

## **Penny Welch and Christian Hickey recognised with NHIA Young Achiever and Outstanding Contribution Awards**

Total Livestock Genetics (TLG) Genetics Material Export Officer, Penny Welch, is one of two people recognised by the National Herd Improvement Association of Australia (NHIA) at the Association's annual industry dinner in Shepparton, Victoria last month.

Penny was nominated by Ruth Barber, Total Livestock Genetics Operations Manager, who recognised her support for young people and herd improvement industry advocacy.

"The passion for the agricultural industry that Penny projects to those around her is infectious and her encouragement of the next generation into the industry is outstanding. Her message has always been that there is a job out there in the agricultural field for anyone, and don't let concerns about education, experience or gender stop you," says Ruth.

As a city kid in regional Victoria, Penny's passion for herd improvement was ignited working on a dairy farm part-time while still at school. With a qualification in rural production, she has specialised in roles supporting the export of Australian dairy and beef genetics and managing animal husbandry programs.

She is a former winner of the Power of Women in Dairying scholarship and serves on the RGTAG (Ruminants Genetics Trade Advisory Group) facilitated by NHIA, and Power of Women in Dairying and Western District Youth Camp committees.

As part of her award Penny received \$3,250.00 funding from NHIA for career development and self-improvement purposes and has chosen to complete the Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership Program later this year.

Commenting on her award, Penny said: "It's very humbling and amazing to be recognised by NHIA and people I work with in the industry in this way. I've always said to young people new to the herd improvement industry that one of the special things about working in it is the great support and that people are willing to back you. Being nominated for and winning this award demonstrates that very clearly."

Former National Herd Development (NHD) Marketing Manager and industry stalwart, Christian Hickey, is the inaugural recipient of a new NHIA award for outstanding contribution to industry. The award recognises demonstrated excellence and a significant contribution in advancing the herd improvement industry.

NHD Chair, Paul Weller, recognised Christian's contribution in increasing farmers' understanding of genetics and his role in implementing the NHIA accredited AI Technician Program in its early years, as some of the career highlights that significantly improved Australia's herd improvement industry.

"Christian's knowledge of genetics and breeding has few peers in Australia. Over more than 25 years with NHD Christian has always embraced change – for the betterment of the industry – be it within genetics or business. Among many things, he witnessed and played a major role in developments that give us today's rapid rate of genetic gain obtainable with the use of sexed semen and genetic

testing. He has always met challenges head-on and has done so with a smile on his face. And he likes nothing more than putting a smile on someone else's," says Paul.

Sara Merckel, NHIA CEO says: "Both our award winners, while at the opposite ends of their careers, have focused on improving the way our industry operates. Penny in her ongoing advocacy and support for those beginning their careers, Christian in increasing farmers knowledge of how genetics can help them improve their businesses. Christian leaves the industry in a much better place than it was at the beginning of his career, Penny has a real focus on continuing to drive it forward."

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#### About NHIA

Formed in 1995 as the successor to the Herd Improvement Organisation Victoria, The National Herd Improvement Association of Australia Incorporated (NHIA) is the industry organisation that promotes herd improvement within the Australian dairy industry, providing a range of services to its membership, and through that membership, to benefit Australian dairy farmers.

The member base includes organisations involved directly in the provision of herd improvement services, a range of activities that lead to productivity gains to farmers as well as herd industry improvement suppliers.