

Connecting with Chuck Sattler



Chuck Sattler serves the dairy industry in various capacities – as Chair of National Association of Animal Breeders (NAAB), Secretary of the Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding (CDCB) and Vice President of Genetic Programs for Select Sires, Inc. This month, CDCB Connection visits with Chuck for his viewpoint on evolutions in dairy genetics.

What is the value that DCB provides to dairy producers and the A.I. industry?

There are many ways in which the CDCB delivers value to dairy producers. I'd like to highlight three areas.

First and foremost, the CDCB delivers tremendous value to dairy producers by providing information that allows producers to directly compare the genetic products offered by different breeding companies and helps producers understand the value of the products they are purchasing. This drives competition among breeding companies and ultimately leads to better products at more affordable prices for dairy producers. This is not the case in some other livestock industries, and I'm hopeful that dairy producers appreciate this value and don't take the CDCB services for granted.

Obviously, the delivery of accurate genomic and genetic evaluations is the primary product that CDCB provides, and this is key information to help breeders improve their herds. Whether you are a producer testing your heifers or an A.I. company testing bulls, you can be confident that the information on those young animals is a solid indicator of the performance later in those animals' lives. The track record of CDCB in this area is unmatched.

Finally, the CDCB provides an independent, trusted company where data from across the industry can be consolidated and used in a way that maximizes its power. Genomic evaluations are just one example where sharing data and using it collectively provides significantly more benefit than that same data would have provided if it was used independently. The CDCB was ahead of its time in harnessing the power of big data. The value of this will only increase in the future. The CDCB is actively looking at new opportunities where we can bring industry data together for the benefit of dairy producers.

How do CDCB evaluations impact the marketability of U.S. genetics?

The CDCB evaluations are viewed as credible and are held in high regard around the world. This is in large part due to the long track record of USDA* - and now CDCB – of providing evaluations that stand the test of time and deliver results consistent with predictions. But it's not just that. It also is the whole network that CDCB represents. It's the quality of records gathered from many large herds where skilled producers are intensively managing the performance of those cows. It's the vibrant breeding industry in the U.S. and North America where breeders are pushing to make genetic progress with each mating they make. Because of all these things, when an animal makes it to the top of the CDCB evaluations it has instant credibility and value around the world.

How do you describe the opportunities in genetic improvement for health traits?

The industry continues to evolve, and we all appreciate the need to continue to improve the health and well-being of our cattle. As the consumer focus of what we do on the farm intensifies, we should strive to do more to prevent disease so that we can do less treatment of disease. The new CDCB genetic evaluations for health traits provide us with new opportunities in this area. I am particularly excited about the availability of genetic evaluations for mastitis resistance. Mastitis remains a very costly disease and one of the major reasons why cows leave the herd. PTAs for Somatic Cell Score (SCS) have been helpful in reducing mastitis but not as effective as we think. I'm convinced that using the direct evaluation for mastitis resistance along with SCS will help the industry make more consistent progress in reducing mastitis. PTAs for mastitis resistance can be a game changer in the breeding industry.

*USDA = United States Department of Agriculture