

BREEDING SERIES HISTORY

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HIGH LIFETIME PRODUCTION FROM EFFICIENT COWS

Health and efficiency are the key drivers in CRV’s breeding programme. And the focus on improving these figures yields results, according to CRV’s Jaap Brinkman. “It results in cows that remain in the herd for an additional lactation and produce 10% more milk from the same amount of feed.”

TEXT INGE VAN DRIE

It is a standard question that Mr Brinkman routinely asks in every country: “What are the main reasons why cows leave your herd?” And in almost every country, CRV’s global product manager Holstein hears the same answers: mastitis, fertility and hoof problems. “In one country mastitis may be top of the list of reasons, and fertility in another. But the same three answers always come up,” says Mr Brinkman. And this is one of the reasons why CRV places so much emphasis on health, as well as efficiency, in its breeding vision. “Healthy cows last longer and are easier and more cost effective to manage,” he says. “Milk losses are reduced, as is the vet and medicine bill.” Put simply, breeding for health can save producers money. Cost savings are made by, among other things, a shorter calving interval, fewer cases of mastitis and better hoof health (see illustration). “CRV is one of the few companies worldwide that collects data on hoof disorders on a structural basis. We now have more than 1.5 million units of data,” says Mr Brinkman.

CRV has been using this data to calculate breeding values for hoof health since 2010. “With these breeding values, producers can make better sire choices and prevent lameness problems. Curved or excessively straight feet and legs is not usually a reason to cull cows, but lameness problems are.” The breeding value ketosis is another example of a health breeding value with which CRV leads the field internationally. “This allows producers to breed cows that are less likely to develop ketosis. And that can save time and money – particularly in large herds, “ says Mr. Brinkman.

ADDITIONAL LACTATION
Efficiency is the other important factor in CRV’s breeding vision. “Focus on those key figures results in cows that remain in the herd for, typically, an additional lactation and produce 10% more milk from the same amount of feed,” says Mr Brinkman. “That means more milk income. Ultimately, producers milk cows to earn a

TOP 25% OF COWS, RANKED FOR BETTER LIFE HEALTH, HAD

- **30 days** shorter calving interval
- **50%** less ketosis
- **30%** less sub-clinical mastitis
- **23%** less hoof problems
- **55%** less still births

TOP 25% OF COWS, RANKED FOR BETTER LIFE EFFICIENCY, PRODUCED

- **an extra 4kg milk** per day
- **an extra** 240 days
- **13,000kg** of milk more during their lifetime
- **one** extra lactation



BIG BOUKJE – A TEXTBOOK EXAMPLE

Big Boukje is the textbook example of a cow that combines both health and efficiency. In March 2016, she was the first cow in the Netherlands to pass the 200,000kg of milk milestone. The excellent Cash daughter lived to 19 years old and, in total, she produced 208,163kg of milk, with 4.64% fat and 3.86% protein, during her lifetime. This equated to a total of 17,705kg of fat and protein. Boukje inherited her high lifetime production from her dam, Boukje 184, and herd great-granddam Boukje 164. Both also produced more than 100,000kg of milk and 10,000kg of fat and protein. Big Boukje’s production is also anchored on her father’s side, with the CRV bulls Cash, Labelle, F16, Tops, and Amos.

living.” Two factors play an important role in improving efficiency: lifetime production and feed efficiency. Efficiency in the eyes of CRV means the lifetime production of a cow divided by the total feed intake in her life. “That gives you the complete picture. Unlike many other organisations, we also include young stock rearing and the feed required for maintenance,” says Mr Brinkman, who also points to CRV’s breeding values for feed intake. “For many organisations, the score for feed efficiency is based on the linear traits for type. We are the only company with a breeding value for feed intake that’s based on practical data on feed intake. We have been collecting this data for two years, on a Dutch dairy unit with 200 cows. And we are going to expand that. At the end of this year, we will measure feed intake at five Dutch dairy units, with a total of 2,000 cows.”

HIGH COMPONENTS
The high lifetime production of Dutch dairy cows shows that they produce milk efficiently. For cows culled in 2017/2018, the average lifetime production was 30,343kg of milk, at 4.35% fat and 3.54% protein. “From an international perspective, the Netherlands scores high,” says Mr Brinkman, who also points to the high components in the Netherlands. In 2018, the Dutch Holsteins averaged 10,258kg of milk, with 4.30% fat and 3.55% protein, in 353 days. “We have been a cheese-making country for a very long time. We have always bred for milk protein. And that is an advantage now because there is an international trend for producing milk with high components. The milk price for high constituents is better.”

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