

## Dairy cattle can handle low-levels of mycotoxins in their diets.

### Fiction.

Like other misconceptions this one has an element of truth. Ruminating livestock can overcome the effect of short term, low-level mycotoxin contamination; however continuous low-level contamination can be as debilitating as acute dosing.

## By themselves molds are bad

enough. Moldy feeds are less palatable and reduce dry matter intake, digestibility and energy content. Most, if not all, molds can produce mycotoxins. The majority of toxins have a major impact on immune function, opening the animal to secondary invasions by bacteria and virus. Needless to say, the economic impact of molds and mycotoxins can be very high.

The cool wet spring is one reason for the increased presence of these mycotoxins. The field formation of mycotoxins can happen at various times during the growing season. The mold spores can contaminate the plant during silking, as well as during times of plant or stalk damage caused by insects and even weather damage, including hail. Any time there is plant stress; the opportunity for mycotoxin contamination exists.

This spring's cool, wet weather is a perfect example due to the spores ability to enter the plant as early as germination. Hopefully this will not be widespread, but should be kept in mind this fall when new crop feeding begins. If the cows are struggling, look back to the season's growing condition and pull some feed samples for testing to rule in or out the potential of mycotoxins. For more information and to receive a free mycotoxin test talk to your NorthStar representative. ★

## Composite Fertility Index : A new way to measure sire fertility

The A.I. industry recognizes multiple systems for measuring sire fertility. Regionally, our industry relies on single sources of fertility data like Estimated Relative Conception Rates (ERCR), other regions lean towards technician-based non-return estimates. Across these different systems bulls may be ranked high on one system, but average or even below average on another. All this creates confusion for you. Which system should you trust?

Fact is, all systems do the best job they can with the data provided. Select Sires, believes accuracy resides in greater numbers and that's why the Composite Fertility Index™ (CFI™) was created. CFI includes information from all available U.S. sources including Relative Breeding Efficiency (RBE), ERCR and Agri-Tech Analytics data (ATA). Combining data from each of these systems into a CFI strengthens the power and accuracy of each bull's fertility estimate.

CFI is comprised of over 1.5 million services on 575 Select Sires. CFI converts the combined and weighted deviations from ERCR, ATA and RBE into a single statistically meaningful index value. Sires greater than or equal to 4 are above average and statistically different than those in the 1 or 2 category. Sires in the 3 category are average with estimated fertility deviations between +2 and -2, but cannot be considered significantly different than sires with a CFI of 2 or 4. A CFI in the 2 range represents sires that are numerically slightly below but statically not different than average. The only truly sub-fertile sires will be represented with a CFI of less than 2.

Not all Select Sires have a CFI. A sire must meet the minimum threshold for number of services in one or more of the individual ranking groups (ERCR, RBE, ATA) before a CFI can be calculated.

CFI should not be confused with the Superior Settler™ designation, they are two different ratings. For years, Select Sires has used advanced microscopic semen evaluation techniques in conjunction with components of a sire's CFI to designate Superior Settlers. There are bulls that somehow achieve above average conception with average semen quality evaluations. There are also some bulls with outstanding semen quality that do not perform to expectations in the field. Only bulls with average or better semen quality AND above average conception are designated a Superior Settler.

CFI offers unbiased fertility estimates you can trust. For more information on CFI and how to incorporate it into your breeding program, visit with your area NorthStar representative. ★

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**CFI converts the combined and weighted deviations into a single index value.**

- $\geq 4.0$  Above Average
- 3.0 - 3.9 Average
- 2.0 - 2.9 Acceptable
- $\leq 1.9$  Fair