

Holstein Association offers sire selection help

Sire Selection continues to be the single most important factor in herd improvement, yet we hear veteran and novice dairymen alike, lamenting that "I just don't know which bull to use." For many, the red book, Sire Summaries from Holstein Association is an excellent source of this information.

Then too, you may want the Holstein Association consultant in your area to help you apply performance information in your sire selection decisions, allowing you to develop a long-term cattle breeding program.

Simply stated, the Holstein consultant translates performance information into terms that spell added opportunity for success with the next generation of cattle that

Cornell program aids volunteerism

ITHACA, NY — The roles of most young teenagers are primarily being a student and a family member. Few have opportunities to take on projects that promote responsibility or allow them to function in groups that are not directly controlled by adults.

To provide such opportunities and to develop a volunteer ethic in young teens, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, MI, has awarded \$88,000 to Cornell University. The grant is part of a nationwide effort to strengthen volunteerism in 4-H programs. The five-year project, "Volunteer for the Future," is made possible by a \$2,753,200 grant from the Kellogg Foundation through the National 4-H Council. Nearly \$1 million has been awarded to land-grant universities in 12 states.

At Cornell, training programs and materials (printed and videotaped) will be developed to help train youth and adults to carry out volunteer programs. Youths will be recruited from 4-H clubs and middle and junior high schools to participate as assistant 4-H club leaders and as aides in after-school care programs for young children and in community improvement projects.

"As young people become adolescents, they need opportunities to take responsible roles in which others are dependent upon them," says Stephen Hamilton, associate professor of human development and family studies at Cornell.

"Our project is designed to enhance the ability of young adolescents—primarily those who are from 12 to 15 years-old—to work in volunteer settings and to promote more socially responsible attitudes," says Hamilton, who is director of the Cornell volunteer project.

Hamilton, a youth specialist in the New York State College of Human Ecology at Cornell, is planning the pilot program for six counties, as yet unchosen, where at least 30 youth volunteers from each will be trained and placed.

Nationwide, 620,000 volunteers serve the nearly 4.5 million youth in 4-H.

you milk in your barn.

There is no magic to this system. By analyzing the performance data, the consultant identifies sires which are transmitting strengths in areas where your herd is deficient. This can be milk production, level of butterfat, sound feet and legs or functional udders. It is a process of increasing the odds your next generation of cattle will have the ability to produce high volumes of milk and that they will have sound udders with correct feet and legs. In short, they will be profitable cattle.

If your problems are many, your consultant will be quick to inform you that the fewer number of functional traits selected for, the more improvement you will experience in any one trait. He will be quick to explain that breeding cattle is not an art, nor is there any mystery to it. His efforts are to

merely increase the odds for your success.

But there is more that the Holstein consultant does when he is on your farm. Without question, he will look closely at your 2 year olds which have calved in the last 6 to 8 months. He will make a mental note to see if they are well grown. If the heifers are on the small size, he may want to take a look at your herd replacement program. Experience has taught him to look for over-crowding, underfeeding, or perhaps both situations. His aim is for you to get all the genetic potential from your young stock. Quite frequently a simple solution surfaces which suggests raising heifers only from the top 75 or 80% of the herd.

Production information gives the consultant clues to the feeding program. If total production or butterfat seems to be low for the genetic potential of your herd, your

feeding program may be the culprit.

Association consultants look for ways to increase pedigree value in the resulting offspring of the mating recommendations. All too frequently, we see a good cow whose dam was by a heifer freshener bull, and the next two dams are very good or excellent. This alone, pointed out to the dairyman; may result in him using genetically superior bulls.

If the consultant observes a surplus of good cows in your herd, he may help you enhance your merchandising program. On the other hand, if he doesn't see enough sound cows, he might suggest that you upgrade your milking herd by adding cows with good pedigrees, good udders, good feet and legs, to your overall herd. The consultant may, through observation, determine that another service from the

Association might be used to your advantage. He'll point out that if there is no identification, it will be difficult for you to determine which are the parents of your good cattle as well as your bad ones.

Before your Association consultant leaves, he will be apt to tell you that 75% of the milk in your bulk tank results from your management, your feeding program, the time of year and other factors. He will remind you that only 25% of the milk in your bulk tank truly emanates through genetics. I am sure he will indicate that the field of genetics, and a practical dairy cattle breeding situation, represents a chance that you take.

If you could use the guidance of a Holstein Association consultant to help you build more productivity and profitability into your herd, call your Holstein Association area office this week and request a visit.

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