App makes bull selection quicker and easier

Neil and Simone Jolliffe

Region: Riverina, NSW

Topic: Good Bulls App

Neil Jolliffe has two files on his mobile phone. One is where he stores all the bull names and details of the semen he has in his artificial insemination tank.

The other is for prospective bulls – those he's liked the look of and will investigate further next time he needs to purchase semen.

This latter list is updated each time DataGene's Australian Breeding Values (ABVs) are released (in April, August and December).

Riverina dairy farmer Neil Jolliffe uses DataGene's Good Bulls App to save time sorting through bull catalogues.

Both files – and the App that makes it possible to create them, DataGene's Good Bulls App – set Neil up for breeding success.

"It saves me a lot of time sorting through catalogues," he said about the App.

"I used the filter on the App and put in four or five main criteria – traits I don't want to compromise on – then apply those filters and it narrows down the available bulls. Instead of going through a catalogue, looking at 50-60 bulls, I'm able to just look at the ones I'm interested in because they fit what I'm looking for."

Neil and Simone Jolliffe milk 320 cows year-round in a housed-cow, total mixed ration system, near Wagga Wagga in NSW.

They are pleased with the genetic merit of their Holstein herd but want to continually push some areas of their operation to maximise production in their new farming system.

These breeding priorities are set in the Good Bulls App as filters.

Neil said he applied a filter for a minimum 102 Calving Ease, 107 Mastitis Resistance, 110 Daughter Fertility and ensures he only searches for bulls that are more than -300 for Milk.
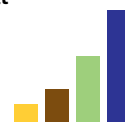
This fertility focus comes after years of concentration on this part of their business, while breeding for calving ease means less labour pulling calves and the cows also recover better from calving.

Producing an average 4.5% fat and 3.7% protein, the Jolliffes are now looking to add extra milk to their higher-than-average components.

Breeding for mastitis resistance makes sense from an animal health and economic perspective and it's also important now they are milking in a housed system.

"Mastitis resistance is one we are pushing a bit harder now, if we can keep the mastitis out of cows, it is better than treating them," Neil said.

"Also, with the compost barn we are looking a lot at

breeding for mastitis resistance to complement the work we do keeping the bedding pack dry."

Using these filters with the Good Bulls App, Neil said the bulls presented also generally have high Balanced Performance Index (BPI).

"I used to print a list off of all the bulls I had in the tank (when I was doing AI) and then have the catalogue in the AI box to refer to if needed, to double check," he said.

Now Neil also uses the Good Bulls App to double check bull details prior to inseminating his cows or when he is critiquing industry information.

"I find, having the App on my phone, is easier. The other thing I use it for, is when I go to bed and I'm reading a journal, if I come across a bull from somewhere around the world – in Holstein International or whatever – I use the App to search that bull and see how he suits the Australian system."

Thanks to the App, Neil said it's easier to compare bulls and he's making better breeding decisions because he's confident the bulls he is choosing fit his breeding criteria.

In addition, he's also finding bulls that meet his breeding criteria that he may not have otherwise come across – a bonus considering he no longer needs to do the time-consuming research himself.

"I used to spend most nights reading bull catalogues," he said.

"Reducing that time has allowed me to spend more time with my family."