ration, day, the digester produces the equivalent be considered waste if energy of 4,000 gallons it were not for the cow's of propane. While more unique ability to digest than enough energy to them. Cottonseed, homirun the dairy is produced, it is sold back to gluten and malt sprouts the grid to power hun- are a few of the by-proddreds of homes in the ucts that fill the bays of community.

Dussen agreed. While Besides manure han- corn silage and haymany of which would ny, distiller's grain, corn the commodity shed at The digester is not Holsum Elm. The near-

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 with the dairies when they have wet feeds that need to be fed quickly.

In the freestall barn, the cows rest on bedding provided by the dry solids from the digester. The barns were designed to conserve energy with insulated ceilings and energy-efficient light fixtures. Even the breeding program revolves around sustainability. "We recycle genetics," Vander Dussen explained. With careful genetic selection, they optimize to breed for cows that will have a

long productive life and heart, Kenn is an environefficiently convert feed to milk. Good animal care and genetics are all part of sustainability, Nagel

Throughout the tour, both managers complimented their respective farm's employees. "We are blessed with great people that really care about cows," Nagel said. The culture of caring for both animals and the environment is a topdown effect. Crediting the dairies' co-owner Kenn Beulow as a vision- tainabilitary, Nagel added, "At the industry."

mentalist.

Beulow's leadership has not gone unnoticed. Last month, Holsum Dairies was honored with the U.S. Dairy Sustainability Award at the White House Washington, D.C. Bestowed on only four dairy farms and two dairy processors throughout the nation, these awards recognized "outstanding economic, environmental and/or social benefit, all helping to advance sustainability of the dairy

DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp commented on the honor saying, "The leadership of this dairy in developing and implementing sustainable practices is a testament to what is possible in dairy agriculture."

WisconsinDepartment of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Secretary Ben Brancel also stated, "Holsum Dairies serve as a shining example to other farmers and farm operators in the state and region regarding sustainable farming practices.'

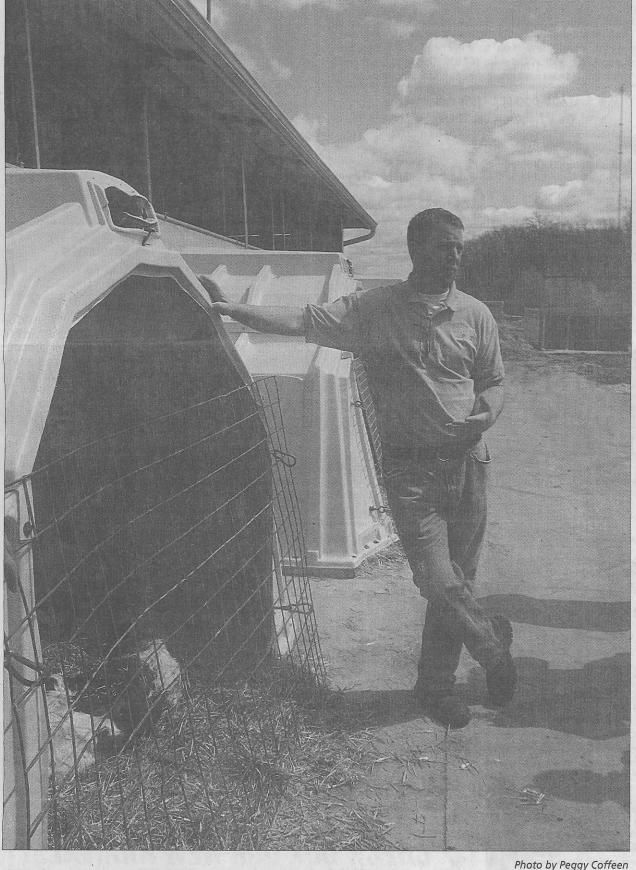


Photo by Peggy Coffeen Holsum Irish Dairy's farm manager Kirk Vander Dussen explained to members of the Wisconsin Green Building Alliance how cows are the ultimate recyclers. Pointing to a newborn calf, he explained that even their breeding philosophy focuses on sustainability through genetic selection.