

Is Sexed Semen In Your Future?

Sarah Roth
Penn State Dairy Alliance

The accelerated expansion of dairy farms has resulted in an increased demand for heifers. To increase and maintain herd size, producers are in need of more heifers than what they can produce on the farm, leading to the purchase of expansion animals. Also, the investment that a producer makes to produce a calf is considerable. Heifer calves usually have more value to the commercial dairy producer than bull calves in terms of income generation. Therefore if the producer can guarantee, to a certain degree, that the offspring will be female, it is more likely that he will recoup his investment and profit in the long run.

Why might a dairy producer want to use sexed semen?

Farm Expansion. The use of sexed semen may have great appeal to producers looking to increase herd size but are wary of purchasing animals from outside sources. Internal growth, especially when initial herd size is small, can be a lengthy process. However, when a producer can use sexed semen to achieve an approximate 9 to 1 ratio of the number of heifers to bulls calves born, the expansion process is greatly accelerated.

Genetic Improvement of the Herd. Through gender selection, producers can more quickly realize the benefits from breeding for genetic improvement. Producers would have the ability to choose which cows would be bred with sexed semen to produce the next generation of replacements. Thus, cows that were genetically superior to their herd-mates would produce high-quality heifers and the remaining cows could be bred to produce males or bred with non-sexed semen.

Calving Ease. With first-calf heifers, calving ease is a great concern. Heifers are still growing when they first give birth, and their smaller size at this stage in life contributes to a higher rate of dystocia. Add to this the larger size of bull calves and the potential for calving difficulty increases further. Using semen selected to produce female offspring can decrease the rate of dystocia and its negative economic impact upon the business.

On the other side of the coin, potential disadvantages to the use of sexed semen include:

Premium Pricing. As with all new technologies, the cost to purchase sexed semen will demand a premium pricing structure. It is estimated that there will be a premium of \$30 to \$46 above the cost

(Turn to Page 51)

Maximize your cows' potential by improving cow comfort with

The Comfort ZoneTM

The Comfort Zone Tie Stall

Designed to maximize cow comfort

Available in stainless steel and
galvanized steel

Perfect for new or remodeled facilities



Pasture Mat[®]

The multi-celled cow mattress
recognized world-wide as the closest
thing to natural pasture!

PROVEN DURABILITY AND COMFORT!

REDUCES LEG INJURIES!

INCREASES PROFITABILITY!

promat

US Patent #5653195

Y2K Free Stall

Eliminates barriers that prohibit
natural movements

Increases forward lunge space

Gatorsheild corrosion protection



Call 610-593-2242 to meet our cow comfort specialist in your area!

Petersheim Cow Mattresses

117 Christiana Pike (Rte. 372), Christiana, PA 17509

610-593-2242

