

## Managing mastitis makes sense

**Dairy farmer: Tim Humphris**

**Region: South-West Victoria**

**Topic: Australian Breeding Values for health traits**

For Tim Humphris, the new Australian Breeding Values (ABVs) released by DataGene in April offer value to his business, but the dairy farmer from Nirranda South, Victoria has been really looking forward to one in particular: the Mastitis Resistance ABV.

“I certainly consider Cell Count when I look at selecting my bulls, but the Mastitis Resistance ABV gives me more confidence,” he said.

“To me it’s more important to reduce clinical cases of mastitis than have a cow with a lower cell count. We have an 80,000-100,000 cell count, so it isn’t really an issue. But I’d really like to reduce the cases of clinical mastitis. The economic impact of a mastitis case is far greater than a cow with a slightly higher cell count.”

Tim chooses bulls via the Good Bulls Guide App, ranking on Balanced Performance Index (BPI) and then filtering for various traits. The number one trait was fertility, but now mastitis resistance is a high priority.

Tim hasn’t focused on Type ABVs much in the past, but he had always applied the ‘udder depth’ filter when selecting bulls.

Research has proven reducing udder depth is one way to improve mastitis resistance, he said.

“It is really interesting to see, in the new traits, how mastitis resistance has a composite of udder depth in it.



*Tim Humphris is looking forward to using ABVs for mastitis resistance, gestation length and calving ease to help identify sires to use over his 3-way cross herd.*

“The ABV includes cell count, clinical case records and udder depth.”

Milking 400 including Aussie Reds and three-way crosses (Aussie Red, Jersey and Holstein), Tim anticipates using the Gestation Length and Calving Ease ABV in combination to increase his confidence selecting Holstein sires.

“Given the three-way crossing, we do use Holstein bulls” Tim said. “When we use Holstein bulls over the heifers, if that’s the cross, we will definitely select on calving ease.”

To breed for improved calving ease, select bulls with a calving ease ABV of at least 103.

The new ABVs are the result of DairyBio research, drawing upon records supplied by Ginfo herds. DairyBio is a joint initiative between Agriculture Victoria, Dairy Australia and the Gardiner Dairy Foundation. Thanks also to the farmers and software providers who supply data used in genetic evaluations.

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