CRV Forward

SUMMER
2025

Magazine for a healthy and efficient herd

Dutch genetics key to success

Fighting lameness with breeding

CRV

BETTER COWS > BETTER LIFE

Dear reader,

Let me start with a question: how are you? I am very lucky to have a job I really enjoy, and some amazing farmers in my area. I think it is important to work together and part of that is to ask each other if we're OK. I am not a professional trained councillor, but I feel it doesn't hurt for us to ask each other if we are OK, and if that means talking about whatever you want, I will always be here for you. And hopefully like wise, in this modern time where time is busy, sometimes stressful. But please make sure you have a few mins for you.
So back to who I am, my name is Richard Williams, I grew up on a dairy farm in Herefordshire. After working with cows for quite a while, after leaving School inc milking cows abroad, I started selling semen in 1990. Our industry has changed quite a lot since then with many dairy farmers not milking anymore. But I think I am very lucky to sell semen for CRV. Previously I knew this company as Avoncroft and Holland Genetics. One of the main reasons I enjoy selling at CRV is that we have a bull for everyone, from grazing herds to intensive dairy units. We also can supply most dairy breeds and have a beef stud with good value for money.
If someone asked me what my favourite type of cow is, this would be an average-sized cow with good milk, good components, which goes back in calf easily, a good efficient cow with good longevity.
Some of my favourite bulls right now are Delta Everton (E-Profit x Jorben) and Delta Borax (Freestyle x Jakarta). Everton is a bull with great looking daughters, having great components, udders and feet & legs. Borax is a bull that offers so much – milk, components, functional type and longevity. I could go on and on, but choosing your favourite bull is like choosing your favourite wife. But considering I have been happily married with my wife Jackie for over thirty years, picking a favourite wife is easier.
Thank you for choosing CRV to be part of your life.

Richard Williams| breeding advisor CRV UK

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Cover photo The two Nominator daughters Retraitehoeve Nieskje 15 and Retraitehoeve Nieskje 17 (photo: Alex Arkink)

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CRV, leading in health and efficiency

Boulevard paves the way

Delta Boulevard combines high milk production with outstanding health traits. Just like Delta Smash he descends from the relatively unknown Margreet cow family.

The Dutch Delta Boulevard (Wendat x Martin x Jupiler) proves that producing high volumes of milk does not have to come at the expense of good health. In fact, while Boulevard transmits close to 2,000 kg of milk, he is also one of the leading sires for health traits within the CRV UK portfolio, scoring +7% for CRV Health. This strength is thanks to his impressive ratings for udder health (105), fertility (107), and hoof health (109). In addition, he passes on high longevity (+417) and strong overall conformation (108), including excellent udders (109) characterised by strong attachment, shallow depth, and high rear udders. Boulevard also sires wide rumps. With a calving ease score of 104, Boulevard is suitable for use on maiden heifers.

Consistent performance

With Wendat, Martin and Jupiler successively in his pedigree, Boulevard brings an alternative bloodline. He descends from the relatively unknown VAH Margreet cow family.

"Cows from the Margreet family are easy milkers and have great longevity," says Luc van Aert, breeder of the Margreet line. Generation after generation, cows from this family have consistently performed well on the family dairy unit, which Van Aert manages alongside his parents.

One example of the family's quality is VAH Margreet 96 (sired by Stellando), who produced over 77,000 kg of milk in six lactations, with 4.24% fat and 3.74% protein. "For years, we have been using genomic testing on our animals, and this enabled us to identify her early on as a promising breeding cow," Van Aert explains.

Following consultation with CRV, Van Aert bred Margreet 96 to Molenkamp Bolt, resulting in the birth of Margreet 100. As a heifer, Margreet 100 was extensively flushed, producing among others the bull Lowlands Mangrove.

"At 1.45 metres, Margreet 100 was not particularly tall, but she was extremely robust and produced high volumes of milk with good solids," her breeder recalls. Margreet 100 achieved a lifetime milk production of nearly 37,000 kg of milk with 4.45% fat and 3.69% protein. Several (half) sisters of Mangrove are still milking on the Van Aert farm today, where they are known for their fertility and above average production levels.

Delta Margit (by Martin), dam of Boulevard

- **High milk production**
- **Excellent udders**
- **High fertility**
- **Healthy hoofs**

Half brother to Smash

Margreet 100's daughter Delta Marga (by Jupiler) went on to become the dam of Midwolder Delta Margit (by Martin), who was classified VG85 for conformation as a second-lactation cow at the CRV testing farm run by the Nooijen family. During her second lactation, Margit produced 13,597 kg of milk in 298 days, with 4.17% fat and 3.60% protein.

Two of Margit's sons are now part of CRV's bull portfolio: Delta Smash (by Jeronimo) and his half-brother Delta Boulevard (by Wendat). Boulevard's outstanding figures are reflected in the fact that he is selected as a sire of sons.

For more information about CRV bulls check our website

Raw milk and Dutch genetics keys to success

In search of more milk from their cows, the Walsh family in Cumbria has overhauled their breeding strategy. They opted for Dutch genetics – drawn by the promise of solid, productive cows with strong longevity.

In the rolling landscape of Cumbria, just north of the Lake District and only 20 miles from the Scottish border, the Walsh family runs Bunkers Hill Dairy. The dairy farm, near Penrith, is home to 125 cows and attracts both local customers and international tourists.

Almost a decade ago, the family invested in a raw milk vending machine – only the second of its kind in Cumbria – to sell unpasteurised milk directly from the farm. It proved a smart move, offering a valuable extra income stream.

"We live in a beautiful area surrounded by hills," says Zac Walsh, who works on the farm alongside his father Mike, grandfather Ian, and Mike's partner Neil Harrison. "Being so close to the Lake District and the Scottish border, we see a lot of tourists – many from abroad. It's a great opportunity to add value to our milk."

Some of the milk still goes to a processor, but a significant part of the milk is now sold locally through the vending machine. "Local people appreciate having access to fresh milk straight from the farm," Zac explains. "But we've had visitors from all over the world, from New Zealand and Australia to Japan."

From 50 to 125 cows

Zac's grandfather Ian started at the current location of the farm in 2006, with just 50 cows and 150 acres. Today they use 350 acres, of which 150 acres is rented, and the herd has grown to 125. It is a closed herd, with all replacements reared on-farm.

The cows are housed in cubicles with mattresses, topped with lime and stardust, and milked in a traditional herringbone parlour. The cows graze from May – once the first cut of silage is taken – through to the end of September. "We don't have a long summer up here," Zac explains. "We used to graze day and night, but when the herd grew, we moved to daytime grazing only."

Maize is not part of the ration. "We're in the wrong part of the country to grow it," Zac says. "We've got heavy clay soils." The feeding strategy is simple: grass silage, a bit of home-grown barley and wheat, and a bought-in protein blend.

Aiming for higher yields

Traditionally, the cows have been British Friesians and crossbred Dairy Shorthorns. However, in recent years, the Walsh family decided to revise their breeding strategy.

"We didn't have an issue with longevity. Our cows usually reach four and a half to five lactations," says Zac. "But we weren't quite hitting the production levels we were aiming for. We were averaging around 7,000 kg per cow per year. We're working towards 8,500."

In their search for genetics that would support both longevity

Company information

Farm name	**Bunkers Hill Dairy**
Owners	**Ian and Judith, Mike and Zac Walsh and Neil Harrison**
Location	**Greystoke, Penrith (Cumbria)**
Herd size	**125 cows**
Average yield	**7,500 kg**
Land use	**350 acres**

and higher yields, the family turned to Dutch breeding company CRV. Zac was particularly drawn to their emphasis on lifetime production and efficiency.

About 18 months ago, Zac travelled to the Netherlands to visit several dairy farms and see the Dutch cows himself.

"They looked fine in the pictures, but it's hard to judge from a distance," he recalls. "I was expecting tall cows, but that was not the case. I really liked the Dutch type of cows. They had good, solid frames, produced well, and lasted."

Until five years ago, the herd relied entirely on stock bulls. Today, all heifers are served to AI, using CRV semen.

Around 75 percent are bred with sexed Holstein semen, the remaining 25 percent with conventional Fleckvieh semen. Holstein bulls currently in use include Delta Lixor, Delta Borax, and the polled Delta Drone PP.

"I think polled genetics are the way forward," says Zac. "It saves us work and is better for the welfare of the calves."

Mike and Zac Walsh

First CRV heifers due this summer

The first CRV heifers are due to calve between late July and August. "Our heifers usually calve down at 27 to 28 months," Zac says. "But the CRV heifers developed so well, we served them a bit earlier. These will calve at about 25 months. It's still not perfect, but it's a step in the right direction."

Looking ahead, Zac hopes to grow the herd slightly, but not at the cost of their family-run structure. "We'd like to keep it manageable without hiring extra labour," he says. "Maybe we'll sell a few surplus heifers in future."

The family is also considering genomic testing. "That could be our next step," Zac adds. "It would give us the tools to make even more informed breeding decisions."

Visitors from all over the world are buying milk

The feeding strategy is quite simple

Fighting lameness with genetics

Lameness is a major welfare and economic issue for British dairy producers. The Dairy Cow Lameness Manifesto sets ambitious goals to reduce lameness by 2044. CRV offers practical breeding solutions to improve hoof health and help producers future-proof their herds.

At the start of this year, the British dairy sector set itself ambitious targets in the Dairy Cow Lameness Manifesto. Within two decades, the industry aims to significantly reduce the number of lameness cases. At present, the GB dairy herd has a lameness prevalence of around 30 percent. The goal of the manifesto is to reduce lameness by at least 10 percent each year, with milestone targets of lowering lameness prevalence across the national herd to under 20 percent by 2028, under 10 percent by 2035, and ultimately achieving a situation where at least 95% of British dairy herds have a lameness prevalence of under 5 percent by 2044.

"This manifesto will not only improve cow welfare but also help reduce the industry's carbon footprint and safeguard the social licence of British dairy farming," says Professor Martin Green of Nottingham University. He also chairs the Dairy Cattle Mobility Steering Group, which developed the Manifesto. "It is very possible to achieve minimal levels of lameness, as we now have the tools to do so – including genetic improvements and a

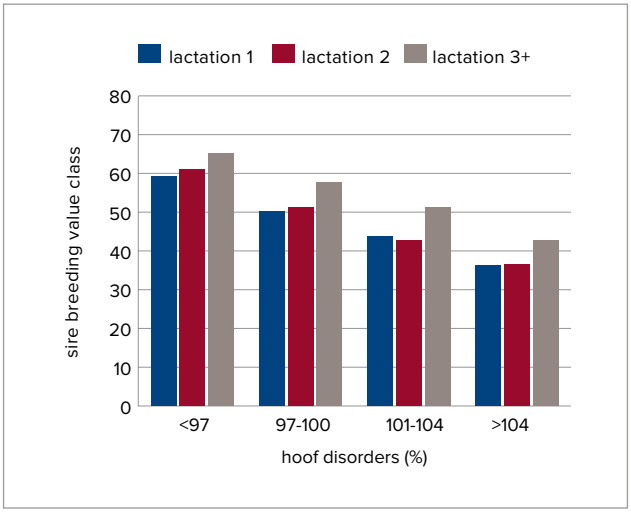

Figure 1: *Relationship between sire breeding values and actual daughter performance for hoof health in lactations 1, 2 and 3+*

growing range of technologies to detect lameness early."
A key part of the manifesto is a list of 21 action points aimed at improving hoof health. One of these points is to harness cumulative genetic gain by selecting sires with strong hoof health traits. CRV was one of the first organisations to enable breeding for hoof health, collecting real-world hoof health data from Dutch and Flemish dairy farmers in cooperation with professional hoof trimmers since the early 2000s. Today, CRV maintains a database with over 2.5 million hoof health records.

Sires with strong hoof health traits

Because hoof disorders are so diverse, CRV developed a hoof health index to help dairy producers breed cows that are less susceptible to a wide range of hoof disorders. This index makes it easier to select sires based on hoof health. CRV estimates breeding values for six specific hoof disorders, which together form the hoof health index. These disorders are sole haemorrhage, digital dermatitis, interdigital dermatitis, sole ulcer, interdigital hyperplasia and white line disease. Breeding with a focus on hoof health has proven effective. Since 2007, the incidence of hoof disorders has decreased by 26 percent in the Netherlands and Flanders.
Dairy producers can easily improve their herd's hoof health by using sires that transmit healthy hooves (see Table 1). Delta Launch and Delta Lixor lead this category, both with a breeding value of 111 for hoof health. Daughters of sires with breeding values of 105 or higher experience 20 to 25 percent fewer hoof health problems compared to daughters of sires with breeding values of 96 or lower (see Figure 1).

sire name	hoof health
Delta Launch PP	111
Delta Lixor	111
Delta Coach	110
Delta Podium	110
Delta Principal	110
Delta Smash	110
Delta Boulevard	109
Lowlands Blessing	109
Delta Ted Talk PP	108
Delta Statement rc	108

Table 1: *CRV's top bulls for hoof health*

performance in lactation 1-3	lowest 25%	highest 25%
all hoof disorders (%)	54	39
digital dermatitis (%)	23	16
interdigital mastitis (%)	15	9
sole haemorrhage (%)	20	14
costs of hoof disorders per cow (euro)	28.6	20.6

Table 2: *Comparison of the actual performances on working farms of the 25% highest and the 25% lowest scoring cows for CRV Health*

Key component of CRV Health index

Hoof health is also a key component of the CRV Health Index. Practical research involving 100,490 cows across 900 dairy units showed that the top 25 percent of cows for CRV Health experienced 15 percent fewer hoof disorders. These cows also incurred lower costs related to hoof diseases, reduced production losses and lower veterinary expenses. Furthermore, they had a significantly higher genetic breeding values for both hoof health and CRV Health.
In addition, dairy producers can use the sire advice programme SireMatch to breed cows with healthier hooves. They can also utilise HerdOptimizer, a genomic herd management tool, to easily identify animals with strong genetic potential for hoof health and breed selectively with these individuals. With the right breeding strategies and management practices, British dairy producers have a real opportunity to future-proof their herds against lameness.

New bulls on offer

Following the April index run, CRV has expanded its portfolio with several new bulls. We introduce the polled Delta Ted Talk PP and the American Ar-Joy Zuri Madden

Delta TedTalk PP • CRV Health +5% • CRV Efficiency +10%

CRV is offering an increasing number of bulls that guarantee hundred percent polled offspring, combined with impressive production and conformation traits. Delta Ted Talk PP is a prime example. Ted Talk is an outstanding top bull with a strong production profile: +285 kg milk, with +0.11% fat and +0.16% protein. Ted Talk daughters will require relatively little feed to produce high quantities of fat and protein (breeding value for feed efficiency 105), also thanks to their good persistency (107).

Ted Talk PP also scores positively across the board for fertility and health traits, including a hoof health score of 108. His type inheritance will appeal to many dairy farmers: his daughters will grow into well-developed cows with an open rib structure and wide, slightly sloping rumps. Their rear legs rear view is straight, their rear legs side view is a bit more curved than average, and they have a strong locomotion. Ted Talk PP scores 108 for udders, with 109 for fore udder attachment, 110 for udder depth, and slightly longer than average teats.

Ted Talk PP's dam, Delta Talleen PP (sired by Jawline PP), was classified VG-85 and has so far achieved a lifetime production of over 17,000 kg of milk with 4.94% fat and 4.02% protein, clearly demonstrating the source of Ted Talk PP's high component inheritance. Ted Talk PP also transmits the A2A2 variant of the beta-casein protein, making him widely suitable for dairy producers wishing to eliminate dehorning concerns.

- **Homozygous polled**
- **High components**
- **Healthy hoofs**
- **Great udders**

Ar-Joy Zuri Madden • CRV Health +3% • CRV Efficiency +13%

The April index run brought excellent news for CRV's US breeding programme. The bull Terra-Calroy Zuri climbed to 3384 TPI points, making him the number four among all daughter-proven bulls. Although Zuri is no longer alive, CRV already has a more than worthy successor in his son Ar-Joy CU Zuri Madden (Zuri x Parfect). Madden holds a genomic breeding value of 3309 TPI.

On the US base, Madden transmits 1694 pounds of milk, with +0.07% fat and +0.04% protein, and he is also a top conformation bull with 1.97 PTAT, including a strong udder score of 1.28. Madden daughters will display plenty of capacity (1.19), excellent rib structure (2.61) and wide rumps (1.86). They will also excel in locomotion (1.10) and have strongly attached udders (1.30), with high (2.10) and wide (2.74) rear udders. Madden daughters will not only impress with their conformation but will also perform strongly on efficiency, with a +13% score for CRV Efficiency. Madden owes this high score to his excellent production inheritance and a feed efficiency breeding value of 108.

- **High in conformation**
- **Outstanding production**
- **High TPI-bull**

Sharing knowledge across borders, visit from the Merlin Discussion Group

Over the past two days, CRV had the pleasure of hosting the Merlin Discussion Group, a long-established group of around 20 progressive dairy farmers from South West Wales, managing a combined 7,000 cows in seasonal grazing systems. The group meets monthly on-farm to exchange ideas and discuss key challenges, from fertility and grass management to labour, building projects, and business strategy. Once a year, they go on a study tour to learn from other farming systems. After visits to Ireland, France, Northern Ireland, and Scotland, this was their first time in the Netherlands.

During their visit, we shared insights into the Dutch dairy sector and how CRV-supports farmers through genetics, herd data, and breeding strategies. The exchange led to valuable conversations about system differences, shared challenges, and opportunities for improvement. One of the farmers summed it up perfectly: “We all produce the same product, but it was so interesting to see that we all reach the goal so differently.”

A big thank you to all members of the Merlin Group for your time, engagement, and curiosity. We greatly value this kind of international exchange and look forward to staying connected.

Lely Exos mows, transports, feeds, and fertilizes grass

Picture left: Exchanging ideas about grazing
Picture below: Explanation about CRV’s Feed Efficiency research project

CRV UK present at the Royal Welsh Show

Do you like ice-creams? Then you do need to visit our booth at the Royal Welsh Show this year! Our breeding advisors are looking forward to welcome you on the Royal Welsh Showground, from Monday 21st to Thursday 24th of July. We are happy to present you our genetic herd management product portfolio!

Body condition score trend determines fertility

A calving interval of 13 months prevents condition loss

Cows that maintain a stable body condition or even gain condition in the first weeks of lactation are healthier and more fertile than those that lose condition. This has been confirmed by various studies conducted in the United States. According to Professor Paul Fricke, managing body condition score is fundamental to maintaining a fertile dairy herd.

A lot of dairy producers assume that fresh cows lose body condition in the first weeks of lactation. But although this assumption is often correct, it is not inevitable according to US professor Paul Fricke, a leading authority in dairy cow fertility. “We also see cows that maintain their condition or even gain weight after calving,” he explaines, based on numerous studies conducted in the US. These studies increasingly highlight the significant impact of body condition score changes in the early weeks post-calving on cow health and fertility. Cows that lose condition are at higher risk of diseases such as ketosis, mastitis, and pneumonia compared to those that maintain their condition. The negative effects of body condition loss on cow health are largely due to ketone bodies and free fatty acids in

number of cows	change in body condition score	pregnancy rate at 32 days (%)	pregnancy rate at 60 days (%)	embryonic mortality (%)
608	–1.5 to –0.75	33	25	15
672	–0.50	44	35	9
650	–0.25	51	42	8
449	0 to +0.75	56	50	2

Table 1: *Relation between pregnancy rate and change in body condition score on a large dairy unit in the US (source: University of Wisconsin)*

the bloodstream, which are released when body reserves are broken down. These compounds weaken the immune system. “The more condition a cow loses after calving, the higher the concentrations of these breakdown products,” Fricke says.

Condition loss affects embryo quality

Breakdown products of body reserves not only negatively affect health but also fertility. High concentrations of ketone bodies and free fatty acids are detrimental to the quality of oocytes produced during periods of negative energy balance. This translates into poor embryo quality, leading to increased early embryonic mortality.

Additionally, the impact of body condition loss on fertility is also indirect due to its effect on overall health. Cows that remain healthy in the early weeks of lactation already have better fertility outcomes compared to those that suffer from diseases such as mastitis and ketosis.

Best fertility outcomes with stable body condition score

One of the studies Fricke refers to was conducted on a dairy farm with 7,000 cows. Nearly 2,400 cows had their body condition scored at drying off and again 30 days after calving. The cows were inseminated from 60 days post-calving.

Table 1 presents an overview of fertility performance across the four groups. The highest pregnancy rates at 32 and 60 days post-insemination were observed in cows that maintained a stable condition. This group also had the lowest rate of early embryonic mortality. The worst fertility results were recorded in cows that lost the most condition, with the other groups showing intermediate outcomes.

Table 2: *Relation between change in body condition score (between calving and 30 days in lactation) and calving interval in the previous lactation (source: Michigan State University)*

number of cows	change in body condition score between calving and 30 days in lactation	calving interval previous lactation (days)
110	≤ –0.5	444
103	–0.4	422
100	–0.3	415
89	–0.2	411
53	–0.1	395
67	≥ 0	392

Managing calving interval is crucial

Preventing body condition loss after calving is a crucial foundation for good fertility, according to Fricke. Maintaining condition in the new lactation starts in the previous lactation. The higher the body condition at drying off, the greater the likelihood of condition loss post-calving and the more body condition points will be lost.

The condition at drying off is largely influenced by the length of the previous lactation. A study conducted at Michigan State University found a direct correlation between calving condition and the calving interval in the previous lactation.

Moreover, the study showed that cows lost more condition in the first 30 days of lactation as the previous calving interval increased. This is illustrated in Table 2.

Achieving good fertility in the new lactation starts with aiming for a calving interval of less than 13 months in the previous lactation, Fricke states. This means cows should be pregnant by 130 days post-calving, even if they are still producing high milk yields at that time.

“By managing the calving interval, you prevent fluctuations in body condition and ensure cows calve at a body condition score of 2.75 to 3,” he explaines. “In the past, a body condition score of 3.5 at calving was considered ideal. This score may be optimal for high milk production, but a higher condition score at calving increases the risk of condition loss in the first weeks of lactation, which is ultimately detrimental to fertility,” the professor concludes.

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in health and efficiency

Genetic herd management

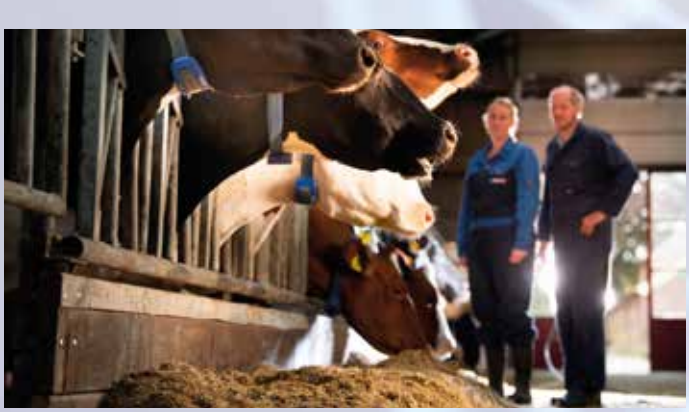
Making the difference for your herd

HERD**OPTIMIZER**

Genomic testing
for the next generation

SIRE**MATCH**

The perfect match
for a perfect herd



OVALERT

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around the clock

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