

Around the Clock with ... Ado If Langhout

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Adolf Langhout is celebrating the 25th anniversary of A.L.H. Genetics on June 14 and 15. Langhout built his business around the imports of high-quality Holstein embryos from the US. These embryos resulted in the proven bulls Duplex, Danillo, Goldday, and Jotan as well as a large number of brood cows including the foundation dams of Snowrush and Snowfever, the former top two Dutch DNA-tested bulls, and the grand-dam of the European Reserve Champion Southland Alex Carola 11. As partner in Quality Genes, Langhout at the time invested the then unprecedented amount of 100,000 guilders in Delta Eugenie. The Mascot daughter went on to become the grand-dam of the proven bulls Emir and Stylist, and most of all the successful sire of sons Mascol. Langhout is placing a stamp on the Holstein population. For HIPlus (Dutch HI supplement), that's reason to invite him for an extensive interview. On Wednesday 27 March this editor travelled to Damwoude for a 24-hour interview; a first!

12.00

Arrival at office "Yn'e Fûke" or "In the pod": Langhout is on the phone with one of the dairy farmers he visited one day earlier with foreign visitors. There's lots of time therefore to shake hands with office staff



Replying to emails every day.

Gerbrich Jousma, Froukje van der Veen, and export manager Wiebe Put. Langhout finishes his conversation and extends a warm welcome. 'Do you want coffee?' We seat ourselves at a long table. Not much later Arjan Werkhoven, who is responsible for looking after the herd as well as the sale of natural service bulls, joins us. And then WWS representative Hans Boschma walks in too for a cup of coffee. 'It is like

The trophy cupboard full of awards from the Noord-Friesland Show.



a stopping place,' says Langhout who confirms that Damwoude has quite a lot of inhabitants. 'The village has core activities for 10,000 people, which makes it just as important as Dokkum. Langhout was born in 1968 in Bennekom in Gelderland and 7 years later moved to Damwoude in Friesland with his parents. 'I am totally at home here. At the start of A.L.H. Genetics, I had to travel a

lot to build my network. Now I am in touch with so many dairy herds and AI-studs that I am best off working from the office. This is also possible because I think mutual trust is the foundation of my business relationships. The dairy farmers I supply with genetics are also the farmers we want to return to in order to market bulls, embryos and genetics. I like building business relationships with dairy farmers who like to milk great cows, have a planned approach to investing in genetics, and can cope with disappointments.

13.00

'Osberver's breeding values should work out in April won't they?' Boschma confirms and leaves. Langhout explains how he makes combinations. 'This is a very fast process. I have the pattern of the cow in my head and know her pedigree. Next I take the bull ranking and look for a matching bull: this one, that one or that one? Sometimes I know within 5 minutes.' Langhout maintains intensive telephone communications with breeders. 'I speak to tens of them every week. It is important for breeders to use the right bulls. This is how they keep interesting genetics in the herd. People succumb easily to using inconspicuous bulls. That's too bad because many generations of genetics are lost.' Langhout is sometimes irritated by the lack of breeding intelligence at AI-studs. 'They are too much involved with bulls from their own breeding program and cows from their own breeding zone.' At Dutch AIs in particular he would like to see more ambition. 'I think discussions about "normal farmer cows" are intensely sad. I like talking about great cows, or preferably about elite cows. Aiming for the first place like Olympic Champions like Epke Zonderland and Sven Kramer do; that's what I miss in the Dutch breeding industry. Accountants repeatedly point out breeding costs but never talk about breeding turnovers. This is just like advising dairy farmers to seed their land with weeds. The upcoming removal of quota is perfect for good breeding. Dairy farmers will be increasingly focusing on revenues: Definitely for daily milk production per stall.'



The six donors are ready for another day.

13.39

This requires concentration; Langhout is a fast speaker! And while still at the lunch table: 'Mascol is doing quite well as sire of sons but does not sire special cows. He does sire good farmer cows.' Langhout laughs. He is not quick to praise bulls. 'None of the O-Man sons equal their sire. Take Man-O-Man for instance. Not a bad bull but the one time I see a wide daughter and the next a frail one: Or one with a sloping rump and then next one with high pins. Real top bulls are only rarely matched by their sons. This was the case with Durham too. His son Damion transmits better type but you can only use him on angular cows.' About the direction of breeding programs: 'The breeding programs have entered a race for the bulls with the top DNA total index while dairy farmers want bulls of the Leadman, Rudolph, and Mr. Sam kind: Bulls whose daughters have proven to stay productive for a long time.' On the other side, Langhout recognizes the practical possibilities of using DNA-tested bulls. 'As commercial dairy farmer, I would prefer to use young bulls from the good and frequently made combination of Planet x Shottle rather than a mediocre proven bull. Genomics are an excellent selection tool as long as you make comparisons within the same blood combination. If not, you are

comparing apples with pears.' Then we end up discussing the last European Championship in Fribourg. 'Last week at least 3 Germans told me they thought it was very positive for the Netherlands to be represented with cows. They were also very positive about the way the Dutch team presented itself.' Langhout imported the BW Marshall grand-dam of the European Reserve Champion, Southland Alex Carola 11 VG-89, and was closely involved with developing this cow family. 'This Alexander heifer stood out right after calving. I strongly pushed for her to be exhibited at the EC. Of course the Netherlands should be there with cows! What would we think if the Dutch soccer team would not go to the EC? The Netherlands is an export nation of agricultural products. Cattle are a part of this. The booth can still be improved so much during the next EC, for instance with "Frau Antje" who distributed small blocks of cheese of Friesland Campina in the Holland Holstein House.'

15.30

'I always eat my sandwiches during work.' In Langhout's kitchen there is a photo of one cow: Markwell Durham Daisy EX-92, the grand-dam of Danillo and Goldday.



Undoubtedly his barn favorite: Durham Adina EX-90.



A nice Guthrie son from Wargo-Acres Blton Mopsie EX-92.

16.51

Gerbrich asks Langhout about an animal for which a sample has been submitted for DNA testing but is no longer alive. 'How many animals does A.L.H. test for genomics every month?' That varies from tens to hundreds sometimes. On the one side there is considerable administration involved, but on the other side the tests do produce results. From a Red Holstein donor, for instance, the first sons ranked no higher than 115 gRZG. However, we continued to test sons and the fourth had a gRZG of no less than 140! And here genomics has proven its worth for breeding.'

17.05

Gerbrich and Froukje head home. At the same time, Mrs. Langhout, Adolf's mother, arrives for the daily cleaning round of the tip-top office. 'Adolf had toy cows in his room as a child. That's how he started. In Damwoude we came to live close to a farm which became his domain.' And not much later she adds: 'after his first trip to California, Adolf came home with 6 rolls of photos. We were looking

forward to the landscapes he had seen, but the photos only showed udders he had photographed.'

18.16

Mrs. Langhout heads home. Her son calls to the US: 'Adolf Langhout: What's happening there?'

18.30

Langhout is ferociously typing on his keyboard. 'I type so hard my keyboard is worn out.' Not much later there is music from his office. 'I have searched for a new one on the Internet which I am now ordering. I am on hold. Shall we go have dinner in Dokkum?'



Nine-thirty in the morning: Time for coffee with the employees.

19.05

Before heading out to Dokkum, Langhout takes a look in the old barn. At the left are 6 mature embryo donors, and on the right are some heifers and tens of bulls which will almost all be sold as natural service bulls.' Langhout points out two nice white bulls, full brothers from the combination of Guthrie x Wargo-Acres Blton Mopsie EX-92. 'Both have a gRZG of around 130. The AIs think this is too low, though more dairy farmers need this kind of bull that excels for size and dairy strength. If DNA technology had been discovered earlier, no Durham sons would ever have been sampled.' One of the donors is Baxter Lila VG-87, a daughter of Comestar Goldwyn Lilac VG-89. 'Look at how deep her ribs are, and how alert she is. She eats and at the same time keeps an eye on everything.' The first pen houses Langhout's barn favorite, Durham Adina EX-90, from the family of Atwood. 'Adina's dam is Kingstead Skychief Adeen EX-94. Well, this is Adeen II; she has exactly the same head.' Adina excels in user-friendliness. 'Just look at her

pen. She is one of the few cows that keeps her stall clean. She only has 1300 gTPI, but that doesn't bother me. With this kind of wide cow I can make great combinations. We have flushed her three times with Atwood already.'

20.08

Arrival at Restaurant De Posthoorn located along the canal. 'Dokkum looks like Amsterdam. Foreigners think this is a beautiful city.' The waiter is quite sure he will be serving this regular client a steak. Langhout has headed his company for 25 years. Does he not miss a business partner to exchange ideas with? 'No because I am quite consistent myself. Breeding requires you not to deviate too much from your fixed path. Dairy farmers require a new

generation of cows that are at least as good as the previous one. If you succeed in this, you are doing really well in breeding already.' Talking about his own direction. While Dutch sire analysts have been travelling to America searching for donors without preferential treatment, Langhout signed many contracts at Ron-Nan and S-F-L Holsteins, a herd in which every two-year-old

seemed to get a high score and produce at least 13,500 kg with high percentages. 'This herd worked with animals from strong cow families that had proven their worth across



Wyandottes, Langhout's favorite chickens.



Langhout points out a young Sudan daughter.

America. They for instance had Prices Chiefs Bess VG-86, who became the grand-dam of Mtoto. I disregarded the high performance of the two-year-olds. I thought mainly it was important which cow families they worked with and that these had good results all over America: Just like the Delias at Regancrest did at a later stage.' About today's Holstein breeding: 'The herds of De-Su, Elite Dairy Genomics and the nucleus breeding program of Select Sires, produce more embryo pregnancies per year than all of the Netherlands combined. The IVP station Trans Ova Genetics in Iowa has 8000 beef cows ready as recipients.' In this context the possibilities in the Netherlands are very limited according to Langhout. 'We are currently in talks about establishing a raising center where commercial dairy farmers have their heifers raised. These heifers are then used as recipients and will return to their owners after calving.' We then make a switch to Kamps-Hollow Altitude RC EX-95, the dam of the bulls Jotan and Acme and the influential brood cow Apple EX-95. 'When Altitude was 13 years old, she recently produced one of the top DNA-tested red Alchemy sons as well as one of the top young red factor bulls. That is the strength of a good pedigree.' Loud music coming from the ceiling is by Al Jarreau. It is time to go back.

23.00

Back in the office; time for beer and anecdotes. 'I have always had a lot of respect for breeding passion and the entrepreneurial spirit of the sire analysts from the east of Germany because they had to start from scratch. The energy level of Edwin Brade, the former sire analyst of Masterrind, seemed indispensable. With him I visited 25 herds in one day, my record. It was only at the end of the day with one address to visit that even Brade wore down.' Langhout sold the bulls Pretin, Lucifer, Jonk, Alves, and Jotan to Masterrind for instance: And Björk, a Bolton son from the Barnkamper Marilyn family. 'I purchased his foundation dam as an embryo in the US.'



Overview of the barn that houses the youngest heifer and bull calves.

24.00

In his carefully compiled archive, Langhout is looking for old American herd-book papers. 'Funny. There is a note on this one. I only rarely make notes. Even when I am on a procurement trip in the US for ten days, I barely make any notes. The combinations, the number of embryos, the prices; I write all the arrangements down as soon as I am home.' The last conversation is about the usefulness of progeny groups. 'Organizing progeny groups should be forbidden. It is much better to work with the numbers on paper unless they are sufficiently reliable and the pedigree is great.'

08.15

Everything is still as quiet at the office as in the barns.

08.30

Gerbrich arrives. Five minutes later Langhout comes in and sits down behind his computer. 'Take a sandwich if you want.'

09.05

HI photographer Han Hopman arrives and creates a new dynamic: 'Good morning Adolf. Have you lost weight?'

09.40

Coffee time, also for Johannes Rosier and the brothers Fije and Tsjerk van der Meer, three young men who help on a regular basis in taking care of the animals including

Langhout's Wyandotte chickens. 'We start with our weekend chores on Friday so we have more time to drink coffee on Saturday. This way we keep things social for the guys,' says Langhout who has planned a visit to the dairy of Taeke Feenstra and his son-in-law Lieuwe-Jan Sangers in Kollum this morning. 'I have successfully sold Lawn Boy embryos from Golden-Oaks Perk Rae-Red P EX-90 to this herd.' But first we will be shooting photos at the office and in



In discussion with Taeke Feenstra and his son-in-law Lieuwe-Jan Sangers.

the barns starting with the noisy Wyandottes. 'The Columbias are the kindest. The partridge-colored are closer to nature and wilder.' Moving on to the Holstein department and we also take a look at the new barn that houses the youngest generation

of heifer and bull calves. Here we see many promising animals like an O-Style from Whittier-Farms Angelina VG-88 (Big Time x Ms Atlees Gold Abigail EX-91) or a Sudan heifer from a Freddie daughter from Regancrest Chassity EX-92. A little further there is a Jordan daughter from World Champion Harvue Roy Frosty EX-97. 'The boys will take her to the show this summer.'

11.37

In Kollum, Taeke Feenstra welcomes us to his herd of 60 milking cows. He then shows his embryo donor Noard Easter Red Lawn-Red P VG-86 and her two fantastic Jotan daughters, the oldest one producing 37 kg per day from a wonderful udder. Langhout also takes a satisfied look at a VG-86 Planet two-year-old from Farnear-TBR Asset Absolute VG-87 (Bolton x Shottle). From her, Feenstra shows us some appealing daughters including an Iota at 2300 gTPI that has been flushed for Italy and will soon be induced again. Before leaving, Langhout walks to the newly born calves. From the youngest Jotan, red & white calves have been born by Dakker RC and Snow RC. Langhout feels their heads out. 'Both are probably horned.' We say good-bye and drive back to the



Taeke Feenstra, dairy farmer at Kollum, tells us about his cattle.

office. 'This herd shows you can make a good return on investment from genetics. From the Lawn Boy, we have already sold more than 50 embryos, and this generates a nice amount of extra revenue.' By the time Langhout parks his car in the garage it is 12.15; the 24 hours went by very quickly indeed. ■

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