

# News Release



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Select Sires Introduces HealthMark™: A New Tool to Breed Healthier Cows**

**PLAIN CITY, Ohio — April 5, 2007** — Through advances in DNA technology and a synergistic partnership with IGENITY®, a business unit of Merial, Select Sires is proud to become the first A.I. organization to designate a category of sires, called HealthMark™, which combines predicted transmitting ability (PTA) data for health and fertility traits with genetic marker information.

Dairy producers know that the key to improving the bottom line is keeping cows healthy and in the herd. That's why producers are more often considering genetic values for somatic cell score (SCS), daughter pregnancy rate (DPR) and productive life (PL) when choosing their A.I. sires. However, due to low reliability until second-crop data is available, these traits have not always been easy to predict or sort for — until now.

"To help dairy producers zero in on balanced health-trait bulls, Select Sires has developed HealthMark as an indicator of sires that transmit improved performances in SCS, DPR and PL," said Chuck Sattler, vice president and manager of genetic programs for Select Sires. "HealthMark is a unique and powerful tool that identifies positive health trait bulls sooner than ever before and allows producers to meet their breeding goals faster."

"We commend Select Sires for taking a leadership position in helping producers apply information from the comprehensive IGENITY profile in an extremely meaningful way," said Dr. Stewart Bauck, executive director, IGENITY. "Regardless of the goals of their herd, all dairy producers can benefit from having additional information on bulls and females to help make more progress in the areas of health and fitness traits."

### **Utilizing the Comprehensive IGENITY Profile**

The comprehensive IGENITY profile now includes DNA markers for PL and dairy form (DF), both leading indicators of cow longevity. Bulls at Select Sires have been analyzed for these important traits using the IGENITY profile. HealthMark sires must score above average in all three health trait areas (SCS, DPR and PL) to qualify for this designation. Data from the bull's IGENITY profile, which includes DNA marker analyses for PL and DF, provides extra information about each sire's ability to transmit positive health traits.

"The challenge with health traits has always been low reliability," Sattler said. "The DNA markers in the comprehensive IGENITY profile are particularly valuable for these low reliability traits, meaning producers can select HealthMark sires with more confidence."

Dr. Bauck added that the information from IGENITY also can help producers on the female side.

"The new IGENITY profile provides a viable alternative for early and accurate predication of cow longevity," he explained. "As part of the comprehensive IGENITY profile, this inside information is available to producers at a cost-effective price and all from a single DNA sample."

### **The Numbers Don't Lie**

HealthMark sires lead the way for health and fertility traits. The correlation between SCS and clinical mastitis is about 60 percent with lower SCS values indicating less mastitis. According to the Holstein active-A.I. sire list, the average SCS score for the breed is 2.94, while the HealthMark Holstein sires average 2.75 SCS. HealthMark sires, on average, also score 2.0 points better than that of an active Holstein sire for PL. The average PL score for HealthMark bulls is +3.0 while the average for the breed is +0.9. Sires carrying the HealthMark designation also excel in DPR, averaging +1.1, while the average DPR rate for Holsteins is -0.3.

### **Put HealthMark and the IGENITY Profile to Work in Your Herd**

To put the comprehensive IGENITY profile to work in your herd, contact your Select Sires sales representative. Select Sires' professional Select Mating Service™ (SMS™) evaluators also are available to help you identify bulls that meet your breeding goals. To locate a professional in your area or learn more about HealthMark, including a full listing of qualifying sires, visit [www.selectsires.com](http://www.selectsires.com). To learn more about the comprehensive IGENITY profile, visit [www.IGENITY.com](http://www.IGENITY.com) or call 1-877-IGENITY.

Based in Plain City, Ohio, Select Sires Inc., is North America's largest A.I. organization and is comprised of 10 farmer-owned and -controlled cooperatives. As the industry leader, it provides highly fertile semen as well as excellence in service and programs to achieve its basic objective of supplying dairy and beef producers with North America's

best genetics at a reasonable price.

Merial is a world-leading, innovation-driven animal health company, providing a comprehensive range of products to enhance the health, well-being and performance of a wide range of animals. Merial employs approximately 5,000 people and operates in more than 150 countries worldwide. Its 2006 sales were nearly \$2.2 billion. Merial Limited is a joint venture between Merck & Co., Inc. and sanofi-aventis. For more information, please see [www.merial.com](http://www.merial.com).

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Source: 2/07 U.S. Department of Agriculture, Interbull and Holstein Association USA.  
All average calculations based on Holstein Association USA's Active A.I. Sire List.

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