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SELECTIONS

LEAVING A LEGACY, NEAL GROTSUN RETIRES

After 38 years of service to our members, Neal Grotsun is retiring as the genetic programs manager at Minnesota/Select Sires Co-op, Inc. Neal was hired by former Minnesota/Select Sires General Manager, Lyle Kruse in June 1984 as a sales representative for north central Minnesota. He also worked as a part-time Select Mating Service® (SMS®) genetic consultant for Select Sires Inc. in the north central region of the country. When Minnesota/Select Sires Co-op, Inc. was formed in 1986, Neal's primary responsibilities evolved to a full-time genetic consultant role covering the cooperative territory. He coordinated the Program for Genetic Advancement™ (PGA™) and daughter photography.

As his career advanced, he witnessed many changes in the dairy industry. At the start, linear evaluations were new to the industry and were being introduced through the SMS program. Later, pedigree mating was established and added as a new tool. Most recently, SMS was rebuilt to factor in health and fertility traits. With new technologies like genomic testing, matings have become more accurate and SMS



genetic consultants can help herds elevate their genetics to extreme levels. Neal worked through each of these changes and learned along the way so that he could be the best resource for his customers.

Throughout his career, Neal worked with more than 1,000 herds providing SMS consultation. In 1992, he was honored as the SMS Genetic Consultant of the Year, an award given to outstanding consultants who have contributed to the growth and success of Select Sires Inc, and their customers.

Chris Sigurdson, general manager, said "You couldn't ask for a better employee and teammate than Neal. He is always a professional and 100% dedicated to the success of our farmer-owners. His passion for mating cows that farmers' desire is unmatched. He's passed on this steady, always-do-the-right-thing approach to everyone he's influenced. We've all been honored to work alongside Neal Grotsun."

While Neal is passionate about genetics and cattle, he never lost sight of the heart of the dairies he worked with – the families. He built relationships with all members of the family and encouraged kids to get involved with 4-H. He has been a strong supporter of youth activities, volunteering at local, county and state 4-H dairy shows. He is also asked to judge county dairy shows throughout Minnesota.

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Leif Annexstad joined the Minnesota/Select Sires team in June 2022 and following Neal Grotsun's retirement, he will assume most of Neal's responsibilities. The primary focus of Leif's role is to help herds achieve their goals by adopting the best mating and reproductive strategies. He will work with dairies to perform genetic audits and utilize Select Sires' many tools and services, including proprietary inventory management calculators, Select R^ePRO Analysis™, the redesigned StrataGEN® program, Select Mating Service (SMS) and Select Reproductive Solutions® (SRS®). Leif will analyze on-farm herd management software reports to uncover profit opportunities and serve as a trusted advisor to dairy customers throughout the Minnesota/Select Sires region.

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GENETIC CONSULTANT Q&A



JENNIFER BRONNER



KIM DEFRANG



LEIF ANNEXSTAD

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I enjoy building relationships with my customers and the opportunity to challenge their strategies and help them boost their farm to the next level. I enjoy walking through the barn with my customers and listening to their feedback, knowing that they are happy with the conformation and performance of their cows.

My passion is helping dairy producers accomplish their goals and making them more profitable and that's the purpose of my role! I also love being on farms and looking at cows.

Since stepping into this role, I have enjoyed meeting producers and visiting their herds. I like learning which tools and services they rely on from Select Sires and how our cooperative is setting them up for a bright future.

How do you add value to your customers' genetic strategies?

I provide a customized approach to each herd. From sire selection to running inventory calculators to incorporating genomic data, the strategies that I develop align with the goals of each herd. At Select Sires, we have lots of tools and each farm calls for a different combination.

I listen to each customer's goals, as well as their challenges, and then recommend the best sires, herd health products and programs to meet their needs. Depending on the herd, I might compile sire lists, prepare breeding strategies, manage inventory calculators and assign matings, along with genomic testing and submissions.

I provide a well-rounded approach based on the goals of each herd. Genetics have always been our bread and butter and a top priority to our customers, but Select Sires also offers a brilliant portfolio of tools and programs. I'm very skilled at analyzing data, comparing against industry trends and preparing strategies that bring the most value to dairies.

Which NxGEN® sire will make the biggest impact on the herds you're working with and why?

7H016282 MIMIC has been very popular among my herds. He combines extreme components, health traits, positive fertility traits and offers an outcross pedigree. His linear adds strength, set to the rear leg, and teat length – high priority improvements for many of the herds I work with.

One of my favorite NxGEN sires from the December sire summary is 14H016082 FRAMPTON. He's a 7H015167 GAMEDAY son out of a 7H014229 TAHITI dam. My customers love their TAHITI daughters, and I don't think you can go wrong with TAHITI in a pedigree. FRAMPTON sires a medium frame with some slope to the rump and set to the leg. He's also designated RobotPRO® and breeds strong attachments with teats closer to the midline of the udder along with good milking speed and temperament. Not only is FRAMPTON a solid production sire, but he's a terrific health and fitness sire with +1,176 HHP\$™, +1,269 DWP\$®, +1,072 NM\$ and +3057 GTPI®.

7H015977 HAYK is one of my favorite NxGEN sires in today's lineup. HAYK provides a balance of production and health, with strong numbers for Daughter Pregnancy Rate (DPR) and Somatic Cell Score (SCS). He ranks second at Select Sires for Herd Health Profit Dollars™ (HHP\$) and is over +1,000 for both Dairy Wellness Profit Index® (DWP\$) and Net Merit (NM\$). His linear is spot-on to create a successful commercial cow and early numbers show strong semen fertility. ♦

ABILITY OF Ca3 BIOFRESH BOLUS TO REDUCE SUBCLINICAL HYPOCALCEMIA

Despite the wide-spread adoption of negative-dietary cation-anion differential close-up diets, researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Cornell University estimate 25-50% of the newly freshened second lactation and greater cows will experience subclinical hypocalcemia (SCH) in the critical first 12 hours after freshening. To be clear, the SCH cows do not require IV Calcium (Ca), rather their ionized Ca (iCa) levels are 1.0 mmol/L blood or lower and they are at greater risk of increased inflammation as a nutrient drain, which results in lower first service conception rates and a greater risk of culling.

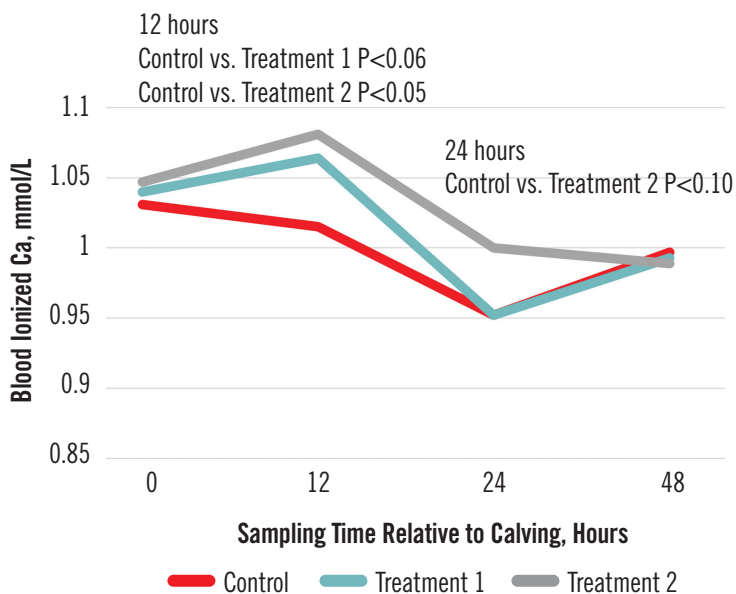
An independent veterinary research company evaluated the Ca3 BioFresh® bolus at a 6,000-cow dairy utilizing a close-up ration with a commercial anionic product adjusted to maintain urine pH of 6.0 – 6.5. The researchers blocked by parity 105 second and greater lactation cows and then randomly assigned the animals to one of three treatments:

- (1) negative control with no supplemental Ca at calving (control)
- (2) one Ca3 bolus within 3 hours of calving (Treatment 1)
- (3) one Ca3 bolus within 3 hours of calving and a second Ca3 bolus within approximately 12 hours of calving (Treatment 2).

All cows were enrolled in the study between May 5-15, 2022. Blood samples were collected from the tail vein using published research and analytical procedures at approximately 0-, 12-, 24- and 48-hours post-calving from each cow.

At the critical 12 hours post-calving measurement, the Treatment 1 and Treatment 2 cows had greater iCa than the control cows, and the two Ca3 treatments were similar for iCa (Figure 1). The SCH prevalence (blood iCa < 1.00 mmol/L) was lower for the Treatment 1 (64%) and Treatment 2 (48%) cows compared to the control cows (73%). The control and Treatment 1 cows were similar for iCa at 24 hours. However, the

Figure 1. Effect of Ca3 BioFresh Bolus Administration on Blood Ionized Calcium Levels of Newly Freshened Second Lactation and Greater Holstein Cows



Treatment 2 cows, having received the second Ca3 bolus, exhibited a greater iCa than the other two groups. The SCH prevalence was lower for the Treatment 1 (64%) and Treatment 2 (48%) cows compared to the control cows (73%).

In summary, the research showed that providing a Ca3 bolus at calving reduced SCH prevalence at 12 hours and 24 hours post-calving. ♦

LEAVING A LEGACY, CONTINUED

Neal and his wife, Cindy, have two children and are looking forward to his retirement. Having more freedom to go fishing, hunting, travel and volunteer are a few activities for which he is excited.

Minnesota/Select Sires is proud of Neal's accomplishments throughout his long career and his SMS customers are happy with the results of his work to guide them in making profitable dairy cattle. Thank you for your commitment to the cooperative and best wishes on a long and happy retirement!

Q&A with Neal Grotsun

What is the best genetic strategic advice you could give to your customers?

Each farm has different goals for their future. I find that a majority of the farms I work with are focused on moderate stature with adequate strength, good feet and legs, strong udder attachments as well as ideal teat placement and length. Today's herds are also interested in health and fertility traits. Herd Health Profit Dollars™ (HHP\$™) will be a growing tool to create healthy, longer-living cattle in their herds. Components will also play a big role in the future.

How do you see technology benefiting genetic development?

Genomic testing is growing and we have options to meet our customers' needs. As a support person on dairies, using the data is vital to gain a return on investment on genomic testing. We will see huge increases in the accuracy of the SMS program by utilizing genomic matings.



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FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER Chris Sigurdson, Minnesota/Select Sires Co-op, Inc.



As we enter into our second year of sharing resources between Minnesota/Select Sires Co-op, Inc. and COBA/Select Sires, Inc., I'm continuing to focus on our customer-owner-members and my colleagues! As a cooperative, serving our customers and supporting the people of our organization is my priority. Together, these groups of people are working hard to feed the world.

From our A.I. technicians that are helping to create the next generation to the office teams executing business responsibilities, the sales teams that are building trust by advancing genetics and the trusted advisors analyzing data and preparing solutions – we all fulfill a purpose larger than ourselves and aim to support our dairy and beef producers in a safe, effective, responsible and sustainable way. Our mission is consistent across every business area I've traveled this past year and it's much to be proud of.

Our customer-driven culture is a distinct competitive advantage that our cooperative holds; one we're constantly sharpening so that we're laser-focused on advancing. When we truly listen to our members and understand their needs and challenges, we can bring them the right solutions at the right time, every time. I'm convinced we can continue to be that consistent source of value for our customers.

While we work toward our growth ambitions for the future, we also need to ground ourselves in the journey these two companies have been on for a combined 112 years. Our rich history began with a simple promise to our customers, suppliers and communities: that we provide Select Sires genetics. Over a combined century later, that promise remains to identify and advance the best genetics for your herd. Our local cooperative approach allows us to understand, tailor and deliver customized solutions. And perhaps most notably, we can never emphasize enough the importance of having the right people on the team.

We must put people first and the company will follow. In everything we do, we challenge our team and members to set bold ambitions. Growth and change can be scary, but we'll do it anyway so that we achieve goals for our customers, cooperative and communities. Working together, we can build on our cooperative's many strengths, position members and ourselves for performance and drive even greater impact in the years to come.

So today, as we begin the 2023 chapter together, I am grateful for the opportunity to be with all of you. ♦

Cooperatively,
Chris Sigurdson