

FARMER PROFILE

MILLBROOK FARM



Millbrook Dairy Profile

Millbrook Dairy is a sixth-generation family farm, founded in 1802, and has been continuously operated by the Space family for over 220 years. The farm spans 1,600 acres of corn/soy rotation across hilly ground in the Finger Lakes and currently milks 850 head with an additional 850 young stock. For generations, the family has been committed to both innovation and sustainability.

Commitment to Innovation

The farm’s proximity to Cornell University has provided opportunities to innovate in partnership with world-class agricultural researchers. Current owner/operators, Ron Space and his daughter, Callan, proudly represent a sixth generation dairy farm in New York. Callan’s degree from Cornell University helped shape both her passion and desire to return to the family farm. Through her participation in Lead NY, she also has brought back valuable leadership skills to support the farm’s business success and position it at the forefront of technological advances in the dairy industry. Through advanced breeding and nutrient management, Millbrook Farm has paved the way for dairy farms across New York state. They became a Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) in 2003, one of the first in New York and non-GMO certified in 2022. “If farmers are doing all the right things, they can market that and improve their public image to sell their products,” Callan said.

Farm at a Glance

SIXTH GENERATION DAIRY

COUNTY: Tompkins + Cayuga County, NY

FARM SIZE: 1600 acres

ENTERPRISE: Milking 850 head with 800 youngstock

NON-GMO PROJECT VERIFIED

- Produced without genetic engineering
- Independently verified through testing and traceability
- Reflects the farm’s commitment to environmental care and responsible livestock management

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Millbrook Farm has a long history of working with local Soil & Water Conservation Districts, with Callan representing the third generation of the family to partner with the Districts for technical assistance.



Through this collaboration, the farm has focused on reducing tillage and minimizing impact on eroding soils. Currently, they are implementing a multi-year winter cover crop program and using speed disk tillage across 1,000 acres. Cover crops help by establishing strong root systems, adding nutrients and protecting fields from wind and water erosion, especially on the farm's hilly terrain. Coupled with reduced tillage, the use of the speed disk allows the farm to manage and break up soils in the spring with a shallower pass, conserving soil structure and managing weeds without heavy disturbance. These practices reflect the farm's commitment to sustainability, partnership, and innovation.

Lessons Learned

Good land management practices make economic sense. "I have a head for numbers," laughed Callan. "We are paying closer attention to our crop yields. With better soils, we have better crops. We are making more efficient use of our equipment and labor, and the balance sheet is going up."

American Farmland Trust's Women for the Land program selected Millbrook Dairy as a demonstration farm because of the family's commitment to sustainable farming practices and willingness to share their lessons learned with the farming community. Callan originally left the farm to pursue a corporate career, but returned to raise her family in the same hills where she grew up. She uses her corporate acumen and leadership skills every day to



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inform business decisions on the farm. Further strengthening the farm's business model, Callan opened Owasco Meat in 2021, a USDA inspected slaughterhouse and meat processing facility helping local producers get their products into the food supply chain. In the fall of 2024, Callan hosted a Women's Learning Circle on the farm, offering an inside look at the many innovative ways Millbrook Dairy is working toward a more resilient sustainable future.

Next Generation

In addition to running the dairy, Callan operates a beef business and invests her time and energy into raising the next generation of farm kids. She frequently partners with Future Farmers of America (FFA) and is proud to showcase Millbrook's 30-year streak of Super Milk Awards, a New York program that recognizes dairies producing exceptionally high-quality milk. In everything she does, Callan is building not just a successful farm, but a legacy of stewardship for the next generation.

