

NTM - the name for the new joint Nordic Total Merit Index for dairy cattle

NTM - Nordic Total Merit - is the name of the new total economic index for dairy cattle in Finland, Sweden and Denmark. The NTM index will strengthen the breeding work in Finland, Sweden and Denmark and make it possible to compare cows and bulls genetically across countries.

As the first in the world Finland, Sweden and Denmark have created a common breeding goal across borders. The breeding value expressing the new common breeding goal is called NTM - Nordic Total Merit. This means that bulls and cows in all three countries will get a NTM breeding value calculated the same way. It also means that, for example, a bull which is used in more than one country will have exactly the same NTM, independent of whether he is used in Finland, Sweden and Denmark. The joint NTM index will be published 15 October 2008. Director of the Nordic Cattle Genetic Evaluation Gert Pedersen Aamand is very satisfied with this new index. "It is a huge win that we can make dairy cattle breeding in the three countries work together" he says.

Breeding goal

The common breeding goal has the same focus as the three old breeding goals had before within each country, namely profitable cows with improved functional traits. However, the development of the common index has led to some changes, based on the expectations for future dairy production with increased focus on animal welfare. Significant emphasis has been put on fertility, calving traits, mammary system and health for all breeds to improve health, reproduction and profit at the same time. Because the new NTM is in line with the three old national Total Merit Indices, the ranking of Nordic top bulls will be the same to a large extent but now they will be ranked on the exact same scale with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 10.

NTM at farm level

For the individual livestock farmer, the NTM means that he can easily compare and select among all bulls tested in Finland, Sweden or Denmark. By selecting after the NTM, the farmer gets profitable cows with good health and functional traits which will fit future dairy cattle production.

"With the new index, I am convinced that we have strengthened the Nordic breeding work and improved the tools to get the best cows for the future" says Gert Pedersen Aamand.

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