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Current and planned changes in USDA-DHIA genetic evaluations (May 1998)¹

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Change in U.S. officiality of Interbull evaluations

A larger percentage of International Bull Evaluation Service (**Interbull**) evaluations are now considered to be official in the United States. For breeds other than Brown Swiss, an Interbull evaluation is official if it includes information from another country, information from more daughters, and a reliability equal to or higher than the bull's USDA-DHIA reliability and if the USDA-DHIA reliability for the bull is less than 85%. The previous criteria for an Interbull evaluation to be considered official in the United States was a USDA-DHIA reliability less than 80% and an Interbull reliability higher by 5% or more. Requirements for Brown Swiss evaluations have not changed: an Interbull evaluation is considered to be official if its reliability is higher than the USDA-DHIA reliability by 5% or more regardless of the USDA-DHIA reliability.

Bulls with foreign identification included in format-38 file

Among the bulls with information included in the May 1998 format-38 file are five artificial insemination (**AI**) bulls with foreign identification (**ID**) numbers. Format 38 uses the expanded ID system, which is needed to represent the ID information for those bulls. The bulls have country codes of CAN (Canada), NLD (The Netherlands), and NZL (New Zealand). The Canadian bull has an 8-digit ID number. Users of the format-38 file that have not yet implemented the expanded ID system may need to make changes to accommodate the foreign ID numbers.

Frequency of genetic evaluations remains at four per year

In May 1997, the Animal Improvement Programs Laboratory (**AIPL**) began to calculate genetic evaluations every 3 months. Some AI organizations and breed associations were concerned about whether the benefits from the extra evaluations were great enough to offset the extra costs associated with the additional releases. However, in March 1998, the Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding reached a consensus that the additional evaluations should be continued. The Council position agrees with the position of the AIPL research staff. Therefore, the current evaluation schedule (February, May, August, and November) will remain in place. In June 1998, the Interbull Steering Committee decided that Interbull also should change its evaluation release schedule from two to four times annually (February, May, August, and November).

Emphasis directed toward a single reliability for yield

In an attempt to bring uniformity to advertising and to reduce confusion among users, the National Association of Animal Breeders encouraged its members and AIPL to emphasize a single reliability for yield instead of separate reliabilities for milk, fat, and protein. This concept has now been endorsed by the Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding, which recommends that publication of reliabilities for individual yield traits be discontinued by February 1999. In February 1998, AIPL announced that it was supporting this effort by renaming USDA-DHIA reliability for milk-fat-protein dollars to reliability for yield. The separate reliabilities for milk, fat, and protein yields will be discontinued by February 1999 in computer files with USDA-DHIA genetic evaluation information that are formatted for use as printed lists.

¹Update of "Changes in USDA-DHIA genetic evaluations (May 1998)."