

IN THIS INTERVIEW, WE ASK PAUL TRAPP, ONE OF OUR PRODUCT ACQUISITION SPECIALISTS, TO SHARE HIS INSIGHTS ON SEMEX'S TOP SIRES, SIRE SELECTION, THE IMPACT OF GENOMICS ON PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCCESS IN THE SHOW RING.

Inside Product Development

Q. How many young bulls enter Semex each year and what percentage of these bulls come from the Progenesis program?

A. About 250 Holsteins, 60 Jerseys and 20 Ayrshires. In 2018, Progenesis, our internal product development program, supplied 40-45% of our Holstein bulls. We expect to stay near this percentage in the coming years.

Q. How many young bulls do you test every year to identify those that will enter stud?

A. We genomic tested more than 3,000 young bulls in Canada, Europe and the USA in 2018. We feel the quality of the bulls we're testing is as important as the total number.

Q. Which indexes does Semex utilize to help select bulls?

A. We look at the entire genomic profile of each bull. TPI, NM\$, LPI, PFT, PLI and RZG are all indexes we use in the decision-making process. Semex sells semen in 80 different countries, so we need to supply a product that can perform well under different milk pricing, management systems and genetic needs.

We believe genetic selection reaches far beyond composite indexes. Productivity, fertility, efficiency and disease resistance are the cornerstones of a long and productive life for dairy cows and these are our focus traits. If these traits are industry leading, composite evaluations like NM\$, LPI, RZG, TPI and others will be globally competitive.

Q. Some bulls are now only available in sexed semen. Does this create exclusivity for bloodlines?

A. The purity level of sexed semen is somewhere around 90%, thus males will be in the general population even if only sexed semen is sold on a certain bull. Sexed semen certainly restricts bloodlines from entering global AI product offerings. Semex and others will often focus on females from these bulls to bring bloodlines into their programs through maternal lines.

Q. Which bulls do you consider to be Semex's most successful sires of sons?

A. 0200H010672 Progenesis Fortune is a bull that combines an outcross sire stack (Octoberfest x Tango x Epic) that traces back through 10 generations of VG and EX cows to Snow-N Denises Dellia. The Fortune heifers I've seen are very

balanced individuals with a straighter leg. I recently saw two maternal sisters to Fortune that are performing really well at Leaninghouse Holsteins in New Mexico. One is VG and the other is EX in her second lactation. Semex is home to many of his best and earliest sons including Claynook Discjockey, Sandy-Valley Fullmarks, Sandy-Valley Emerald, Sandy-Valley Embellish, Westcoast Grandprix, Progenesis Hemingway, Regancrest Bluedevil, Leaninghouse Hobbs and OCD Option.

Other bulls that have a nice track record for making sons are Sandy-Valley Challenger, Progenesis Positive, Progenesis Marius, Silverridge V Imax and Progenesis Topnotch.

Q. When it comes to market demand, which Semex bulls are top sellers?

A. Our top proven sires are Croteau Lesperron Unix, Comestar Lautrust and Monument Impression. Our top Genomax™ bulls include Siemers Bloomfield, Walnutlawn Sidekick, Westcoast Yamaska, Progenesis Beegees and View-Home Cardinals.

Q. How important is the show ring and show type to the Semex product line? How do you assess the impact of a bull like Val-Bisson Doorman?

A. Doorman has certainly had and will continue to leave his mark in show rings around the world. And, being an Immunity+® sire, he is very popular in commercial herds. Proven type bulls like OH-River-SYC Byway, Walnutlawn Solomon, Stantons High Octane and Croteaux Lesperron Unix remain popular due to their success in the show ring. Elite type bulls like OH-River-SYC Crushabull, Siemers Hanket, Our-Favorite VC Mafia, Aardema Drifter, Siemers Hawt, Progenesis Kendal and Walnutlawn Sidekick are current key genomic type sires.

Q. What impact has the arrival of genomics had on North American studs? Has it made Semex even more influential on the international scene?

A. North America has always been home to a high percentage of the best genetic pedigrees the world has to offer. Many of the North American studs and breeders quickly adapted to genomics, and found ways to implement it in their herds to produce seedstock. North American studs and breeders also have access to cutting edge IVF technology and top-ranking pre-release bulls. These are two of the key factors in making top genetics for the next generation.



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Parts of this interview were previously published in Holstein International. Progenesis Fortune, photo by Han Hopman