
NHIA News

Herd Improvement Newsletter

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Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of NHIA News. Members tell us they want regular updates on the industry and the activities of the Association. This newsletter will be produced a few times each year and will contain information relevant to all staff involved in the data management and genetic improvement of Australian dairy herds.

In addition, there will be articles and snippets from research programs, material on improving on-farm production and tips to aid members as you work with farmers.

Members are encouraged to submit material and make suggestions on content.

Celebrating Lifetimes in Herd Improvement

NHIA membership enjoyed a wonderful night at the Mercure Hotel in Geelong last month after the Annual General Meeting.

As is the case each year, a number of awards were bestowed on worthy recipients and this year, they included six Meritorious Service Awards for individuals who have contributed selflessly to the endeavour of herd improvement and to the activities of the Association. Congratulations to:

- Rod Brasher
- Howard Hodgetts
- Ian Parkinson
- Peter Semmens
- Cliff Scammell
- Graham Sutherland.

The audience was treated to a wonderful collage of stories about the antics of days gone by as the recipients accepted their awards.

Well done all.

A publication of
the
National
Herd
Improvement
Association
of Australia
Inc

**Memory
is not a
photo,
it is a
movable
construct**

New Extension Role

Denise Burrell Joins NHIA

NHIA has recently employed a new staff member to work with member sites in an extension and industry development role.

Denise Burrell is known to many of you through her long association with dairy in the north of Victoria and more recently in the south west.

Denise holds a B Agri Sc degree from The University of Melbourne and also completed a Masters of Agriculture degree from the University of Sydney where she conducted research on the hormonal responses in dairy cattle during pregnancy and lactation and how these affect the cow's ability to lactate.

Denise has worked in an extension role with the Department of Ag in NSW and has taught agriculture students at Glenormiston and Kerang.

Recently, she has been the Program Manager for the National Centre for Dairy Education based in Terang.

During October, Denise will be introducing herself to members in Victoria. Initially, she will work closely with a group of farmers and the local herd improvement centres in south west Victoria.

Over time, much of the material that she will develop will be relevant to all NHIA members and all members will have access to the expertise that Denise develops.

Herd Improvement Insights.

Sexed Semen - How to Use it

Recently WWS announced the release of gender selected semen from their Select Sires range. The bulls released by WWS join a growing number of elite sires on offer from 21st Century Genetics and Agri-Gene.

Sexed semen is not your average straw that you can put into any old cow. Typically, it has certain characteristics that mean it requires special handling, discerning selection of recipients and an understanding of the farm's genetic and management goals.

How do companies sex semen?

Male and female sexuality is carried from the sire to the offspring in the semen. All eggs in the female are capable of becoming a bull or a heifer.

Semen that has been sexed is processed using technically advanced and expensive equipment which makes the semen flow through a very fine column where the sperm can be sorted into male and female sperm.

The sorting process uses light intensity to tell a male sperm from a female sperm. Female sperms have slightly greater amounts of DNA in their heads.

At Select Sires they have 10 sorting machines that cost \$US300,000 each. These run 24 hours a day in 3 eight hour shifts. With this level of investment, the sorting process can be very accurate, but it is not 100% accurate. Typically, semen companies quote female rates at around 85% to 90%.

Even though sperm pass through the analyzer at about 100 km/h, the sorting process is slow and requires significant investment to enable a commercial quantity of product to be available. Each machine produces 7.5 straws per hour with each straw containing 2,000,000 sperm.

Given that most reproduction experts agree that optimum fertility occurs when at least 6,000,000 live sperm are inseminated, this lower sperm number is one of the reasons that sexed semen can have slightly

lower than normal fertility.

Each of the manufacturers have specific requirements for handling, thawing and inseminating using their semen. Follow the manufacturers instructions carefully to ensure your farmers are getting the value from the product that they expect. Also, don't assume that semen from different manufacturers can be handled in the same way. Be prepared to modify your technique to suit the special nature of the product.

In Which Cases is it Worth Recommending Sexed Semen?

Sexed semen is more expensive than its unsexed equivalent. It requires careful handling and it produces slightly reduced conception rates. In this respect it is not for every farmer.

The typical uses for sexed semen are:

- Farmers looking to increase their heifer retention rate. Even though sexed semen has slightly lower fertility, it is mainly female sperm. This means that you might get slightly fewer calves, but you will get many more female calves than from normal semen.
- In the same way, farmers that are able to access livestock markets to sell quality milkers can increase the supply of stock by using sexed semen.
- Farmers looking to increase the rate of genetic gain. Well grown heifers are more fertile than older cows. For this reason, some manufacturers recommend using sexed semen in heifers only. Given that heifers have the highest genetic merit in the herd and they are more fertile, it makes sense to use sexed semen from elite sires in heifers. The resulting higher rate of heifers born will add to the speed of genetic progression within the herd.
- Heifer calves exhibit a lower rate of calving difficulty compared to bull calves. Using sexed semen, especially in heifers, will reduce the rate of calving problems in the herd.

Sexed semen does come at a premium. However, in certain circumstance, this premium can be well worth the cost. Talk to your Semen Supplier representative about their range of sexed semen bulls.

NSW Relaxes Pregnancy Testing Rules

In September, the NSW Veterinary Practitioners Regulations 2006 took effect. In part, the Regulations state the act of pregnancy diagnosis in animals other than horses is no longer a restricted act of veterinary science. NHIA has confirmed this with the Registrar of the Veterinary Board and the Parliamentary Councils Office. The effect of this change is that non veterinarians can provide and charge for pregnancy testing services to cattle farmers in NSW.

Accreditation News

Professional AI Technician Accreditation

The Professional AI Technician Accreditation program run by NHIA continues to attract strong participation from AI staff around the country.

During 2005 and 2006, we conducted 8 Accreditation days and have been delighted to see another 25 technicians join the ranks of the Professionals.

Congratulations to the following Technicians who passed in 2005 and 2006:

- Brendan Coonan
- Daryl Worth
- Brook Twamley
- Ross Francis
- Jacqueline Hall
- Chad Tyrrell
- Peter Clifford
- Alistair Ludeman
- Anthony Shelley
- Brodie Appleton
- Shane Gardiner
- William Cornelissen
- Colin Irvine
- John Couch
- Mike Van Der Aa
- Stuart Ellis
- Brenton Sessions
- Lucy Roberts
- Bill Morgan
- Matthew Haberle
- Ben Warnett
- Klint Wagstaff

- Sean Millar
- Megan Dodd
- Peter Phillips
- Patsy Thomson
- John Pietsch
- Jeff Ryrie
- Ronnie Hibma
- Adrian Filsell
- Kevin Read
- Dean Baker
- Allison Lee

All Accredited Professional AI Technicians have their names listed on the NHIA web site and members are eligible to display their Accreditation Logos which signify their Professional status. NHIA has a range of material with logos including individually printed name badges, large badges for the back of overalls and jackets, weather proof stickers for AI boxes and car windows and brochures explaining to farmers the value of using well qualified and competent technicians.

Semen and Embryo Handlers

NHIA has recently called for expressions of interest for the next round of Semen and Embryo Handlers Accreditation. This program involves assessment of the facility for semen handling equipment, record keeping and staff safety. Staff are also assessed for competency in handling product, identification protocols and safety procedures.

If your facility has not been assessed or you have new staff that require accreditation, call NHIA today.

About NHIA . . .

Interested in any of the material covered? Call Chris Braniff, General Manager

**National Herd Improvement
Association of Australia Inc**

**on 03 9329 1688
fax 03 9328 3092**

**write to us at:
3/21 Vale Street
North Melbourne, 3051
email: nhia@nhia.org.au**

Upcoming Events . . .

- ADHIS Advisory Meeting, 29 Sept 2006
- NHIA Board Meeting, 23 November 2006
- Dairy Australia AGM, 24 November 2006
- International Dairy Week, 14-18 Jan 2006
- NHIA Member Forum, 16 January 2006
- NHIA Dairy Dinner, 16 January 2006

Fuel Savings Grow as Prices Remain High

Good news for Members

A challenge exists when explaining the savings from fuel card use to members. The pricing process is complex and involves applying small, but different adjustments to the wholesale price.

The adjustments are based on a number of factors including the cost of transport from the bulk depot to the retail site.

The wholesale price is set by state and region and might change a few times each day or a couple of times per week, depending on the fuel company.

The table on the right includes a very small sample of actual savings that members enjoyed when filling tanks during August. I admit being surprised at how often Geelong was represented. As a rule, the savings are greater in centres with little competition between fuel stations where retail margins are higher.

During August 2006, members using Shell saved over 10 cpl on 47 occasions and saved over 5 cpl another 190 times. The greatest saving of 18.4 cpl occurred three times.

These figures are for Shell fuel only. Many members have cards from multiple companies and the collective savings can be very significant.

Each of the companies have a different administration fee for card use:

- Shell charges \$1.82 per card per month, ex gst
- BP is \$2.00 per month ex gst
- Caltex is 38 cents per transaction, including gst &
- Mobile is 35 cents, ex gst

In addition, NHIA applies a minimal fee of 2.0% of the fuel company charge to cover the cost of administration.

Date	Product	Savings (CPL)	Site
23/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	18.49	GEELONG VIC
30/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	18.44	GEELONG VIC
29/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	16.61	GEELONG VIC
7/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	14.93	GEELONG VIC
9/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	14.40	GREENSBOROUGH VIC
23/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	13.33	KENSINGTON VIC
16/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	13.30	DONNYBROOK VIC
21/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	13.10	GEELONG VIC
23/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	12.17	DONNYBROOK VIC
30/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	12.02	SCONE NSW
27/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	11.89	ROCHESTER VIC
30/08/2006	OPTIMAX	11.75	MOORABBIN VIC
10/08/2006	DIESEL	10.98	MERIMBULA NSW
31/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	10.93	COLAC VIC
5/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	10.78	ROCHESTER VIC
14/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	10.39	GEELONG VIC
28/08/2006	DIESEL	10.38	KHANCOBAN NSW
22/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	10.24	ECHUCA VIC
28/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	9.95	COLAC VIC
29/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	9.94	COLAC VIC
3/08/2006	DIESEL	9.91	KHANCOBAN NSW
27/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	9.83	COLAC VIC
15/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	9.73	ECHUCA VIC
18/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	9.52	ROCHESTER VIC
13/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	9.45	GEELONG VIC
17/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	9.30	ECHUCA VIC
14/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	9.21	COLAC VIC
4/08/2006	DIESEL	9.19	SIMPSON VIC
17/08/2006	DIESEL	9.16	HEYWOOD VIC
31/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	8.95	ECHUCA VIC
20/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	8.89	SCONE NSW
31/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	8.74	HEYWOOD VIC
25/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	8.70	COLAC VIC
12/08/2006	DIESEL	8.51	NAROOMA NSW
22/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	8.34	KIEWA VIC
5/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	8.28	TRARALGON VIC
22/08/2006	DIESEL	8.19	ALBION PARK NSW
14/08/2006	DIESEL	8.19	ALBION PARK NSW
15/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	8.08	WARRNAMBOOL VIC
19/08/2006	DIESEL	8.08	GEELONG VIC
4/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	8.07	WONTHAGGI VIC
28/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	7.74	PORTLAND VIC
14/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	7.73	WONTHAGGI VIC
9/08/2006	DIESEL	7.60	MEENIYAN VIC
18/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	7.60	KIEWA VIC
18/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	7.55	SCONE NSW
16/08/2006	DIESEL	7.51	SEYMOUR VIC
31/08/2006	DIESEL	7.47	PENOLA SA
28/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	7.47	MURRURUNDI NSW
17/08/2006	UNLEADED PETROL	7.44	KIEWA VIC

Savings listed above are the cpl difference between the listed pump Price at the bowsers and the actual price paid on contract for Shell.