

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JESSICA STILES HESS NAMED HONORED WITH 2025 YOUNG JERSEY BREEDER AWARD

Reynoldsburg, Ohio, August 15, 2025— The Board of Directors of the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA) has honored Jessica Stiles Hess of Boonsboro, Md., with the 2025 Young Jersey Breeder Award. This national recognition celebrates breeders under the age of 40 who have achieved excellence in managing and breeding Registered Jerseys, demonstrated significant production and type achievements, and shown leadership in the Jersey and dairy industries.

Hess's connection to Jersey cattle began before she could walk, when her parents, Janet and the late Tracy Stiles, gifted her first calf from their family herd, Shenandoah Jerseys. Through her youth, she expanded her herd with the support of her parents, purchasing animals—including from the Pot O'Gold Sale—and showing competitively. In 1998, she exhibited Hedgebrook B Lad Marie, Excellent-94%, to the title of *Junior National Reserve Grand Champion*, a cow whose descendants still grace the Shenandoah herd today. One such descendant was even gifted to her son, Cole, to start his own herd.

Hess faced a major challenge during her freshman year of high school when her father passed away from cancer. She and her mother carried on his legacy, growing the herd and improving facilities, including building a new parlor while Hess pursued her dairy science degree at Virginia Tech. Her college experiences only strengthened her resolve to return home and continue the family business.

Today, Shenandoah Jerseys milks with a DeLaval VMS robotic milking system, retrofitted into their existing freestall barn and parlor. The family also installed an automatic calf feeder to improve efficiency and invested in sustainability by adding solar panels to the barn. The REAP herd currently averages 24,045 lbs. milk, 1,102 lbs. fat, and 931 lbs. protein on 99 cows.

In her breeding program, Hess follows the model set by her parents: “a good quality milk cow.” She prioritizes ideal teat placement and size, udder depth, strong feet and legs, and maintaining high components. Her success in these goals is reflected in the performance and longevity of her herd.

Hess and her husband, JR, became majority owners of Shenandoah Jerseys in 2022. With their two young sons, Cole and Luke, in mind, they have expanded their land base by purchasing two additional farms, positioning the next generation for success should they choose to farm.

“She is a forward thinker who has embraced cutting-edge technology to improve her farm’s efficiency and adaptability,” wrote Renée Norman-Kenny in a letter of support.

While the future of the dairy industry can be uncertain, Hess remains steadfast in her commitment to the Jersey cow. As she wrote in her award application: *“I don’t know what’s ahead for Shenandoah Jerseys, but I know that as long as I’m here, there will be Jersey cows.”*

The Young Jersey Breeder Awards were presented at the AJCA-NAJ Annual Meetings in Lexington, Ky., on June 25, 2025. Since its inception in 1976, the award has recognized 320 outstanding young Jersey breeders nationwide.

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For a high resolution photo, please get in touch with the American Jersey Cattle Association Communications Department at info@usjersey.com.