

Recording reds keeps business on track

Dairy farmer: Warren Gallagher

Region: Northern NSW

Topic: Data-driven decisions, workability reporting

“Unless you have the correct information, you can’t make a correct decision.”

– Warren Gallagher

Warren Gallagher values his herd recording information so much, he changed his business to make the most of it.

The NSW dairy farmer uses data gathered from his monthly herd tests to not only make breeding and culling decisions, but also help him plan the next 12 months.

Robust breed data is so important to his farm business that five years ago he made the switch to milking and breeding Aussie Reds.

“Moyola Aussie Reds is part of the evolution to make better choices with more information,” Warren said.

“Pretty much, it was my quest for information that guided me to where I am now.”

Warren milks 240 Aussie Reds at Clunes, 40 km inland from Byron Bay in northern NSW.

Monthly herd recording has been a ritual at the farm for 44 years. Warren also reports his heifer workability traits each year to assist with DataGene’s genetic evaluation system.

Australian Breeding Values (ABVs) for a bull’s milking speed, temperament and likeability are based on workability reports provided by dairy farmers like Warren.



Warren Gallagher says his herd, Moyola Aussie Reds, is part of the evolution to make better choices with more information.

“With information, you are working 12 months ahead of yourself because you have got that history behind you. You know where your cows are up to and it provides a time frame for your future progress. You know where you stand.”

Warren Gallagher

When it comes to information, Warren said “every bit counts”.

“If I don’t have information, I can’t plan,” he said. “Herd recording used to be more about milk – focusing on production – now I concentrate more on cell counts.

“It helps to make decisions, because unless you have the correct information, you can’t make a correct decision.”

The herd’s information is stored in the Easy Dairy computer program. When a heifer enters the dairy for the first time, the computer program recognises this and prompts Warren to score her workability traits a month after she’s calved.

“It is very simple to record,” he said.

“It is super easy to put it in and certainly no trouble, all you do is tab across and it keeps telling you what to do.

“I guess we all have a responsibility to help the industry out by supplying data.”

When it comes to scoring a heifers’ likeability, “I ask myself, do I see her as a potential old cow,” he said.

Since moving across to Aussie Reds, temperament and milking speed have both been consistently good across Warren’s herd and his workability reports reflect this.

Breeding priorities

Udders and a cow’s dairy strength or type are the most important breeding objectives for the Moyola Aussie Red herd. Warren believes these two traits contribute to a cow’s longevity.

To select the bulls used to join the milking herd, Warren examines the sires offered by his preferred breeding company and then checks their Good Bulls status and rankings for udder and type.



Warren Gallagher says every bit of information counts: “if I don’t have information, I can’t plan.”

Rearing only 40 heifers a year, dairy bulls are used to artificially inseminate 100 of the best cows each year. These cows are identified through their herd recording data as well as their udder and frame.

The rest of the herd – about 140 – are joined to beef bulls. Warren has a market for his beef-cross animals and this breeding program helps him manage the workload as the sole farm operator.

He said the frame of an Aussie Red provides it with a higher meat value than other dairy breeds when sold directly to an abattoir.

Until recently, the Clunes area had been dry and Warren relied on feeding bought-in hay, hand feeding for only the second time in his farming career.

Normally, the cow’s milk from 61 hectares of irrigated pasture with dry cows fed round bale silage made from summer grasses. Milkers are supplemented with up to 8 kg/cow/day combination of corn, wheat and canola meal.

Producing 1.6 million litres of milk for the year, Warren said the alteration to the diet at the end of the herd’s lactation didn’t affect the Aussie Reds.

Thanks to a strong history of herd recording, he has the data to back this up.

CONTACT US

ABN: 78 613 579 614

DataGene Limited, AgriBio, 5 Ring Road,
La Trobe University, Bundoora Victoria 3083



email: enquiries@datagene.com.au



www.datagene.com.au



T (03) 9032 7191



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