

Texas Dairy Matters

Higher Education Supporting the Industry

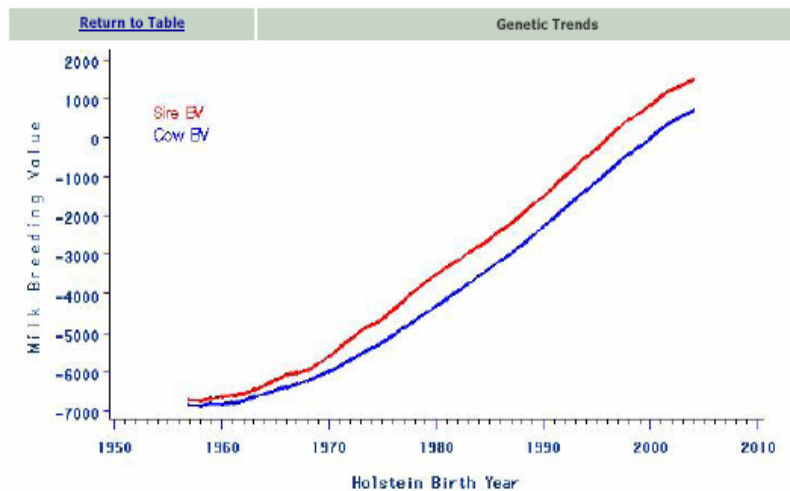
QUARTERLY GENETIC EVALUATIONS MEAN FASTER GENETIC PROGRESS

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Improved profit through sound genetic choices is one of the least expensive, yet most lasting, management decisions you can make for your dairy. The USDA, through its Animal Improvement Programs Laboratory (AIPL), calculates a genetic estimate on active AI sires quarterly. This estimate, free to producers, is called Predicted Transmitting Ability (PTA). It is the best prediction of the genetic value of an animal.

All available records of the animal and its parents, offspring, or other relatives are incorporated into the evaluation. Current animal model techniques allow joint genetic evaluations of bulls and cows. Unfortunately, a PTA for a cow or bull changes as new information accumulates.

Using up-to-date information is critical to making the best genetic selections. It is



critical that you use current sire information in order to capitalize on the continual genetic increase that is shown in the graph to the left. AIPL releases this information in February, May, August and November. Quarterly evaluations result in less change in PTA for a bull in consecutive runs and earlier information for new bulls than the previous semi-annual evaluation release

schedule.

Quarterly evaluations speed the detection of changes in PTA of previously marketed AI bulls. A bull's PTA may decrease, sometimes dramatically, when large numbers of second crop daughters freshen. Using quarterly evaluations, AI companies identify such bulls earlier, reduce marketing of the bull's semen sooner and contract fewer daughters of the bull as potential dams. These actions promote faster genetic progress in the dairy population. Quarterly genetic evaluations also provide earlier identification of elite cows, decreasing the age of bull dams. Again, this decreases the generation interval and speeds genetic progress per year.

Here are some tips for using these evaluations for highest profits:

- ¶ Manage your semen supply to maximize progress.
- ¶ Purchase only enough semen to last until just after the next information release.
- ¶ Avoid the temptation to buy large volumes of semen of a *hot bull* because the price is too good to resist.

Many outstanding AI bulls are available at reasonable prices. The next *hot one* may be only three months away. Herd size, season of the year, and conception rates determine the number of units of semen you need for a three month period. Keep abreast of current information by accessing the latest in genetic evaluations directly from AIPL via their web page:

www.aipl.arsusda.gov

Don't rely on others for this important information.