

Dakota takes top spot, but will genomic bulls rule the rankings in April?

It's all change at the top

Top dairy breeder and NMR/RABDF Gold Cup finalist Willy Ley shares his thoughts and views on the most recent – and the next – bull proof rankings.

text Rachael Porter

He admits to being somewhat distracted by what's to come when looking at the latest proof run. Willy Ley already has an eye on the April 2012 rankings, when genomically evaluated sires will be added for the first time. "I'm just eager to see how the rankings look – I suspect that the genomically evaluated bulls will dominate, but seeing will be believing. It's exciting times for dairy breeding, and I'm sure there will be some controversy too."

But back to the December proofs. What caught Willy's eye and why, apart from the fact that the rankings will never look the same again?

Top spot

Well, there's a change at the top, for starters. Topping the list of the Holstein bull proof rankings, published by DairyCo Breeding+, is the high production bull ALH Dakota moving up to number-one position.

Ranked on Profitable Lifetime Index (PLI) and demonstrating exceptional all-round performance, this Oman son manages to combine high daughter production (Predicted Transmitting Ability for milk, 1,035kg and 33.5kg protein) with outstanding health and fitness traits. Daughters continue to demonstrate low cell counts, although it is improvements in their fertility (Fertility Index 0.8) and lifespan (LS 0.5) which have elevated



Willy Ley

Dakota from second position. His Lifespan Index is among the best of the top 50 PLI bulls, and his PLI is now an impressive £258.

"His lifespan certain is good – that's what grabbed my attention and he's certainly one to dabble with," adds Willy. "He's not badly priced either, at £18 a straw."

In second position is former number-one sire, Lynbrook Jancen, who shares Dakota's exceptional transmission of longevity and has a PLI of £242.

"He's certainly in demand. I've not managed to get hold of any straws yet – I keep ringing up the AI company though and I'll get some eventually."

In third position is Oman grandson, Morningview Levi, who made his debut in April 2011. Sired by Buckeye and out of Morningview Oman Libby, he is the best daughter fertility improver (FI 5.1) in the top 10.

"I might use him – his percentages are

positive and he's my sort of bull. But there are so many good bulls out there and you can't use them all!"

Best of the British breeding and convincingly earning his place in the top 10 is Ballycairn Tiergan, who is establishing himself among the very best bulls worldwide.

Now with 71 UK daughters milking in 47 herds, he improves his SCC Index to -18 and with a Type Merit of 1.8, he is the highest type transmitter of the top 10 PLI bulls.

Also the highest ranking Goldwyn son and the highest ranking bull without Oman blood, he weighs in with a PLI of £216.

Bred by Andrew McCollum in Northern Ireland, Tiergan is out of the UK's former number-one PLI cow, Ballycairn Garter Tinnie VG87.

Genomic bulls

It all makes good reading for Willy, who has cows in calf to this sire and is looking forward to seeing progeny on the ground.

So, back to those genomically evaluated bulls. Willy says that he began 'dabbling' two years ago and his first 'genomic' heifers are just beginning to mature. "I used one or two Oman sons with high scores.

"I'm relatively comfortable with the technology – there's got to be something in it. But there's also got to be a sting in the tail somewhere – there usually is. Maybe milking speed or temperament? Only time will tell."

As of April 2012, DairyCo will publish two main lists of Holstein bulls. The first will feature bulls with milking daughters contributing to their index and the second will comprise young bulls with no milking daughters.

name	sire	mat. grandsire	supplier	production							functional traits				conformation			
				rel.	milk	fat kg	prot. kg	fat%	protein%	EPIN	EPLI	SCC	lifespan	fertility ind.	dCE	F&L	udder	TM
ALH Dakota	O Man	Durham	Dairy Daughters	79	+1035	+34.0	+33.5	-0.08	+0.00	57	258	-11	0.5	0.8	1.7	1.45	0.01	0.51
Lynbrook Jancen	O Man	Manat	Bullsemen.com	74	+461	+31.4	+24.4	+0.16	+0.11	54	242	-11	0.5	0.4	—	-0.19	-0.20	-0.17
Morningview Levi	Buckeye	O Man	Genus	74	+665	+28.5	+25.2	+0.03	+0.04	48	233	-20	0.3	5.1	1.3	1.01	0.46	0.78
Co-op Oman Logan	O Man	BW Marshall	Bullsemen.com	73	+956	+34.8	+29.5	-0.03	-0.02	52	227	-23	0.3	-0.9	0.5	0.90	0.21	0.51
Mainstream Manifold	O Man	BW Marshall	Semex	74	+877	+33.9	+26.6	-0.01	-0.02	49	222	-8	0.3	3.5	2.8	-0.01	0.97	0.76
Ufm-Dubs Alta Esquire	O Man	Mark Sam	Alta	76	+497	+37.2	+23.1	+0.21	+0.08	56	220	-3	0.2	-0.1	1.9	1.02	0.16	0.48
Long-Langs Oman Oman	O Man	Aaron	WWS UK	73	+704	+29.0	+29.6	+0.01	+0.08	55	219	-1	0.2	-1.2	1.7	0.84	1.42	1.52
Co-Op Oman Loydie	O Man	BW Marshall	Bullsemen.com	73	+472	+28.0	+24.0	+0.11	+0.10	51	217	-15	0.2	1.4	2.2	0.86	0.47	0.73
Ballycairn Tiergan	Goldwyn	Garter	Cogent	92	+397	+31.3	+18.6	+0.19	+0.07	46	216	-18	0.2	1.7	0.8	1.30	1.78	1.81
D Omar	O Man	Lukas	Viking Genetics	77	+485	+29.4	+23.5	+0.12	+0.09	51	213	-22	0.1	2.9	0.3	0.73	-0.03	0.33
Crockett-Acres Eight	O Man	Mtoto	Semex	74	+582	+24.4	+24.1	+0.02	+0.06	45	212	-19	0.3	3.4	1.3	0.48	0.22	0.39
Coldsprings Garner	O Man	Patron	Bullsemen.com	74	+529	+27.7	+18.4	+0.08	+0.02	39	211	-22	0.4	4.6	0.9	0.51	0.80	0.85
Gran-J Oman McCormick	O Man	Durham	Genus	74	+320	+28.0	+15.2	+0.19	+0.06	40	211	-21	0.3	6.0	1.6	0.76	1.09	1.22
Pirola Goldwyn Wyman	Goldwyn	O Man	WWS UK	70	+287	+23.5	+17.9	+0.15	+0.11	42	208	-24	0.1	4.6	0.4	2.65	1.68	2.29
D Oblat	O Man	Morty	Viking Genetics	76	+810	+33.0	+26.1	+0.01	+0.00	49	207	-12	0.1	4.0	1.1	1.11	-0.13	0.52
Morningview Legend	O Man	Durham	Genus	74	+534	+23.8	+24.2	+0.03	+0.08	46	207	-13	0.3	2.1	0.8	0.61	0.11	0.37
Lynbrook Classic	O Man	Manat	Dovea Genetics	68	+585	+34.0	+24.0	+0.13	+0.06	52	204	-17	0.2	-1.2	1.9	-1.24	-0.20	-0.62
Guarini	Goldwyn	O Man	Bullsemen.com	73	+505	+19.7	+21.9	+0.00	+0.07	40	201	-23	0.2	2.6	—	1.41	2.42	2.36
Regancrest Alta Iota	O Man	Ito	Alta	73	+585	+29.2	+21.1	+0.07	+0.03	44	200	-11	0.2	2.4	0.7	0.50	1.79	1.57
Woudhoeve 1042 Impuls	O Man	Jesther	Avoncroft Genetics	78	+599	+27.0	+25.0	+0.04	+0.07	48	200	-14	0.2	0.9	0.2	0.26	0.01	0.19

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

"Only bulls with a reliability of at least 65% (and 10 milking daughters) feature in the first list, and bulls whose indexes have reliabilities of more than 40% feature in the young sire list," explains the head of genetics at DairyCo Breeding+, Marco Winters.

"Genomic indexes have reliabilities somewhere between 55% and 65%," says Mr Winters.

"When more information goes into the calculation of the genomic index, and when the heritability of the trait is high (such as production traits), the reliability will be at the higher end of the scale."

Bulls that have genomic data included will have a 'G' label alongside the evaluations, to make them distinguishable

from bulls with conventional proofs. "But we won't be talking about 'gPLI' as some other countries do.

"This is because we believe that in the near future, all bulls will have genomic data included in their proof."

Young bulls will also be listed on a separate list, to clearly distinguish these from daughter proven bulls at this stage. "This is to highlight the difference in reliability that still exists," adds Mr Winters.

And how will the daughter-proven list look? He's not expecting a dramatic change.

"High reliability bulls won't change at all. Lower reliability first-crop bulls will see a little more change, but nothing out

of the ordinary. So the top 10 should still look familiar."

That said, the top end of the young bull list will indeed be higher than the top daughter proven bulls.

"However, the very top daughter proven bulls are not that far behind the top genomically evaluated young bulls."

DairyCo Breeding+ is publishing a leaflet to help producers understand not only genomics but also how they should use the new bull rankings and make good breeding decisions about which sires to use.

It will be sent out to producers in April and includes a useful, easy-to-follow 'dos and don'ts' list for looking at genomic indexes. I

Lynbrook Jancen



Morningview Levi



ALH Dakota



New top sires for other dairy breeds



British Friesian

British Friesian producers have a new number one sire with which to expand their breeding repertoire, in the shape of UK-tested Morcourt Hilton. Breaking through the £200 Profitable Lifetime Index barrier, this son of Tittenser Hylke combines impressive production figures with solid traits for fitness.

Danish-bred DJ Broiler takes top honours in the Jersey rankings

Jersey

The top three Jerseys reshuffle slightly to reveal a new number one this run in Danish-bred, DJ Broiler (PLI £204). Broiler transmits excellent daughter fertility, fitness and type.

Ayrshire

Finnish Ayrshire, Asmo Tosikko takes top honours in the Ayrshire rankings with a PLI of £191 and combines high production with good cell counts (SCC -23).

BULL PROOFS

name	sire	mat.	grandsire	supplier	production						functional traits					conformation		
					rel.	milk	fat kg	prot. kg	fat%	protein%	EPIN	EPLI	SCC	lifespan	fertility ind.	dCE	F&L	udder