

# Simple milking and feeding system for new American goat dairy

Fourth generation cheese maker Jean Rossard stepped down from his Montchevre goat cheese factory in Belmont, Wisconsin, USA in 2018. But he was not quite ready for retirement so when his son Simon became interested in raising dairy goats, Jean took the chance to pass on his knowledge to the next generation.

by the USA Waikato  
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[www.waikatomilking.com](http://www.waikatomilking.com)

Jean and his sons, Simon and Julien, set out on a venture which would lead to establishing a new dairy, The Laughing Goat, LLC in 2019.

They started on a farm lease with 400 animals near Darlington WI. Simon trained on the Darlington farm from 2018 and about a year later the family decided to set up their own dairy, near their home by Belmont in Lafayette County, WI.

That is when they started to look around for a new goat milking system. They spent a year reviewing the options with several dairy dealers, visiting milking plants in the US, Canada and France.

"We decided to go with the Waikato Milking Systems goat rotary parlour to replace our 2 x 16 rapid exit stanchions and an archaic feed system," Jean told International Dairy Topics. "Our goal was to find a simple milking and feeding system,

**From left: Julien and Simon Rossard with their father, Jean set up the Laughing Goat dairy.**



with technology, built using high quality materials to resist a harsh farm environment and, of course, to be animal friendly."

The Waikato Milking System rotary satisfied most of their requirements. Plus, the company's midwest team was in Verona, WI, about one hour from the farm, which was a major selling point. "We knew that if we needed an urgent service repair or to obtain critical replacement parts, we could do that right away."

The family was impressed with the rotary design and its lightweight composite deck. They liked that the inflators, pulsators, vacuum lines, and milk pipeline were accessible outside and inside the rotary. The rotary platform, stalls and components were mostly built of stainless steel, hard plastic and rubber.

## Beating the pandemic

The family began to set up Laughing Goat in the Northern Hemisphere fall of 2019 but Covid-19 arrived in March 2020 which held up delivery of barn equipment. "Fortunately the rotary was ordered in August 2019 and it was delivered from New Zealand just before the pandemic."

They moved to the new farm on 16th April, 2020. The local contractors and the Waikato Milking Systems team did a good job of getting the building ready to assemble the parlour during the pandemic. The rotary is easy to operate and safe to use with just two people, one to take care of the milking and the other to move the animals around and for post-dipping.

The platform operates with a simple switch to put it into milking or cleaning mode. Another switch controls the platform speed or rotation per minute.

In March, the plant was milking about 300 goats, with another 90 to freshen. "The rotary is set at 7.5 minutes per rotation which is capable of milking about 480 goats per hour," Jean told us. The rotary would allow the farm to increase to 1,000 milking goats in the near future. With the rotary's quick stop and start feature, the operator can



**The Optima External Goat Rotary at the Laughing Goat farm.**

pull on a blue line above their head for a quick stop and quick start. The red line can be pulled for an emergency stop which needs to be cleared and reset on the control panel to resume milking.

The goat rotary also features an automatic cluster presentation arm unique to Waikato Milking Systems. It automatically returns the cluster to the platform height, ready for cupping, so the operator does not have to constantly bend over to reach for the clusters. The automatic detach is also a good option which saves a lot of walking around the rotary.

## Dairy management software training

The only challenge setting up the rotary was learning how to use the dairy management software. The family worked with their local Waikato Milking Systems representative from Belmont, and with the company's technicians in New Zealand via audio-visual, to calibrate, create groups and manage the feed system. It is a great tool to manage and schedule the amount of feed and feed choice that needs to be dropped per animal, per day in a selected group (lactate, dry or freshen group).

The feed weights can also be automatically increased or decreased per goat in a group through the year on a weekly basis. The feed weight control is definitely

a saving factor, knowing the high feed price per ton, and is a way to be sure each goat is getting the right amount of feed.

The dairy management software has other useful features like milk volume data per animal and per milking, animal alerts and animal health history.

Overall the rotary plant has lived up to the family's expectations. If Jean were to wish for any additions, he says it would be a pre and post dip system to keep the somatic cell and bacteria count under control. "But we definitely think the Waikato Milking Systems' goat rotary parlour and feeding system were the right choice for our farm," Jean added. ■

## The automatic cluster presentation arms makes it easy for Julien to milk the goats.

