

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Andrew Vander Meulen Wins 2019 Curtis Clark Achievement Award

Andrew Vander Meulen of Avonlea Genetics Inc., Brighton, Ontario, has won the Curtis Clark Achievement Award for 2019. His selection was announced on November 8th during the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto, Ont. Vander Meulen is the 33rd recipient of this award which was established by the Alberta Holstein Branch in 1988 to honour the late Curtis Clark of Acme Holsteins, a respected Alberta Holstein breeder, cowman and showman.

Andrew Vander Meulen, 49, has been involved with Jersey cattle all his life. He grew up on his parents' Peninsula Jersey Farm at Stirling, Ont., where he developed his love and passion for breeding purebred Jerseys while working on the farm and participating in 4-H. Following graduation from Kemptville Agricultural College, he worked for six and a half years for Jersey Canada as Assistant Executive Secretary and Associate Editor of their Canadian Jersey Breeder magazine. During his time with the Association, Vander Meulen cultivated many great relationships with Jersey breeders around the world, while also gaining a great business background.

In 1997, Andrew married Jennifer Livock and they became partners in the operation now known as Avonlea Genetics with Jennifer's parents, Jim and Liz Livock. Jen's grandfather and great-uncle, Bill and Jack Featherstone, originally started the Avonlea herd at Oakville, Ont., in 1934. Offspring from three of the original six cows purchased for the farm by the Featherstones are still making an impact at Avonlea. Following a barn fire, the farm moved to Brighton in 2000 where the herd is housed in a bedded pack barn and milked in a herringbone parlour. While the Avonlea herd has always had a worldwide reputation for breeding quality cattle, Andrew and Jen have worked tirelessly to bring the herd even further to the forefront of the Jersey breed. Today Andrew and Jen and their children, Taylor, 18, and Will, 16, along with help from Jen's parents, manage this highly regarded Jersey herd. A two-time Master Breeder winner, Avonlea Genetics was this year's Breeder of Distinction at the TD Canadian 4-H Dairy Classic.

The Avonlea herd presently consists of 20 Excellent, 33 Very Good and four Good Plus cows. Breeding balanced, productive animals from deep-pedigreed cow families has always been the goal at Avonlea. Two longtime cow families, the Mischief and Kitty lines, have generated many show winners and high type cattle not only for Avonlea, but other breeders as well. The Mischief family has produced such notables as Avonlea Renaissance Mischief (VG-88-7*). She is the dam of Avonlea Mischief's Magnolia-ET (Ex-92-4E-12*), 2016 Jersey Canada "Cow of the Year", and the grandam of Musqie latola Martha (Ex-97-USA), the three-time Royal Winter Fair Supreme Champion and once World Dairy Expo Supreme Champion. The Kitty line has given rise to such cows as Avonlea Renaissance Kookie-ET (Ex-92-5E-9*), a seven-time All-Canadian nominee in milking form and a two-time All-Canadian winner. Kookie's granddaughter, Avonlea Premier Chocolate Chip (Ex-95), was All-Canadian and All-American 5-year-old in 2018. In addition to these homebred families, Avonlea has also invested in some of the best cow families the Jersey breed has to offer around the world.

At Avonlea, showing is a family affair with Andrew and his family working side-by-side to present cattle at many shows in Canada and the United States each year. Avonlea has

earned over 300 All-Canadian nominations resulting in 55 All-Canadian and 42 Reserve All-Canadian awards. In 2008, Avonlea took grand champion honours at the Royal Winter Fair and World Dairy Expo with Alexvale Made Me Giggle (Ex-96-3E-4*). They claimed an earlier Royal grand championship in 1998 with Avonlea MCT Becky (Ex-96-2*). Taylor and Will Vander Meulen have inherited their parents' love for showing and have already won numerous awards for their 4-H calves and showmanship talents ensuring many more continued years of showing participation by Avonlea.

The marketing of genetics has always been a vital part of Avonlea's program. Avonlea has exported embryos to over 30 foreign countries. They sell many animals privately and in public auction sales each year. The bottom line in all of their marketing endeavours is ensuring they have a "happy customer". In the last 15 years, Andrew and Jen have expanded their marketing efforts to include a sales management component. The couple has managed some of the highest averaging Jersey sales in North America, including their own successful Summer Splash series. More recently, Avonlea has also boarded and shown cattle for breeders and partners from Canada, the United States, Brazil, Mexico and Australia. Andrew takes great pride in caring for these cattle like they are his own and ensuring that they perform at their best at the shows and are profitable for their owners.

An internationally recognized judge, Andrew has judged national Jersey shows in Canada (Royal Winter Fair), the United States (the All-American and World Dairy Expo), Brazil, Mexico and Colombia, as well as officiating at shows in Australia and countless more across North America. He has served on numerous breed and industry committees. Vander Meulen was the Jersey representative to the committee that developed Canada's National Livestock Identification (NLID) program. He was a national director and then Jersey Canada president in 2007.

Andrew Vander Meulen is an astute cowman, businessman and enthusiastic Jersey promoter. Articulate and personable, he is considered by all to be one of the "good guys" in the business. Vander Meulen is humbled to have won the Clark award. He says it is truly an honour for him to be recognized by a group who have been his peers and mentors and for whom he has the utmost respect. He is also grateful to the Alberta Holstein Branch for their continued efforts in sponsoring this award. "This type of recognition is important in our industry, and I am glad the Alberta Branch has continued the tradition of this award," he says.

The Curtis Clark Achievement Award is presented annually at the Royal to the Canadian dairy cattle exhibitor who is respected for his ability, sportsmanship and dedication. Former recipients of the award choose the winner. Andrew Vander Meulen received a gold belt buckle as a personal keepsake of this honour. His name will also be engraved on the distinctive Clark trophy that bears a bronzed version of Curtis Clark's hat.

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