# EVALUATION SYSTEM FOR TRAITS OTHER THAN PRODUCTION

# TOP

# FOR DAIRY CATTLE IN NEW ZEALAND

Published by: Advisory Committee on Traits Other than Production

June 2020

# EVALUATION SYSTEM FOR TRAITS OTHER THAN PRODUCTION (TOP) FOR DAIRY CATTLE IN NEW ZEALAND

#### Introduction

Yields of milk protein and milkfat are important traits for the profitability of a dairy cow. Milk volume, cow liveweight, fertility, somatic cell count and cow survival are also directly related to the profitability of dairy animals due to their impacts on farm revenues and farm costs. These traits are included in the Breeding Worth (BW) and Production Worth (PW) indexes on which selection decisions in New Zealand dairying are primarily based.

However, there are "Traits Other than Production" (TOP) like temperament, milking speed and conformation which contribute to the overall value of any animal in a herd and any bull which transmits them. Data on some of these traits is collected and analysed. TOP trait assessments do not contribute directly to the BW or PW indexes.

Breed Associations and artificial breeding organisations are interested in the recording and evaluation of traits other than production of New Zealand dairy animals. The TOP Advisory Committee of representatives from these organisations operates an evaluation system for traits other than production. The TOP system is based on:

- linear assessment of traits
- experience from many years of conformation assessment
- current genetic and economic knowledge
- latest research results from New Zealand and overseas
- national cost effectiveness
- future requirements for dairy cattle characteristics

The main objective of the TOP system is to provide accurate and unbiased comparisons of cows and sires, thus providing cow owners and bull owners with easy-to-use information. The TOP evaluation system is directed by the TOP Advisory Committee (a sub-committee of New Zealand Animal Evaluation Limited) which comprises of three representatives from the New Zealand Dairy Breeds Federation, one from the Animal Evaluation Unit (LIC-AEU), one from CRV AmBreed and one representing AB companies other than LIC and CRV. The committee plays a major role determining policy relating to the system, sets inspection standards and monitors the performance of inspectors.

#### The Basis of the TOP System

With cow numbers stablising the focus on individual cows has increased, so it's more important than ever to ensure farmer's have highly efficent animals that will last in the herd. The TOP system plays an important role in this and includes adaptability to milking, shed temperament and milking speed. All these are important characteristics of cows in large herds.

Liveweight influences overall efficiency if animals are heavier than necessary for their level of production.

Udder characteristics are very important. Udders allowing easy machine milking, reduce labour costs and improve milking efficiency.

Not all traits can be recorded or included in the selection objective: Some cannot be influenced by breeding methods, and others cannot be measured accurately or are not important. The TOP system incorporates of some of the most important traits required on the New Zealand dairy farm.

#### **Benefits of the TOP System**

The TOP system offers the following features:

- It improves and facilitates sire selection
- It gives the breeder an objective assessment of the animal .
- It is easy to use
- It is compatible with electronic data processing
- It is easily understood
- It is accepted by dairy cattle breeders as well as commercial dairy farmers

#### **Collection of data**

#### Linear assessment

The accuracy of any system depends on the accuracy with which data is collected. This is also true when assessing the conformation of an animal.

The method of linear assessment is the most accurate method of conformation evaluation and for this reason is widely used. The TOP system is based on linear assessment of animals

A detailed guide which explains the method of scoring and the definition of the traits recorded is given on pages 5-11.

#### **Traits recorded**

The following traits are recorded:

Information supplied by farmer:

- 1. Adaptability to milking (slowly-quickly)
- 2. Shed temperament (vicious-placid)
- 3. Milking speed (slow-fast)
- 4. Overall opinion (undesirable-desirable)

Information supplied by inspector:

- Stature (<110cm - >145cm) 1.
- 2. (<250kg - >600kg) Weight
- 3. (frail-capacious) Capacity (pins high-pins low/sloping)
- 4. Rump angle
- 5. (narrow-wide) Rump width (straight-sickled/curved)
- 6. Rear leg set
- 7. Udder support (weak-strong)
- 8 Fore udder (loose-strong)
- 9 Rear udder (low-hiah) (wide-close)
- 10. Front teat placement
- 11. Rear teat placement
- 12. Teat Length
- 13. Udder overall (undesirable-desirable)
- 14. Dairy conformation (undesirable-desirable)
- 15. Body condition score (undesirable-desirable)

Any additional characteristics of the animal not described by these traits can be recorded as farmer's or inspector's comments.

(wide-close)

(short-long)

#### Inspectors

Inspectors must pass a practical examination in order to qualify as TOP inspectors. They are nominated by participating organisations and are required to attend Certification Days organised and administered by the TOP Advisory Committee to ensure uniform standards. Breed Associations organise additional workshops on the granting of their respective breed awards.

# Inspections

All TOP inspections of animals are organised by breed associations on behalf of all participating organisations. The TOP records from two-year-old animals are used for sire evaluations. To achieve valid comparisons between sires, two-year-old animals in a herd may not be inspected selectively: if any two-year-old is to be inspected they all must be, with the exception of herds that have been identified by AB companies as Contemporary Group herds (where a subset of two-year-olds will be inspected).

However, selected older cows can be re-inspected at the cow owner's request.

# **TOP Breeding Value Analysis**

Best Linear Unbiased Prediction (BLUP) under an animal model has been used to evaluate New Zealand dairy cattle for linear type traits. The animal model allows simultaneous sire and cow evaluation which prevents certain classes of selection bias and increases the accuracy of prediction compared to sire maternal grandsire models.

The statistical model for analysis includes effects for:

- herd-season contemporary group
- stage of lactation when scored
- age at first calving in months (nested within breed)
- heterosis
- genetic group
- animal genetic merit and
- the random residual

A grouping strategy in which a genetic group for each animal is derived from the genetic group effect of the animal's ancestors is used. For each animal with unknown ancestors, phantom parents without records are created. The phantom parents are assigned to appropriate genetic groups. The genetic group effects represent the average genetic contribution of the phantom parents. Genetic groups were assigned by sex (male or female missing parent), birth year, country of origin and breed. The genetic merit of the animals is defined as the breeding value which is the sum of the addictive animal genetic effect and the genetic group effect.

#### Administration

#### **Sire Registration**

To include a sire for the TOP evaluation system, the sire must be enrolled with New Zealand Animal Evaluation Limited (NZAEL). The nominating AB company will be charged a herd fee for each herd nominated for TOP Inspection, as well as an animal fee for each two-year-old inspected.

#### Inspections

Applications for TOP inspections from cow owners are processed by the breed associations. Applications from bull owners who have enrolled sires for Animal Evaluation and TOP evaluation are processed by LIC.

According to the applications received, TOP lists are downloaded to an electronic data

recorder, with the identification of the animals to be inspected. TOP Farmer Lists are sent to the herdowner to complete.

#### **Data Processing**

The completed TOP inspections are uploaded to and stored in the Dairy Industry Good Animal Database (DIGAD).

The organisation and distribution of TOP publications is the responsibility of LIC. Breed Associations receive TOP cow listings for herds whose inspection was requested through them. Bull owners receive cow listings for herds which they requested to be inspected.

#### Charges

A current schedule of charges for TOP inspections and bull enrolments is available from LIC. The charges cover travel, accommodation and labour of the inspector, data entry, editing, analysing and reporting of the data.

#### **Publications**

#### **TOP Cow listings**

The TOP inspection results for their herd are sent to all farmers who had cows inspected for TOP. Part of a cow listing is shown on page 12. Besides the herd information the TOP results for each cow evaluated are shown. In addition the two-year-old average, herd average and the national breed average for each trait is printed. For pedigree cattle the TOP evaluations are also published in the Breed Association Cow Production Register, which are available from breed societies.

#### **Other Reports**

The TOP information for an animal is incorporated in numerous other reports such as the Individual Animal History, Three Generation Pedigree and Sales Catalogue.

# LINEAR ASSESSMENT FOR TRAITS OTHER THAN PRODUCTION (TOP)

The ability to evaluate dairy cattle more accurately for their traits other than production initiated the introduction of the method of linear assessment on which the TOP system is based. The increase in accuracy of sire and cow evaluations using linear assessment is brought about by two main factors:

- The objective description of the animal as it ranks between the biological extremes
- The scale with nine scores allows more of the variation present to be recorded

The main advantage of the TOP system is that inspectors describe the animal, rather than how closely the animal resembles an imagined "ideal" animal.

The description of the animal given by the inspector can then be interpreted and used by different people for their specific purposes. Thus the main objective of the assessment under the linear system is the objective description of the animal, its ranking between the two biological extremes, no matter which ranking is considered "ideal".

Linear assessment as the base of the TOP system offers the following advantages:

- It allows a more accurate description of traits other than production for daughters of progeny tested sires, dams of bulls and pedigree cows
- It describes an animal objectively and is used to produce sire evaluations which give the animal breeder a more objective assessment of the value of the animal
- It agrees closely with evaluation systems used overseas and therefore will allow comparisons between different populations
- It allows efficient electronic data processing and computing, which increases the use and value of the recorded information

# Assessing the animal

Each trait is scored separately on a scale from 1 to 9 represent the possible biological extremes.

The traits included in the TOP system are the traits currently considered most important in dairy cattle. They include four traits scored by the farmer, three of which describe how well the animal fits into the milking routine. These traits are scored by the farmer on a separate form called TOP Farmer List (see page 13).

Fifteen conformation traits and body condition score is scored by inspectors using an electronic data recorder (see page 14). As the assessment is a description of the animal the scoring is carried out across breeds. Any additional characteristics of the animal not described by these traits, are noted in the Comment Codes column using codes shown on pages 15 and 16.

Up to ten comments per animal can be recorded.

Further information is available from: NZ Animal Evaluation Ltd Manager Brian Wickham Private Bag 3221, Hamilton 3240

# A. Farmer traits

Information supplied by the herd owner.

#### 1. ADAPTABILITY TO MILKING

This trait describes how soon the animal settled into the milking routine after calving. (eg. How many milkings before milk let down was spontaneous. How many milkings before milking was completed without extra attention.)

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9
		Slo	owly <	Average	>	Quic	kly		

# SHED TEMPERAMENT

This trait describes the temperament of the animal in the shed while being handled and milked. It is a different trait to adaptability to milking and should be assessed once animals have settled into the milking routine.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
					D.			

Vicious < Average > Placid

#### 3. MILKING SPEED

2.

This trait describes the milking speed of the animal, i.e. the time from putting cups on to the time flow stops or cups are taken off.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
			~ .		-			

Slow < Average > Fast

#### 4. OVERALL OPINION

This trait describes the farmer's overall acceptance of the animal as a herd member.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
				Average	> Fact	_		

Slow < Average > Fast

#### **B.** Inspector traits

Information supplied by the inspector.

Note: All diagrams in this booklet are based on two-year-old animals.

#### 1. STATURE

This trait describes the height at the shoulders of the animal.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<110	110-114	115-119	120-124	125-129	130-134	135-140	140-145	>145cm

#### 2. WEIGHT

This trait describes the estimated liveweight of the animal.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	9

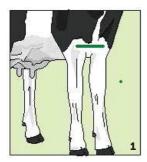
<250 250-299 300-349 350-399 400-449 450-499 500-549 550-600 >600kg

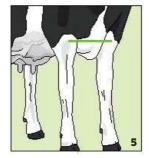
#### 3. CAPACITY

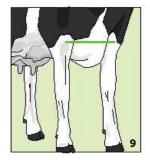
This trait describes the capacity of the animal as a combination of strength and depth of chest and body as viewed from side, rear and front in relation to the physical size of the animal.

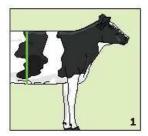
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

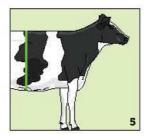
#### Frail < Intermediate > Capacious

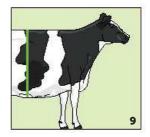












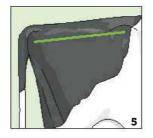
#### 4. RUMP ANGLE

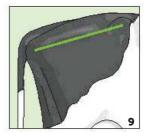
This trait describes the angle of a line between the centre of the hips and the top of the pins.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Pins high < Level > Pins low/sloping



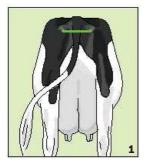


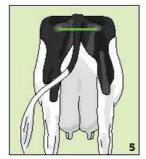


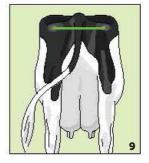
#### 5. RUMP WIDTH

This trait describes the distance between the most posterior point of the pin bones relative to the size of the animal.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		Narr	ow <	Intermedia	ate >	Wide		



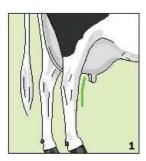




#### 6. REAR LEG SET

This trait is an assessment of the straightness or curvature of the back legs from an imaginary line between thurls and the mid hoof while the animal is walking.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		Stra	aight <	> S	ickled/curv	ved		







#### 7. UDDER SUPPORT

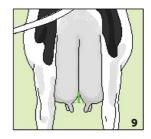
This trait describes the strength of the suspensory ligament as viewed from the rear. It also includes the udder depth relative to the hocks. It does not include rear udder, which is a separate trait.

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9
			Weak	<	>	Strong			

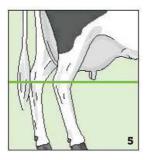


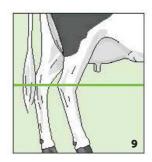


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#### 8. FORE UDDER

This trait describes how well the front udder is attached to the body wall.

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9
			Loose	<	>	Strong			



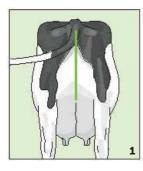


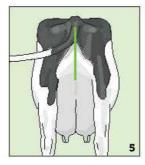


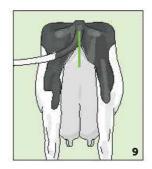
#### 9. REAR UDDER

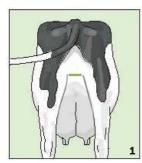
This trait describes the height and width of the rear udder attachment as distinct from udder support.

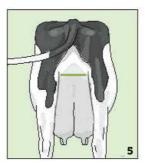
1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9
			Low	<	>	High			

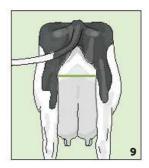








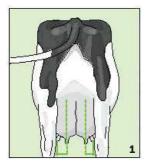


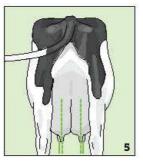


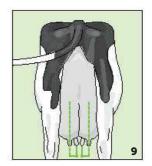
#### **10. FRONT TEAT PLACEMENT**

This trait describes the placement of the front teats (at the point of attachment to the udder) relative to the centre of the quarters as viewed from the rear.

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9
			Wide	<	>	Close			



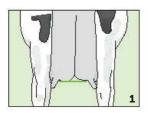




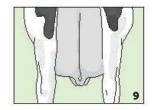
#### 11. REAR TEAT PLACEMENT

This trait describes the placement of the rear teats (at the point of attachment to the udder) relative to the centre of the quarters as viewed from the rear.









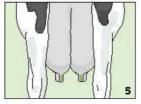
#### 12. TEAT LENGTH

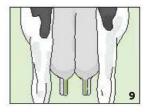
This trait descibes the length of the rear teats.











#### 13. UDDER OVERALL

All traits pertaining to the udder including those udder traits that have been linear scored.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		Ur	ndesirable	< :	> Desii	able		

#### 14. DAIRY CONFORMATION

All traits pertaining to dairy conformation including those body traits that have been linear scored, but excluding all the udder traits.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

#### Undesirable < > Desirable

#### 15. BODY CONDITION SCORE

This trait is a visual estimate of an animal's body fat reserves.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--

Skinny < Desirable > Obese



Photos from Dairy NZ publication: Body Condition Scoring Made Easy: The official field guide, June 2011

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Livestock Improvement		ľ	TRAITS OTHER THAN PRODUCTION RESULTS YEAR	OTHI	L R L	Ӗ			2		5	0	Z	Įμ	J S C	Ľ۱	S S	μ	L R					lemine 8
Name					Ľ	N N	<b>P</b>	9	5	l≷	SAMPLE COW LISTING	E	2							1				evaluation
Address Address City				ц	TPT/I	LOC/ RUN	LOCATION : PTPT/HERDCODE : AE RUN DATE :	AE N	000-0 CD 7	N0000-000-000/00 ABCD 7/1234	00/00		TOP IN	INEW	INSP INSP	T DAT N DAT ECTO	— шшф	Jspec	tor N = Tra	it Not	LIVEWEIGHT DATE : TOP INSPECTION DATE : INSPECTOR : Inspector Name Scored	DATE PRC * = Animal C	DATE PROCESSED : 11/02/2010 PAGE : 4 * = Animal Changed Location	02/2010
Name	ldent.	Test No.	Sire	BW (\$)	AM	ST	MS 0	00	s S	N N	c ra	<u> </u>	N L	SN	s FU	J RU	E	RT	no.	DC	Condition Score		Comments	Liveweight (kg)
BLACK & WHITE HFR A	08.8	47	101134	54/46	4	9	7	ß	9	2 2	5 4	9	5 7	9	9	9	ى د	9	9	9	3.5	82		
BLACK & WHITE HFR B-ET	08 24	78	101134	5/44	5	9	80	9	9	به د	2 Q	-	6 7	7	7	7	2	9	2	~	4.0	84		
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BLACK & WHITE COW D	0638	130	672213 101738	133/52 13/56	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	ი თ		8 4 7 0		9 V 9 V	9 0	2	ŝ	n n	ιΩ α	9 1	α0 α		84 85		
BLACK & WHITE HFR F	08.46	104	106734	36/42	) 4	o o	~ ~	9				_		9		-		_	. 0	~ ~	3.5	83		
BLACK & WHITE HFR G-TW	08 2	20	103768	52/49	9	7	7	7	7	9	7 5	-		9	9	ŝ	4	9	ŝ	9	4.5	81		
BLACK & WHITE COW H	04 57	28	103768	46/53	0	0	0	0	6	00	7 5	-	9	7	7	∞	2	9	7	6		88		
BLACK & WHITE COW I	05 29	100	104732	57/55	0	0	0	0	6		5	-	6	7	9		4	9	7	4		84		
BLACK & WHITE COW J	05.4	37	104732	47/55	0	0	0	0	6		4	-	6	7	9	2	4	9	9	œ		84		
HOLSTEIN HEIFER	* 08 40	36	101650	143/46	9	9	œ	7	9		5	-	9	9	9	4	2	9	2	2	4.0	82		
HOLSTEIN COW	04.61 *	38	99351	93/53	0	0	0	0	80		8	-	6	∞			4	9	2	8		85		
BLACK & WHITE COW K	00 39 LIKL	53	95223	136/58	0	0	0	0	80		9	-					4	9	80	6		EX2		
FRIESIAN COW	°3 69	156	101822	46/56	0	0	0	0	<del>л</del>		8	ي	2 9	œ	2	œ	4	9	~	ø		87		
AVERAGE OF 2YR OLDS IN HERD				46/43	6.3	7.3	7.1	7.4	6.9	5.8	5.7 4	4.8	5.9 6.	6.1 6.	6.6	6.3	6.0 5.0	0 6.0	0 6.3	6.4	4.2			
AVERAGE SCORE FOR HERD 45 COWS INSPECTED				49/48	6.3	7.3	7.1	7.4	7.8	6.7	6.5 4	4.6	6.2	6.4 7.	7.1 6.	6.6	6.4 4.8	8 6.0	0 6.7	7 7.3	4.2			
ALL INSPECTIONS 2009/2010																								
AYRSHIRE					6.8	6.9	7.0	7.0	5.4	4	6.8	5.0	6.3	6.1 6.	6.2	5.9	5.9 4.7	7 5.7	7 6.0	6.7	4.4			
HOLSTEIN-FRIESIAN					6.1	6.2	6.2	6.5		5.3		4.7 6	6.1 6.	6.1 5.	5.9 5.	5.6 5.	5.6 4.5	5 6.0	5.6	6.2				
JERSEY					6.3	6.5	6.5											5 5.6						
MILKING SHORTHORN					6.5	6.7	6.5	6.7	5.6		6 2 0	4.8		0.0	2.9		5.4 4.6		4 0	6.2	4.4			
					0.0		0.0			0.0			0.0			0.0		0.0						
AM Adaptability toMilking ST ShedTemperament	030		OverallOpinion Weight	c	0 A A C A		Capacity RumpAngle	ty Angle			- S -		Legs UdderSupport	)ddnc	ц.		운도 :	Å F G	FrontTeat F	der at Pl	RearUdder FrontTeat Placement	92	UdderOverall DairyConformation	rall ormation
	0		an		Ň		VdIIIn	NICILL			2			ann			צ	ř	a	al Fic	ICELLEUI			

1 = vicious 2 = very temperamental 3 = temperamental 5 = intermediate 6 = signity placid 7 = placid 7 = vertremely placid 9 = extremely placid 1 = extremely undesirable 2 every undesirable 3 = undesirable 5 = slightly undesirable 6 = slightly desirable 6 = slightly desirable 7 = desirable 7 = desirable 8 = extremely desirable 9 = extremely desirable Please Use Code Numbers 1 = extremely slowly 2 = very slowly 3 = slowly 4 = slightly slowly 5 = internediate 6 = slightly quickly 7 = quickly 9 = extremely quickly 9 = extremely quickly 1 = extremely slowly 2 = very slowly 3 = slowly 4 = slightly slowly 5 = internetiate 6 = slightly quickly 7 = quickly 9 = extremely quickly 9 = extremely quickly Adaptability to milking Shed Temperament **Overall Opinion** Milking Speed Requested through : Date processed : COMMENT Location : OVERALL OPINION 1-9 T.O.P. FARMER LIST MILKING SPEED 1-9 ADAPTABILITY TO MILKING SHED TEMPERAMENT 1-9 1-9 COW No ident. indicators **\*** : Parentage not yet checked **#** : Parentage uncertain = : Parentage cannot be verified **IDENTIFICATION** Cow Details AGE BREED PREV AWARD

Participant Code :

Herd Code :

(Herd Owner or Manager)

Signature

Date : \_\_\_\_

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# **TOP FARMER COMMENT CODES**

Each fate status MUST be followed by a cause of fate code eg. C LP - Culled due to Low Production

#### **FATE STATUS**

- C Culled
- D Died
- S Sold

# **CAUSE OF FATE**

#### PRODUCTION

LP Low Production

#### DISEASE

- BL Bloat
- FE Facial Eczema
- MA Mastitis
- OD Other Disease (specify)

#### MANAGEMENT

TE Temperament

#### SHED BEHAVIOUR

- SM Slow Milker
- SC Kicks Cups
- SK Sucker
- SH HoldsMilk

#### OTHER

- RF Red Factor
- OF Off Colour (Holstein Friesian only)

#### OTHER

- Y Dry
- IN Induced
- LC Late calver
- R Running with calf, not milked
- O Other (specify)

#### ACCIDENT

IA Injury or Accident

#### REPRODUCTION

- AB Abortion
- CT Calving Trouble
- MT Empty
- RO Reproduction Other (specify)

### CONFORMATION

- TD Double Teats
- FT Feet & Leg problems
- LM Lameness
- SO Shed Other (specify)
- TC Teat Conformation
- UB Blind Quarter
- UD Udder Conformation
- UL Light or Dry Quarter

# TOP INSPECTOR COMMENT CODES

#### **FATE STATUS**

- C Culled
- D Died
- S Sold

#### **CAUSE OF FATE**

### PRODUCTION

LP Low Production

#### DISEASE

- BL Bloat
- FE Facial Eczema
- MA Mastitis
- OD Other Disease (specify)

#### MANAGEMENT

TE Temperament

# **CONFORMATION COMMENTS**

#### HEAD

- HJ Weak Jaw
- HU Undershot Jaw
- HW Wry Nose
- HO Other (specify)

#### LEGS & FEET

- LH Hocky
- LR Overgrown rear feet
- LS Shallow angle
- LO Other (specify)
- LF Overgrown front feet
- FT Feet & Leg Problems
- LM Lameness

### TEATS

- TA Angling out (rear teats only)
- TB Bunched
- TD Double or fused
- TF Angled forwards
- TL Long
- TP Pointed
- TR Angled to the rear
- TS Small/Short
- TT Thin
- TX Extra teats which interfere
- TO Other (specify)

#### OTHER

- Y Dry
- IN Induced
- LC Late calver
- R Running with calf, not milked
- O Other (specify)
- Z Missing inspection

#### ACCIDENT

IA Injury or Accident

#### REPRODUCTION

- AB Abortion
- CT Calving Trouble
- MT Empty
- RO Reproduction Other (specify)

#### BODY

- BN Narrow chest
- BT Low thurls
- BW Weak loin
- BO Other (specify)

#### UDDER

- UB Blind Quarter
- UC Collapsed, broken down
- UE Oedema
- UF Bulgy front udder
- UG Short front udder
- UL Light or dry qaurter
- UQ Quartered udder
- US Slopey udder floor
- UT Udder texture
- UU Unbalanced udder
- UO Other (specify)

#### OTHER

- OC Other causes
- RF Red factor
- OW Predominantly white (over 80%)
- OF Off colour (Holstein Friesian only)
- NT Not true to breed
- ER Eligble for registration