



THOUGHTS

From The Secretary

Last month we began the process of clearing some of the muddy water I had stirred up at last year's convention when discussing the new score card. As I wrote, the central tenet of the new system is balance: Balance of strength/substance with dairy quality. Balance of width of chest with depth of heart. Balance of this front-end power with a long, feminine dairy neck blending into the shoulder. Balance of a clean, flat, angular bone with substance. Balance, balance and more balance along with mobility, correct rump structure and mammary system, the new score card will more adequately describe the cow.

This score card has had Type Committee (Breeders), Genetics Committee, Board, A.I. Industry, University personnel, Brown Swiss staff and research data incorporated from the beginning and during the course of the development process. The current version was published in the May, 2006 Bulletin in "Thoughts". It was published for your, the members, "consideration and review" before final Board approval in July. We will publish the card again in May this year. The current goal is to implement the card beginning with the June tour in Wisconsin.

The new score card does not discriminate against a cow with an abundance of stature as long as she possesses the width of chest, depth of heart and spring of rib to balance her height. Tall, frail brown storks will score lower in the Strength and Substance category. Nor does it favor round boned, thick-skinned, short-necked, teacup uddered hippos lacking any semblance of the ability to produce milk. While being recognized for their sheer volume, coarse boned, poor shouldered cows will lose points in Strength and Substance for structural problems in the front end and for lacking style. What will change is that the medium framed, balanced, stylish, mobile, good-uddered cows will not be penalized for being a 5 in stature.

This month we begin with Dairy Quality. This category is responsible for 15% of Final Score. Dairy Quality is defined as:

The physical evidence of milking ability is evaluated. Listed in priority order, the descriptions of the traits to be considered are as follows:

Ribs-rib bones are wide apart, flat, well sprung and slanted toward the rear. 5%

Bone-flat and clean with adequate substance. 4%

Body Condition-appropriate for stage of lactation. 3%

Breed Characteristics-overall style, strength and balance. Head should be feminine, with a long lean neck blending into a long body. 3%

How does this, the above, impact the score in this category? Let us return to the cows we met last month. The first was a cow described as a brown hippo. While having a large body volume this cow is coarse boned, round-shouldered lacking any semblance of style. We can further characterize this cow as being a short-necked (relative to her size), round-eared specimen. It is hard to imagine any time in her lactation that her body condition score would be appropriate for the stage. On her ribs, well-sprung and widely spaced but round and pointing to the ground she gets a 70. While there is plenty of bone it is about as far from what we want as one can possibly get. She gets a 50. Body condition is in the same range another 50. Breed character, well, it may be some breed but not ours, another 50. If you add these up in our card by percentages in the category this cow ends up scored 52 points for dairy quality. For the two categories, Strength and Substance (86) and Dairy Quality (52) this cow averages 69.

The second cow we described as tall and narrow. Winged shouldered she lacks style though she is long and clean through the neck. She is flat and angular-boned but tight-ribbed, lacking spring and openness. For this part of category she gets a 76. Her bone quality is very acceptable, gaining her an 85. Her body condition is also appropriate for stage of lactation, receiving an 88. However, for breed characteristics her lack of style and balance offset her long elegant neck gathering a 73 (remember she also lost points for style in Strength and Substance). Putting the weights together gives this cow a 80 for Dairy Quality. For the two categories, Strength and Substance (69) and Dairy Quality (80) this cow averages 74.5 (rounded up to a 75).

The third cow we described as beautifully balanced with a clean bone last time though lacking in total volume of the first cow or stature of the second cow. The third cow is clean, flat, open and angular in the rib easily gaining a 93. Her bone quality is exceptional, gaining a 97. This cow is late in lactation and carries flesh, however it is the proper amount, for which she receives a 94. Loaded with style starting with her feminine head, long, elegant neck blending into her shoulder and carrying back through her body, cow three is 97 for breed charac-

ter and style. These scores give her a 95 for Dairy Quality. Averaging Strength and Substance (89) and Dairy Quality (95) gives a 92 for the two categories.

The next category in the Major Trait Descriptions is Rump. Accounting for 10% of the Final Score the Rump category classification:

Provides core support for reproductive efficiency, health udder and the rear feet and legs. Adequate width through the rump promotes calving ease and breeding efficiency. Listed in priority order, the description of the traits to be considered are as follows:

Rump-pins should be adequately spaced and slightly lower (2 inches) than the hip bones; rump should be long with thurls of proportionate width. Tail head is set slightly above and neatly between the pins bones, and the tail is free from coarseness. 5%

Vulva-is nearly vertical and the anus should not be recessed. 2.5%

Back-should be straight and strong; the loin broad, strong and nearly level. 2.5%

The rump and back are important functional structures that still must retain style. While the rump structure plays a number of roles the primary emphasis is Reproductive Efficiency. One of the major points that the new score card addresses, again with input from many sources, are those cows that are level or high in the pins with weak loins. Why? Those cows in general have poorer reproductive performance. If we continue to select for level rumps in general we select against getting cows pregnant and select against expanding the breed in commercial herds. Another part of the rump structures that plays a crucial role in conception is the tipped vulva and recessed anus. These problems lead to lower fertility.

What this means that in this category those cows that have "box car rumps" that are level from the hooks to the pins will not score as high as cows that have the 2 inch slope AND are stylish about the tail with a strong back and loin. We will return to this category next month.

As we close a Big Thank You to the Minnesota State Association for donating \$1,000 towards the new data base. This is in addition to their \$2,000 last year for the same project. Minnesota has also pledged \$2,000 to promotion of crossbreds. Till next time with the long lived, early calving, productive Brown cow with the low somatic cell...Brown Swiss. Dave