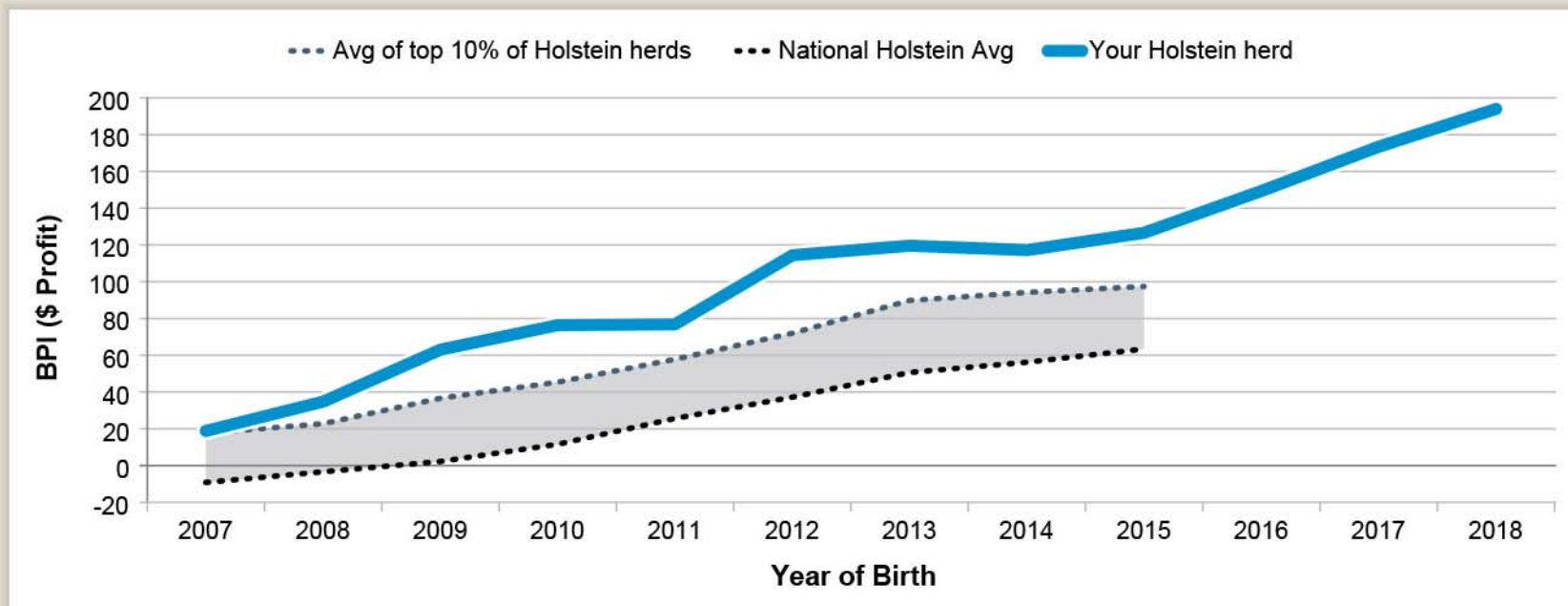


*How the herd improvement industry  
can motivate the necessary rate  
of change in our farmer base.*

**Craig Lister**



## Genetic Progress for Balanced Performance Index



The Balanced Performance Index (BPI) reflects the economic drivers of net profitability for the range of dairy farming systems in Australia. Traits include production, survival, type, mammary, milking speed, temperament, cell count, fertility and feed efficiency.

# THE STRATEGY – HOW IT WAS ACHIEVED

**1: Set a clear and concise breeding goal.**

*“Breed efficiently productive, healthy and fertile Holsteins with robust functional type”*

# THE STRATEGY – HOW IT WAS ACHIEVED

## **1: Set a clear and concise breeding goal.**

*“Breed efficiently productive, healthy and fertile Holsteins with robust functional type”*

## **2: Selected teams of elite BPI/APR bulls consistent with the declared breeding goal.**

- Usually requires some compromise between profitability (BPI) and secondary breeding preferences. How much future profit are you willing to forego to satisfy these preferences?

# THE STRATEGY – HOW IT WAS ACHIEVED

## **3: Utilised sexed semen on the highest genetic merit animals within the herd.**

- Fixed Time AI programs on maiden heifers plus selective use through milking herd.
- Lowest genetic merit cows in the herd were identified and not used for breeding Holstein replacements.
- Combination effectively increases the average genetic merit of the dams of future replacement heifers.

# THE STRATEGY – HOW IT WAS ACHIEVED

## **4: Genomic Testing.**

- Herd selected for the 10,000 cows project and GINFO.
- Commenced selective genomic testing of heifer calves in 2011, graduating to blanket testing every Holstein heifer born from 2014 onwards.
- Enabled more accurate & intensive implementation of breeding strategy.
- Increased effectiveness of complementary matings for milking cows & maiden heifers e.g. low heritability traits like daughter fertility can be correctively bred for from first joining.

# HOW CAN THE HERD IMPROVEMENT INDUSTRY MOTIVATE CHANGE?

*The biggest challenge remains helping farmers to recognise the importance of their annual genetic investments, and motivating them to equip their future dairy herd with the genetic tools necessary for a profitable and healthy life.*

To achieve this, it is first necessary to convince them that:

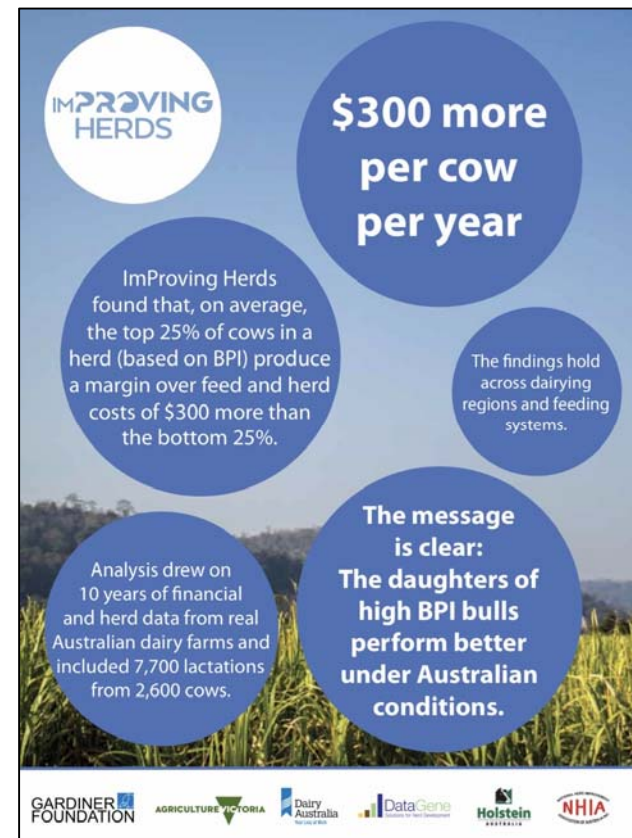
- Investing extra time and effort into their breeding program will deliver a realistic improvement to the profitability of their future dairy herd.
- They are capable of implementing a breeding program to significantly improve the genetic merit of their herd, resulting in healthier more productive cows.
- Increasing their herd's genetic merit does not necessarily require significant financial investment.



# IMPROVING HERDS PROJECT

Historically difficult to quantify the role of genetics in increasing farm business profitability.

The **ImProving Herds** project is a useful reference in these discussions, with the results clearly demonstrating that higher genetic merit cows generate a greater margin over feed costs.



# CAPABILITY

- Recognise that we, as people who are passionate about herd improvement, can inadvertently discourage farmers from taking control of their own herd breeding program through the manner in which we discuss genetics.
- In discussions with the farm sector emphasise the key messages like *“select high BPI bulls from the Good Bulls Guide”*
- Build confidence that a clear and consistent breeding strategy implemented year after year will deliver a healthier more productive dairy herd.
- Technology will provide increasing levels of assistance (Good Bulls App, Herd Data App).



# WHAT DO HIGH BPI BULLS COST?

Selecting a team of high BPI bulls does not require significant extra financial investment, just a little time and effort spent on research.

| Bull                | BPI        | ASI        | Survival   | D Fert     | OT         | MS         | Price          | Straws     |
|---------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|----------------|------------|
| Coastal-View Mookie | 372        | 242        | 110        | 109        | 105        | 107        | \$20           | 50         |
| Bomaz AltaBettman   | 344        | 204        | 107        | 111        | 101        | 104        | \$18           | 50         |
| Calister Maebull    | 317        | 129        | 109        | 112        | 103        | 103        | \$20           | 50         |
| Bouw Rocky          | 313        | 111        | 113        | 110        | 111        | 108        | \$12           | 50         |
| Delta Alonso        | 311        | 179        | 108        | 112        | 103        | 102        | \$12           | 50         |
| Jet Star Trickin    | 304        | 173        | 108        | 113        | 104        | 100        | \$16           | 50         |
| <b>AVERAGE</b>      | <b>326</b> | <b>173</b> | <b>109</b> | <b>111</b> | <b>104</b> | <b>104</b> | <b>\$16.33</b> | <b>300</b> |

Source: Jared Ireland



**CALISTER  
HOLSTEINS**

