



GrazingMatters

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ABS in the Southern Hemisphere

ABS has long been established in the Australian dairy industry and for the last four years has also been associated with KI Samen, a distributor in New Zealand. From the beginning of 2008, the New Zealand market has been growing dramatically and it has become apparent producers are now looking for different genetics.

New Zealand farmers are looking to increase production per cow rather than per hectare as land prices spiral through the roof. This also ties in with New Zealand's dairy industry goal to increase total productivity by 50%, including an increase in milk solids by 35% by the year 2015, as recently reported by DairyCo. Over the last ten years New Zealand producers have achieved a 32% increase in kilos of milk solids per hectare and this is targeted to increase by a further 4% per year. The dairy industry has set out objectives for how New Zealand producers may achieve these targets, including:

- **FEED:** over the next 10 years move the national average of 10.25t grazed forage DM harvested/ha to 15.4t pasture DM harvested/ha. Maximise profitability where supplementary feed is used.
- **ANIMALS:** increase feed conversion efficiency, optimise lifetime milk production and improve dairy cow functionality

The consumption of dairy feed saw a substantial rise of 287% in the first quarter of 2008 compared to a year ago with farmers now feeding more inputs (mainly purchased from Australia) and only relying on pasture for 70% of their feeding requirements. This has led to New Zealand farmers being far more open to using different genetics especially genetics that will produce more but still hold together. Hence in the last four months ABS has sold just short of 20,000 units.

Geoff Wood, Dairy Product manager for ABS in Australia, describes the effects of the recent changes "Bulls in heavy demand have mainly been sourced from Australia and the UK; ABS Riviera, Kelstein Dynasty and Oversight Dragon from the UK and Goldbullion, Junco, Pontiff and Vacum from Australia. Riviera has proved to

be the most popular individual bull as he ranks very high for BW in New Zealand. As the New Zealand rankings are calculated monthly Riviera like others tend to bounce around a little but last month he was +220 BW. Anything over 200 BW becomes very appealing in this market." Heifer sorted semen is becoming more appealing in New Zealand as the dairy industry continues to expand. "1,200 doses of ABS Sexation have been sold to New Zealand this year made up of Riviera, Dragon and Dynasty. This market is expected to grow dramatically in the next 12 months," comments Geoff.

ABS Technical Services have also been in demand across the Tasman Sea. Our team who provide advice to Australian RMS customers are



Cows grazing on a South Island farm in New Zealand

in demand from New Zealand dairy producers who want more advice on breeding programmes including synchronisation, cue-mates programmes and sorted semen. As dairies get larger and there is more pressure to get cows back in calf, help is needed to maximise herd performance. At the same time producers are becoming increasingly concerned about inbreeding and its negative effects on production and fertility. Geoff Wood describes the increased demand for the ABS mating program, GMS Genomate "Genomate has been proving popular with many breeders as herds strive to limit inbreeding. Customers are able to custom build their ideal cow with the program, be it improving fitness traits or components for example. As Genomate looks back over seven generations customers can be assured their herds are protected against genetic recessive disorders and the negative impact of inbreeding is minimised."

This Issue:

UK Cornerstone Programme Delivers

Fertility plus 280

More Heifers with no compromise on time



UK Cornerstone

The long wait for a UK grassland proven bull is over! ABS Topnotch is our first graduate from the UK Grassland Cornerstone Breeding Club and delivers on our promise to provide the type of genetics needed on grass based systems. Topnotch has impressive proof figures; 12.1kg of protein with positive percentages and is 2.5 points higher than average on daughter fertility. However, more importantly is the customer satisfaction we hear about with Topnotch daughters. Comments such as “easy to manage” and “exactly the type of animal I need for this system” are as encouraging as the 82 daughters Topnotch currently has in his proof.

Topnotch semen was some of the first young sire semen to be sent onto grassland herds in February 2005 when we launched the UK Grassland Cornerstone Breeding Club. As with progeny testing, it all takes time and three years on we are in the position of daughters calving in from the bulls we have tested, which leaves us with the exciting task of finding where they are and how they are performing.



Topnotch Daughter

As we stand today, there are 450 herds signed up to Grassland Cornerstone Breeding Club, with 187 in the UK and 263 in Southern Ireland. To date we have sampled 21 Black and White young sires including British Friesians and six Jerseys in the UK, with the next wave of test daughters to start calving next spring. Irish bred bulls make up 30% of the bulls we have sampled, with the first Irish bull, Ballybride Dano to have daughters calving from now on! In Southern Ireland we have tested 13 young sires, four of these going through the Gene Ireland programme (the progeny testing programme in Ireland run by the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation). We have early figures on the four bulls from Gene Ireland, shown below:

Animal Name	Test Year	Est EBI	EBI Rel	Milk	Fert	Calv	Beef	Health	CI	SURV	Gest Len
Millstreet Ruud 13	2007	134.44	34	53.94	44.39	36.6	0.65	-1.14	-2.99	0.77	-3.62
Killingley Keet Starlight	2007	139.82	34	66.54	46.69	36.95	-5.78	-4.58	-2.37	1.64	-3.17
Carracoush Tisabri	2008	184.82	30	93.43	56.19	33.83	-2.06	3.43	-1.96	2.93	-2.76
Killingley Sjoerd Class	2008	133.71	34	105.22	21.77	22.14	-9.13	-6.29	-0.68	1.22	-1.55

There are 1,990 recorded inseminations on these four bulls, with the two sampled in 2007 having 217 heifer calves on the ground now. Their latest estimated EBI figures is also shown, along with Sub-index information for milk, fertility, calving ease, carcass (Beef) and health. All four young sires show promising improvements for calving interval (CI) which links with their below average gestation length figures.

Testing bulls in the UK, under UK systems has never been so important to dairy farmers, seen by the increase in membership to Cornerstone Breeding Club. In total we have over 3,000 herds signed up in the UK but there is always room for plenty more! Cornerstone fits in to any breeding policy, as explained by Mr Knowles and Mr Giles.

Robert and Chris Knowles, Trink Farm, Cornwall

Robert and Chris Knowles of Trink Farm, St Ives in Cornwall milk 240 cows. The breeds in their herd is NZ Friesian, Holstein x Friesian and Jersey crosses. They have recently started to increase the herd and plan to milk 270 cows by 2010. Their herd breeding policy would place fertility at the top of the list along with body weight, milk solids and feet, to achieve a suitable cow for their farm and system.

Chris says, “We joined the Cornerstone Breeding Club because we are interested in trying to help as much as possible to achieve the right sort of genetics from home shores. I believe that there is a good genetics base to work with in this country and like to help further it by using Cornerstone young bulls. I like the variety of young bulls that we have had so far and although none of them are milking yet, we have six heifers in-calf that look strong and robust. I really support the principle of developing genetics from the Northern Hemisphere, we use young bulls as a measure against the New Zealand genetics that we have.”



Chris Knowles

Andrew and Rachel Giles, Maesllwch Farm, Herefordshire

Andrew and Rachel Giles farm at Maesllwch Farm, Glasbury on Wye, Herefordshire with son William as Herdsman. The farm is organic and covers 1,000 acres comprising mainly of grass for grazing and silage, along with some arable. The 380 New Zealand Friesian cows, including some Jersey crossbreeds are milked twice a day through a 24:48 swing over herringbone, geared up for a one man operation. Cows calve in a tight spring block from February to mid March, and bred back within a four to five week period. The cows graze from early March until mid November, when they are brought inside onto grass silage, with whole crop if it is available. Replacements are bred on farm and current breeding policy is to continue to breed robust, fertile, cows that convert pasture into good milk solids. Andrew says being a member of the Grassland Cornerstone Breeding Club suits their breeding goals: “I felt



Andrew and William Giles

that I had to join because unless seasonal calvers with pasture systems help prove UK bulls then all the alternatives have to be sourced elsewhere.” Andrew comments the Irish young sires available through Cornerstone offer an exciting diversity of genetics “the UK gene pool is small but the inclusion of Irish young sires offer a credible alternative. I'm pleased to be associated with the Cornerstone Breeding Programme and we have been using young bull semen for two years now. I support ABS with their UK Grass and Genetics programme.”

Cornerstone really is the foundation of providing proven bulls to deliver what you need on your systems, with a fundamental part of the process being the collection of data from the official milk recording organisations (NMR and CIS in the UK). Cornerstone members give us permission to use their data which not only provides the production data of milk, fat and protein on our test sires but also information on inseminations and daughter fertility. We also use these records to locate daughters of test bulls, so we can ask our members who are milking them how they fit into their system, their opinions on the animals and of course, to take photographs. If you want to be part of our exciting future and join the Cornerstone Breeding Club, please call Louise on 01270 616631 for details or visit our website www.genusbreeding.co.uk and go to the Cornerstone Breeding Club section.



Fertility plus 280

With block calving systems fertility is paramount to anything else, getting your cows back on their feet after calving and in calf again is what drives profit. Extended calving intervals are a cost few can afford.

In 2002, Genus ABS introduced Fertility plus[®] to help improve conception rates by 6%-9% in difficult breeding cows. Containing the semen of three beef bulls in one straw, with scientifically proven capacitation rates, it has since become a UK industry standard. Now in 2008, to help you stay profitable in an ever changing agricultural climate, we have launched Fertility plus[®] 280. With the same science backing as our other Fertility plus products, 280 offers the potential to reduce gestation length in your cows to a remarkable average of just 280 days* (that's six days shorter than the average of the Beef and Holstein breeds).

This for you is an easy solution to more milk, and more chance to get your cows back in calf next time. When each day your cow is open costs £6/day,** Fertility plus 280 will provide you with a total benefit of £61/cow (compared to conventional semen). For more information on Fertility plus 280 contact our Fertility plus team on 0870 162 2000.

*Source: Based upon averages proven in Genus ABS calving survey

**Source: Promar international 2008



More heifers, with no compromise to time

ABS Sexation is sexed semen available from Genus ABS. Sexation offers 90% female calves and 52% conception rate taken from over 1,500 PD results. Sexation can fit into tight calving patterns, as demonstrated by Cornerstone Breeding Club member Mr Grigg at Venton Farm...

Mr Grigg of Venton Farm, Bideford, Devon operates a tight calving pattern, so utilised RMS to serve a group of heifers with ABS Sexation last winter. Their RMS technician inseminated over a six week period using 95 straws of sexed semen. Mr Grigg is very pleased with the outcome of 45 live heifer calves, including three sets of twins!



ABS Sexation heifer calves at Venton Farm

With a range of bulls available, including sexed British Friesian, Jersey and Brown Swiss, Sexation is an option to increase the number of heifers you produce and ultimately the money you produce!



For more information on ABS Grassland Genetics, Alpha Building, London Road, Nantwich CW5 7JW.

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Calls may be monitored for training purposes.