10TH ANNIVERSARY: GENETICS, DATA AND HERD IMPROVEMENT



HERD'27

22-23 March 2027 | Geelong

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

PROUDLY BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

DataGene Solutions for Herd Development

Dairy Australia

Holstein Australia

National Herd Improvement Association of Australia Inc. NHIA

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Day 1 | Monday 22 March 2027 | Novotel Geelong

11:00 am

Arrival, Morning Tea and Registration.

11:30 am

Official Welcome.

Conference Master of Ceremonies:
***Greg Duncan**, Dairy Australia*

11:45 am

From 2009 to 2045:
Looking Back, Breeding Forward.

Presenter:
***Dr Matthew Shaffer**, Dairy Australia*

Drawing on his leadership across DataGene and Dairy Australia, **Dr Matthew Shaffer**, CEO of Dairy Australia, reflects on 18 years of herd improvement — the lessons that have shaped today's dairy industry and the innovations, opportunities and challenges that will define the next 18 years.

(25 mins, no question time)

12:10 pm

Directions in Breeding Programs and Bull Selections.

Facilitator:
***Peter Thurn**, DataGene*

Panel:
***Dr Katie Olson**, ABS Global (Online)*
***Jonathon Gleeson**, Dairy Farmer*
***Trevor Parrish**, Dairy Farmer*

Breeding companies have a significant influence on the genetic direction of the global dairy herd. **Dr Katie Olson**, Senior Director, Global Bovine Product Development at ABS Global, will explore where breeding programs are heading — the traits gaining attention, changing selection priorities and what's on the horizon for dairy genetics.

Katie will be joined by **Trevor Parrish** and **Jonathon Gleeson** to share their perspectives on the future of breeding and where they are placing their selection emphasis for the years ahead.

(Katie – 20 mins, no question time)

(Panel – 20 mins + 10 mins question time)

1:00 pm

An introduction from Zoetis (5 mins).

Sponsor Update:
***Daniel Abernethy**, Zoetis*

1:05 pm

Lunch, sponsored by Zoetis.

2:05 pm

Diversifying Herd Recording Services.

Presenter:
***Richard Miller**, National Milk Records Ltd, UK*

Richard Miller is a farmer and Product Strategy Manager with National Milk Records (NMR) in the UK. Over the past decade, he has helped lead the evolution of NMR's herd-recording services, including infectious disease testing, DNA-based identification of mastitis pathogens, modernised milk testing for robotic herds, health-monitoring software, genomic testing and GenoCells for somatic cell monitoring.

With herd-recording participation in the UK remaining above 80%, Richard will explore why herd and milk recording continue to play a critical role in modern dairy farming — and how continually evolving services to meet farmers' changing needs has helped keep herd testing relevant.

(30 mins + 10 mins question time)

2:45 pm

Turning Data into Better Herd Decisions:
Part 1 | The Future of Herd Intelligence.

Facilitator & Presenter:
***Dr Stephanie Bullen**, Dairy Australia*

Presenters:
***David Chandler**, Easy Dairy Automation Systems*
***Dr Matt Makin**, Digital Dairy*

Dairy farmers are generating more data than ever before through herd management software, herd testing and milk recording, sensors and industry systems. But data only creates value when it can be easily accessed, understood and turned into practical decisions on farm.

This session explores the journey from data to decision — what information farmers need, how data can flow more effectively between systems, and how emerging tools can turn that information into practical insights and action.

Day 1 | Continued

What do farmers want and need when it comes to herd-level decision making?

Dr Stephanie Bullen from Dairy Australia will share findings from her PhD research exploring the behavioural drivers and barriers that influence how farmers use data to make herd management decisions.

(10 mins)

Making data flow: Lessons from Australia's largest herd management software provider.

Drawing on Easy Dairy's experience supporting thousands of Australian dairy farms, **David Chandler** will explore how advances in the Easy Dairy Herd Management System and associated hardware are improving the flow of information between on-farm systems — helping turn data into practical actions and better herd management decisions.

(15 mins)

AI-powered herd intelligence.

Dr Matt Makin will introduce Digital Dairy AI, an emerging herd intelligence platform that uses artificial intelligence to analyse multiple farm data sources and identify health and production risks before they become visible. They will explore how AI-powered decision support can help farmers act earlier and make more informed decisions to improve animal health, productivity and profitability.

(15 mins + 10 mins questions to all speakers)

3:35 pm

Afternoon tea, sponsored by MolBreeding.

4:05 pm

Intro to AI – Rocco the Robot joins via Zoom.

Presenter:
***Rocco the Robot**, Robot for Hire*

(5 mins)

4:10 pm

Turning Data into Better Herd Decisions: Part 2 | The Next Frontier, AI, Genetics & Herd Improvement.

Presenters:
***TBC**, Dairy Farmer*
***Nick Brasher**, FarmWest*
***Professor Ben Hayes**, The University of Queensland, QAAFI (Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation)*

Listen to a dairy farmer who brings a practical farmer's perspective.

(15 mins)

Putting AI and data to work for farmers.

Nick Brasher will share how FarmWest is using AI-powered tools and data insights to support better decision making, improve service delivery and create new opportunities for farmers and advisers alike.

(15 mins + 10 mins question time with Justin & Nick)

The future of herd improvement: Powered by AI.

Professor Ben Hayes will explore how artificial intelligence and machine learning could shape the next era of genetic evaluation and herd improvement. Ben will examine how these technologies can make better use of genomic, performance, health and environmental data to improve predictions of genetic merit, identify and evaluate new traits, and optimise breeding decisions across populations.

Ben will also consider what these advances could mean for the future roles, services and capabilities of herd improvement organisations — and how the sector can turn increasingly complex data into practical value for farmers.

(30 mins + 10 mins question time)

5:30 pm

Day One Wrap up and Close.

(5 mins)

6:30 pm

Pre-Dinner Drinks, sponsored by Vetoquinol.

7:00 – 10:30 pm

Herd'27 Dinner, sponsored by Elanco Australasia Pty Ltd.

Facilitator:
***John Droppert**, Bendigo Bank, Business & Agribusiness*

Welcome:
***Lynnell Fisher**, Elanco Australasia Pty Ltd*

Day 2 | Tuesday 23 March 2027 | Novotel Geelong

8:00 am

Arrival, Registration, Coffee and Mingle.

8:25 am

Welcome to Day Two.

Conference Master of Ceremonies:
***Greg Duncan**, Dairy Australia*

Greg Duncan will oversee the morning recovery plans following the celebratory Herd'27 Dinner and introduce Day 2.

8:30 am

Trends Reshaping Genetic Evaluation.

Presenter:
***Dr Sophie Eaglen**, World Wide Sires (Online)*

Drawing on her experience working with breeding organisations and dairy markets around the world, **Dr Sophie Eaglen** will explore the major trends reshaping dairy genetic evaluation beyond the United States. She will examine how breeding objectives are evolving in response to different production systems, markets and societal expectations, including the growing emphasis on health, fertility, efficiency, resilience and environmental traits.

Sophie will also explore the important role of evaluation organisations such as DataGene in ensuring that available genetics are assessed against local data and breeding priorities — helping deliver genetic improvement that produces cows suited to the conditions, economics and future needs of Australian dairy farming.

(30 mins + 5 mins question time)

9:05 am

Beef on Dairy Opportunities.

CalfWays roadmap. Where are we now?

Presenter:
***Bec Barnewall**, Dairy Australia*

The CalfWays Roadmap provides a national framework to improve calf rearing outcomes and support the long-term sustainability of the dairy and beef industries. **Bec Barnewall** will share progress to date, key achievements, lessons learned and the priorities shaping the next phase of implementation.

Dairy Beef Opportunities: The New Zealand perspective on beef on dairy genetics.

Presenter:
***Dr Lucy Coleman**, Beef + Lamb New Zealand*

Dairy Beef Opportunities is a joint initiative between New Zealand's dairy and beef industries and the New Zealand Government to create more value from non-replacement dairy calves.

Dr Lucy Coleman from Beef + Lamb New Zealand will share an overview of the program's beef-on-dairy progeny test and how the results are informing sire selection tools.

Lucy will also explore a recent pilot for sharing calf genetic information through the supply chain to benefit dairy farmers, rearers and finishers.

(30 mins + 5 mins question time)

9:40 am

Reproductive Performance.

Getting cows pregnant: The Science and Practice of Reproductive Management.

Speaker:
***Dr Paul Fricke**, University of Wisconsin-Madison (Online)*

Dr Paul Fricke, Professor of Dairy Science and Extension Specialist at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, is internationally recognised for his work in dairy cattle reproduction. His research and extension programs focus on the biology and reproductive physiology of high-producing dairy cows and, importantly, translating that science into practical reproductive management strategies for dairy farms.

Joining Herd'27 online from the United States, Paul will share the latest thinking and research in reproductive management and what it means for improving reproductive performance on farm.

(30 mins)

Timing is everything: AI, activity and ovulation.

Facilitator:
***Kristen Davis**, Dairy Australia*

Panel:
***Dr Paul Fricke**, Expert Dairy Scientist from University of Wisconsin-Madison*
***Chris Kendall**, National Repro Consultant and NHIA AI Teacher (Beef and Dairy) from World Wide Sires*
***Dr Alex Ball**, Expert Beef Repro Consultant from Rural Analytics*
***Ben Warnett**, Repro Consultant from Profitabull*

Day 2 | Continued

Kristen Davis from Dairy Australia will facilitate a practical panel discussion exploring the timing of artificial insemination in relation to increased activity and synchronised ovulation.

The panel will consider data-driven approaches to AI timing, including the use of automated activity monitors and synchronised ovulation protocols, and discuss how farmers and advisers can use these tools and strategies to optimise fertility in lactating dairy cows.

(20 mins panel, 10 mins question time)

10:40 am

Morning Tea

11:10 am

From Tank to Pregnancy – Why Industry Standards Matter.

Presenters:
***Sara Merckel**, NHIA*
***Paul Kenny**, Paul Kenny Cattle Artificial Breeding Consultant*

There's a lot that can happen between the tank and a pregnancy — and every detail counts.

From protecting valuable frozen semen and embryos to delivering a quality insemination, every step relies on precise technique, sound knowledge and professional standards.

Sara Merckel and **Paul Kenny** from NHIA will take a practical look at NHIA's Frozen Semen & Embryo Handling Accreditation and National Professional AI Technician Accreditation — why these standards exist, what can go wrong when best practice slips, and how accreditation helps build confidence, consistency and professionalism across the industry.

Because when it comes to reproductive performance, precision, professionalism and credibility count.

(20 mins)

11:30 am

Breeding Great Herd Replacements and Managing them to Maximise your Return on Investment.

Facilitator:
***Dr Emily Piper**, DataGene*

Presenters:
***Andrew Cavill**, Corobina Dairies*
***Peter Thurn**, DataGene*
***Phil Keegan**, Apiam Warrnambool*

Dr Emily Piper, DataGene, will introduce a practical session exploring how genomic information, breeding decisions and heifer management can work together to help farmers breed and rear the cows they want in their herd.

Extracting the benefit from genomic testing.

Long-term genomic tester **Andrew Cavill** of Corobina Dairies will share how he has used genomic testing to build his herd, the practical benefits it has delivered and the challenges along the way. Andrew will also explore the balance between growing heifers well while keeping mature stature in check.

(20 mins)

Breeding for reduced stature.

Peter Thurn from DataGene will explain how the stature breeding value translates into the cows we see in the herd and provide practical guidance for farmers looking to reduce the genetic stature of their herd.

(20 mins)

Growing Heifers to meet your goals.

Drawing on years of experience working with dairy herds, **Phil Keegan** from Apiam Warrnambool will explore how to grow heifers to reach their optimum size and development at calving — without simply producing bigger animals.

(20 mins + 10 mins question time with all speakers)

12:40 pm

An Introduction from Nybro (5 mins).

Presenter:
***Marty Rowlands**, Nybro*

12:45 pm

Lunch, sponsored by Nybro.

1:45 pm

NHIA Market Survey.

Facilitator:
***Dr Alex Ball**, Rural Analytics*

Panel:
***Geoff Wood**, World Wide Sires*
***Tyson Shea**, Semex*
***Bruce Ronalds**, ABS*
***Hilary Lunn**, LIC*

Day 2 | Continued

Australia's semen market is changing — and the NHIA Semen Market Survey provides a unique picture of how breeding choices have evolved.

Drawing on the NHIA Semen Market Survey data, Australia's key survey tracking semen sales and market trends, this session will explore where the industry has been, what is driving the market today, and where it could be heading.

Facilitated by **Dr Alex Ball**, the discussion will bring together semen companies and resellers to unpack the trends behind the numbers — from changing breed and genetic choices to the factors influencing what farmers are buying and why.

(30 mins + 5 mins question time)

2:20 pm

Integrating IVF into your breeding program.

Presenters:
***Helen Thoday**, Trans Ova Australia*
***Brett Sweetnam**, Inventia Genetics Technologies*
***Nathan Shannon**, Shannon Pastoral*

How IVF can enhance your dairy operation.

Helen Thoday, Head of Commercial Operations, TransOva

(15 mins + 5 mins question time)

IVF lessons from the beef world.

Brett Sweetnam, Inventia Genetics Technologies

(15 mins + 5 mins question time)

How IVF works in a large herd environment.

Nathan Shannon (IVF user and operator of a 'Satellite Facility'). Nathan and his family run a large housed system in Northern Victoria. Hear how Nathan utilises IVF to breed better heifer replacements and at the same time addresses the issue of surplus calves.

(15 mins + 5 mins question time)

3:20 pm

Rocco's Wrap Up – The Future is in Good Herds.

Presenter:
***Rocco the Robot** – Robot for Hire*

Rocco the Robot brings Herd'27 to a close with a light-hearted look at herd improvement's past and future-and how AI can work alongside people, data and science to help dairy innovation thrive.

(20 mins, no question time)

3:40 pm

Official close, followed by a light afternoon tea.

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