

10 Questions for Jan Schilder

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In 1950, U.S. dairy breeder Bill Weeks created the aAa® analysis system. Since then, interest in aAa® has steadily increased. HI posed 10 questions to Dutch aAa® analyzer Jan Schilder, one of 25 analyzers world-wide, who has been working with aAa® since 1990.

📞 BERT WESSELDIJK 📷 HAN HOPMAN

1 Can you communicate in 2 or 3 sentences what aAa® stands for? What is the basis?

'We look at the relationship between all parts of an animal and find the causes of problems. Using the 6 groups of aAa® qualities, farmers can select bulls that will prevent these problems in the next generation.'

2 How many aAa® analysis are done annually around the world and primarily in which countries?

'In 2014, we analysed 220,529 cows and 3,442 bulls, in the US, Canada, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand and 21 countries in Europe.'

3 Is the number of farmers working with aAa® increasing or decreasing?

'The number is continually increasing.'

4 What is the most prominent reason for farmers to begin with aAa®?

'Farmers want to breed better functioning animals, and we are able to explain that first of all you need to create better form in the animal before you can achieve better function that farmers need in a good milk cow.'

5 Do all AI sires world-wide have an aAa® code?

'All AIs in the previously mentioned countries have their bulls analysed by aAa®.'

6 What impact has the breakthrough of genomics had on aAa®?

'Genomics is one method of evaluation. It indicates how good or poor an animal is. Nothing

has changed for us as for each individual animal we indicate what is required to create balanced offspring. In the breeding world, there is too much talk about what sires do, while the female line is equally important. Everything the farmer gets for offspring is still the result of a mating.'

7 Can the use of genomic sires combine well with aAa®?

'Yes. Just like every other method of evaluation, farmers will always get the best results when they select the best sires available and subsequently use them according to aAa®. To have a cow that functions better than her dam, her sire needs to add specific qualities to the mating which will cause the offspring to have better form. And better form always leads to better function.'

8 As an aAa® analyzer, what is your perspective on developments in the Holstein breed?

'In recent years, there is a one-sided trend towards the aAa® qualities "Tall" (2), "Open" (3) and "Strong" (4) in breeding. The total indexes in the US and Europe have the tendency to evaluate these types of animals more favourably. One-sided selection always leads to extremes and functional problems in animals. Experience has taught us this. Everyone involved in cattle improvement should have the goal of creating animals with optimal form so that they can function as normally as possible.'

9 In practice, it turns out to be difficult to find sires with the qualities 5&6; what do these sires provide?

'The aAa® quality "Smooth" (5) brings more width, stability, and capacity for eating and provides more space for the internal organs. "Style" (6) brings attentive character, central thurls, and solid bones. And "Dairy" (1) offers the feminine qualities that provide the natural will to milk.'

10 Will there be sufficient diversity in Holstein breeding to allow for good use of aAa® into the future?

'Farmers will always be looking for bulls that can help breed better functioning animals. Experience shows that it is often farmers who provide precisely what the population needs, and in that way maintain and/or restore the natural balance between form and function.' ●

