OCT/NOV/DEC   ISSUE NO. 184

*info*Holstein

A Holstein Canada publication providing
informative, challenging and topical news.

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THE ROYAL
REVIEW
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Royal Winter Fair (p. 8)

THE 2024 MASTER BREEDER REVEAL

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE
JANUARY 17, 2025

LIVE FROM BRANTFORD
TUNE IN JANUARY 17 AT 8PM EST

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Photo by Sue Crest, Skycrest Holsteins, Alberta

SEMEX®
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS
CÉLÈBRE 50 ANS
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Call for National Directors Nominations

There is an open call for nominations for National Directors in the Electoral Districts listed to the right. Clubs located in these districts received official notification of the call in November, and nominations will close December 8, 2024. Ballots will be mailed out to all voting members in the districts with more than one candidate by January 8, 2025 and voting closes on February 8, 2025. The criteria for the National Director Eligibility can be found in the Association's By-laws at www.holstein.ca; nomination forms can be obtained from your local Holstein Club, Provincial Branch or by contacting Jodi Zettler at jzettler@holstein.ca or 1-855-756-8300 ext. 229

Electoral Districts 2024	
Western Quebec	Sylvie Mahannah
Quebec at large	Benoit Turmel
Northern/Central Ontario	Dennis Werry – Not standing for re-election
Alberta & NWT	Willem Vanderlinde

EAST COAST KITCHEN PARTY
DAIRY FOCUS ATLANTIC
OUR DOORS ARE OPEN
AGM, MASTER BREEDER GALA
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April 1–6, 2025

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Our Doors Are Open
Nos portes sont ouvertes

Halifax 2025

Stay on top of Convention News! Follow Holstein Canada National Convention on Facebook & watch for updates on the Holstein Canada Website. Schedule & details now available.

Reserve your room today at the Westin Nova Scotian 1-902-421-1000

Message from the President: Gilles Côté

Dear Holstein Canada Members,

The Canadian Holstein Cow has long been respected for her longevity, strength, functionality and award-winning style. Our breed and breeder expectations have evolved and continue to evolve. With that evolution, the goals and breed development have also changed, and today, more than ever, it is not a one-size-fits-all approach, but it is defined within the eye of each breeder.

That does not diminish your Association's role in breed improvement, nor does it diminish the respect for the Canadian Holstein. The change within our industry to more technology and on-farm solutions can accelerate that pace of change. As a Breed Association, we must keep pace and ensure we are on track. This means working with other industry partners on advancement for the benefit of our members and keeping track of industry trends.

Recently, our Board of Directors has taken some definitive action to ensure that we are doing our part to be an essential link in the chain of the changing industry. In doing so, we are committed to being a viable organization which brings value to its members effectively and efficiently. Our industry and organization are at an inflection point to ensure Holstein Canada as an integral part of the future. Setting our sights on the future means taking the Vision and Strategy of the organization very seriously, which will be a key part of our priorities and work during the next few months.

As our Board looks to the future, we will also celebrate our past successes. Holstein Canada will be marking the 100th anniversary of our Canadian Classification service. For a century, this service has been at the heart of improving genetics and supporting producer success. We're planning a series of celebrations throughout 2025 to reflect on this incredible legacy and highlight its importance for the future of the global dairy industry.

We only need to look at the evolution of our classification system and registration efficiencies to find evidence of the willingness and need for continual improvement. As we celebrate 100 years of evolution and success, we look forward to working cohesively with our members to set our path to continued success.

Yours sincerely,

Gilles Côté

Update on Awards Program and 2024 Master Breeder Program Dates

We would like to inform you that the changes to Holstein Canada's awards program, which were announced at Holstein Canada's 2024 AGM in Hamilton Ontario, will be temporarily placed on hold. We are committed to ensuring any updates to our awards program align with the needs of our membership and will share further information as soon as possible.

Please note, the dates for the 2024 Master Breeder program remain unchanged. 🐄
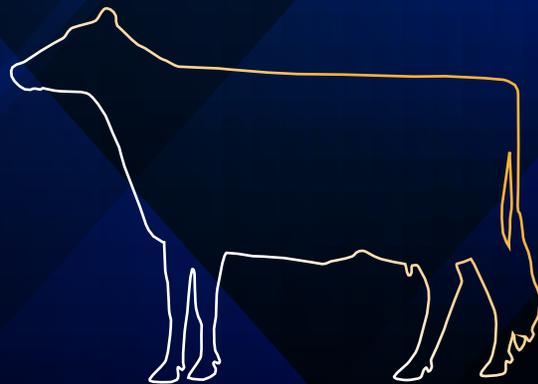
Holstein Canada Holiday Hours

Family is incredibly important to both Holstein Canada members and staff. The following are the hours of operations that will be in effect at Holstein Canada's head office during the holidays.

From our family to yours, the Holstein Canada team wishes you a wonderful holiday season and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year. We look forward to continuing to serve you, our valued members and clients, in 2025! Happy Holidays! 🐄

Monday, December 23	Open	Monday, December 30	Open
Tuesday, December 24	Closed at noon	Tuesday, December 31	Closed at noon
Wednesday, December 25	Closed	Wednesday, January 1	Closed
Thursday, December 26	Closed	Thursday January 2	Open
Friday, December 27	Closed		

The Royal REVIEW 2024

Another Royal in the books! The 102nd Royal Winter Fair saw an impressive turn out from across the country with over 400 head shown in the Black and White Holstein show and 131 animals exhibited in the Red and White Holstein show.

The two National Holstein shows are always a highlight of the Royal Winter Fair, showcasing some of the best animals across North America. In the national Red and White Holstein show, judge Markus Hehli of Rimbey, Alberta selected Premium Apple Crisp Lilly as his Grand Champion. This is the repeat feat for Lilly as she was named Grand Champion Red and White at The Royal in 2023. The following day, Judge Blair Weeks of Pleasant Valley, Prince Edward Island and Associate Judge Bruce Wood selected Jeffrey-Way Hard Rock Twigs as the 2024 Grand Champion Black and White Holstein. Between the two heifer shows, there were an impressive 17 Junior Breeder's Herds and 10 Senior Breeder's Herds. The success of the two National Holstein Shows would not have been possible without the generous support of a large number of sponsors who help make these shows happen. Along with the show sponsors, Holstein Canada would also like to thank the breeders and exhibitors of these impressive animals!

WE SINCERELY THANK THE FOLLOWING:

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Prince Edward Island Holstein Branch
ProRich Seeds
Saskatchewan Holstein Branch
Semex
Smygwaty Holsteins
Vicki Fletcher Photography
Wendon Holsteins
Westcoast Holsteins

PEDIGREE ANALYSIS

A pedigree analysis was completed following the conclusion of this year's National Holstein Shows. The analysis was completed on only those animals that appear in the Holstein Canada database. The following charts summarize the results of various data from animals exhibited at the shows.

LEADING SIRES OF ANIMALS EXHIBITED AT 2024 NATIONAL BLACK & WHITE HOLSTEIN SHOW

Rank	Name	# of Daughters
1	FARNEAR DELTA-LAMBDA-ET	62
2	GOLDEN-OAKS MASTER-ET	41
3	WALNUTLAWN SIDEKICK	36
4	CROTEAU LESPERRON UNIX	17
5	STANTONS CHIEF-ET	16
6	STANTONS ALLIGATOR-ET	14
7	MB-LUCKYLADY EYE CANDY-ET	11
7	WOODCREST KING DOC	11
9	OH-RIVER-SYC CRUSHABULL-ET	9
10	MB-LUCKYLADY BULLSEYE-ET	8
11	BLONDIN ENERGY	7

LEADING SIRES OF ANIMALS EXHIBITED AT 2024 NATIONAL RED & WHITE HOLSTEIN SHOW

Rank	Name	# of Daughters
1	MR BLONDIN WARRIOR-RED-ET	34
2	FARNEAR ALTITUDE-RED-ET	19
3	RIVERDOWN UNSTOPABULL	11
4	CYCLE MCGUCCI JORDY-RED	8
5	VOGUE ILLUSTRATOR-P	6
6	MR AFFECTION ANALYST-RED-ET	5
7	LINDENRIGHT MOOVIN RC	4
8	BLONDIN ALPHA	3
8	GOLDEN-OAKS A TURBO-RED-ET	3
8	MR DANIELLE DEVOUR-ET	3
8	SIEMERS OCT APPLE-CRISP-ET	3
12	AVANT-GARDE-I LATENITE	2
12	DYMENTHOLM MR APPLES AVALANCHE	2
12	LOH DICE-RED-ET	2

LEADING SIRE STACKS OF ANIMALS EXHIBITED AT 2024 NATIONAL BLACK & WHITE HOLSTEIN SHOW

Rank	Sire x MGS	# of Daughters
1	DELTA-LAMBDA X DOORMAN	9
1	DELTA-LAMBDA X SIDEKICK	9
2	UNIX X SOLOMON	5
3	SIDEKICK X UNIX	4
3	DELTA-LAMBDA X GOLD CHIP	4
3	DELTA-LAMBDA X ALLIGATOR	4
4	DELTA-LAMBDA X IMPRESSION	3
4	DOORMAN X SIDEKICK	3
4	CHIEF X DOORMAN	3
4	MASTER X GOLD CHIP	3
4	SIDEKICK X CRUSH	3
4	SIDEKICK X DELTA-LAMBDA	3
4	SIDEKICK X DOORMAN	3
4	DELTA-LAMBDA X SID	3

LEADING SIRE STACKS OF ANIMALS EXHIBITED AT 2024 NATIONAL RED & WHITE HOLSTEIN SHOW

Rank	Sire x MGS	# of Daughters
1	ALTITUDE-RED X WARRIOR-RED	6
2	WARRIOR-RED X UNSTOPABULL	6
2	WARRIOR-RED X ALTITUDE-RED	5
2	ALTITUDE-RED X JORDY-RED	4
5	ALTITUDE-RED X UNSTOPABULL	4
6	UNSTOPABULL X WARRIOR-RED	3
6	WARRIOR-RED X ARMANI	3
6	WARRIOR-RED X AWESOME-RED	2
9	WARRIOR-RED X COLT P-RED	2
9	WARRIOR-RED X CONTENDER	2
9	WARRIOR-RED X JACOT RED	2
9	WARRIOR-RED X JORDY-RED	2
9	UNSTOPABULL X DIAMONDBACK	2
9	JORDY-RED X DEFIANT	2
9	TURBO RED X CONTENDER	2

AVERAGE CLASSIFICATION SCORE (IN CANADA) OF ANIMALS EXHIBITED AT THE BLACK & WHITE CLASSES - 2024

Class	Number of Cows	Average Score
Class 9 - Winter Yearling in Milk	2	86.00
Class 10 - Fall Yearling in Milk	20	86.30
Class 11 - Summer 2 Year Old	11	86.64
Class 12 - Spring 2 Year Old	11	86.45
Class 13 - Winter 2 Year Old	17	86.65
Class 14 - Fall 2 Year Old	12	86.75
Class 15 - Junior 3 Year Old	29	88.07
Class 16 - Senior 3 Year Old	15	88.47
Class 17 - 4 Year Old	11	92.36
Class 18 - 5 Year Old	12	93.33
Class 19 - Mature Cow	7	92.86
Class 20 - Longtime Production: 70,000kg +	6	95.50

AVERAGE CLASSIFICATION SCORE (IN CANADA) OF ANIMALS EXHIBITED AT THE RED & WHITE CLASSES - 2024

Class	Number of Cows	Average Score
Class 10 - Fall Yearling in Milk	4	85.25
Class 11 - Summer 2 Year Old	4	86.75
Class 12 - Spring 2 Year Old	3	86.67
Class 13 - Winter 2-Year Old	3	86.33
Class 14 - Fall 2 Year Old	2	87.00
Class 15 - Junior 3-Year Old	8	87.38
Class 16 - Senior 3-Year Old	3	89.33
Class 17 - 4-Year Old	2	92.00
Class 18 - 5-Year Old	4	91.50
Class 19 - Mature Cow	3	92.33

FARM PROFILES

West

By Toby Kleinsasser

Springbutte Farms

Located in the heart of Southern Alberta, Springbutte Farms has a rich history rooted in family, hard work, and a commitment to sustainable farming practices. The journey began in 1965 when Henry and Willemien tied the knot and purchased their first farm, an 80-acre plot where they initially raised pigs. This was just the start of a legacy that would evolve over the decades.

In 1972, the couple expanded their operation by acquiring a herd of cows from Henry's brother and entered into a partnership with Willemien's brother. This partnership led to the establishment of Double S Farms, registered under the prefix "Double." For about ten years, this collaboration flourished, but as the farm evolved, the partnership was dissolved, and Henry began using the prefix "Springbutte."

The early 1990s marked another significant milestone when the family purchased an additional block of land. With the original farm no longer sufficient for the growing herd, the decision was made to relocate operations to the newly acquired property. During this time, they also initiated a small feedlot with a capacity for 1,300 head, a modest size given the farm's location in "Feedlot Alley."

Today, the legacy continues as Henry and Willemien have passed the farm onto their four sons: Gerald, Randy, William, and Jason, who recently ventured out to start his own business in cattle buying and selling. In a noteworthy shift, the farm transitioned from a traditional freestall/parlour milking setup to robotic milking in January of this year, reflecting their commitment to innovation.

Each brother plays a pivotal role in the farm's operations. Gerald, the eldest, oversees crops, feedlot management, and financials. Randy focuses primarily on dairy operations, while William assists with both dairy and fieldwork.

Quick Stats

OWNERS: GERALD SLOMP, RANDY SLOMP, WILLIAM SLOMP
PREFIX: SPRINGBUTTE
LOCATION (TOWN): IRONSPRINGS, AB
 # OF COWS MILKED: 242
TOTAL NUMBER OF HEAD: 540
FACILITY TYPE: FREESTALL & BEDDED PACK
 # OF ACRES FARMED: 1200
HERD PRODUCTION AVERAGE (L/COW): 39L/COW

Their children contribute to various tasks on the farm, ensuring a dynamic involvement from the next generation. Longtime employee Bert Tanis also plays an essential role, showcasing versatility in farm operations.

Currently, the farm milks 274 cows, with impressive BCA scores: 270, 297, and 280.

Community involvement has always been a cornerstone for the family. Henry was an active member of the local Green Acres Holstein Club, and he encouraged his children to participate in the Green Acres 4H Club. Today, Randy and William serve on the Green Acres Holstein Club Board, with Randy also holding a position on the provincial board. The family is also deeply engaged with the local Christian Reformed Church in Iron Springs, and Gerald has contributed to the local Foodgrains Growing Project for many years.

Springbutte Farms spans 1,300 irrigated acres, with an additional 300 acres rented most years. The farm grows a variety of crops, including timothy hay, alfalfa, corn, wheat, barley, and canola, adapting to the needs of both their dairy and feedlot operations.

A commitment to the longevity of their cows is at the heart of the farm's practices. The transition to freestalls over 40 years ago emphasized the importance of good feet and legs. A balanced, uniform cow with strength and consistent eating habits is vital. As they adapt to robotic milking, features like teat size, udder texture, and overall conformation are becoming increasingly important.

The family tracks productivity and lifespan through Lactanet/DHI information and the Holstein Canada registration and classification system, ensuring they maintain high standards for their herd.

To enhance cow longevity, Springbutte Farms has implemented various management practices, such as improved freestalls, specialized bedding packs for recuperating cows, and close monitoring of rations. Regular hoof trimming, the use of rumination technology, and attentive care during calving are all critical components of their health management strategy.

The journey starts with raising healthy calves. The family has strategically selected bulls based on calving ease and breed averages, minimizing stress during calving. Holstein Canada's classification services help identify the herd's strengths and weaknesses, ensuring informed breeding decisions

Holstein Canada has been instrumental in supporting the farm's breeding goals, focusing on traits that promote longevity. By identifying heifers with the right conformation—adequate width, good feet, strong udders—Springbutte

Farms can ensure a robust herd for the future. The classification process allows the family to learn and stay updated on their herd's needs.

As the family navigates the complexities of modern dairy farming, they are committed to maintaining a balance between breeding for production and longevity. With more crossbreeding and careful breeding decisions, they aim to avoid inbreeding issues while ensuring the health and productivity of their cows.

Paying attention to their cows—observing behavior, dietary habits, and overall health—remains a foundational practice. This proactive approach, combined with advancing technology, ensures that Springbutte Farms will continue to thrive, nurturing both their animals and the land for generations to come. The story of Springbutte Farms is a testament to the power of family, community, and the relentless pursuit of excellence in agriculture.

Crampy Project Update

By Hannah Sweett, Knowledge Transfer Specialist – Genetics Portfolio
Gabriella Condello, M.Sc. Student, University of Guelph

> As Crampy cows become a growing concern for Canadian dairy farmers, Lactanet conducted a data collection blitz to assess the current prevalence rate in Canada and explore the potential for a genomic evaluation to reduce its incidence. In this article, we provide an update on the project and discuss future industry directions as we move towards developing tools to mitigate Crampy.

A Quick Refresher

Crampy, formally known as Bovine Spastic Syndrome, is a progressive neuromuscular disorder that affects cattle typically between the age of 2 and 7 years.

This condition manifests as spastic contractions in the muscle of one or both hindlimbs, the back, and eventually the entire body. Clinical signs include shaking or pressing against the neck rail when rising, hyperextension of hindlimbs, and signs of lameness, although animals can still walk bearing full weight. Diagnosing Crampy poses challenges due to the varying progression of symptoms, making it difficult to pinpoint the root cause, as discussed in Lactanet's previous article.

Data Collection Blitz Overview

As you may recall, Lactanet launched a one-time national "Crampy Data Collection Blitz" encouraging farmers across the country to submit their data on lactating cows that exhibit symptoms associated with two neurological syndromes: Crampy and Paresis. Paresis shares many similarities with Crampy however it typically occurs in younger animals and often affects one hindlimb with a locked hock, resembling a "pegged leg" with no shaking.

The data collection period spanned from September 2021 to April 2022 during which Lactanet received 2,807 Crampy and 219 Paresis cases reported from 801 participating dairy herds across Canada. We extend our gratitude to all farmers who contributed data to this important industry project! Your participation and the data provided have been instrumental in the initial stages of developing tools to mitigate the prevalence of Crampy across Canada.

The collected data on affected animals in milk-recorded herds was matched with their herdbook registered herd mates to establish a whole herd inventory. This combined data was provided to the University of Guelph as part of the M.Sc. thesis project of Gabriella Condello. The objectives of the thesis were to estimate the prevalence of Crampy in Canadian dairy farms and to assess the genetic component to see if genetic tools could be a mitigation strategy, as highlighted below.

Age of Onset and Severity

As mentioned previously, Crampy is known to affect cattle aged two years or older and Paresis within the first two years of age, which identifies an overlap in the potential age of onset. The age of onset for Crampy cases that producers identified varied up to 12 years, with the highest frequency between the younger ages. A high degree of severity was also identified during the younger ages with a total of 566 severe Crampy cases.

Assessing the Potential for Genetic Selection

Given the challenging diagnosis of Paresis and limited reported cases, only the Crampy cases were explored further. Animals that were three years of age or older with reported signs of a neuromuscular disorder, were assumed as Crampy cases. Using this age category minimized the possible overlap between the two disorders. The data was further filtered resulting in 1,952 Holstein cows with reported signs of Crampy with 54,826 herdbook registered herd mates from 678 herds. In total, over 12,000 of the cows included in the analysis were genotyped.

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The average within-herd prevalence rate for Crampy was estimated to be 4.7%, as shown by the distribution of herds in Figure 1. The higher prevalence of Crampy in some herds suggests it could be influenced by genetic or environmental factors such as herd management practices. Further analyses calculated genetic components that help identify the possibility for a genetic evaluation to reduce this prevalence. The estimated heritability of Crampy was found to be 6.8%, which clearly suggests potential for genetic selection.

The relationship between sire estimated breeding values (EBVs) and the percent of daughters reported as Crampy was also compared. Daughters born to the poorly rated sires were 3.2 times more likely to develop Crampy compared to those born to the top-rated sires. By prioritizing the top-rated sires and reducing the selection of those with a higher expected frequency of Crampy daughters, the prevalence rate of Crampy can be reduced over time.

This indicates that selecting against poorly rated sires is beneficial for genetic selection as it targets genetic improvement. Furthermore, an analysis of regions within the cattle genome identified several significant regions and genes meaning that Crampy is controlled by many genes, which confirms previous studies. For all traits of importance that are controlled by multiple genes, genetic and/or genomic evaluation and selection is the obvious approach for a favourable genetic response.

What's Next?

The results of this study confirm and quantify the degree of genetic control contributing to Crampy in dairy cattle. It also highlights the opportunity for genomic selection, however additional data is needed prior to the development of a national genetic evaluation system for Crampy.

An ongoing national data collection strategy is required to identify Crampy cows in Canadian herds as symptoms are observed with age. Given the earliest age at onset for Crampy is at least two years, a data collection strategy should be focused on lactating cows in herds enrolled on milk recording. In addition, to maximize the accuracy of a genomic evaluation system, a proportion of cows affected and unaffected by Crampy within each herd should be genotyped. To follow up on this data collection and research initiative, the Canadian dairy industry needs to develop and implement a cost-effective ongoing data collection strategy that identifies Crampy cows as symptoms are expressed over time.

Figure 1: Distribution of Within-Herd Prevalence Rate of Crampy in Canadian Holsteins
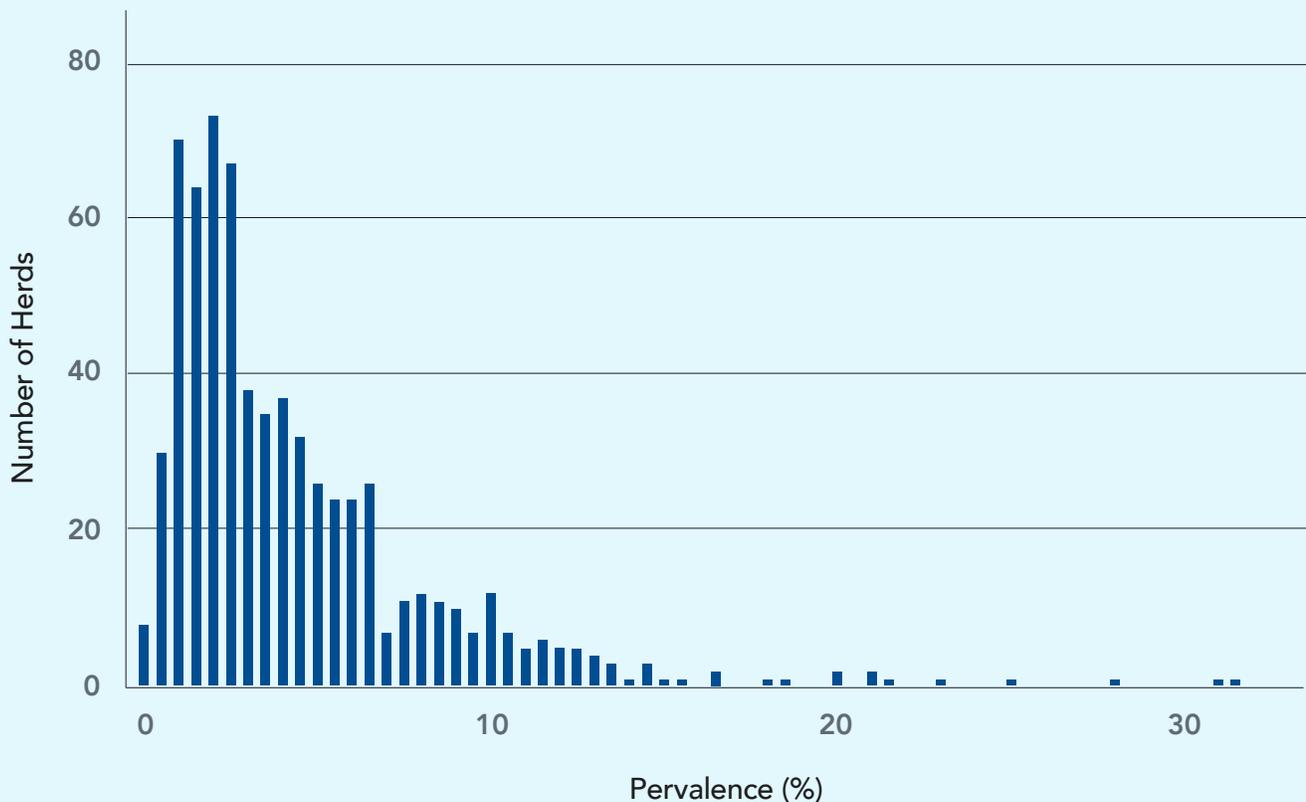
CONNEXXION

Update

An exciting new update to the ConneXXion app is coming for members who order their DairyTrace ear tags via Holstein Canada. The new update will allow members to order a replacement tag with the same lifetime number from the app. See a tag missing - order via the app on your phone right there and then!
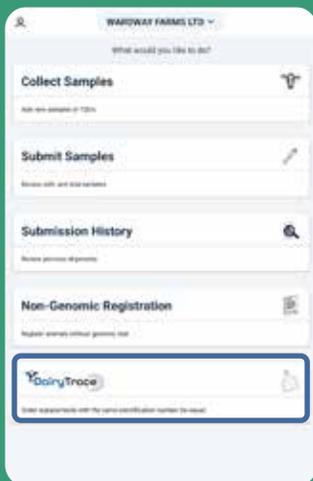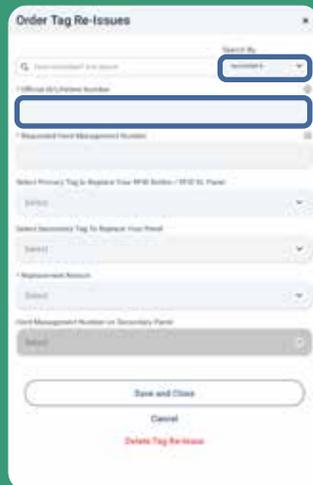
⚹⚹ STEP 1

Once you're logged into the ConneXXion app, scroll to the bottom to find the new **DairyTrace feature**.
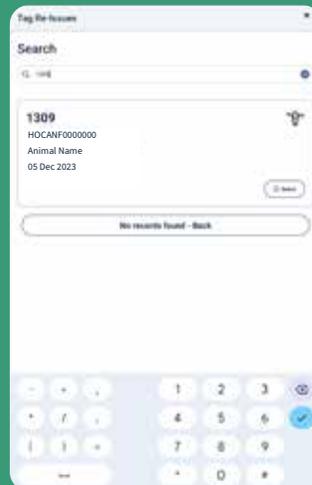
To order a tag, select: **Add Tag Re-Issues.**

⚹⚹ STEP 2

Search by **Herd Management Number** or **Official ID** of the missing tag number.

⚹⚹ STEP 3

Select the animal the tag re-issue is needed for.

⚹⚹ STEP 4

The Lifetime Number and herd management number will auto-populate. Fill in the **type of tag, replacement reason** and select if you would like the herd management number on secondary panel. Select the **Save and Close** Option.
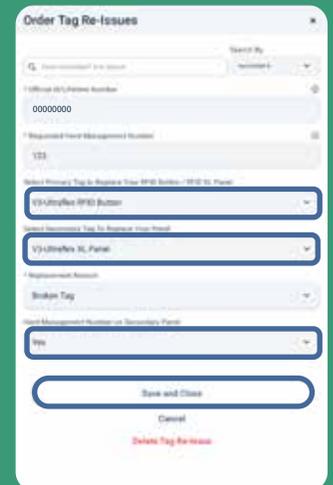
When you are finished you have the option to Add another Tag Re-Issue or Submit your cart.

USING THE CONNEXXION APP

To use the ConneXXion app you can download from the app store using your mobile device (phone or tablet)

Google Play Store (Android devices) or Apple App Store (Apple devices) or by scanning the QR Code to download ConneXXion app.

SCAN HERE

Download on the **App Store**

ANDROID APP ON **Google play**

The Role of Reliability in Breeding Strategies

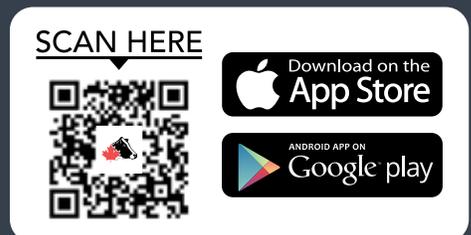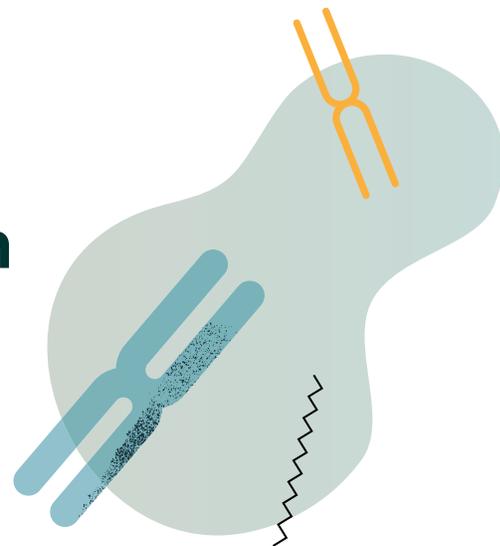By Shannon Cartwright, Education and Extension Technical Specialist

The dairy industry is evolving rapidly with several advancements in technology. Information and data now play a pivotal role in the daily decisions dairy producers make. Since data plays such a key role in the daily operations of a dairy farm ensuring this information is as accurate and reliable as possible is key to success. The same is true when it comes to establishing breeding strategies and making breeding decisions, with the reliability of the information being essential to making informed and profitable decisions.
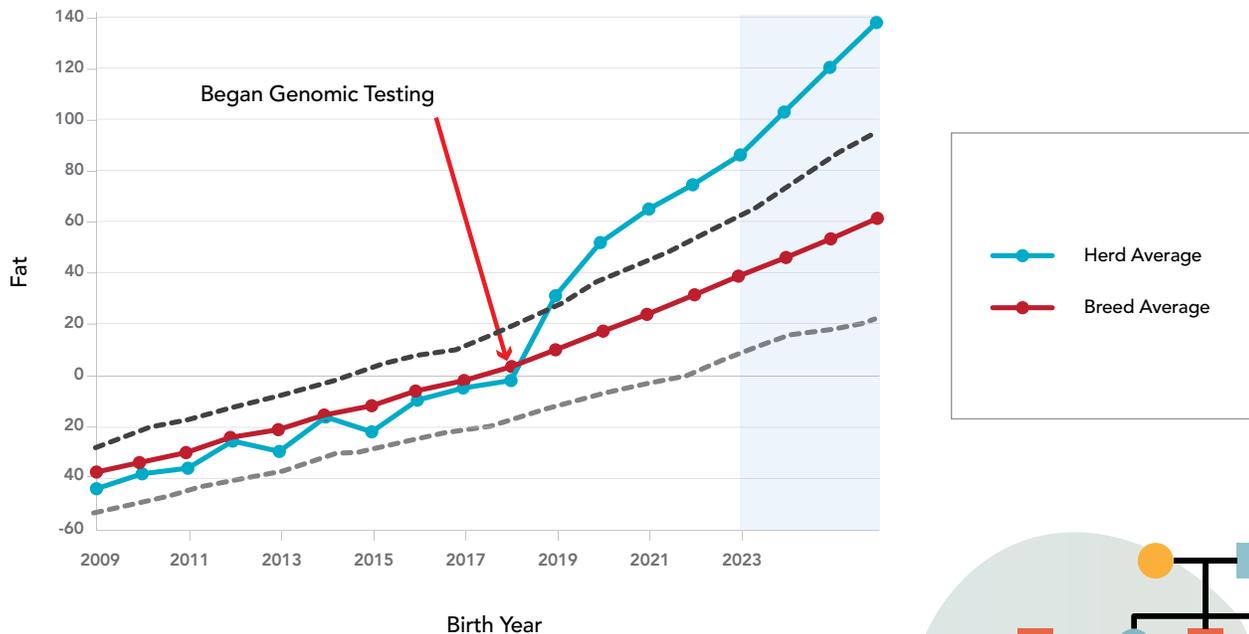
BENEFITS OF GENOTYPING FOR RELIABLE EARLY DECISIONS

When a calf is born you have little to no information on this animal until you register them. Registration allows this animal to be linked to the information available for their sire and dam and will provide the animal itself with a genetic evaluation. The information provided from registration is valuable, however it does have its limitations with typically only having reliabilities between 20 – 30%. The reason for this is you do not know the actual genes the sire and dam passed to the offspring, so the only information you have is on the sire and dam themselves. Therefore, making breeding decisions based on registration alone will be quite limited in accuracy. Additionally, you really will not have much of an idea about how

that animal is going to perform until it calves, and at that point, you have already invested in raising the animal before you have the information to make a more reliable decision. However, by genotyping a calf and adding the genetic information you can increase the reliability of the animal evaluation to around 70 – 80%. This allows you to make a much more accurate decision early on before investing too much in the calf. It will allow you to make more precise breeding decisions as you have a clear picture of the actual genes that were passed on to the calf and therefore a better idea of what will be transmitted to future offspring. Additionally, it provides you with the information to make much more accurate decisions on whether the animal is worth keeping before you invest too much into raising them.

ENHANCED SEMEN SELECTION AND BREEDING STRATEGIES

Having more reliable information also allows producers to make more accurate decisions on semen selection. Knowing with accuracy which animals provide your elite genetics allows you to make sound decisions on who will contribute to the future of your herd. Those animals identified as the top genetic animals in your herd you could select to breed to sexed semen to ensure the continued genetic progress at a faster rate in your herd. This in turn allows you to be more selective on the number of replacements you need to raise, allowing producers to save costs in terms of rearing calves. Alternatively, this information can also help you identify animals you do not necessarily want to contribute to the future genetics of the herd, and you may consider breeding them with beef semen to capitalize

Fat

Began Genomic Testing

140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
20
40
-60

2009 2011 2013 2015 2017 2019 2021 2023

Birth Year

Herd Average
Breed Average

on revenue from this sector. Having reliable information to make these types of decisions is critical to ensuring the success of these breeding strategies.

RAPID GENETIC GAINS THROUGH GENOMIC TESTING

We have seen in herds that implement genetic strategies that shortly after they start genomic testing their genetic gains in those traits increase exponentially. An example of this can be seen in the image above for fat yield. This herd in the years before genomic testing hovered around breed average for fat, however after they implemented genomic testing and improved the reliability of their selection decisions their genetic progress for this trait increased at a rapid rate and is now above the 90th percentile for the breed. We do have to keep in mind that the animal's environment will still play a role in the expression of genes and therefore the performance of the animals, but if animals are managed well this will allow them to express their full genetic potential. Overall reliability is essential in breeding strategies for ensuring continued genetic progress, improved performance, and increased on-farm revenue.
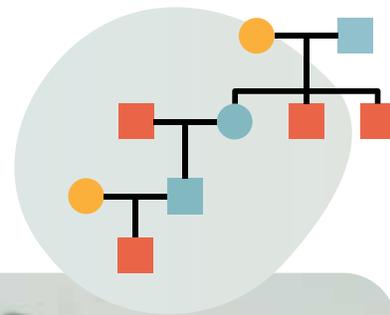
Classification: A Tool to Improve Longevity, Performance & Profitability

By Shannon Cartwright, Holstein Canada Extension and Education Technical Specialist

Holstein Canada's classification system has been around for almost a century, with it celebrating 100 years in 2025, and has played a key role in the breed's progression over the years. The data from each classification visit feeds into our Canadian evaluations for conformation traits and has been a key factor in breeding for the Canadian Holstein cow we see today. However, classification has not just played a role in improving the overall conformation of the Holstein breed but is a tool that can be used to improve longevity, performance, and in turn profitability in Canadian dairy herds.

> Some of the top reasons for culling dairy cattle include fertility, health issues, and lameness. Involuntary culling can be costly to dairy producers as typically an investment has already been made in these animals and, there may be the added cost of treatments.

Increased rates of culling result in the need for more replacements to be raised which leads to added costs and ultimately affects total on-farm revenue. Classification can be an effective way to manage these issues and improve longevity. Many of the traits within the classification system, particularly in the mammary and feet and legs sections, have high to moderate positive correlations with fertility traits, health traits, hoof health, and herd life. This means that when we improve these particular traits, we are also improving various fertility traits, health traits, and herd life. Similarly, as shown in the graph below, as
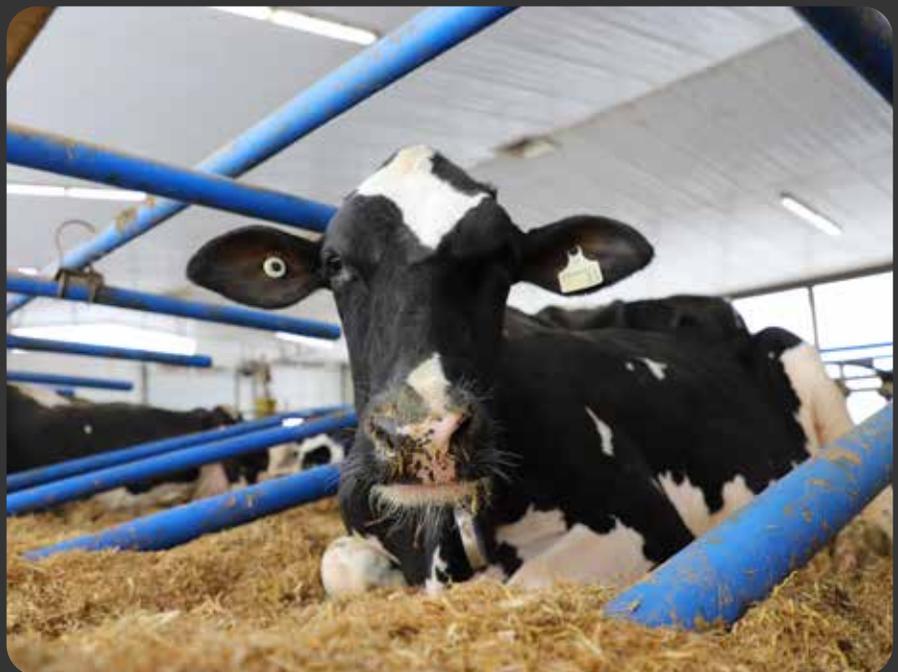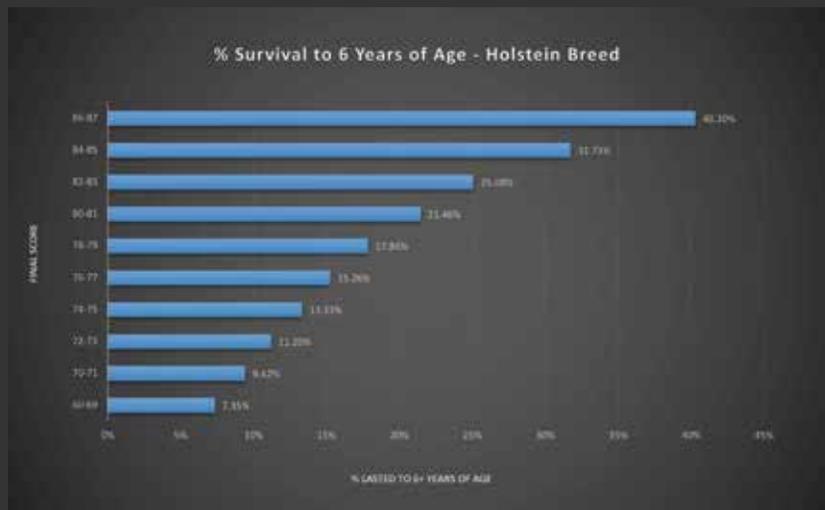
the overall final classification score improves so does the percentage of cows that last beyond 6 years of age further solidifying the role functional conformation can play in improving longevity.

Additionally, ideal functional conformation can play a key role in improving overall milk production and therefore increased profitability for the farm. The mammary system section is highly positively correlated with milk yield and persistency, indicating that, improving traits within the mammary system will result in increased production which is sustained over the lactation. Similarly, feet and legs and dairy strength are also moderately positively correlated to milk yield, fat yield, and protein yield further justifying the part classification plays in improving production performance and profitability. The graph below illustrates this perfectly showing that as the final score improves so does overall lifetime production and revenue, with animals that achieve a final score of 86-87 resulting in almost double the production and revenue than those that achieve a final score of 60-69.

Overall, the information you receive from classification is a great tool for helping identify both weaknesses and strengths in your herd as a whole as well as in individual animals. This information can play a key role in helping define breeding strategies for your herd and helping to assess how management and environment relate to the genetics of your herd.

Using this information can aid in breeding cattle with high production and improved longevity which in turn results in increased profitability and the greatest returns on investment. Therefore, although classification is almost a century old the advancements that have occurred in the system along with the data it provides allow it to continue to be a valuable tool for our industry and the advancement of the breed itself.

Zoar ✗ VG-86-2YR Gameday ✗ VG-1* Pursuit ✗ GP-84-2YR-10* ✗ EX-90-2E
✗ EX-91 ✗ VG-88 ✗ VG-86 ✗ EX-91-2E ✗ EX-95-4E 1* ✗ EX-90-3E

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By Shannon Cartwright, Holstein Canada Extension and Education Technical Specialist

2024
Dairy Cattle Industry Forum

The Dairy Cattle Industry Forum was held this year in Toronto on September 17 and 18 and was hosted by Lactanet in partnership with Holstein Canada. There were about 80 in attendance, including staff, management, and board members from various industry partners including artificial insemination companies, Dairy Farmers of Canada, Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Lactanet, Holstein Canada, and Provincial Branches.

The Forum started with an opening message from Lactanet's CEO Neil Petreny and Holstein Canada's President Gilles Côté. This was followed by presentations focusing on the theme of taking a closer look at longevity. The first speaker Dr. Albert DeVries, from the University of Florida, started his presentation by addressing the various reasons for culling in dairy cattle and the different cull rates over time and by lactation. He then discussed different models used to predict the amount of time an animal would need to remain in the herd to cover her costs and start making a profit as well as using this information to determine which animals should remain in your herd to provide the most return on investment.

Dr. Simon Jetté-Nantel, from Lactanet, followed by discussing options for improving longevity, which included either reducing involuntary culling or increasing voluntary culling. This means a producer could try and find ways to improve health and fertility to reduce the number of animals being culled for these reasons or they could improve the average production per cow so your culling decisions are mainly production-based. The take-home message from this presentation is both options can work and it will depend on the situation in the herd at the time that dictates which option is ideal. These 2 presentations were followed by a producer panel made up of dairy farmers, from across Canada, that have all made significant gains in LPI over the last 10 years. The producers discussed their farm story and the strategies and tools they use to achieve the current success they see today. The key theme amongst all these producers was that genetics has played a key role in the herds' success and in making such significant gains over the last decade.

The second day of the Forum included presentations that focused on the theme of breeding strategies and sustainability. The day began with a presentation from Dr. Kajal Latimer, from the Canadian Angus Association, who started by discussing the pros and cons of raising and processing beef x dairy animals. She then discussed a project Canadian Angus is currently working on in partnership with Holstein Canada and the benefits of collaborating with other industry partners. This was followed by a presentation from Dr. Caeli Richardson, from AbacusBio, who discussed the methane index for dairy cattle and the benefits and potential need to use in dairy cattle breeding in the future.

The next couple of presentations were from the processor and retailer side of the dairy industry. The first presentation was by Jacqueline Stroud from Agropur who was representing the Dairy Processors Association of Canada. She spoke about consumers' perceptions and the things they place emphasis on when purchasing dairy products, which included things like animal health and sustainability. She discussed to provide consumers with confidence in dairy products, processors need more data concerning animal health and sustainability practices on farm, and collaborations between industry and processors can be an ideal way to achieve this. The day ended with Juliana de van der Schueren and Ross Anderson from Starbucks Canada discussing the retailer's perspective. They discussed Starbucks's approach to sustainability and their need to meet a target of net zero by 2030. They also discussed the recent launch of their Dairy Sustainability program in collaboration with Dairy Famers of Canada and Farm Credit Canada to provide dairy producers incentives for using various sustainability practices and echoed similar messages as the previous speaker regarding the need for data to provide confidence in dairy products for their consumers.

All in all the Forum was well attended and a fantastic opportunity for industry professionals to network and gain knowledge on some key topics that will play a role in continuing to ensure the success of the Canadian Dairy Industry as a whole.

Genetics & Calf Health:

Developing a Disease Reporting System for the Canadian Farmer

By Shelby Duggan, University of Guelph Student

Key Points:

- Incidences of pregnancy loss and calf developmental complications are increasing in Canada's dairy population, raising animal welfare, herd productivity, and farm profitability concerns.

- Reporting incidences of pregnancy loss and developmental complications in calves is essential for managing them. Through reporting and genetic testing, researchers can identify if any genetic links to the abnormality exist, allowing for proper management to limit future occurrences throughout the population.

Current Challenges:

1. The Canadian dairy industry lacks a well-implemented reporting system for documenting incidences of developmental complications and pregnancy losses.

2. Pregnancy loss and Developmental complications and abnormalities often go unreported

What are "Pregnancy and Developmental Complications"?

Pregnancy loss
- Embryonic Loss
- Stillbirths
- Abortions

Malformed Calves
- Extreme deformities
- Organ development deformities

Diseased young stock
- Any disease of unknown origin in calves and young stock < 3 years of age.

Modern Breeding Programs and Homozygosity in Canadian Dairy Cattle

Genetic selection has led to significant advancements in Canadian dairy production efficiency, health, and welfare. However, the intense use of elite sires has resulted in higher genetic relationships between animals, reducing overall genetic diversity. Although the long-term consequences of this remain unclear, current concerns include the spread of undesirable genetic conditions through the inheritance of undesirable genes.

How Do Genetic Pregnancy and Developmental Complications Occur?

Genetically-related pregnancy and calf developmental complications occur when a calf inherits the same copy of an undesirable gene from each parent. Some can be lethal, resulting in pregnancy loss, and some impede normal calf development, leading to developmental deformities and reduced viability. When undesirable conditions aren't identified and managed early, they can quickly spread through the dairy population.

To date, the dairy industry has made great strides in identifying and managing genetic conditions but as the frequency of unknown abnormalities increases, we must remain diligent.

Current Reporting in Canada

Canadian dairy farmers do not have a centralized system for reporting pregnancy and developmental complications. While some organizations offer individual reporting platforms, these systems are rarely used, and these occurrences are often seen as a normal part of farming. As a result, there's little urgency to report these incidents, leading to a significant gap in valuable data that could otherwise help address and mitigate these issues. To date, no research has been conducted to identify the barriers that might prevent Canadian producers from reporting. Understanding these factors is key to improving both herd health and industry practices.

Important: Not all Pregnancy and Developmental Complications are genetic!

Identifying the root cause of a pregnancy or developmental complications can be challenging and is often unsuccessful. More commonly, these complications are linked to environmental factors such as nutritional imbalances, stress, temperature extremes (like heat stress), toxins, and disease and infection prevalence within the herd. However, testing for undesirable genes is still important, and in some situations, certain genes can contribute to abnormalities.

The Impact

Animal Welfare: Genetic conditions have serious implications for calf welfare, affecting both their survival and quality of life. Some of these conditions are lethal, leading to early mortality, while others result in calves surviving with health and mobility challenges. The delayed onset of certain disorders complicates early detection and can lead to a gradual or rapid decline in the calf's health and wellness status.
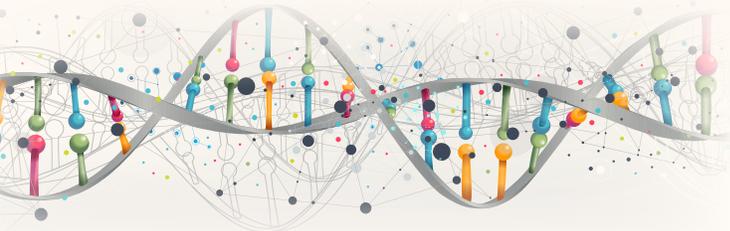
Reproductive Disorders in Dams: Stillbirths, abortions, and developmental malformations, increase the dam's susceptibility to reproductive disorders and birthing complications, including dystocia, retained placenta, metritis, endometritis, and mastitis.

Reduced Productivity & Profitability: Costs of calf loss and developmental challenges include veterinary expenses, pharmaceutical costs, increased labor fees, decreased milk production, replacement heifer fees, etc., significantly reducing annual farm profitability.

Disease in Future Generations: When disease-linked genes go undetected, breeding management becomes increasingly difficult, as these genes will spread across generations, increasing the prevalence and likelihood of pregnancy and developmental complications in future herds.

Why is Reporting Important?

• *Understanding the underlying genetic cause of pregnancy and developmental complications requires detailed examination.*

• *Reporting and genetic testing allow us to pinpoint any genetic causes of these abnormalities.*

• *Reporting is essential for the development and implementation of preventative measures to minimize future incidences of deformities and fatalities in dairy herds.*

• *When cases go unreported, valuable opportunities to prevent future occurrences are lost*

How Can Reporting and Genetic Selection Help?

Reporting incidences of pregnancy and gestational complications, and receiving genetic testing, are important for identifying and managing genetic conditions in the dairy population. As an example, Brachyspina was first documented, as a lethal defect marked by low birth weight (~10kg), shortened spine, and elongated limbs in calves. Through farmer reported cases and genetic testing, Brachyspina was identified as a hereditary disease resulting from the inheritance of two copies of an undesirable gene. Once a gene test was developed, breeders could manage its presence in breeding programs by avoiding mating potential or known carrier animals together, limiting it's spread to future generations.

→ **What Can you do?**

Fill Out Our Survey: To address challenges surrounding pregnancy and developmental complications, and the lack of reporting, the Centre for Genetic Improvement of Livestock (CGIL) at the University of Guelph has partnered with Holstein Canada, Lactanet, and SEMEX to develop an improved reporting system tailored for Canadian dairy producers to document these incidences in their herds. To ensure this system meets the needs of *ALL Canadian dairy producers and maximizes future use, we need your help!* Please watch for the link, coming in the near future, to complete an anonymous survey and provide invaluable feedback that will shape the design of a reporting system and ultimately reduce the frequency of genetic conditions in the Canadian dairy population.

Our GOAL

We aim to design a reporting system that can be easily integrated into dairy farming practices and widely accessible to all Canadian producers. The system will allow you or your veterinarian to submit a picture, description, and a blood or tissue sample from the calf and its dam for analysis.

Have Questions? Contact:

Dr. Christine Baes (cbaes@uoguelph.ca)

Dr. Shannon Cartwright (scartwright@holstein.ca)

Dr. Hannah Sweett (hsweett@lactanet.ca)

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Another National Show added!

Holstein Canada has announced the exciting addition of a new National Show for 2024: the Red Deer Westerner Show in Red Deer, Alberta. As one of the largest dairy cattle events in Western Canada, the Westerner Show is known for drawing exhibitors from across the four western provinces, making it a natural fit for national status. This milestone highlights the importance of the Western Canadian dairy community and its contributions to the Holstein breed.

This year, Judge Dominic Fortier of Saint-Christophe-d'Arthabaska, Quebec had the honour of placing over 180 head of Holsteins over two days.

Grand Champion Olortine Avenger Design, exhibited by R&F Livestock Inc and Walker Dairy Inc.

For Western Canadian breeders, the new national status means increased visibility and the opportunity to gain national recognition and allows exhibitors to showcase their hard work on a national stage. This addition to the Holstein Canada National Show lineup provides a valuable platform for breeders and continues to build momentum for Holstein excellence across Canada.

Congratulations to the exhibitors, sponsors and organizers of this impressive event! 🐄

Western Canadian Classic (WCC)

The future of the dairy industry shone brightly at this year's Western Canadian Classic (WCC), held in Armstrong, British Columbia. This annual event gathers young dairy enthusiasts from across the four western provinces, where they compete in various skills competitions, including showmanship, a dairy knowledge quiz, clipping, and conformation.

Holstein Canada was proud to be a sponsor of the event, which focuses on fostering the next generation of leaders in the dairy industry. This year Holstein Canada provided sponsorship for the junior, intermediate and senior dairy science quiz. Congratulations to all the participants for their hard work and dedication. A special nod goes to the top-ranking province, Alberta for their outstanding efforts.

With such talent on display, the future of Canadian dairy is certainly in good hands. 🐄

YBS Report 2024

Another outstanding year for Team Canada at the 22nd Young Breeder School event in Belgium this August. Not only did the six young leaders representing Team Canada do exceptionally well, it's worth noting many of the top conformation heifers have Canadian genetics in their pedigrees.

Team Canada had four team members in the top 15 overall participants, with Kyle Vaandrager of British Columbia taking the award for top individual. Thank you to Semex and Holstein Quebec for their sponsorship of this event.

WINNERS

SHOWMANSHIP CHAMPIONS

CHAMPION
Kyle Vaandrager, British Columbia

RESERVE
Theresa Bekehermes, Germany

HONORABLE MENTION
Juliette Naud, Quebec

CLIPPING COMPETITION

1st   Jordan Hawthorne, Ontario

2nd   Xavier Labbe, Quebec

3rd   Kyle Vaandrager, British Columbia

JUDGING COMPETITION

1st   Xavier Labbe

young LEADER jeunes LEADERS

Meet the new Young Leaders

Emma Van Steekelenburg

Emma is the second generation on her family's dairy farm, Quintus Dairy, in Brooks, Alberta. They milk 60 cows under the prefix "Quintus" in a free-stall robotic barn and farm on almost 500 acres of land. Her role on the farm includes calf care and herd health management. In 2022, Emma graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with a degree in Animal Science.

Emma joined the Young Leader Committee because she enjoyed the Young Leader program at a previous National Convention and she wanted to provide other young people with the same experience she had. Emma wants to be more involved in engaging the future of the dairy industry and informing them of opportunities available to them.

René Harvey

René Harvey of Ferme Harvey et Frères.INC., located in Lac St-Jean, Québec. René and his family milk 62 cows (9 Ex, 33 VG, 12 GP, 2 G) with 105 total head on farm. He is responsible for herd management and cow genetics. His drive for knowledge of the Holstein breed and desire to meet new people prompted him to become a Young Leader.

Top Sires According to Average Final Score of 1st Lactation Daughters
Based on 1st Lactation Classifications June, July and August 2024

Top 10 Sires with 100+ Daughters Classified in Three-Month Period

Sire	Daughters Classified	Avg Daus Score	Avg Dam Score
UNIX	160	81.81	82.64
ILLUSTRATOR-P	200	81.53	81.82
ALONGSIDE	145	81.32	81.59
BAROLO SG	111	81.30	81.66
VICTOR	132	81.28	81.36
RANGER-RED	196	81.26	81.86
A2P2-PP	190	81.13	81.27
FUEL	568	81.11	81.58
RANDALL	335	80.92	81.59
LUSTER-P	131	80.83	81.45

Top 10 Sires with 30-100 Daughters Classified in Three-Month Period

Sire	Daughters Classified	Avg Daus Score	Avg Dam Score
MASTER	54	83.17	83.24
BELIEVE P	54	82.30	82.07
LIMITED P	89	82.15	82.35
CRUSHABULL	79	81.65	82.35
HANLEY	95	81.35	80.89
CRUSH	67	81.25	81.61
RENEGADE	94	81.24	81.14
MEDALIST	47	81.21	80.77
IMPROBABLE	59	81.08	80.44
MANEUVER PP	42	80.98	81.76

NOTE: Daughters are included in these statistics only if both the daughter and her dam calved for the first time before 30 months and were both first classified within the first six months of lactation. Sires listed must have >=50% of daughters that improve in score over the dam.

Top 15 Sires with the first 10 Daughters Classified in a Six-Month Period

Sire Name	Daughters Classified	Avg Daus Score	Bull Proof for Conformation*
LASVEGAS	10	84.90	9
SKYCREST KING COBRA	15	83.27	3
STARLINE DONKEY SNOWFLAKE	12	83.17	4
HANANS	23	82.96	7
VOGUE DRASTIC E157-P	11	82.73	3
BELIEVE P	227	82.60	11
STAN	55	82.53	16
AVENGER	408	82.35	13
LIMITED P	370	82.30	16
OTTO	23	82.17	9
REDBRIDGE APPLE C DESTRUCTOR	10	82.10	3
SHEERAN	11	82.09	10
IDEE WINDBROOK LUCIFER	12	82.08	2
JOURNEY-RED	29	82.07	8
DIEMERTDALE JACKPOT ALLEGIANT	27	82.00	2

Top 10 Sires for Health and Fertility with 100+ Daughters Classified in Three-Month Period

Sire Name	Daughters Classified	Sire Health & Fertility	Avg Daus Score
SPEEDUP-P	745	668	80.4
ALMAMATER	263	650	80.0
TOTEM	258	623	80.4
HEART	112	595	80.3
ALTAFLASHBACK	144	595	79.3
LOGISTICS	117	578	80.3
LAMBEAU	311	569	79.2
ADAGIO-P	143	568	79.5
REDEYE-P	103	560	80.5
COCKPIT	159	560	79.7

NOTE: Some bulls have a small amount of daughters in a small number of herds. *Proof may be genomic, MACE or phenotype-based.

Classification Schedule

Mid-round `MR`

DECEMBER

ON `MR` Perth, Lanark, Renfrew, Leeds, Grenville
QC `MR` Nicolet, Yamaska, Drummond, Pontiac
QC Frontenac, Beauce
NB
NS
PE
NL

EARLY

This schedule is subject to change within a 1-2 week period.

Top 10 Sires for 305d Fat Production with 50+ Daughters Classified in Three-Month Period

Common Name	Classified Daughters	Avg Daus Score	Average 305-Day Fat	Sire Proof for Fat
CHANDLER	59	80.1	479.2	92.0
CONWAY	78	80.7	473.0	125.0
ALTAWHEELHOUSE	54	78.1	468.5	93.0
RENEGADE	77	81.6	462.6	102.0
ALTAZAZZLE	93	79.1	461.5	118.0
ALTAHAILED	83	78.6	458.7	88.0
RANGER-RED	209	81.4	450.7	89.0
LAMBEAU	172	79.4	446.9	119.0
PHANTOM	119	80.0	445.4	90.0
ALCOVE	472	80.3	440.4	125.0

Note: Daughters are included in the statistics if they had their last milk test/lactation termination date beyond June 1st, 2024.

Top Sires According to Trait Section Average Score of 1st Lactation Daughters

Based on 1st Lactation Classifications June, July and August 2024

Top 10 Sires for Herd Life with 100+ Daughters Classified in Three-Month Period

Sire Name	Daughters Classified	Average Final Score of Daughters	Sire Herd Life
DELTA-LAMBDA	770	82.5	112
SPEEDUP-P	745	80.4	110
ALMAMATER	263	80.0	110
SWINGMAN-RED	137	80.2	109
REDEYE-P	103	80.5	108
HARVEST	117	80.4	108
AVENGER	160	82.1	107
HANLEY	137	81.3	105
RANDALL	506	80.9	105
SOLARPOWER	140	80.8	105
ADORABLE	158	80.40	105
HEART	112	80.3	105
COCKPIT	159	79.70	105

Top 10 Sires for Conformation with 100+ Daughters Classified in Three-Month Period

Sire Name	Daughters Classified	Average Final Score of Daughters	Sire Conformation
LIMITED P	116	81.9	16
LEGEND	107	82.3	15
ALLIGATOR	299	82.0	14
SIDEKICK	392	81.8	14
ALONGSIDE	226	81.4	14
A2P2-PP	282	81.3	14
DELTA-LAMBDA	770	82.5	13
AVENGER	160	82.1	13
CRUSHABULL	116	81.7	13
ILLUSTRATOR-P	290	81.6	12
CRUSH	102	81.2	12

Celebrating 100 years of Classification

Célébration des 100 ans de la classification

CLASSIFICATION 100 YRS ANS

2025