

# *Dairy Industry Good Animal Database*

**In 2009 DairyNZ commissioned the latest in a series of reviews which have been conducted, on New Zealand's dairy herd improvement database.**

The review built on the tradition of earlier reviews to enhance on-farm profitability and optimally position the wider sector for the future, especially in terms of harnessing new technological developments.

In contrast with earlier reviews, the Review Committee (headed by Professor Robert Anderson) was also charged with considering 'non genetic fields' in the database which impact on decisions like animal health, greenhouse gas emissions, biosecurity, compliance, general farm management and animal traceability.

At the end of its deliberations, the Anderson Committee published a range of recommendations pivotal among them being that the custodial and on-going developmental responsibilities for the New Zealand Dairy Core Database, until then discharged by Livestock Improvement (LIC) pass to an 'industry good' organisation with no interest in utilising the Core Database for competing commercial services.

DairyNZ is the industry good organisation representing New Zealand's dairy farmers and, together with LIC, the organisations were charged with deliberating and agreeing on the development of a Dairy Industry Good Animal Database (DIGAD).

## **Anderson Review of the New Zealand dairy herd animal database (summary)**

The full Anderson Committee Report and recommendations is available on the DairyNZ website. The following is a summary of the recommendations which relate to the NZ Dairy Core Database -

### Herd testing and other animal records

- The NZ Dairy Core Database as it exists today should be retained, refreshed with new data on an ongoing basis, and should be maintained, owned, developed and controlled by an industry good facility.
- Herd Testing should continue to be regulated by statute over the next five years; the dairy industry should aim for self-regulation within the next five years.
- Current Herd Testing Standard should be updated to incorporate data from automatic recording devices for milk yields and/or milk components.
- Certified herd testers should continue to be required to validate farm, animal, event and production data prior to submission to the NZ Dairy Core Database.
- TOP information including Liveweight measurements, obtained outside the certified herd testing system must continue to be available for the Animal Evaluation System. The governance of the data collection, maintenance and access arrangements in this particular context should be vested in the users of the TOP scheme which includes participating breeding companies and breed societies.

## Future scope

- Moving forward and subject to authorisation by an industry governing entity such as the DairyNZ subsidiary NZ Animal Evaluation Ltd, new database fields should be defined and added, or deleted where appropriate, as new animal traits of relevance for genetic evaluation purposes emerge.
- The national database requirements for genetic improvement purposes should be reviewed in five years to identify industry good opportunities associated with advances in bovine genomics technology.
- As appropriate, new data fields should also be defined and added to support farm management decisions, or industry supply chain requirements, or to conform to government and/or industry requirements for animal recording for disease prevention or quality assurance purposes.

## Funding

- The new National Dairy Database industry good organisation should arrange ongoing funding for the restructured new National Dairy Database. A mixture of industry and user-pays funding is envisaged.

## Mandate

- The mandate of the new National Dairy Database industry good organisation should preclude that organisation from competing in the commercial markets within which its stakeholders operate.
- A key function of the new National Dairy Database should be the provision of estimated breeding values and indices of genetic merit for all dairy animals in NZ as generated by the National Breeding Objective and genetic evaluation system sanctioned by DairyNZ.
- The Review Committee supports the current policy for the National Breeding Objective.
- The new National Dairy Database industry good organisation should continue the current policy that parties sourcing breeding value information from the national genetic evaluation system are required to publish the industry's benchmark index of total merit currently represented by the BW index.

## Access

- National Dairy Database services should be extended to include industry good information, defined by the new National Dairy Database industry good organisation.
- NZ commercial service providers should have access to the new National Dairy Database on behalf of their clients, subject to meeting the costs for the services provided by the new National Dairy Database.