



HERD IMPROVEMENT  
CO-OPERATIVE AUSTRALIA LTD

April 2020

# Newsletter

*Building your future through genetics*



*In Victoria, Agriculture Minister Jaclyn Symes has confirmed agriculture and agribusinesses are essential services, therefore we will continue to do the best we can to provide you with the products and services that you require during these circumstances. We would like to thank you for your understanding and co-operation during this time.*

*Following on from our successful stint at the Sungold Field days, the Western District has seen increased interest in herd testing. Our branch manager, Chris Hoffman has reported several new clients have engaged Hico to carry out herd testing. There are challenges on-farm with the COVID-19 situation, but let's hope, this is a relatively temporary situation. Ongoing, Hico will be looking to provide quality service through accredited sampling officers, reliable and timely data feedback and expert analysis where required from our Farm Services Manager - Daniel Espinosa.*

*The Hico commitment is to provide you with quality service and value as we are focused on maintaining highly skilled staff to fulfil your needs. To meet AI demand, Hico has invested in upskilling staff members, through the participation in the intensive AI training program recently conducted in New Zealand with LIC.*

*The Hico board has strategically commenced a review of our Mistro Software. The expectation is that this review will lead to a next generation technology release for our client base, providing users with innovative resources to improve management and decision-making on farm.*

*Due to the uncertainty and potential impending severity with regards to COVID-19, the board has decided to forgo the appointment of a new General Manager for the foreseeable future to minimise further changes to the business. We would like to announce that Brendan O'Loughlin will continue in the role of GM and look forward to his leadership and management within the business going forward.*

*Operating through this once in a hundred year event, Hico is committed to delivering the best possible service in the circumstances. This period may interrupt some supply chains but at this point our product lines have been secured. Autumn semen supplies are on track, although a reconfiguring of our service is underway with efforts focused on engaging clients via telephone rather than face-to-face, during this pandemic. We invite customers to make contact with their Hico representative or branch office to order their usual products and services. Above all, we remain open for business.*

**Regards,**

**Ross Anderson**  
Chairman



This upcoming ABV release will bring with it the addition of some new traits, being; gestation length, mastitis resistance, dairy strength, feet and legs, and rump, as well as the update of the calving ease, overall

type and mammary system ABVs. If you would like to learn more about these updates, get in contact with your local sales rep so we can provide you with these resources.

## US TPI BASE CHANGE

For those of you who often refer back to the country of origin when looking at bull proofs, a review by the Holstein Association USA will be seen this year. Updates have occurred every 5 years since 1980, with the new update coming into effect at the April 2020 genetic evaluation.

This adjustment will allow for the genetic quality and

competitiveness in breeding to be maintained due to the genetic progress that has been made, therefore upholding the relevance of predicted transmitting ability

(PTA) to cows in production at present. Due to genetic gain being made across the past 5 years for most traits, you will see a decline in the PTA, compared with an unfavourable trend which will see an increase.

## **Herd Segmentation – Target Profitability and Genetic Gain**

*A new era in dairy cattle breeding sees targeting of breeding decisions for improved profitability and optimisation of genetic gain through the use of herd segmentation.*

*Herd segmentation refers to the use of sexed semen on your superior animals to generate your replacements, conventional on the middle proportion of your herd and beef on your poor performers thereby allowing for improved genetic gain.*

*By breeding smarter through identification and joining of your best and most fertile animals to sexed semen, allows you to generate genetically superior replacements early. Isolating your herds poorer performing animals and not allowing them to produce replacements, quickly increase the genetic merit of your replacement females whilst still maintaining your milking herd numbers.*

*Remember that genetics is permanent and cumulative so you need to make the best breeding decisions today to improve your future genetics. The overriding way to do this is by producing replacements from your best animals and not allowing poor genetics to enter your herd through breeding and raising subpar heifers. With reliability of sexed semen now at a much high level than before, there's no reason why you shouldn't implement it into your herd, furthermore the current strength of the export market brings stability in your decision to breed excess heifers.*

### **Implementing a breeding program with these principles allows for a variety of benefits;**

*By mating your selected group of superior animals in their first joining cycle with sexed semen, you are able to generate high performing replacements early. The flow on effect of this will have your replacement heifer group meeting targets evenly, enabling ease of management and subsequently allowing for a tighter more successful joining due to uniform health, growth and fertility within the population. Thereby make these heifers an ideal group for the use of sexed semen in their first joining.*

*Improving animal welfare on farm and maintaining social licence to operate through the decline of bobby calf production will only become more prominent in the dairy farming future. The use of sexed and beef semen allows only for the production of utilisable and saleable animals.*

*Due to prolonged droughts in the northern parts of Australia our beef breeding stocks are seriously depleted. With the break of this drought in many areas the demand for restocking is greater than ever. This opens up a very important market for the forward sale of dairy-beef animals produced through herd segmentation. With the addition of beef into the bottom end of your herd you are able to maximise the value of your entire calf crop.*

*In the continued challenges facing the dairy industry, farmers may welcome the opportunity to spread the economic risk within their business. The importance of making additional revenue streams, such as export heifers or beef calves will remove your sole dependence and reliance on milk as your greatest income stream.*

*This will bring greater consistency to your enterprise through stabilisation of your cash flow and minimisation of economic shocks. Herd segmentation is the key to doing so.*

*Talk to your local Hico sales representative about the benefits that herd segmentation could play in your business and how implementation would best suit your enterprise. Lean on our advice and your herd test data to help you identify animals that are suitable to be mated to sexed semen and those that should not have replacements generated from them.*

*We have specially selected calving ease sexed and beef sires tailored for these breeding requirements. Please look out for the Hico bull team promotional fliers that you should have received via email, providing information on sexed, conventional and beef options. If you have not received this please contact your local Hico branch or sales rep.*



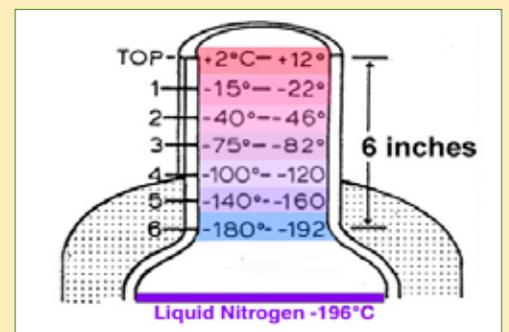
# AI Tank Management

Tank maintenance and semen handling are two critical components to ensuring the viability of your semen.

Storage of your tank should be in a clean, well-lit, ventilated area out of direct sunlight and elevated off of any concrete, wet or poorly ventilated surfaces. Exposure to these conditions may cause corrosion of the tanks outer shell therefore leading to the shortening of the functional life with potential of failure. Some of the best ways to do this is by storing your tank on some blocks of wood, a pallet or rubber matting. We encourage you to routinely monitor LN2 levels in your tank by keeping record of nitrogen losses, dipsticks are available from our offices to allow you to do so. If you are worried about the losses you are seeing and the potential of tank failure, talk to our knowledgeable stock control officers for advice. This joining season, why don't you try this nifty bag idea shown on the right from one of our loyal customers to keep your AI tank spick and span.



When handling semen it is critically important to ensure it is always held below the frost line of the neck of the tank to maintain the viability of any semen not being thawed. The temperature of LN2 within the tank (-196°C) increases rapidly the further you travel up the neck of the tank as seen in the diagram on the right. The frost line is located between 3-4 inches up the neck of the tank, withdrawing canisters above this point will compromise all semen in that canister. You should be mindful that the large surface-area-to-volume ratio of semen straws leaves them very susceptible to thermal fluctuation. Remember that the thermal injury that occurs to sperm during this time is permanent and irreversible.



# Covid-19

Social distancing and hygiene within the workplace is critically important during this time of essential service. Below are some pointers provided by Dairy Australia to help you implement these protocols.

We encourage you to check the Dairy Australia website for further information on economic impacts and how best to protect you, your business and your employees. [www.dairyaustralia.com.au/c19](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/c19)  
<https://farmhub.org.au/covid-19-assistance-and-support/>

**Dairy Australia**

## MILK TANKER OPERATORS

- Use **disposable gloves** when you arrive at each farm.
- Ensure **antibacterial spray** is in each truck, at farm pickup point and at tanker bay.
- Wipe down all hand contact surfaces** and touch points prior to leaving each farm and at the end of your work shift.

**Dairy Australia**

## PREVENTING COVID-19 SPREAD DURING MILKING

- Wear gloves** from the start to the end of the entire milking process.
- At the end of each row, or half turn on a rotary, **spray your milking gloves**
- Wipe down/ spray with disinfectant** any jointly used pieces of milking equipment post-milking.
- Stay more than 1.5m (or at least 3 bails) apart** at all times, preferably on opposite sides of the bridge.



# GeneScreen

Make your breeding decision easy through the use of a free GeneScreen report. A screening of your herds profile at a whole herd and individual animal level, allows for identification of genetics and how they are working in your herd. This therefore allows you to more easily set breeding goals and continually track your genetic progress. Analyse individual cow pedigree records and get suggested matings based on your nominated group of bulls.

After recent staff training carried out by Tim Sargent from DataGene, our team have a thorough understanding of this technology and how best to implement it into your herd. Talk to your local Hico sales rep to discuss the opportunities of using this data within your herd and the ability for Hico to produce these reports for you. Other reproductive reports that you may be interested in are: genetic progress report, herd progress report and fertility focus report.



## New Zealand AI Training

We pride ourselves in providing our customers with the best quality service to allow your business to obtain the best results on farm. In achieving this, we recently sent two of our staff members Gemma Mowbray and Kristen Davis to New Zealand on an intensive AI training course with LIC.

Initial stages of the training were conducted on an artificial cow, allowing participants to grasp concepts and have a sound knowledge of the procedure, before using live cows. The remainder of the course was then carried out on live cows, with high performance levels having to be met in order to gain accreditation.

During this time they also had the opportunity to visit a high genetic merit herd as well as one of LIC's bull collection facilities, providing a holistic view from semen production right through to progeny.

Both of the girls are looking forward to the upcoming autumn joining to put their skills into practice.

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**Have you got feedback?  
Please email us at [info@hico.com.au](mailto:info@hico.com.au)**

## 25 Years of Service

We would like to acknowledge both John Pietsch and Glenn Fraser from the Colac branch for completing 25 years of service. Glen and John have spent their time working in the field of farm services including AI, freeze branding and dehorning.

Hico is very appreciative of their continued commitment, contribution and the way they have positively impacted our Western District customer base.



## MEET:

**Gemma Mowbray - Warragul** Gemma comes to Hico with sound experience in the cattle and Agriculture industry. This began at a young age having grown up on a small beef farm in East Gippsland. Her career took her to 4 years contract mustering around the Kimberleys and Northern Territory. Upon returning to Gippsland she spent a further 4 years working on a dairy farm near Stratford as well as working for the saleyards both droving and completing office tasks. Gemma has taken on the role as farm services technician based out of Warragul, we would like to welcome her to the team.



**Shane Kent - Colac** Shane grew up in the Colac region and has been heavily involved in the dairy industry. This led him to take on the opportunity to share farm with his parents for three years before traveling around Australia. During that time he had the opportunity to work on a dairy at Margaret River. We welcome Shane to the Hico Farm Service team.



**UPCOMING INDUSTRY EVENTS:** Due to the COVID -19 health crisis all GippsDairy events as well as industry conferences and events have been postponed or canceled. Stay tuned for further updates in our next newsletter.



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