

Top cell count improver and a sire with several proven bloodlines top bull rankings

Out of this world

Former Gold Cup finalist and respected Holstein breeder

Willy Ley shares his views on the latest daughter-proven and genomically-tested lists following the December bull proof run.

And we outline the changes to PTAs.

text **Rachael Porter**

A handful of new young genomic sires have set pulses racing among the Holstein breeders who want to be at the genetic cutting edge – including Devon-based breeder Willy Ley.

He's keeping an eye on the new number-one sire in the DairyCo PLI ranking, and the bull's blend of a mixture of bloodlines mean that Willy won't be alone.

As a Freddie x Planet x Ramos sire, Rosylane-LLC Alta Barney brings the prospect of high production together with exceptional daughter health and fertility.

This is no surprise when the high fitness bloodlines in his pedigree are considered. His genomic PLI is £254.

Willy admits that he's a Planet fan and that he's milking quite a few of his daughters.

"I've several already milking and more waiting in the wings. This sire shows that there's plenty more to come from him."

Willy is also excited about the equal second ranking sires Lavaman and



Willy Ley: "I'm still 'dabbling' in genomics"

Cashcoin (PLIs both £251). He has young calves on the ground by Lavaman and is pleased to see the bull maintaining his position since the previous index run. "His PLI wasn't far off that of Man-O-Man, a bull I haven't used to date because his semen was so expensive. For me, Lavaman was the next best thing." Willy is yet to use Cashcoin, but he's tempted.

"I asked for a brochure so I could take a closer look. I think he's a bit expensive – some genomic sires cost as much as £37 per straw and I think that's a lot for an unproven sire.

"I also know that the price will fall in six months or so as more genomic sires are added to the list. So I may wait a while." Fourth ranking Synergy Alta Pilsner is another newcomer with a pedigree offering something different.

A Jives son (who himself is a young sire by Jeeves out of a Shottle dam) out of a Planet x O Man dam, Pilsner traces back to the famous Lou Etta family. His PLI is £249.

Willy is still 'dabbling' in genomic sires, but says he's becoming 'braver' as daughter proofs are published and the 'theory' is mirrored by practice. "Daughter proofs are confirming the accuracy of genomic proofs.

"A pattern is beginning to emerge and, although there will be the odd sire that doesn't live up to his genomic figures, the majority are being pitched just about right.

"I guess that DNA can't lie, but it's still important to have daughter proofs to keep a close eye on what's going on and make sure any claims made by breeders and geneticists are robust."

Daughter-proven sires

Looking to the proven sire rankings, there's a new number-one bull specialising in udder health; a brand new UK-proven O Man son; and a strong showing by UK sires in the top 20 Profitable Lifetime Index ranking, published by DairyCo Breeding+.

The number-one position is taken by Guarini, a Goldwyn son whose somatic cell count index has improved to an impressive -32, making him among the best of the Holstein breed for udder health.

"I've used him, but I don't have any daughters on the ground just yet. I thought he looked like a useful package and we've been looking for a decent bull like him.

Woudhoeve 1042 Impuls



Lynbrook Jancen



name	sire	mat. grandsire	supplier	production							functional traits					conformation		
				rel.	milk	fat kg	prot. kg	fat%	protein%	EPIN	EP/LI	SCC	lifespan	fertility ind.	dCE	F&L	udder	TM
Guarini	Goldwyn	O Man	Bullsemen.com	75	+561	+23.1	+25.0	+0.01	+0.08	46	253	-32	0.5	1.3	0.8	1.84	2.18	2.33
Morningview Levi	Buckeye	O Man	Genus	83	+622	+30.7	+23.9	+0.07	+0.04	49	247	-18	0.4	5.4	2.4	1.85	0.75	1.31
Lynbrook Jancen	O Man	Manat	Bullsemen.com	75	+366	+30.6	+22.4	+0.20	+0.13	53	236	-12	0.4	2.4	0.8	-0.22	-0.04	-0.05
Whitman O Man Awesome Andy	O Man	Zade	Bullsemen.com	84	+337	+28.4	+14.6	+0.18	+0.05	39	235	-26	0.7	5.4	1.9	0.84	0.16	0.41
Cogent Twist	Shottle	Major	Cogent	95	+580	+39.9	+23.3	+0.20	+0.05	56	229	-9	0.3	-2.8	0.2	1.58	0.67	1.12
Ballycairn O Man Pello	O Man	Goldwyn	Genus	85	+864	+37.2	+29.7	+0.04	+0.02	57	228	-9	0.1	1.2	1.4	1.63	0.97	1.39
Mainstream Manifold	O Man	BW Marshall	Semex	85	+836	+35.3	+26.6	+0.03	-0.01	51	225	-8	0.2	3.6	3.1	0.2	1.2	1.05
Gomez	Goldwyn	Lancelot	Sterling Sires	73	+353	+30.6	+19.0	+0.20	+0.09	47	222	-6	0.2	6.3	1.1	1.89	0.75	1.24
D Omar	O Man	Lukas	Viking/Nordic Genetics	79	+440	+29.1	+22.3	+0.14	+0.10	50	222	-23	0.2	3.4	0.4	0.66	0.21	0.51
ALH Dakota	O Man	Durham	Dairy Daughters	85	+886	+30.3	+30.0	-0.05	+0.02	52	221	-10	0.3	0.1	2.3	2.19	0.28	0.89
Ballycairn Tiergan	Goldwyn	Garner	Cogent	94	+326	+30.1	+17.1	+0.21	+0.08	45	220	-20	0.3	2.1	2.0	1.34	1.53	1.62
Ensenada Taboo Planet	Taboo	Amel	Dairy Daughters	96	+925	+27.2	+26.0	-0.11	-0.05	41	219	-3	0.6	1.2	2.1	1.41	1.28	1.41
Co-Op Oman Loydie	O Man	BW Marshall	Bullsemen.com	85	+511	+26.8	+24.4	+0.08	+0.09	49	214	-12	0.2	3.2	2.3	1.37	0.3	0.72
Pirola Goldwyn Wyman	Goldwyn	O Man	WWS UK	82	+297	+24.3	+17.6	+0.15	+0.10	42	213	-22	0.3	2.1	1.7	2.65	1.81	2.42
Goldfire	Goldwyn	O Man	Bullsemen.com	78	+528	+23.9	+20.8	+0.04	+0.04	40	208	-18	0.2	5.9	0.9	2.03	1.21	1.87
Woudhoeve 1042 Impuls	O Man	Jesther	Avoncroft	78	+554	+26.3	+25.0	+0.05	+0.08	49	207	-13	0.1	4.5	0.1	0.29	0.17	0.33
Co-Op Bosside Massey	Mascol	Bret	Bullsemen.com	85	+507	+21.4	+19.8	+0.02	+0.04	37	206	-27	0.3	2.9	0.5	2.07	2.35	2.64
Danillo	Goldwyn	O Man	Sterling Sires	80	+457	+23.5	+18.2	+0.07	+0.04	38	205	-14	0.3	2.7	0.8	3.3	2.3	2.99
Omagic	O Man	Lambada	Bullsemen.com	75	+737	+30.2	+23.6	+0.01	+0.00	45	204	-11	0.3	3.1	2.4	1.43	-0.46	0.25
Dansire Mascol Mason	Mascol	O Man	Viking/Nordic Genetics	78	+558	+26.1	+20.3	+0.05	+0.03	41	202	-22	0.2	5.0	1.5	1.61	0.52	1.06

Table 1: Top 20 daughter proven sires available in the UK ranked on PLI (source: DairyCo breeding+ and Holstein UK)

“So we took a chance on him. Obviously, I’m really pleased to see him at the top but I can’t say I’m surprised.”

The Buckeye son Morningview Levi edges into second (from first) position, but maintains his strong figures for fitness.

Good daughter fertility (Fertility Index +5.4) and particularly impressive calving ability (both direct and maternal), combine with high production PTAs to earn him a PLI of £247.

Willy hasn’t used him on his herd as he thinks he’s a bit on the narrow side.

“Don’t get me wrong, he’s a good bull. But you can’t use them all.”

The same can be said for Lynbrook Jancen (PLI £236), the component specialist who holds on to third position, and also for fourth-place sire Whitman O Man Awesome Andy (PLI £235), whose Lifespan Index at +0.7 is the best of the breed.

“Andy is well priced and I’m interested in him, but I haven’t bought any straws.” Willy has, however, used semen from Shottle son Cogent Twist quite extensively.

He moves into the top five with a PLI of £229 based on performance by 82 daughters in 51 herds.

Twist becomes the number one UK-proven bull and improves on his impressive figure for kg fat, now with a breed-leading 39.9kg.

“I have some heifers on the ground, born last spring and summer, and they’re looking good. I’m looking forward to milking them.

“And I’m thinking about using some more Twist in the future. It depends on what else catches my eye.”

More health and fertility information added to PTAs

Additional information will appear in cow genetic indexes with the aim of helping milk producers breed healthier cows.

The new information will bring cow Predicted Transmitting Abilities (PTAs) into line with those for bulls, which have included health and fitness traits for many years, according to DairyCo Breeding+.

“PTAs for somatic cell count, female fertility and lifespan have not been included in published cow indexes until now, but will be part of all female indexes from this month,” says head of genetics for DairyCo Marco Winters.

This information will be available through the ‘Herd Genetic Report’, which is available for any milk recorded

herd through the DairyCo Breeding+ website (the cost is covered by the levy).

“Producers will be well aware of their herd’s healthiest and highest performing cows,” continues Mr Winters. “But they will also be aware that factors other than genetics have an influence on this performance.

“So this additional information will give them the opportunity to identify their herd’s strong genetic lines for these important health and fitness traits, and hopefully help them to breed better cows,” he adds.

“In addition to this, it will allow breeders to benchmark their herd against others, and to monitor their own genetic progress over time.”

This means that if they find they are

lagging behind on either count, they should find it easier to take action.

“Breeding cows with good indexes for health and fitness traits is not expected to have an instant effect on their performance,” says Mr Winters. “But the benefits are cumulative and build up over the generations, so by improving your herd’s genetics for these all-important traits, you are making your cows easier to manage over the long term, and stacking the odds against disease and infertility firmly in your favour.”

➡ To access your report go to www.dairycobreeding.org.uk and select ‘Herd Genetic Reports’. If you are not registered yet, select the option to register and you will be provided with login details.