



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### NEW DAIRY GENETIC EVALUATIONS RELEASED BY CDCB

**Bowie, Md., August 8, 2017** – New dairy genetic evaluations have been released August 8 by the Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding (CDCB). These triannual releases – in April, August and December – provide the genetic evaluations for individual animals used by dairy producers, genetic suppliers, breed associations and other dairy stakeholders. The CDCB calculates genetic evaluations for four total merit indexes and 35 individual traits as Predicted Transmitting Abilities (PTAs),

A new trait, Gestation Length (GL) for service sires, is available for the first time with the August 2017 evaluation. Gestation Length shows the influence each service sire is expected to have on the number of days his mates carry their calves during their pregnancies.

“The introduction of Gestation Length demonstrates the accelerating trend to develop genetic evaluations for more traits,” stated João Dürr, Chief Executive Officer of the CDCB. “Genomics and the ability to genotype animals have greatly expanded research and development of new traits that can continue to improve the health and productivity of dairy cattle.” Significant research for potential new traits is on-going through collaborative efforts between CDCB, land-grant universities and USDA’s Animal Genomics and Improvement Laboratory (AGIL).

#### **Gestation Length and Other August Changes**

Gestation Length evaluations are available for animals of all dairy breeds, including crossbreds that have usable genotypes. Differences in GL can be used to concentrate calvings in herds with seasonal calving, more accurately schedule dry-off, manage maternity pens, and understand correlated effects of GL on other traits such as calving ease, stillbirth and age at first calving. Key research for the GL trait was conducted by Jan Wright and Paul VanRaden of AGIL, with publication in the [Journal of Dairy Science](#) and [presented](#) at the 2017 American Dairy Science Association meeting. CDCB has prepared a comprehensive and convenient [Trait Reference Sheet](#) to describe GL.



A handful of minor changes were also implemented in the August evaluations to apply recent research and drive continuous improvement within the U.S. evaluation system. These changes are described on the [CDCB website](#) and related to unknown parent group definitions, a correction on two Holstein composite traits used in the merit indexes, a new editing system for calving ease and stillbirth phenotypic data, and the adoption of a rapid computation procedure for Holstein imputation.

#### **Access to Genetic Evaluations**

The CDCB website includes a plethora of dairy genetic summaries, tables and lists, in addition to publicly-available queries on [individual animals](#). The [CDCB site](#) is updated with lists for all sires, elite cows and heifers for net merit, and high-ranking grade cows and heifers, as well as comparative summaries. Further information will be available August 10 at 1 p.m. (EDT) to reflect the status of semen availability for sires in AI (artificial insemination). Additionally, the official CDCB evaluations will

be published in various formats by breed associations, artificial insemination and genetic suppliers, dairy herd information (DHI), dairy magazines and other industry sources.

### **December Preview**

With new innovations in genomics and information systems, it is likely that one or more new traits will be introduced each year. This is evidenced by the new Gestation Length, which follows the introduction of cow livability by CDCB in August 2016. As a result of comprehensive research by CDCB and AGIL, CDCB will launch six new health traits in December 2017 related to hypocalcemia/milk fever, displaced abomasum, ketosis, mastitis, metritis and retained placenta. Research and development focus is centered on traits that demonstrated significant genetic differences and impact the health, productivity and profitability of dairy cattle.

### **Save the Date**

The first chance for in-depth information on the new health traits will be the CDCB annual industry meeting, October 3 during World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wis. Dairy producers and all industry stakeholders are invited to “Discover New Dairy Genetics” during this session from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the Exhibition Hall (Room Mendota 4). The session will feature a producer panel with perspectives on health traits, along with presentations from CDCB and AGIL researchers.

The next triannual evaluations will be December 5, 2017. Mark your 2018 calendars with the release dates of April 3, August 7 and December 4.

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### **About Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding (CDCB)**

The Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding (CDCB), in Bowie, Md., provides premier dairy genetic information services through industry collaboration centered around a mission to help optimize cow health and productivity in herds worldwide. The CDCB drives continuous improvement and maintains the integrity of the world’s largest animal database, building on a quality foundation with more than eight decades of recorded U.S. dairy animal performance. The CDCB is a collaborative effort between four sectors of the U.S. dairy industry: Dairy Records Providers (DRP), Dairy Records Processing Centers (DRPC), National Association of Animal Breeders (NAAB) and Purebred Dairy Cattle Association (PDCA).

### **Photo caption**

A new trait, Gestation Length for service sires, is available for the first time with the August 2017 evaluation. Gestation Length can help concentrate calvings in herds with seasonal programs, more accurately schedule dry-off and manage maternity pens.

*Photo credit: American Jersey Cattle Association.*