

GLENN'S UDDERINGS

By
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Dairy Agent

Profitable Breeding Strategies

One of the secrets of a successful and profitable dairy breeding program is the consistent use of top genetic bulls on all cows from which you intend to keep any offspring, according to VPI dairy specialist, Bennett Cassel. Each breeding on your farm, including services to heifers and problem breeders, is an opportunity for making genetic progress in your herd.

On many farms, one third or so of the offspring that are born and raised for herd replacements come from first calf heifers and problem breeders. These heifers and problem breeders should be bred, not to non-dairy bulls or bulls of unknown genetic origin, but to bulls that have the opportunity to introduce some good genetics into the herd at reasonable costs. If you are interested in using A.I. sires on heifers, but find it difficult to detect heifers in heat or inconvenient to constrain them for servicing, consult your veterinarian and

A.I. personnel about heat synchronizing techniques, and if necessary, construct appropriate facilities for catching and restraining cattle.

This is not to say that all the good bulls are in A.I. service. However, A.I. bulls generally do have a lot more records making up their proofs, which means you can more reliably predict the impact they may have on your herd. Herd sires will continue to be used for a variety of good reasons, some of which are: convenience, improved conception in some cases, personal preferences, developing proofs to merchandise bulls, etc. The point is, if you are going to use natural service, select healthy, virgin dairy bulls out of good genetic stock and switch bulls frequently enough to reduce the risk of a "dud" bull leaving a big hole in your breeding program.

What are "top genetic" sires? That varies, depending upon who you talk to, and upon individual breeders' goals. For one breeder it might be sires with high PD values

for milk, dollars, protein yield, type, etc. For others, it might be longevity traits, pedigree strength, etc.

If you have been selecting service sires wisely and making genetic progress with each succeeding crop of calves, the best females in your herd should be in your young heifers not yet bred. You probably would not think of breeding your best cow in your milking herd to any old bull of unknown genetic origin; nor should you do this with your best females in the herd, your young heifers!

The trouble is, you don't know which heifer will be your best cow of tomorrow until she freshens and proves herself. However, your DHIA reports can give you a clue if you have been reporting breeding information and animal identifications accurately. It will show up on your reports as parent average (PA) or estimated transmitting ability (ETA). These estimates consider what the calf has inherited from its dam and sire.

On the Penna. DHIA reports parent averages (PA) of calves can be found on their dam's Individual Cow Page.

Several Raleigh DHIA reports show calves estimated transmitting abilities (ETA). It may appear as ETAM, ETAS, ETA%, ETAF, ETAP, etc. You can find it on one of the Individual Cow Records (DHI-303, but not on DHI-203), and on the following optional reports, if requested: Annual Heifer Calf Listing (DHI-209), Heifer Calf Management Listing (DHI-214), and calves Individual Identification Page (DHI-204).

So, for good genetic progress, and to keep your breeding program on a well-planned track, plan

what sires you want to use considering: breeding goals that will have a positive financial impact on your business, bull's genetic merit and reliability ratings, semen costs, etc. Here's where you might want to solicit the experience of a breeding consultant.

Then, determine how much semen you will need for the next six months or so. With this information in hand you are now in a position to shop for the semen and breeding services you need in a very methodic, business-like manner. This will help you avoid the temptation of buying a few straws of a new "hot" sire or from overstocking your semen tank.

When the next sire summary is published, be ready to revise your list of chosen sires and prepare your shopping list for the next six months or so. Remember, proofs of young sires you chose earlier may change when their second crop of daughters come into milk. With the rapid genetic progress that is taking place in the industry,

the good bulls of today can quickly become quite ordinary with the influx of genetically superior bulls of tomorrow.

How well have you been doing keeping your herd genetically ahead of the average, and toward the front of the pack? The genetic profile of the sires you have been using is a good indicator. You can find this on the Raleigh DHIA Herd Summary Report. One goal may be to strive for an average percentile rank of service sires of 80% or above.

You may have many opportunities to improve your herd genetically. So do your competitors, so don't miss the opportunity to stay abreast of or ahead of your competition. The next challenge then is being able to manage the herd in a manner that allows cows to express their genetic potential and remain in the herd long enough to reward you with some good offspring and profit margins.

Penn State is an affirmative action, equal opportunity university.



Lancaster Dairy Herd Improvement Assoc.
1592 Old Line Rd. Manheim, PA 17545
(717) 665-5960

JAY MYLIN
Manager
Lancaster DHIA

Lancaster DHIA is sponsoring a breakfast meeting for any agribusiness worker, 7:30 a.m., Tuesday, Oct. 26, at the Country Table Restaurant in Mount Joy.

The purpose of the meeting is to help you understand the Raleigh

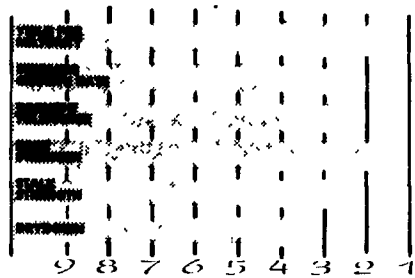
reports and ways to use them for herd management.

We will be looking at how to use the 202 Herd Summary for observing strengths and weaknesses in a herd, ways to use Consultant-Dart to help the dairyman, and at the optional reports available.

For reservations, please call Jay Mylin at (717) 665-5960.

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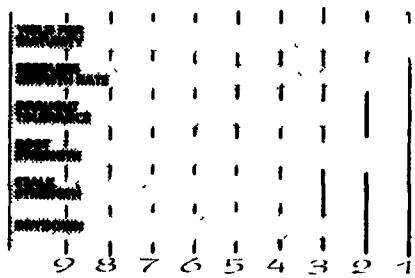
9=Poor, 1=Excellent

DK 522 "11"

Versatile hybrid with outstanding disease resistance.

Key traits: Good seedling growth. Very good plant health. Excellent root strength.

Management tips: Adapted to a wide range of soil types and tillage practices. Responds to higher populations. Very early hybrid for mid-Atlantic growers, with yield and health required to take advantage of early corn premiums. Excellent full-season grain hybrid for northern growers with very good silage characteristics.



9=Poor, 1=Excellent

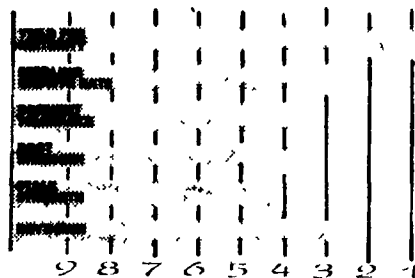
DK 623 "11"

Our 111-day yield leader. Produces big yields under a wide range of environmental conditions.

Key traits: Good stalk quality and excellent root strength. Very good stress tolerance. Good early stand establishment and seedling vigor.

Medium tall plant with medium ear placement. Medium shank and husk cover. Girthy ear with very good test weight and grain quality. Tied for 1st Place in the 1992 New Jersey NCGA Yield Contest (Class A Non-Irrigated) for Rustin Farms of Trenton with 219.84 bpa.

Management tips: Widely adapted. Excellent top end yield potential under irrigated and favorable conditions. Relatively small seed size. Very good resistance to Southern Corn Leaf Blight. Average 1st and good 2nd generation resistance to corn borer.



9=Poor, 1=Excellent

DK 646 "11"

Top yielding 114-day hybrid.

Key traits:

Contest winning yields. Fast seedling growth rate. Very good plant health. Tall hybrid with medium ear placement. Large ear, excellent ear flex — length and girth. Shows yield well. Excellent ear retention. Took 1st Place in the 1992 New Jersey NCGA Yield Contest for Rustin Farms of Trenton with 209.07 bpa (Class A, Non-Irrigated), and for Richard Tindall of Trenton with 198.02 bpa (Ridge-Rill, Non-Irrigated).

Management tips: Adapted to varied soil types and weather conditions, but highest yields come from better soils at moderate plant populations. Adapted to bean and corn ground. Massive plant — excellent silage choice for tonnage, protein & digestibility.



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