



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 second article focuses on breeding to maximise total milk production.

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**H**igh production is key to the success of Fred and Mark Houseman's North Yorkshire-based 350-cow herd. And they have been using CRV sires for the past 20 years to help them achieve their goal of breeding heifers and cows that produce plenty of milk across several lactations.

"There's a pre-conception that high production herds are only interested in milk – not type. But the two very much come hand in hand," says Mark. "You can't have a cow that achieves good yields, and a high lifetime daily yield, if she's not built to last. So type is also important.

"I think the Dutch were among the first to recognise this and their sires produce daughters that are well suited to our management system, set up and breeding and production goals," he adds.

The Senterprise pedigree herd, which he runs with his father, Fred, at Burton

Sound type is key to pedigree herd's high output

# Balanced breeding boosts milk yield

We continue our look at CRV's Result Navigator and the second article in our series focuses on the importance of production.

We spoke to a leading pedigree producer to find out more about his breeding goals and how he achieves them.

text **Rachael Porter**

Top Farm near Harrogate, is a mixture of black-and-white and red-and-white Holsteins. The cows are housed all year round and fed a TMR to provide maintenance plus 35 litres: "Although we have eased back a bit at the moment, due to the low milk price. When things pick up, however, we will be set to 'fly' again."

## Yield potential

Mark explains that any extra milk that's produced above his contracted litreage is classed as 'B' quota by his milk buyer – Payne's Dairies – and he only receives 11.5ppl for that. "So we're not really pushing them to maximise their yield potential at the moment, it's not worth putting health and fertility under pressure for that price."

The herd is currently averaging 31 litres per cow per day – that's a herd average of 9,850 litres at 4.20% butterfat and 3.46% protein, with a SCC of 114,000 cells/ml and a Bactoscan on 19.

"That's an impressive yield and we're

not pushing them hard to produce it. Genetics plays a huge role here."

Dutch sires suit Mark's system because they produce 'balanced' daughters that last for several lactations and also milk well. The herd average is currently four lactations and rising, but there are many cows that are now milking having calved eight times. "The cows and heifers that we have bred during the past two decades are, in my view, well suited

*Mark Houseman: "I want to see rows of balanced and uniform cows"*



Table 1: CRV's Result Navigator production sires

name	InSire/proven	sire x mat. grandsire	milk	fat kg	prot kg	fat%	protein%	PLI
Apina Norman	InSire	Uno x Ramos	+389	27.0	14.1	0.14	0.02	£610
Bouw Rocky	InSire	Shamrock x Goli	+542	26.4	21.2	0.06	0.04	£544
MS Riverboy RF	InSire	Aikman x Planet	+543	29.2	18.1	0.09	0.01	£535
Texel Beauty Debutant-Red	InSire	Dakker x Super	+570	18.0	21.2	-0.05	0.03	£474
Vero Anchorman	InSire	Hunter x Goli	+574	25.0	23.9	0.03	0.06	£464
Vekis Chevrolet	InSire	Freddie x Planet	+782	22.9	22.4	-0.09	-0.03	£463
Delta Jonas	InSire	Chevrolet x Niagra	+286	21.5	15.5	0.13	0.08	£446
Delta G-Force	proven bull	Man-O-Man x Jordan	+314	18.1	20.2	0.07	0.12	£435
Vero Startrek	InSire	Snowfever x Planet	+515	22.4	21.6	0.03	0.06	£434
D'n Driehoek Nilson	InSire	G-Force x Boxer	+244	20.5	21.2	0.13	0.16	£432
Vero Pianoman	InSire	Mogul x Planet	+586	21.1	19.9	-0.02	0.01	£420



*Eye-catching heifers: Mark is extremely pleased with his latest batch of Atlantic, Cricket and Fidelity daughters*

to the housed system,” he says. “They’re not too big, they have good health and fertility traits and they’re not ‘extreme’ in any way.

I want to look down a row of cows and heifers and see uniformity – I don’t want any ‘stand out’ cows.”

That’s not to say that Mark’s cows don’t catch the eye. They have good feet and legs and udders and plenty of body capacity, without too much height.

“And they also offer plenty of milk. We know that, when we want them to, we can put our foot on the gas and the cows will milk and not just put on body condition.”

### **Sexed semen**

The herd moved to a new unit, built on a greenfield site, in 2009 and is fed a TMR that comprises both maize and grass silage, soya, rape, pot ale syrup and sugarbeet pulp.

Mark began using CRV’s Sirematch programme 20 years ago. “Back then it was all about corrective mating, but today I just pick the middle-of-the-road

cows and breed replacements from just those cattle.”

He uses SiryX sexed semen on all heifers and the top cows in the milking herd – about 15 a month for this all-year-round calving herd. And Belgian Blue semen is used to AI the lower genetic merit animals.

“I use Silent Herdsman to aid heat detection and, to maintain a level milk supply to fulfil my buyer’s contract, I also try to calve at least 10 heifers a month.”

The herd has expanded during the seven years, from 180 head to today’s 350, using home-bred replacements. During that time they have also sold a lot of heifers. The average age at first insemination for heifers is 15 months and the average age at first calving is between 26 and 27 months

When selecting sexed semen to use on his herd, Mark looks first at PLI and also keeps a close eye on fertility scores. Mark tends to avoid anything below £450PLI. Fertility must be, ideally, at least +3. As for kilogrammes of milk, he

looks for between +200 and +300, with good fat and protein. “I have selected for more milk than that, but I don’t do it too often because, like I said, I really want to avoid any sires that are too extreme.”

### **Uniform daughters**

Bulls currently in his AI flask include: Vero Pianoman and Vero Crown for use on cows. And he’s been using Apina Norman on his heifers.

“They are all good, solid ‘all rounders’ that will produce the balanced and uniform daughters – with plenty of milk – that I’m looking for. I like to look along a line of my cows and for them all to look the same.

“I get a lot of satisfaction from that and it also makes management easier if the cows are all very similar, in both type and production.”

He adds that he has 42 Delta Atlantic heifers on the ground that he’s particularly pleased with, as well as 21 Cricket daughters and 34 by Fidelity: “Now those really have to be seen to be believed – they’re great heifers.” |