



The Point



Convert and Bio Cycle Plus team up for better herd health

By Nicole Mackinder

Maynard Hansen is not normally a nosy neighbor, except when it comes to the health of his herd. “We have had several cases of severe calf scours at the farm and our mortality is through the roof,” is what Hansen overheard from another area producer while attending his local dairy meeting. Although his Dorchester, Wisconsin herd didn’t have a scours problem, he couldn’t help but try to learn something new. Little did he know that paying attention to another producer’s experiences would benefit his herd’s health.

“She (my neighbor) mentioned the only way she was able to clear up the scours was with a powder she had been mixing in the milk replacer,” recalls Hansen. He later learned that powder was Convert™, a direct-fed microbial. Comprised of a special blend of naturally occurring direct-fed microorganisms, Convert also contains L-form bacteria, microbial sugars, enzymes and specialized proteins.

Impressed with Convert’s success controlling scours, Hansen researched the product and learned it also helps boost the immune system, improve appetites, and increase growth rates; all of which help reduce calf mortality. With that in mind he decided to give it a try.

“I started feeding Convert and saw a difference in the calves’ appetites right away,” declares Hansen. “They are much more alert than before and their appetites are huge. I even have to be careful I don’t over-feed them.”

While calf scours were really never a problem, Hansen says the incidence has been reduced even further after using Convert. “I would definitely recommend Convert to anyone raising calves,” remarks Hansen. “It can help calves that are having trouble or just give a healthy calf a better start.”



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Not all “sexed semen” is created equal

As the demand for “sexed semen” grows, the more choices come available. With more choices comes confusion, as products coined with the same name (car, tissue, aspirin) are not all the same. “Sexed semen” is no different. In theory all “sexed semen” will produce a specific gender calf, but there are real differences in the benefits depending on the brand you choose. With that in mind here are a few questions you should ask about “sexed semen.”

What is the accuracy of producing a heifer calf?

Select Sires’ gender SELECTed™ semen is 90 percent pure. That means nine out of ten calves born from gender SELECTed semen are heifer calves.

What’s the genetic value?

Like conventional semen, the genetics of “sexed semen” vary. Select Sires offers gender SELECTed semen from proven Holstein, Brown Swiss and Jersey sires. Looking at genetics on the gender SELECTed lineup you can find Top 100 TPI™ sires, as well as sires that offer high-milk production, extreme components,



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Teat sealant lowers SCC in first calf heifers

More than 50 percent of first calf heifers freshen with an intramammary infection in one or more quarters. These infections result in lower milk production and increased treatment costs.

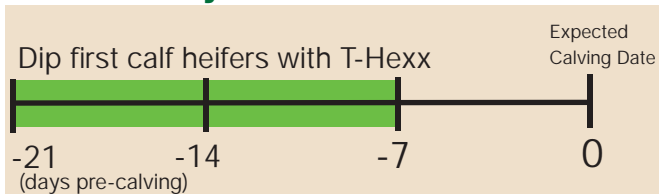
In a study conducted by Todd Charnetzki, the Ripple Group, LLC it was shown that the application of an external dry cow sealant one to three weeks prior to calving lowers clinical infections and SCC.

Heifers chosen for the study were anticipated to calve within 45 days. Each heifer was treated two weeks prior to the expected calving date by dipping one front and one rear teat with T-Hexx®

Dry™. Additionally, a control group of heifers who were not dipped with T-Hexx Dry were also observed. Three to eight days post-calving quarter samples were taken and SCCs were recorded.

The result: quarters dipped with T-Hexx Dry had lower SCC than quarters not dipped: 201,380 SCC compared to 307,080 SCC. Furthermore, clinical infections were significantly lower in quarters dipped with T-Hexx Dry. The infection rate was only 8.57 percent in dipped quarters, compared to 18.57 percent in un-dipped quarters and 22.37 percent in the control group. ☆

T-Hexx Dry recommended use



Monitor pregnancy rate with DHI data

Getting cows bred this summer was difficult. As a result there are a lot of open cows right now, which means pregnancy rates are low. Now is the time to pay close attention to your herd's pregnancy rate and start making strides to improve it. Breeding as many eligible cows as possible will have the greatest impact on improving pregnancy rate. Your goal should be to breed at least 60 percent of all eligible cows.

Using your DHI data can make identifying eligible cows and monitoring your herd's pregnancy rate quite easy. When using PCDART, a User Report can be created to identify all eligible cows to breed. When creating the report you choose which parameters determine "if" a cow is eligible (open cows, cows serviced – not confirmed pregnant, etc.). Once the User Report is created, those cows can be put into a temporary group

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top health traits, high udder composite scores, feet and leg specialists and high reliability.



How do you get the best results?

The best results with gender SELECTed semen are achieved when you pay strict attention to the details of semen handling and timing of inseminations. It is recommended that gender SELECTed semen only be used in well-managed virgin heifers. It is best if heifers are inseminated 12 hours after observed estrus.

Following this protocol, the many research herds using gender SELECTed semen have experienced very acceptable conception rates. Averages indicate well-managed herds that achieve 60 – 65 percent conception rates in virgin heifers with traditional semen may expect 45 to 50 percent conception with gender SELECTed semen.

Is there sufficient data to back-up product claims?

In the 1980s a breakthrough in semen sexing technology was made by USDA researchers in the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory in California. The patents for this technology were licensed to a company named XY Inc. of Fort Collins, Colorado, which has performed a considerable amount of research during the 1990s to optimize efficiency of these sorting procedures. Commercialization of sexed semen in the United States was initiated with a 2003 license granted to Sexing Technologies in Navasota, Texas.

Select Sires works closely with Sexing Technologies using their technology to make gender SELECTed semen. In addition to their research, Select Sires has been conducting extensive field trials since 2001 and continues research today.

What are the benefits of "sexed semen"?

"Sexed semen" produces more heifer calves which allows you to expand herd size internally and avoid the potential

dangers of importing disease from purchased animals. More heifers also means the opportunity for more selective culling and the potential to sell extra heifers.

Less difficult births for first calf heifers is another reason to consider using "sexed semen". According to the National Association of Animal Breeders (NAAB) only 5.3 percent of births are difficult when a heifer is born, compared to 10.9 percent when a bull is born. Fewer calving problems offers several economic and health benefits including increased milk production, more live calves, less labor to care for post-fresh heifers and sick calves and the list goes on and on.

Through ongoing and comprehensive research, Select Sires is able to offer the highest-quality product with gender SELECTed semen. No other source in the industry offers the experience and research that backs gender SELECTed semen. For more information on the benefits of choosing the gender SELECTed brand visit with your area NorthStar representative. ☆