

## Farm facts at your fingertips

**Dairy farmers: Kevin Lockett**

**Region: Gippsland, Victoria**

**Topic: HerdData**



Gippsland dairy farmer Kevin Lockett has his herd records just where he wants them – at his fingertips. DataGene’s new mobile app, HerdData, gives Kevin access to his herd records anywhere, any time.

Kevin milks 165 cows on about 88ha at Neerim North, Victoria with a split-calving herd of cross bred, Holstein and Jersey cows. The herd is part of a larger family operation which milks around 700 cows across three farms.

When he wants to check on a cow’s most recent herd test figures, find out when she is due to dry off, or calve, and find out who a cow is in calf to, he just pulls out his phone to access his records.

***“Having the HerdData information on my phone makes management quick and simple – I don’t know how I farmed without it.”***

**– Kevin Lockett,  
who milks 165 Holstein,  
Jersey and crossbred cows at  
Neerim North**

The HerdData app is a big improvement on the record keeping Kevin had when he started on the farm.

“I came back to dairy farming about five years ago after working in the transport industry. While I grew up around dairying I had limited herd management experience when I started on this farm so I found myself keeping a lot of records,” he said.

“The family dairy operation had undergone a stage of rapid expansion and bought cows in – so I didn’t even know the history of the cows on the farm.

“I was writing everything down in notebooks, on pieces of paper and on wall charts to keep track of what was happening to individual cows in the herd.

“At the end of the day I then had to sit in front of the computer at home and update all the records – it involved handling records twice.

“There was always a risk that bits of paper would get lost or damaged – and then the records were gone before they got into the computer system.



“HerdData has made record keeping so much easier. Everything is so simple and easy to access – it’s brilliant.”

“It’s a very easy app to use – if you can use a smart phone then you can use HerdData. It wouldn’t matter whether you were 17 or 57 – it’s basically idiot proof.”

HerdData allows Kevin to enter herd records on the spot as well as view a range of records including herd test data and performance graphs on his phone.

The records that can be entered on the app include calving dates, dry-off dates, pregnancy test results, sales, culls, matings, health events and treatments.

It also provides access to herd records, cow IDs, cow status, sire and dams.

In addition, the app also synchronises records entered during the day with the home computer as well as DataGene’s and the herd test company’s databases. This ensures no records are lost, even if the phone is lost or broken.

“I record all the bulls used and joining dates – AI and natural – then record preg test results which will be matched to the most suitable joining date,” Kevin said

“When a cow calves I can just tap the phone and record the date she calved, her calving ease, the sex and size of the of calf and its tag

“The app matches the calf to the sire and lists whether it is to be sold or kept as a replacement heifer.

“Every animal is recorded in the app and allocated to a group – such as dry cows, milkers, and young stock. When a cow calves she automatically moves from the dry cow group to the milking herd and is on the list for the next herd test.

“The HerdData app also lets me know which cows are due to dry off in the next two weeks, and who is due to calve when – all I need to do is two simple clicks on my phone and I’ve got a list in front of me with the cows and their dates.”

Accessing up-to-date herd records and the most recent herd tests data on a mobile phone has meant Kevin can make informed management decisions in the dairy or out in the paddock.

“Before I had HerdData I would have to wait for the herd test results to come through on an email to the home computer, then go through the list of cows at the end of the day when I got home before deciding on which cows to cull the next day,” Kevin said.

“Just recently I was able to pull up my most recent herd tests results on the app as soon as they synchronised with the phone, then look at the history of a number of cows while I was in the dairy.

“I made a decision to cull two cows based on the information HerdData gave me on my phone. I called the livestock transporter and cows were on the market within 24 hours.

“Having the information on my phone makes management quick and simple – I don’t know how I farmed without it.”

While Kevin is working as a one-man operator, he believes the app would be invaluable in large herds where all employees could access the same synchronised data on their phones.

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.

***“Having DataGene’s HerdData app has made record keeping so much easier. Everything is so simple and easy to access – it’s brilliant.”***

**– Kevin Locket**

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