

Jürg and Alexander Hofmann (Hokovit)

‘Only the smart ones buy from us!’

For decades, the Swiss company Hofmann Nutrition AG, under the brand name Hokovit, has been an esteemed name in the European feed industry. Hokovit, which is primarily known for its competency in the micronutrient aspect of cattle feeding but also makes products for swine, poultry, equine and fish feed, is a real family business. The company of Jürg Hofmann and his son Alexander is also known for noteworthy successes in Holstein breeding. As such, the pair have a lot to say and a conversation with them could be as interesting for conventional dairy farmers as for enthusiastic breeders.

STEPHAN SCHNEIDER HAN HOPMAN



In addition to the production of micronutrients for animal feed and a high-quality Holstein breeding program (Hokovit Genetics), Hokovit is active in four different areas of business, including the production of premium meat under the Qualivo label.

Diamond via Adagio. Her highest daughter is a 2861 gTPI Gameday, but what impresses us even more is her own production ability. After 256 days of her 1st lactation, she has already produced 11,326kg/24,970lb 3.91% 3.57%.

And, like all Hokovit animals, she is being housed by one of your clients?

Jürg: ‘Yes, of course! Powermaid is in the barn of Remo Büsser, one of our Concept Dairy Pro clients and a Hokovit feed advisor. Remo was able to improve the average daily production of his 55-cow herd from 28kg/62lb to 42kg/93lb within a year on the back of our products. That was an enormous step and one of many proofs of how successfully our products work.’

What kind of a product is Dairy Pro?

Alexander: ‘Dairy Pro is a micronutrient premix that boosts metabolism as well as the immune

system. Its use promotes digestion and has positive effects on milk yield and components. Furthermore, the immune system is stimulated which increases the resistance to disease. Improved metabolism and a stronger immune system not only make the cow healthier, but also improves her fertility. Finally, Dairy Pro acts as a catalyst and improves feed efficiency. In dairy cow nutrition there is a big need for stabilizers, that is to say micronutrients like those in Hokovit Dairy Pro or Dairy Protect. In the rumen they serve to maintain a diverse microbial population, and in the intestines for the regulation of intestinal flora. In the large intestine they help prevent large intestinal acidosis and poor fermentation.’

And all this on the basis of micronutrients?

Jürg: ‘Yes. Although micronutrient products are not our only line of business, this is where



Jürg and Alexander Hofmann: ‘We want to serve the niche, not the masses!’

we have our core skills. We launched our first micronutrient additive, Homexan Stimul, in 1978 and over the course of time an incredible amount of knowledge has been added. However, it is clear to us that we do not want to sell any bulk products. We knowingly seek out the niche market.’

What do you mean by that?

Alexander: ‘In Switzerland, we offer an individually tailored feed mix and mineral supplement for every farm. Our clients are dairy farmers who want to focus on particular points. We achieve the biggest and most visible effects on farms where a lot of things are already going well. Among our most faithful clients are many successful dairy farms and just as many well-known breeders across Europe. I always joke that only the smart ones buy from us.’

And is the number of smart dairy farmers increasing?

Jürg: ‘Of course! Every degree of progress in structural change only lets the farms survive that operate the most professionally. Micronutrients have become a trend because they improve the feed efficiency, immunity and profitability of dairy cows. Those are exactly the topics that have been guiding us in breeding over the last 20 years. However, it remains a fact that 95% of all cows are fed without micronutrients.’

Nonetheless, the field of micronutrients still has relatively little research and, really, there are hundreds of different micronutrients that could be used in feeding?

‘Without micronutrients you don’t get the necessary feed into the animals!’

Alexander: ‘Yes, that is true that so far little scientific research has been done in this field and there are few official and reliable analyses. Yeast extracts, herbs, plant extracts and even specific fatty acids and colostrum are different micronutrients that are used. To achieve effects of production, growth or immunity, the key is to create the right composition and mix, and here the data we have gathered and the feedback from our clients over 40 years of experience show that we can achieve a lot with our products.’

What does Hokovit do differently than other manufacturers with similar products?

Alexander: ‘It is important to understand that we positively influence digestion and the immune system. Without micronutrients, you don’t achieve the amount of intake that the animals require to reach their genetical potential for production. Without micronutrients, the feed is not as well used by the animal. Really, it should be said that a modern Holstein cow that does not produce 12,000kg/26,400lb through at least 5 lactations is not fed sufficiently and needs extra help.’

But not every farm is the same. Both management and feeding will vary.

Alexander: ‘That is exactly the point and the approach that is important to us. Our concept in Switzerland always includes a thorough farm consultation and at the end, naturally, a feed mix that is specifically targeted to the needs of the farm.’

And where do you find the knowledge about the right recipe for each respective farm?

Jürg: ‘That is, as said, primarily a result of decades of experience. All our products are tested for years on farms and all results are carefully documented. The knowledge that we gain through this is enormous. However, it is important for us and our clients that at the end of the day we are in a position to offer a solution that is structured in such a way that alternatives can also be used. We work very intensively with internationally-known specialists for the science of dairy cow feeding and management.’

There are differences between farms, but there are also thoroughly different philosophies that are seen between countries. How do you deal with that?

Alexander: ‘As mentioned, for our company every dairy farmer is an individual client in our consultations and receives a unique program. It could certainly be said that these differences between countries do exist. We know these from the countries where we are represented and consider these differences in conjunction with our advisory services and distribution partners with respect to the selection of our products.’ ●