

- Thorncreek Farms focuses on nutrition
- Safer, easier filling
- Faster unloading with Harvestore XL 400



Harvestore Dealer's Focus on Nutrition Helps Ontario Dairy Decide to Invest in Harvestore

When Mike and Melissa Hansma of Ontario's Thorncreek Farms decided to investigate the potential benefits of a Harvestore forage system, they contacted Ontario Harvestore Systems to begin their evaluation.



The Hansma's new Harvestore at Thorncreek Farms.

The Hansma dairy was milking 75 cows and had been striving to increase production of milk and milk components to increase profitability under Canada's quota system. This would mean getting more out of its feeding program and profit per cow.

Thorncreek Farms was storing its forages in open-top concrete stave silos. What they found out from Ontario Harvestore was that Harvestores do a better job of protecting forage quality over stave silos – and that better forage quality leads to improved nutrition, which in turn would have a measurable impact on the health and productivity of their dairy herd.

Mike, who researches his investments carefully, was impressed by the information on dairy nutrition and feed quality

provided by the Harvestore dealer's representative, Gary Folkema. Mike was looking for more than a wonderful piece of equipment to save time and labor in the short term. He was interested in the lifetime value he'd get by investing in a Harvestore haylage system.

By crunching the numbers, Mike saw that focusing on upgrading forage feed quality would impact milking performance. The family would make more money for a more positive cash flow over their feeding program of the past.

Ontario Harvestore put together a new system for Thorncreek Farms that includes a 25 x 90 Harvestore with automated push button fill doors, external breather bags and the new, powerful Harvestore XL 400



Summer, Mike and Melissa Hansma.

unloader for fast removal of feed. Gary oversaw the delivery and installation of the Hansmas Harvestore system at every step.

At first, Mike was considering a 20 x 90 unit. But his calculations showed him he needed more storage to increase the amount of haylage he wanted to feed. By going to a 25 x 90 instead of a 20 x 90, he'd also have a large enough silo to install the faster XL 400 versus an Alliance unloader.

(continued on reverse)



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A visit to other dairies using Harvestore technology confirmed to Mike that the information he had from the dealership was practical and real.

“It was good to see what other dairies were doing, but in the end you never know until you get yours up and running,” Mike observes. However, he says “everything we thought would come true has so far.”

“In nine years Mike had tried to get his butterfat over 4 percent and now he has,” says Gary. “Where I can do the most good is to get dairies to look at their nutrition.”

Safer, Easier Filling, Faster Unloading

Mike says he “really, really likes” the push button fill doors. “You push a button and you’re all done. Sometimes you’re filling silo at night and I don’t like climbing 90 feet in the dark when I’m tired.”

Push button fill doors help to protect silage quality, save labor, and are safer for the

operator as workers aren’t exposed to silo gasses and dangerous climbing, Gary says. He also mentions that Mike’s Harvestore system is outfitted with external breather bags that capture CO₂ during fermentation and return it to the silo when temperatures inside the silo are cooling.

Hansmas’ Harvestore XL 400 has unloaded haylage at up to 630 lbs per minute. “Most of the time we get 400 lbs per minute, which is a lot better than we had been getting. We put up an oats and peas mix last year that was a little wetter and, man, did it hoof it out.”

Next, a Harvestore for High Moisture Corn

The Hansmas are so happy with their Harvestore for haylage, they are putting up a 20 x 70 unit for high moisture corn.

“High moisture corn exceeds dry corn in its value,” Mike says, approximately 64 cents per bushel on a 100 percent dry matter



The New Harvestore XL Unloader.

basis. In his area, dry corn has jumped from \$105 to \$158 per ton.

Again, he and Ontario Harvestore penciled out the returns from the new unit. “I wish I had the high moisture corn unit last year and I would have saved a lot of money,” Mike says.

Gary and Mike talk on a regular basis. “I’m surprised if I don’t hear from him at least once a week,” Mike says of Gary. “I really value his input.”

Hansmas Save On Supplements, Earn Even More On Butterfat

Since purchasing their Harvestore, “We have been saving approximately \$1,500 per month in feed supplements,” says Mike. “And we have been getting an additional \$3,000 per month for more milk components” such as butterfat, he adds. At the same time, the Hansmas have shrunk their herd size from 75 to 67 milking cows to stay within Canada’s quota.

“We’ve seen butterfat go up nicely since we put up the Harvestore,” says Mike. The dairy used to struggle with butterfat, particularly during hot summer months. “Our butterfat would be 3.3 or 3.4 and we couldn’t get it up for anything. After feeding haylage last summer, our butterfat rose to just under 4.0 percent and we’ve hit a high of 4.33 percent. There are two reasons for this – that blue silo and a high haylage ration.”

Cows were fed 60 to 65 percent moisture haylage in a 50-50 mix with corn silage and two to three lbs per head per day dry hay, which Mike now says was “the wrong thing to do.”

Today he feeds 40 to 45 percent moisture, shorter cut haylage in an 85 to 15 percent mix with corn silage for a drier overall feed. His 90 percent alfalfa, 10 percent Timothy mix with two lbs of Brome grass added per acre is a highly palatable forage that is less coarse for the cows, Mike adds.

“We don’t feed any dry hay now unless it’s to fresh cows to get them up and going,” Mike explains. “We try to get our milk out of the haylage, not corn silage.”

“Haylage is the big key to everything. The haylage is nice and at a moisture level which is

healthy for the cow. In some ways, we’re going back to the way we used to feed years ago – we’ve got healthier cows and we haven’t had one single foot problem.

He used to spend \$1,900 to \$2,000 a month in supplements and now spends only \$400, feeding straight soymeal at a reduced rate of 1.25 lbs per head per day at only \$197 per ton. “We’re saving \$1,500 a month by feeding haylage and more of it, and we get the same amount of milk with more milk components from fewer cows,” he says.

Mike is keeping his eye on other positive returns from feeding from a Harvestore, such as pregnancy rate. “Going to a more forage diet (dry haylage) I think is helping, but time will tell for sure,” Mike concludes.

We’d Like Your Comments...

Have you had success designing rations around forage stored in a Harvestore? We’d like to hear your story and possibly feature it in an upcoming issue of Harvestore Today. If we use your story, we’ll present you with an iPod. Email us your experience or other comments to dnelles@engstorage.com.