Ontario Dairy Youth Trust Fund Announces New Scholarship and Inaugural Winner

The Ontario Dairy Youth Trust Fund is pleased to announce a new scholarship, the Lyle Martin High Achievement Scholarship. It was awarded to a student that has completed an application for the Ontario Dairy Youth Trust Fund and displays the most impressive application based on community, post-secondary and agriculture involvement along with success in the 4-H program. The award of $750 per year is sponsored by CanWest DHI and EastGen. Andrew Brovkved of Murrilo is the first winner.

The scholarship is established in the name of Lyle Martin, a well-respected dairy farmer from the Brussels area. He was a former board member for CanWest DHI and EastGen. His daughter Wanda Heibein notes that he was always on one committee or another, and often was the leader or chair. Heibein says the award exemplifies many things her father found important in life including further education in agriculture, community involvement, supporting youth, and advancements in the dairy industry. Lyle Martin set high standards for himself. He was often quoted saying, “Always do your best. What you plant now, you will harvest later.”

Andrew Brovkved who won the first scholarship exemplifies what Lyle stood for. He attends the University of Guelph – Kemtpville Campus in the Associate Diploma of Agriculture Program. He has actively involved himself on his family’s farm as well as working for others in the Thunder Bay area, as well as in the Kemptville area while at school. Andrew is a director on the Oliver Agricultural Society and helps to organize the Murrilo Fair Youth Dairy Show. He has participated in judging and clipped clinics put on by Harold Bosma and the Thunder Bay Holstein Club. At Kemtpville, Andrew is on the College Royal Livestock Show Committee. He has many agricultural certifications including “Proudly Presenting Agriculture”, (an agricultural ambassador program) and the Rural Ontario Institute’s Steps to Leadership Program. Although there is no 4-H in Thunder Bay, the judges found it encouraging to see that he was so involved in events in his area. Andrew’s future goal is to own a dairy farm and be able to provide quality milk for the residents of Thunder Bay as well as be involved in agricultural clubs and organizations within the district.

Andrew Brovkved


Every dairymen wants to get everything in one complete package. In the genetics and reproduction business, this is a tall order to fill, but Semex’s Immunity+™ lineup is about as close as it gets to truly doing just that!

During the first six months of 2013, a large number of Semex sires were tested for High Immune Response (HIR). This testing resulted in 36 new sires being designated Immunity+ sires with the August genetic evaluation release. These sires are not only proven to be exceptional for their disease resistance, but also for their genetic merit. They average +2305 GTP (186 points over other bulls tested this year) and $708 for NWS (+$165 over other bulls tested this year). Additionally, they excel for traditional health traits at +4.7 for PL and 2.69 for SCS, giving clear evidence that you can indeed build immunity while also quickly advancing important genetic traits.

Perhaps, the most exciting addition to the immunity+™ lineup was Semex’s Genomax™ super star 0200H07450 Amighetti Numero Uno. Additionally, it is impressive to see the inheritance of immune response at work by looking at Numero Uno’s sons. From the first group of sons tested, 12 have also been confirmed as Immunity+™!
To maximize genetic gain, a herd must use every possible way to encourage growth, minimize morality and disease events in their calves during the first weeks of life. Studies have shown that calves who acquire respiratory disease in the first eight weeks of life, will go on to produce 500 kg's less milk during their first lactation, two years later. Losing 500 kg due to events that occurred in the first few weeks of life, wipes out much of the benefits provided with new genetic gains.

To improve calf rearing, many herds across the EastGen area are now using accelerated growth programs. By providing a calf with more energy by increasing the volume of milk available to a minimum of 8 litres per day, they are able to grow and stay healthy due to a strong immune system.

By raising calves correctly, and maximizing the growth in heifers during the first few months of life, you will insure that heifer calves will be able to bred at a young age, and hit the pipeline sooner. Calves are your newest genetic investment, do everything possible to make sure you maximize it!

Further evidence of this inheritance was found by testing the sons of one of the first Immunity+ Genomax sires, 0200HO02698 Misty-Springs Supersonic. Supersonic remains an extremely popular Genomax sire, and five of his first group of sons tested also qualified as Immunity+. With only 10% of bulls tested qualifying as Immunity+ sires, these numbers are certainly impressive. Certainly not all sons or daughters of Immunity+ bulls will have high immunity themselves, but Numero Uno and Supersonic are examples of how Immunity+ bulls’ progeny will more frequently be found to be higher immune responders when compared to other bulls’ progeny. This is because immune response has a 25% heritability. This is comparable to production and conformation traits, and is much higher than all traditional health traits.

Every analysis we’ve performed since Immunity+’s introduction offers additional validation. Whether analyzing the sires themselves, their daughters, their sons or the genomics, we continue to see time and again that this science is real, and that it breeds true. And, we will continually analyze the herd data of Immunity+ sires’ daughters to confirm the impact that one generation of Immunity+ bulls can have on a dairy, and how by utilizing Immunity+ in your breeding program, each successive generation can accumulate further disease resistance.

Recently, I had the pleasure of traveling to California to visit vet clinics and many large dairies including organic dairies to discuss Immunity+. The producers and vets tell us that this technology makes a lot of sense to them, because their experiences have shown them that certain cows and cow families display a greater resilience to disease and a better response to commercial vaccines. These folks already believed that there was a strong genetic tie associated with higher immunity, and they were pleased to hear that someone had finally identified the genetics behind such an important characteristic. And, they were looking forward to selecting genetics with this science behind it.