

Every producer sets goals for his farm. These goals may differ, but the herd is always at the heart of the business. In this six-part series we set out to help you to improve your herd. Our first article offers an introduction on breeding with a purpose.

Part 1: **Introduction**

Part 2: **Production**

Part 3: **Efficiency**

Part 4: **Fertility**

Part 5: **Longevity**

Part 6: **Health**

CRV Result Navigator offers five key criteria for herd management

Completing the circle for success

Insight, planning and improvement are three key ingredients to continued genetic gain and ensuring the future success of your dairy herd. And now there's a tool that can help you to keep a close eye on your herd's individual progress and ensure that it stays on track.

text **Rachael Porter**

Selecting sires for use on your individual herd – with its own specific breeding goals – can be complicated. With the vast amount of data now available on both sires and dams – whether it's daughter proven or genomic information – it's a lot more difficult to 'navigate' a path to success than it was, say, 20 years ago. And once you have the right genetic base you need to manage the genetic potential to turn all that potential into success – also quite a challenge that requires good planning and plenty of informed decision taking.

That said the chances of success, when looking to breed and manage cows that will enjoy a healthier and more productive and longer life, can also be greatly improved if you know what to select for and how best to do it. That's just one reason why CRV has developed and introduced Result Navigator – a tool to help producers 'navigate' their herd

towards continued improved and good results.

The herd is always at the heart of any dairy business and the CRV Result Navigator has been developed to help producers achieve the best possible results with their herds. The organisation has focused on five key areas that can make the difference on the vast majority of dairy units. These areas are production, efficiency, health, longevity and fertility and they are all connected to each other.

High lifetime production

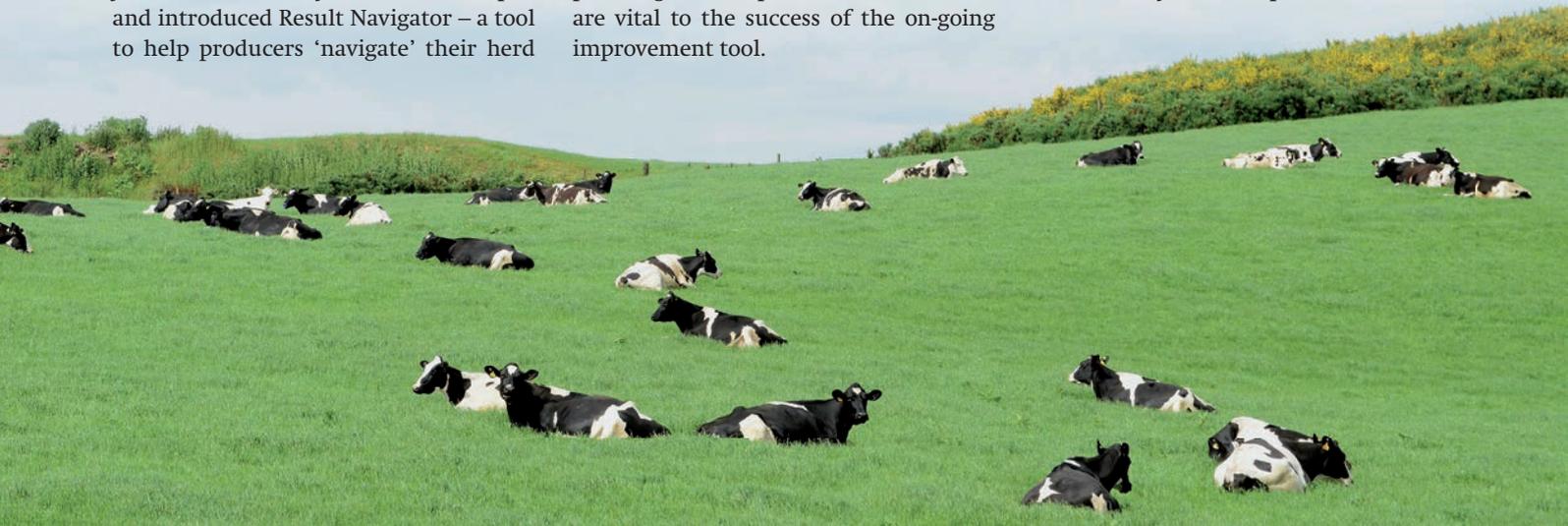
Efficient production can only be achieved in a herd where the cows get a chance to achieve high lifetime production with good health and good fertility. Good herd management also requires insight, planning and improvement, and these are vital to the success of the on-going improvement tool.

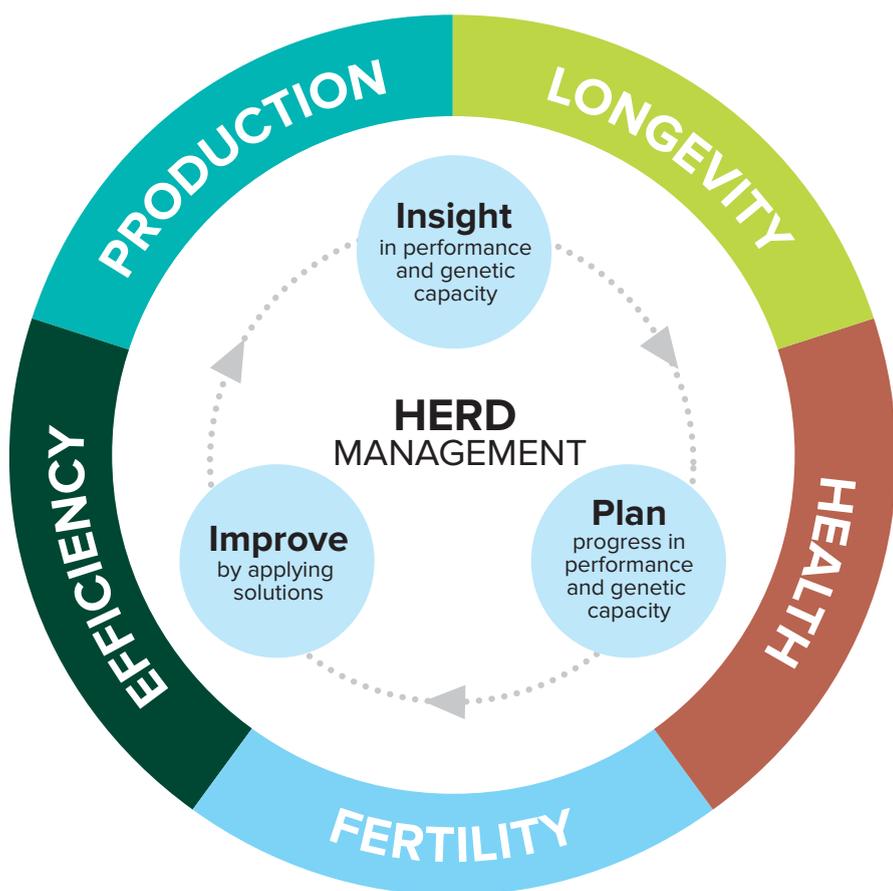


Bertil Muller: "Good fertility is an important cornerstone of any well-performing dairy herd"

"Let's start with fertility," says CRV's Bertil Muller. "Fertility is an important cornerstone of any well-performing dairy herd. Fertility ensures continued milk production and genetic progress.

"But fertility is a complex issue, which





Full circle: CRV's Result Navigator keeps herd on track for success now and in the future

is affected by many things and that's why CRV gives it a wealth of attention in its breeding and management programmes."

Producers also want a healthy, easy-to-manage herd. Healthy animals ensure smoother production and better growth. Staff are also happier as their workload is reduced and, just as importantly, milk production costs are lower. So a healthy herd increases the producer's income and efficiency. CRV is using information to visualise the health of the herd, and to make sure that the next generation is healthier than the present one. "We work preventively – because prevention is better than cure," explains Mr Muller. "To do this we listen to advice, and we also provide information to key farm consultants and advisers, including feed suppliers and vets.

Production is also important. Every producer wants to see their herd achieve good milk yields. A productive herd, in terms of milk, is a prerequisite for a good income provided this production is achieved efficiently.

"The right breeding goal and the right genetics are the foundation for a productive herd. And CRV enables producers to lay this foundation, but we do much more besides," explains Mr

Muller. "For example, we help them monitor their herd's production – for example via milk recording – giving them a sound foundation on which to base their management decisions.

"Producers can make better decisions about which cows they want to continue to breed from, for example, and they get a clear picture of which animals are producing efficiently and which are not."

Cost control

For many producers, efficient production takes priority over maximum production. Efficiency means needing fewer raw materials, such as feed and fertiliser, per kilogramme of milk produced. "This is better for the environment – and better for their bottom line too. Efficient production also means working with healthy animals with high longevity," says Mr Muller.

He adds that CRV is right at the beginning of the food chain. "So we are uniquely placed to help herds produce milk in a sustainable and responsible way. The company helps them to breed specifically for efficiency."

Longevity is important too. Producers aim to build a herd that has the capacity to grow old. Dairy cows that complete

many successful lactations are living proof that all has been well with their health, fertility and production. "They also produce more efficiently, because older animals produce more milk than young ones," explains Mr Muller. "What's more, they go on producing for longer, so they give more milk in relation to the energy – and time – invested in them during rearing.

"CRV not only helps producers to breed a herd with high longevity, we also pay a lot of attention to preventing premature mortality – involuntary culling – due to health or fertility reasons."

Constant monitoring

Insight is key across all five criteria. "Solid and effective herd management begins with understanding our clients' goals with their herd. Next, by analysing the information that's available on the herd, we identify the strengths and weaknesses of the performance of our customers' herds, including their genetic capacity", says Mr Muller.

"Insights are then gained in potential improvements and innovation. The process of obtaining insight is gone through after every improvement cycle. Through constant monitoring, results can be fine-tuned.

Planning is the next step. With the insights we gain, we can help our customers meet clearly defined targets for achieving focused and sustainable improvements in herd performance.

"Which results need to be improved? CRV can then help them to choose the best approach and solutions to use. The solutions could be in a number of areas: product information, services, genetics advice or a combination of them all. Whatever they are, progress should be made."

Making improvements and achieving good results can only be achieved with careful implementation. Selecting the right solutions for a dairy herd will depend on the circumstances on the unit and the business and calls for an eye for detail, according to Mr Muller. "This could include choosing the weights for our mating programme SireMatch, for example, or optimising an online management system to get even more out of it. By constantly monitoring the improvements made, it is possible to gain more new insights that will help fine-tune performance improvements even further.

"And with that, we're back at 'Insight' in the CRV Result Navigator – so the circle is closed." |