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Eli Grindflek, PhD – Head of Research

Doubling genetic progress

The Topigs Norsvin research team's goal is to develop the tools needed to double the rate of genetic progress in our commercial crosses. In practice, this means that the economic improvement seen in the slaughter generation increases by a greater amount each year.

Making further improvements, however, is becoming more difficult as our proficiency at delivering this genetic progress improves. Many of the larger, easier to achieve gains have already been realized. The research, therefore, needs to branch out into new areas or new technologies to achieve these goals.

Nowadays many science headlines are dominated by debates about the legislation and public acceptance of some new scientific technologies. However, most of what we can achieve comes from more detailed phenotypes, the more widespread use of existing technologies and tools, or new applications of these.

A good example of branching into new areas is shifting the focus in genotyping to commercial pigs. Genotyping in the purebred nucleus lines is now routine and has generated considerable

additional gains. However, to achieve similar gains at the customer level, genotypes from the commercial generation need to be included.

The R&D work on piglet survival, relevance of variation in feed intake, and meat quality, are all good examples of how we strive to deliver balanced breeding. Topigs Norsvin has never focused on individual traits, like the total number born, for marketing purposes. Genetic progress must be sustainable and realized on the farms of our commercial customers if it is to benefit the pork production chain. We are aware that although single trait improvements in genetic gain may look relatively small, it is these marginal gains that make the difference between outperforming the competition versus simply matching what is being achieved elsewhere in the industry.

Topigs Norsvin is using a substantial part of its annual budget – organized into research platforms of reproduction, robustness and animal welfare, feed and feed efficiency, meat and carcass quality, and genetics and genomics – to reach its goal of doubling genetic progress.

Pigbase

Our unique breeding core

It is considered to be the biggest pig breeding database of its kind in the world. Pigbase is unique and the core of the Topigs Norsvin breeding program. Pigbase stores the information of more than 45 million pigs.

Pigbase contains more than just phenotypic data gathered on nucleus farms. It also contains a lot of data from commercial farms that work with the InGene in-house breeding program of Topigs Norsvin and the CCPS (Combined Crossbred and Purebred Selection) program. This makes it one of a kind. In addition, data from the CT scans at the Delta stations, AI stations, packers, and data from research projects are stored in and used in Pigbase.

The Topigs Norsvin genotyping program has expanded rapidly in recent years. With the development of genomic selection and other DNA technologies, more data are becoming available and can be used in calculating breeding values, selection lists, and more.

The vast amount of data and a properly working database are not the only things needed for a perfect breeding program. The quality of the data is important for creating genetic progress. Quality control is organized by a combination of well-trained and knowledgeable people working inside the nucleus herds, as well as clear protocols, both of which are supported by Pigbase. Pigbase contains automatic data quality checks by computer algorithms and reports to data specialists who can take action in the event of errors or issues.

Minnesota 4-H Purple Ribbon Livestock Auction



The 2019 Minnesota State Fair 4-H Purple Ribbon Livestock Auction was the most successful in its history and raised over \$760,000 in the sale of 106 animals including 24 beef, 10 dairy steers, 30 barrows, 10 gilts, 24 lambs, and 8 goats. In total, 2,898 Minnesota 4-H participants brought animal projects to the fair, which also included rabbits, poultry, and llamas. The year marks the 40th anniversary of the auction at the Minnesota State Fair. In addition, 41 scholarships were awarded totaling \$65,000.

As described by the Auction Committee: “The future of the livestock industry lies in the hands of today’s youth. They are producing and feeding livestock to meet the needs and objectives of the industry and for their own economic livelihood. The care and devotion they give their animals represents the very best in animal husbandry.”

Pictured above: John Eggert, CDO – Topigs Norsvin USA and Faith Sayles of Mower Co., MN, recipient of a \$1,000 MLBA (Minnesota Livestock Breeders Association) scholarship sponsored by Topigs Norsvin USA.

Producer PROfile – Isler Crest Farms Inc.



Isler Crest Farms Inc.

Nathan, Scott, and David Isler, all Ohio State graduates, are the fifth generation of the Isler family to farm at the location that is today Isler Crest Farms Inc. in Prospect, Ohio. The three brothers are partners in this 1200-sow farrow-to-finish operation that has doubled in size in the last five years. As Nathan describes, “Our father Bill and uncle Don built the farm as a breeding stock producer supplying purebreds across the country and the world, and we are still doing this today. We use Norsvin Landrace semen to make F1 females by crossing with our own York base to produce superior females that really perform.”

Isler Crest has maintained a closed herd and has not brought any live animals onto the farm since the early 1970s.

“We are a self-sustained farrow-to-finish operation. We grow enough corn for ourselves and operate our own feed mill,” added Nathan. In fact, the Islers farm approximately 3,000 acres, of which over 80% have been no-till for over 20 years. They utilize cover crops on approximately 25% of their total acres. Their pen gestation system was compliant with state requirements 10 years prior to the deadline.

The Islers have and continue to work with the USDA and The Ohio State University on several research studies, and they are dedicated to improving the swine industry. Collectively, they serve on many boards including Soil & Water, Farm Bureau, and the Ohio Pork Producers.



Nathan, David & Scott Isler



Isler gestation barn



Isler gilts

Balanced breeding still hot



Hans Olijslagers – Chief Technical Officer

Societal concerns about the pig production sector are growing around the world. More than 20 years ago, Topigs Norsvin opted for a balanced breeding approach. The breeding goal is not simply focused on maximizing economic returns, but on striking a favorable balance between economic benefits and animal welfare.

The balanced breeding approach of Topigs Norsvin has clearly paid off. In our Corporate Sustainability Report, we put forward our vision that every piglet born should be weaned by its mother. Selection for mothering ability and milk production is challenging, but our TN70 sows are the ultimate evidence that this is possible. Sow milk is far more cost-effective and welfare friendly than expensive milk substitutes or motherless rearing technology. TN70 sows have proven to be easy going mothers that deliver top quality piglets with excellent finishing potential.

Leading in sustainable breeding

Topigs Norsvin is also prepared in other areas of sustainable breeding. For example, next to group housing of gestating sows, loose farrowing is coming up in certain markets in response to the

demand for welfare pork concepts. Norsvin Landrace sows in Norway have already been selected for decades under loose farrowing conditions.

We have also implemented social genetic traits in our breeding program. This allows us to simultaneously improve production and welfare in our genetic lines.

Recent major trials done by the industry provide convincing evidence that Topigs Norsvin finishers have better natural resistance against PRRS than competitor boars. It is good to see that our sustained efforts to select for robust pigs are paying off big time now.

I am dedicated to further developing the most economic and sustainable breeding program in the world. Market-driven research and applying the latest technology in our breeding program are at the core of our strategy. We promise our customers that our genetics will fit future demands for sustainability, while at the same time securing the basis for profitable production.

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Topigs Norsvin USA announces new Sales & Business Development Manager



Kurt Wolf

Topigs Norsvin USA is pleased to announce the appointment of Kurt Wolf as Sales & Business Development Manager. Kurt brings 12 years of experience in the swine industry to Topigs Norsvin and will be focused on accounts in the eastern corn belt.

"I'm excited to join the Topigs Norsvin team" said Kurt, "and to be a part of major genetic progress within the swine

industry." Kurt is a graduate of The Ohio State University and was previously employed as sales manager for Alltech, Dostofarm, and Ag Property Solutions. Kurt enjoys showing Holstein cattle and lives in New Bavaria, Ohio with his wife, Linda, and son, Leo.

Kurt can be reached by email: kurt.wolf@topignorsvin.us or by phone: (952) 207-0049.

Topigs Norsvin USA summer internship program

Miranda McGuire of Greentown, Indiana is completing the final year of her undergraduate coursework at Purdue University. Miranda is an Animal Science major with a concentration in Production. She describes herself as someone who is "really passionate about working with people and animals, as well as pigs!" Upon graduation, Miranda is hoping to work in the swine industry as a farm manager or in consumer relations.

Miranda's main goal of interning with Topigs Norsvin was to gain research experience. As an employee of the Purdue University Swine Research Farm, Miranda has been involved in a number of research trials, but until this summer, had not had a project of her own.

Throughout her ten-week internship with Topigs Norsvin, Miranda was exposed to various aspects of the swine genetics business. She began her experience at the Topigs Norsvin office in Minnesota where she spent time planning an experiment to estimate the effect of day of induction on sow and piglet performance. Other aspects of Miranda's internship included on-farm data collection, data management, data analysis, and interpretation. Miranda presented these results to the Topigs Norsvin team at the conclusion of her internship in preparation for her final presentation to the farm staff and management team who partnered with the study.

Miranda's friends and colleagues at Topigs Norsvin USA thank her for her hard work this summer and wish her the best as she completes her undergraduate education.

For more information about internships with Topigs Norsvin USA, contact Dr. Jenelle Dunkelberger at jenelle.dunkelberger@topignorsvin.us



Miranda McGuire

Topigs Norsvin USA

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AI Stud Stations

Grand Vertex

Canton, IL
Doug Groth
(217) 357-2811

Eastern Iowa AI

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Doug Peterson
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Keith & Marie Rithamel
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Ai Partners-Skylab

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Bruce Zierke
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Whole Hog AI

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Ron Brodersen
(402) 254-2444

Commercial Concepts A.I., Inc.

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J. Mac Magee
(800) 573-4577

Ostler Sires

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Dale Stewart
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US Sales Agents

Gordonville, PA

Abe Fisher
(717) 615-8378

Hamilton, IL

Terry Turner
(309) 337-5291

AgCentral

Canistota, SD
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(605) 661-5819

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AI Stud Stations

Magnum Swine Genetics Inc.

Fort Macleod, AB
Andrew Buesekom
(888) 553-4844

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Ste. Anne, MB
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(204) 355-4012

Total Swine Genetics Inc.

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Stuart De Vries
(800) 844-9913

C & M Genetics

Lucan, ON
Dr. Cornelius Oltean
(888) 259-7594

Sunrise Genetics

Amherst, NS
Mike MacDonald
(902) 661-7883

Topigs Norsvin Insider Quiz

How to Play

Please answer the questions in our Insider Quiz. All the answers are in this newsletter. Then fax, mail or email your answers, along with your name, address, and phone number to:
Fax: 204-489-3152
Email: info@topignorsvin.ca

Entries are to be received by **October 31, 2019**. The first 10 entries drawn with the correct answers will receive a \$20.00 gift card. The Topigs Norsvin rep in your area will deliver the prize. Employees of Topigs Norsvin and their subsidiaries are not eligible.

Topigs Norsvin INSIDER Quiz Winners

Winners from the Summer 2019 issue will receive a \$20.00 gift card. Here are the winners from the last issue: Tyron Waldner – Meadow View Hogs – SD; Henry Entz – Carmichael Colony – SK; Daniel Waldner – Evergreen Colony Farming – AB; Lucy Rose Kleinsasser – Springfield Colony – MB; Gilbert Kleinsasser – Huron Farms – MB; Matthew Wurtz – Jamesville Colony – SD; Ben Van de Brunhorst – Van de Brunhorst Acres – ON; Luke Wipf – Lakeside Colony – AB; Ben S. Entz – Roseglen Farming Co. – AB; Dan Waldner – Sturgeon Creek Colony – MB. The Topigs Norsvin rep in your area will deliver your prize. Congratulations!

1. How many sows does Isler Crest Farm have? _____
2. How long ago did Topigs Norsvin opt for a balanced breeding approach? _____
3. How many pigs provide the information in the Pigbase database? _____
4. Which Topigs Norsvin line has been selected for decades under loose farrowing conditions? _____

Name: _____

Farm Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____ Fax #: _____ Email: _____

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