

So how important are feet and legs on a 4-h calf? Carscadden answered this question by referring to the Holstein Canada Conformation Analysis (scorecard) and explained that with a total of 100 points, the majority of points come from the mammary system, and the feet and legs. He explained, “When a judge is looking at the calf, they’re paying a lot more attention to the feet and legs because they are worth a lot more points.” Reiterating to the group that without a mammary system to judge, the extra points have to go somewhere - therefore go to the feet and legs, rump, and overall frame of the calf. “I’ve seen a lot of 4-H members struggle with a calf that cannot keep her legs up under her or that has a lot of set to her legs. It’s very difficult to do well with that calf,” he added.

CATCHING THE JUDGES EYE

A calf with overall “dairyness” balanced with strength and style is sure to catch the eye of the judge. Carscadden stressed, “You’re going to have more success with a calf that has dairyness with an adequate amount of strength. You don’t want a calf that’s thin or frail because a judge will want to see strength; and that’s frail calf would not survive in a lot of environments.”

The judge is also looking for a balance to see that all of the parts “flow together.” Questions to ask yourself include:

- Are you going to be struggling all year to make sure there is enough body on the calf?
- Will you be feeding hay throughout the year to give the calf the appearance of more body depth?
- Is this a calf that you are going to have to grow more hair on the topline to make her look balanced?

FINAL TIP

Using herd management tools and consulting industry professionals are great ways to gain dairy knowledge in order to breed that perfect calf. By taking tips from an expert in sire analysis who has judged both the Royal Winter Fair and the World Dairy Expo, along with developing your dairy “cow sense,” you are bound to succeed. It is worth the time and effort to research and find or create the calf that is right for you!

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PROGRESSIVE DAIRYMEN

Editor Lora Bender

Proper calf selection is beneficial for your 4-H dairy career. Creating your desired calf through strategic breeding is an approach to consider when building your show string.

Keen youth and parents gathered to hear Brian Carscadden, sire analyst at Semex, discuss what to look for when selecting a 4-H calf during the 2016 London Dairy Congress in London Ontario. Carscadden, an avid 4-H supporter and a world-renowned cattle judge, offered his expertise on the subject to help guide the next generation of dairy show enthusiasts.

CREATING YOUR CALF

When beginning your calf selection from a breeding perspective, a review of genomics is a good place to start. With its 65 percent prediction reliability, genomics has revolutionized how the next generation of bulls are developed and acquired. Carscadden stated, "At Semex, 55 percent of sales in 2015 were from young bulls. My advice is to use a minimum of 50 percent genomic bulls in your herd because it works."

CHOOSING YOUR CALF

Carscadden highlighted 5 important factors to take into consideration when selecting a calf:

1 Consider its Size!

A size appropriate heifer can make all the difference in the show ring. For example, is the calf well grown for her age? Will the calf be too big for you by the end of the 4-H season?



Photo taken at the RAWF 2017 in Toronto Ontario by Jennifer Crawford

2 Review Conformation

Does the calf have a long neck? Sound feet and legs? Balance and dairyness?

3 Look at Influential Attributes

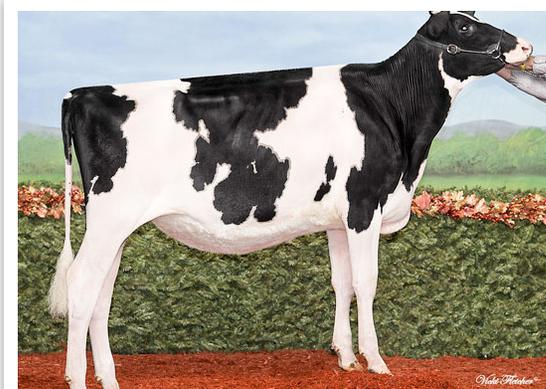
Does the calf show signs of poor attitude? Does she have depth of body?

4 Use High-Type Bulls

Genomics can play a positive role in calf selection, so don't hesitate to use young genomic bulls with confidence.

5 Research Families

Pay attention to bloodlines in regards to feet, legs and dairy strength. Take into consideration commonalities between calves from the same sire and calculate the probability of your calf to carry the same traits.



Doorman daughter - Cerpolaït Doorman Roselyn. Photo provided by Semex