July 2018

Q: Why is selecting for immunity important?
Disease frequency in the global dairy population has been increasing each year since 1996. Selection of traits with low heritability that do not directly measure an animal’s ability to resist diseases has not provided a significant change in health of the dairy population.

Q: HOW CAN IMMUNITY+ HELP SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?
Immunity+ sired animals have genetics which have been proven to provide robust immune systems capable of dealing with a large variety of potential immune challenges, both viral and bacterial in nature, encompassing nearly all major diseases that have an economic impact on farm.

Q: Why Immunity+ instead of selecting directly against individual diseases?
The immune system is hugely complex, and selecting for one disease like mastitis can leave animals more susceptible to other potential diseases such as Johne’s or viral pneumonia. Immunity+ provides a robust resistance to all disease, plus the heritability is significantly higher than any individual disease incidence.

Q: What is heritability and why does it matter?
Heritability is the proportion of total variance in a trait that can be explained by genetics. This means that traits with low heritability are more difficult to make genetic progress in relation to the total amount of variation in the population. High heritability traits are usually easily and directly measured, and genetics have a larger impact on the difference observed between animals.

Q: Are there any benefits other than less disease?
Immunity+ sired animals also respond better to commercial vaccinations and produce higher quality colostrum than animals sired by any other bull.

Q: How much reduction in disease can I expect from selecting an Immunity+ sire?
It varies by trait, but selecting Immunity+ sires should lead to anywhere from 5-10% reduction in disease in just one generation. More generations of selection will continue to decrease disease frequency even further.

Q: What do I have to give up to select for Immunity?
Nothing! Immunity+ bulls on average have higher genetic merit for all other major traits than the rest of the bulls. No matter what you usually select for is an Immunity+ bull that fits your herd.
Q: If Immunity+ is better in bulls that have higher genetic merit, can’t I just select high genetic merit bulls and assume I’m getting Immunity+ too?

No, there are always exceptions, and the only way to be sure you are getting high immune responding daughters is to select Immunity+ sires. Although Immunity+ sires are high genetic merit sires, not all high genetic merit sires for other traits have genes that will provide the robust, effective response to disease that comes from Immunity+ sires.

Q: Has this data been validated in a real commercial setting?

Yes, we have taken data from herds across the EastGen and across North America. The results have been astonishing. Reductions in every major disease have been seen, and range anywhere from 5% to 20% reduction in animals sired by Immunity+ sires compared to all others. Mastitis, lameness and mortality saw especially large decreases in frequency.

Q: What about colostrum?

Cows sired by Immunity+ sires had on average, higher colostrum quality. A correlation of immune response status of their sire and colostrum quality of +0.55 was observed. More importantly, was that no HIR sires had daughters who had average colostrum, on average, was too poor to feed their calves.

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Q: What is EastGen?

EastGen is pleased to announce that Don Lantz is the new Genetic Advisor for other traits have genes that will provide the robust, effective response to disease that comes from Immunity+ sires.

OptiMate provides our clients with the ultimate user experience to tailor matings to their needs and genetic goals helping them make the best decisions for their success. This new and improved mating program, quickly and easily provides mating suggestions with complete forecasting of genetic progress.

It’s an easy-to-use, touch-based tablet software designed for the dairyman to be involved in the mating experience. There’s tight integration with SemexWorks™ to focus on breeding strategies and economic parameters that are important to your dairy operation. It’s easy to manage inbreeding and haplotypes while maximizing genetic gain. In seconds, herd strategies are built, creating highly visual and easy-to-interpret reports. Matings can be done on either the LPI or TPI system EastGen prides itself on having the best trained, most knowledgeable staff in the dairy genetics industry. Add to that the best technology in the business and you have full access to Semex Solutions (formerly S60+ Genetic Solutions).

Genetic Advisors receive this designation following a nomination process that evaluates staff who have completed formal development activities including achieving the CSP designation (Certified Sales Professional) and exemplify EastGen’s core values, who consistently perform at a significantly high level and who produce strong results for EastGen and customers. Recipients are those sales professionals whose colleagues and other industry professionals recognize as leaders in the AI industry.

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