

Breeding program to help in the heat

Dairy farmers: Gordon family

Region: Northern Victoria

Topic: Heat Tolerance ABV

A new Heat Tolerance ABV will be one consideration when choosing bulls to use over the 640 cows in the Gorbro Holstein herd run by the Gordon family at Cohuna in Northern Victoria.

“Climate change is going to result in more variable and extreme weather patterns so making sure we use bulls with improved Heat Tolerance is part of a long-term strategy for the herd,” Ross Gordon said.

“We’ve been part of the Ginfo project so we have genotypes for the herd that show a spread in the Heat Tolerance ABVs of our cows. We will be looking for bulls that combine production and heat tolerance in the future.

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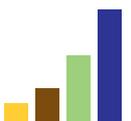
– Ross Gordon, Cohuna, Victoria

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Ross said dealing with hot weather was a big factor for dairy farms in Northern Victoria, especially during heat waves when temperatures did not drop at night.

Dairying in an irrigation area and grazing summer crops also meant humidity could affect the herd’s ability to handle hot weather.

Ross has seen production and fertility affected by hot weather so has put a number of strategies in place to help





the herd, such as a roof over the dairy yard, sprinklers at the dairy and ensuring the cows always have access to shade.

The Gordons also aim to graze millet crops that are lush and have a high water content at night, and ensure the herd doesn't have to walk too far from the dairy when there is a run of hot weather.

To breed for improved heat tolerance, look for bulls that combine a high Balanced Performance Index (BPI) with a Heat Tolerance ABV of greater than 100.

Gorbro Holsteins is a family partnership that includes Ross and Janette, their two sons and their spouses: Drew and Stacey, and Glen and Genna.

The Heat Tolerance ABV was developed by Dairy Bio, a joint initiative between the Victorian Government and Dairy Australia, with funding from the Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.

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