



Executive Secretary
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THOUGHTS

From The Secretary

Last month we ended on cleaning up the confusion that had been spawned by my speech on the score card at last year's convention with the new category of Rump. The back and rump are important skeletal elements that must furnish the proper structure to provide Reproductive Efficiency. The rump that is level from hooks to pins, while inherently attractive, is an economic dead end that hastens the departure of the average cow from the herd. This rump structure can lead to higher rates of calving difficulty and a slower pace of uterine recovery post calving. As always, everyone with an interest in the future of Brown Swiss must recognize that there are exceptions. However, the data is compelling that flat, excessively wide rumps is not a path which breeders wishing to produce long lasting cattle should direct their breeding goals down.

A trait that has gained in importance with the new card in the category of Rump is Vulva. A vulva that is recessed back into the rump with the lower portion extended out causing a slope, is a vulva that has tendency to result in lower conception rates. This arises from both urine pooling and fecal contamination, creating an unhealthy environment for fertilization and/or resulting in early embryonic death.

The description of this category that accounts for 10% of the Final Score is: *Provides core support for reproductive efficiency, healthy 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 pin 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%

We now return to the hippo, the beanpole and stylish cows of the previous months. The first cow has plenty of width through the rump. However, her round rump has more than enough slope, her tail head is coarse setting high above the pins. Her anus is recessed and her vulva tipped. However her loin is strong. For rump she receives a 74, vulva a 55 and back a 88. Putting the weights together she receives a 73 for Rump.

The beanpole on the other hand has a moderate slope, indeed she has the 2-inch ideal. While not overly wide through the thurls, she is more than adequate. Her tail head is laid in beautifully and as we noted last month, bone quality throughout her body is very acceptable. Her vulva is vertical and her anus is not recessed. Further her loin, while not overly broad, is strong. While there are other features of the beanpole we are not comfortable with we must admire her stylish, reproductively efficient rump structure. In the break down the beanpole gets an 89 for rump, a 97 for vulva and an 87 for back. This gives the beanpole a 91 in rump.

On the other hand the stylish cow has problems in the rump category. At first glance the clean-boned, wide rump stylish tail head goes with the overall appearance of the cow. However, when we examine her rump we realize that her pins are actually above the hooks. Her anus is recessed and the vulva is tipped. Through the loin the stylish cow is weak. When we see her walk she has a tendency to pop her pins up and drop her loin. For rump she gets an 80 on the borderline of going into the 70 range if her pins were just a smidgen higher. In the vulva she is not as bad as the hippo but is still a major concern. For vulva she receives a 75. For the back, the loin while not great, is in the low plus range; gaining a 83. This gives our stylish cow an 80 in rump.

The last newly described trait in the new score card is Mobility. This trait replaces Feet and Legs and is valued at 20% of the scorecard.

The description is: *The structure and movement of feet, pasterns and legs are evaluated. Evidence of mobility receives a major*

consideration. Listed in priority, the descriptions of the traits are as follows:

Movement-free and comfortable, able to rise and lie down easily. 7%

Feet-steep angle and deep heel with short, well rounded closed, toes. 4%

Legs-4%

Front and Rear Legs-tracking straight, wide apart with feet squarely placed.

Rear Legs-Side View- a moderate set (angle) to the hock.

Hocks- cleanly molded, free from coarseness and puffiness with adequate flexibility.

Thurl Position- centrally placed between the hip bones and pin bones 3%.

Pasterns- short, strong and flexible. 2%

Mobility has long been a key part of the power of Brown Swiss. Mobility is integral for the future competitiveness of the breed. We will return to this vital category along with mammary next month.

Beginning with the May Genetic Evaluations, records from all breeds, including crossbreds, will be combined on a common base. All relatives of each animal, regardless of breed composition, will contribute to each animal's genetic evaluation. Before a Brown Swiss cow out of a Holstein dam had the same pedigree contribution regardless of how poor or good that dam was. In addition, there will be a greatly improved heterosis calculation. Also, more cows are included in management groups in herds with multiple or mixed breed cows. Breeds will be reported on their own breed base.

What this means immediately, is that we are having a very large scale base change. All cows on test are now included in the calculation. As a result, all breeds including Holstein will experience a downward shift in PTS's. For the future this change opens the door to greatly expand the ability to sample young sires. Watch next month for more on this.

Till next time with the Brown Cow with the low somatic cell—Brown Swiss... Dave