

Consistency, improved reliability and record PLIs all count in latest rankings

Reliability and stability

Lancashire-based Holstein breeder James Tomlinson digs down into the detail behind the top bulls that are vying for top position in the latest daughter-proven and genomic sire rankings.

text **Rachael Porter**

James Tomlinson is among the many Holstein breeders who like to see the consistency and improved reliability in daughter-proven bulls. And there's a new reassurance in the August 2017 AHDB Dairy proven sire rankings where Gen-I-Beq Lavaman has regained his position as the number-one sire ranked on Profitable Lifetime Index (£PLI). This Man-O-Man son returns to the position he has held on several occasions, with a PLI of £668 and a total of 942 UK daughters contributing to his index. "He's been around for a while now and this shows that he's a consistent sire," says James. "I've not used him on my herd, but I may try him now. I have used a lot of Goldwyn, so I tended to shy away

from him. But I think I can find a place for him now."

Sire stack

De-Su Rookie, who led the field in the April proof run, has been edged into second place with a PLI of £647. "But he looks like a decent sire too. I particularly like his sire stack," says James. Rookie is a high fat transmitter (35.2kg) and also passes on low cell counts (SCC Index -25), good mastitis resistance (Mastitis Index -4) and longevity (Lifespan +0.6) to his daughters. "My only concern is his rump angle and that's why I've shied away from him before. But with this staying power and these figures, I think he's on my 'may be' list."



James Tomlinson: "The sires in the genomic ranking all have phenomenal PLIs"

Moving up to third place is the exceptional daughter fertility improver (Fertility Index +21.2), VH Cole Clark with a PLI of £641. And in fourth place sits S-S-I Shamrock Mystic, with a PLI of £621, a fertility index of +17.6) and +0.5 for longevity. His paternal half-brother, Teemar Shamrock Alphabet (both by Shamrock) shares these characteristics with +17.5 FI and +0.7 LS and has a PLI of £612. "These are both good bulls – how else would they make it on the list – but they're both too low on type for me. They

Table 1: Top 9 genomic and top 9 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			
				reliability	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	King Street Sires	67	+437	+34.9	+21.7	+0.21	+0.09	819	3	-24	0.7	13.4	0.1	2.51	1.95	2.47
Peak Alta Depot	Hotshot	Montross	Alta/Global Genetics	67	+672	+29.8	+22.3	+0.04	+0.01	818	8	-36	0.9	17.5	0.7	1.32	1.39	1.66
VH Balisto Brook	Balisto	Denim	Viking	69	+507	+40.4	+24.4	+0.24	+0.10	791	4	-36	0.7	8.8	1.1	0.81	0.94	1.04
Progenesis Padawan	Jedi	Enforcer	Semex	67	+985	+25.8	+32.5	-0.15	+0.01	779	21	-22	0.7	16.2	-0.4	1.94	2.08	2.43
Westcoast Perseus	Penmanship	Doorman	Semex	67	+675	+33.9	+30.7	+0.09	+0.10	779	15	-25	0.6	10.3	0.9	1.10	1.97	2.05
Westcoast Guarantee	Boastful	Tango	Semex	67	+1045	+38.9	+35.5	-0.03	+0.02	774	8	-30	0.6	8.9	0.5	0.43	1.26	1.24
VH Balisto Brixton	Balisto	Mandel	Viking	68	+80	+29.3	+19.3	+0.33	+0.21	756	-15	-23	0.6	8.5	1.4	0.42	1.64	1.52
Prehen Lancaster	Penmanship	Shamrock	UK Sires Direct	67	+635	+29.6	+22.9	+0.05	+0.03	751	-3	-13	0.7	17.1	1.0	0.98	1.52	1.69
ABS Achiever	Yoder	Embassy	Genus	67	+592	+48.7	+23.2	+0.30	+0.05	743	-3	-17	0.6	6.8	0.2	1.67	1.54	1.83
proven sires																		
Gen-I-Beq Lavaman	Man-O-Man	Goldwyn	Semex	99	+352	+20.0	+25.6	+0.07	+0.17	668	-8	-4	0.2	14.3	1.0	1.14	0.86	1.06
De-Su Rookie 11057	Bookem	Bronco	WWS	82	+656	+35.2	+23.2	+0.11	+0.02	647	7	-25	0.6	6.8	0.2	0.89	1.65	1.55
VH Cole Clark	D Cole	Lambada	Viking	80	+493	+3.8	+17.1	-0.18	+0.02	641	-22	-5	0.8	21.2	2.5	1.09	-0.36	0.23
S-S-I Shamrock Mystic	Shamrock	Shottle	WWS	82	+610	+24.7	+20.1	+0.01	+0.00	621	1	-20	0.5	17.6	-0.7	0.12	0.53	0.41
Teemar Shamrock Alphabet	Shamrock	Ramos	Genus	83	+528	+15.4	+17.2	-0.06	+0.00	612	-22	-4	0.7	17.5	2.4	0.68	-0.40	-0.10
De-Su 11236 Balisto	Bookem	Watson	Genus	96	+467	+29.4	+28.8	+0.13	+0.16	606	13	-18	0.4	1.6	0.4	0.90	1.02	1.06
Har-Dale Acres-Jp Alta CR	Mogul	Trigger	Alta/Global Genetics	83	+412	+32.1	+16.3	+0.19	+0.04	601	-9	-10	0.4	9.2	-0.8	1.84	2.31	2.44
Co-Op Robust Cabriolet	Robust	Planet	Bullsemen.com/AIS	91	+655	+33.8	+22.8	+0.09	+0.02	596	-17	-7	0.5	5.9	1.4	0.72	0.84	0.82
EDG Rubicon	Mogul	Robust	King Street/Western Farm	82	+632	+39.2	+20.8	+0.17	+0.00	595	15	-7	0.5	8.5	-0.1	2.30	1.66	2.18

both have minus scores and I can afford to be picky with so many other good sires, across two rankings, to choose from.”

The sixth sire in the ranking – new to the top 10 and moving up from 26th position – is De-Su 11236 Balisto. This heavily used sire of sons has really caught James’ eye. Balisto’s 109 UK milking daughters confirm his genomic expectations and rank him high for protein (28.8kg and +0.17%) and maternal calving ease (+2.1). His PLI is £606. “And I’m definitely going to order some straws and have a dabble. He comes from a good cow family and has an interesting sire stack. And he’s been used as a sire of sons,” says James. Skipping to 10th place sees the highest-ranking UK-bred sire re-appearing in the top 10. And James is pleased to see Prehen Omen there. He has a PLI of £588 and is strengthening his position as daughters are added – he now has 268 UK daughters contributing to his index. “He’s one I said to keep an eye on because I knew he had more to prove. His milk yield has dropped a little, but I think he’s an all-round good sire and he definitely has a place in UK herds. I’m going to use him – probably as a ‘sweeper’.”

Genomic sires

The sky high PLIs of all the young sires is the first thing that strikes James in this proof run: “They’re all above £800, which really is phenomenal,” he says. The front runner Mr Rubi-Agronaut retains the number-one position and breaks the £800 Profitable Lifetime Index (EPLI) barrier with a PLI of £819. He also transmits solid production, marked by a Predicted Transmitting Ability (PTA) for fat of +0.21%. “He’s got it all – type, low SCC and fertility. He also has a good sire

stack and he’s from the Apple cow family – one of the best there is. So I’ll be making some enquiries about price.”

New in second place is Peak Alta Depot (Hotshot x Montross) with a similarly impressive PLI of £818. And James agrees. “His figures are almost unbelievable really – they’re so good. I’m not overly happy about his dam’s classification, but you can’t ignore the numbers in this proof. Again I’ll be looking to buy a few straws.”

This bull is an exceptional fitness transmitter – he’s one of the very best for Somatic Cell Count at –36 with a Lifespan Index of +0.9 and a daughter Fertility Index of +17.5.

Climbing to third spot is VH Balisto Brook (PLI £791), another remarkable bull for udder health. With the top ratings for SCC and Mastitis (–36 and –6 respectively), Westcoast Perseus (Penmanship x Doorman) now ranks in equal fourth place with a PLI of £779. He shares this position with non-mover, Progenesis Padawan (Jedi x Enforcer). Padawan is a transmitter of solid protein, high lifespan, fertility and high type (+2.43 Type Merit).

“Again, these are excellent bulls, but I can’t use them all. And these latter two are both –2 for straight legs and I’m avoiding sires that are too straight in the leg.

“Other than that, I can’t fault them. And I think that Perseus’ modern sire stack will be particularly appealing for breeders looking for something special to parade in the showring.”

In sixth position is Westcoast Guarantee. This Boastful x Tango, a useful cross according to James, shows genomic figures of 1,045kg milk, 38.9kg fat and 35.5kg protein and combines these with

outstanding SCC and Mastitis Indexes, giving him a PLI of £774.

“He’s definitely one to look out for. I’m certainly going to keep an eye on him.”

The eighth ranked young sire already has James’ full attention. Prehen Lancaster is the highest ranked UK-bred bull, weighing in with a PLI of £751 and the PLI of this Penmanship x Shamrock is underpinned by tremendous daughter Fertility Index of +17.1 alongside a high Lifespan Index (+0.7).

Genetic gain

“Making it to the top 10 is such an achievement and I like UK-bred sires anyway,” says James, adding that this bull is also from an exceptional cow family – Laurie Sheik. “I’m definitely going to use him on my herd – without a doubt.”

More than two thirds of all Holstein inseminations in the UK are carried out using genomic young sires and James says that the same ratio that he’s using on his herd.

“I’m now milking daughters by the first genomic young sires that I used and I’m very happy with them.”

It’s a similar picture across the industry and AHDB Dairy’s Marco Winters says that producer confidence in the genomic predictions is clear.

“This is a remarkable rate of adoption of a relatively new technology, which AHDB introduced as part of its genetic evaluation service just five years ago.

“We estimate that the additional genetic gain achieved on UK farms, as a result of producers choosing to use these superior genomic young sires, is approaching nearly double the annual gain we were achieving prior to the availability of genomic indexes in 2011.” |

Gen-I-Beq Lavaman



Patty Jones

Mr Rubi-Agronaut 73287



Frank Robinson