

German genetics: successful in the Netherlands

Dutch breeders and milk producers have been purchasing German export heifers for many years. Directly at the auction venues alongside the border, customers from the neighbouring country can be found regularly on the lists of buyers. Furthermore, German bulls still gain more popularity. We asked about the Dutch interest in German genetics.



MS Eugenie VG 86 raised by Family Booy, Streefkerk, is a daughter of the German sire Jardin and current bull dam in the Netherlands. She descends over Addison x Boudewijn x Lord Lily x Jabot from Delta Mascot Eugenie, Mascol's granddam. She is 22 % above the herd average with her projected first lactation production of 8,531 - 4.28 - 3.49.

Even if the number of almost 4,300 Holstein heifers exported to the Netherlands was definitely the exception in 2007, our western neighbours may be among the long-time loyal customers of German breeding cattle. Reason for this turnover boom, continuing with more than 3,000 heifers exported in 2008, was mainly the really high milk price in the Netherlands in combination with the impacts

of the Bluetongue disease that increased the demand.

The Dutch demand has indeed decreased a bit now, but the good business relations with customers in the neighbouring country are still of great importance because they traditionally purchase out of the higher segment. This is true for both the buyers of breeding cattle at the breeding organisations' auctions and also for those that invest in top genetics at special auctions.

After the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 2001 strict regularizations for the collection and export of cattle were passed in the Netherlands. Most of these directives are still in force today. This practically makes the organisation of breeding cattle auctions impossible. So there is no platform within the Dutch cattle marketing sector where supply and demand can coincide for public price fixing. That is why Dutch milk producers gladly use the possibility to buy breeding animals at German auctions.

"Germany offers an enormous range of high-quality heifers with regard to its big breeding cattle auctions.

From my point of view, German breeders are more willing to sell good quality than their Dutch colleagues. Hence the price-performance ratio here is that good", Johan Bergsma from Nijensleek says – and he knows what he is talking about. This Dutch cattle farmer and breeding animal trader is mostly always at German auctions especially in the cities of Lingen and Cloppenburg. There he buys not only for himself animals of high quality, but also for other Dutch cattle farmers.

Flexible, will to milk and strong in conformation

Family van Wijk is one of Bergsma's customers from Zuurdijk located in the North. Arie, Anne, Jasper and Simon van Wijk manage a dairy farm with a total area of 156 hectares, 356 dairy cows and 250 young cattle. The herd has an average production of 10,162 kg milk with 4.20 % fat and 3.47 % protein.

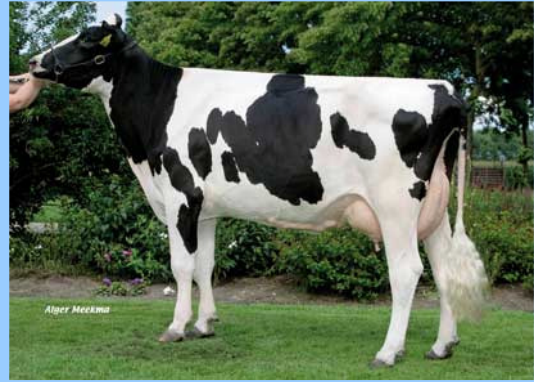
"Within the period 2003 to 2009, we bought 80 animals at auctions in Lingen and Cloppenburg in order to increase our herd size. The animals were bought by Johan Bergsma and he also organized transport and necessary blood tests (e.g. leptospirosis). In order to reduce transportation costs we always try to purchase several animals at the same time."

His father's Arie experiences are also a reason why Jasper and Simon van Wijk have opted for breeding cattle from Germany. "Our father already bought the first German heifers in 1983. They were strong animals that reached a high lifetime production and had positive transmission ability for the herd. Furthermore, really good animals can be hardly found or paid here."

The brothers' requirements for animals purchased are as follows: "We want heavier animals that are well-balanced and not too angular. They have to be able to produce trouble-free in our herd without individual treatment. We basically would like to improve our herd's quality through these purchases so that we bid for top class animals of a certain auction. The conformation is more important to us than the pedigree." Family van Wijk has had a very good experience with animals bought in Germany so far. "We are totally satisfied. The animals have really got used to the three times milking a day and they are doing well in the herd. We only had very few losses. The milk yield is well above average but our cows are simply a bit better in protein."



The Fieldhouse-daughter **Lena 19** of Raven x Bookie was classified VG 89 as heifer and was 15 % above the herd average with her first lactation of 10,872 - 4.09 - 3.24. In her second lactation, she is projected to 13,200 kg. "Lena 19 is the prettiest cow that I have bred so far and develops very well. She is tall and long, has lots of style and is very balanced", breeder John de Vries from Boyl says. Lena 19 was class champion at the NRM Show 2008 and belonged to the last five in the finals.



One of the most highly-productive Laudan-daughters of the Netherlands is housed at Wim Zwambag in De Hoeve. "We have purchased **Ijsselvliedt Roza 9496** as a calf from Family Puttonstein from Wezep. She was classified here with 86 VG points and has a first lactation (305) of 12,443 kg milk with 4.61 % fat and 3.44 % protein. After 621 days, she has now a total of 21,154 kg milk with 4.49 % fat and 3.53 % protein. Roza is a bull dam for numerous AI centers and has already had three bull calves. We are waiting for 36 pregnancies to come, ten in the US and Great Britain.

Wide range of good quality

Jan de Jong from Olderberkoop is also satisfied with animals bought at German auctions. He just raises only a part of his female progeny on his own and thus he needs some extra cows from time to time in order to abide by the strict slurry regulations.

"There are principally three reasons why I buy my cows in Germany: Firstly, what I buy shall be better than what I already house in my barn. There is a wide range of good quality in Germany. Secondly, I would like to see what I am about to buy and this is possible when considering the close location of German auction venues. Thirdly, there are good possibilities in Germany to purchase fresh animals. Through that, I do not have any calving risk and can classify the udders well. Since the end of 2005 I have bought around 20 animals whereof only two died so far. Within the last few years I have also bought some Red Holsteins because – amongst other things – of somehow different bloodlines. I really like the Laurel-daughters for example and they truly confirm the bull's breeding values: not extremely tall and not extremely much milk, but very good rumps, udders and feet and legs."

The Stylist-daughter Aletta, coming from her sire's test, confirms that animals bought in Germany have a good conformation. She was purchased as a heifer by Mts. Deterd-Oude Weme in Heemserveen at a German auction and produces really well in her new home. Moreover, she can also come up with a 1c prize and an "honourable mentioned" at the champion selection "middle" at the Winter Show in Zwolle with a show success.



Family van Wijk manages a dairy farm in Zuurdijk. The brothers van Wijk bought about 80 Holstein heifers from Germany to increase their herd size. "Especially the good combination of conformation and production, which cannot be found like that in the Netherlands, is a highlight. They are strong animals with a high lifetime production and also very calm and accessible", Jasper and Simon van Wijk say.

Photo: Family van Wijk

German bulls: components and different bloodlines

Alex Borst cares of the Koepon herd in Garnwerd together with his colleagues. He really trusts in German genetics: "An essential reason for the use of German bulls is that we are committed to the reliability of the German test system. Moreover, the German breeding offers always somehow different bloodlines. And components are a bit higher than in North America. We have used Laudan, Lancelot and Leif because we

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wanted to have Lukas-blood in our barn. We had some Lukas-heifers in milk that impressed with lots of strength and body and they combined this with a high, trouble-free production. Lukas was a bull that had only got a few chances in breeding, but everybody knows that he was a good bull. Feet and legs were possibly just average, but this can be kept in mind when mating. The Lukas-son Leif was also not used that much in the Netherlands, but early he could stand a chance at Koepon's. This resulted – amongst others – in Koepon Leif Classy. She finished her first lactation in 375 days with 10,369 kg milk and more than 4.00 % protein. She has five sons for AI and if she had better flushes, she would have gotten more. There is also a contract from Great Britain for her own pregnancy.”



This picture shows five milking Mascol-daughters from second crop at the farm Koepon Garnwerd. They have a projected average first lactation production of (305) 9,405 - 4.20 - 3.71 and are – with that – 14 % above the herd average.



The Leif-daughter **Koepon Classy VG 86** is also housed at Garnwerd. She already proved her will to milk as a heifer with more than 4 % protein. She was signed as bull dam several times. She has a Manager-sister classified VG 85 that can also show a very good production in her first lactation (305) 10,109 - 4.98 - 3.96 - LW 137.

“We will be back”

When the demand decreases, great importance has to be attached to the customers' satisfaction because only through this they will come again. Last but not least, this does not only confirm the last sentence of Jasper and Simon van Wijk: “We will surely visit a few German auctions in future.”



Aletta VG 86 (Stylist x Lee) received an “honourable mentioned” as second calf cow at the Winter Show in Zwolle 2008. She finished her first lactation (305) with 9,167 - 4.63 - 3.55.



Margriet 91 VG 87 (Rustler x Jubel) of J. Aantjes, Streefkerk, has a projected production in her first lactation (305) of 7,477 - 5.12 - 3.37 (LW: 102).