

Jürg Hofmann: ‘2000kg more milk with the Concept Dairy Pro!’

Article published by:

**Holstein
International**

www.holsteininternational.com

For more than four decades, Jürg Hofmann has been the driving force of Hofmann Nutrition AG, which is now being successfully operated by his son Alexander. The speciality of the company is high value concentrates of micronutrients, which are specifically combined depending on the type of animal and market requirements. Additionally, Hofmann has his own Holstein breeding program which delivers up to three bulls to AI studs every year. Our visit to Hofmann's office in Bützberg gave us the opportunity to discuss various topics in depth.

🗣️ JACQUES BERNARD 📷 CHRISTINE MASSFELLER

Mr. Hofmann, could you give an overview of your concept?

‘The company was founded 63 years ago and since the late 1970's we have been producing concentrates of micronutrients which we sell worldwide. Depending on the situation, they can be mixed into the ration directly on-farm or added to a supplement by a feed mill, and depending on the type of animal and its requirements we have developed different combinations. For dairy cows we recommend our Concept Dairy Pro with the Dairy Pro, Dairy Protect and Cattle Guard products.’

What exactly are micronutrients and how are they combined?

‘We use many different micronutrients, like yeasts, plant extracts, colostrum, and many more. The combinations and recipes are our company secret. We have put a lot of blood, sweat and tears into product development over the last 47 years so that we achieve the desired results. The active ingredients must be harmonized with one another, like the instruments in a good orchestra. That is the only way to achieve the desired synergy and improve the health and production of the animals.’

What effect does that have on the animals?

‘For one, there is a direct influence on the immune system and the health of the animal. Furthermore, the feed efficiency significantly improves and in the long-term there are positive effects on functionality and lifetime production. One important effect is the reduction of stress and, as we know, the absence of stress results in high milk production.’

That in turn helps the pocketbook of dairy farmers ...

‘Exactly. The costs per cow and day for our micronutrients are relatively small and deliver a high ROI (Return On Investment). for clients.

Our Concept Dairy Pro advisors in the field regularly calculate IOFC, i.e. the revenue from milk sales minus all feed costs, to be sure that clients get a very good ROI.’

How do you work with the farms?

‘Here we need to differentiate between farms in Switzerland and outside. In Switzerland we have our own team of nine specifically trained experts which offer advisory and eva-

ferences, as in Switzerland a lot of emphasis is placed on forage quality and concentrate feeds are more relatively more expensive. In Switzerland, much less concentrate feed is used per liter of milk produced than elsewhere. That is why production increases are often realized more quickly in other countries. European countries in general differentiate themselves from other continents. When we talk to Europeans, the focus is on improving the efficiency and profitability of individual farms. But when we talk to representatives from Asian countries or those in the global south, then the message is quite clear that the main topic is feeding their population. These countries are committing everything to sustainably increase their production to be more self-sufficient for food production and give their citizens better quality food. To this end, they knowingly promote large farms because they can work more diligently and efficiently. We are happy that with our micronutrients we can contribute to the improvement.

Are there differences in the composition of your micronutrients?

‘Certainly! We combine the micronutrients in such a way that the concentrate is best suited for the location where it will be fed. In this there are big continental differences: the cows in countries with more heat have different needs than a cow on the Swiss alp.’

What type of improvements in production can be achieved?

‘In Switzerland our evaluations show that clients who strictly implement our Concept Dairy Pro can, over time, produce an additional 2000kg milk per cow and year. Many farmers do not even know initially what their herd – with optimal feeding, management and health – is even capable of producing. With a genetically normal Holstein herd, an average of 12,500kg/27,500lb

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uation services. At the end of the day, it comes down to what the client wants and how intensively they want to work with us and our products. Some only want the concentrate to mix into their feed, others want customized feed plans with premixes designed for their farm specifically and supplemental feed with Hofmann's micronutrients.’

Where are the differences internationally?

‘Outside of Switzerland, the products are typically sold through feed specialists and feed mills. Innovative veterinarians are also among our clients. We supply them with the concentrates, and they ensure that they are properly used. In the feeding itself there are large dif-



Jürg Hofmann in front of his company in the Swiss town of Bützberg.

is realistic today. With a better genetic level, more than 14,000kg/31,000lb is possible. Currently, our highest client in Switzerland has a herd average of 14,500/32,000lb. This also has a positive impact on the environment. A cow with a production of 14,000kg per lactation is superior for feed efficiency, land area requirement and methane production that two cows with a production of 7,000kg/15,500lb.’

The numbers seem high, but definitely realistic. How did you come to them?

‘In our own beef program Qualivo we have many beef farmers as clients. On our best farms we achieve an average daily gain of 1,8kg/4lb in the class between 200kg/440lb and 550kg/1210lb liveweight with beef on dairy crossbreds. When we weigh these bull calves individually, we determine that with the same feeding and housing conditions, several bulls gained 2.4kg/5.3lb per day and others “only” 1.5kg/3.3lb. The best bulls have a slightly higher feed intake, but significantly better feed conversion. That is primarily due to genetics. When it comes to genetics, even dairy farmers can learn something for the beef producers!’

Is that why you developed your own breeding program?

‘No, not because of that, but in the 20 years that we have been operating the breeding

program we can see clear progress. I like when things operate at a high level. That is when work is fun, and this is the spirit I want for the company and for breeding. Over the years we have determined that genetics play a large role for production when it exceeds 14,000kg/31,000lb. In Switzerland it is still very popular to select for conformation, and we want to breed animals that have the potential to achieve high production.’

So what does the Hokovit breeding program look like?

‘I started in 2005 with the purchase of 20 embryos over lunch. From these embryos came the Goldwyn daughter Moo Diamond EX-93, who is from the Cinderella branch of the Roxys and became the dam of the Bolton son Hokovit Best. Now, Hokovit genetics owns a small but fine group of breeding animals that are kept at our clients, who also carry out our embryos. We have put together a strategy by which these clients can purchase animals from the program. It brings joy when animals with the Hokovit prefix deliver high yields for our clients.’

This shows that you have already achieved a lot with your breeding for production!

‘Yes, that's true. Over the years I have developed a real passion for it. But I would not define it as breeding only for production. We want

to breed animals where everything is correct and whose offspring will make their breeders happy. We breed for high production black and white animals with good conformation and for red and whites we have been concentrating on polled genetics for years.’

It is working out well for you, as can be seen in the bulls placed at AI studs!

‘We are able to sell two to three bulls per year to AI studs, which of course makes us proud considering the modest size of our breeding program. A successful bull dam is Hokovit Genia 3, an Einstein daughter who will produce over 16,000kg/35,000lb with high components in her second lactation. She is the dam of Genio, Gaudius (both from Gordon) and Galileo 6 (<Troy). Another important cow is the Nipit daughter Hokovit Nipita-PP1. She is the full sister to the successful bulls Hotop-Red-PP and Red Rock-PP and her Delta-Steam son Nick-PP is currently on offer at Swissgenetics. Nipita's Globed daughter Nirwana flushed really well and we are hoping for red and white, homozygous polled sires! ●