

Proven and genomic rankings leave producers spoilt for choice

Debutants steal the show

Lancashire-based Holstein breeder James Tomlinson is in awe of the quality of proven and genomically tested sires that are now available. He shares his highlights from December's bull rankings.

text **Rachael Porter**

He's one of the top milk quality improvers of the Holstein breed and James Tomlinson says that there's no doubt that Mr Rubi-Agronaut, who heads the list of genomic young sires in the new AHDB Dairy indexes with a December 2017 Profitable Lifetime Index (PLI) of £812, will be in huge demand and short supply.

Agronaut transmits fat and protein percentages of +0.22% and +0.09% respectively, and also has the highest Type Merit of the top 20 sires at +3.12. "And he's out of the Apple cow family and offers great fertility. So I'm going to enquire about his price, even though I doubt they'll have any straws available."

Colossal PLI

James also believes that producers won't go far wrong with second-place sire Claynook Casper (Hang-Time x Bombero). Like all of the top £PLI sires, Casper scores strongly for both daughter fertility (fertility index +13.4) and daughter lifespan (LS +0.7 lactations).

"He's expensive, which isn't surprising for such a good bull. He has a colossal PLI and super fertility. And Charity is a trusted and reliable cow family. So I'm certainly going to enquire. But if I buy



James Tomlinson: "I'll be making several semen-price enquiries this month"

any straws they will be for my top cows only."

VH Balisto Brook holds on to third spot, transmitting a massive weight of fat at +40.5kg and excellent udder health, with -36 for Somatic Cell Count and -6 for mastitis. Fourth is Peak Alta Depot, another strong udder health bull, who also has excellent daughter fertility (+17.6) and the highest lifespan index in the breed at +0.9.

Former number-one sire, Westcoast Perseus holds his position in the top five with a PLI of £788 and a high protein percentage (+0.11%), and stands ahead of the first brand-new bull in the top 10.

This new entry, Progenesis Doctor, has

certainly grabbed James' attention. "I'm definitely giving him a second look. I've used a lot of Superhero semen and have been happy with the results." This sire reduces maintenance feed cost for his daughters (-6) and has a high milk Predicted Transmitting Ability (PTA) at 811kg. "I can't go wrong with him."

Seventh is UK-bred Prehen Lancaster. He is another favourable daughter maintenance transmitter at -3, reaffirming his position among the world's best. Sharing eighth position, with Progenesis Padawan, is Leaninghouse Helix who has good all round PTAs and a PLI of £773. James is excited about him, particularly due to his modern sire stack.

Proven sires

The number-one position in the new Profitable Lifetime Index (£PLI) rankings for daughter-proven Holstein bulls is held by long-term leader, Gen-I-Beq Lavaman. This bull has almost 100 more UK daughters contributing to his figures since they were published by AHDB Dairy in August 2017. More than 1,000 are now milking in the UK. And James says you can't argue with that. "But I can be picky, because there are so many other excellent sires to choose from. And, for me, he's just not high enough for milk. Although he is clearly very persistent."

He has a PLI of £690, reflecting his balanced breeding profile, with a very high Predicted Transmitting Ability (PTA) for protein percent (+0.18%) and low daughter maintenance costs (-9).

In second position is a bull which makes his debut in the proven bull rankings in

S-S-I Shamrock Mystic



De-Su 11236 Balisto





Peak Alta Depot



Mr Rubi-Agronaut 73287

the shape of Mocon. Bred in Germany to a daughter of Snowman, his sire is Morgan, giving him both Bookem and Shottle in his pedigree. “And it is an interesting sire stack, but it’s his chest width that puts me off,” says James. With a PLI of £679, Mocon has a PTA which combines high weight of milk (839kg) and protein (28.5kg), alongside low cell counts (–23) and favourable daughter maintenance (–19) that reflects his daughters’ smaller than average stature.

Teemar Shamrock Alphabet edges up to third place with outstanding fitness attributes including daughter fertility (Fertility Index 21.1) and good calving

ease (both direct and maternal). And cell count and fertility improver, S-S-I Shamrock Mystic holds on to fourth position (PLI £640), closely followed by VH Cole Clark, another fitness specialist with 21.2 FI, +0.8 lifespan and a PLI of £634. Sixth place goes to De-Su 11236 Balisto, now with more than 200 UK daughters contributing to his proof and a PLI of £628.

New in seventh position, and the first of three sires to really catch James’ eye, is De-Su Penley 11839, a Seagull-Bay Platinum son with exceptional udder health at –38 SCC and –6 mastitis. His PLI is £621. “I’m getting prices for him and

eighth-place De-Su Rookie 11057 and ninth place EDG Rubicon. These are the three proven sires that have really captured my imagination this time around,” says James. “Penley’s SCC of –38 really stands out and he’s from a good cow family and by Platinum. Rookie’s high type and his ‘alternative’ sire stack make him worth a closer look, and a phone call. And Rubicon is highest for type and his modern sire stack seals the deal. But the sires listed in both rankings are exceptional. Much of it comes down to personal preference and individual herd breeding goals. There’s so much choice. But you can’t use them all.”

Table 1: Top 10 genomic and top 10 daughter-proven sires available in the UK, ranked on PLI (source: AHDB Dairy and Holstein UK)

name	sire	mat. grandsire	supplier	production							functional traits					conformation		
				rel.	milk	fat kg	prot. kg	fat%	protein%	£PLI	maint.	SCC	lifespan	fertility ind.	dCE	F&L	udder	TM
genomic sires																		
Mr Rubi-Agronaut 73287	Rubicon	Shotglass	Cogent	64	+399	+33.9	+20.2	+0.22	+0.09	812	2	–27	0.7	13.1	–0.1	2.44	2.10	3.12
Claynook Casper	Hang-Time	Bombero	WWS	63	+759	+31.1	+29.8	+0.01	+0.06	796	14	–21	0.7	13.4	0.2	1.34	2.85	2.35
VH Balisto Brook	Balisto	Denim	Viking/AIS	66	+497	+40.5	+23.7	+0.25	+0.09	795	2	–36	0.7	8.9	0.9	0.91	0.90	1.60
Peak Alta Depot	Hotshot	Montross	Alta/Global Genetics	63	+605	+28.0	+20.4	+0.05	+0.01	791	7	–36	0.9	17.6	0.6	1.23	1.27	1.98
Westcoast Perseus	Penmanship	Doorman	Semex	64	+646	+33.5	+30.0	+0.09	+0.11	788	15	–25	0.6	11.0	0.8	1.00	1.98	1.68
Progenesis Doctor	Superhero	Mr Mogul Delta	Semex	63	+811	+34.1	+29.6	+0.02	+0.04	785	–6	–22	0.7	10.5	–1.0	0.99	1.90	1.84
Prehen Lancaster	Penmanship	Shamrock	Gene Source/UK Sires Direct/AIS	64	+709	+31.5	+24.8	+0.04	+0.02	775	–3	–14	0.7	17.4	0.8	0.88	1.50	1.53
Progenesis Padawan	Jedi	Enforcer	Semex	64	+956	+23.9	+32.2	–0.16	+0.01	773	20	–22	0.7	16.6	–0.4	1.91	2.05	2.19
Leaninghouse Helix 22137	Hang-Time	Jacey	WWS	64	+662	+33.6	+26.1	+0.09	+0.05	773	11	–32	0.6	11.2	–0.2	1.45	2.70	2.38
KNS Barabo	Battlecry	Balisto	Mastergen	64	+608	+27.4	+27.4	+0.08	+0.09	761	5	–29	0.8	7.3	–0.5	1.70	1.60	2.40
proven sires																		
Gen-I-Beq Lavaman	Man-O-Man	Goldwyn	Semex	97	+331	+20.0	+25.2	+0.09	+0.18	690	–9	–4	0.2	16.0	0.8	1.09	0.79	0.70
Mocon	Morgan	Snowman	Bullsemen.com	72	+839	+24.3	+28.5	–0.10	+0.02	679	–19	–23	0.6	7.5	0.9	0.25	0.92	0.78
Teemar Shamrock Alphabet	Shamrock	Ramos	Genus	82	+544	+15.8	+17.8	–0.07	+0.00	668	–23	–3	0.7	21.1	2.4	0.73	–0.32	–0.17
S-S-I Shamrock Mystic	Shamrock	Shottle	WWS	79	+588	+23.7	+19.8	+0.01	+0.01	640	0	–21	0.5	18.7	–0.6	0.01	0.55	0.84
VH Cole Clark	D Cole	Lambada	Viking	81	+438	+2.0	+16.1	–0.18	+0.02	634	–22	–4	0.8	21.2	2.5	1.16	–0.52	0.52
De-Su 11236 Balisto	Bookem	Watson	Genus	93	+500	+29.8	+29.0	+0.12	+0.15	628	10	–19	0.5	1.1	0.3	1.18	1.05	1.69
De-Su Penley 11839	Platinum	Shamrock	WWS	72	+784	+25.2	+24.8	–0.07	–0.01	621	12	–38	0.6	6.2	0.3	1.20	1.40	1.78
De-Su Rookie 11057	Bookem	Bronco	WWS	80	+672	+35.5	+22.9	+0.11	+0.01	616	6	–25	0.5	5.9	0.2	0.79	1.60	1.48
EDG Rubicon	Mogul	Robust	Cogent	79	+656	+39.8	+21.0	+0.16	+0.00	612	11	–11	0.5	8.3	–0.4	2.29	1.94	2.92
View-Home Littlerock	Cashcoin	Robust	Semex	69	+582	+23.0	+22.3	+0.00	+0.04	603	–10	–12	0.6	8.8	0.6	0.97	1.06	1.23