

# Canadian Blonde d'Aquitaine Association

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## BREEDER PROFILE

The Canadian Blonde d'Aquitaine Association is pleased to offer this space to profile our breeder members. If your operation has been featured in a magazine or newspaper, please contact Myrna Flesch at [westwind@telusplanet.net](mailto:westwind@telusplanet.net)

### CASE VANDERHAM FARMS Completely sold on Blondes!

*Written by Myrna Flesch, March 2008*

Do you think you would ever purchase two bred heifers that would ultimately change the focus of your livestock operation? Case and Donna Vanderham did just that! They operated a commercial cattle operation and in 1993 purchased two bred blonde heifers. Donna states "when those heifers calved in 1994, she was completely sold on the Blonde breed".

In 1967, Donna and Case started out on a small mixed farm in the Beeton area of Ontario. In 1977, they moved to their present location in Grey County near Owen Sound. Case and Donna had both grown up in this area and appreciated returning to their roots. Their operation encompasses approximately 350 acres, some of that rented from their neighbours.



2006 Grand Champion Calf at the Lindsay Central Exhibition.  
Leading 'Hopeful' is Dylan Thompson.

They have two daughters, Kim who is married to Mike Deneau (they have two children) and Lisa who utilizes her Masters in Environmental Science by working for the Government of British Columbia as head of a Water/Safety Department in Kamloops.

Kim and Mike live nearby and can frequently be found helping at the farm. The Vanderhams have long term retirement plans that include Kim and Mike eventually taking over the farm operation. I have said long term retirement plans, because although Case is 66 and Donna is coming 63, I sensed this is not very imminent.

Case has been a long-haul trucker for Hydeman Transport out of Wroxeter, a small town near Stratford, Ontario. Since 1997, he has been long haul trucking both in Canada and the United States.

Case has been more involved with the farming operation since he suffered a shoulder injury as a result of an accident in August 2006. However, prior to the accident Donna has been the 'farmer' in the family, making the decisions regarding the cattle, planting and harvesting seed crops, and doing the haying.

Case and Donna harvest 25 acres of grain, put up 500 round hay bales (4X5s) and about 250 green feed bales each year. Donna states they purchase some grain from a local mill that is certified "all Natural Feeds". She stated further that some years they must purchase an additional 50 - 100 bales of hay.



Granddaughter, Bethany, showing how quiet cows are.

When the two aforementioned Blonde heifers (who incidentally were not registered stock) calved, changes came about to the Vanderham Farm operation. The commercial cattle were sold in 1994, and they started their purebred operation with the purchase of 6 purebred or fullblood cows through the Hanover Dispersal Sale. They also purchase some Clare-Elle breeding through a sale at Carson's Market which peaked their interest in polled cattle. Donna mentioned that dehorning is not a favourite job on the farm. They leased the famous Sandgaard's Bluejay bull, picking him as a foundation sire for their herd because of his excellent feet, legs and the milking ability of his offspring.

The Vanderhams have gradually worked their herd to be fullblood and mostly polled. Donna likes the insurance of pedigree that comes with fullblood animals - and from what the writer could gather - she is not likely to purchase unregistered stock any time soon.

In the past few years they have concentrated on polled fullbloods and currently have 40 cows (all but 4 are polled) and have 5 bulls. They raise their own replacement heifers. Each year they retain four or five heifers and two or three bulls and make their decision in the spring as to whether they make breeding stock or not. Donna states she does not register or tattoo until the animal is a yearling.

The pedigrees in their herd include animals that embrace the breeding programs from Blon Dell, Hanover Stock Farm, Hilltop Orchard Farms, Royal Dunford, Clare Elle, Maple Valley, Triple C and Roseneath to name but a few.

The Vanderhams have developed a market for freezer trade. This has been accomplished by niche marketing of their beef. Their customers appreciate the lean and tender product. Donna appreciates the carcass yield and is a strong proponent of advising folks in the beef arena to have Blonde cows or to upgrade their calf crops by using a Blonde bull on their current cows.

Donna is in charge of the calving operation. The barns are set up with the pregnant cows wintering outside, running in and out of a barn. When the cows are close to calving they are moved to a holding pen. When calving is imminent the cows are moved to individual calving pens where they remain for approximately 3 days after calving. Both the calf and mother are then moved to a barn kept for the purpose of raising the newborn calves. Thus the newborn calves are not exposed to the bacteria found in every barnyard that has been in constant use. This management technique has eliminated scouring and pneumonia in the calves.

The Vanderham Farm has a health protocol in place. All calves are given Vit A-D, selenium and ear-tagged with their own number and that of the dam at birth. The herd is vaccinated with Triangle 9 and Ivomec is applied both fall and spring.

They market the spring calves that they feel will not make good breeding stock, at a weight between 550 - 675 lbs. thorough the market in Brussels. The calves sold in the fall are given a One Shot vaccination to ward off shipping fever and pneumonia for their prospective buyers. Their later born calves are held over for the grasser trade in the spring.

Case Vanderham was a cattle and horse buyer at one time. This graduated to Cases's rather unique "pet project". He breeds his Belgium mares to mammoth donkeys with the end product being "big mules". Donna states he has a good market for his "pets". They also ride two of the

mules.

In recent years, the Vanderhams have moved into the show ring. This resulted in their having a first with a Yearling Bull and the Grand Champion yearling heifer at the Fair in Lindsay this past fall. This gives credence to their breeding program and puts their herd on display as well. The animals raised in their operation have pedigree names starting with VDH. Look closely the next time you see an animal starting with VDH!

Donna is currently a Director on the Ontario Blonde d'Aquitaine Association Board.



Grandson, KC, with Champion Yearling Heifer at the 2003 Royal.