DataGene
Solutions for Herd Development

Annual Update 2026



DataGene is an independent, industry-owned organisation that delivers world-class herd improvement products and services to Australian dairy farmers and their service providers. Our members include leading herd improvement service providers, genetics suppliers, breed associations and peak dairy industry organisations.

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ABS

AGRI-GENE

Apiam animal health

AUSSIE REDS

Australian Dairy Farmers

BROWN SWISS AUSTRALIA

COBDEN ARTIFICIAL BREEDERS CO-OP. LTD.

Dairy Australia

FARMWEST

Genetics AUSTRALIA Breeding better Australian herds

Holstein AUSTRALIA

JERSEY Australia

LIVESTOCK AND BUSINESS CENTRE LIMITED

LIC LIVESTOCK IMPROVEMENT

NHD NATIONAL HERD DEVELOPMENT

NEOGEN Australasia

NATIONAL HERD IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC. NHIA

NU-GENES HERD IMPROVEMENT SPECIALISTS

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TasHerd Tasmania's Herd Improvers

VIKINGGENETICS

Wellbred GENETICS

Yarram Herd Services

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Abbreviations

AAABG	Australasian Association for the Advancement of Animal Breeding and Genetics
ABV	Australian Breeding Value
AI	Artificial Insemination
ASI	Australian Selection Index
BPI	Balanced Performance Index
CCM	Cloud Controls Matrix
CDR	Central Data Repository
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
FVI	Forage Value Index
GAICD	Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors
Ginfo	Genomic Information Reference Herd
HWI	Health Weighted Index
ICAR	International Committee for Animal Recording
iDDEN	International Dairy Data Exchange Network
LTE	Linear Type Evaluation
MACE	Multiple Across Country Evaluation
MIR	Mid Infrared
NASIS	National AI Sire Identification Scheme
NBO	National Breeding Objective
NHIA	National Herd Improvement Association
R&D	Research and Development
SI	Sustainability Index



Chair's Report

TIM JELBART, CHAIR, DATAGENE

As a dairy farmer and Chair of DataGene, I understand that the decisions we make today shape not only the performance of our herds, but also the future of our businesses and our families.

Trusted data and genetics have an important role in those decisions, and that responsibility sits at the heart of everything DataGene does.

Improving how farmers access and use their data remains one of the industry's biggest opportunities and one of DataGene's greatest challenges. The vision has not changed, but our experience has shown that achieving it is more complex than simply connecting systems. As technology evolves, so too do expectations around data access, ownership and stewardship, together with the respective roles of farmers, service providers and industry organisations.

Progress depends on collaboration, shared purpose and a willingness to tackle complex challenges together across the industry. While progress on data connectivity has not been as fast as any of us would like, the lessons learned in recent years have strengthened our understanding of what is needed to deliver meaningful change in data accessibility and utilisation.

As a Board, we reflected carefully on where DataGene can make the greatest difference over the coming decade. We believe DataGene's greatest value lies in building on the strengths the industry already relies on—trusted genetic evaluation, responsible stewardship of industry data and strong partnerships that help translate information into better decisions on farm.

With that direction in mind, we were pleased to welcome Dr Emily Piper as Chief Executive Officer. Emily brings outstanding expertise in genetics and genetic evaluation, together with a practical understanding of the Australian dairy industry and international commercial experience. She is already providing strong leadership as DataGene continues to build on its core strengths while exploring opportunities to deliver greater value for farmers.

During the transition to Emily's appointment, Ross Joblin provided steady leadership as interim Chief Executive Officer. On behalf of the Board, I thank Ross for his commitment and leadership during this important period.

The 2025/26 financial year saw DataGene posting a net surplus of $51,307, a significant improvement from the previous year's $122,842 deficit.

The Company maintained a sound asset and equity position, with the reserve supporting risk management, operational continuity and strategic investment in people, infrastructure and industry services.

I thank my fellow Directors for their thoughtful contribution throughout the year, along with Emily, Ross and the entire DataGene team for their professionalism and dedication. I also thank Dairy Australia, herd improvement organisations, research partners and, most importantly, the dairy farmers whose continued support and contribution make DataGene's work possible.

I am confident that by staying focused on trusted data, sound science and practical outcomes, DataGene will continue to make an important contribution to a productive, profitable and sustainable dairy industry.

Financial summary 2025/26

Profit and Loss at 30 June 2026

Sales Revenue	4,796,201
Other Revenue	53,632
Other Income	33,553
Total Income	**4,883,386**
Employee expenses	2,327,345
Other expenses	2,504,734
Total Expenses	**4,832,079**
Surplus	51,307
EBITDA	**676,684**

Balance Sheet at 30 June 2026

Current Assets	1,627,724
Non-Current Assets	3,969,178
Total Assets	**5,596,902**
Current Liabilities	668,807
Non-Current Liabilities	1,163,847
Total Liabilities	**1,832,654**
Net Assets/Total Equity	**3,764,248**



CEO's Report

EMILY PIPER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, DATAGENE

It is a privilege to present the 2026 Annual Update, the first in my role as CEO of DataGene.

One of my first observations has been the dedication and expertise of our staff, directors and industry partners.

Over recent months, I have had the opportunity to meet with farmers, herd improvement companies, research partners and industry stakeholders across Australia. Those conversations have reinforced the important role DataGene plays in supporting the Australian dairy industry, and I am excited by the opportunity to work with the people and organisations that make Australian dairy one of the world's most innovative and collaborative industries.

At the heart of that role is trust. As the trusted steward of Australia's dairy data and genetic evaluation systems, DataGene has earned the confidence of industry through decades of safeguarding the integrity of its most valuable data assets.

Building on that foundation, we have an opportunity to broaden the role of trusted industry data—underpinning not only genetic evaluation, but a growing range of data-driven decisions that will benefit farmers and the wider industry. Realising this opportunity will require all of us across the industry to think differently about how data is shared, governed and used. As we do, we must preserve the trust that has underpinned Australia's dairy genetic evaluation system for decades.

I have also been encouraged by the depth of expertise across the organisation and the industry's commitment to continual improvement. Significant advances have been made to Australia's genetic evaluation system during the past year, while important work has also begun to strengthen the technology and data foundations that will support the next generation of services.

One of the strongest messages I have heard from stakeholders is that technology alone will not deliver better outcomes. The relationships between farmers, herd improvement organisations, researchers and industry service providers are just as important as the systems that connect them.

This was reinforced through the experience of the DataConnect project. While the project delivered important outcomes, including a redeveloped HerdData App, an industry data audit and improved data integration pathways, it also demonstrated that successful data sharing depends on trusted partnerships, clear value for farmers and practical solutions that fit naturally within existing farm businesses and industry systems.

These lessons will help shape DataGene's future direction as we continue working with industry to improve the way data is shared, connected and used.

This was also a year of transition for DataGene. I would like to acknowledge the stewardship provided by our interim CEO, Ross Joblin, during the first seven months of the year, together with the commitment of our staff, Board and industry partners. Their collective efforts ensured DataGene continued to deliver the trusted services that underpin Australia's dairy breeding system while maintaining momentum on important strategic priorities.

Looking ahead, my priority is to ensure DataGene remains a trusted, innovative and responsive organisation that helps farmers make better decisions through data and genetics. By continuing to strengthen our technology, build trusted partnerships and focus on practical outcomes for farmers, I believe DataGene is well placed to make an even greater contribution to the Australian dairy industry.

Thank you to our staff, Board, Dairy Australia, industry partners and the many farmers who contribute their data, knowledge and experience. Your commitment makes DataGene's work possible, and I look forward to working with you as we continue building a stronger future for the Australian dairy industry.

Solutions for herd development

About DataGene

DataGene is an independent and Australian dairy industry-owned organisation responsible for driving herd improvement and enabling data-driven decisions in the agriculture sector.

It is an initiative of Dairy Australia and the broader dairy industry. DataGene brings together non-competitive functions under the one umbrella, including genetic evaluation, herd recording and data systems. It also provides software development services and strategic consulting services in technology.

Our Vision

Leading sustainable and profitable agriculture by facilitating data-driven decisions.

Our Mission

An independent DataGene supports Australian dairy farmers to improve the sustainability and profitability of their farms by delivering world-class genetic evaluation, data-driven decision-making tools, and software and professional services to the agricultural industry.

Our activities are managed within five strategic pillars:

1. Efficient data-driven decisions
2. Sustainability and animal performance through R&D and herd improvement
3. Promoting the value of herd improvement
4. Diversified and improved service provision
5. Service delivery

How we work

DataGene plays a fundamental role in the pathway between research outcomes and on-farm application. With many others also having a role in this process, collaboration is vital. DataGene has a long-standing collaborative relationship with DairyBio that provides the research pipeline for genetic evaluation, new traits, improved reliability and novel applications (see page 33).

DataGene performs the development and delivery roles to implement new traits and applications created by DairyBio. The development phase may involve implementing models into DataGene's genetic evaluation system and developing new software, tools or apps. Ginfo – the industry's genomic information reference population – has an important role for both research and development and data integrity to facilitate world class genetic evaluation.



Solutions for herd development

DataGene's expertise in development is increasingly recognised and valued by other organisations within the dairy industry and more widely across agriculture.

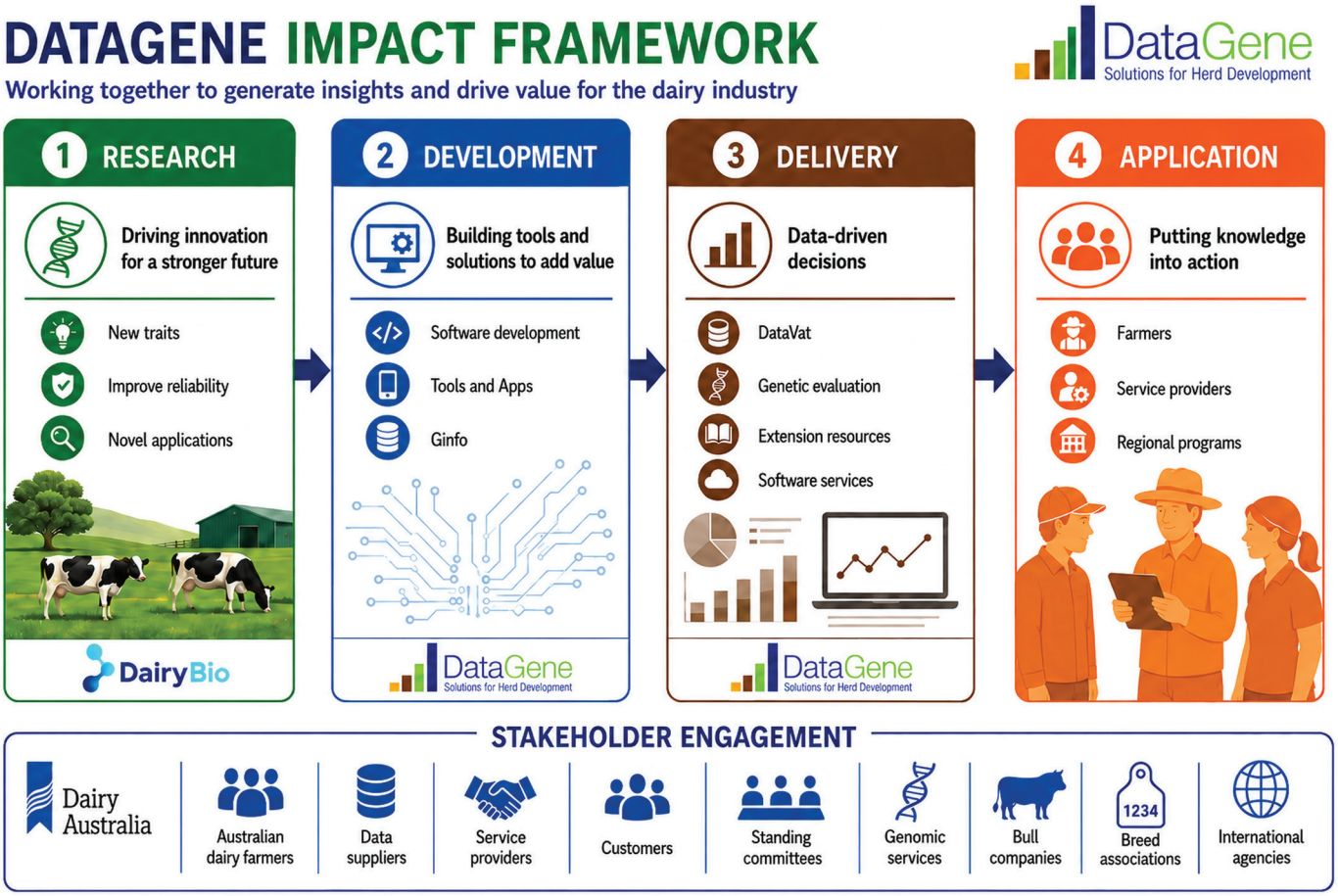
DataGene's routine delivery services include genetic evaluation (ABV releases, including genomics, that are published via DataVat.com.au), software services such as DataGene Centre for herd test centres and data integrity to facilitate world class genetic evaluation, and a range of extension resources.

Dairy farmers are the reason for DataGene's existence. They are the end-users of most of our products and services and the focus of our vision and mission. We recognise that many players have an influence on the application of herd improvement on farm. To ensure farmers have access to the information and tools they need, DataGene works with a broad range of service providers including herd test centres, software companies, bull companies, breed societies, resellers and genomic service providers. We can also reach farmers through a diverse range of advisers, including Dairy Australia's regional programs.

DataGene works closely with international organisations such as the International Committee for Animal Recording, Interbull, iDDEN, the Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding and Lactanet.

DataGene is owned by industry. Its foundation members are Dairy Australia, Australian Dairy Farmers and the National Herd Improvement Association of Australia (NHIA). Our members include herd test centres, genetics companies, genomic service providers, breed associations, and animal health companies (see inside front cover).

Dairy Australia is a major funder of DataGene and is also a client in the development of software solutions such as the Clinical Mastitis App.



Products and services

DataGene owns and manages Australia's national independent dairy genetic evaluation database and analysis service with the aim of increasing the rate of genetic improvement in Australian dairy herds.

Genetic and genomic evaluations

DataGene is the sole entity calculating and supplying Australian-specific breeding values. Virtually all AI bulls with semen sold in Australia have been evaluated using DataGene's independent genetic and genomic data.

DataGene maintains the industry's national genomic reference herd, Ginfo, which underpins the development of breeding values for new traits, especially those that are difficult to measure, such as health traits. Ginfo also enables the industry to use new technologies such as MIR (mid infrared) spectrometry (see page 24).

Evaluations are publicly released three times a year in April, August and December, in line with internationally agreed Interbull release dates. Bull ABVs are updated weekly for fee-paying customers such as genetics companies and herd owners. Female ABVs are updated weekly based on the latest genomic and herd test results for herd owners and genomic service providers. Australian Breeding Values are calculated for Holstein, Jersey, Guernsey, Brown Swiss, Australian Red, Ayrshire, Illawarra, and Dairy Shorthorn breeds as well as their crosses.

Genomic evaluations are delivered for Holstein, Jersey, Red breeds and their crosses.

NASIS registrations

DataGene manages the National AI Sire Identification Scheme (NASIS) that registers critical information on dairy and beef bulls for the purpose of pedigree recording and genetic evaluation. NASIS is part of the Central Data Repository and holds a wealth of detailed identity information for more than 30,000 bulls from around the world.

Export heifer certification

DataGene collaborates with Holstein Australia in the certification for Holstein heifer exports, including administration of records of animal pedigrees and identification details.

Reports, tools and resources

DataGene supports and enhances a suite of decision support tools such as the Good Bulls Guide, Good Bulls App, Genetic Progress Report, HerdPlatform dashboard, HerdData app, Fertility Focus report, Mastitis Focus Report and national statistics.

Software services

DataGene delivers software development and maintenance services including Centre and inventory software to herd testing and AI service providers. DataGene Centre is the software that supports more than 90% of herd testing in Australia. DataGene Centre is a highly specialised software solution tailored to Australian conditions. DataGene has a proven track record for developing and maintaining software for the agriculture sector, both domestically and internationally.

Forage Value Index

DataGene evaluates Dairy Australia's Forage Value Index each year. Developed by Dairy Feedbase, the Forage Value Index (FVI) is a tool that helps Australian dairy farmers and their advisers to make more informed decisions when selecting ryegrass cultivars. FVI is evaluated for perennial, Italian and annual ryegrasses for seven dairying regions.

Products and services

Products and services delivered directly	Fee for service
Good Bulls Guide and App	×
Website (information and data)	×
ABV(g) reports to genomic service providers	✓
Bull proofs to bull companies	✓
HerdData app	✓
Project management services to industry organisations	✓
Centre and inventory software to service providers	✓
Software development services to industry	✓
NASIS	✓
Export heifer	✓

Products and services delivered through third parties	Fee for service
HerdPlatform (via DataVat / herd test centres)	✓
Selective Dry Cow Tool	✓
Genetic Progress Report	×
Extension resources	×
MIR Conception report (via herd test centres)	✓



Our data engine room

DataGene's data engine room is underpinned by three IT systems: DataVat, the Central Data Repository and the genetic evaluation system.

Combined, DataVat, the CDR and the genetic evaluation system hold the key to enabling dairy farmers to make data-driven decisions with ease. Although challenging, DataGene continues to progress towards the vision of a system that enables "single entry; multiple access". The aim is for seamless transfer of data between on-farm systems and industry databases enabling data to be entered once and then used in multiple ways across different platforms, tools and reports.

DataVat

DataVat is a web portal that allows customised, secure access to various reports, tools and resources such as Australian Breeding Values, the Genetic Progress Report, HerdPlatform, the Selective Dry Cow Tool and MIR Conception. These tools draw on each herd's own data that is stored in the Central Data Repository. Some of the tools and reports are publicly accessible, while others are available only to herd owners, or fee-paying customers of DataGene services (such as bull companies and genomic service providers).

Central Data Repository

The Central Data Repository is Australia's largest database of dairy animal performance records, some dating back more than 100 years. With new information arriving every day, the CDR feeds data into the tools and resources delivered via DataVat. While DataGene is its caretaker, the CDR's value extends beyond genetic evaluation and herd data measurement that it is best known for. The CDR supports dairy cattle trade and marketing, quality assurance programs required by milk processors, industry reporting, benchmarking farm business performance and other services.

Increasingly, the CDR is evolving to incorporate data from non-traditional sources. DataGene is committed to expanding the CDR by connecting additional data sources and enabling data sharing across multiple platforms.

A key principle underpinning the CDR is that each farmer should control access to their data.

Genetic evaluation system

DataGene's genetic evaluation system is the IT system which processes the billions of records of animals' genetic and performance data to calculate Australian Breeding Values and indices. The genetic evaluation system includes the models used to calculate ABVs for more than 40 traits and four indices. The genetic evaluation system is run 43 times a year to update ABVs and indices.

DataVat
Tools for better decisions



Performance metrics

DataGene uses clearly defined measures to monitor its progress for the most important aspects of its work.

This report includes just six of these key metrics: Genetic trends, number of cows in the Central Data Repository (CDR), number of bulls and females that have been genomically tested, National AI Sire Identification Scheme (NASIS) bull registrations and workability records. These metrics represent our progress towards the National Breeding Objective and forecast future success that is founded on high-quality data.

Genetic trends

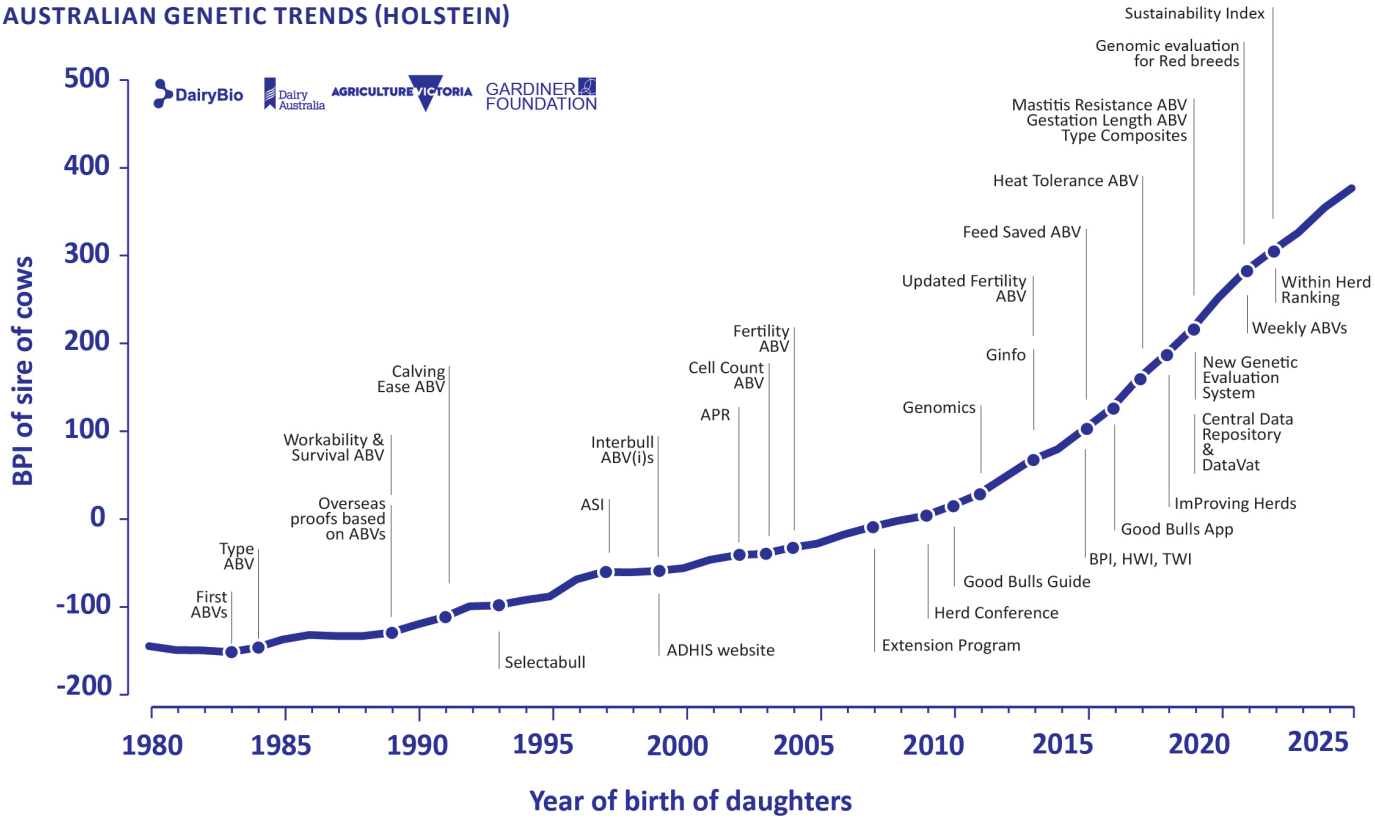
A substantial portion of the value that DataGene delivers to the dairy industry is through genetic evaluation that drives profitable herds and cows. DataGene tracks the rate of genetic gain for dozens of characteristics but its main genetic metric is the trend for Balanced Performance Index (BPI) for the sire of cows.

Target: long-term (10 year) average $30/year

Current: For Holsteins, the average rate of genetic gain for BPI in sires of cows over the past 10 years (2015-2025) is very close to the target, at $29.30/cow/year.

For Jerseys, the 10-year trend is $14.90/cow/year, with the most recent 5-year trend at $15.30/cow/year.

AUSTRALIAN GENETIC TRENDS (HOLSTEIN)



Performance metrics

Number of cows with data in the CDR

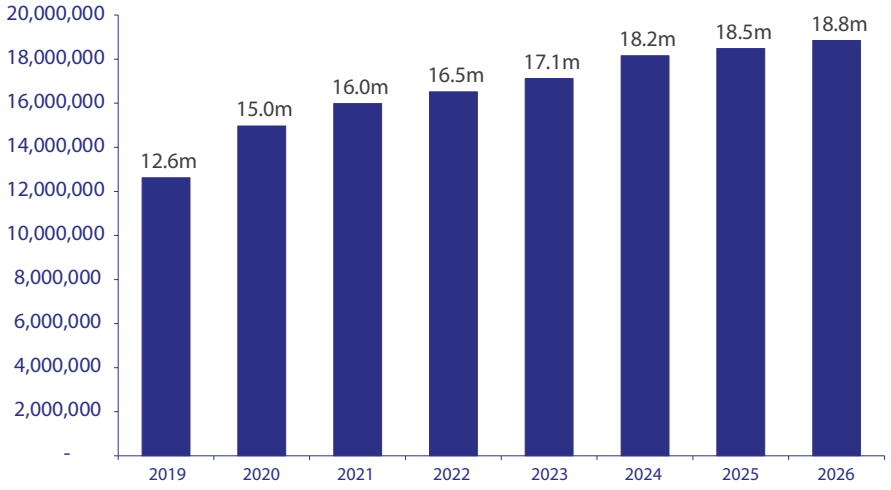
Expanding the number and type of records in the CDR is vital to ensure the industry has access to data for accurate genetic evaluation and innovations to enable data-driven decisions.

Tracking the number of cows in the Central Data Repository gives an indication of the information arriving from herd-recording services, breed organisations and on-farm data sources that are now connecting.

Target: increasing annually by 5%

Current: 18.8 million (1.9% increase)

NUMBER OF COWS IN CENTRAL DATA REPOSITORY (CDR)



Female genomic testing

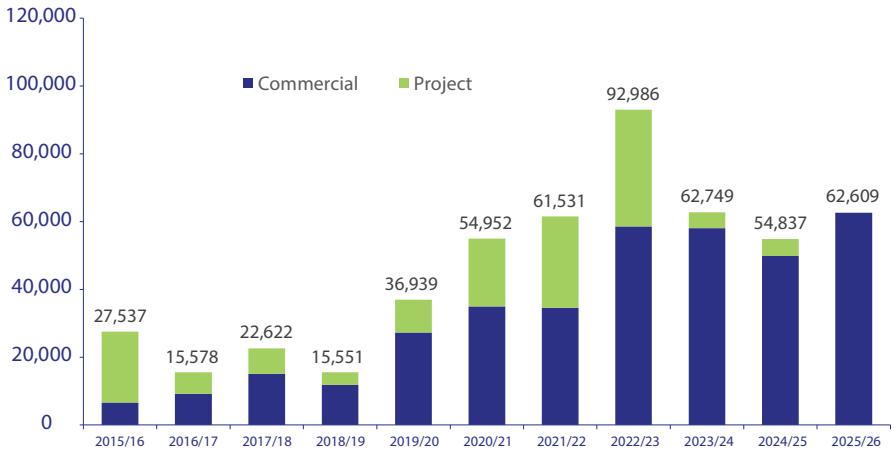
Heifer genomic testing is a cost-effective way for farmers to select the best replacements for their herd. Genomic results contribute to higher rates of genetic gain through selection decisions and pedigree correction, confident culling choices and diversifying income streams that enhance business agility.

Target: minimum of 15% increase in the number of females tested

Current: 62,609 (14% increase)

While the number of commercially tested cow has increased by 25.6%, there were no animals associated with research projects tested this year.

NUMBER OF GENOMICALLY TESTED FEMALES



Performance metrics

Bull genomic testing

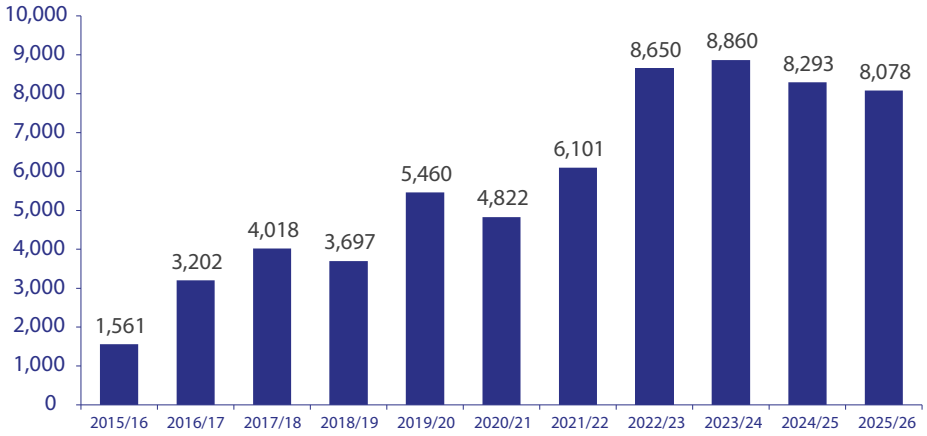
Strong demand for Australian genomic evaluations for bulls has delivered another strong year of bull genomic testing. Increasing the number of bulls that are tested ensures that farmers have access to the best genetics available, validated in Australia's unique dairying environments.

Target: >3,000/year

Current: 8,078 (2.6% decrease since last year, 152% more than when DataGene began in 2016/17)

While there was a decline in bull genomic testing this year, the number remains strong.

NUMBER OF GENOMICALLY TESTED BULLS



NASIS registered bulls

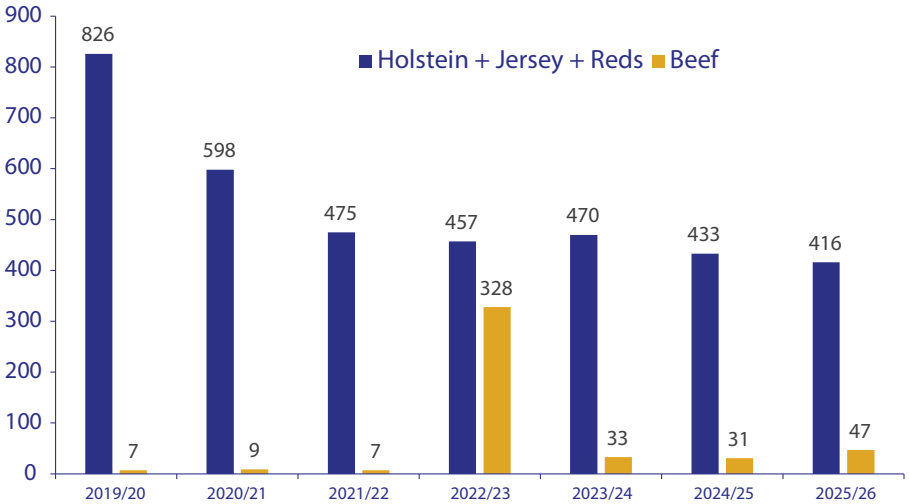
The NASIS (National AI Sire Identification System) bull registry is a collaborative industry effort that underpins high quality animal recording and evaluations in Australia.

Target: Maintain a minimum of 500 new bulls registered on NASIS each year.

Current: 416 (decrease of 4% since last year)

NASIS registrations were slightly lower than last year for dairy bulls (-17) while NASIS beef registrations were up by 16. This reflects the changing product mix in the marketplace. NASIS registrations may continue to fluctuate over time depending on seasonal and market considerations (beef price, dairy heifer export opportunities, etc).

NUMBER OF NASIS REGISTERED BULLS



Performance metrics

Workability

Workability reports are a vital piece of data for genetic evaluation – no one likes a kicking cow or a slow milker. Workability traits have an economic value and are included in breeding indices (BPI, HWI, SI). Farmers are asked to report workability scores on all 2-year-old heifers through their herd management software (Easy Dairy, Mistro Farm), their herd test centre or the HerdData app.

Target: 3,000/year from the progeny of nominated sires

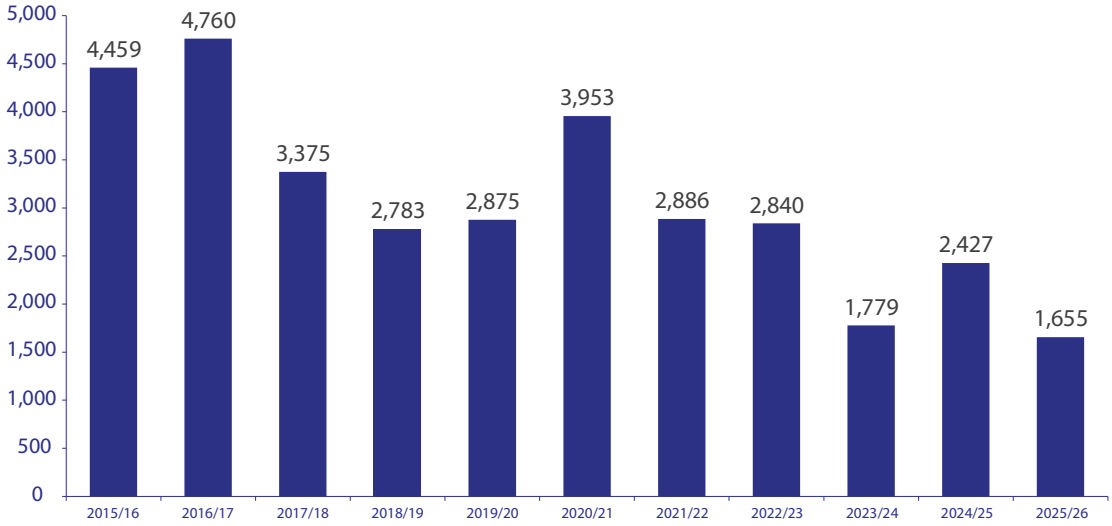
Current: 1,655 from the progeny of nominated sires (32% decrease since last year).

Workability records dropped back this year to similar levels to 2023/24 which is disappointing after last year's uptick. This continual decline is an ongoing concern for the industry, however it also highlights the genetic improvement in workability traits, where farmers are now placing less emphasis on these traits due to the satisfactory performance of most heifers entering the herd.

To encourage farmers to report the workability of their heifers, the HerdData App is free for workability reporting (subscription fees apply for farmers wanting to use all app features).

DataGene has recently invested in the HerdData app which is now freely available for workability collection (subscription fees apply for farmers wanting to use all app features).

WORKABILITY DATA FOR NOMINATED BULLS



New CEO reconnecting with Australian farmers

After nearly 10 years in the US, Dr Emily Piper is enjoying reconnecting with Australian farmers.

Starting as DataGene's CEO in February 2026, Emily believes the organisation is well placed to continue providing genetic evaluation and herd improvement services that make Australian dairy farm businesses more profitable.

And she thinks the sky's the limit in developing additional data insights to help all agricultural industries.

Based with Zoetis in Kalamazoo, Michigan, for the previous nine years, most recently heading its Business Process and Strategic Programs for its Precision Animal Health group, Emily's career has centred on developing and commercialising genomic and precision technologies for livestock producers.

She started as a pioneer in the commercial delivery of genomics in Australia. With a PhD in veterinary science, she went on to lead the Animal Genetics Laboratory at the University of Queensland and in 2014 joined Zoetis Australia as Technical Services Manager for Genetics which led to her US role.

Now back in front of the Australian dairy industry, she has been listening to what farmers want and need, and determining how DataGene can help.



Emily Piper addressing WA Dairy Innovation Day.

Her interest in agriculture stems back to her grandparents who were fine wool Merino producers and her father's family are still on sheep, cattle and cotton farms, which gave her a passion for the land and agricultural production.

Emily has worked alongside DataGene since its transition from ADHIS in 2015. In her role with Zoetis Australia, she teamed up with DataGene to launch genomic evaluation for female dairy cattle. This was the start of a fruitful connection. One of the reasons she was keen to work with DataGene is the loyalty, trust and recognition it has in the industry.

She was keen to lead the team that would create the next era of data aggregation, software development and tools to enable DataGene to provide other data insights to Australian dairy farmers to make their operations more profitable into the future.

A common thread throughout Emily's career has been making technology work at scale and she hopes to apply that at DataGene. "I have a background in scaling data-driven companies and I've been involved in translating research and development outcomes in genetics and genomics into customer-usable tools my entire career," she said.

As a leader, she aims to "empower talented people to do what they do best, remove obstacles, rally the team around the company vision and ensure the voice of our customers is at the centre of what we do".

Emily is married to Justin and, along with their two Australian Kelpies, she looks forward to returning to the Australian bush for camping and hiking.

CASE STUDY

WA farmers ignore the trends and stick to their goals

Over a dairying career closing in on 50 years, Mark and Dorothy Haggerty have seen breeding trends come and go but they've never swayed from their goals.

They have always bred a commercial herd that suits their family farm at Capel in the south-west corner of Western Australia and continue to enjoy the success that comes from sticking to a consistent, well-researched breeding strategy.

Their West & Haggerty herd is in the top 5% in Australia for the Balanced Performance Index (BPI) and their production figures continue to improve and impress.

Regularly turning to DataGene's Good Bulls Guide, using genomic testing and herd recording data, Mark and Dorothy have stuck to their guns and made real genetic progress.

Dorothy and Mark, their daughter Lisa and her husband Jason and seven staff milk 900-1,000 Holsteins in a herd topping 2000 including dry stock.

The family enterprise expanded 19 years ago with a 12,000 ha wheat and sheep property to secure grain and fodder, and son John and his family run sheep, providing more diversification.

They thrive on using data and technology, not only for breeding but for production, with DeLaval milking robots introduced earlier this year.

In June, they hosted the 2026 Western Dairy Innovation Day, following the theme 'Future Farming Systems' showcasing their new robotic dairy, cow behaviour and technology integration.



Mark and Dorothy Haggerty have fast-tracked genetic gain in their herd by genomically testing female calves.

They breed for a medium-sized Holstein, with good bone, good capacity, feet and legs, increasing production and components, and temperament is a high priority. "If you can't milk them because they're cranky, it doesn't matter how good of a producer they are," Dorothy says.

Good Bulls App

Using the Good Bulls App is one of the keys to their success.

"When we're looking, we put in our parameters and see what comes up and most of them tend to be in the Good Bulls App," Dorothy said. "It's very helpful. We use the filtering tool where you can put in everything you want and see what comes out. That narrows your search parameters and is a big saving time wise."

Bulls used in the past two years are amongst the top BPI bulls available and above average for fat and protein, temperament, feet and legs, matching their breeding objectives. The herd's genetic progress report shows that 89% of cows born in 2023 were bred from Good Bulls, a simple strategy to improve the genetic merit of a herd over time, which is reflected in the graph.

Genomic testing

Every female is genomically tested at birth. "That gives us such a suite of tools for selection to cull the bottom, choose the beef-on-dairy mothers and select the best cows and heifers for sexed semen," Dorothy said.

Dorothy and Mark have been great supporters of the Australian genetic evaluation system, contributing information to the system through herd test and using DataGene tools and information to build this great herd over decades.

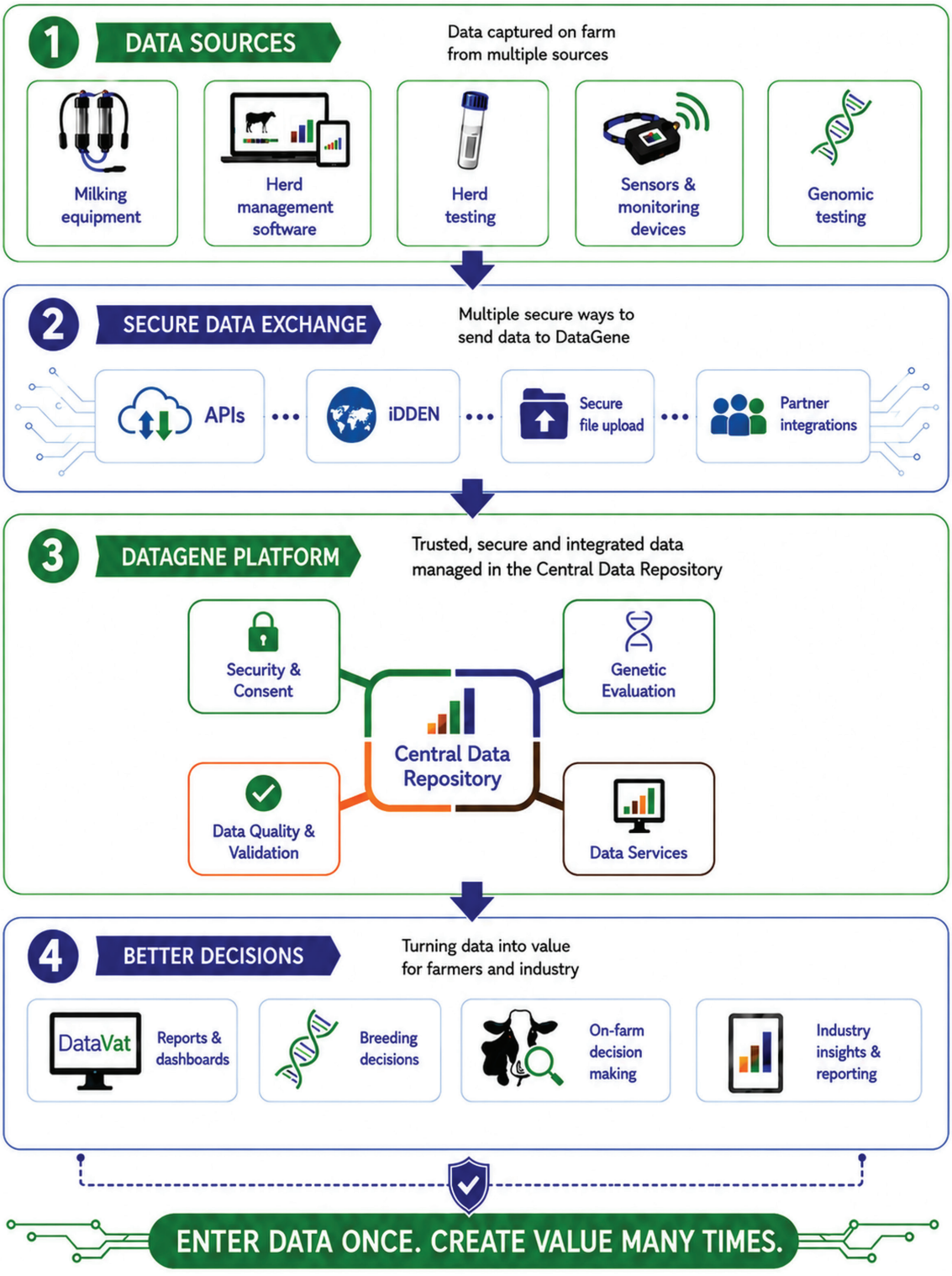
At the Western Dairy Innovation Day, DataGene CEO Dr Emily Piper said the West & Haggerty success wasn't by chance.

"It didn't happen because they got lucky with one bull; it happened because they consistently applied a breeding strategy over many years. Small genetic improvements compound over time," Dr Piper said.

"Three things stand out: use of the Good Bulls Guide, genomic testing and female selection, and keeping good herd recording and reproductive data.

Highlights 2025/26

THE DATAGENE DATA JOURNEY | From farm data to better decisions



Highlights 2025/26

STRATEGIC PILLAR 1: EFFICIENT DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS

Strategic priorities (2025–2029):

- DataVat provides seamless transmission of data between on-farm systems, DataGene and industry data users.
- DataVat becomes the industry reporting platform for sustainability metrics.
- Work with Dairy Australia, milk processors, animal health sector, and others on improved data collection and analytics.
- Develop new reports, tools, and resources to help make the best whole-farm decisions.

Key focus areas 2025/26:

- DataGene platform rebuild
- DataConnect
- iDDEN integration with equipment manufacturers

KEY DELIVERABLES

System enhancements
DataGene IT platform rebuild
iDDEN
DataConnect

System enhancements

The ever-increasing size and complexity of Australia's Central Data Repository place ongoing pressure on the resources required to process routine genetic evaluations. This year, DataGene implemented a series of system improvements and hardware upgrades that reduced routine processing times by more than 40 hours. The enhancements maintained stable breeding values and indices while improving reliability for some genomically tested animals.

DataGene IT platform rebuild

DataVat is a web portal that allows customised, secure access to various reports, tools and resources that draw upon data in the Central Data Repository (CDR), including information from the Genetic Evaluation System. In the time since DataVat was developed (in 2016), IT technologies and DataGene's services delivered through it have evolved. The redevelopment of DataGene's IT platform is a multi-year project designed to accommodate expected growth in data available and also connect farm data that is currently siloed.

This year's focus was to be on completing the first phase of the DataVat/CDR rebuild. However, the scope was redefined in the second quarter to better reflect the DataGene and industry needs from its IT platform and available resources. Renamed DataGene platform rebuild, the revised scope comprises four key modules: security upgrade, detailed solution design, user security and consent management and API layer extension and integration. A target architecture review and technology recommendations were completed, with work to upgrade security and consent management modules was scheduled for 2026/27.



Highlights 2025/26

iDDEN

DataGene is a member of the International Dairy Data Exchange Network (iDDEN), the largest international dairy data partnership. Together, shareholders represent more than 20 million cows located in 200,000 herds.

iDDEN connects on-farm dairy equipment, software, and sensors with dairy data organisations (like DataGene) to enable seamless, secure, and standardised data flow.

iDDEN members and partners benefit from streamlined data connections through a universal interface – the iDDEN Data Exchange Hub. Farmers benefit from more efficient data exchange and retain control of their data through authorised access.

2025/26 progress

A consent management trial was completed during the year. A similar trial was undertaken to simplify authentication between systems and countries.

The IT development work on DataGene's system has been completed in readiness for connections via iDDEN. The timing of Australian connections is determined by individual equipment manufacturers.

DataConnect

DataConnect explored ways the industry could work collaboratively to tackle the challenges farmers experience when exchanging and integrating data. Better connections between data sources and the industry database (Central Data Repository – CDR) are essential foundations for DataGene's vision of a pipeline that allows for single data entry; multiple uses. The project delivered a redeveloped HerdData app, with strong uptake, completed a comprehensive supply chain data audit and improved pathways for connectivity to DataGene's CDR. While the project did not achieve its target number of farm connections, it provided valuable insights that are informing DataGene's future approach to improving industry data connectivity. It reinforced that achieving meaningful progress is more complex than simply connecting technology, requiring alignment across farmers, service providers and industry organisations.

iDDEN
The international dairy data exchange network

iDDEN's owners

Australia: DataGene
Austria, Germany: RDV
Canada: Lactanet
Germany, Luxembourg: vit
The Netherlands, Belgium: CRV
USA: National DHIA
Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden Nordic Cattle Data Exchange (NCDX)

iDDEN's partners include:

DeLaval and its affiliates UNIFORM-Agri and Dairy Data Warehouse
GEA
Lely
Afimilk (produces cow behaviour sensors, farm management software and milk meters)
Cowmanager
SmaXtec (a rumen bolus sensor company)
Qualitas AG (provides IT and quantitative genetics services for Swiss livestock)
Synergy

Highlights 2025/26

STRATEGIC PILLAR 2: SUSTAINABILITY AND ANIMAL PERFORMANCE THROUGH R&D AND HERD IMPROVEMENT

Strategic priorities (2025-2029):

- Deliver world best practice genetic evaluations.
- Collect herd performance data to grow Australia's largest dairy dataset.
- Assist with development of high-value ABVs.
- Promote the use of genomic testing.

Key focus areas 2025/26:

- National Breeding Objective
- Revised Survival ABV and new Stillbirth ABVs
- Ginfo – adding genotypes and LTEs to reference population.

KEY DELIVERABLES

National Breeding Objective
ABV releases
Revised Survival ABV
Stillbirth ABVs
Improved Red Breed evaluations
Enhanced expression of type traits with intermediate optimums
Jersey composite type traits
Ginfo

National Breeding Objective

The National Breeding Objective (NBO) describes the collective breeding priorities for Australian dairy herds. Its purpose is to enable farmers to breed herds that meet the future needs of the Australian dairy industry. The NBO must evolve over time in response to the changing needs of dairy businesses, new knowledge and breeding technologies. This year's focus was to implement the recommendations from the review undertaken in 2024 and 2025. Industry requested this roll out occur with the December public ABV release. Refer to page 21 for a summary of the key changes implemented.

ABV releases

Releasing updated Australian Breeding Values and indexes is DataGene's core business. ABVs and indexes are key tools used by farmers and the herd improvement industry to improve the genetic merit of the Australian dairy herd.

During the year, DataGene delivered 43 releases of Australian Breeding Values including three public ABV releases, in April, August and December. DataGene's communication and extension campaigns are focussed around the three public releases, when interest in genetics and breeding tends to peak. DataGene collaborates with Dairy Australia's communication team, to expand the reach of campaign messages.

New Survival ABV

A new model to calculate the Survival ABV was implemented with the December 2025 public release.

Previously, the Survival ABV was a prediction of the probability of survival from year to year. The new model, developed by DairyBio, is based on a combination of survival from the end of the first lactation and survival in subsequent lactations. Overall, it gives better predictions of an animal's productive lifetime. (More details page 33)



An updated model for the Survival ABV, implemented in December 2025, gives a better prediction of an animal's productive lifetime.

FEATURE PROJECT

Updated National Breeding Objective

Following the 2024-2025 review of the National Breeding Objective, DataGene updated the Australian dairy breeding indices, to reflect the industry's evolving breeding priorities. The key refinements, implemented with the December 2025 public ABV release, are outlined below.

1. Updated pricing in all indices, for all breeds

To reflect changes in the market, updated pricing for milk components and input costs was applied to all indices and breeds. Instead of using historical average milk prices, the indices are now based on forecast prices. This better aligns the economic weightings in the indices with the market conditions likely to apply when animals bred using the updated indices enter the milking herd, generally about three years later.

Feed costs were updated but kept at the same ratio to milk income as in the past. However, the protein-to-fat price ratio moved from 2:1 to close to 1:1, to better reflect forecast milk-pricing models.

2. Health Weighted Index (HWI)

The Health Weighted Index was enhanced to better reflect the needs of seasonal herds with pasture-based systems by adding calving ease and gestation length. Compared to the previous HWI, the expected response to selection depends on the breed:

Holstein: faster genetic gain for fat, protein, survival, cell count, calving ease and gestation length; and similar gain for fertility.

Jersey: faster genetic gain for fat, fertility, gestation length, cell count and mastitis resistance.

3. The base (the average animal for breeding values)

The base (or average animal for breeding values) was updated in November 2025 and will be updated every five years in line with international best practice (ICAR).

Updates to DataGene's indices (BPI, HWI, SI, ASI) were implemented in December 2025, to ensure farmers breed herds that meet the future needs of the Australian dairy industry.



Highlights 2025/26

Type traits with intermediate optimums

In December 2025 DataGene introduced a refined way of expressing six type traits with intermediate optimums. The way these ABVs are calculated was not changed. DataGene simply enhanced the way they are expressed to make it easier for breeders to recognise animals that are close to the intermediate optimum. The change involved including a letter after the breeding value. The letter indicates if the ABV is within the optimum range (O) or an alternative letter indicating the trait direction.

Expression of traits with intermediate optimums

	Lower breeding values ⟷ Higher Breeding values		
	Description	**Optimum**	**Description**
Pin Set	High (H)	**O**	Low (L)
Rear Leg Set	Straight (S)	**O**	Curved (C)
Bone	Coarse (C)	**O**	Sharp (S)
Udder Depth	Deep (D)	**O**	Shallow (S)
Fore Teat Placement	Wide (W)	**O**	Close (C)
Rear Teat Placement	Wide (W)	**O**	Close (C)

Intermediate optimum ABVs by breed

	Holstein	Jersey	Aussie Red
Pin Set	107-114	97-104	101-104
Rear Leg Set	95-97	95-97	93-95
Bone	102-104	103-105	102-104
Udder Depth	100-105	101-107	100-102
Fore Teat Placement	101-109	99-101	99-102
Rear Teat Placement	85-93	97-99	90-95

Improvements to Red Breed evaluations

A new approach to blending overseas (MACE) information into the single step Red Breed ABV analysis was implemented with the December 2025 public release. This addressed the issue of the overestimation of the Protein ABV for Red Breed bulls in general but specifically, bulls with overseas information. This reduced the variance of the Protein ABV with a flow on effect on any indices that include Protein ABV, i.e. BPI, HWI, SI and ASI.



A new approach to blending overseas information resulted in improved Protein ABVs of Red Breeds.

Highlights 2025/26

Stillbirth ABVs

Calves represent about a third of the stock on a dairy farm and rearing them involves significant time and money. Stillbirth is the leading cause of death (higher than scours and respiratory disease) in Australian dairy calves. The rate of stillbirth is 5-7% in Australian dairy cattle.

In April 2026, DataGene began including Stillbirth ABVs in its evaluation for all dairy breeds: Holstein, Jersey, Australian Red, Crossbreds, Brown Swiss, Ayrshire, Illawarra and Guernsey.

Bulls: A bull's Sire Stillbirth ABV reflects his progeny's ability to be born alive or dead. The trait is expressed once in his life.

A bull's Maternal Stillbirth ABV reflects the ability of his daughters to give birth to alive or dead calves. The trait is expressed when his daughters calve.

Cows: A cow's Sire Stillbirth ABV reflects her progeny's ability to be born alive or dead. The trait is expressed once in her life.

A cow's Maternal Stillbirth ABV reflects her ability to give birth to alive or dead calves, and her daughters' ability to give birth to live or dead calves. The trait is expressed every time she calves.

Farmers wanting to reduce stillbirths are encouraged to select animals with Stillbirth ABVs of less than zero.



Stillbirth ABVs were implemented in April 2026.

Jersey composite type traits

From April 2026, DataGene has used an updated method for calculating composite type traits for Jerseys, in line with classification changes implemented by Jersey Australia. Jersey cows and bulls now receive composite breeding values for Feet & Legs, Dairy Strength and Rump. The Overall Type and Mammary System ABVs were also updated to reflect the new Jersey classification system.



DataGene updated its method for calculating Jersey composite type traits, to align with the new Jersey classification system.

FEATURE PROJECT

Ginfo – Australia's genomic reference population

Australia is one of a few dairy industries in the world to have a national reference herd for genomic information, Ginfo.

It is a large-scale genotyping project to provide a database of genetic and performance (phenotypic) information. Ginfo underpins research to increase the reliability of ABVs and indices and to develop breeding values for new traits, particularly those that are hard to measure and record, such as the Heat Tolerance ABV. Genomic prediction accuracy depends on the size, quality and relevance of the reference population. To ensure Ginfo remains relevant, genotypes and LTEs for new animals in member herds are collected every year.

This information underpins genomic testing in Australian dairy herds by matching performance data (phenotypes) with genetic markers (genotypes).

As well as improving the reliability of existing ABVs and indices, Ginfo enables researchers to develop breeding values for traits that are difficult to measure such as Heat Tolerance and Feed Saved.

Ginfo data is used in a wide range of DairyBio research projects. This research will ultimately lead to new or improved Australian Breeding Values.

Ginfo wouldn't be possible without the participation of 157 commercial dairy herds with excellent records located across Australia's eight dairying regions.

During the year about 12,100 new genotypes from Ginfo herds contributed to the national reference population, bringing the total population to about 150,000 cows. The reference population also includes about 18,500 bulls.

Ginfo is a collaboration of DataGene, DairyBio and Dairy Australia.

Bill and Andrew Cochrane's herd is one of the 157 herds whose excellent quality records are contributed to the Ginfo project.



Highlights 2025/26

STRATEGIC PILLAR 3: PROMOTING THE VALUE OF HERD IMPROVEMENT

Strategic priorities (2025-2029):

- Promote the use of independent, validated and science-backed indices and ABVs.
- Effectively communicate the value proposition of data-informed decisions.

Key focus areas 2025/26:

- Increase the number of heifers genomically tested
- Promote herd improvement resources
- Support Dairy Australia's regional programs in promoting herd improvement.

KEY DELIVERABLES

Good Bulls strategy

Heifer genomic testing

Communication and extension

Improving the genetic merit of Australian dairy herds

DataGene's core business is supporting farmers to breed higher performing, more profitable and sustainable dairy herds. A variety of regular activities contribute to this:

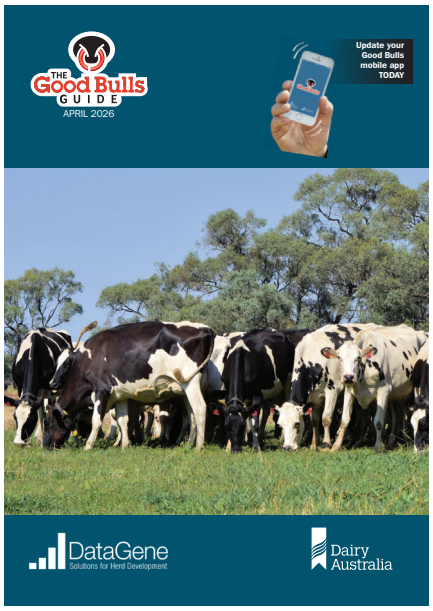
- Publishing Australian Breeding Values
- Communication campaigns associated with each public release of Australian Breeding Values
- Working with the herd improvement industry and others who influence farmers' breeding decisions
- Resources on the website
- Reports and tools such as the Good Bulls App
- Extension activities.

Every joining season is an opportunity for dairy farmers to improve the genetic merit of their herds. The results are permanent and cumulative. DataGene's key extension message is to breed replacements from the females in the herd with the highest genetic merit by joining them to Good Bulls.

Australian Breeding Values and Indices are the key tools that enable farmers to identify high genetic merit animals.



Highlights 2025/26



Australian Breeding Values (ABVs)

Australian Breeding Values are the foundation of genetic improvement in Australian dairy herds. DataGene publishes Australian Breeding Values, providing farmers, advisers, bull companies and herd improvement service providers with a consistent and trusted source of genetic information. To meet the needs of different users, ABVs are published through a range of digital and downloadable products, including:

DataVat – searchable and filterable

Good Bulls Guide – Excel spreadsheets and PDF reports

Good Bulls App – searchable and filterable

HerdData Platform – for herd test centre customers

Bull companies also publish ABVs in sales catalogues, through custom Apps and on their websites.

Good Bulls

Bull choices made easy

Good Bulls Strategy

The aim of the Good Bulls Strategy is to encourage farmers to breed all dairy herd replacements from sires with Good Bulls status. To qualify, a bull must meet DataGene's minimum requirements for Balanced Performance Index (BPI) and reliability and be available for purchase. DataGene offers a range of tools to help farmers identify bulls that meet their breeding priorities, including the Good Bulls Guide and the Good Bulls App which are both updated with the public release of Australian Breeding Values in April, August and December each year.

During the year enhancements were made to the Good Bulls App, incorporating changes to the indices, base and expression of intermediate type traits (see page 22).



Genomic testing females enables dairy farmers to fast track genetic gain in their herds.

Genomics

Genomic testing analyses an animal's DNA from a sample such as ear tissue, to predict future performance. Animals can be tested as young calves, so that early decisions can be made about their future value to the business.

Bull companies were the first to adopt genomic testing when it became available in Australia in 2011. Genomics transformed the way bull companies identify bulls of superior genetic merit to include in their product offering. In recent years, genomic testing of females has become a valuable tool for dairy farmers. Genomic testing of females gives farmers the opportunity to fast-track genetic gain in their herds.

Highlights 2025/26

Breeding replacements from the best females

Advances in genomic testing, heat detection and sexed semen have enabled Australian dairy farmers to be strategic about breeding replacements from the highest-genetic merit females in their herds. They have a variety of options for the lower genetic merit females which may vary with market conditions, for example joining for dairy beef, export heifers or culling.

Currently some genomic service providers report only foreign breeding values to their Australian customers. DataGene has been pursuing opportunities to encourage them to also report Australian Breeding Values on animals tested through their services. Australian Breeding Values draw on Australian performance data to give the best possible prediction of an animal's performance under Australian conditions, whereas overseas breeding values are designed to give the best predictions for performance under their local conditions.



Communication and extension

One of DataGene's core functions is to promote resources and encourage people to access these tools. This is largely done through the promotional campaigns associated with each public release of Australian Breeding Values (April, August and December).

These campaigns provide a vehicle to:

- promote the Good Bulls and heifer genomics extension messages
- encourage people to use DataGene's digital resources including DataVat, the Good Bulls App and the HerdData App.

In addition, this year's campaigns also included new and updated resources supporting:

- updated indices, base change
- updated Survival ABV
- improvements to Red Breeds evaluation
- Stillbirth ABVs
- enhanced expression of type traits with intermediate optimums
- Jersey composite type changes.

In addition, DataGene supports bull companies, genomic service providers and Dairy Australia's regional programs with extension activities related to herd improvement. Some examples of this year's activities include our team presenting at field days, bull nights, young dairy network meetings and the Genetics Australia Conference.

CASE STUDY

Reaping the benefits of genetic improvements

Frank and Marianne Kelly are reaping the benefits of making steady genetic improvements over the past decade, with genomics playing an important role.

Now milking 420 Australian Reds on their 500-hectare farm at Tragowel, south of Kerang, Frank and Marianne have switched breeds but always maintained a focus on breeding what's best for their farming business.

Today, they have fertile cows that are easy to calve with good udders and strong feet and legs to cope with long walks.

The April 2026 ABV release confirmed the quality of the Kelly herd, which ranked sixth in the Australian Red Breed for Balanced Performance Index (BPI), up one spot on its December 2025 ranking.

Frank and Marianne have recently placed their first bull, ARBDENNIS – Homedale Dennis, into the AI system and recorded the Top BPI Australian Red genomic heifer in the December ABV release with '4926', a daughter of VIKRVESTY.

The success came on the back of a multi-generation commitment to embracing breeding advancements and following a consistent breeding strategy.

Frank's father Denis was among the first in the region to use artificial insemination. Frank continues to use new technologies and has been genomic testing over the past four years.

The farm has been in the family for nearly 80 years and has continued to evolve, moving from Holsteins and Jerseys to straight Holsteins, to three-way crosses and about a decade ago settling on Australian Reds.

"We were looking to improve on fertility when we went with the Reds," Frank said. "We're really pleased with the herd and the direction it is going, the quality of the heifers and their durability and calving ease."

Frank has been genomic testing all calves and heifers for four years and is starting to reap the rewards. The highly ranked BPI cows that have entered the herd are performing well.

"We're getting good solid results so we're at the stage where we can select from the lower end of those heifers and move them on. We've got excess numbers each year but now we can breed from the best and go to beef with the rest."

Those strong numbers allowed the farm to peak at 420 this year, up 20 on expectations. "We had plenty of heifers so we ended up milking a bigger herd and the season was good," Frank said.

After the April 2026 ABV release, ARBDENNIS ranked 4th for BPI, 8th for Health Weighted Index (HWI) and 5th for Sustainability Index (SI).

"He hasn't yet got the results on the ground but the GA guys say he is a good animal to handle and fairly productive."

On the home farm Frank has selected to improve udders and says they're getting better every year. "Feet and legs are also critical for us because they have to walk so far. If their feet and legs aren't good, they're going to struggle."

They also breed for calving ease and fertility and are seeing good results.

Genomics has played an important role in steady genetic improvements in the Kelly family's herd. Pictured are Frank and his son Marty, daughter-in-law Courtney and grandson.



Highlights 2025/26

STRATEGIC PILLAR 4: DIVERSIFIED AND IMPROVED SERVICE OFFERINGS

Strategic priorities (2025-2029) include:

- Develop and maintain software and data services.
- Collaborate with stakeholders in livestock and other agricultural sectors to deliver services.
- Work with herd recording centres to rapidly adopt technology and services.
- Build and maintain DataGene and industry infrastructure.
- Develop and maintain industry solutions.
- Establish new revenue streams.

Key focus areas 2025/26

- Deliver the Forage Value Index
- Deploy redeveloped HerdData app
- Contracted projects.

KEY DELIVERABLES

Forage Value Index
HerdData app
Contracted project

Forage Value Index™

Forage Value Index

DataGene routinely evaluates Dairy Australia's Forage Value Index. Developed by Dairy Feedbase, the FVI is a tool that helps Australian dairy farmers and their advisers to make more informed decisions when selecting ryegrass cultivars. It provides an accurate, reliable and independent assessment of the potential economic value of ryegrass cultivars in different dairy regions of south-east Australia and Western Australia. This was the first year that FVIs were delivered for three types of pastures and the various regions, including analysis of additional data for Western Australia.

HerdData App

The HerdData app provides a quick and easy way to enter or access herd records using a phone or other mobile device. Its data is synchronised with the farm's herd management software, allowing information to be shared across the whole farm team.

This helps them make more informed decisions and keep better records. It also enables information that was previously difficult to capture to reach DataGene's central data repository. The information contributes to more accurate breeding values and opportunities for new breeding values such as for health traits.

This year a redeveloped HerdData App was deployed and successfully retained its user base.



Highlights 2025/26

Contracted projects

While the core of DataGene's funding comes from Dairy Australia, DataGene derives additional income from services to external clients. These services are based on DataGene's capabilities including project strategy, development and management, IT and software development. As well as providing additional income, it enables DataGene to retain skilled personnel with a deep knowledge of DataGene's core business. DataGene aims to diversify its income through these services where they have a strong strategic alignment.

This year's contracted services included the continuation and completion of support for ongoing support and maintenance of the Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding and the Global Methane Hub.

Global Methane Hub

The Global Methane Hub is an initiative of the International Committee for Animal Recording (ICAR) and Wageningen University. The database provides a storage and exchange platform for phenotypes and genotypes for the global ruminant industries. DataGene was initially contracted to gather and document the requirements for the database and was then successful in tendering for the development phase of the project. The development work was completed this year, with the project now in the maintenance and support phase.



Highlights 2025/26

STRATEGIC PILLAR 5: SERVICE DELIVERY

Strategic priorities (2025-2029) include:

- Apply best-practice corporate governance and financial management.
- Have the right capability and processes to innovate and deliver value.
- Sustain effective stakeholder and employee engagement.
- Develop and maintain appropriate IT infrastructure and policies.

Key focus areas 2025/26

- Maintain engagement through Standing Committees
- External security audit.

KEY DELIVERABLES

Strategy refocus
Standing committees
Security audit

Sharpening our strategic focus

DataGene undertook an interim review of its strategic focus to ensure future effort and investment remain directed to the areas of greatest value for Australian dairy farmers and the broader dairy industry. The exercise provided greater clarity around organisational priorities and core business, ensuring future investment is concentrated on initiatives that will deliver the greatest impact.

The process included workshops with the board and leadership team, informed by feedback from key stakeholders. The discussions confirmed that DataGene's strategic direction remains sound while identifying opportunities to maximise the impact of future investment by better aligning it with the organisation's purpose and strengths. DataGene remains committed to supporting profitable and sustainable dairy farming through trusted data, world-class genetic evaluation and practical decision-support tools.

DataGene's five strategic pillars are fit for purpose and continue to provide the framework for delivering the organisation's strategy.

DataGene Standing Committees

DataGene has a variety of formal and informal mechanisms that provide stakeholders with input to DataGene's priorities and activities. Formal consultative committees include the Genetic Evaluation Standing Committee and Herd Test Committee. They are not simply an advisory body but exercise authority as delegated by the board.

The committees meet regularly and make a valued contribution to DataGene policies and activities. (see page 35).

Security audit

DataGene is responsible for maintaining and protecting large volumes of sensitive industry data, including the genetic evaluation system, 'Centre' and the Central Data Repository (CDR).

Regular security audits, by an independent evaluator, ensure that DataGene's systems operate to industry best practice and any weaknesses are promptly identified and addressed.

DataGene has implemented a strategic readiness assessment approach for adopting the industry-aligned CCM Lite framework. This allows DataGene to evaluate the framework's relevance and alignment with existing controls – without prematurely committing to full implementation.

CASE STUDY

DataConnect

DATA THAT WORKS AS HARD AS THE HERD

Western Victorian father-and-son dairy team, Julian and Oscar Cavarsan, are putting their herd records to work – within their farm business and for the wider industry.

A phone call from their local vet was enough to convince them to submit herd data for industry use.

The process of connecting their records to DataGene was straightforward.

"I thought it's a good way to help out," Julian explained.

"The more of us that join, the more information we get back, and the more accurate information we get back."

Now the herd is connected, the Cavarsans' 500-cow production and health records are quietly extracted from the dairy computer each night and combined with records from across the country to help build a stronger national picture of animal performance.

Herd records like this are the key to developing and improving industry tools such as Australian Breeding Values (ABVs) and various health reports.

But the Cavarsans' family dairy operation - involving Julian and Janet, Oscar and Brooke, and Henry - hadn't always been data-focused.

"I was originally computer illiterate," Julian said. "Very slow to pick it up. I didn't have much time for it. But now that I know our system, and know what information we can get from it, it's invaluable."

Data now drives everyday operational decisions at their Ecklin South property. And from an industry point of view, they recognise how much data has driven breeding development.

"I remember years ago a good cow would go about 16 litres, and now we're sort of averaging 30 litres pretty easily," Julian said. "Everything has changed so much. We attribute a lot of the growth to data collection, it's extremely important."

Their herd is about 95 per cent Holstein, selected with the guidance of a breeding advisor for balance and durability - cows that can handle a pasture-based system and unpredictable conditions.

Collecting data and applying it to make more accurate and timely decisions is part of Oscar's daily routine.

"Whenever we find a cow with mastitis, we're pulling her up and checking how many times she's had it before, when her last treatment was," he explained. "If we're accurate with entering things in, it makes it easy and intuitive to manage."

Oscar was on the end of the phone when the farm was connected to DataGene.

He said the process was simple – a short phone call, a quick installation – and now it runs unnoticed in the background of the dairy computer.

"We don't notice it running in the background on a day-to-day basis," he said. "In fact, we'd kind of almost forgotten we even did it."

But the reason they signed up remains front of mind - helping strengthen the industry by contributing real on-farm information.

For this family, the more farms that share data, the more useful that data becomes for everyone.

Data now drives everyday operational decisions made by Julian and Oscar Cavarsan for their 500-cow herd at Ecklin South, Western Victoria.



DairyBio: Development pipeline

DairyBio's Animal Program provides a research pipeline for Australia's genetic evaluation system, including breeding values for new traits and improved reliability of existing ABVs. The new (multi-trait) model for the Survival ABV and the new Stillbirth ABVs are examples of DairyBio research implemented by DataGene this year.

Stillbirth ABVs

Calves that are born dead, or die within the first day of life, are classified as stillbirths

DairyBio researchers developed a multi-trait model to leverage as much available data as possible to generate high-quality genetic predictions for stillbirth traits. New data was collected from dairy farmers about the fate of the calf and ease of calving.

The research identified sufficient genetic variation between animals, within a breed, to use Stillbirth ABVs to genetically select for lower risk of stillbirth. From a breeding perspective, it is important to breed for cows that are born alive, and cows that are able to give birth to a live calf. These are two distinct traits that are expressed as Sire Stillbirth ABV and Cow Stillbirth ABV (see page 23).

In the statistical model, adjustments are made to account for environmental and management factors such as the herd, year, season of calving, sex of the calf and parity of the dam.

New survival ABV

DairyBio scientists analysed herd-life data to enhance the Survival ABV, helping farmers select for cows with longer, more productive lives. This work led to a new model for the Survival ABV, implemented by DataGene in December 2025.

A key innovation in the new Survival ABV is the use of a more detailed model that separates survival into two genetically related traits:

Early Survival – survival from first to second lactation

Late Survival – survival from second and later lactations.

This distinction recognises that the reasons cows leave the herd early in life differ from those leading to later culling. Researchers also explored the genetic relationships between survival and other traits, providing new insights into why cows stay or go.

Overall herd-life

In an analysis of nearly two million cows, average herd life was 4.11 lactations in Holstein and 4.16 lactations in Jersey. The average lactation number within herds at any given time was similar across breeds: 3.37 for Holstein and 3.34 for Jersey.

Early and late survival

Defining early and late survival was a major step forward. Although the traits are genetically correlated (0.77), they are not identical, meaning that selection pressure can be applied to improve both. The study identified trait relationships that help explain genetic differences in survival between early and later stages of life.



DataGene consultative committees

DataGene has a variety of formal and informal mechanisms that provide stakeholders with input to DataGene's priorities. Formal governance structures include the Board and Standing Committees.

The Genetic Evaluation Standing Committee and Herd Test Centre Committee meet regularly and make a valued contribution to DataGene policies and activities.

A formal standing committee gives members direct influence over DataGene's priorities and program activities. This is not simply an advisory body, but exercises authority as delegated by the Board in areas of industry policy and guidelines. It comprises individuals from within the dairy industry and herd improvement sector who possess relevant skills and experience. Standing Committee members are nominated by stakeholders and appointed by the Board. It is chaired by a member of the DataGene Board and includes at least one member of the DataGene management team.

Genetic Evaluation Standing Committee

The Genetic Evaluation Standing Committee provides advice and recommendations to the DataGene Board on specialist matters in relation to genetic evaluation and related technologies.

Members of the Genetic Evaluation Standing Committee as at June 2026 included:

- Sam Simpson (Chair), DataGene board
- Daniel Abernethy, Zoetis
- Brian Lawrence, ADF
- Glen Barrett, Jersey Australia
- Steph Bullen, Dairy Australia
- Bryan Dickson, Holstein Australia
- Rob Derksen, Genetics Australia
- Thuy Nguyen, DataGene.
- Trevor Parrish, dairy farmer
- Josh Richardson, Nu-Genes
- Bruce Ronalds, ABS
- Emily Piper, DataGene
- Tim Weller, WWS
- Ruidong Xiang, DairyBio

The Genetic Evaluation Standing Committee met four times during 2025/26. The committee received regular progress updates and provided guidance and feedback on the implementation of the National Breeding Objective; expression of intermediate type traits, movements of young bulls for type traits and the updated Survival ABV.

Data Access and Standards Standing Committee

The Data Access and Standards Standing Committee was established to provide strategic oversight and advice to support effective data governance across the Australian dairy industry. This included advising DataGene and other stakeholders on data sharing standards, policy development, and system operations for key platforms such as the Central Data Repository (CDR) and DataVat.

During the year, the Board reviewed the role of the Data Access and Standards Standing Committee. With established arrangements already in place for sharing herd test data, and new data sources generally managed through individual agreements with data providers, the Board concluded that the committee was no longer required and agreed to disband it.

DataGene gratefully acknowledges the contribution of committee members over many years.

Herd Test Centre Committee

The Herd Test Centre Committee plays a key advisory role for DataGene, providing strategic input on opportunities to enhance data sources, diagnostic analytics, and reporting platforms such as HerdPlatform and the Central Data Repository (CDR). Its focus is on pre-competitive collaboration, particularly in the development of software, services, and tools that support herd improvement.

Members of the Herd Test Centre Committee, as at 30 June 2026:

- Nick Brasher, FarmWest
- Fiona Brierly, Dairy Express
- Angela McNeil, NHD
- Peter Nish, Tasherd
- Leesa Wade, NHD
- Emily Piper, DataGene
- Peter Thurn, DataGene

The committee met twice in 2025/26, discussing a range of strategic and technical topics, including overseas models, Staph aureus testing, HerdData App, DataConnect, iDDEN and opportunities to use in-line meter data.

DataGene Board

DataGene is governed by a skills-based Board. Members are elected on their knowledge and experience in dairy, herd improvement, finance, R&D and governance.

The Board must include three directors with direct expertise in dairy farm management. Directors are entitled to serve a three-year term and up to three consecutive terms (i.e. nine years). The ongoing rotation of Directors ensures the ongoing refreshment of skills and experience on the board.



Tim Jelbart

B. App. Sci (Hons) AAPI
Chair

Tim is a dairy farmer and Holstein breeder from Inverloch, West Gippsland, Victoria. He is the general manager and director of Jelbart Dairy, which is owned by Tim and his brother, comprising a dryland dairy and beef business with 1,100 high-production Holstein milking cows and 1,500 head of dairy replacements and F1 Wagyu calves. The business relies on genomic testing for accurate genetic information, which has resulted in significant genetic gains across the herd in recent years. Before returning to the family farm Tim completed a degree in applied science, specialising in rural property valuation. He was a rural and agribusiness property valuer with CBRE, valuing some of the largest agribusiness assets across Australia.



Jeff Odgers

B. Business (Agricultural Management), Ass. Dip. Farm Management.
Dairy Australia nominated Director, Deputy Chair

Jeff Odgers has more than 35 years' experience in Australian agribusiness; through involvement in large scale dairy farming, and board roles in research, industry services and food manufacturing.

He was Dairy Australia Chair from 2017 to 2020, serving as a non-executive director between 2013 and 2021. Jeff led Murray Dairy Inc as board Chair from 2008 to 2012, during a time of significant evolution in the region's farm systems.

Jeff was also a non-executive director of Bega Cheese Limited 2011-2020 and prior to that Tatura Milk Industries Limited from 2009 to 2011.

He has a deep understanding of the value chain and a passion for farming and encouraging the adoption of technology. Jeff is a strong believer in the capacity of the dairy industry to create and put tools in the hands of farmers, as an enabler towards strengthening their businesses.

DataGene Board



Alexander Ball

B Rural Science (Hons), PhD
Director

Alex Ball and his wife operate a stud beef enterprise at Armidale, NSW. Having spent 18 years in various roles with MLA, Alex has extensive knowledge of the development and implementation of genetic evaluation systems. He managed the national sheep recording program Sheep Genetics and was instrumental in the establishment of across-flock, across breed and Merino evaluations for the sheep industry. He has managed national R&D programs and conducted evaluation of genetic investments in Australia and internationally. In his roles with Herefords Australia Alex was responsible for the implementation of single step evaluation for that breed. Since 2018 Alex has operated a private consultancy service, Rural Analytics, delivering a wide range of projects for agricultural clients. He sits on working groups for Cattle Australia and NFF and is a director of the SRS genetics company.



David Barber

PhD (Ruminant nutrition), B. Agr. Sci (Hons),
Assoc Dip Applied Science, Cert Animal Husbandry.
Director

David Barber is actively involved with his family's 180-cow dairy farm, Range View Farm at Marburg, Queensland. He also runs a small nutrition consultancy business in south-east Queensland providing advice to dairy and beef farmers on nutrition and feeding management to improve productivity and profitability.

David's roles with the farm include feed supply and procurement, feeding management; heifer rearing and breeding management, dairy-beef production; and assisting with day-to-day activities such as milking, feeding and repairs and maintenance.

He has more than 40 years' experience in agricultural production systems, having held both research and extension roles, mostly with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. David brings to the board a deep understanding of the production system, operating environment and unique challenges faced by the Northern dairy industry and the drivers of the uptake of research findings and motivations for farmers to implement new practices.

DataGene Board



James (Jim) Bruce

Director

Jim Bruce has worked most of his career in the Australian genetics supply chain, including with Semex, ABS, Phoenix Genetics, Genes Diffusion, Genex, Elders Genetic Services and Elders Rural Services. These roles have given him insights into the different systems operating in Australia, USA, Canada and France. He has experience in both dairy and beef artificial breeding and genetics and the opportunities and challenges for herd improvement in Australian livestock industries. Jim is currently the Business Manager, Animal Nutrition for Auschem Pacific.



Sam Simpson

M Marketing (Agribusiness), B App Sci (Agric), Grad Dip Agribusiness, Dip Frontline Management Director; Chair, Genetic Evaluation Standing Committee

Sam and her husband operate a 450-cow dairy farm, Craiglands Holsteins, at Larpent in South Western Victoria. They have been members of Holstein Australia for 21 years and genotyping their animals since 2015. Sam runs the herd's breeding program as well as the business finances, HR and information systems. She is the Chair of DataGene's Genetic Evaluation Standing Committee. She is actively involved in a number of industry groups including promoting dairy to the local community and school groups. Craiglands Holsteins was a focus farm for the ImProving Herds project and Sam was a member of the MIR for Profit project steering committee. Before taking on a full-time role with the farm, Sam spent 10 years as a sheep officer and Farm$mart Project Manager with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries.



Josie Zilm

B Ag Sci (Hons), MBA, GAICD
Director

Josie Zilm has spent most of her career in agricultural banking including a variety of roles with National Australia Bank and a period with Fonterra, Tasmania. Located in Gippsland, Victoria, she is also a beef and fodder producer, former deputy chair of the Herd Improvement Co-operative Australia (Hico) and former deputy chair of the Southern Rural Water Groundwater and Rivers Forum.

Josie works with industry stakeholders, the supply chain and government to understand the challenges and opportunities across the agricultural sector.

She is a partner in Amella Pastoral, an irrigated beef grazing property producing grass-fed Angus cattle and irrigated fodder.

With an honours degree in Agricultural Science, an MBA and as a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Josie has an outstanding understanding of agriculture, corporate governance and director responsibilities.



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Solutions for Herd Development

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DataGene is an independent and industry-owned organisation responsible for driving genetic gain and herd improvement in the Australian dairy industry and is an initiative of Dairy Australia and industry. This report is published for your information only. It is published with due care and attention to accuracy, but DataGene accepts no liability, if, for any reason, the information is inaccurate, incomplete or out of date whether negligent or otherwise.
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