



Transferring cows between herds to ensure their records move with them

Key points

- Transferring cow records gives new owners access to generations of historical data that can be easily uploaded to on-farm software.
- The buyer should notify their herd testing centre **before** adding an animal to their on-farm software.
- The National ID is the preferred identification to use when transferring an animal.
- Transferring ownership at a breed society does not automatically transfer the animal at herd testing.
- Creating a “new” animal in your on-farm software will often lead to creating a duplicate record in industry databases as the animal often already exists in another herd.

Transferring a cow's records is an easy way to maintain data consistency with generations of performance and pedigree data able to be uploaded directly to on farm software. This generates more reliable breeding values, supports management and breeding decisions on farm, and maintains a consistent flow of information throughout the herd improvement network.

Why bother?

Many animals that are sold to another herd end up with lost, incomplete, or duplicated records. Incorrect or lack of transfer of new animals at herd test centres creates a disconnect between on-farm data (Herd Recording ID), breed societies (Herdbook ID) and the herd improvement database (National ID).

This is a common cause of data errors across the herd improvement network, with farmers losing access to valuable historical information.

When is a transfer required?

Herd test centres should be notified whenever a ‘new’ animal enters a herd. A ‘new’ animal includes:

- Any animal purchases (privately or at auction)
- Any animals moved between herds (movement between sharefarmer herds or when an operator runs separate herds across multiple farms)

When an animal is purchased, it is the buyer's responsibility to transfer the animal at herd testing. The agent and vendor will arrange a transfer of ownership

National ID is the primary identification used for genomic testing and Australian Breeding Values.

Herd Recording ID is an individual's ‘within herd’ identification, often corresponding with a visual ID such as an ear tag or freeze brand.

Herdbook ID is a secondary identification used by breed societies. It is only used for registered animals.

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with the breed society, but this does NOT automatically transfer the animal at herd testing.

How to transfer a new animal

Buyers: It is the buyer's responsibility to transfer an animal at the herd test centre. It is the buyer who must assign the **new** Herd Recording ID.

*To avoid potential duplication of records, the buyer should notify their herd testing centre **before** adding an animal to their on-farm software (ie. MISTRO, EasyDairy, HerdData).*

The **National ID** is the preferred identification method when transferring an animal.

Sellers/agents: When selling an animal, sellers (vendors) and agents should provide buyers with the animal's **National ID**. Sellers should enter the **code S8** (Sold for Dairying) when terminating animals with their on-farm herd management software to ensure the record remains ‘**active**’ on the herd improvement database.

Steps to transferring cows between herds (new owners)

- 1. Obtain National ID**
ask the seller/agent to provide the National ID for each animal bought.*
- 2. Create a list of the new animals**
assign each National ID with a new Herd Recording ID in your herd (do not add the new Herd Recording ID to your on-farm software)
- 3. Send the list to your herd test centre**
- 4. The herd test centre will transfer records to the new Herd Recording ID**
automatically transferring all performance, pedigree, and genomic data linked to the National ID.
- 5. The herd test centre will generate an automatic update** for any on-farm herd management software, breed society and industry databases.

* If the seller/agent cannot provide the National ID for purchased animals, ask them to provide farmer's name, address, herd test centre and Herd Recording ID of animals. Send this list to your herd test centre to discuss your options.

What happens if an animal isn't transferred?

How does this happen?

When an animal is allocated a 'new' Herd Recording ID by the farmer without notifying the herd test centre, a 'new' National ID is created for that animal. This results in duplicate records for that animal, and a disconnect between the animal's Herd Recording ID, National ID and Herdbook ID.

Even if the farmer uses on-farm software to manually add information such as Herdbook ID, date of birth, sire and dam, the 'new' record will **NOT** link to the historical data on the herd improvement database unless the farmer notifies their herd test centre and the correct National ID is linked to the cow.

Effects of not transferring an animal

Accurate herd test data is critical for breeding, culling, and health management decisions. Farmers cannot achieve the full benefits of herd testing when information such as breeding values, pedigrees, production data and cell count histories, are incomplete or missing. Refer to [Technote: The benefits of herd recording](#).

Lost production history

Access to a cow's complete production history is important when making performance-based breeding, management and culling decisions. Duplicate records or incomplete histories greatly reduce the accuracy and reliability of this information. Refer to [Factsheet: Tips for recording great data](#).

For herdbook registered animals, missing production histories will greatly devalue a pedigree, as well as affecting breeding values, production awards, brood cow points and Master Breeder points.

Production Index (PIs)

The Production Index (PIs) is an important performance measure and management tool. Refer to [Technote: Production Index \(PI\)](#). When data such as breed status, date of birth, age at calving, calving date and lactation number is incomplete or absent, it reduces the accuracy of the PI, or potentially, a PI will not be generated at all.

Australian Breeding Values (ABVs)

Breeding values are linked to the animal's National ID. If a new animal has not been correctly transferred at the herd test centre, the National ID may be disconnected from the Herd Recording ID. Refer to [Factsheet: Australia's two breeding indices](#) and [Technote: Requesting and receiving genomic evaluations](#).

This disconnect will result in an ABV which is not calculated using all available information including correct pedigree, production, type and workability information. Genomic breeding values can be calculated for animals where this data is absent or incomplete, but the reliability of the breeding values will decrease.

Health data

Historical information such as somatic cell counts, fat and protein ratios, lactation performance and calving intervals are valuable indicators of an individual's health history. Refer to [Factsheet: Breeding for better health and welfare](#).

By transferring an animal correctly, it ensures any historical performance data of both the individual and their maternal dam and grand dams can be utilised when making health related breeding, culling and management decisions.

Pedigree data

If a disconnect occurs between the Herd Recording ID, National ID and Herdbook ID, pedigree data can be lost. This affects the reliability of breeding values, can devalue a studbook registered pedigree, and limit the capacity of a selective mating program to accurately avoid inbreeding.

Different forms of Identification

National ID

The National ID is the primary form of identification used for genomic testing and Australian Breeding Values. The National ID is lifetime traceable and should be used as the primary identification when transferring an animal at herd testing.

- ✓ Primary link between all other forms of ID
- ✓ Primary identification for genomic testing
- ✓ Lifetime traceable
- ✓ Does NOT change when a cow moves herds
- ✓ Identifies database point of origin

Herd Recording ID

The Herd Recording ID refers to an individual's 'within herd' identification. It is allocated by the farmer, often corresponding with a visual ID such as an ear tag or freeze brand. The Herd Recording ID is not always lifetime traceable as it is common for farmers to change the Herd Recording ID whenever a new animal is introduced to a herd.

- ✓ Primary on-farm identification for most farmers
- ✓ Primary identification for herd testing
- ✗ NOT lifetime traceable
- ✓ Changes when a cow moves herds
- ✓ Relies on the shire/herd number to identify point of origin

Herdbook ID

The Herdbook ID is allocated by a breed society and is only relevant for studbook registered animals. It is a secondary form of identification and relies on links to the National ID and Herd Recording ID when accessing herd testing data. Transferring ownership of a Herdbook ID does not automatically transfer the animal at herd testing.

- ✓ Primary identification at breed societies for pedigree data
- ✓ Supplementary identification at herd testing
- ✓ Does NOT change when a cow moves herds
- ✓ For studbook registered animals only
- ✓ Lifetime traceable

Summary

Data quality for purchased cows is preserved when farmers provide the National ID of the animal to their herd test centre before herd testing the animal in their herd. Duplication and loss of data can be avoided by this one simple step and the value of your recently purchased cow maintained.

Read more

Factsheet: [Tips for recording great data](#)

Factsheet: [Breeding for better health and welfare](#)

Factsheet: [Australia's two breeding indices](#)

Technote: [Test Day Model for Production ABVs](#)

Technote: [The benefits of herd recording](#)

Technote: [Production Index \(PI\)](#)

Technote: [Requesting and receiving genomic evaluations](#)

More information

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