

2009 Australian Red Dairy Breed Presidents Report

It would appear that each year we read a Presidents report, we read about the tough times the dairy industry has experienced over the previous twelve months. The 2009 season has been no different with the dairy industry suffering a collapse in milk price and continued drought conditions in many areas. We also suffered the sad passing of James Hill our CEO.

We, either as an industry, breed society or individual must push aside the negatives and focus on the positives that have been made for the Australian Red Dairy Breed as a result of dedicated work by James Hill, Genetics companies and the valued input from the ARDB committee and members over the past twelve months.

When we reflect upon James Hill's input, passion and dedication to the Aussie Red Breed, I personally find myself smiling in recognition that the years of hard work James put into getting changes made to the Australian Profit Ranking, APR, with regards to more emphasis being put on health, fertility, survival and less on production has now been achieved.

We must also credit James Hill with instigating the process that now sees Aussie Red progeny test bulls being available to dairy farmers here and overseas from both ABS and Semex. This achievement over the past twelve months can not be underestimated as to its potential to expand the Aussie Red breed and promote the accepted use of Red genetics by dedicated ABS and Semex clients. James' vision was to move the ARDB to a wider client base rather than having all our eggs in one basket at Genetics Australia with just the one team of Aussie Red bulls. It is very pleasing to see his vision come into fruition.

2009 was also a very positive year for our Aussie Red breed with the initial APR proof of ARBBobdown. Congratulations must go to his breeders Denis and Michael Riggs and Genetics Australia for progeny testing ARBBobdown and their continued support of the Aussie Red breed.

ARBBobdown's proof is a clear indication that the Aussie Red breed is now gaining enough genetic depth through breeders using many generations of the top Scandinavian sires in sequence, to breed dams with the ability to produce world class Red sires.

2009 also saw the dairy industry suffer a decrease in semen sales as a direct result of the collapse in milk price and the continued drought. The real positive to come 2009 was that the sales of Red semen bucked the trend and actually increased, with genetics companies reporting increases in sales of Red semen in some cases of over 40%.

The field work done three years ago with first time users of Red semen is now also paying off. These dairy farmers that received good advice and only used the best bulls were so impressed with the results that they have now shifted from experimenting with 40 or 50 doses of Red semen to now using Red semen over their whole herds. Semen sales into herds of between 400 and 1200 doses of Red semen to first time users is now also occurring. This shows that there is a growing confidence within the dairy industry with regards to the use of Red genetics.

With regards to field work for the ARDB, we are now entering a very exciting phase with many new herds that have used Red genetics having to make the decision of

which cows to convert to pure Aussie Red and which cows to continue 3-way cross breeding.

It is extremely pleasing to see new young members to the Aussie Red breed, who have an interest not only in breeding profitable commercial dairy cows, but also in breeding maternal lines with the view of breeding young bulls suitable for selection into Progeny Test programs.

It is very pleasing to see the ARDB field work result on some Illawarra and Ayrshire breeders begin to broaden the genetic base within their herds and begin using the top Danish Red and German Red Angler bulls.

I would like to use this opportunity to give a big thankyou to Sam Graham. Sam's enthusiasm and love for the Aussie Red, his ideas and input have done more for the Aussie Red than he or anyone else realises. In a year where I have personally been struggling with both depression and a marriage split up. Sam and his enthusiasm have been absolutely fantastic for keeping me focused. The pictures of the Beaulands cows that Sam organised will have a lasting effect on our Aussie Red breed. These are the pictures that we as a breed have been waiting years to finally get!! Sam has also organised the initial showing of Aussie Red cattle at IDW (International Dairy Week). This has resulted in fantastic publicity for the Aussie Red. Sam is also updating our web site. So to Sam, thankyou.

James Hill's passing was an enormous loss and our thoughts must go out to his wife Chris and his family. James' passion for our Aussie Reds, his professionalism to be able to communicate with all levels of our industry and his guidance of the ARDB will be and is sadly missed. Vale James "Health traits Hill" Hill.

The 2009 season overall, was I believe a very good one for the ARDB and our Aussie Red breed, with many positive out comes:

- Increased sales of Red Genetics
- New young members
- New members wanting to register calves
- Increased interest in breeding Progeny Test bulls
- Positive outcomes now flowing from field work
- Increase in the number of enquiries for Red heifers

Hopefully we can continue the gains we have made in 2009 and improve on them during the 2010 season

Regards

Steve

Steve Snowdon

ARDB President

