

Australian Red Dairy Breed Chair Report

Samuel Graham: July 2021

The Australian Red Dairy Breed (ARDB) has had a successful start to 2021, despite COVID-19 limiting our ability to hold an in-person AGM or Mid-Year Meeting.

The AGM was held online in January, and was attended by a number of our members from all over Australia. We welcomed Owen Simpson to the board, who is replacing Paul Cocksedge in the Technical and Interbreed portfolio, after Paul served 4 years on the board. Paul has accepted a role as ARDB delegate to DataGene. David Jupp was also welcomed onto the board as our Company Secretary, replacing Graeme Hamilton who has accepted the role as ARDB delegate to IRDBF. We would like to thank both Paul and Graeme for their hard work and commitment to the ARDB.

The AGM was followed by two on-farm herd visits; one in Gippsland and the other in South-West Victoria. These two days were very successful, and attended by a number of farmers and service providers from within each region. A huge thank you to Will Colbert and Meaghan Douglas, and Tim Humphris and Marie Clark for opening up their farms, and taking time out to enable these farm visits to go ahead.

Even with the leadership changes, business has continued, and we have completed the five-year review of the Model Cow document. During this process, it became apparent that our current cattle registration eligibility policy also needed to be reviewed.

Of particular significance, we are proposing changes to remove Red Holsteins from the Red Breed group. The Red Breed group is the ARDB's recognised registered cattle group from which the ARDB allows their progeny to receive full registration as an ARDB animal. Not only has this proposal been requested by some of our current members, it also follows the direction from two of the world's largest Red Breed cattle populations, the Norwegian Red and Viking Reds, who no longer allow registered Red Holstein's progeny to be registered within their register. It will also bring clarity to our Red Breeds analysis, as it will move us in line with the Australian and International breeding values that include Red Holsteins within the Holstein base, and not within the Red Breed group, for all recorded data, including genomics, herd recording and classification.

Whilst our current registration model has ensured we have a relatively "open register", which has been used to establish the ARDB and encourage registration, I believe we need to ensure the integrity of the ARDB register into the future by appropriately registering animals who have a parent from another breed of registered genetics not in the Red Breed group. Otherwise, we are in danger of establishing ourselves as a cattle register, rather than a Red Breed register.

In consultation with Holstein Australia, it was recommended that the grade suffix be applied to any cattle who only have one registered parent from the Red Breed group. This will still allow these animal's pedigree to be recorded, but will not allow these animals to receive the same full privileges as those animals who have both parents registered in the Red Breed group. Future progeny of these grade cattle sired by bulls from the Red Breed group will be eligible for full registration benefits.

We understand that change to the registration policy can be quite emotive, but I believe we can discuss these issues in a professional way. I would like all members to understand that they can express their views directly to the board, and discuss these proposed changes amongst members, before we vote on the proposed changes to both these policies at the 2022 AGM. If the proposal is

accepted by a majority of members at our AGM, this will not affect any current animals in the register, but will be executed on new registration from 1st January 2023.

In other news, we welcomed the first private release of Red Genomics in April. To re-iterate my previous comments from January, it is extremely important to note that this genomic index is a combination of a genomic dataset on four traits (worth about 60% of the index) and a generated parent average for the remaining traits (worth 40% of the index). The purpose of understanding this is to ensure Australian farmers do not use red genomic information blindly, but as another tool in helping them select future bulls, and future replacements for their herds. We need to learn from past mistakes made from using genomics, and understand we will have “teething” issues in the presentation of the first public release on Red Genomics in August. The dataset has a much lower reliability than other breeds genomics, but also provides us a starting point from which to develop the reliability of Red Genomics into the future. Again, I would like to particularly acknowledge and thank DataGene for the significant time they have invested into bringing this project to fruition.

Genetics Australia has included two new young sires to join their Australian Red bull stable. These two young bulls have been selected by their breeders as outstanding prospects and endorsed by a team of Australian Red members. Additionally, they have high rated Red Genomic indexes, which should give Australian dairy farmers more confidence in using these bulls in their AI team. These bulls include Johville Park Booboo (VR Wiking x VR Tokyo) and Beaulands Blitzon (VR Tokyo x ARBBonjovi). I would encourage all our members to include these bulls in their AI team to enable them to receive a reliable proof.

Thank you to all our members who have supported the board and our team in various ways over the past 6 months. May you continue to enjoy milking your Australian Red Cows.

Yours Sincerely,

Samuel Graham.

Australian Red Dairy Breed Chair Report

Samuel Graham: January 2022

It is with great anticipation that we approach our in-person AGM. The ARDB has an incredible sense of community, that has really been missed during our border restrictions over the past 20 months.

It has been encouraging to see our breed continue to go from strength to strength, and while this can be measured in many ways, it has been highlighted over the past few weeks by our Australian Red Cow of the Year entries. All the nominations would be worthy recipients of this title, and I can only commend our members for continuing to promote our breed in many ways, particularly through this competition.

Our leadership team continues to go above and beyond in both directing our breed and promoting the growth that we have continued to experience. Brett Davies, Owen Simpson, Meaghan Douglas and I have met regularly on Zoom for our board meetings. My fellow board members have done an exceptional job and I can only endorse their reports wholeheartedly. Brett Davies has served on the Board for 4 years and is retiring from the board this year. We wish him the very best and sincerely thank him for his contribution to the ARDB.

I would also like to publicly acknowledge the tireless work of Frank Kelly (Treasurer), Graeme Hamilton (ARDB representative to IRDBF), Paul Cocksedge (ARDB representative to DataGene) Greg Gouling (VIC OFC organiser) and Bev Phelan (TAS OFC 21 ARDB ambassador). The expertise and industry connections that these members contribute to the ARDB is invaluable.

I would like to take the time to also thank our industry partners that directly support the ARDB. Firstly, to Genetics Australia whose financial support of the ARDB is invaluable. Secondly, to Viking Genetics Australia who also financially support the ARDB, and granted Erik Thompson (ARDB life member) time to judge our OFC.

An absolute highlight for the ARDB in 2021 was the August public release of the first Red Genomics in Australia. Whilst we acknowledge the limited reliability of this dataset, it is a starting point for future data to feed in to. Again, we would like to publicly thank DataGene for the immense amount of work that they have put into this project; and acknowledge past ARDB leadership that financially invested into this project. One of the unforeseen benefits this project brought to the wider Australian industry was that the Red Genomic index can also be utilised by the other breeds in the Red Breed group, namely the Illawarra and Ayrshire Breeds.

After the Red Genomics were released, DataGene contacted us about their next proposal; that the Red breed group breeding values should be split post-analysis into individual Red breeds with different bases. We are strongly opposed to this proposal, we feel it belittles the contribution of the ARDB to the Red Breed group, particularly towards the Red Genomic project. We believe that it will work against any collaboration the Red breed group may have in the future. We also believe that it will reduce the ability for commercial farmers to easily compare the genetic merit of different cattle within the Red breeds group. We are concerned that the proposed breeding values could be manipulated for financial gain. We will continue to liaise with DataGene into the future on this issue and keep our members informed on any outcomes.

We have had one new bull enter the Genetics Australia Horizon Young Sire program since my Mid Year Report, Beaulands McKeon (Faabali x Foske). He is onsite and hopefully should be available early in 2022. The latest three bulls that have entered this program have been selected by farmers, and then endorsed by receiving high genomic values.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to two members who have both decided to retire in 2021 and disperse their herds. Jan Raleigh (Blackwood Park ARDB Stud, VIC) and Michael Riggs (Loden ARDB Stud, QLD) have both registered cows since the inception of the ARDB. They have both been actively involved in committees, hosted herd visits and promoted the ARDB both domestically and internationally. To this end, the Board unanimously agreed to award them Life Membership. It is our hope that this highest honour within our breed will appropriately acknowledge the tremendous legacy that they both have left us. We would all like to congratulate them on this achievement.

Enjoy milking your Australian Reds in 2022,

Samuel Graham

ARDB Chairman