



# Fifth-generation Tillamook farmer carries on tradition

By MARGARETT WATERBURY  
For the Capital Press

For John Seymour, raising calves and making silage beats working in an office any day.

“I’ve worked 9-to-5 type jobs — banking, offices — but I really enjoy my life now. I don’t have days off, but I don’t really have bad days, either,” he said. “I work every day, but there’s no defined boundary between my work and my life, and I like that.”

Courtesy of Seymour Dairy  
Seymour Dairy’s calves are still raised on the original parcel their family purchased in 1876. “I’ve worked 9-to-5 type jobs — banking, offices — but I really enjoy my life now. I don’t have days off, but I don’t really have bad days, either,” said fifth-generation farmer John Seymour. “I work every day, but there’s no defined boundary between my work and my life, and I like that.”

John, 27, is a fifth-generation dairy farmer and the dairy manager at Seymour Dairy. His family arrived in southern Tillamook County in 1876, just 17 years after Oregon became a state. Today, their original parcel is still part of the 200-acre farm.

Currently milking about 300 cows, Seymour Dairy sells exclusively to the Tillamook County Creamery Association, where John’s mother, Amy Seymour, is

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John Seymour, fifth-generation dairy farmer

on the board of directors.

John runs all of the day-to-day operations: making decisions about where cows will go, scheduling employees, managing herd health and nutrition, treating sick cows, measuring pasture and mending fences.

“That’s what you get when you’re the manager, and also the boss’ son,” he said with a smile.

Seymour Dairy takes advantage of the Oregon Coast’s relatively mild climate by keeping cows in the pasture as long as possible, typically from the beginning of March all the way through mid-November.

“As long as there’s grass outside for them to eat, they’re outside,” he said.

John’s maternal grandfather introduced the rotational grazing system they still use today. He established 22 separate pastures, a carefully chosen number that ensures cows can be moved to fresh pasture each day. Rye grass, Seymour Dairy’s primary fodder crop, has three leaves.

It takes seven days for the plant to grow each leaf, which means it takes 21 days for a pasture to fully regrow after grazing.

That seasonal approach also extends to calving and breeding.

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In addition to his responsibilities as the dairy manager, John is also a participant in the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association Young Dairy Leaders program. Alongside three other young dairy farmers, John has traveled to Salem and Washington, D.C., to lobby lawmakers on behalf of the dairy industry.

“We’ve been able to build connections with members of the Oregon delegation,” John said, “and I think that’s important. There’s a big disconnect now where people don’t really know where their food comes from, or even a lot about farms. It’s hard for dairy farmers to find the time to talk to people about what they do, but it’s good to get out there and share our stories, to let people know we’re here for the right reasons.”

“Getting to turn grass into milk and cheese is pretty rewarding, and it’s not something very many people get to do anymore. It’s really hard to get into the industry for a person my age who doesn’t have a family farm or financial backing. I’m really lucky I have a farm I can come back to and keep those traditions going.”

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