

Press Release

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VikingRed leading the green path with a new strategy

The strategy for the next four years (2021-2024) has been approved by the VikingRed committee and the focus on sustainability and efficiency is on top.

The VikingRed strategy has fine-tuned their goals to increased benefits for dairy farmers while achieving more genetic progress in their herds.

A more efficient and sustainable cow is at the heart of the new VikingRed strategy 2021-2024. These objectives are linked to creating a response to the current world challenges and demands. "We have a solid focus on animal welfare, food security, and reducing climate impact in our entire production plan. VikingRed is a naturally healthy cow with the highest production of milk and solids for the red cows in the world. With the new strategy, we want to address more specific goals to develop the genetic capital of each cow", Jakob Lykke Voergaard, Product Manager VikingRed, says.

A green profile for a red cow

In the new strategy, health and survival indexes – which also are a reflexion of animal welfare - will continue to be an essential part of the new strategy.

- Treatment frequency reduced for Udder health, General health, and Hoof health
- Increased survival rate for still-birth, youngstock, and cows.
- Besides, the prediction on polled bulls to buy by 2024 is 35% of total bulls.

Beef on Dairy bulls on the menu

One of the changes in the new strategy is the inclusion of the term Beef on Dairy.

"We want to combine dairy and beef production to make a more climate friendly solution by making more crosses between VikingRed and Beef", Lykke Voergaard explains. "When you are using the same cow to produce milk but also a beef calf, you are optimizing the resources accordingly with the climate", he adds. This initiative means the replacement of 33% of purebred VikingRed bulls with Beef on Dairys, a process that will occur smoothly along with the four-year strategy. "At the same time, this initiative is more profitable for the farmer because the value of slaughter animals will increase, and in combination with sexed semen it is possible for the farmer to increase the genetic gain and profitability of his dairy business",

Females, an important part of the breeding plan

He adds that another important angle of the new strategy will be the relevance of the female animals when it comes to complementing the genetic progress of VikingRed. The goal is to have half of the born females genomically tested by 2024. "We will have the possibility to increase the genetic progress by identifying the best heifers and increase the VikingRed reference population. Also, it is very important

for the farmers because they can use the genomic information of their females as an important management tool in their farms”, Lykke Voergaard, adds.

Bulls with crossbreeding profile

In connection with the strength and vitality VikingRed transmits when used in crosses, the new strategy has included some specific targets to have a wider offer for crossbreeding profiles for the needs of specific markets. “As such, we are preparing to select animals that will fit the specific conditions for different markets and different crossbreeding programs”, he says.

“The VikingRed cow is a leading breed for crossing and will naturally boost the health, fertility, and efficiency of the herd”, Lykke Voergaard, explains.

VikingRed is one important piece of two structured and scientific proven crosses: ProCROSS (VikingHolstein x VikingRed x French Montbeliarde) and VikingGoldenCross (VikingRed, VikingHolstein, VikingJersey). Besides, VikingRed will support genomic test of crossbreeding animals in order to make it possible for the crossbreeding herds to select the best animals genetically for the next generation to improve farmers’ profit.

A concerted roadmap

The VikingRed committee, different research entities, and VikingGenetics’ breeding specialists agreed on the common objectives to boost the green profile of the VikingRed cattle. “Our advantage is that we don’t start from zero, VikingRed has already achieved many milestones concerning health, efficiency, and sustainability. Now, we are going to lift up VikingRed to the next level to ensure increased profitability for the dairy farmer”, Lykke Voergaard, says.

VikingRed cows are well-known for their excellent natural health, fertility and easy calving and are consistently amongst the top rankers on local indexes internationally.

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VikingGenetics is one of the world-leading providers of innovative and sustainable bovine genetic products and solutions, cooperatively owned by around 20,000 dairy and beef farmers in Denmark, Sweden and Finland. A unique combination of breeding for health traits as well as production has led to a position as domestic market leader in the Nordic countries and strong player globally. VikingGenetics employs 155 people in Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Australia, Germany and United Kingdom.