

Siemers Holsteins: The Unique Combination of Elite Indexes, Lifetime Productions, and Conformation

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In recent years, Siemers Holsteins has expanded steadily to 3200 milking cows today.

Just in 2019 alone, no less than 16 Holstein cows were able to pass the special milestone of 300,000 lb (136,360 kg) milk at Siemers Holsteins. A herd in which the number of cows >100,000 kg milk (220,000 lb) is unparalleled world-wide. At the same time: in the recent April release, Siemers bull Renegade Rozline captured the nr.1 position in Canada. While in the US, the daughter proven Siemers bull Runaway made a significant jump, climbing to 2647 TPI. He – just like Rozline – originates from the powerful Roz family, which has performed

splendidly for generations. Side by side with various other families, who together provide a remarkable genetic level in the Siemers herd. High time for an extensive HI report.

JAN BIERMA / HAN HOPMAN

Where shall we begin? A truly elite farm like Siemers offers numerous starting points. Do we begin with an overview of the impressive list of Siemers bulls that are being used everywhere? Or do we begin with an analysis of the notable lifetime productions attained by Siemers' stars? Or should we look at the powerful show arsenal – considered a hobby, but nevertheless significant – that Siemers houses? Or should we first turn to the impressive and successful cow families with which the Siemers work? No. First we will go back in time for a moment. To the very first job of Dan Siemers, who operates Siemers Holsteins together with his brother Paul (also involved in both management and breeding) and wife Janina (elected as “Dairy Woman of the Year” in Madison in 2019). ‘I started out as a semen salesman at Sire Power,’ tells Dan. ‘I sold semen from bulls like Ned Boy, Tesk, Oscar, Mountain and Curious. There I quickly learned: people want the complete story. You need to ensure that you always have something for everyone. Then you can accomplish something everywhere. In addition, I learned: never give up! Because competition in the semen market was really fierce.’ Those lessons led to the broad breeding goal at Siemers. ‘Our goal is simple: breed better cows, for every dairy farmer. Better cows simply provide better results.’

STREET LENGTH

Better cows is certainly the case at Siemers Holsteins. Proof is abundant, but here we select this result: in 2017, Siemers made global news as the biggest source of Holsteins with high lifetime productions. Don't be shocked: no less than 390 (!) Holsteins had passed (until 2017) the 100,000 kg milestone (220,000 lb) at Siemers! As such, Siemers had a street-length lead on the ranking of 100,000 kg Holsteins, with Summitholm in Canada taking second place with 119 Holsteins. Since 2017, Siemers has continued undeterred on the path of sensational lifetime productions. Another example: up until 2017, they had 16 Holsteins that had produced 300,000 lb (136,360 kg). In 2018, that number nearly doubled, with 12 new Holsteins >300,000 lb. And in 2019, another 16 were added, so that in the meantime a total of 44 Holsteins have passed 300,000 lb! And yet another statistic: just in 2019 alone, 77 Holsteins at Siemers passed the milestone of 250,000 lb (113,635 kg). (Note: since the US works with lb, here figures like

250,000 lb and 300,000 lb are being used, instead of 100,000 kg elsewhere.) Of course, along with that, it must be noted that the total number of milking cows at Siemers is large: 3200 head. But even so, the figures are impressive, since comparing it to a herd with 100 cows translates into 2.4 cows passing 250,000 lb each year!

How can so many Holsteins reach such high lifetime productions? Dan first mentions the team of employees. 'We are delighted to work with an excellent team of people, with many who have worked for us for a very long time. That is extremely important.' At the same time, Dan says: 'We don't really focus on high lifetime productions, and we don't keep our cows around for that reason. Nevertheless, the situation has changed. We used to sell a lot of milking two-year-olds, but the market has changed drastically. We are now raising fewer heifers, with beef-on-dairy currently being used on 30% of our herd. As such, fewer heifers are coming into production, so there is more space for older cows to continue.'



(<https://digitaal.holsteininternational.com/get-image/8924>)

Dan Siemers: 'I would rather talk about "performance" than "production". The modern cow needs to do so much more than just produce.'

[Terug naar artikelen \(/nl/articles\)](#)

EXCELLENCE

What does the high lifetime producer look like at Siemers? ‘All kinds of cows can do this. Excellent cows, but also GP cows. Big cows, and more medium cows. We have learned a lot from this,’ says Dan. ‘We often think that we know what a high lifetime producer needs to look like, but let the cows tell us that themselves. We often think cows need to have low pins, but frequently, cows with high pins get far as well!’

Another aspect: are the high lifetime productions at Siemers at the cost of solid type? Here the answer is: “thrice no”. Because while a significant number of Holsteins may reach high production milestones, an even higher number score EX each year! ‘Between 100-200 new cows classify EX at our place annually,’ Dan adds. That is not because Siemers breeds only for type, or pays a lot of attention to shows. No, certainly not, because the show portion has even decreased in recent years. ‘Show is not a sector in which you can easily make profit,’ shares Dan. And explains: ‘A very practical aspect: if you want to breed elite show cows, then you will end up with a large number of cows that are not good enough for shows, but they’re also not functional in your dairy herd – too tall, etc. As such, it doesn’t work for us to breed for show cows.’

That is not to say that Siemers does not see the significance of conformation – certainly not. Dan: ‘We continue to pursue conformation. The slogan of our farm is: “Genetics for Cow People”. These genetics also include solid type. Because people are tired of seeing animals with dams and grandams that do not have lactations or classifications. For us, it remains important that the dams of future generations have proven their functionality, with good productions and solid type.’

SIRE SELECTION

For Siemers, that is a critical point in sire selection and delivery. ‘Annually, we sell about 50 bulls to AI companies. Of course, high indexes are important. But sometimes, we don’t even have the highest numbers. What we do have: dams with scores and lactations, and grandams with scores and lactations. We, ourselves, certainly do not want anything else; we only use bulls whose dams have proven themselves. From solid cow families – which is also important. That is also the reason that 40% of our inseminations are done with semen from our own sires.’

But: those who think that a progressive farm like Siemers uses only genomic sires is mistaken. 'We are using more progeny proven sires than in the past. We are very satisfied with Delta, Rubicon and Lambda. Sires that provided truly elite cows – we sure have used 1000 doses of each of these three sires. Today, Helix is our new bull. And, what is nice about him: he has so many good sons! For that reason, we are using both Helix and his sons. Renegade also looks really good, so we are also using him and his sons. The same is true for Hotline and sons; of them, we find Peak Tropic very interesting.'



(<https://digitaal.holsteininternational.com/get-image/8925>)

At Siemers, different rations are fed to various age and production groups.

ROZ

As mentioned already: 40% of the inseminations are done with homebred bulls. Who are they? This automatically brings us to the families that the Siemers view as the best on their farm. So, we ask about the three best families. 'Then I end up with the families of Roz, Paris, and Hanker.' We begin with Cherrycrest Manoman Roz EX-91. 'She is simply the best cow we ever purchased,' says Dan with admiration. We would need

Terug naar artikelen (/nl/articles)

several pages to describe the achievements and generations provided by Roz. Take, for example, just one of Dan's favorite sires: Siemers Rolan Roskoz (2846 gTPI; 1.51 gPTAT). His dam, Siemers Delta S-Roz-Ann EX-91 traces via a VG-85 Supersire and an EX-93 Windbrook back to the original Roz, which the Siemers family purchased at the World Classic Sale in Madison. Roz is a Man-O-Man granddaughter of the phenomenal brood cow Whittier-Farms Outside Roz. A status which Roz is now reaching herself. 'Roz is a cow family that can give you any type of cow you want,' explains Dan. The bull from the Roz family that is currently drawing most attention is Canada's genomic nr.1: Siemers Rozline, realizing 3832 gLPI and 2986 gTPI (owned by Select Sires). He is a Renegade son out of Frazzled daughter Roz 28450, who is now in production and has been pictured, but due to the corona pandemic, has not been classified yet. She traces via Siemers Rubicon D-Rozza VG-87 and Siemers Doorman Roz EX-93 back to the original Roz. Here we immediately have a direct connection with another nr.1 bull from the Siemers herd: K&L-OH Rossi Guay, Spain's nr.1 bull in 2019 and owned by Xenetica Fontao. Guay (4931 gICO) is a Gymnast son from the previously mentioned Rubicon D-Rozza. We conclude our Roz chapter with Siemers Runaway: this Semex sire is Siemers' highest progeny proven bull (2647 TPI) and is a Lottomax son from the Roz family.

HANKER

Time to move along quickly: to Cookiecutter Hanker EX-94, the magnificent Mogul daughter of Global Cow 2019, Cookiecutter MOM Halo. 'Hanker was the most expensive cow we ever purchased – but she was worth every dollar of it,' says Dan, full of respect. Hanker is now in her fourth lactation and it is hoped that she will be classified soon again – that is how promising this 8-year-old Mogul daughter looks right now. Hanker has extensive offspring at Siemers and they are making significant use of her grandsons. There are several, but we will mention four here: Siemers Hunk (Hotline-Monterey-Hanker; +3.06 gPTAT; Semex); Handsome (Doc-Monterey-Hanker; 3.09; Select Sires), Hancock (Doc-Monterey-Hanker; 3.34; Select) and Haniko (Lambda-Monterey-Hanker; 3.35; AI Total). Note: these four bulls descend from three different Monterey daughters of Hanker, scoring EX-91, VG-85, and VG-86 respectively.



(<https://digitaal.holsteininternational.com/get-image/8926>)

The number of cows with high lifetime productions is remarkably high at Siemers; in total, 44 head have already surpassed 300,000 lb (136,360 kg).

PARIS

Next, we ask Dan: if you had to give up all 3200 cows, and you were allowed to keep just one to begin a new herd, which one would you chose? It doesn't take too long, and then Dan says decidedly: 'Then I would chose Siemers Lambda Paris, a VG-87-2yr Delta-Lambda daughter with 2894 CTPI. She is still very high, she has tons of high daughters and sons – she does everything that you want her to do. And she flushes splendidly – yes, she is my favourite.'

Lambda Paris represents the third family in the top-3 at Siemers: the Paris family. Lambda Paris traces via Siemers Denver Paris VG-87 (Denver is a Mogul son of Delicious) and Quality Tango Paris VG-86 back to a VG-87 Facebook daughter from the

Terug naar artikelen (/nl/articles)

well-known Welcome Goldwyn Penya family. It's not surprising that Lambda Paris' son Siemers Parfect – a Renegade son with 2980 gTPI and +1.80 gPTAT – is among the favourites at Siemers.



(<https://digitaal.holsteininternational.com/get-image/8927>)

This is Siemers Goldwyn Galaxy, combining many great qualities: conformation EX-94, lifetime production 112.870kg (248,314lb) and a deep, powerful homebred cow family.

ELITE TYPE

We already wrote about it: show breeding is considered a hobby at Siemers. But: they are still enthusiasts to such an extent that they are actively working in this area. A nice example is the notable show cow Strans-Jen-D Tequila-Red, good for EX-96. 'We purchased her some months ago from MilkSource, and she has truly proven that she can breed great cows,' shares Dan enthusiastically. 'That is what we want. When we purchase an animal, she absolutely has to be one of the best, and Tequila has proven that. She flushes well and her embryos are destined for pregnancies here and being sold.' A well-known show cow from home breeding is Siemers Goldwyn Galaxy: good for

[Terug naar artikelen \(nl/articles\)](#)

EX-94, 112,870 kg (248,314 lb) with Siemers Damion Glam EX-92 as dam, who in turn descends from Siemers Mtoto Genev EX-90. Unfortunately, Galaxy is no longer around – notably, her last flush was with Hero. Hero is Siemers bred, and in 2011/2012 was very popular as an elite type transmitter, receiving more than 7600 daughters. Even today, Hero (Toystory-Durham, out of a deep Siemers cow family which includes Inspiration and Starbuck) scores +1.84 PTAT!

“PERFORMANCE”

We could continue to talk for hours about Siemers, but only have so much space. We conclude with an interesting comment made by Dan Siemers. ‘These days, I don’t like to use the words “type” and “production” anymore. With “type”, the commercial dairyman thinks of show cows and “fancy” type. But they do not want that, they want solid type – and thus I prefer the term “conformation”. In other words: how the cow is built. The word “production” is also outdated. After all, today it is certainly not only about production, but about so much more: fertility, somatic cell, calvings, etc. As such, today we prefer the term “performance”, because this tells us what the cow is supposed to do for the dairyman. And that is what it’s all about today.’



(<https://digitaal.holsteininternational.com/get-image/8928>)

Siemers Holsteins in the US

- Owned by the Siemers family
- Located close to Newton in eastern Wisconsin, US
- 3200 milking and dry cows, 6000 animals total
- Production: 3x 38,045 lb (17,300 kg) 3.9% 3.15%
- >1000 VG & EX cows Nr.1 in US for number of GMD & DOM cows
- Acreage: nearly 6000 (2400ha)
- Ration: different TMR rations for various groups
- Current sires: Helix & sons, Hotline & sons, various young Siemers sires, Delta, Rubicon, Lambda

