

What are the breeding objectives of high output/low EBI herds in the Lakeland Dairies region and is there a need for tailored advisory messages?

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Abstract

Understanding farmer breeding objectives and practices is essential to deliver effective breeding advisory messages. This study outlines individual farmer breeding objectives and practices of a specific group of non-EBI adopting farmers who are technically excellent with high milk output herds. The aim of the research is to develop guidelines for a tailored advisory approach to breeding which can be used with farmers who have similar breeding goals and concerns about the EBI.

Qualitative research methods were used to interview both farmers and breeding advisors in the Lakeland Dairies region. Selection criteria based on herd genetics and farm performance allowed the study to identify high output/low EBI farmers. This project has the potential to develop guidelines for a tailored approach to breeding messages which will also be useful in other areas of knowledge extension where low adoption of other technologies exists.

Early conclusions indicates that farmers are breeding for high output cows that are functionally and aesthetically correct. Participants are using a combination of criteria/information to select bulls. Farmers highlighted technical EBI related concerns linked to farm system, cow conformation and milk potential. Farmers will use high EBI bulls if the bulls meet their other criteria. Farmers have a lot of knowledge and experience in dairy cow breeding. This partly explains why farmers are so selective when choosing bulls.