

The 1,000th '10 tonner'

Sunny Boy accounts for one in six of all cows producing 10,000kg of fat and protein in the Netherlands

Fifteen years after the introduction of the 10-tonner category, the number of cows producing 10,000kg of fat and protein has passed the 1,000 mark. And who stands out among this long line of 10 tonners? Sunny Boy tops the charts with 157 10 tonners.

Dutch cattle are producing more and more milk during their lifetime. The statistics speak for themselves – in the most recent milk production registration year, milk production figures had reached 30,000kg of milk. By the time they stopped producing, the cows had notched up a total of 30,777kg of milk with 4.39% fat and 3.50% protein, equivalent to 2,430kg of combined fat and protein.

It's not only the average that is on the increase, but the number of cows with extraordinary staying power is also on the up.. The number of 100-tonne cows is already way past 15,000 and recently the number of cows exceeding the 10,000kg of fat and protein figure passed 1,000.

'Magic' figure

A brief history lesson shows that it was in 1994 that the Dutch cattle syndicate NRS decided to erect a new milestone for lifetime production. The long list of 100,000kg cows was, at that time, growing so fast – there were already more than 1,500 – that a new category was necessary in order to be able to distinguish really outstanding producers. This was the 'magic' figure of 10,000kg of fat and protein.

In that first year, eight cows received this brand new diploma. After 1994, the number of 10 tonne slowly grew (see Table 1). While in the early years there were between 10 and 20 a year, in 1998 the NRS recorded 44 10 tonners. The term 'magic' was no longer quite so special when, shortly before Christmas 1998, the 100th cow passed the 10,000kg of fat and protein mark.

In 2001 number 250 was recorded. Four

years later, the number had risen to 500. Since 2005, more than 100 new 10-tonne cows a year have been added. In May 2009, the 1,000th cow passed the 10,000kg fat and protein mark. This honour went to Rud Fortuna (sire Etazon Fortuna), now more than 15 years old. In 4,214 days, she produced 125,385kg of milk with 4.52% fat and 3.45% protein.

Rud Fortuna took a little more than 4,200 days to reach the 10-tonne mark, which is about average for a 10 tonne. The average 10 tonner is in her prime when she passes the 10,000kg of fat and protein milestone. There are, of course, exceptions: the fastest 10 tonners to date have been Claudia 31 (sire Celsius) and Hilda 28 (sire Sunny Boy). Claudia 31 – when just 10 years old – produced 119,923kg of milk with 4.63% fat and 3.73% protein in 2,557 days, equivalent to 10,000kg of fat and protein, a daily average of 46.9kg of milk. Hilda was not far behind, producing 123,368kg of milk in 2,603 days with 5,471kg of fat and 4,586kg of protein.

Systematic breeding

By far the most 10 tonners are registered under the name of the Knoef family. A total of thirteen belong to these high-producing dairy farmers, who also have 37 100 tonners to their name. The first, Anna Jacoba 71 (sire Top Brass), broke through the barrier in 2001, followed one year later by her daughter Anna Jacoba 73 (sire F16).

So what's the secret of the high lifetime production of Knoef cows? "We breed systematically with a view to production and acceptable udders and legs," Jos Knoef told the cattle breeders' journal Veeteelt in 2004.

"By doing that, I am breeding for lifetime production, and that is the intention. Longevity and durability are, on their own, not so important. This is why we are always looking on the Internet at the production index of the breeding bulls. I know that that number is still the best."

Sunny Boy

In the same way that some operations excel in the number of 10 tonners, there are also breeding bulls with many daughters that pass the 10,000kg of fat and protein mark. Sunny Boy tops the list (see Table 2). Of the 1,000 10 tonners, he accounts for 157, or put another way, one in six. And the end does not appear to be in sight for Sunny Boy, a son of Nehls, with new daughters clocking up 10,000kg of fat and protein on an almost monthly basis.

This is true to a lesser extent for the number two. To date, Tops has produced 130 10 tonners, and not that many more are expected. Born in 1977, Tops again belongs to an older generation. He was the breeding bull who from the very start put his stamp on the 10-tonner class. When at the end of the 1990s the NRS

Table 1: Number of 10 tonners per year

| year | number |
|--------------|--------|
| 1994 | 8 |
| 1995 | 12 |
| 1996 | 12 |
| 1997 | 21 |
| 1998 | 44 |
| 1999 | 56 |
| 2000 | 52 |
| 2001 | 66 |
| 2002 | 46 |
| 2003 | 52 |
| 2004 | 78 |
| 2005 | 108 |
| 2006 | 117 |
| 2007 | 123 |
| 2008 | 142 |
| 2009 | 63 |
| total number | 1,000 |



Celsius daughter Claudia 31, the fastest 10 tonner

| sire | number |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Skalsumer Sunny Boy | 157 |
| Tops | 130 |
| F16 Rocket C | 63 |
| Kingway Elevation Very | 31 |
| F & G Acres Felix | 23 |
| Thonyma Gambler | 17 |
| Freebrook Sexation Amos | 14 |
| Flemingdale A Superstar | 12 |
| Etazon Celsius | 11 |
| Keystone Ivan Silver | 11 |
| Paltzer Sexation Bert | 11 |

Table 2: Breeding bulls producing the most 10 tonners in the Netherlands

produced a list of the first 100 10 tonners, all twelve had the Tops pedigree.

A fair way below Sunny Boy and Tops, in third place, is F16 with 63 10 tonners, followed by Very and Felix with 31 and 23 10-tonne cows respectively.

In the list of breeding bulls with the most 10 tonners to their credit, black-and-white bulls stand out. With seven 10 tonners to his name, Triple Threat is the top red-factor breeding bull. Among the red-and-white bulls, Pigeonwood has produced the most 10,000kg of fat and protein cows (5) – followed by Red Mitchel (4) and Marty (3). Brown Swiss descendant Etazon Energy has also produced three 10 tonners.

Gradually, daughters from a new class of breeding bulls are appearing on the 10-tonne cow list. Celsius has produced 11 with 10,000kg of fat and protein, his contemporaries Labelle and Jabot seven and six respectively. Three Delta Lava daughters have passed the 10,000kg of fat and protein mark. In 2009, the first two 10-tonner daughters of Eastland Cash were recorded. They do not represent a threat to Sunny Boy's position at the top of the list as he's expected to build on his advantage in the years to come.

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