

Mistyglen Holsteins to open



FERGUSON BROS. OF ST. THOMAS LTD.
Let's think about Spring, it will be here before you know it!

Seed and Contracts available for:
 Cranberries, Dark Red Kidneys,
 White Kidneys and more.

CUSTOM HARVESTING AVAILABLE

Give us a call to discuss your 2021 crop needs

R.R. #6, 43850 Ferguson Line
 St. Thomas, ON N5P 3T1
 Phone: 519-631-3463 Fax: 519-631-8843
 E-mail: fergusonoffice@execulink.com



The Pettit family - Kris, Kadie, Tom and Maddie - were thrilled to welcome back 52 cows back to Mistyglen Holsteins on Monday, Nov. 30. They spent nearly six months rebuilding their milking barn after it had been hit by two separate tornados in summer last year. (AE/Jodie Aldred Photography)

By Veronica Reiner of the Aylmer Express

While 2020 was a tumultuous year marked by challenges—tornadoes twice barreling through their milking barn, in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic—the Pettit family is coming back stronger in 2021, rebuilt and incorporating a new venture on their Belmont area dairy farm.

The Mistyglen Creamery, spearheaded by Kris Pettit, is an on-farm processing plant and retail store, with construction expected to begin in the spring and planned to be open for business by the end of the year.

The creamery will offer on-farm processed products,

including non-homogenized full-fat milk, chocolate milk, yogurt, kefir and cheese curds.

"We're pretty excited about it," said Kris. They've announced this new venture, and while planning and construction is underway, she said they aim to "keep getting people interested in it, right from the get-go. That's the main goal at this point."

She said her vision for the creamery is not just about providing food products. "It's also about connecting with our local economy and connecting with our consumers and educating people on farming and dairy."

Kris and her husband Tom Pettit run the 265-acre farm, Mistyglen Holsteins, along

with their daughters Maddie, 15, Kadie, 13, and Tom's sister Suzanne. The family has deep roots in the region, with the dairy barn located across the road from the property first settled by the Pettit family in 1816.

“ you don't think about your own safety. You just think about your animals and making sure they're okay. ”

Kris, who works full-time as a registered nurse, will oversee the creamery once it is operational. She said her background

in health and nutrition will be valuable in this new endeavour to process and sell farm fresh dairy products.

She will also serve as plant manager, and the Pettit family will provide labour for processing, with plans to expand and eventually provide employment opportunities in the future.

The idea for the creamery originally came about five years ago, but had been put on the back burner to focus on other projects before they decided to move forward with it last year.

Setbacks

Unfortunately, several major obstacles presented themselves for the family to overcome in 2020.

On June 10 last year, an EF1 tornado, with maximum winds of 150 kilometers per hour, blew off their dairy barn's rear wall. The structure was twisted and compromised down to the cement. About 52 cows were milking in the free-stall barn when the tornado hit, and while

the herd was agitated by the events, they were unharmed.

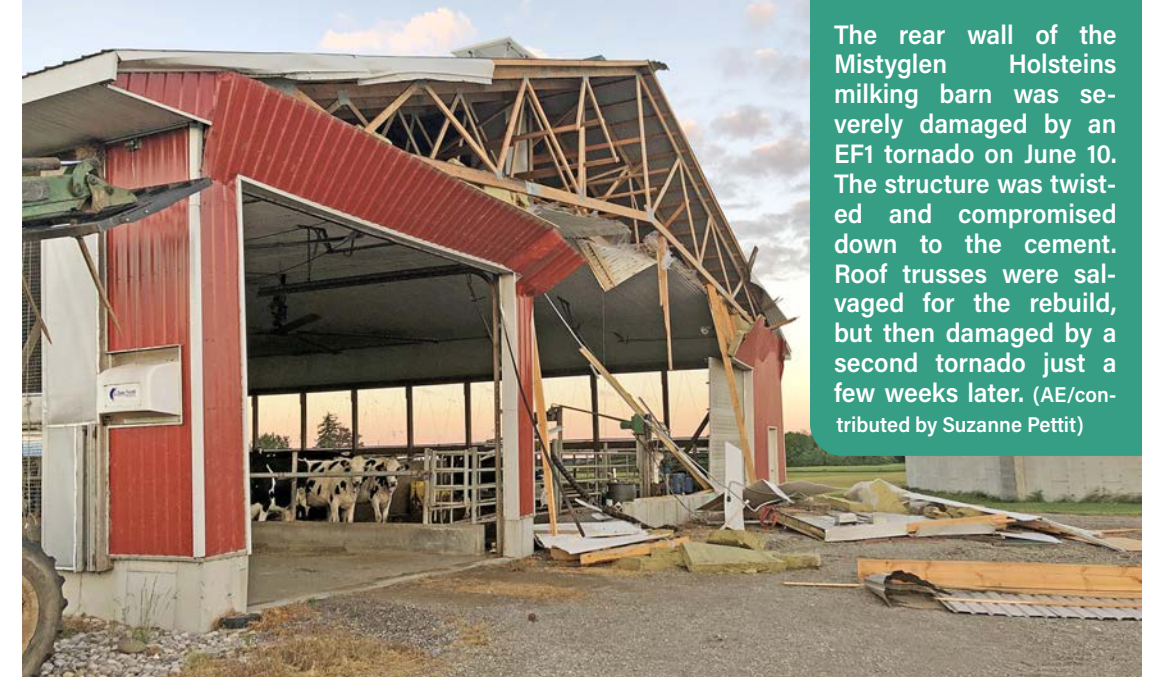
"We had no full hydro outages. It flickered on and off, but eventually, it stayed on. Everything kind of functioned as normal as it could until we got the cows out," explained Tom, adding the 200 amp service panel needed to be disconnected later for safety reasons.

Wrangling the spooked cows to their old barn for shelter was a challenge in the intense stormy weather conditions.

"You were basically working off lightning light," said Tom. "The light would flash, and you'd look around to see if there was any cattle."

"It wasn't a safe environment to be in. But you don't think about your own safety. You just think about your animals and making sure they're okay."

They were fairly certain that the herd wouldn't be able to stay in the barn afterward, but it was difficult to assess that night with the darkness and torrential downpour. It was not a rest-



The rear wall of the Mistyglen Holsteins milking barn was severely damaged by an EF1 tornado on June 10. The structure was twisted and compromised down to the cement. Roof trusses were salvaged for the rebuild, but then damaged by a second tornado just a few weeks later. (AE/contributed by Suzanne Pettit)

Hamilton Ward & Cathers
 INSURANCE SERVICE LIMITED
www.hwcinsurance.ca | info@hwcinsurance.ca

Call ONE OF OUR FARM SPECIALISTS

 Marianne Hamm mhamm@hwcinsurance.ca	 Jason Shackelton jshackelton@hwcinsurance.ca	 Deb Stewart dstewart@hwcinsurance.ca	 Charlie Roloson croloson@hwcinsurance.ca	 Troy Killough tkillough@hwcinsurance.ca
--	---	---	---	--

Your Mainstreet Insurance Broker
226-667-4921

Aylmer 75 Talbot Street East	Port Stanley 289 Bridge Street	St. Thomas 581 Talbot Street	Tillsonburg 128 Broadway	Stratfordville 9254 Plank Road
--	--	--	------------------------------------	--

AYLMER RAD SHOP & AGRICULTURAL PARTS

Offering Chevron and Transit oil products. Also caring Huronia tanks, welding supplies and products.

Chevron **TRANSIT** **HURONIA**

- Tractor Parts, Newer & Older
- Shop Supplies
- Seats
- Belts
- Oil Filters

PARTS FOR:

- Tillage
- Combines
- Lawn & Garden

& MUCH MORE

Wide Selection of Die-Cast Toys

Hours: Monday - Friday 8 - 5 p.m.
519-773-3209
 cell: 519-319-0430 cell: 519-619-4796
joan-laur@hotmail.com
 114 Talbot St. E., Aylmer

new creamery after whirlwind year



13-year-old Kadie Pettit, left, and her sister Maddie, 15, hold up a Mistyglan Creamery promotional poster inside the milking barn at the Belmont-area dairy farm, Mistyglan Holsteins. The new creamery will be located in front of the milking barn, and is tentatively planned to open by the end of 2021. (AE/contributed by Suzanne Pettit)

ful night for the Pettits, who were concerned that the barn could collapse and hurt the cattle.

Once the family inspected the damaged barn the next morning and saw the aftermath, they realized the cows needed to be temporarily rehoused.

In addition to their immediate concerns, the process to establish the creamery had been well on its way when the tornado hit. The Pettits were planning to meet with an Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) dairy plant specialist at their farm, just two days after the tornado damage.

"So we thought, oh, man, we're supposed to meet with dairy plant specialists, and we don't even have cows in our barn anymore," said Kris.

"He showed up and he looked around and he was like 'What on earth happened here?'" said Tom. They held the meeting at the south end of the building, which had a still-intact office.

Helping hands

A silver lining was the outpouring of community support following the tornado damage.

"That next morning, people just started showing up. I didn't even know they were coming," said Tom. "A couple of friends, they took the whole day off work; they put in about a 15-hour shift that day, just helping us clean up."

Friends and community members, some driving from over an hour away, helped to cut down damaged trees, clear brush, and mended fences so that the heifers could get back

on the pasture. Topped equipment was set upright.

"That's something we'll never, ever forget," added Kris.

The herd was shipped off the property to the neighbouring Verhoef dairy farm at around 10 a.m. the next day. Verhoefs have about 190 cows that milk three times daily.

The Mistyglan herd took about one week to settle down from the shock of the incident and adjust to the new milking system, but it was relatively smooth sailing after that.

The close proximity allowed the Pettits to easily check in with their herd, to help with milking, and to deliver corn silage.

Rebuilding was severely disrupted when an EF0 tornado ripped through the dairy barn once again on July 19. Leftover roof trusses, which were initially salvaged and carefully removed in sections to be reused, were then twisted and bent by the second tornado.

The Pettits were forced to re-order new trusses, and weren't able to resume the rebuilding process until August.

They had two ongoing insurance claims: Tornado 1 and Tornado 2.

"Insurance has been great," said Tom.

"Honestly, you don't usually hear that in these situations," but he said their provider has "been nothing but great. They looked after everything, right down to the small details."

Building back better

The Pettits took this as an

opportunity to make improvements on the dairy farm to come back stronger than before.

They noticed their herd really seemed to like the sand bedding at the Verhoefs, so they switched from rubber mats to sand bedding on their own farm.

The new dairy barn was outfitted with new equipment, including a DaLaval V300 robot milker, fans, a manure pump and an improved camera system.

After nearly half a year, the cows were finally welcomed back home on Monday, Nov. 30, where they adjusted fairly quickly to the new environment.

Cows with previous experience with a robot milker visited on their own, so there were only a few heifers that needed to be fetched and taught the new system.

"Ambassadors and advocates"

"I grew up milking cows from the time I was old enough to be able to attach the hoses to the pipeline," said Tom, adding that was about nine-years-old.

Tom's father purchased the Mistyglan Holstein property on Yorke Line in 1957, when he was 19-years-old. Tom and Suzanne both studied at the University of Guelph Ridgetown Campus, and graduated in 1999. After that, they returned home to take over the farming aspect.

Since then, they expanded the crop farming operation through land purchase, while milking occurred in the same barn as their father up until May 2020.

"I've always enjoyed the diversity of the job. There's always something new to do. I work with animals every day, I

fix my own equipment."

Tom looks after maintenance, cropping, breeding, and medications, while Suzanne focuses on the operation's genetic side. Kris will be more involved in the milk processing side moving forward and loves working with the calves.

"We all have our roles to play, but they all intertwine together as well," said Tom.

Their children have also taken a strong interest in dairy farming. Both Maddie and Kadie are members of the Elgin County Dairy 4-H club and help out with various jobs on the farm, such as chores, washing, and trimming cows.

Looking ahead, Mistyglan is planning to expand the calf barn and heifer facilities and purchase more land. They currently own 230 acres and rent out the remaining 35.

As for this year, Kris sees 2021 as a time for progress while juggling multiple tasks. "I foresee that we can be big ambassadors and advocates for Canadian milk moving forward, and the creamery just gives us another avenue to be able to do so."



Sisters Kadie and Maddie Pettit are all smiles with Verhoef dairy farm worker Kendra Cornelissen. The Mistyglan cows stayed at the neighbouring Verhoef farm for almost six months, from June 2020 until late November, while their barn was rebuilt after tornado damage. It took about one week for the cattle to adjust to the new environment and milking system. (AE/contributed by Suzanne Pettit)

Sharing farm life online

Mistyglan Holsteins documented the rebuilding of the barn on their social media pages, posting daily photos updates for 171 days.

Mistyglan Holsteins—and now Mistyglan Creamery—has an active online presence, with thousands of people following their posts of daily farm life on social media platforms.

"We really like being able to bring people out to the farm and give them the experiences that we feel privileged to be able to have, and be able to bust and myths that people might think about dairy farming," said Kris.

"We really want to be transparent. Especially with COVID, social media is so important now in any business really," said Kris.

Suzanne mainly manages the farm's social media pages, which they created around November 2011.

In introducing their newest venture, the family posted a video showing Kris, Tom, Maddie and Kadie unrolling a Mistyglan Creamery banner in front of their newly reconstructed barn. The tagline below the business name on the banner reads: "Homespun Milk."



Proudly serving Aylmer and Area for 15 years!

Specializing in commercial & residential properties

Contact Paul at 519-636-7442 or stokeslawncare@eastlink.ca

We're Elgin County's LARGEST USED CAR DEALER

- 19,000 + Vehicles Sold
- Over 300 Certified Vehicles in Stock

ONE-STOP AUTOMOTIVE CENTRE

- Truck Accessories
- Paint & Body Shop
- Automotive Repair Centre
- Oil Undercoating
- Interior & Exterior Reconditioning



<p>2016 Ram 2500 Longhorn LTD 6.7L Diesel, Crew Cab, 4x4, 215,000 km \$43,995 CERT+HST+LISC</p>	<p>2018 GMC Sierra SLE Crew Cab, 5.3L V-8, 4x4, 77,000 km \$36,995 CERT+HST+LISC</p>
<p>2015 Ram 1500 Reg Cab, 8' Box, Eco Diesel, 4x4, 85,000 km \$23,995 CERT+HST+LISC</p>	<p>2015 Ram 2500 SLT Flatbed, 6.7L Diesel, 149,000 km \$38,995 CERT+HST+LISC</p>
<p>2019 Ram 1500 Warlock Crew Cab, 4x4, 5.7L Hemi, 29,000 km \$41,995 CERT+HST+LISC</p>	<p>2017 GMC Canyon Denali Loaded, Crew Cab, 4x4, 87,000 km \$24,795 CERT+HST+LISC</p>
<p>2013 Chevrolet Avalanche LTZ Black Diamond, 145,000 km \$26,995 CERT+HST+LISC</p>	<p>2018 Ford F-150 XLT S-Cab, 8' Box, 4x4, 99,000 km \$31,995 CERT+HST+LISC</p>
<p>2017 GMC Sierra SLE Kodiak Edition Crew Cab, 5.3L V-8, 115,000 km \$33,995 CERT+HST+LISC</p>	<p>2020 Ram 1500 Level 2 Crew Cab, Hemi 5.7L, 54,000 km \$44,995 CERT+HST+LISC</p>
<p>2017 Ford F-150 XLT Crew Cab, 5.0L V-8, 4x4, 71,000 km \$33,995 CERT+HST+LISC</p>	<p>2015 Ram 3500 Laramie Crew Cab Dually, 6.7L Diesel, 148,000 km \$54,995 CERT+HST+LISC</p>
<p>2013 Ram ST 3500 Flatbed, Diesel, 4x4, 192,000 km \$27,995 CERT+HST+LISC</p>	<p>2016 Chev Colorado Crew Cab, 3.6L, 4x4, Leather, 149,000 km \$23,995 CERT+HST+LISC</p>

MORE TRUCKS TO CHOOSE FROM!

Goodwill's Used Cars

420 Talbot St. E., Aylmer

519-765-1047 • www.goodwillusedcars.com



H.A. KEBBEL FUNERAL HOME

119 Talbot Street East, Aylmer
519-773-8400 | kebbelfuneralhome.com

In difficult times, it helps to know that all arrangements are being handled with the utmost attention to detail & understanding.



Our family serving your family for

OVER 50 YEARS

Herb Kebbel—Bob Kebbel

