



Our life. Our work. Our home.



U.S. Dairy Sustainability
Award Winner
Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy.

DISCOVERING COMMON GROUND

Renting or Selling Your Land to Kinnard Farms



Finding Common Ground

The reason we farm is because we love agriculture. The Golden Rule guides us. Our contracts with landowners start with a conversation and a handshake. We believe in open communication in making decisions with our landowners. We respect that this is your land. This philosophy creates a win-win partnership giving our landowners a strong return on their investment.

We prefer a three- to five-year contract because of the upfront investment we make in studying your soil; installing drainage pipes, if necessary; picking rocks; and improving your land's productivity.

Our machine operators are trained, highly-skilled professionals. Our local team members meet with our landowners to assure your questions and concerns are addressed.

We believe being a good neighbor and farming the land is an honorable profession. We welcome your partnership in this endeavor to provide people with good nutrition and provide a return on your valuable investment.

The Kinnard Family



Kinnard Farms Wins U.S. Dairy Sustainability Award

On June 28, 2017, the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy®, awarded Kinnard Farms the national Outstanding Dairy Farm Sustainability Award. We were one of three national winners in this category. Award winners represent the U.S. dairy community's voluntary efforts towards continuous improvement in sustainability.



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Judges evaluated nominations based on their economic, environmental and community impact. National companies and organizations judged the awards, including representatives from the World Wildlife Fund, The Nature Conservancy, Elanco, and DeLaval. The award recognized everyone at Kinnard Farms for our innovative ways to maximize water, soil and cow comfort while supporting our rural community.

In the press announcement, Chad Frahm, senior vice president, Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy said: “The Kinnard family is dedicated to continuous improvement in cow comfort and soil health, allowing them to grow the farm sustainably and preserve their rural community’s agricultural roots. We commend them for their impressive practices.”

Nathan Nysse, a senior agronomist with Tilth Agronomy, nominated us for the award, saying: “Kinnard Farms takes a responsible approach to farming, keeping social, economic and environmental impacts top-of-mind. The Kinnard family remains focused on maintaining soil quality and health and keeping their land in crop production for a long period of time, while protecting our surface and groundwater. The family owners have strong values, personal integrity and a willingness to exceed regulations to make sure their dairy farm is good for the people and the planet.”

It has always been our goal to do the right thing. We do not do it for the recognition, but because that’s how we were raised. Being recognized on a national level is both humbling and motivating. We are humbled to stand among two other outstanding farm families in this category, and we are motivated to continue working to preserve and protect our land and resources.



Left to right are award sponsors Roger Cady, Elanco, Sandra Vijn, *World Wildlife Fund*, family members David and Jackie Stewart, Lee Kinnard, and Steve Richter, *The Nature Conservancy*, Matt Nuckols, *event emcee* and Virginia dairy producer, and sponsor Steve Harris, *DeLaval*.

Soil isn't dirt

Signing a rental contract to entrust your land – which is often your largest asset – to a local farmer requires not only a fair price, but the confidence that they will care for it as if it were their own. At Kinnard Farms we believe soil is a living, breathing organism, and we manage it with the respect it deserves. Our family takes pride in caring for your soil in a manner that allows for profitable crop production and improved soil health. Simply put, our science-based, cutting-edge farming practices make your land more valuable.





One size doesn't fit all

- We do our own homework and devote time to studying the soil. We work with our agronomist to study Farm Service Agency maps and county soil maps. We familiarize ourselves with soil types, slopes, and other features before placing a value on the productivity of your land.
- Our homework doesn't stop here. Once we make a commitment, fields are soil sampled on 2.5-acre grids. The exact location of the sample is geo-referenced using a GPS system. This allows us to return to the exact spot each time we sample, and ensures our farming practices and fertility program are improving your soil.
- If there is any possibility of rock within five feet of the surface, we run our Veris machine (a specialty machine that uses electromagnetics to read soil profiles) over the soil to verify depth to bedrock. This technology has been used by our family for nearly a decade, and has proven to be very effective at identifying shallow soil areas.
- All of this information is then geo-referenced using our state-of-the art GPS system. This technology allows us to precisely pinpoint shallow soil areas within a field, year after year, with absolute certainty.

Improving our soil while protecting our ground and surface water

- Nutrient application is precise and science based. All soils are “fed” according to soil test results following a prescription that is written by our agronomist, our soil doctor. Nutrients are applied to keep soils in an optimal healthy range; they are never over or under applied because both can lead to serious soil health issues.
- Excellent soil health is critical to protecting our ground and surface waters. Our family has been planting cover crops for 30 years, a practice which has been recognized by government agencies as an excellent tool for protecting water resources in agricultural areas. A cover crop is a crop grown solely for the purpose of improving our soil and protecting our water. Cover crops are not harvested or fed to our cows. We have had excellent success in growing many different species, including annual rye grass, oats, barley, wheat, winter wheat, triticale, red clover, turnips and radishes. While this practice is fairly new to other area farmers, we have refined this process over the decades and routinely grow cover crops on 75% of our land base. Our family is firmly committed to the practice, even though it involves extra work and expense. We routinely plant more acres to cover crops each year than the combined total acreage of all other farmers in Kewaunee and southern Door Counties.





- Only the nutrients required to grow the crops are applied to the land. That's why we study organic matter, to know exactly how much phosphorus and potassium to apply. We live here, too. It's important for us to keep the groundwater safe and surface water clean.
- Our farming practices are designed to increase the organic matter content of soil. Soil is not just dirt. It is organic matter teaming with life. Organic matter can be depleted with poor management and soil erosion. Organic matter gives soil the ability to store nutrients and filter water, holding onto any nutrients applied for use by the crop. Organic matter also has the ability to store rain water, which influences the availability of water to a crop during dry periods. Scientists report that for every percentage point of organic matter increase in the soil, the soil can hold an additional 16,500 gallons of plant-available water per acre. Our family's practices routinely lead to increases in organic matter of 2-3% over time.

Farming for the Future

Our family has long understood the relationship between today's care of our soil and the future productivity of our soil. Our goal is to constantly improve our soil, leaving it in a condition better than it was when we were originally entrusted with its care. We understand that though we may own or rent the land, this soil is not ours and we are only caring for it for future generations. We take this responsibility quite seriously.

- We know healthy soil is vital to the future. In the late 1980's, we saw the value of employing soil scientists, otherwise known as agronomists. Our family works with some of the best agronomists available, and we follow their recommendations precisely. As a result, our soil is healthier. We never "mine" the soil, but instead remain focused on leaving the soil in better condition each year.
- Soil is a natural filter. However, for soil to do its job filtering out and holding nutrients for use by crop growth, it needs to be healthy. This means it must be free of compaction. To determine if compaction is affecting soil health and water absorption, any new land we farm is routinely probed to look for compaction layers that need to be eliminated. This is done through either deep tillage or by planting deep rooted crops or cover crops that will repair the compaction. We have dug many soil pits on our land over the years, and have been amazed at how far roots will penetrate into the soil when compaction layers are eliminated. Eliminating these compaction layers also greatly improves rain water infiltration, which reduces water erosion and aids in protecting surface water quality.





- We search for areas of erosion often, and will work to find a solution to the issue. Often, planting cover crops and keeping the soil covered all year is enough to keep the soil where it belongs. Over the years, we have converted hundreds of acres into contour strip crops, and have installed many miles of grassed waterways. This not only protects our precious soil, but is vital to keeping soil and nutrients out of our surface waters.
- Our goal is to improve the structure of the soil. We prefer to use no till or minimum till to protect soil structure. Depending on previous tillage and production methods, it may take a few years to utilize no-till farming practices. We assess soil health annually and expect to see soil teeming with earthworms and microbial activity when we perform our checks.
- Our crop scouts use Integrated Pest Management. Using drones and the proven practice of “walking fields” they make corrections field by field, acre by acre. We believe in managing every acre as an individual “farm,” and have invested heavily in GPS systems that allow us to vary seeding and fertilizing rates based upon soil tests and acre-by-acre needs.

- Our large, modern fleet of machinery allows us to be very efficient and care for large acres of land very quickly. Working with Mother Nature, we use small windows of good weather to get in and out of your fields to minimize disruption. Our landowners tell us they enjoy watching our large machinery work their fields because it's so much different than when they farmed. We like it because it allows us to farm with less inputs. Our huge investment in satellite guidance for our machines allows us to operate with little or no overlap while performing field operations. We routinely use 25% less fuel per acre when using computer guided machinery versus non guided machines. This also means 25% less wear and tear on our machinery and less labor hours needed per acre. We are able to pass some of these savings back to the landowner in the form of higher rental rates.
- Our machine operators are a vital part of caring for our land. We spend a lot of time training our operators, and strive to hire only the best. Many of our operators have farm roots, and all live in our community. They understand the importance of caring for our land and our community. They also understand the importance of being a good neighbor, as they are likely to be from our neighborhood. We pride ourselves in keeping our roads swept clean if mud or dirt is tracked onto the road, and work to ensure our operators are courteous to all others on the road.
- We take great pride in the appearance of our farmland and crops. Waterways are routinely mowed, rocks are picked, and driveways are maintained. We often perform land improvement projects, including drainage improvement.






We use homegrown fertilizer

- Our preferred way to provide nutrients to grow our crops is to spread organic manure instead of chemical, synthetic fertilizer. Manure application to the land is an exact science. Nutrients are precisely applied to meet, but not exceed, a crop's needs.
- One of our trucks holds 5,500 gallons of liquid manure. Why is it liquid? 25% of the truck is rainwater, collected off of our feed storage pads each time it rains. The remainder is comprised of manure, which is further diluted by collecting every drop of water we use on the dairy, whether we wash a tractor or clean a milk line. We recycle a lot of water on your fields when we fertilize. We like using a renewable, recyclable, homegrown and all natural product.
- Using our soil maps, we use GPS on our equipment to identify areas with rock. The satellite stops application of manure in areas with shallow soil. GPS improves our efficiency and our accuracy.
- We try to get into and out of an area as quickly as possible. We understand it may be a temporary inconvenience. We try to use large teams of people and a lot of equipment to finish nutrient application quickly. Trucking our organic fertilizer allows us to efficiently fertilize thousands of acres rather than concentrate our nutrients in a small area.
- Each year, we produce enough manure to provide 50% of our fertilizer needs. We choose to use manure as our base fertilizer and use synthetic fertilizer to fill in for any shortfall of nutrients. Our farm is a recycling facility: 50% of the feed we harvest each year is marketed as milk and beef, the remaining 50% is recycled back to the land as manure nutrients. This is an extremely sustainable and environmentally friendly way to provide a nutritious and delicious food supply to an ever-growing and hungry population.



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Find us on 

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