

Top Of The List

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- Trust the index and use the bull.
- Keep using the bull, but less.
- Use the bull, but be sure not to double up faults.
- Don't use the bull. If the next high bull is nearly equal for net merit, it won't hurt too much.

Cassell also discussed a new feature that was added to the net merit index this past February. The daughter pregnancy rate (DPR) indicates a bull's ability to pass on reproductive performance.

Even though DPR is a lowly heritable trait, it is "extremely valuable." The change it brings will be slow but permanent, Cassell said.

All the young bulls in sire selection programs start out with the potential to be good — but only about one in 10 make the grade, according to Cassell. He strongly advised using a stud provider that doesn't have a biased interest in any particular bull.

"Make sure you're with an organization that doesn't care which bull out of those ten makes it," he said.

Mike O'Connor, dairy professor at Penn State, spoke on reproductive management strategies.

"What's the most expensive semen?" O'Connor

said. "Semen that doesn't result in a pregnancy.

"Breed cows that are in heat," was his tongue-in-cheek advice.

O'Connor's fieldwork and research has shown that semen is often either put into a cow that is not in heat or is not inserted fully into the cervix. O'Connor has an x-ray device that helps train breeders by showing the results of their semen placement.

At Pride-N-Joy Holstein, the Wanner family and their PDMP intern, Marcela Martinez, offered three tour stops. They shared their systems for feeding, breeding and nutrient management, as well as protocols for calves and young heifers. Genex/CRI was exclusive sponsor of the meeting and helped with tours.

The Wannans have about 400 cows and an exemplary breeding program.

For more information about PDMP, visit the website **HYPERLINK** "<http://www.das.psu.edu/pdmp/>" <http://www.das.psu.edu/pdmp/> or contact Beth Moore, Special Projects Coordinator **HYPERLINK** "<mailto:beth@innernet.net>" beth@innernet.net or (717) 375-2910.

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