

# GENETIC AUDIT UNLOCK MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

**Have you ever done a genetic audit? That's one of the first questions producers need to ask themselves when they're building their own strategic plan.**

"Producers are running a business and they need good genetic consultation," says Paul Krueger, Semex's Vice President for Global Key Account & Solutions Strategy. "Genetics affect everything from the health of your herd to whether you are getting the maximum return on the milk you are producing. To optimize production, you really have to know where you are heading from a genetics perspective."

For Krueger, a genetic audit allows producers to make fundamental business decisions that impact productivity, and helps identify genetic strategies to support their goals. This is anything from breeding their best females to sexed semen thereby enhancing genetics overall, to using beef sires on animals with lower genetic value to using targeted sire selection to correct herd trait weaknesses.

"A genetic audit starts with talking with producers about how they get paid and identifying what really impacts their milk check," says Krueger. "For example, are they paid based on solids or volume? Once we identify this, we can then determine whether we need to focus on traits that will give us increased fat or fluid." Krueger also wants to understand the traits the producer has been selecting for in order to determine whether the farm has been making progress or losing ground. Assessing how the herd stacks up within a population – a province, region or country is important.

information and delivers a 65-70% reliability. "We're more than doubling the reliability and that really allows us to make faster progress. Quite simply, we can better distinguish the herd's strongest genetics and employ strategies that leverage those animals to improve the entire herd."

## IDENTIFY KEY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Those strategies include: using Semexx™ sexed semen on the better cows to produce more high genetic heifers; utilizing Immunity+® sires to improve the health of these heifers as well as the herd overall. On the other side of the coin, producers can target weaker animals with beef matings, eliminating these genetics from the herd while improving calving ease and potentially realizing a greater return from the sale of the resulting beef calves.

"We know that strong fertility and good pregnancy rates will always be key drivers on profitable dairy operations, but a genetic audit really lets us look towards the future," says Krueger. "We're focusing on the semen we use today and what that will mean for the future of your operation three years down the road."

From Semex's perspective, Krueger believes a genetic audit plays an important role in unlocking a host of management options for producers. "It provides a great opportunity to identify any holes in your management program. Whether it be reproductive protocols, pregnancy rates or cull rates, it's going to highlight areas that can be improved upon."

"It will also show you management opportunities you can exploit to improve your herd and production. That's where tools like SemexWorks and Elevate really shine," adds Krueger.

Using SemexWorks™ touch-based software helps simplify genetic audits, explains Krueger. "We can import the producer's herd information and extract key pedigree information from their cows and heifers. Then, we create a report that looks at various production, type, health and fertility traits to analyze how they compare against the population." Producers can assess how each generation of heifers compare; determine whether the farm is making progress; and identify areas of strength in addition to where improvements need to be made.

Once the herd and farm production dynamics have been identified, Krueger says producers can determine those factors that have the greatest economic impact. "If we have issues with rear legs we need to select bulls to address it. If we need to improve fat or protein percentages we can increase the emphasis on those traits."

With genomic information Semex can also use Elevate®, its automated genetic herd strategy program, to increase the reliability of genetic reports. Krueger notes that traditional parent averages are considered 30-35% reliable, but Elevate uses genomic

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