

# Back on the Farm

Dairy Herd Management grad returns to his family's farm after a life-threatening injury

By Deborah Anderson  
Photos by Deborah Anderson

From the time he was a boy, whenever Sean Klatt was asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, he was sure to answer, 'a farmer.'

He loved his family's dairy farm – taking care of the cows, being out in nature, and working hard from sun-up to sundown. Sean isn't one to sit much. As he grew older, he even took on work on neighboring farms.



While still in high school, Sean was able to work toward an associate degree in Dairy Herd Management at WITC-Rice Lake through the Youth Options program. Sean appreciated how WITC courses are directly related to a career, to the point, and are for people who really know what they want to do – and taught by people who are or have been dairy farmers.

Sean was able to spend mornings taking college courses and then attend high school in the afternoon. This made for some long days, starting with farm chores early in the mornings, sports after school, followed by more evening chores at home. That's a heavy load for a teenager.

"His work ethic is incredible," WITC instructor and veterinarian Jeff Johnson, said.

But, as statistics show, farming is one of the top 10 dangerous occupations when it comes to accidents on the job. The Klatt farm was no exception. This past January, Sean was clearing out a jammed feed mixer when his foot was caught, severing it. His dad, Mike, severely injured his hand while trying to pry Sean's foot loose.

Through advancements of modern medicine, Sean's foot was reattached and Mike's fingers were saved after lengthy surgeries. After a few weeks spent in the hospital and then sitting around the house – which, of course, Sean hated – he was ready to get back to his high school and college courses. Three months later, to Sean's amazement, the doctor told him his foot had healed enough that he could start walking without crutches.

In May, Sean attended two graduation ceremonies. On May 16, Sean walked across the stage at the WITC-Rice Lake graduation ceremony and was handed his associate degree in Dairy Herd Management, a week before receiving his high school diploma.

Sean, prepared for whatever the future holds, is looking forward to buying some of his own cows this fall – a step closer to realizing his long-held dream. ■

—Deborah Anderson is the marketing and public relations associate at WITC-Rice Lake

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