Once You've Received Your Genetic Test Results

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WHERE IS THE VALUE OF GENOMIC TESTING AND THE SUBSEQUENT RESULTS?

The combination of sexed semen and better reproductive management protocols gives herds the opportunity to manage their animal inventory differently. Heifer matings are now the most critical matings. You're able to maximize genetic progress via sexed semen, giving you up to 90% female calves from your first lactation heifers. This creates management challenges that genomic testing through Elevate® can alleviate.

Using your genomic results to sort through your herd's inventory is common. This data can dictate which animals get sexed, conventional or beef semen, and help balance your future heifer inventory. After pedigree errors found by genomic testing are corrected, one of the first decisions that needs to be made is based on ranking heifers from highest to lowest genetic value. Industry indexes such as GTPI and GLPI are commonly used to sort through genomic data. Although these indexes help to rank animals on a national level, they may not reflect the herd's genetic needs and goals. It is suggested that the herd owner works with his/her genetic advisor to build a custom index, putting weights on the traits the owner deems important.

SEMEX WORKS™

SemexWorks allows dairy herd managers to build a custom index that fits their herd's genetic goals.

Semex has a program called SemexWorks™ that allows dairy herd managers to build a custom index that fits their herd's genetic goals. A custom index allows for a simple top to bottom ranking of animals, without getting weighed down in sorting through sub traits.

Once you've gotten your herd's index of choice picked, it's time to make inventory decisions. Genomic testing helps provide a ranking, but you must also account for herd and business management decisions that will impact current and future needs. Pregnancy rates, age at first calving, heifer rearing costs and herd internal growth and expansion needs are just some of the many factors that need to be accounted for. Combining the genomic ranking with proper inventory accounting will help to select animals to get sexed, conventional or beef semen, as well as culling, and in some cases IVF or an ET strategy. To help with these decisions, Semex developed a tool called the Elevate Solver that combines genetic and herd management information, to help develop the best strategy for the herd. This will drive up genetic gain, as your highest animals will contribute to the next generation.

One area that can be a difficult decision to make is breeding older, productive cows to beef semen, because genetically they index lower than their younger herd mates. If the system is set up correctly, those older cows have already contributed to the next generation by producing high genomic females based on the use of genomic selection and sexed semen. Your goal with these cows changes. Your new goal is to keep this cow in the herd as long as possible by using high fertility semen, including beef semen. To get the maximum out of your genetic results, a herd must accept the fact that younger animals will make up the bulk of the future replacements.

To get the most out of your genomic results, it's recommend you work with a trusted genetic advisor who knows how to get the most out of the technology available and challenges the herd management to think about how their genetics are being managed now and into the future.

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