What’s ahead in this ABV release
April 2020 ABV Release Update # 1

New/updated traits
The April ABV 2020 release includes new or updated ABV models for eight traits:
1. Gestation length (new)
2. Calving ease (updated)
3. Mastitis resistance (new)
4. Overall type (updated)
5. Dairy Strength ABV (new)
6. Feet and Legs ABV (new)
7. Rump ABV (new)
8. Mammary system (updated)

The easiest way to access the new traits is through the Good Bulls Guide excel and spreadsheet files published on the DataGene website; or by looking up individual animals on DataVat (animal search). At this stage the new traits will not be published in the Good Bulls App or printed Good Bulls Guide. We are working on updating the App to include the new traits and will advise you when this is ready.

Bull movements
Bull rankings are affected by changes to type breeding values because Overall Type and Mammary system are included in the three indices: Balanced Performance Index (BPI), Health Weighted Index (HWI) and Type Weighted Index (TWI).

Gestation length
The Gestation Length ABV gives farmers a new tool for managing late calving cows. It identifies bulls whose calves are born earlier than their expected due date. This means cows calve earlier or are in-milk more days before re-joining, giving them more time to recover after calving and improving fertility. Using the Gestation Length ABV on later calving cows is a way to tighten calving patterns. Look for bulls with a Gestation Length ABV of less than zero. Every 1 ABV is about 1 day shorter gestation.

Calving Ease
The updated Calving Ease ABV now includes genomics which means that most Holstein bulls, including young genomic bulls will receive a Calving Ease ABV. Farmers will have more Holstein bulls to choose from if they want to ensure their cows and heifers calve easier.

Mastitis resistance
The new Mastitis Resistance ABV makes it easier to directly breed for improved mastitis resistance. It is available for all breeds, including young genomic bulls. The Mastitis Resistance ABV draws upon three sets of information: 305-day somatic cell count, udder depth and clinical mastitis records. To breed replacements with improved mastitis resistance, select bulls from the Good Bulls Guide with a Mastitis Resistance ABV of greater than 100.

Type changes
The new type traits and updated Overall Type have been introduced to provide new breeding tools. New composite traits for Feet & Legs, Rump and Dairy Strength have been are now available.

The new and updated type breeding values are published for Holsteins, Red Breeds Guernseys and Ayrshires. Type ABVs are unchanged for Jerseys and aren’t evaluated for Brown Swiss.

Read more: Changes to Type ABVs, April 2020

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Understanding Type ABVs
For those who want a more detailed understanding of Type ABVs, DataGene has published a detailed industry resource Type ABVs explained.
For a quicker read: Tech Note and Fact Sheet.

Future Stars
Bulls that are too young to expect semen to be available are called our Future Stars. These can be viewed on Datavat.com.au.

Enhancements to GESNP & DataVat
Recent enhancements to the genetic evaluation system include:
• Programming and testing new/updated ABVs
• NASIS module.
• Progeny Test module.

The focus of DataVat enhancements has been on building the user-registration delegation module which will allow data owners (farmers) to control permissions for third parties (e.g. staff and service providers) to access herd records and reports.

NBO review update
The review of the National Breeding Objective (NBO) is progressing according to schedule. The NBO describes the collective breeding priorities for Australian dairy herds and is expressed through DataGene’s three breeding indices – BPI, HWI and TWI.
An industry online survey has been completed with more than 350 responses from a broad cross-section of industry. An external consultancy, AbacusBio, has been engaged to analyse survey results and their potential implications for the BPI, HWI, TWI. We are expecting an options paper any day which will underpin discussions with stakeholders over the coming months. Once the industry has agreed on any changes to the NBO, the genetic evaluation algorithms will be adjusted and tested with the expectation of rolling out in the December ABV release.
More information: NBO review fact sheet, NBO Discussion paper.

What’s coming later in 2020
DataGene’s program of work continues with the following developments underway
• More frequent evaluations.
• Improvements to NASIS processes
• Implementation of NBO review outcomes

Recent research papers
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Acknowledgement
The new and updated ABVs the outcome of DairyBio research. DairyBio is a joint initiative between Agriculture Victoria, Dairy Australia and the Gardiner Dairy Foundation. Thanks also to farmers and software providers who supply data used in genetic evaluations.

More information
Michelle Axford
Ph 0427 573 330
E: maxford@datagene.com.au

Communication resources
Lee-Ann Monks, DataGene Marketing and Communication ph 0419 349 244 lmonks@datagene.com.au

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Need help with DataVat?
Support is available for DataVat users.
Online: user instructions are available 24/7.
Email: datavathelp@datagene.com.au

Top tip: Don’t forget there are two websites: Datagene.com.au:
• General info e.g. fact sheets, tech notes
• ABV lists (cows and bulls) including Good Bulls Guide (pdf and excel spreadsheets)
• Data Services for semen companies

Datavat.com.au:
• Animal search (replaces Display-a-bull)
• Herd specific records and reports (requires registration and authority from herd owners)