



# December 2025 ABV release

## Impacts from NBO changes

### Key points

Implementing the recommendations from the review of the National Breeding Objective has delivered an enhanced genetic evaluation system (see over page). The following trends have been observed with implementation in the December 2025 public release of Australian Breeding Values (ABVs).

1. A general drop in ABVs due to the base update
2. Higher values for BPI, HWI, SI (plus ranking changes)
3. Higher values for Overall Type and Mammary (Holstein and Jersey)
4. Lower values for Fertility ABV (Holsteins)
5. Big drop in Milk Litres ABV in Jerseys
6. Optimum breeding values identified for type traits with intermediate optimums
7. New model for Survival ABV

### Enhanced genetic evaluation system

The changes implemented in December 2025 have resulted in an enhanced genetic evaluation system, enabling the industry to breed herds that suit future needs.

Milk payments are more reflective of current and future payment systems.

The base update means that the ABVs are based on comparison with a more relevant population (animals born in 2020 now instead of 2011).

The Health Weighted Index is more suited to seasonal producers with the inclusion of Calving Ease and Gestation Length.

Farmer and industry feedback and preferences were considered when formulating the updated indices.

### Lower ABV values for most traits

When the base is updated without any other changes, ABV values would be expected to be lower. Animal rankings are not affected by a base update.

However, updating the base was one of several changes implemented in December 2025 so the

values of ABVs and indices and animal rankings are influenced by the combined changes.

### Higher values for BPI, HWI, SI

The magnitude of indices has increased slightly in all breeds. In particular, BPI values have increased, mainly due to increase weightings of milk price; from \$6.18 per kg of milk solids to \$8.43.

Generally, a base update leads to lower ABV values which flows on to the indices (BPI, HWI and SI). However, the changes made to the formulas of the indices (including updated milk return and input costs) have offset this.

Individual bull rankings for BPI, HWI and SI have changed but in general high-ranking bulls continue to rank well, albeit with some reshuffling.

Changes in BPI rankings are mostly due to the changes in milk prices, particularly the change in balance of protein to fat, as well as updated feed, input and labour.

[Read more: Technote: Updating the base](#)

## Overall Type & Mammary ABVs (Holsteins and Jerseys)

In Holsteins and Jerseys the ABV values for Overall Type and Mammary have increased noticeably.

This is because the base group for type evaluation has been expanded to provide a more representative group of animals for comparison.

Previously, a highly selected group of elite animals was used to create the base group for type evaluations. Now, all animals entering the genetic evaluation system are used providing a better estimate of the type merit of the population used in the base.

The upshot is that bulls and cows are now compared to a more representative group of animals. The result for Holsteins and Jerseys in particular is that their Overall Type and Mammary System ABVs have risen.

Read more: [Technote - Understanding Type ABVs](#)

## Fertility ABV (Holsteins)

In Holsteins, the Fertility ABV has decreased by 6 points – due to the base update.

This is a larger drop than for other breeds, but it's actually good news. It reflects exceptional genetic improvement for fertility in the Holstein breed over the past 10 years which means the merit of the base group has improved dramatically (since previous base update).

## Milk Litres ABV (Jerseys)

In Jersey's, Milk Litres ABVs have dropped on average by more than 200 litres.

This could also be seen as good news, reflecting the fantastic gains made by Jersey breeders for production in the past 10 years. The genetic merit of the base group has improved dramatically, leading to a decrease in the Jersey milk breeding values.

## Type traits with intermediate optimums

DataGene has enhanced the expression of type traits with intermediate optimums to make it easier for people to identify animals that are close to the optimum. Animal that are close to the optimum carry an O beside their breeding value.

There is no change to in the way the type breeding values are calculated.

Read more: [Technote - Understanding Type ABVs](#)

## New model for Survival ABV

DataGene is now using a new model for Survival ABV. It combines both early and late survival to give a better prediction of productive life.

The introduction of the new model in December 2025 had a small, once off impact on Survival ABV. About two thirds of Holstein bulls changed by less than plus or minus 5 ABV points for survival. Extreme changes were plus or minus 8 ABV points (less than 1% of the population).

The impact was slightly greater in Jerseys.

As survival is included in the three indices (BPI, HWI, SI), the new model Survival ABV had a small flow on effect to the BPI, HWI and SI.

Read more: [Technote - Survival ABV](#)

## Acknowledgement

DataGene is an initiative of Dairy Australia and the herd improvement industry. DairyBio provides the research pipeline to develop and maintain Australian Breeding Values.

## Contact us

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## National Breeding Objective

The National Breeding Objective (NBO) describes an agreed group of desirable traits, providing breeding direction for both bull and cow breeding across the country. Australia's NBO is aimed at increasing net farm profit. It is expressed through the three breeding indices – Balanced Performance Index (BPI), Health Weighted Index (HWI) and Sustainability Index (SI).

The NBO is reviewed every five years, to ensure it keeps pace with the evolving needs of dairy businesses, new knowledge and breeding technologies.