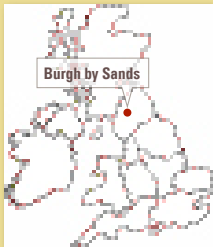




#### The Hodgson family

Investing in genetics and new housing, and continually fine tuning health and fertility management, has helped this business to realise a dream.



Herd size:	<b>145</b>
Unit size:	<b>122 hectares</b>
Average yield:	<b>10,761kg</b>
EX cows:	<b>40</b>

**G**old Cup runners up this year and winners of the NMR Silver Salver are Cumbria-based producers David and Louise Hodgson. And they are also thrilled with their achievement.

“We’ve already been out to celebrate and we’re all still very excited and buoyed by our success,” says David, who admits he was always in awe of previous Gold Cup winners. “I wouldn’t say that I aspired to winning it – it always seemed just too far out of our reach. But we got our heads down and did the very best job that we could with what we had and then found ourselves in a position where we could enter.

“So, when we qualified, we thought, why not – you’ve got to be in it to win it, as they say. And just look at us now!”

Today he and Louise run the Wormanby Holstein herd, based near Burgh by Sands in Cumbria, which was registered pedigree in 1985. They run the business

## NMR Silver Salver winners have realised their Gold Cup competition dream

# Aspiring to win

You’ve got to be in it to win it, say this year’s runners up in the NMR/RABDF Gold Cup competition. And win they certainly did, scooping a silver award that many producers can only dream of winning. Here we find out how.

text **Rachael Porter**

with David’s parents Harry and Margaret. David’s keen interest in genetics has encouraged investment in renowned cow families.

Constantly improving the herd and its management has led to a flexible system to suit their Holstein cows. And with the latest investment in new housing they are looking forward to more fine-tuning of the herd’s health and production.

Selecting for longevity means that as well as milk sales from their 145 milkers, the Hodgsons have up to 40 newly calved heifers for sale annually along with breeding bulls, amounting to a third of the business’ gross income. “Despite the recent drop in milk prices, cow values have held up, but should we feel it would be better to milk more cows than we have the flexibility to retain the heifers and increase herd numbers,” says David.

The unit’s 122 hectares could run a 200-cow herd, but Harry and David currently manage the cattle themselves with some relief help. They believe that one of the threats to the industry is the availability

of quality labour and this is one of the reasons why they have invested in a building that reduce labour input.

But they can see plenty of opportunities and, having invested heavily in buildings and genetics, the Hodgsons are optimistic about the future and believe the demand for quality milk will make production sustainable. The new cubicle house for 105 cows has improved herd management by facilitating year-round housing of the majority of the milking herd.

“We have seen an increase in yield of up to 500kg a cow and we have only had six cases of mastitis during the 12 months since we started using the building,” says David.

Longevity is high up on the agenda at Wormanby and the Hodgsons look to breed long lasting cows. The aim is for cows to achieve 50,000kg within five lactations. Currently there are 40 EX cows in the herd with 70 VG and 30 GP cows. The herd averaged 10,761kg of milk, at 3.76% fat and 3.12% protein on twice-a-day milking, for the year ending September 2011. |



*Cow house: a new cubicle shed for 105 milkers allows the herd to be managed inside all year round*