

New national A.I. bull fertility evaluation available Sire Conception Rate (SCR)

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The USDA Animal Improvement Laboratory (AIPL) has been researching and developing a new method for evaluation of sire fertility for several years. The new trait is called Sire Conception Rate (SCR) and was released with the August, 2008 sire summary data.

Historically our industry has recognized multiple systems for measuring sire fertility. The new SCR is a national sire fertility evaluation and offers several significant advantages over prior methodologies. Probably the most important difference between SCR and other systems is that it is a larger database with more services, which ultimately contributes to greater accuracy in sire fertility evaluations. This increase in number of services comes both from a larger source of data (most of the major processing centers in the U.S.) and from use of multiple services (up to seven per lactation) rather than just first service. Secondly, SCR is based on on-farm pregnancy diagnoses

(where available) which should also tend to improve accuracy over non-return rate systems.

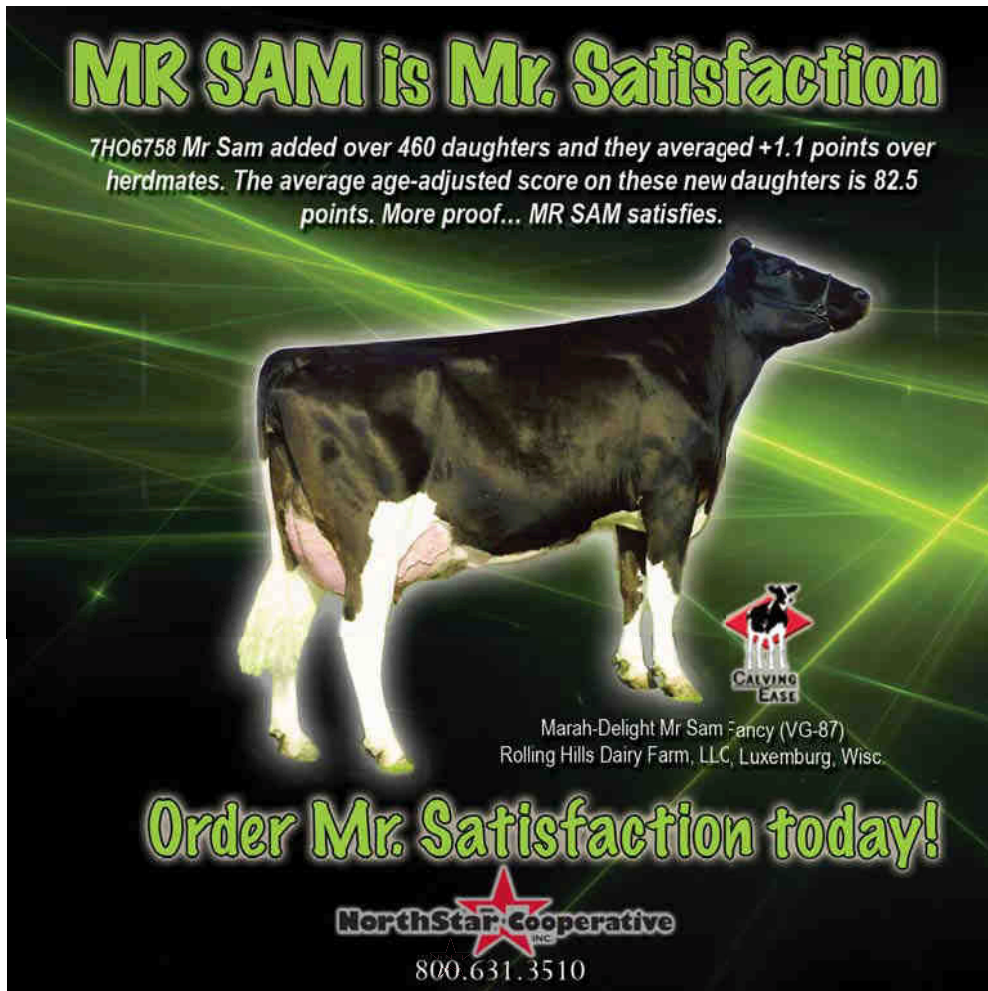
Another major difference between SCR and other systems is the inclusion of a new component in the model referred to as the expanded service sire term. This term is actually the composite of four other effects including: age of sire, sire inbreeding, inbreeding of the mating and the stud-year effect. For sires with thousands of services, the expanded service sire term will generally have very little, if any, impact. However, the expanded service sire term will hopefully improve the accuracy of sire fertility predictions that are based on relatively few numbers of services (fewer than 500).

The SCR evaluation “looks” very similar to Agritech Analytics (ATA) and Estimated Relative Conception Rate (ERCR) with differences expressed as plus or minus deviations from the “average” sire which is set to “0”. Similar to the

ATA system, SCR will carry deviations out to one decimal place.

As with all sire fertility evaluation systems, users should be careful not to “split-hairs” in deciphering the value of differences in fertility estimates. Irrespective of the number of services that accompany an estimate, differences of less than 2 or 3 percent between bulls should not be considered real differences as these data and analyses simply do not have that degree of precision. Dairy producers should use SCR to distinguish those sires with the highest probability of conception (greater than or equal to +3) from those you might choose to use more cautiously and conservatively (less than or equal to -3). The rest should be considered average, acceptable fertility sires.

For more information on SCR or sire fertility evaluations visit selectsires.com/UnderstandingAISireFertility.pdf or aipl.arsusda.gov/reference/arr-scr1.htm. ★



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Linear type changes for August Sire Summaries

The Holstein Association introduced a modified genetic evaluation model for the linear type traits with the August evaluations. The new evaluation procedures mean higher STA values and higher type composites for current bulls. On average, Active A.I. sires will increase 0.37 for Udder Composite and 0.33 for Feet & Legs Composite.

Other model changes were made to allow more complete processing of the evaluations. These modifications are similar to the changes made last year for the PTAT evaluations. The new evaluation model improves the stability of type evaluations as bulls add second-crop daughters.