

Top picks from the latest sire rankings

Reliability and variety

The latest bull proof run fell short of Lancashire-based Holstein breeder James Tomlinson's expectations. But then, he says, producers have been a little spoiled for choice in previous daughter-proven and genomic sire rankings.

text **Rachael Porter**

It had to happen really – that level of excitement wasn't sustainable. That's James Tomlinson's philosophical approach to his disappointment with the latest April proof run for both genomic and daughter-proven sires. "There are some extremely good sires in there, obviously. But nothing like the number of eye-catching bulls seen in the past two rankings. But then, I guess, we have been a little spoiled and expectations have grown as a result."

The number-one daughter-proven sire available in the UK, ranked on Profitable Lifetime Index (£PLI), published by AHDB Dairy, is De-Su Rookie 11057. With a PLI

of £669, up 44 PLI points since the December proof run, this Bookem son makes gains for Lifespan Index, earning the very high score of 0.7, and weighs in with the best Somatic Cell Count Index in the top 10 at -25. He also has the best Predicted Transmitting Ability (PTA) for mastitis – a new evaluation launched by AHDB this month. "There's no doubt that he's a great sire, with decent type and milk yield and a good sire stack. The only thing that put me off was his teat length score, which is a little shorter than I'd like," says James.

Second-place, and former number-one, sire Lavaman (PLI £635) now has nearly



James Tomlinson: "We've been spoiled and that increases expectations"

800 daughters in the UK and strengthens his breeding pattern, with a 99% reliable production index. "His milk has dropped a little since the previous run, probably due to adding more daughters to his proof," says James.

Staying power

Kings-Ransom Erdman (PLI £623), who ranked number-one in December 2016, now lies in fifth position. There have been no major changes to his transmitting pattern – he has simply been overtaken

Table 1: Top nine genomic and top nine 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	King Street Sires	67	+484	+34.0	+22.1	+0.18	+0.08	793	2	-24	0.7	12.0	0.2	2.45	2.08	2.53
Westcoast Persus	Penmanship	Doorman	Semex	67	+685	+35.6	+30.7	+0.10	+0.10	784	15	-26	0.6	10.0	1.0	1.10	1.98	2.05
Westcoast Guarantee	Boastful	Tango	Semex	67	+980	+38.1	+34.6	-0.01	+0.03	782	8	-29	0.6	9.6	0.6	0.53	1.30	1.29
Progenesis Padawan	Jedi	Enforcer	Semex	67	+947	+25.7	+31.4	-0.13	+0.01	761	21	-22	0.7	15.1	-0.5	2.04	2.14	2.51
Prehen Lancaster	Penmanship	Shamrock	UK Sires Direct	67	+677	+31.2	+23.6	+0.05	+0.02	759	-2	-14	0.7	16.9	1.0	1.13	1.60	1.80
Bomaz Alta Topshot	Supershot	Embassy	Alta/Global Genetics	66	+856	+40.8	+33.0	+0.08	+0.06	740	5	-13	0.6	7.4	0.6	0.98	1.15	1.30
VH Balisto Brook	Balisto	Denim	Viking	68	+426	+36.7	+21.5	+0.24	+0.09	737	4	-33	0.7	8.6	0.7	0.81	0.99	1.09
De-Su Curry 13360	Jedi	Supersire	WWS	67	+1084	+42.7	+38.6	+0.00	+0.04	729	13	-15	0.6	5.6	-0.8	0.79	0.93	1.02
ABS Mayday	Tailor	Balisto	Genus	67	+488	+33.9	+26.1	+0.18	+0.12	728	10	-26	0.6	6.6	-0.3	0.89	2.36	2.27
proven sires																		
De-Su Rookie 11057	Bookem	Bronco	WWS	82	+665	+36.3	+22.9	+0.12	+0.02	669	8	-25	0.7	7.2	0.2	0.95	1.64	1.56
Gen-I-Beq Lavaman	Man-O-Man	Goldwyn	Semex	99	+326	+19.8	+23.5	+0.09	+0.16	635	-8	-2	0.2	14.1	1.0	1.21	0.87	1.10
S-S-I Shamrock Mystic	Shamrock	Shottle	WWS	82	+597	+26.6	+20.2	+0.04	+0.01	626	1	-20	0.5	16.5	-0.8	0.23	0.59	0.49
Tollenaars Alta Micro	Plan	O Man	Alta/Global Genetics	87	+420	+15.3	+18.6	-0.02	+0.06	625	-3	-16	0.6	17.7	1.1	0.39	-0.01	0.23
Kings-Ransom Erdman	Planet	Ramos	Bullsemen.com/AIS	85	+487	+23.8	+14.8	+0.06	-0.01	623	-23	-20	0.8	11.8	0.7	0.20	0.35	0.30
VH Cole Clark	D Cole	Lambada	Viking	80	+458	+5.4	+16.8	-0.15	+0.02	617	-21	-5	0.7	20.5	2.5	1.03	-0.33	0.24
Teemar Shamrock Alphabet	Shamrock	Ramos	Genus	83	+571	+18.2	+18.4	-0.05	+0.00	615	-19	-4	0.6	17.4	2.4	0.90	-0.21	0.14
Seagull-Bay Supersire	Robust	Planet	WWS	95	+1171	+43.2	+36.0	-0.03	-0.02	612	8	-13	0.5	0.1	0.3	1.20	1.02	1.20
Cogent Supershot	Supersire	Superstition	Cogent	74	+939	+25.1	+29.9	-0.14	-0.01	599	9	-17	0.6	5.9	0.3	1.30	1.35	1.56

by some steadily improving sires. “And that’s no mean feat because he is a great sire – good enough for me anyway. I’ve just used him on some of our younger cows – particularly those that were more extreme. It was his lifespan score of 0.8 that really drew me in – his daughters have staying power,” says James.

He describes number-six bull, VH Cole Clark, a Curtis Cole from a T Lambada dam, as an odd one: “I dug around but I really couldn’t find out much about him. I always want to have a bit of background on a sire – figures alone are never enough for me.” Indeed, Clark does have a somewhat different pedigree for the UK market and gains a PLI of £617.

New entry

Previous entries, Teemar Shamrock Alphabet and high production sire Seagull-Bay Supersire hold their position in the top 10 with PLIs of £615 and £612 respectively. Immediately following his father (Supersire), is a new entry into the daughter-proven list in the shape of Cogent Supershot. Early milking daughters in the US contribute to this bull’s graduation into the proven list, where he largely mirrors his earlier genomic predictions. His PLI is £599 and both he – and his sire Supersire – have James’ full attention.

“These are the two most interesting sires in this proof run and I’ve looked closely at their figures and backgrounds. They’re both offering a huge amount of milk and are from really good cow families. I decided to go for Supershot, mainly due to his higher fertility score of 5.9. I’ve ordered 50 straws.” There may be more variety in the

genomic-sire ranking, but there’s still little to write home about and, if anything, James says that this list makes for uneasy reading. “Genetic progress has been phenomenally fast and, looking at this, I wonder if it’s perhaps been a little too quick. Many of these sire are out of dams that haven’t been classified yet – some have yet to calve down.

“You have to wonder whether that’s sensible, from a breeding and selection point of view.”

The leading young Holstein sires with genomic indexes do, indeed, show more variation in bloodlines than they have in the past, with eight sires represented among the top 10 bulls. At the top of the ranking is Mr Rubi-Agronaut, a bull which has a different sire stack from many, with Rubicon x Shotglass x Shamrock x KHW Goldwyn Aiko in his back pedigree. Transmitting particularly high milk components (+0.18% fat and +0.08% protein) and good daughter health and fertility, Agronaut has a PLI of £793.

“He’s from a good family – Apple – but he only transmits 484kg of milk,” says James. “I think breeders are focusing on PLI to get to the top of the list and, if I’m honest, I prefer the sires ranked from 10 to 20, not 1 to 10. As far as PLI goes, there’s not a lot of difference and it’s the other traits that I’m more interested when selecting sires for my herd.”

Former number-one sire, Westcoast Perseus, is now in second place and is the highest ranking son of Penmanship. He continues to show the high production with good milk solids and daughter health and fertility of the previous index run and has a PLI of £784.

James says he’s from a good family and has an impressive sire stack.

One position below Perseus is his herd-mate, Westcoast Guarantee (PLI £782), from the British Columbia-based herd which was founded in 2010. Transmitting an exceptional combination of high milk volume and solids with very low cell counts (SCC Index –29), Guarantee has one of the best scores for the new Mastitis PTA among the leading bulls at –5.

UK-bred sire

Skipping to the fifth ranking bull sees a sire from the UK, in the shape of Prehen Lancaster. With an exceptional all-round index for production and fitness and as the best improver of daughter fertility in the top 10 (Fertility Index +16.9), Lancaster earns a PLI of £759. Lancaster is a son of Penmanship, and descends from the Laurie Sheik family. And he’s a bull that’s captured James’ imagination. “It’s good to see a sire from the UK in the list and he looks pretty decent, with such a renown and excellent cow family. I’m taking a serious look at him and I will be ordering some straws.”

James says he’ll also be making enquiries about the newcomer in eighth position, De-Su Curry 13360. He offers by far the highest volume of milk in the top 10 at 1,084kg, yet still remaining in positive territory for percentages of fat and protein. With a breed-leading 42.7kg fat and 38.6kg protein, he also has a PLI of £729.

“He’s a Jedi son – he really puts plenty of milk into his bulls and also offers a fertility score of 5.6 and a somatic cell count score of –15. Curry is too good to ignore and I think I’ll find some space for him in the flask.” |

Bomaz Alta Topshot



Cogent Supershot

