

Phone app fills missing link

Dairy farmers: Ken and Bonnie Ravenhill

Region: Western Australia

Topic: HerdData



Mobile technology is making it much easier to keep track of cow records – just ask WA Holstein breeder Ken Ravenhill (Moonaralla Holsteins).

“We’ve gone from paper and pens, to laptops and now we are using the HerdData app on a mobile phone to access cow records.” Ken said.

“The technology is making it easier to keep good records and access them whenever you want, wherever you are on the farm.”

Ken and Bonnie Ravenhill, along with their four children Heath 13, Georgina 11, Thomas 5 and Lola 3, farm at Narrikup, 25 kilometres north of Albany in Western Australia.

The family farm – which includes Ken’s parents, Graham and Jan – milks 1200 Holsteins through a 60 stand rotary and has between eight and 10 full time staff.

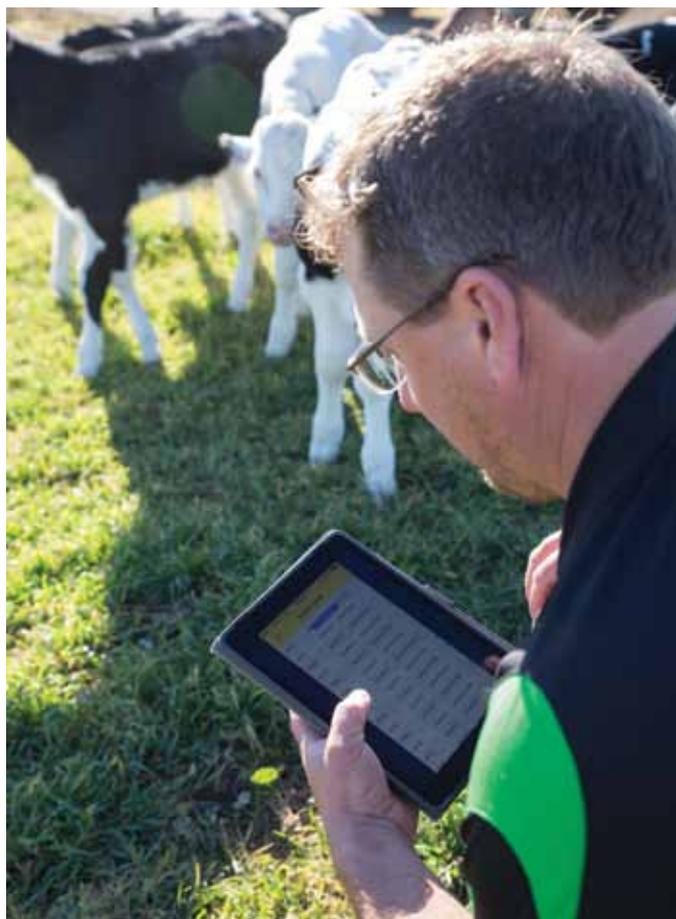
“It means we have a massive amount of records on cows including herd test data, herd health records, calving and breeding records,” Ken said.

“With such a large number of cows we can’t remember them all, so it’s great when you can get an app on your phone which lets you access all that information.”

Ken downloaded DataGene’s HerdData app as soon as it became available as a way of accessing herd information anywhere on the farm.

The app synchronises with the home computer program, EasyDairy, as well as DataGene’s and the herd test company Farm West’s databases.

Ken is currently using HerdData to retrieve information such as cow IDs, cow status, sire and dam details on his phone. The app also allows him to view a range of records including herd test data and performance graphs.



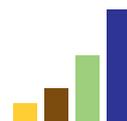
Mobile technology is making it easier for Ken Ravenhill and his staff to keep track of cow records.

“I can access the data on my phone even if there is no phone signal – and I probably access the app two to three times a day to look up information,” he said.

“Having an app on the mobile phone saves having to print lists in the office then carry them around the farm with me – it really fills the missing link in our data system.

“It’s great. If I’m in the calf pens or out in the paddock and I want to look up an animal I can pull out my phone and look up an animal’s pedigree, BPI or ASI.

“I can check when a cow is coming into season, when a cow was last mated and when she is due to calve so I can identify cows for lead feeding.





Ken Ravenhill and his daughter Georgina access herd information in the paddock.

“I can also look up a cow’s production and cell count and where she sits in the herd when it comes to making decision on which cows to cull.

“At this stage I’m just getting to know the app, but I can see it has enormous potential if we have a number of copies available on the farm so a number of people all have the same data at their fingertips.

“Its great technology – an app on a mobile phone is now better than a computer was 10 years ago.”

In the future, Ken plans to use HerdData to enter herd records directly onto his phone when he is around the farm.

The records that can be entered on the mobile phone include calving dates, AI dates and sires, heat detections, dry-off dates, pregnancy test results, sales, culls, health events and treatments.

Herd records entered during the day would then synchronise with the office computer to ensure no records were lost, even if the phone is lost or broken.

“Having an app on the mobile phone saves having to print lists in the office then carry them around the farm with me – it really fills the missing link in our data system.”

Ken Ravenhill, WA, 1200 milkers, Holstein

The HerdData app was developed by DataGene – an initiative of Dairy Australia and the Australian herd recording sector, with the assistance of participating herd testing centres.

The app is suitable for Android and Apple tablets or phones and can be downloaded from IOS AppStore or GooglePlay.

The annual subscription is \$99 a year, which includes data synchronisation and upgrades.

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December 2017