

# **AUSTRALIAN RED DAIRY BREED**

**2006**

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

**By Mr John Williams**

The Australia wide drought as you all well know, has been acknowledged as the worst in 100 years. Thus I began my 2003 Annual Presidents Report. I went on to talk about the effects of a general decline in milk prices and grain / fodder shortages with associated price hikes: prices far higher than experienced before. I talked about irrigation water shortages; the extremely difficult environment under which farmers were operating and the stresses involved in maintaining a focus on the Aussie Red Breed goals: namely, to breed and milk commercially desirable cows despite such challenges. 2006, is now arguably the worst drought in recorded history. It along with the reality of global climate change, challenges us to remain resilient, optimistic and focused on realizing the optimum potential of the breed.

Today the Dairy Industry is the third largest rural industry in Australia with a farmgate value of \$3.2 billion in 2005/6, contributing \$9 billion to the economy through processing and marketing. It employs over 100,000 people, with 50,000 directly involved in farming on 8840 dairy farms (10,000 plus before Deregulation) that produce approximately 10 billion litres of milk. With this background, within an industry becoming more economically focused and commercially streamlined, the breed has prevailed, going from strength to strength. Statistical data courtesy Genetics Australia outlining 2006 sales shows that the Aussie Red breed has performed outstandingly in what was for them was a relatively ordinary year. Semen sales, rather than decline as could have been expected, performed positively against market trends of other breeds.

### **PROGENY TEST**

<b>TEAM</b>	<b>DOSES A.R.D.B. PT.</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
2001	7575	Going well before drought
2002	6915	Good result
2003	5380	Real problems
2004	6365	On road to recovery
2005	8550	Took 4 yrs to get back on track
2006	<b>11,000+</b>	A really great year.

**RED SECTOR** (includes small amount of Brown Swiss, Montbelliarde & Illawarra)

**YEAR: 01-07-05 to 30-06-06**

	Proven doses	PT doses	Total
That year (above)	35831	11381	47212
Previous year	26992	8019	35011
Gain	8839	3362	12201
% Gain	<b>33</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>35</b>

**PERIOD: 01-03-06 to 30-11-06**

	Proven doses	PT doses	Total
This period	38101	11792	49893
Previous year	29876	9112	38988
Gain	8225	2680	10905
% Gain	<b>27</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>

As stated in his 2005/2006 Annual Report, Genetics Australia Board Chairperson, at that time, John Harlock identifies that farmers' are wanting Australian bred bulls for Australian conditions.

The ARDB is acknowledged both Nationally and Internationally as an extension of the Scandinavian breeding model. Essentially this means we have used (since the early 1980's) and continue to have access to proven bulls that have been selected for their functional dairy type in conjunction with profitable dairy traits, via an exhaustive breeding values system in place and continually fine tuned over a period of thirty years plus. Our Progeny Testing program is yielding outstanding results. The emergence of Australian proven bulls of high genetic merit and reliability is evidence of this success. Increasing wide spread use (tables above) is the result. Further evidence of our achievement is acknowledged when international visitors comment that the herd of Aussie Red cows being viewed could easily be in Sweden.

At no other point in our development has demand been so significant from the commercial dairy sector (64% of semen sales going into Victorian herds). Frustration at the costs and management issues presented by non production traits, particularly fertility and calving ease that impact on profitability are certainly prompting farmers to have a hard look at the opportunities presented by the use of ARDB bulls. It is ironic that in many dairy publications of late advertisements are appearing for Red bulls with semen available. In most cases, no mention is made of the Breeds involved, nor is there a proof quoted (ABV or ABVi) I would suggest any issue that may negatively impact on sales is conveniently overlooked. The problem this poses is the confusion engendered in the market place and the ARDB wearing any failures from the use of these bulls. Another current issue is the perception that dairy type will determine the productive future of a dairy cow. As a fourth generation breeder of Red dairy cows, I disagree. I have seen too many poor performing bulls bred from successful show cows of so called great dairy type. An effective and functioning

classification program, in conjunction with a merit index system of high reliability (ADHIS-ABV's) is the future for our breed. Our selection process for both Progeny Test and imported Proven Bulls is transparent and a major success factor is the integrity of information from seed stock producers and commitment by committee members to rigorous analysis of data before a bull is approved.

2006 saw a number of initiatives realized, and positive actions taken in reference to the ARDB.

- Crossbreeding Program and associated Workshops.

For a comprehensive report on Crossbreeding and the series of workshops refer to The Red Cow International Magazine August 2006 Issue No 40.

- Classification Workshop.

A successful classification workshop was held in Northern Victoria with members of the Jersey Breeders Classification Committee. I wish to thank Ross and Kim Kirkam for their hospitality in hosting this event.

Where we are today in terms of our position in the Australian dairy landscape would not be possible without the ground breaking work of Pat Swasbrick , a founding member and former E.O and Goran Malmberg, former export manager of Svensk Avel, who were acknowledged for their years of work at a special dinner held in their honour last night here in Albury..

Their collective motivation, foresight, persistence and vision, has set the foundations on which the Aussie Red Breed now sits. Our success as a breed of substance, backed up by over 30 years of Scandinavian research and scientific evidence enables us to command the respect and clout it does today; a consequence of the confidence, belief and trust that evolved with leaders such as Goran and Pat. The legacy they have established is one that we all have a mandate to pursue in a breed that really has a place on the Australian dairy landscape. Additionally I wish to acknowledge the contribution of recently retired Genetics Australia CEO, Bernie Harford, with whom our organization forged a positive working relationship. Our partnership with AUSRED, continues to be mutually beneficial. I draw your attention to both the Editorial written by Karen Moroney and details of the 2007 International Red Cow Conference.(The Red Cow International August 2006 Issue No 40)

In concluding I thank all those involved in the functioning of this society for their continued contribution, time and commitment .On behalf of the ARDB, I thank our Chief Executive Officer, James Hill for the many hours he puts into the role, and the work he does in promoting the breed, in the various forms in which he has a role.