



AI Courses

For those that don't know, we worked in collaboration with the National Centre for Dairy Education in Australia (NCDEA) to run four AI courses in August where we successfully trained 44 people in a month.

This was a pilot program which is now under industry review to see if we can come up with a sustainable and effective AI training framework for the future. Once the review is complete in November, we will set out dates for training courses for next year. The preliminary plan is for courses to take place in both Autumn and Spring in 2009.

If you would like any further information, contact us at the NHIA office.

NHIA Sundowner function

Last year, we kicked off what we hope will become a long running tradition with our Sundowner function on the evening before the Dairy Australia annual meeting. This event provided a great opportunity for networking with all the players in the Australian dairy industry.



This year the Sundowner function will be held at the RACV Club in Bourke Street, Melbourne on Thursday 27th November from 5pm to 7pm. All members are invited to attend, so please note the event in your diaries.

What can we do for you?

All AI tanks should have three 'dangerous goods stickers' on them and we have stocks of these stickers available to members. Also, we have Wall Charts, Calendars and Docket Books available. For any orders, please contact Sara on 9742 7244.

Correct codes help a lot!

For any member who purchases Liquid Nitrogen or Dry Ice through BOC Gas & Gear outlets, please make sure that you use the correct account codes! There have been a number of lapses recently that have caused unnecessary extra work for everyone.

Car Hire

Don't forget our car hire deals for all your seasonal ute hire during the busy AI season. Sara can give you all the details.



'Breeding Betsy' For Hire

If anyone is interested in hiring 'Breeding Betsy' as an AI training aid, please contact our office.

Thanks

We would like to acknowledge the generous sponsorship of BOC, Tru Test and Europcar for our recent AGM in Kyabram. Please remember to support those who support us.

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Newsletter

Issue — September 2008



"This will change dairy farming FOREVER"

Quite a claim, isn't it? The headline is a quote from the homepage of the LIC website and it refers to the hot topic in breeding circles right now – genomics or marker-assisted selection.

The scientists finally cracked the code of the bovine DNA in 2004 and ever since, everyone connected with dairy genetics has been in a race to perfect the science of using the animal's DNA to predict its genetic merit so that the selection of semen can be based on that prediction.

New statistical procedures are in the process of being developed so that this genomic (DNA) information can be incorporated into current genetic evaluations to produce genomic ABV's.

The LIC website has the view that "DNA proven genetics is the most significant development in farm productivity improvement since Artificial Breeding (AB) began in New Zealand fifty years ago."

- American Study

Seven AI organizations in North America (USA and Canada) have collaborated with the US Department of Agriculture in the biggest DNA study in the world so far which saw around 5500 Holstein bulls have their DNA sequenced. This has enabled them to identify 54,000 genetic markers from which comes the data that the geneticists use to make genomic predictions.

Commencing in January 2009, the USA and Canada will be producing GE-PTAs (genomic enhanced- Predicted Transmitting Ability) which are their equivalent of our Australian Breeding Values (ABVs).

Genomic evaluations for Progeny Test bulls will be more accurate than current Parent Average values for young bulls – but not as accurate as Progeny Test proofs so there will still be the need to carry out the normal sire evaluations using herd test data. It is expected that this will lead to less bulls being Progeny Tested but a higher percentage of bulls graduating with proven results. We can expect AI studs to collect semen on potential graduates earlier, to cull bottom end bulls earlier, to market more semen on younger bulls and also, in the age of sexed semen, have a whole new group of bulls for producing sexed semen.

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- The Kiwis are full steam ahead on DNA Proven

The LIC has invested heavily in recent years in DNA technology and are the first to be offering young bulls with genomic evaluations for sale. This spring, NZ dairy farmers will have the opportunity to buy a "DNA Proven" pack containing bulls which have genomic evaluations available. I am informed that the semen is selling at a premium around \$25 per dose and demand has been high from farmers wishing to make use of this new technology from the beginning.

The LIC has genetic material stored from over 4000 bulls which it has been progeny testing since the early 1960's and these have been used to sequence DNA to get the NZ research results.

The Kiwi message is simply that the sooner this technology is adopted, the sooner the benefits will become apparent in the form of increased genetic gain.

- Australian Data

The Australian data has been gained from co-operative research undertaken by Genetics Australia, the Dairy CRC and the DPI/University of Melbourne. Almost 800 bulls with semen collected by Genetics Australia over the years have been used in the Australian studies.

ADHIS are in the process of doing the necessary calculations for producing GE-ABV's and hope that this information will be available within the next year.

- The beef experience has not all been positive

The beef industry in Australia has been very quick to promote the uptake of marker-assisted selection for traits such as tenderness, marbling and net feed intake. A company called Catapult Genetics has developed commercially available tests for genetic markers for these important traits. By integrating these DNA results with existing BREEDPLAN EBVs, the Smartgene for Beef Project aimed to calculate marker-assisted breeding values to help beef producers select for economically important traits. At least that was the theory.

In a startling development, however, the Smartgene for Beef Project found that whilst two of the four gene markers for tenderness were useful in Marker-Assisted breeding values (MA-EBVs), there was no, or very limited, value in the gene markers for marbling and net feed intake. This has led to many in the beef industry having concerns that the technology does not deliver on its promise.

It will, therefore, be important that the dairy industry is able to prove that marker-assisted selection does provide us with correct information. The only way to do this is to monitor and compare the results of bulls with genomic ABVs with their normal progeny tested ABVs when they become available with time. So, essentially, the jury will be out until about 2012 or 2013 when the first genomic ABV bulls get their first progeny proofs. Then we will know one way or the other.

- Exciting times ahead

There is absolutely no question that our industry is on the brink of very exciting times – so much so that it is difficult for anyone to really predict what is going to happen.

Tom Lawlor is the Director of Research and Development for the US Holstein Association and he recently wrote in an article on genomic selection that "The next few years will certainly be exciting. As many mysteries start to become unraveled, other questions, ones we don't even know we should be asking, will be asked. You may not have heard much about genomic selection before, but I have a feeling we'll be talking about this for years to come."

Don't renew your insurance without checking this out!

We recently were able to assist one of our members, Nationwide AB in Noorat, with obtaining transit insurance for semen shipments. John Pickford was very impressed with the service provided by Benton Insurance Services,

"They were pretty good, and got back to me very quickly with a quote. The best thing is they understood what we needed and there was no need to explain the product or the nature of it – they knew what we needed and gave it to us. It was a good price, too."

Benton Insurance Services are very experienced in the provision of all types of insurance to rural businesses and we have found them to be very helpful and responsive to member enquiries. Why not give them a ring if you are not satisfied with your current provider or if you feel like your business is being taken for granted? It can't hurt to get a second quote!

Call Mary Nougher at Benton on (03) 5986 8686 and tell her that NHIA suggested you call.

Farmwest Discovery Day

I had a great opportunity recently to visit members in Western Australia and attended Farmwest's Dairy Discovery Day just outside of Bunbury.

It was a terrific event – well organized and very well attended by an enthusiastic group of farmers. Leon Giglia and his team at Farmwest had set up an excellent display area where around twenty or so dairy product supply companies tempted farmers with their wares. The semen companies seemed to be especially busy explaining their bull line-ups to potential customers.

"This is our big event for the year," said Leon, "and the farmers just love the opportunity to come out and talk to so many suppliers in one go."

As part of the day, Farmwest also organized a talk on current issues by Wes Judd, the vice-president of ADF as well as "The Great Cross-breeding Debate" which featured industry legends Jim Conroy, Daniel Abernethy and Brian Albertoni of WWS, among others. The debate was great fun, interesting and conducted in terrific spirit. All in all a terrific event and congratulations to all concerned.

The Eradication of EBL

Enzootic Bovine Leucosis is a viral disease found in cattle, especially in intensive conditions such as dairy production. There has been a program which has been going since 1994 to eradicate the disease totally in Australia and this is nearing completion. We just need one final push to clear the last remaining infected herds (31 in Victoria, 2 in SA and 1 in Queensland) and to complete a final round of Intensive Bulk Milk Testing in order to convince the OIE (the world veterinary authority) to declare us free of EBL.

This is important because we need this to secure our world export markets for milk products. In milk exports, as in all other things, the bar is being raised all the time and in the future, it is foreseen that freedom from EBL will be a significant trade advantage to Australian exporters. Which, in the end, is of benefit to everyone connected with the dairy industry.

A paper has recently been circulated to all herd test centers explaining the EBL program and its upcoming testing round. The herd test centers will be important to this process in that they are best placed to collect milk samples on farm for EBL testing. As an industry, it is important for us all to be 'on board' and encourage the process.

If you would like further information, or a copy of the EBL report, please contact the NHIA office.