

## Holstein Association Says BullSearch Saves Time

BRATTLEBORO, Vt. — Making better decisions in less time is a top priority on most dairy operations, regardless of how many cows are milked.

Using the BullSearch program from the Holstein Association to select sires for a mating program can help increase profit potential and save valuable time, as many producers around the country have learned, according to a Holstein Association news release.

"You get the most out of your time and investment in semen by letting BullSearch take the emotions out of your bull selection," said Pete Kappelman of Meadow Brook Farms in Manitowoc, Wis. Kappelman, who milks 300 Holsteins, said the computerized sire selection program allows him to choose certain traits and the select the bulls accordingly.

BullSearch is a user-friendly software program that contains the most up-to-date sire information available, which is updated every January and July. Producers can sort bulls using their own selection criteria, and then choose sires that are best suited for their herd performance goals.

Because the information is provided from the Holstein Association, BullSearch offers unbiased information. That's one reason Carl George of Delevan, N.Y. likes the program, but the fact that

he can select specific traits is important as well.

"This saves us a lot of time when we're sorting out bulls," he said. "We can put in the traits we want, and then the program selects a group of bulls that fit the criteria. We can look at the bulls individually from there."

George said he selects for milk, feet and legs, udders, and pounds and percent protein. When mating heifers, he also considers calving ease. He currently has about 150 cows in the milking string, and about 120 head of young stock.

"The number one reason I use BullSearch is to save time," he said. "When the semen salesmen come to the farm, I can ask them questions using the information from BullSearch. It gives me something to have before they get here."

Having the sire information consolidated in one place saves time when semen sales reps visit Arizona Dairy Co., according to Ross Tappan, general manager for the operation. "With BullSearch I don't feel like I have to see every semen salesperson," he said. "It definitely helps that it's unbiased - you don't get too many complaints from AI when you tell them you used BullSearch, because there's no competition."

The dairy has about 5,500 animals in the milking herd, includ-

ing dry cows, and raises its own replacement heifers, about 6,000, as well. In addition, bulls are banded and moved to a steer operation on the dairy. All together, there are close to 14,000 animals at the operation.

Tappan has been using BullSearch since it was first introduced in 1986. He noted he believed the program would work

for producers with any size dairy operation. "I think anyone wanting to save time should use it," he said.

Kappelman said the user defined Multi-Trait-Index feature allows him to select the herd's sires the way he wants to. "Using an index allows you to easily choose the bulls that best meet your criteria without eliminating certain

bulls because of a minimal fault in one area," he said.

He added that BullSearch has helped him define his herd's breeding program. "BullSearch is an unbiased, information-based approach to designing a blueprint for the production and type traits that the next generation of your herd will need to meet your business goals."

## Maryland Farmers Offer Bay Conservation Tips

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Maryland Department of Agriculture Secretary Lewis R. Riley announced the spring kickoff of "Take It From Maryland Farmers," an educational outreach program aimed at informing homeowners about practical gardening actions to protect the Chesapeake Bay.

"Take It From Maryland Farmers" highlights various conservation measures—best management practices—that farmers use to produce healthy crops and protect water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. By applying these measures at home, lawn and garden projects, homeowners are encouraged to join Maryland farmers working to protect the Bay.

Interested gardeners can call (800) 342-2507 toll-free in Maryland (outside Maryland call 410-531-1757) to receive a free copy of the Maryland Farmers' Bay-Wise Guide to Backyard Actions for a Cleaner Chesapeake Bay. The guide offers homeowners a variety of easy-to-follow Bay-friendly suggestions for caring for lawns and gardens. Among the many easy-to-follow ideas offered are general rules of thumb for fertilizing lawns and gardens, how to spot and correct erosion

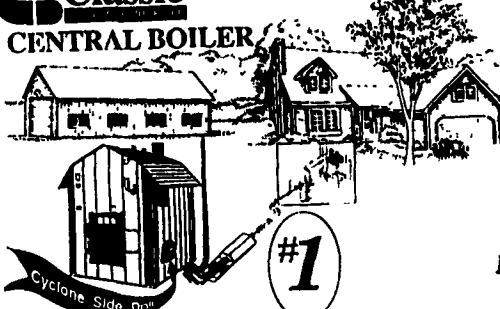
problems, and what can be done to control weeds and insects without pesticides.

With the spring gardening season in full swing, homeowners are being urged to join Maryland farmers as responsible stewards of the land by practicing conservation in their own backyards.

"Everyone who works the land has a responsibility to protect the Bay," said Secretary Riley. "Agriculture has a lot of experience in this area that we can share with backyard gardeners."

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