

## Halifax: Gorgeous Cows and Breathtaking Scenery

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**GREAT FOOD AND HOSPITALITY, GORGEOUS COWS, AND BREATHTAKING SCENERY, ARE JUST A FEW WORDS TO DESCRIBE FARMING ON THE EAST COAST.**

The 2011 National Holstein Convention was held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from May 12th to 16th. This year's Ontario delegates for the Young Adult Program of the Convention were Janelle Kellogg of Welovale Holsteins in Port Hope, Jamie McNinch of Bonniespring Holsteins in Millbrook and myself, Kyleene Kidd-Williams of Kedeb Holsteins in Peterborough.

The Convention was based out of the Westin Nova Scotian hotel, which is where we convened on Thursday afternoon for our first meet and greet with 25 other delegates from across Canada. We then watched a video on parliamentary procedure and discussed the applications of genomics on our farms.

Following the seminars we all walked to the Alexander Keith's brewery for a tour and dinner.

Friday morning started off early for a full day of farm tours. Our first stop was the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC), in Truro-Bible Hill. The NSAC Ruminant Animal Centre is a 35,000 square foot tie stall facility that is home to 40 purebred milking Holsteins, replacement heifers and calves. Their current herd classification is 1 EX, 15 VG, 27 GP and 8 G, with a BCA of 223-224-216. We toured the facility and learned about some of the research they are conducting at the facility, in particular with pasture feeding.

Our second stop was at Musqui Valley Farms Ltd., owned by the Dillman family. They have a 50 head milking herd of Holsteins, Jerseys, Guernsey's and one Brown Swiss. The barn was five years old, having been rebuilt after a hurricane loss that destroyed the original barn. Their current herd classification is 8 multiple EX, 32 VG, 12 GP, and 1 Good. The current BCA of 208-231-216 is a combined BCA of all breeds. At this farm we had Jack Thomson of West River Holsteins and an official Holstein Canada judge discuss how judging correlates to functional confirmation.

The last farm stop was at Browntown Farms Ltd., owned by Alex Brown. Alex's story was a very interesting one. Coming from a family that was in the forestry industry, Alex had limited farming background when at the age of 20 he purchased his own farm. Now just

four years later he milks 80 head in a freestall barn and crops 700 acres of land. Dr. Shawn McKenna spoke to us as the guest speaker at this location, on animal foot health and the cost of lameness. He advised that the average cost per case in lost income due to lameness averages \$325. With this figure in mind we discussed treatment and prevention techniques.

After a full day in the barns, we headed back to the hotel to get ready for the Master Breeder Awards Banquet. We watched in awe as 20 Master Breeder Shields were presented, and came away inspired to go home and work harder towards obtaining this honour for our own farms either for the first or second time.



*Jamie McNinch of Bonniespring Holsteins, Millbrook, Kyleene Kidd-Williams of Kedeb Holsteins, Peterborough and Janelle Kellogg of Welovale Holsteins, Port Hope enjoy down-home hospitality at the 2011 National Holstein Convention held in Halifax from May 12-16. (Photo submitted)*

Saturday morning we had the privilege of having breakfast with three Master Breeders, Marc Comtois of Comestar, Curtis McNeil of Heather Holme and Bloyce Thompson of Eastside. We were able to have a question and answer session with them. All three farms donated an embryo from one of their best cows and were awarded at the breakfast.

Following breakfast we attended Holstein Canada's Annual General Meeting for the day. While much was discussed highlights included Lindenoord Rudolph Lilac being named Cow of the Year and Marc Comtois being presented with the Superior Accomplishment Award.

That night we attended an Atlantic Lobster Feast followed by the National Convention Spotlight On The East cattle sale. Many of the animals sold in the sale along with numerous other exhibitors showed in the Atlantic Holstein Show the following day. We attended the show, which saw Wendon Goldwyn Allie crowned Grand Champion.

Our Conference wrapped up the Sunday night with a comedy show and dinner. The following morning the majority of the delegates returned home with seven of us, including Jamie and myself, staying on for the East Nova Scotia and Newfoundland bus tour from May 16th to 20th.

Great friendships were made and a lot was learned. It was an amazing experience and one that I know Janelle, Jamie and I would recommend to everyone who is eligible to apply.

Thank you to Holstein Ontario for sponsoring us on this experience of a lifetime!

