



CHAIRMAN REPORT

FROM ANTHONY SHELLY YEAR 2023-24

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the National Herd Improvement Association of Australia I am pleased to present this annual report to our members.

The last year has seen several initiatives and programs advanced that align with NHIA's strategic objectives of leading the continual development of the Australian herd improvement industry, fostering higher levels of professionalism within the sector and representing the industry effectively for the benefit of members.

It has, however, been a challenging year financially, though I am pleased to report that member equity has been maintained at the same level as in the previous financial year at just over \$1.4 million, quite an achievement in the difficult trading conditions members will be all too familiar with.

Financial Performance

Despite the economic challenges, NHIA has maintained a strong financial position through prudent management and strategic investments.

Investment in staff and resources coupled with a one-off cost associated with the Association's decision to move its operations out of Dairy House saw costs increase 4.8% year-on-year. Given the 4.1% Consumer Price Index increase over the same period, operational costs were effectively managed.

The investment portfolio played a major role in generating revenue, delivering a return of 12.75% over the reporting period.

I flagged in my previous Chair's report that constrained revenue streams were an issue for NHIA due to restricted revenue sources and industry shrinkage. A focus for the Board over the reporting period has been on how to incorporate new services that deliver for members, increase NHIA's engagement with industry and generate extra profit margins. This work continues.

While the accounts show a decline in revenue of 14% progress on projects, including establishment of the NHIA Beef Working Group, the recently announced AI Accreditation Training, Mentor Program and continued development of the Learning Hub are early-stage new revenue streams with good growth potential.

The Value of Membership

I am pleased to report that NHIA has maintained strong support from members. A key part of this has been our focus on our regional member forums, which play a pivotal role in our mission to enhance the herd improvement industry.

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These forums provide a crucial platform for direct engagement between NHIA and its members, fostering a sense of community and collaboration. By bringing together members, industry experts, and stakeholders in a local setting, we facilitate the exchange of ideas, address region-specific and sector wide challenges, and tailor our support to meet diverse needs.

These forums also serve as valuable opportunities for members to access the latest research, technological advancements, and best practices in herd improvement. Ultimately, they empower our members with the knowledge and resources necessary to drive innovation and productivity in their operations, laying the groundwork for a prosperous future for the industry.

They also demonstrate that we can work together when we have a common goal of investing in and strengthening the industry; NHIA provides the platform to unite as one voice.

The Association has also made great strides in its efforts to effectively represent the full range of businesses operating in the herd improvement sector, foster broader industry collaboration and increase membership value with the establishment of the NHIA Beef Working Group.

The newly established group has three founding pillars:

- **Effective Representation:** Strength in collective action, ensuring the beef industry's voice is heard in discussions, negotiations, and decision-making.
- **Promoting Awareness:** Disseminating crucial information, sharing best practices, and educating stakeholders about industry developments to drive informed decisions and facilitate growth.
- **Strong Advocacy:** Collaborating with industry organisations and stakeholders to create policies and initiatives that benefit the beef industry.

I would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organisations who have contributed to this important industry first initiative:

Chair: Nigel Semmens (ST Genetics)

Organisation Representatives: Fletch Kelly (ABS), Chris McIlroy (AgriGene), Andrew Medhurst (Alta Genetics), Damien Thomson (Genetics Australia), Vaughn Johnston (Semex), Geoff Wood (WWS)

Vet Representative: Ced Wise (Ced Wise AB)

NHIA Board Representation: Nick Brasher (Farmwest), Adam Daniel (NuGenes)

Secretariat: Sara Merckel (NHIA)



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RGTAG

The Ruminant & Genetics Trade Advisory Group (RGTAG) is a critical entity within NHIA, focusing on advancing the international trade of ruminant genetics to the benefit of the wider industry and members.

This group actively engages in activities designed to enhance the export of superior Australian ruminant genetics, ensuring adherence to international trade standards and effectively navigating global market intricacies. By collaborating with government agencies, industry stakeholders, and international counterparts, RGTAG addresses regulatory hurdles, advocates for favourable trade policies, and uncovers emerging market opportunities.

I would like to acknowledge the work of Dom Bayard (Global Reproductive Solutions) who stepped down as RGTAG Chair in January. His extensive experience in livestock genetics and international trade has played a crucial role in advancing the Group's mission. Penny Welch (Total Livestock Genetics), NHIA's recent Young Achiever award winner, has replaced Dom as RGTAG Chair. Her dedication to our industry, collaborative way of working and knowledge sharing will stand RGTAG in good stead.

Progress on key fronts

Industry Training and Education

Part of our strategy for this year was securing industry experts as Certificate IV Trainers to assist TAFEs and Registered Training Organisations to develop a uniform industry approach. NHIA supported five member representatives to undertake this training. We also now support twelve TAFEs, industry organisations and private training providers in our mission to provide industry-endorsed, nationally consistent training programs designed to enhance domestic AI workforce capabilities.

We also continue to work collaboratively with Dairy Australia, who have supported us in several areas, notably with their contribution to and endorsement of our AI Manual for Beef and Dairy Herds, an important industry resource which will be updated in the next few months.

Semen and Embryo Handlers Accreditation Program

Developed in response to industry demand, this NHIA Accredited Program and Code of Practice is for employees and organisations seeking to establish the adoption of a uniform standard for organisations and staff handling semen and embryos during the distribution process.

I am delighted to report that 30 individuals have now gone through this program. To ensure that it continues to meet industry needs, trainer Travis Evans, with the input of member organisations, has overseen an update to the training materials and the program has been rebranded and is being effectively promoted to industry.

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Herd Improvement Learning Hub

The industry learning hub is a focus point for NHIA as we continue its development as an essential industry and member resource and one-stop-shop for herd improvement training needs. It currently houses training for AI, semen and embryo and AI accreditation.

I would like to encourage all members to contribute to the development of the Learning Hub as it continues to evolve into a key training resource and delivery vehicle for member businesses.

Semen Market Survey

The NHIA semen market survey is crucial for several reasons, first and foremost because it provides valuable insights into market trends, helping industry stakeholders understand current demand, pricing, and preferences for genetic materials. This information enables members to make informed decisions about inventory, marketing strategies, and product development.

I believe it now plays a pivotal role in enhancing the efficiency, profitability, and strategic direction of the Australian dairy genetics market. NHIA will continue to consult with members on reporting metrics to ensure that it meets industry needs in to the future.

NHIA Awards

NHIA recognises individuals who have made a significant contribution to the herd improvement industry. This year's Young Achiever Award recipient, Penny Welch, was recognised for her support for young people and industry advocacy. She is a former winner of the Power of Women in Dairying scholarship, serves on the Power of Women in Dairying and Western District Youth Camp committees, and is the current RGTAG Chair. Among her many attributes, her passion for the industry and her encouragement of the next generation into the industry is outstanding.

Former National Herd Development Marketing Manager and industry stalwart, Christian Hickey, was the inaugural recipient of a new NHIA award for outstanding contribution to industry. The award recognises demonstrated excellence and a significant contribution in advancing the herd improvement industry.

NHIA members will be aware that Christian, one of the herd improvement industry's greatest advocates, passed away in June this year. He gave lifelong service to the herd improvement and cattle genetics industry and was highly respected by his clients, colleagues, and across the sector.



Penny Welch - Young Achiever 2024
Awarded at IDW 2024



Christian Hickey - Outstanding Contribution
Awarded at IDW 2024

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I would also like to acknowledge Greg Tiller, a familiar and friendly face at NHIA events for many years, who passed away last August. His passion for Australian genetics was unrivalled, as was the regard he was held in by countless people throughout the dairy industry.

As many NHIA members will attest to, in addition to his industry knowledge and expertise, it was his personality and humour that drew people to him, along with his honesty and loyalty.

Thank you from me

It has been an honour to serve on the NHIA Board for the last nine years, as Chair for the last two. Over that time, it has been inspiring to see the dedication and commitment of members to the ideals of the Association, along with their commitment to seeing our industry thrive.

From its dairy roots, NHIA has evolved to become an organisation that effectively represents all sectors of our industry, and I would say the herd improvement industry's strongest advocate.

With relatively limited resources, the Association has consistently turned ideas into actions, has grown its relevance through effective engagement with industry and taken the lead in areas such as training, industry standards, mentorship and accreditation. It is often said that we are a 'people' industry. It is through the development of our people, by investment in tools and programs that genuinely support them, that the Association will continue to grow into the future. And by always challenging the status quo, never resting on its laurels or being afraid to ask the hard questions.

One of NHIA's real strengths is the continual growth and development around the Board table, harnessing the diverse skills of those who are passionate about our industry and want to work together to drive it forward. Thank you to Cathy Bourke, Mike Rose, Adam Daniel, Nick Brasher and Paul Kenny for their dedication and commitment to their Board roles over the last year.

On behalf of all members and the Board I would also like to thank CEO Sara Merckel, along with Karen Eastop. Sara's dedication and commitment to NHIA, along with her astute business management skills and solution orientated approach has kept the Association on track.

I look forward to seeing NHIA's role as the herd improvement industry's only truly representative group evolve and develop into the future.

Best regards,



Anthony Shelly, Chairman
