

National Association of Animal Breeders



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NAAB ANNOUNCES RECIPIENT OF 2025 PIONEER AWARD MR. CHARLES "CHARLIE" WILL

Madison, WI [October 6, 2025] – The National Association of Animal Breeders is pleased to announce Mr. Charles Will, known to family and friends as "Charlie," has been selected as the 2025 recipient of the NAAB Pioneer Award. Charlie dedicated more than 43 years to the AI industry before his retirement, leaving a lasting legacy as a pioneer in modern dairy genetics.

"Charlie traveled the world and spoke to tens of thousands of dairy farmers at meetings and seminars throughout his career. He had an incredible gift for taking complex genetic concepts and making them understandable to every dairy farmer. His enthusiasm for genetics inspired breeders around the globe. He is truly a pioneer in modern dairy genetics and a legend in our industry," said Scott Ruby of World Wide Sires.

Charlie graduated from the University of Illinois in 1974 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Dairy Science. Shortly after, he began his career as an area salesman with MABC before moving into the role of SMS evaluator. In 1978, he joined Select Sires in Plain City, Ohio as a Sire Analyst, a position he held for nearly 40 years. His influence extended well beyond U.S. borders. During his career, Charlie gave genetics seminars in 49 states and 18 foreign countries, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Japan, South Africa, Spain, and Switzerland, among others. He was also frequently invited to judge cattle shows internationally, further cementing his reputation as a respected leader in the field.

As a sire analyst, Charlie's contributions can best be measured through the exceptional Holstein genetics he procured for Select Sires. The bulls he brought into the program have had a lasting impact on both domestic and global dairy producers, with every unit of semen purchased serving as a vote of confidence in his work. Among them were many "difference-makers" that advanced dairy herds worldwide. To name a few:

7H980 Walkway Chief MARK – MARK was the first bull Charlie bought, and he turned out to be a sire of outstanding frames and top udders. MARK's impact was the number of top females which became great brood cows.

7H1118 Arlinda ROTATE – When evaluating daughters of another breeder proven bull in California, Charlie became impressed with the high milk production and strength sired by a "white bull" named ROTATE. History shows he went on to appear in the pedigrees of many top Holstein sires for generations.

7H1897 To-Mar BLACKSTAR – BLACKSTAR was the complete package siring high production and outstanding type. During his lifetime, BLACKSTAR was the most sought-after sire of sons for studs throughout the U.S. and World.

7H2236 Emprise Bell ELTON – ELTON was a breeder proven bull from Minnesota whose dam scored Good Plus with a Good udder, thus he did not meet the normal stud qualifications however his milking daughters had highly desirable udders and feet and legs, along with good health traits. ELTON was very popular and went on to be in the pedigree as the sire of DURHAM and the maternal grandsire of OMAN.

7H5157 Regancrest Elton DURHAM – “Supreme Type” in the form of 5,039 Excellent daughters and many winners at major shows that earned Premier Sire banners.

7H6417 O-Bee MANfred Justice – (1,000,000+ units sold) When calving ease, productive life and other health traits became increasingly important factors, along came OMAN. Extreme in many health traits along with high production, OMAN became a favorite of many commercial dairymen and A.I. studs around the world as a sire of sons.

Some of the other high customer satisfaction bulls Charlie Will was involved with include: MATHIE (1,000,000+ units sold), JOLT, BW MARSHALL, EMORY (800,000+ units sold), MILLION (1,000,000+ units sold), INTEGRITY (1,500,000+ units sold) and BLITZ (1,500,000+ units sold).

Charlie constantly sought out new ideas to advance genetic progress. When genomics came along late in his career, he embraced it. Charlie worked with breeders to secure the highest genomic young sires for use in the Select Sires system. Charlie Will’s legacy is in the impact he has made to the dairy industry through the sires that he purchased that will impact pedigrees for generations.



2025 NAAB Pioneer Award being accepted by Chuck Sattler, Select Sires from NAAB Board Vice Chair, Jerry Thompson at the NAAB 79th Annual Meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on August 26, 2025.

NAAB is the national trade association for artificial insemination businesses. NAAB members account for about 95% of dairy semen sold in the USA and market semen to more than 100 countries around the world.

"BETTER CATTLE FOR BETTER LIVING"