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Dairy family adds innovation to operation

By **HEATHER SMITH THOMAS**
For the Capital Press

ROYAL CITY, Wash. —
This large dairy the Columbia

Basin 30 miles southwest of Moses Lake, Wash., is owned and operated by Austin Allred and family, who farm nearby.

The facility was originally built in 2000 by the Smith Brothers, who also ran a bottling plant.

“They sold it to Nelson Faria, who ran it a few years then started farming in Texas in 2008. That’s when my dad and I got involved. In 2016 I bought Nelson’s portion so now it’s just our family. We are potato farmers and grow row crops and apples, but I branched out into dairying,” Allred said.

“I was fortunate to be able to work with him for several years before he moved to Texas,” Allred said.

Most of the cows are Holstein-Jersey crosses. Faria utilized the best of both breeds.

“I have 1,000 purebred Holsteins and some purebred Jerseys but most of our cows are crossbred. We are going toward Jerseys; that’s what the market dictates,” he said.

“I spend all my days milking cows and loving it,” he said.

On average of 20 calves are born each day.

“We use sexed semen to ensure plenty of heifer calves,” he said. At this point they don’t sell surplus heifers because they are still expanding cow numbers.

The family farm grows most of the feed. Rotation crops such as alfalfa and silage work well with potatoes.

Austin and his wife, Camille, have a 3-year-old boy named Porter and a 1-year-old girl named Adaline.

“Their favorite thing every morning is go check the cows. Porter just got his first battery-powered 4-wheeler and loves to drive back and forth between home and the office. My favorite thing is to have my kids at work with me,” he said.

“I am new in the dairy world. I grew up growing potatoes and apples with my



Courtesy of the Allred family

Austin Allred, his wife, Camille, and their kids, Porter and Adaline. Royal Dairy in Washington state raises mostly Holstein-Jersey crosses and uses a unique bio-filter that cleans its waste water.

dad. This is a new adventure, but I have an advantage regarding regulations and challenges that dairies are facing right now because I don’t know much about the past,” he said.

The dairy is up to date and doesn’t have to try to change traditional ways of doing things, he added.

One innovation Allred has installed is a bio-filter.

“The dairy industry has a challenge with manure, and liquid manure management is the biggest challenge. We already process our green water through a centrifuge and are now taking it one step farther and processing it through a bio-flow-through system installed by BioFiltro,” Allred said.

It utilizes large, concrete structures that hold layers of rocks, wood chips and shavings and a top layer of earthworms and bacteria.

“We apply the green water on top of that with sprinklers

and within four hours it percolates through and comes out significantly cleaner. This natural filter removes most of the nitrogen and phosphorus, and much of the potassium,” he said.

The water can be put back onto the land via pivot irrigation.

They also have a valuable by-product in worm castings. The worms consume a lot of the wood chips along with the nitrogen and some of the other nutrients, he said.

“We harvest the worm castings, which are used as a nutrient-dense fertilizer by greenhouses, orchards and gardeners,” Allred said.

“The goal is to manage our water in a system that is environmentally helpful rather than harmful. If we have clean water to utilize on the dairy and farm, we use less total water, plus have the benefit of fertilizers from solids in the manure.”