



Media Release

Semen market holds steady as beef on dairy demand increases

Domestic dairy semen sales in Australia grew by 2.4% in 2023 to 1,787,697 units, reversing the 5.5% decline in sales seen over the previous 3 years. Total dairy semen sales, including 100,004 units for export, held steady with a marginal 1% gain to 1,887,701 units.

While survey respondents reported a 15.2% decline in beef semen sales in 2023, increased use of beef semen by the dairy sector is a clear trend. Year on year the number of beef on dairy sales increased by over 18,000 units. Since 2020 beef on dairy sales by National Herd Improvement of Australia members has grown from 36.8% to 47% of reported beef semen sales.

NHIA Chair Anthony Shelly says over the last 3 years of the semen survey we have seen beef semen play a more significant role in the dairy sector.

“Semen for dairy beef use represents 47% of imported and domestic beef semen reported in the survey, with sales increasing by 9.5% over the previous year’s reporting. It’s quite simple, as long as consumer demand for dairy beef continues to grow, we can expect this trend to continue.

“With beef prices softening over the last 12 months, a knock-on effect has been a significant reduction in herd improvement in the sector, so the 15.2% decline year on year reported by survey respondents was in line with expectations.

“That said, looking at the latest forecasts from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, we would expect to see a reversal of this decline over the next year with the value of beef and live cattle production and export predicted to rise by 25% and 6% respectively, increasing cattle prices and higher restocker demand.”

Genomic growth continues in dairy sector

With an 11.2% growth in sales over the last 12 months, genomic semen now makes up 66.6% of all dairy semen sales in Australia, continuing the consistent growth trend of the last 4 years.

“Genomic sales have grown from 45% of the market in 2020 to today’s figure, with daughter proven sales declining by 13% year on year, to make up 27.9% of the total market.” says Mr Shelly.

“I think this is pretty clear cut. Confidence in genomics is growing year on year, and using genomic semen has enabled farmers to, among other things, advance genetic gain in their herds, reduce heifer rearing costs and increase livestock trading profits.

Sexed semen sales soften

Making up 36.7% of the dairy semen market, sales of sexed semen declined 2.1% year on year to 656,960 units following 7 years of consistent growth. The long term trend, however, remains strong, with a more than doubling in the size of the market for sexed semen since 2020.

Conventional semen sales increased by 5.3% to 1,130,737 units, making up 59.9% of dairy semen sales, a slight decline on the previous year’s 61%.

2/...Semen market holds steady as beef on dairy demand increases

“If you go back to 2016, the first year NHIA recorded sexed semen sales, they made up just 6.2% of the total sales. There have been a number of drivers behind the meteoric growth in sexed semen use since then, including a strong live export market, improved sorting technology and subsequent results,” says Mr Shelly.

“Over the last 12 months the dairy industry has seen a significant drop in live export volumes, with the forecasts over the short to medium term showing no change in outlook. This is likely to be a factor in the softening in sexed semen sales, with the ability for farmers to generate a significant income stream from surplus heifers stalling.”

The National Herd Improvement Association of Australia Semen Survey is conducted annually with data drawn from Australia’s leading genetics companies.

NHIA would like to thank the 2023 Semen Market Survey participants who provided the raw data for this report. The participants were:

ABS Australia | Agrigene | Alta Genetics | Genetics Australia | LIC | Rocky Repro | Semex | ST Genetics Australia | Viking Genetics | World Wide Sires

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About NHIA: Formed in 1995 as the successor to the Herd Improvement Organisation Victoria, The National Herd Improvement Association of Australia Incorporated (NHIA) is the industry organisation that promotes herd improvement within the Australian dairy industry, providing a range of services to its membership, and through that membership, to benefit Australian dairy farmers. The member base includes organisations involved directly in the provision of herd improvement services, a range of activities that lead to productivity gains to farmers as well as herd industry improvement suppliers.