

Genomic sires continue to show their genetic superiority

PLI revision prompts sire ranking reshuffling

Respected Holstein breeder and former Gold Cup finalist Willy Ley has perused the latest daughter-proven and genomically-tested sire lists following the August bull proof run.

text **Rachael Porter**

Fertility is now king, says Devon-based producer Willy Ley. But that's not the most interesting thing he spotted when he clapped eyes on the latest bull rankings. "What I found most interesting – and exciting – is that the top 100 genomic bull would be eighth or ninth place in the daughter proven list. That really puts the rate of genetic gain – and potential progress – that genomic sires have to offer into perspective."

Genomic young sires do, indeed, continue to show their genetic superiority. The latest genomic ranking features no less than nine elite sires exceeding £600 for the newly revised Profitable Lifetime Index (£PLI).

The list is topped by a new number-one sire, CRV Avoncroft's Apina Norman with a £PLI of £635. This Numero Uno x Ramos, excels in daughter fertility and longevity with scores of +12.4 and +0.6 respectively. He combines all this with solid production and high type figures. "I've not used him yet, but I will be taking a closer look. In fact the same can be said for the top four sires in this list. They all offer good fertility and a fair amount of lifespan," says Mr Ley. So he will also be pouring over River-

bridge Co-Op Troy's figures. He ranks second (PLI £621) and is another genomic giant for fitness. This Mogul x Freddie also transmits high type (Type Merit +2.69) and transmits positive milk solids. Third ranking Farnetur Alfalfa climbs from 21 in the previous index run and benefits from the new £PLI revamp thanks to his moderate-sized daughters, which are efficient milk producers and have outstanding fitness and fertility.

"I have looked at him in the past and there's nothing wrong with him at all. Like I always say, I can't use them all." Trailing by only one point in fourth position is the high type Mr Moviestar Mardi Gras, up from 15th place last time. "I may consider buying some of his straws – he's a fairly complete bull.

High production

With a PLI of £610, in fifth position is Co-op Robust Cabriolet (Robust x Planet) who breeds daughters with high production and low maintenance cost. He combines this efficiency with solid fitness and type. And Willy has already used some semen on his herd. "It was recently, so I don't have any calves on the ground just yet. He was competitively



Willy Ley: "Comparing the lists really puts genetic progress into perspective"

priced and he's a Robust son. What more can I say other than that he's a good overall bull and positive on fertility."

The first UK-housed and internationally popular Cogent Supershot ranks sixth and is the highest milk and protein bull in the top 20 (PLI £605). With a PLI of £602 is Bomaz AltaArmani, a bull with good milk solids, SCC and daughter fertility. And the highest transmitter of kilogrammes of fat is Seagull-Bay Silver, who is also the previous number-one genomic sire. He now ranks eighth with a PLI of £601 and a TM of +3.52. Squeezing into the group of £600+ PLI sires is Lepacha Loberry with an all-round good production, type and fitness rating.

Rounding off the top 10 is Ladys-Manor Graf La-Bron, whose PLI is £596. Willy was particularly pleased to see him in the top 10 as he has some of his calves

Apina Norman



Ballycairn Oman Pello



Morningview Levi



name	sire	mat. grandsire	supplier	production						functional traits					conformation			
				rel.	milk	fat kg	prot. kg	fat%	protein%	EPLI	maint.	SCC	lifespan	fertility ind.	dCE	F&L	udder	TM
VH Tirsvad Goldwyn Grafit	Goldwyn	O Man	Sterling/Viking	81	+519	+30.3	+23.1	+0.11	+0.07	623	17	-19	0.2	10.5	1.2	2.26	1.07	1.74
Prehen Omen	O Man	Goldwyn	Bullsemen.com/AIS	87	+363	+23.9	+23.6	+0.12	+0.14	579	13	-11	0.3	6.8	1.9	1.38	1.21	1.46
Gen-I-Beq Lavaman	O Man	Goldwyn	Semex	83	+151	+14.3	+16.9	+0.10	+0.15	545	5	-9	0.2	8.2	2.5	2.66	1.61	2.14
Hammer-Creek O Man Kody	O Man	Goldwyn	Cogent	82	+520	+15.2	+20.4	-0.06	+0.04	542	12	-10	0.4	12.8	0.7	0.76	1.95	1.92
Ladys-Manor Rd Grafeeti	Freddie	Goldwyn	Cogent	82	+240	+21.7	+10.5	+0.15	+0.03	538	-1	-17	0.4	6.6	0.5	2.62	2.95	3.34
Kings-Ransom Erdman	Planet	Ramos	Bullsemen.com	85	+485	+22.3	+14.6	+0.04	-0.01	531	-12	-12	0.5	8.6	1.5	1.46	1.15	1.39
Morningview Levi	Buckeye	O Man	Genus	84	+409	+25.1	+18.2	+0.11	+0.06	529	8	-11	0.3	9.4	2.1	1.65	0.56	1.10
Welcome Oman Paco	O Man	Aaron	Bullsemen.com	85	-30	+18.7	+7.5	+0.25	+0.11	522	-19	-12	0.2	14.3	2.7	0.84	0.22	0.52
ABS Simon	O Man	Laudan	Genus	95	+489	+20.8	+20.3	+0.02	+0.05	513	-14	-8	0.2	10.2	2.2	0.51	-0.06	0.10
Ballycairn Oman Pello	O Man	Goldwyn	Genus	95	+850	+31.9	+26.8	-0.02	-0.01	501	29	-24	0.1	6.3	2.8	1.47	0.88	1.21
D Mason	Mascol	O Man	Viking/Nordic Gen.	80	+385	+21.5	+16.2	+0.07	+0.05	498	-3	-23	0.4	4.3	1.5	1.83	0.35	1.08
Gran-J Oman McCormick	O Man	Durham	Genus	99	-122	+17.8	+2.8	+0.29	+0.09	497	3	-11	0.3	16.3	0.8	1.80	1.28	1.79
Marbri Facebook	O Man	Airraid	Semex	82	+685	+31.6	+23.0	+0.05	+0.01	496	20	-8	0.1	3.4	1.3	2.67	2.61	2.98
Laurelhill Classic	O Man	Laudan	Genus	95	+315	+11.2	+16.2	-0.02	+0.07	495	17	-18	0.4	13.3	1.7	0.16	1.23	1.10
De-Su 521 Bookem	Planet	Ramos	Cogent	86	+642	+15.4	+22.0	-0.12	+0.01	486	18	-16	0.3	2.6	1.4	3.09	2.62	3.13
genomic sires																		
Apina Norman	Número Uno	Ramos	CRV Avoncroft	67	+462	+26.8	+16.0	+0.10	+0.01	635	3	-17	0.6	12.4	1.3	1.23	2.11	2.31
River-Bridge Co-Op Troy	Mogul	Freddie	Bullsemen.com	67	+472	+23.4	+17.8	+0.06	+0.03	621	13	-19	0.6	9.8	1.0	2.15	2.34	2.69
Farnear Alfalfa	Supersire	Freddie	Genus	67	+694	+27.4	+20.9	+0.00	-0.02	614	2	-16	0.6	7.7	1.5	1.84	2.00	2.31
Mr Moviestar Mardi Gras	Mogul	Planet	King Street Sires	67	+493	+27.2	+18.1	+0.09	+0.03	613	15	-11	0.5	8.1	1.0	2.59	3.47	3.77
Co-Op Robust Cabriolet	Robust	Planet	Bullsemen.com	68	+649	+35.5	+24.6	+0.12	+0.04	610	-10	-5	0.3	4.0	2.5	1.63	1.68	1.79

Table 1: Top 15 daughter proven and top five genomic sires available in the UK ranked on PLI (source: DairyCo breeding+ and Holstein UK)

on the ground. “I’ve used quite a bit of him and I’ve also used his proven sire Graffiti extensively. I can be pretty certain that his daughters will be good cows and so far I’ve not been disappointed.”

Daughter-proven sires

Moving to the daughter-proven list, top health and fertility bulls are dominating the new, revised £PLI rankings. It’s no surprise to see the proven Holstein sire rankings dominated by bulls that transmit significant improvement to their daughters’ health and fertility and reduce their costs of milk production. And it’s no surprise that Willy has used the new number-one bull, VH Tirsvad Goldwyn Grafit, on his herd. Grafit transmits exceptionally high daughter fertility (+10.5) along with low cell counts (-19) without compromising on milk and milk solids production. Formerly in second place, he is a Danish-bred son of Goldwyn out of an OMan and tracing back to the American cow family, Tui Onyx Nick. “The Danes have been focusing on health traits for longer than many their cattle breeding countries, so I guess he should be up there,” says Willy. Grafit has already been heavily used in Scandinavia based on his early genomic predictions. At £623, Grafit’s PLI is far higher than cattle breeders will be

accustomed to seeing, as the index’s new formula recognises the high financial value of the best genetics in the current economic climate.

The number-two bull, Prehen Omen, is a complete newcomer, and originates closer to home, in Northern Ireland. Now owned by the McLean family (Relough herd) and from the Dutch Froukje cow family (which has many high ranking females on the genomic rankings), this bull is a components specialist at +0.12% fat and +0.14% protein.

His PLI is £579 and he is now available through Bullsemen.com. “So far, I’ve not been able to get my hands on any straws,” adds Willy, who hopes he soon will.

Another new entry at number three is the already popular, Gen-I-Beq Lavaman. Straight into the proven list having formerly led the young sire rankings, he comes through with high components (+0.1% fat and +0.15% protein) and good fitness on the proven list. His new PLI is £545.

Willy says that he will also build confidence in the DNA technology behind genomic young sire indexes. “I used him as a genomic sire and I have his daughters milking in my herd. They’re good heifers and cows and I’m pleased with them.”

Hammer-Creek O Man Kody climbs up

the rankings into fourth position, also with good daughter fertility at +12.8 and a PLI of £542, while former number-one £PLI sire, Ladys-Manor RD Grafeeti now ranks in fifth position.

Grafeeti is the highest type bull of the top 50 sires, at Type Merit +3.34. His PLI is £538.

Sixth ranking Kings-Ransom Erdman has the highest Lifespan Index in the top 20 at +0.5, meaning his daughters, on average, milk for half a lactation longer (around 150 days more) than a zero lifespan sire. This Planet x Ramos x Bullet benefits from the changes to the £PLI formula, with a PLI of £531.

Meeting expectations

It’s been an exciting bull proof run and Willy is always happy to see former genomic sires meeting expectations when they’ve produced enough daughters to join the proven list. “It’ll be interesting to see what will happen when the genomic list contains bulls with no notable sire of reference, like Shottle, for example. He’s very well known across the world.

“Bulls are still very much advertised using daughter photos and proven sire and dam information. With the continuing acceleration of the rate of genetic gain, we’ll reach a point where those daughters won’t be born yet and figures won’t be available.”