

Animal health and welfare on Australian dairy farms

Includes key findings from the Dairy Australia
Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey 2025



Contents

Executive summary	1
About the Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey	2
20 years of progress	3
How Dairy Australia prioritises investments in animal health and welfare	4
Key findings	7
Farm systems	8
Main animal health, welfare and fertility issues facing farms	10
Genetic improvement	12
Electronic collection of herd data	15
Antimicrobial stewardship	17
Biosecurity planning and practices	19
Euthanasia	21
Calf and heifer management	22
Calf pathways	27
Milking herd and milk quality management	28
Extension and training	32

Executive summary

This report provides an overview of the current state of animal health and welfare on Australian dairy farms by bringing together findings from the Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey (AHGS) and other relevant industry data sources.

Conducted regularly since 2005, the AHGS tracks dairy farmer attitudes, behaviours and practices relating to animal health, welfare, fertility, antimicrobial stewardship and herd genetics. The findings help Dairy Australia and the broader dairy industry to inform research, development and extension (RD&E) priorities, guide policy development, identify opportunities to improve on-farm performance, and monitor alignment with evolving community expectations. In November 2025, 400 dairy farmers from all Australian dairy regions were randomly selected to participate in computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI). Regional quotas were established to ensure a statistically robust sample, and survey data were weighted to reflect the geographic distribution of Australian dairy farming businesses (see Appendix 1 for the survey methodology).

The 2025 AHGS identified continued improvement across a range of animal health and welfare practices. Positive trends included increased adoption of polled genetics, earlier disbudding, greater use of pain relief during disbudding procedures, stronger colostrum management, and improved biosecurity planning. Lameness prevention and management practices also remained widely adopted, with most farms allowing cows to walk at their own pace and treating lame animals promptly. The survey further highlighted improvements in the management of down cows and timely euthanasia practices, with the use of blunt force trauma continuing to decline over the past decade.

Overall, the findings demonstrate the Australian dairy industry's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in animal health, welfare and responsible herd management. Opportunities remain to further increase the adoption of recommended practices, particularly in relation to the use of pain relief for specific conditions, preparedness for extreme weather events, and reducing regional variation where access to veterinary and advisory services may influence practice adoption.

About the Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey

The Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey is conducted every three years and provides an evidence base for animal health, welfare, fertility and genetics practices on Australian dairy farms.

Based on interviews with 400 randomly selected farmers from across all eight dairying regions (see Appendix 1 for survey methodology), the 2025 survey results show that many core practices are well established across the industry. These include widespread use of artificial insemination, strong uptake of electronic herd recording, high rates of pain relief use during disbudding and dehorning, and generally timely treatment of lameness, mastitis and down cows.

The survey also identifies opportunities to strengthen further animal health and welfare outcomes. These include separating sick or antibiotic-treated animals from the main herd, increasing veterinary review of treatment protocols, and supporting greater adoption of some practices across regions and farming systems.

Encouragingly, the results show an industry continuing to strengthen capability in husbandry and genetics. Notable gains were seen in areas such as written biosecurity plans, use of polled genetics, training participation and veterinarian-developed protocols. The findings also show that welfare-focused practices are more common where farmers have recently participated in training or worked closely with their veterinarian, highlighting the value of continued investment in practical extension and advisory services.

Industry uses these findings to inform and support reporting against the Dairy Australia Strategic Plan and Commitment 3 (Providing best care for animals) of the Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework. This commitment has recently been updated to better reflect current industry priorities and contemporary best practice, including the addition of a dedicated biosecurity goal. To support these changes, the 2025 survey included new and updated questions to establish baseline measures for the revised animal care commitment and its supporting indicators.

The 2025 survey provides both a snapshot of current practice and a guide for future industry investment. It will help inform priorities, refine policy settings and shape Dairy Australia programs that support profitable dairy farm businesses while continuing to strengthen animal health and welfare. Repeated every three years, the survey will continue to monitor industry progress, identify emerging priorities and measure the impact of industry initiatives over time. Above all, the findings reflect the substantial progress Australian dairy farmers have made over the past 20 years through their ongoing commitment to improving animal health, welfare and farm management.

20 years of progress

For 20 years, the Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey has documented changes in animal health, welfare, fertility and genetics practices on Australian dairy farms. Over that time, the industry's priorities, reporting frameworks and performance measures have evolved to reflect emerging knowledge, community expectations and industry priorities.

The first Animal Husbandry Survey was conducted in 2005 to benchmark the five priority areas identified in the 2003 National Dairy Industry Animal Welfare Strategy. Since then, the survey has been repeated every three years, providing a consistent measure of industry progress. In 2013, the Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework became the national priority-setting mechanism for animal care, with survey reporting aligned to Commitment 3 from 2014 onwards.

The survey has captured substantial improvements across many areas of animal care. Of the original five priority areas, tail docking and routine calving induction are no longer measured because they have been statistically eliminated from Australian dairy farms. Routine calving induction illustrates how clear industry policy, practical support and farmer commitment can successfully drive practice change.

The 2025 survey marks another important milestone, introducing updated measures aligned with the revised Commitment 3 of the Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework, including a dedicated biosecurity goal. Together, the past 20 years of survey findings demonstrate Australian dairy farmers' ongoing commitment to improving animal health, welfare and herd management.



Figure 1 Evolution of the Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey

2003

National Dairy Industry Animal Welfare Strategy identifies five key priority areas.

2013

Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework becomes the national priority setting mechanism for animal welfare.

2022

Routine calving induction phased out.

2005

First Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey establishes industry baseline.

2015

Industry policies introduced to phase out routine calving induction and introduce the use of pain relief during disbudding.

2025

Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey expanded to include revised Commitment 3 indicators.

How Dairy Australia prioritises investments in animal health and welfare

Dairy Australia prioritises investment in animal health and welfare through two primary strategic frameworks:

1 Dairy Australia's Strategic Plan

2 Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework

Together, these frameworks guide investment, identify industry priorities and measure progress towards improved animal health, welfare and farm business performance.

Dairy Australia's Strategic Plan

Dairy Australia's Strategic Plan to 2030 sets out the industry's ambitions, priorities and measurable outcomes, developed in collaboration with farmers and industry stakeholders. At its core is the goal of strengthening the profitability, resilience and long-term sustainability of Australian dairy farm businesses.

The Strategic Plan includes four shared goals to improve farm performance:

- 1 Increase earnings before interest and tax (EBIT) by 30 cents per kilogram of milk solids.
- 2 Increase homegrown feed utilisation by one tonne per milking hectare.
- 3 Increase genetic gain by A\$90 per cow entering the herd.
- 4 Increase the proportion of first-calving heifers reaching their third lactation and beyond by 12%.

Animal health and welfare underpins each of these goals. Healthy animals are more productive, live longer and contribute to more profitable and resilient dairy farm businesses. Dairy Australia's investment therefore focuses on:

- Reducing the impact of disease through prevention, early detection and effective management.
- Improving reproductive performance and genetic gain.
- Optimising nutrition to support productivity and animal wellbeing.
- Improving milk quality through healthier, longer-living cows.

Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework

The Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework (ADSF) is the Australian dairy industry's framework for measuring and reporting sustainability performance. Governed by the Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC), it tracks progress across four commitments covering economic viability, people, animal care and environmental stewardship. The Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey provides key data used to measure progress against Commitment 3: Providing best care for animals.

Updated Commitment 3

Commitment 3 was refreshed in 2025 to better reflect current industry priorities and contemporary best practice. The updated commitment expands its focus to include industry initiatives such as CalfWays, the Australian dairy sustainable calf management roadmap, and the development of a dairy industry Animal Care Assurance Program. It also introduces updated measures relating to calf management, pain relief during husbandry procedures, lameness prevention and treatment, colostrum feeding, humane euthanasia and antimicrobial stewardship.

The 2025 Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey establishes baseline measures for these updated indicators, enabling progress to be monitored consistently over time.

New biosecurity goal

A significant addition to the Framework is Goal 8, a dedicated biosecurity goal. This reflects the industry's commitment to protecting Australia's animal health status, strengthening preparedness for emergency animal diseases and maintaining access to valuable domestic and export markets.

Key initiatives include developing and maintaining an Emergency Animal Disease Action Guide, increasing the number of trained industry representatives available to respond to disease outbreaks, and encouraging all dairy farm businesses to implement documented biosecurity plans. The 2025 Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey establishes baseline measures for these initiatives, providing a benchmark against which future progress can be assessed.

Table 1 The Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework Scorecard for Commitment 3

Commitment 3

Providing best care for all our animals

Goal	Data source	Baseline	2023	2024	2025	2030 Target	Progress
Goal 7. Provide best care for all animals for whole of life							
7.1	An Australian dairy industry animal care assurance program is developed				In progress	NTM ⁱⁱⁱ	●
7.2	A whole-of industry surplus calf roadmap is developed				Completed 2025		●
7.3	All farmers adopting relevant recommended industry practices for animal care						
	All calves disbudded:	AHGS	81% (2022)		83%		●
	• prior to two months of age						
	• with an anti-inflammatory	AHGS	29% (2022)		50%		●
	• and where possible pre-operative local anaesthetic	AHGS	37% (2022)		51%		●
	All animals receive pain relief for conditions which are assessed to be painful, including clinical mastitis, lameness, and dystocia	AHGS	89% (2022)		68% mastitis 77% dystocia 72% lameness		●
	All farmers implementing an appropriate lameness management strategy that includes key practices for prevention, early detection, and effective treatment (including pain relief)	AHGS	96% (2022)		93%		●
	All farmers implementing appropriate strategies to manage inclement weather, including access to drinking water at all times from birth, and sufficient mitigation strategies to minimise heat or cold stress	DA Strategic Portfolio Tracker 2025	96% (2022)		87%		●
	Downer cows are assessed and treated, including appropriate nursing, or euthanised if required without delay	AHGS	88% (2025)		88%		
	For animals requiring euthanasia, it is performed:	AHGS	76% immediately 81% within 2 hours (2025)		76% immediately 81% within 2 hours		
	• as soon as possible						
	• by a trained and competent individual	AHGS	NDA		NDA		
	• by close-range, appropriate firearm or captive bolt to the brain	AHGS	85% (2022)		95%		
	All farmers implementing a colostrum-feeding program to ensure passive transfer of immunity, which may include the feeding of supplementary, high quality, first-milking colostrum within 12 hours of birth	AHGS	87% (2025)		87%		
7.4	The dairy industry is committed to antimicrobial stewardship and uses antimicrobials responsibly, as little as possible, as much as necessary, to protect the health and welfare of animals, people, and the environment						
	All dairy farmers use antimicrobials appropriately under veterinary direction:	AHGS	74% (2025)		74%		
	• All farmers following treatment protocols for common conditions that have been developed with their veterinarian						
	All farms have an annual veterinary visit which includes a review of:	AHGS	59% (2025)		59%		
	• Treatment protocols for common conditions						
	• Dry cow antibiotic therapy strategy	AHGS	41% (2025)		41%		
	• Where used, antimicrobials of high importance to human health	AHGS	59% (2025)		59%		
	• All S4 in-feed antimicrobials, with the farms' nutrition consultant	AHGS	29% (2025)		29%		
	The Australian dairy industry monitors dairy cattle for the development of resistance in bacteria to antibiotics of high importance to human health in Australia		Project underway		Incomplete, surveillance program in development		●
Goal 8. The Australian dairy industry strives to maintain its privileged animal biosecurity status and access to high value export markets							
8.1	A whole-of-industry Emergency Animal Disease Action Guide is developed and maintained				Completed 2025		●
8.2	The dairy industry increases and maintains the number of trained Liaison – Livestock Industry (LLI) and Consultative Committee for Emergency Animal Disease (CCEAD) personnel for ensuring adequate representation in the event of an EAD	ADF/AHA LLI Dairy Booster Training 2025/26	32		68		●
8.3	All dairy businesses implementing a documented biosecurity plan, for the management of exotic and endemic diseases	AHGS	62% Written Plan 68% Implemented		74% Written plan 68% Implemented		●

iii No targets for commitment 3 have been determined.



Key findings

Farm systems

Calving pattern

Calving patterns across Australia reflect regional climate, pasture growth and milk market requirements. Nationally, seasonal (38%) and split/batch (36%) calving systems were the most common in 2025, while year-round calving accounted for 26% of farms.

Regions supplying fresh milk markets were dominated by year-round calving systems to support consistent milk supply throughout the year. This was particularly evident in Subtropical Dairy (92%) and DairyNSW (91%), with approximately 90% of farms in Queensland and New South Wales operating year-round systems. Seasonal calving was uncommon in these regions (2–4%).

Western Australia and South Australia showed more diverse calving patterns. In Western Australia, split/batch calving was the most common system (47%), followed by year-round (37%) and seasonal calving (17%). South Australia showed an even distribution between seasonal and split/batch calving (both 27%), while almost half of farms (47%) operated year-round systems.

In contrast, regions less dependent on fresh milk markets aligned calving with pasture growth patterns. Seasonal calving was most prevalent in Tasmania (76%), followed by WestVic Dairy (52%) and GippsDairy (51%). Year-round calving was uncommon in these regions, accounting for 0% of farms in Tasmania, 12% in WestVic Dairy and 6% in GippsDairy.

At the state level, Victoria was characterised by split/batch (46%) and seasonal (44%) calving systems, with only 10% of farms operating year-round. The Murray region also showed a strong preference for split/batch calving (57%). [See Table 2](#)

Herd structure

The average milking herd size increased slightly from 369 cows in 2022 to 375 cows in 2025. Herd size varied considerably across regions, ranging from an average of 179 cows in Queensland to 594 cows in Tasmania.

Nationally, farms had an average of 172 yearlings or younger on hand, equivalent to 45% of the milking herd. Farms also expected an average of 106 heifers to calve, representing 31% of the national milking herd.

Herd size and replacement numbers varied across regions (Table X). Smaller herds (<150 cows) were most common in Subtropical Dairy (52%) and Queensland (46%), while Tasmania had the largest average herd size (594 cows) and the highest proportion of farms milking more than 700 cows (23%).

Across all regions, yearlings accounted for 43–55% of milking herd numbers and heifers due to calve represented 26–34% of milking herds. [See Table 3](#)

Updated feed system classifications

Dairy Australia updated the national dairy farm feed system classification in 2025 to better reflect current feeding practices and improve consistency in industry reporting.

The classification groups farms according to how dairy herds are predominantly fed, providing a consistent framework for benchmarking, research and analysis across Australia's diverse dairy production systems. It supports more meaningful comparisons between similar farming systems and helps inform research, development and extension investment.

The revised classification was developed in consultation with 11 industry experts representing every dairying state and was finalised by Dairy Australia's Development and Regional Adaptation team in November 2025. It updates the framework originally developed through the Grains2Milk program in 2008. The five feed system categories remain unchanged, although grain feeding thresholds and the definition of hybrid systems have been refined to better reflect current industry practice.

The five feed system classifications are:

- 1 Grazing with low to moderate grain and concentrates.
- 2 Grazing with high grain and concentrates (more than 1.6 tonnes of dry matter per cow per year).
- 3 Grazing with a Partial Mixed Ration fed daily.
- 4 Hybrid systems using grazing and a Total Mixed Ration strategically throughout the year.
- 5 Total Mixed Ration systems.

The revised definitions reflect the increasing use of grain and concentrate supplements across the industry and are expected to result in more farms being classified within the low to moderate supplement category. Recent data indicate that around 80% of farms were previously classified as high supplement systems under the earlier classification. Results from the Dairy Australia Feed and Animal Nutrition Survey will be available in July 2026.

Table 2 Calving system by region (% of farms)

Calving pattern	% mentioning (base: all respondents)											
	National n=600	Murray n=125	West Vic n=125	Gipps n=135	NSW n=45	Subtrop n=50	SA n=30	WA n=30	Tas n=55	Vic n=382	NSW n=61	QLD n=42
Seasonal	38%	25%	52%	51%	4%	2%	27%	17%	76%	44%	3%	2%
Split/batch	36%	57%	36%	43%	▼ 4%	6%	27%	47%	24%	46%	▼ 7%	7%
Year round	26%	18%	12%	6%	▲ 91%	92%	47%	37%	0%	10%	▲ 90%	90%

Source: Dairy Australia National Dairy Farmer Survey Report, February 2025

Table 3 Herd size and stock on hand by region (mean number of animals of each class)

Herd size/yearlings or younger on hand	Total		Dairy region							
	2022 n=400	2025 n=400	Murray n=80	West Vic n=82	Gipps n=85	NSW n=30	Subtrop n=37	SA n=30	WA* n=25	Tas n=31
Small herd (<150 cows)	18%	23%	17%	20%	▲ 27%	24%	52%	20%	13%	6%
Medium herd (150–300 cows)	38%	35%	37%	35%	38%	28%	37%	37%	26%	26%
Large herd (301–500 cows)	23%	20%	25%	17%	▼ 15%	31%	9%	20%	30%	32%
X-large herd (501–700 cows)	13%	12%	10%	16%	11%	14%	3%	17%	17%	13%
XX-large herd (>700 cows)	8%	10%	12%	12%	9%	3%	0%	7%	13%	23%
Mean (cows)	369	375	399	412	333	320	190	328	431	594
Average number of yearlings	149	172	208	168	143	159	104	155	220	▲ 236
Yearlings: milking herd	42%	45%	46%	44%	43%	47%	47%	49%	50%	44%
Average number heifers due to calve	89	▲ 106	114	116	94	77	49	99	139	▲ 168
Heifers: milking herd	26%	31%	30%	34%	34%	27%	29%	30%	28%	26%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Main animal health, welfare and fertility issues facing farms

The 2025 AHGS found that animal health, welfare and fertility challenges continue to affect most Australian dairy farms, with approximately eight in ten respondents reporting at least one current issue. Reproduction and fertility (39%) and mastitis (38%) were the most commonly identified concerns nationally.

Other commonly reported challenges included lameness, infectious bovine keratoconjunctivitis (pinkeye), heat stress, flies and bobby calf management.

Larger herds were generally more likely to report multiple issues, with pinkeye and bobby calf management emerging as concerns among the largest farms. Regional differences were also evident, with lameness and mastitis more commonly reported in Tasmania, while heat stress and flies were more frequently identified as challenges in subtropical dairy regions. [See Table 21](#)

Table 21 Respondents' opinions on the most important animal health, welfare and fertility issues facing Australian dairy farms (% of farmers)

Main animal health and welfare issues – unprompted	% mentioning (base: all respondents)											
	Total	Dairy region							State			
	2025 n=400	Murray n=80	West Vic n=82	Gipps n=85	NSW n=30	Subtrop n=37	SA n=30	WA* n=25	Tas n=31	VIC n=239	NSW n=47	QLD* n=28
Reproduction/fertility	39%	40%	38%	40%	53%	27%	47%	44%	29%	39%	45%	32%
Mastitis	38%	39%	32%	31%	43%	38%	23%	52%	71%	34%	40%	36%
Pinkeye	25%	23%	29%	24%	30%	13%	20%	36%	26%	26%	21%	18%
Calf scours	24%	33%	16%	24%	27%	19%	13%	36%	26%	25%	19%	21%
Lameness	21%	10%	21%	26%	13%	16%	13%	40%	48%	20%	11%	18%
Calf pneumonia	20%	19%	20%	18%	20%	30%	10%	16%	23%	19%	19%	29%
Parasites (e.g. worms, fluke)	19%	13%	23%	16%	27%	30%	0%	20%	19%	18%	28%	21%
Flies	18%	23%	13%	12%	23%	43%	7%	36%	6%	16%	23%	46%
Bobby calves/non replacement calves	17%	18%	16%	15%	30%	16%	3%	12%	26%	16%	23%	18%
Heat stress	12%	18%	2%	8%	23%	41%	3%	20%	0%	9%	26%	39%
Biosecurity	12%	14%	11%	11%	17%	16%	3%	16%	10%	12%	15%	18%
Theileria	6%	0%	2%	16%	13%	0%	0%	0%	3%	7%	9%	0%
None	20%	27%	23%	19%	10%	13%	23%	4%	10%	23%	13%	18%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025



Genetic improvement

Artificial insemination and Australian breeding indices

Ninety-two percent of survey respondents use artificial insemination in their herds. Of these, 64% use an Australian breeding index to inform breeding decisions. Use was significantly higher among large to xx-large herds (68%) than small herds (55%). [See Table 4](#)

Use of the Balance Performance Index (BPI) has continued to trend upwards since 2019 and remains the most used Australian breeding index (54% of respondents, compared with 52% in 2022). Use of the BPI also varies by herd size, with 68% of large to xx-large herds using the index compared with 55% of small herds. [See Figure 2](#)

Compared with 2022, national use of the Health Weighted Index (HWI) increased significantly from 24% to 33%. The largest increase occurred in Western Victoria, rising from 21% to 36%. Although substantial increases were also observed in South Australia and Tasmania, small sample sizes mean these changes were not statistically significant. [See Figure 3](#)

The Sustainability Index

The Sustainability Index (SI) ranks dairy animals according to their genetic potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions intensity. It combines traits including production, survival, health and feed efficiency into a single index, helping farmers select more efficient animals that deliver permanent, cumulative improvements in productivity while reducing emissions intensity per litre of milk.

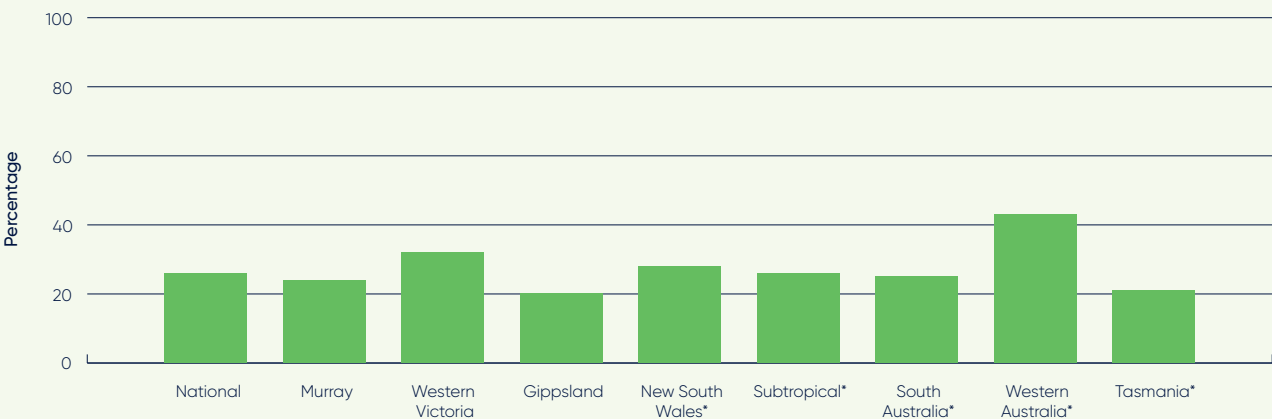
Although management practices also play an important role, overseas research has shown that improving genetic merit is one of the most cost-effective strategies for reducing emissions intensity.

Genetic improvement is a relatively low-cost approach, with benefits that are both permanent and cumulative.

The Sustainability Index is expressed relative to a base value of zero. Animals with higher Sustainability Index values are genetically more efficient, producing more milk per kilogram of greenhouse gas emissions.

Since its release in August 2022, the Sustainability Index has been adopted across all dairy regions, with 26% of respondents using artificial insemination incorporating the index into their breeding programs. Adoption varied by region, ranging from 43% in Western Australia to 20% in Gippsland.

Figure 4 Percentage of artificial inseminating farms using the Sustainability Index by region



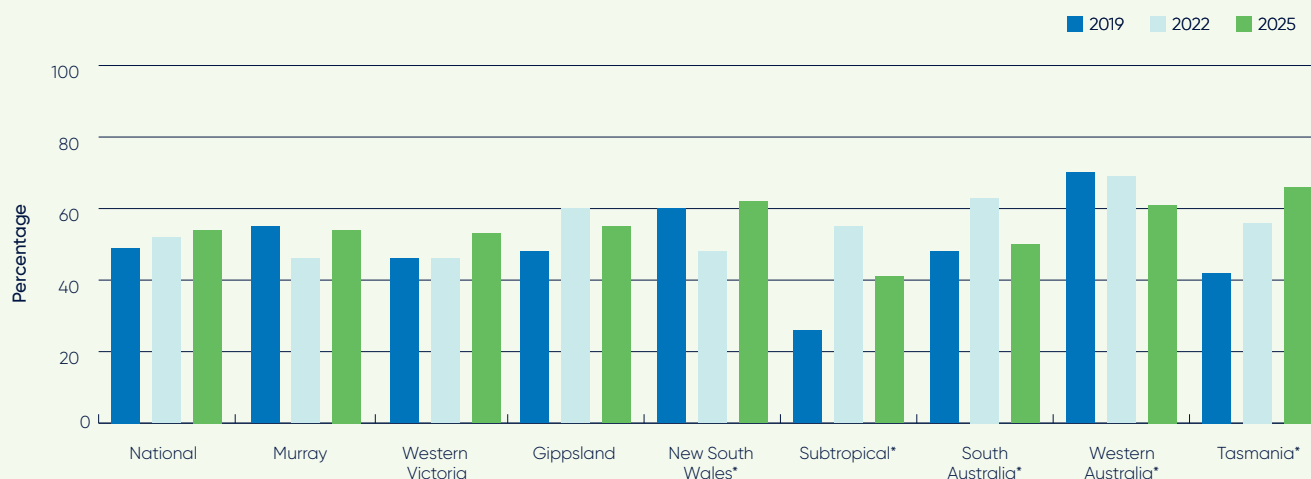
Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Table 4 Percentage of farms using breeding indices by region

Australian index usage	% mentioning (base: respondents using artificial insemination AI/aware breeding indices)									
	2022 n=350	2025 n=365	Murray n = 75	WestVic n=74	Gipps n=80	NSW* n=29	Subtrop* n=27	SA* n=28	WA* n=23	Tas* n=29
Total: use BPI/HWI/SI	N/A	64%	60%	65%	61%	69%	56%	64%	78%	72%
Use BPI	52%	54%	54%	53%	55%	62%	41%	50%	61%	66%
Use HWI	24%	▲ 33%	34%	▲ 36%	26%	28%	30%	39%	39%	45%
Use SI	N/A	26%	24%	32%	20%	28%	26%	25%	43%	21%
Use other	N/A	32%	38%	24%	36%	24%	23%	39%	13%	38%
Unsure index used	8%	9%	9%	9%	8%	10%	22%	11%	17%	0%
None	N/A	9%	8%	11%	11%	10%	7%	0%	0%	3%

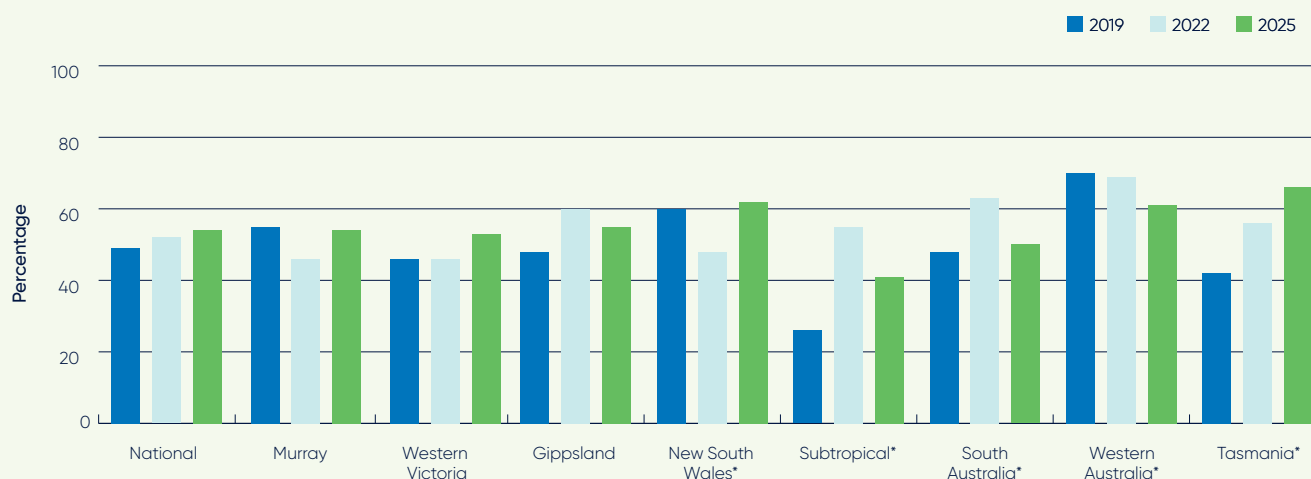
Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Figure 2 Percentage of artificial inseminating farms using the Balance Performance Index by region



Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Figure 3 Percentage of artificial inseminating farms using the Health Weighted Index by region



Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

* Caution, small sample ▲ Statistically significant increase since 2022

Influence of Australian indices on semen purchasing decisions

Three-quarters of respondents using artificial insemination (75%) reported that Australian breeding indices and Australian Breeding Values (ABVs) had either a lot or a little influence on their semen purchasing decisions. However, this proportion declined significantly from 82% in 2022. This change was largely driven by a reduction in the proportion of respondents reporting that breeding indices had a lot of influence on their decisions (42%, down from 50% in 2022). Declines were observed across several regions and were most pronounced in Gippsland. [See Table 5](#)

Confidence using Australian Breeding Values

Survey respondents generally reported high confidence in using Australian Breeding Values (ABVs) to make breeding decisions. Eight in 10 respondents using ABVs reported being either very confident (28%) or fairly confident (52%).

Respondents from Tasmania and those managing xx-large herds were significantly more likely than their counterparts to report being very confident. In contrast, respondents from Western Victoria, Gippsland and NSW were more likely to report lower confidence in using ABVs to make breeding decisions. [See Table 6](#)

Table 5 Percentage indicating the influence of Australian breeding indices on semen purchasing decisions by region

ABV/BPI/HWI/SI influence	% mentioning (base: respondents using AI)									
	Total	Dairy region								
	2022 n=350	2025 n=375	Murray n=75	West Vic n=76	Gipps n=80	NSW* n=29	Subtrop* n=27	SA* n=28	WA* n=23	Tas* n=29
A lot	50%	▼ 42%	35%	42%	▼ 39%	41%	44%	43%	65%	59%
A little	32%	33%	38%	25%	34%	34%	41%	50%	30%	21%
None at all	16%	▲ 22%	25%	28%	▲ 25%	17%	11%	4%	4%	21%
Depends/not sure	1%	2%	1%	3%	3%	7%	4%	4%	0%	0%
Unaware ABV/BPI/HWI	1%	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total: a lot/a little	82%	▼ 75%	73%	67%	▼ 73%	76%	85%	93%	96%	79%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Table 6 Percentage of farms confident in using Australian Breeding Values by region

Confidence using ABVs °	% mentioning (base: respondents using ABVs/able to answer)								
	Total	Dairy region							
	2025 n=361	Murray n=74	West Vic n=74	Gipps n=79	NSW* n=28	Subtrop* n=27	SA* n=28	WA* n=23	Tas* n=28
Very confident	28%	30%	34%	20%	14%	26%	25%	26%	50%
Fairly confident	52%	53%	43%	57%	57%	52%	68%	74%	39%
Not too confident	10%	7%	9%	11%	18%	19%	7%	0%	4%
Not confident at all	10%	11%	14%	11%	11%	4%	0%	0%	7%
Total: confident	80%	83%	77%	77%	71%	78%	93%	100%	89%
Total: not confident	20%	17%	23%	23%	29%	22%	7%	0%	11%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

* Caution, small sample ▲ Statistically significant increase since 2022 ▼ Statistically significant decrease since 2022

° Question alteration in 2025 means that data cannot be statistically compared with past years, significance testing not conducted

Electronic collection of herd data

Three-quarters of survey respondents (75%) reported collecting individual cow data electronically in 2025, a proportion largely unchanged from 2022 (76%). Adoption was strongly associated with herd size, increasing from 52% of small herds (<150 cows) to 99% of XX-large herds (>700 cows). Electronic data collection was reported by 72% of medium herds, 88% of large herds, and 85% of X-large herds, indicating that digital herd recording has become standard practice on larger dairy farms.

Among farms collecting data electronically, Easy Dairy remained the most widely used herd management software, with 44% of respondents using the program nationally. Use was relatively consistent across herd sizes, ranging from 39% to 49% of farms, demonstrating broad adoption across the industry.

A diverse range of alternative herd management platforms was also reported, with 22% of respondents using software outside the major programs listed in the survey.

These systems were most used by small herds (38%) and became less common as herd size increased, accounting for only 10% of XX-large herds.

Mistro was used by 14% of respondents nationally and was most reported by medium (19%) and large herds (17%). Use of DeLaval DelPro/Herd Navigator increased slightly from 5% in 2022 to 8% in 2025 and was more common among larger herds, with 12% of large herds and 11% of XX-large herds using the software. GEA DairyPlan remained stable nationally at 5%, although use increased to 14% among XX-large herds. In contrast, Jantec use declined from 13% of respondents in 2022 to 6% in 2025, although it remained more common among X-large (14%) and XX-large herds (13%).

Regional differences in electronic data collection were less pronounced than those associated with herd size. Adoption ranged from 62% of farms in DairySA to 88% in Tasmania. [See Table 7](#)

Table 7 Percentage of farms recording data electronically, software used, and herd size

Collect data electronically/ software used	Total		Dairy region							
	2022 n=305	2025 n=303	Murray n=61	West Vic n=60	Gipps n=66	NSW* n=23	Subtrop* n=23	SA* n=25	WA* n=22	Tas* n=23
Total: collect data electronically (base: all respondents n = 400)	76%	75%	76%	73%	78%	77%	62%	83%	88%	74%
Easy Dairy	42%	44%	56%	40%	32%	65%	48%	56%	50%	26%
Other programs	27%	22%	24%	15%	21%	26%	39%	20%	23%	22%
Mistro	20%	14%	12%	22%	24%	0%	0%	4%	0%	4%
DeLaval Herd Navigator or Delpro	5%	8%	2%	7%	8%	9%	4%	0%	27%	30%
Jantec	13%	▼ 6%	3%	▼ 10%	6%	4%	0%	0%	0%	13%
GEA Dairy Plan	5%	5%	5%	0%	9%	4%	0%	12%	9%	4%

Collect data electronically/ software used	Total		Herd size				
	2022 n=305	2025 n=303	small n=47	medium n=100	large n=72	x-large n=41	xx-large n=40
Total: collect data electronically (base: all respondents n=400)	76%	75%	52%	72%	88%	85%	99%
Easy Dairy	42%	44%	40%	43%	49%	39%	47%
Other programs	27%	22%	38%	27%	13%	22%	10%
Mistro	20%	14%	7%	19%	17%	11%	8%
DeLaval Herd Navigator or Delpro	5%	8%	1%	5%	12%	9%	11%
Jantec	13%	▼ 6%	0%	4%	▼ 3%	14%	13%
GEA Dairy Plan	5%	5%	4%	2%	4%	6%	14%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

DataGene

DataGene is an independent organisation that supports the Australian dairy industry through genetic evaluation, data management and decision-support tools for farmers and advisers. It manages national dairy data assets, including genetic and herd performance data, and delivers independent genetic evaluations that support herd improvement across the industry.

In December 2025, DataGene appointed Dr Emily Piper as Chief Executive Officer. She returns to Australia after almost 10 years in the United States with Zoetis, where she most recently led Business Process and Strategic Programs for its Precision Animal Health group.

Under Dr Piper's leadership, DataGene will continue to focus on dairy genetics, data infrastructure and decision-support tools, with an increased emphasis on delivering practical value for farmers. Priorities include strengthening data platforms and connectivity, improving data quality, and developing tools such as genomic mating solutions to support on-farm decision-making. DataGene will also continue to advance genetic evaluation through research and innovation, including progressing single-step evaluation methods and incorporating new and alternative data sources while protecting the national datasets that underpin industry confidence.

Another priority will be increasing the adoption and impact of DataGene's products and services. This will be supported through extension activities, clearer communication of their value, and stronger engagement with farmers, advisers and industry partners. DataGene will also explore growth opportunities aligned with its core capabilities to support herd productivity, farm profitability and the long-term sustainability of the Australian dairy industry.



Incoming DataGene CEO Dr Emily Piper



Antimicrobial stewardship

In-feed antimicrobials

Nationally, 14% of respondents use antibiotics in feed to manage ruminal acidosis in their milking herd. However, use varied significantly by region, ranging from two in five farms in Western Australia to one in 20 farms in Subtropical, and by herd size, from 10% of small herds to 23% of XX-large herds.

Rumensin was the most used in-feed antibiotic, used by 70% of respondents who included antibiotics in feed, followed by Eskalin (25%) and Tylosin (15%).

During data collection, anecdotal feedback suggested that some respondents using Rumensin were unaware that it is classified as an antibiotic.

Among respondents using antibiotics in feed, 61% fed antibiotic-containing feed year-round. On average, antibiotics were included in feed for 294 days per year.

See Table 8

Table 8 Use of prescription antibiotics in feed to manage ruminal acidosis (% of farms)

Antibiotic usage	Total		Dairy region							
	2022 n=400	2025 n=400	Murray n=80	West Vic n=82	Gipps n=85	NSW n=30	Subtrop n=37	SA n=30	WA* n=25	Tas n=31
Used prescription antibiotics in feed in past year	14%	10%	▼ 4%	5%	▼ 25%	20%	0%	7%	20%	3%
Treated animals with ceftiofur	N/A	41%	42%	26%	53%	40%	54%	37%	52%	29%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

New EU rules mean tighter controls on antimicrobial use required on dairy farms

From September 2026, new European Union (EU) rules will affect how Australian dairy farms need to use and record antimicrobials, including antibiotics, for Australia to maintain trade access.

While antibiotics and other antimicrobials used to prevent or treat disease will still be allowed under the new EU rules, antimicrobials can no longer be used to promote growth or increase production in animals. This includes some products that may be described as feed additives or nutritional supplements, such as lasalocid and monensin.

These changes mean that the Australian dairy industry will need to carefully manage and record the usage of antimicrobials on farm.

"Australia exported \$29 million of dairy products to Europe in 2025, primarily high protein whey concentrate," explained Karl Ellis, Dairy Australia's Economic Sustainability & Competitiveness Manager.

"For Australia to keep selling dairy products into the EU market, the whole dairy industry is going to need to comply with these new rules."

For dairy farmers, that means keeping careful records of any veterinary product or feed additive usage as the EU may review them during audits of Australia's export systems. Farmers will therefore need to be careful and deliberate about how antimicrobials are used on-farm and make sure every use is recorded clearly and accurately.

The advice from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is:

- Review all antimicrobial veterinary products used on your property or included in feeds and supplements to ensure they are only used for disease control or prevention.
- If necessary, consult your veterinarian or nutrition advisor for guidance on complying with EU rules.
- Record the therapeutic reason for using any veterinary products or feed additives on your property, including for antimicrobials the disease or condition being treated or prevented by recording that you have used the product 'to prevent or control disease' or include the disease treatment or prevention use listed on the label (e.g. to prevent bloat, treat coccidiosis).

* Caution, small sample ▼ Statistically significant decrease since 2022

Antibiotic treatment protocols

Nationally, 74% of farms had written treatment protocols for common conditions that had been developed with veterinary input. This did not vary significantly by region, processor or farmer age, but was more common on XX-large farms than on smaller farms.

Among respondents able to answer the question, veterinarians had reviewed the herd's dry cow strategy within the previous 12 months on 41% of farms nationally. Review rates were significantly higher in Tasmania and among herds with more than 300 cows.

Twenty-nine percent of respondents able to answer reported that a veterinarian had reviewed their use of prescription antibiotics in feed during the previous 12 months. This was highest in Gippsland, which also reported the greatest use of in-feed antibiotics.

Among farms using prescription antibiotics in feed during the previous year (n = 41), 62% reported that a veterinarian had reviewed their treatment protocols.

Nationally, 41% of respondents used ceftiofur to treat animals. Of these farms, 59% had received a veterinary review of treatment protocols during the previous 12 months. Review rates ranged from 49% of small and medium herds to 69% of large to XX-large herds.

Overall, veterinarians had reviewed general treatment protocols during the previous 12 months on 59% of respondent farms.

Selecting an appropriate antibiotic dry cow strategy

At the end of lactation, dairy cows require a dry (non-lactating) period of sufficient length to allow udder tissue to repair and regenerate. Antibiotic dry cow therapy involves administering a long-acting antibiotic formulation into the udder via the teat canal immediately after the final milking of lactation. The antibiotic remains in the udder for an extended period (typically 20 to 70 days), helping eliminate existing intramammary infections and reducing the risk of new infections during the dry period.

Antibiotic dry cow therapy is used at dry off to:

- treat existing intramammary infections that were not cured during lactation.
- reduce the risk of new intramammary infections during the dry period.

For many years, blanket (whole herd) antibiotic dry cow therapy was considered best practice for mastitis control. However, the widespread availability of non-antibiotic internal teat sealants has enabled greater adoption of selective (part-herd) antibiotic dry cow therapy. Under this approach, only cows with evidence of intramammary infection receive antibiotics, while uninfected cows receive an internal teat sealant. When implemented appropriately, selective dry cow therapy can reduce antibiotic use and treatment costs while maintaining clinical and subclinical mastitis outcomes at calving.

Choosing the most appropriate dry off strategy should always consider the herd's individual circumstances and be planned in consultation with a veterinarian. Information on herd mastitis prevalence and the incidence of new infections during lactation is critical when determining whether selective (part-herd) antibiotic dry cow therapy is appropriate. Selective dry cow therapy may be considered where the herd has:

- an annual average bulk milk cell counts below 150,000 cells/mL.
- reliable cow identification.
- complete and accurate clinical mastitis records.
- fewer than 25 clinical mastitis cases per 100 cows during the previous 12 months.
- no *Streptococcus agalactiae* infection (based on PCR testing or individual cow milk cultures).
- at least one individual cow cell count (ICCC) recorded for every cow within 80 days of the planned dry off date.

Although several countries have already phased out, or are moving towards phasing out, blanket dry cow therapy, this approach is not currently recommended in Australia. Blanket cessation of antibiotic dry cow therapy may increase the risk of adverse animal welfare and milk quality outcomes if selective dry cow therapy is implemented inappropriately. More information on selective (part-herd) dry cow therapy is available in the Countdown Farm Guidelines for Mastitis Control at dairyaustralia.com.au/countdown.

Biosecurity planning and practices

The proportion of farms with a written biosecurity plan increased significantly from 62% in 2022 to 74% in 2025. The proportion of farms with a written biosecurity plan increased across every region, herd size and processor supplied, with significant increases observed in Victoria and New South Wales. Respondents who had attended animal health and welfare training within the previous two years were more likely to have a written biosecurity plan than those who had not attended training (82% versus 63%).

Survey results indicate that written biosecurity planning has become more widespread across the Australian dairy industry. Among farms with a written plan, all respondents reported following it at least some of the time. However, a small proportion of larger businesses reported only sometimes following their documented biosecurity procedures. [See Table 9 & 10](#)

Table 9 Farms with a written biosecurity plan (% of farms)

Have written plan	Total	Dairy region								
	2022 n=400	2025 n=400	Murray n=80	West Vic n=82	Gipps n=85	NSW n=30	Subtrop n=37	SA n=30	WA* n=25	Tas n=31
Yes	62%	▲ 74%	▲ 73%	74%	62%	80%	92%	67%	76%	84%
No	35%	▼ 23%	▼ 24%	21%	33%	17%	5%	27%	24%	16%
Don't know	3%	4%	3%	5%	5%	3%	3%	7%	0%	0%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Table 10 Adherence to written biosecurity plan (% of farms with plan)

Follow biosecurity plan	% mentioning (base: respondents with written biosecurity plan)												
	Total	Dairy region									State		
	2022 n=251	2025 n=296	Murray n=59	West Vic n=61	Gipps n=53	NSW* n=24	Subtrop n=34	SA* n=20	WA* n=19	Tas* n=26	VIC n=165	NSW n=41	QLD* n=25
Always	68%	68%	63%	62%	72%	71%	85%	70%	58%	65%	65%	71%	88%
Sometimes	32%	32%	37%	38%	28%	29%	15%	30%	42%	35%	35%	29%	12%
Never	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total: always/sometimes	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

* Caution, small sample ▲ Statistically significant increase since 2022 ▼ Statistically significant decrease since 2022

The Australian Dairy Industry Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) Action Guide

As part of the Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework's updated Animal Care Commitment, a new Goal 8 was introduced to strengthen animal biosecurity across the dairy industry. One of its targets was the development of a whole-of-industry Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) Action Guide.

In 2025, Dairy Australia and Australian Dairy Farmers collaborated to develop the first edition of the Guide. The draft was tested during a simulated emergency animal disease response exercise (Exercise Laneway), with lessons from the exercise incorporated into the final version.

The Guide provides a practical framework for how the Australian dairy industry will prepare for, coordinate and support a response to a cost-shared emergency animal disease outbreak under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA). It outlines the roles and responsibilities of key industry organisations, governance arrangements and communication pathways, while providing practical guidance on biosecurity, business continuity, stakeholder engagement and record keeping.

The Guide also includes operational procedures, response job cards and supporting resources to help the dairy industry meet its obligations, support affected farmers and processors, minimise industry impacts and contribute to a coordinated national disease response.



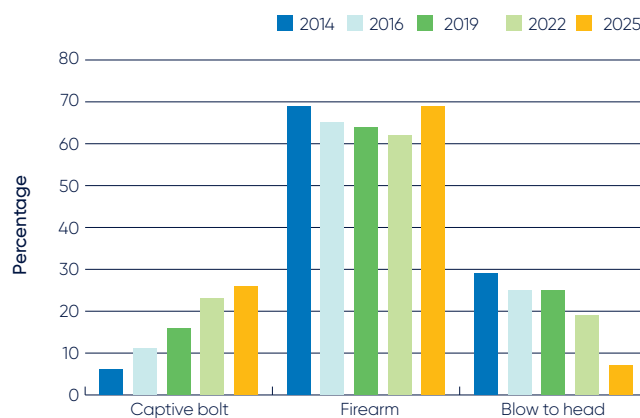
Euthanasia

Firearms remained the most used method for calf euthanasia in 2025 (69% of farms), with use remaining relatively stable over time. The use of captive bolt devices has continued to increase since 2014 and is now significantly higher than in 2019 (26% of farms, up 10 percentage points). Use varied by herd size, ranging from 14% of small herds to 50% of XX-large herds, and by region, from 10% of farms in Western Victoria to 38% in Murray Dairy.

The use of blunt force trauma for calf euthanasia has continued to decline and is now used on a significantly smaller proportion of farms than in 2019. However, a small proportion of farmers continue to use this method, and eliminating its use except in genuine emergency situations remains an important priority for the Australian dairy industry.

Farmers who had attended Euthanise Livestock training within the previous two years were more likely to use a captive bolt device (63% versus 26%) and less likely to use blunt force trauma (2% versus 7%) than those who had not attended training. [See Figure 5 & Table 11](#)

Figure 5 Method used for calf euthanasia over time (% of farms)



Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Table 11 Methods used for calf euthanasia by region (% of farms)

Euthanasia approach °	% mentioning (base: all respondents)									
	Total		Dairy region							
	2022 n=317	2025 n=400	Murray n=80	West Vic n=82	Gipps n=85	NSW n=30	Subtrop n=37	SA n=30	WA* n=25	Tas n=31
Captive bolt	23%	26%	38%	10%	28%	27%	24%	27%	20%	32%
Gun	62%	69%	65%	65%	64%	73%	78%	77%	88%	90%
Sharp blow to the head	19%	7%	11%	5%	7%	3%	5%	3%	4%	3%
Use third party (vet/ knackery)	N/A	62%	69%	83%	74%	47%	19%	37%	36%	29%
Do not euthanase	N/A	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

* Caution, small sample ♦ Question alteration in 2025 means that data cannot be statistically compared with past years, significance testing not conducted

Calf and heifer management

Healthy, well-cared-for calves are fundamental to both the productivity and social licence of Australian dairy farming. The survey examined several key calf management practices that influence calf health, welfare and long-term performance, including colostrum management.

Dairy Australia supports calf health and welfare through research, development, extension and policy initiatives, including:

- Delivering the *Rearing Healthy Calves* extension program to thousands of people working on Australian dairy farms, providing training in best-practice calf management, husbandry and care.
- Investing in improved resources and training to support best-practice disbudding.
- Collaborating with the red meat industry to improve the economic viability of beef from dairy cattle.

Colostrum management



Nationally, calves were always (72%) or mostly (15%) provided with supplementary first-milking colostrum within 12 hours of birth on 87% of farms. This practice was significantly more common in the Victorian dairy regions, Tasmania and SA than in NSW and Subtropical. It was also more common on X-large and XX-large farms than on smaller farms.

Because the survey question changed from provision of supplementary colostrum within 24 hours of birth (2022) to within 12 hours of birth (2025), results cannot be compared directly over time.

Overall, supplementary first-milking colostrum was provided within 12 hours of birth on most Australian dairy farms. However, there remains scope to increase adoption among smaller herds.

Respondents who had attended calf rearing training within the previous two years were more likely to always provide supplementary first-milking colostrum and around half as likely to either never provide supplementary colostrum or leave calves with their dam. [See Table 12](#)

The importance of colostrum

The provision of supplementary first-milking colostrum is essential for all calves. Colostrum is the first mammary secretion produced after calving. Unlike humans, the placenta of the cow keeps the maternal and foetal blood supplies separate. As a result, calves are born without antibodies in their bloodstream. Colostrum provides maternal antibodies that help protect newborn calves against disease until they develop their own immune response at around six weeks of age.

Although some milk processors and dairy manufacturers define colostrum as the mammary secretion produced during the first eight milkings after calving, first-milking colostrum contains the highest concentration of antibodies and should always be prioritised for newborn calves. Antibody concentrations decline rapidly with subsequent milkings.

Providing every newborn calf with an adequate volume of high-quality first-milking colostrum as soon as possible:

- reduces the incidence of scours and other calf diseases
- reduces calf mortality
- improves growth rates
- improves lifetime milk production and fertility in replacement heifers.

Further information on colostrum management and other calf rearing practices is available from Dairy Australia.

Table 12 Provision of supplementary first-milking colostrum within 12 hours of birth (% of farms)

Provision of additional colostrum	% mentioning (base: all respondents)								
	Total	Dairy region							
	2025 n=400	Murray n=80	West Vic n=82	Gipps n=85	NSW n=30	Subtrop n=37	SA n=30	WA* n=25	Tas n=31
Total: always/mostly	87%	83%	89%	92%	77%	78%	90%	72%	94%
Always	72%	68%	77%	69%	70%	70%	77%	64%	81%
Mostly	15%	15%	12%	22%	7%	8%	13%	8%	13%
Rarely	4%	6%	2%	2%	13%	8%	3%	4%	0%
Never	4%	4%	4%	2%	10%	8%	3%	8%	3%
Calves left with mother	5%	6%	5%	4%	0%	5%	3%	16%	3%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Disbudding and dehorning

Broad improvements have been observed across the Australian dairy industry in reducing the need for dehorning through increased use of polled genetics, earlier disbudding and greater provision of pain relief.

The use of polled genetics has continued to increase, with 54% of farms using at least some polled genetics in their breeding program. However, only 3% of farms relied exclusively on polled genetics, ranging from 6% of small and large herds to none of the XX-large herds.

Consistent with 2022, most respondents (83%) disbudded calves before two months of age. Sixteen percent reported dehorning calves between two and six months of age, while 8% dehorned calves older than six months. Significant increases in early disbudding were observed in NSW (63% in 2022 to 70% in 2025) and Subtropical (43% in 2022 to 57% in 2025).

Overall, 92% of farms either used polled genetics or disbudded calves before two months of age.

Pain relief was provided during disbudding or dehorning on 91% of farms. However, uptake varied by:

- Region, ranging from 73% of farms in Subtropical to 100% in Gippsland.
- Herd size, from 88% of herds with fewer than 300 cows to 96% of larger herds.
- Whether written treatment protocols had been developed with veterinary input (95% versus 85%).

Topical spray remained the most used form of pain relief, although it was usually used in combination with other pain relief methods.

Many farms used multimodal pain relief, combining local anaesthetic with anti-inflammatory medication (35%), or local anaesthetic, anti-inflammatory medication and sedation (27%). However, one in five farms relied solely on topical spray.

Because the wording of this question changed in 2025, results cannot be compared directly with previous surveys. [See Table 13 & 14 on next page](#)



* Caution, small sample

Table 13 Methods of horn removal (% of farms)

Method used	% mentioning (base: all respondents)									
	Total	Dairy region								
	2022 n=400	2025 n=400	Murray n=80	West Vic n=82	Gipps n=85	NSW n=30	Subtrop n=37	SA n=30	WA* n=25	Tas n=31
Use polled genetics	37%	▲ 54%	▲ 66%	▲ 43%	44%	▲ 77%	57%	▲ 67%	76%	45%
Disbud calves <2 months of age	81%	83%	86%	83%	92%	70%	57%	70%	76%	94%
Dehorn calves at 2 – 6 months of age	14%	16%	16%	16%	14%	27%	22%	10%	20%	6%
Dehorn heifers or cows >6 months	6%	8%	6%	6%	1%	20%	19%	20%	12%	6%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Table 14 Provision of pain relief for disbudding (% of farms)

Pain relief provided ^o	Total	Dairy region							
	2025 n=387	Murray n=78	West Vic n=80	Gipps n=82	NSW n=30	Subtrop n=34	SA* n=28	WA* n=24	Tas n=31
Total: use pain relief	91%	92%	91%	100%	78%	73%	88%	91%	97%
Topical spray	72%	61%	72%	89%	59%	56%	72%	87%	73%
Local anaesthetic	51%	46%	56%	55%	30%	41%	52%	43%	70%
Anti-inflammatories	50%	51%	46%	58%	52%	26%	48%	35%	60%
Sedation	40%	37%	40%	43%	30%	35%	28%	26%	63%
Other pain relief	2%	3%	3%	0%	0%	9%	0%	4%	0%
Only provide topical spray	20%	18%	19%	25%	15%	15%	16%	39%	10%
Only use local anaesthetic	5%	7%	5%	5%	4%	6%	0%	0%	0%
Use local anaesthetic and anti-inflammatories	35%	28%	38%	40%	22%	23%	32%	30%	53%
Use sedation, local anaesthetic and anti-inflammatories	27%	22%	27%	34%	15%	20%	20%	17%	50%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

^o Caution, small sample ▲ Statistically significant increase since 2022

♦ Question alteration in 2025 means that data cannot be statistically compared with past years, significance testing not conducted

Disbudding resource update

Results from the 2022 National Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey identified opportunities to improve both disbudding practices and the provision of pain relief, particularly in some dairy regions.

Because only around 1.5% of the Australian dairy population is naturally polled (does not develop horns), most dairy calves require intervention to prevent horn growth. Horns increase the risk of injury to both cattle and people.

Disbudding destroys the horn-producing tissue before it attaches to the skull, typically before eight weeks of age. This prevents horn growth and avoids the need for the more invasive procedure of dehorning. Although disbudding is less invasive, it is still painful and should always be accompanied by appropriate pain relief.

A range of pain relief options is available, including anti-inflammatory medications and topical sprays. Veterinarians can also provide local anaesthetic nerve blocks and sedation where appropriate.

In 2025, Dairy Australia commenced a project to improve disbudding practices in New South Wales and Queensland. The project included farmer consultation to understand barriers to adoption, development of practical resources, delivery of pilot workshops, and evaluation to refine materials before broader rollout through Dairy Australia's regional teams.

Consultation identified limited training opportunities, low confidence in disbudding skills, and year-round calving systems, where small numbers of calves reduce the commercial viability of service providers, as key barriers to adopting best practice.

To support practice change, Dairy Australia developed written and visual guides for farmers and service providers, instructional videos, service provider lists, and practical on-farm workshops combining hands-on training with discussion of key concepts.

Between the 2022 and 2025 surveys, the proportion of farms disbudding calves before two months of age increased by 33 percentage points in Subtropical and 11 percentage points in NSW.

Updated calf disbudding resources are available from Dairy Australia. Farmers interested in attending a disbudding workshop should contact their local Dairy Australia regional team.

Figure 6 NSW Disbudding Best Practice workshop.



Heifer weighing

The findings highlight a significant gap between recommended heifer management practices and what is occurring on farms, with clear implications for herd productivity. With 70% of farmers never weighing replacement heifers, most are managing growth without objective data, increasing the risk that animals fail to meet target weights at joining and calving. This can lead to delayed age at first calving, poorer fertility, and reduced lifetime milk production.

In contrast, larger herds, particularly xx-large operations, are much more likely to weigh regularly, suggesting that more intensive, data-driven systems are better positioned to capture the productivity benefits of monitoring growth.

Barriers to adoption are both practical and perceptual, with lack of scales (47%) and not seeing the value (25%) the most common reasons for not weighing. This indicates that alongside infrastructure constraints, there is also a need to better communicate the link between heifer growth monitoring and profitability.

Table 15 Heifer weighing frequency (% of farms)

Replacement heifer weighing	% mentioning (base: all recipients)								
	Total	Dairy region							
	2025 n=400	Murray n=80	West Vic n=82	Gipps n=85	NSW n=30	Subtrop n=37	SA n=30	WA* n=25	Tasmania n=31
At least once every 3 months	10%	9%	15%	5%	0%	5%	20%	4%	30%
Every 3–6 months	11%	14%	11%	4%	13%	8%	10%	8%	23%
Less often	9%	8%	13%	6%	10%	11%	17%	12%	3%
Never	70%	69%	61%	86%	77%	76%	53%	76%	43%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Infectious bovine keratoconjunctivitis (IBK), also known as pinkeye

Over recent years, Dairy Australia has received increasing reports from farmers of severe and unpredictable outbreaks of infectious bovine keratoconjunctivitis (IBK), commonly known as pinkeye. Findings from the 2025 Animal Husbandry & Genetics Survey confirm that pinkeye in calves is a common issue, with 59% of respondents reporting they had experienced the disease.

The reported incidence of pinkeye varied considerably between regions, ranging from lower levels in Western Victoria (46%), Subtropical (38%) and Tasmania (52%), to substantially higher levels in Murray (83%) and NSW (77%). State-level results followed a similar pattern, with 68% of New South Wales farms reporting pinkeye compared with 60% of Victorian farms and 39% of Queensland farms. The likelihood of reporting pinkeye also increased with herd size, rising from 47% of small herds to 75% of XX-large herds.

Among farms reporting pinkeye, the proportion of calves affected was generally low. Around two-thirds of respondents (68%) reported that 10% or fewer calves were affected, with an overall average of 16%. This pattern was consistent across most regions and processor groups, suggesting that although pinkeye is widespread, outbreaks are usually limited to a relatively small proportion of calves within affected herds. However, Gippsland and Tasmania reported more severe outbreaks overall, with average proportions of calves affected of 20% and 30%, respectively.

Figure 7 Healing pinkeye lesion



(Image credit: Dr Jakob Malmo)

Dairy Australia supporting new pinkeye research

In April 2026, the Dairy Australia Board approved a new five-year research project to reduce the incidence and severity of pinkeye in dairy calves. The project will take a novel multidisciplinary approach to better understand why outbreaks occur by investigating the multiple on-farm factors that contribute to disease risk. It will also use genomic sequencing to identify different strains of *Moraxella bovis*, the bacterium most associated with pinkeye, and determine whether particular strains are linked to more severe disease. The findings will support the development of more targeted and effective prevention and management strategies for farmers.

The project brings together researchers from the NSW Department of Primary Industries, the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute, the University of Sydney and the University of Technology Sydney. During the first year, researchers will work with 5 to 10 dairy farms to pilot sampling and data collection methods. This will include collecting bacterial samples and farm-level information, such as feeding practices, fly burdens and breed composition. Researchers will also develop a standardised eye lesion scoring system to support more consistent assessment of disease severity by farmers, veterinarians and advisors.

From the second year, the project will expand to include dairy farms across Australia. Genomic sequencing of bacterial isolates will continue throughout the project, with findings shared progressively to help farmers adopt practical, evidence-based strategies to reduce the frequency and impact of pinkeye outbreaks.

Calf pathways

Questions relating to calf pathways were not repeated in the 2025 Animal Husbandry & Genetics Survey because recent data were available from the National Dairy Farmer Survey 2024 and a comprehensive multi-source analysis commissioned by Dairy Australia in 2025.

Results from the 2024 National Dairy Farmer Survey indicate that the proportion of heifer calves retained as replacements has remained relatively stable over time, while the proportion of calves entering dairy beef pathways has fluctuated in recent years.

Table 16 Destination of calves born on Australian dairy farms

	AHGS* 2016	AHGS* 2019	AHGS* 2022	NDFS* 2024
Heifer replacements, including as export/sale	39%	37%	42%	41%
Intended for dairy beef	16%	16%	26%	21%
Bobby calf market	36%	38%	23%	30%
Euthanased	9%	9%	8%	8%

* AHGS – Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey; NDFS – National Dairy Farmer Survey

Table 17 Indicative dairy calf pathways: replacements and non-replacements (2020–24)

	Total hd	%
Total cows in production	1,270,000	
Annual calvings	1,060,000	
Viable calves (24+hrs) born	996,400	100%
Pre-weaning losses	20,101	2%
Required as herd replacements	330,200	33%
Destined for heifer export/sale	89,676	9%
Destined to be raised as beef	154,442	16%
Bobby calves sold 5–30 days	314,065	32%
Euthanased on farm (deduction)	87,916	9%

Source: Meridian Agriculture. (2025). "Calfways" surplus calf pathway economic analysis: Calf numbers and potential impact upon the red meat sector (Internal Dairy Australia report)

Meridian Agriculture was commissioned by Dairy Australia in 2025 to undertake a comprehensive analysis of calf pathways in Australia. The analysis combined information from multiple sources, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics, slaughter levy and live export data, scientific literature, Dairy Australia levy records and industry surveys. Where complete information was unavailable, estimates were developed using the best available evidence. The full analysis is available on request.

CalfWays

Managing dairy calves not needed for herd maintenance presents both a significant challenge and a promising opportunity for the Australian dairy industry. Traditionally, these calves have been considered a byproduct of dairy operations, with limited pathways including early life-slaughter, live export or on-farm euthanasia.

CalfWays is an industry-led initiative designed to transform these outcomes. Developed by Dairy Australia in collaboration with over 150 dairy and beef stakeholders, the **Sustainable Dairy Calf Management Roadmap (CalfWays)** sets a vision that by 2035 all viable non-replacement calves can enter a valued market pathway, eliminating the need for routine euthanasia.

By aligning the dairy and beef sectors, CalfWays aims to improve animal welfare, unlock economic value and meet evolving societal expectations. A joint three-year co-innovation agreement between Dairy Australia and Meat & Livestock Australia is supporting implementation through coordinated leadership, investment and industry collaboration.

CalfWays is now endorsed by major organisations including dairy processors, genetics providers, and research organisations, with opportunities to sponsor or collaborate on projects to improve the economic viability of beef from dairy animals.

Find out more at **Calfways | Meat & Livestock Australia**

Milking herd and milk quality management

Milking and mastitis management

Almost all respondents (92%) use a registered teat disinfectant after every milking. Adoption was universal in Western Australia and Tasmania (100%), but significantly lower in Subtropical Dairy (84%) and NSW (87%). Use also varied by herd size, ranging from 99% of large to XX-large herds to 81% of small herds.

Automated teat sprayers were used on 32% of respondent farms nationally. Adoption differed significantly by region, herd size, processor and management practices. Use was highest in SA (43%) and lowest in Subtropical (19%) and NSW (20%). Larger herds (>500 cows) were substantially more likely to use automated teat sprayers than herds with fewer than 150 cows (58% versus 15%).

Almost three in ten respondents (29%) reported always (17%) or mostly (12%) drying teats after washing and before cup attachment, while just over half (53%) never do so. The proportion of farms always or mostly drying teats varied considerably by region, from 43% of NSW respondents to 19% in WestVic.

Respondents who had completed mastitis training within the previous two years were more likely to use a registered teat disinfectant after every milking, use automated teat sprayers and always or mostly dry washed teats before cup attachment, suggesting that training is associated with greater adoption of recommended milking practices.

Questions relating to the use of internal teat sealants were introduced for the first time in the 2025 survey.

Administration of teat sealants to heifers before first calving varied considerably across the industry. Uptake ranged from 39% of respondent farms in Tasmania to just 3% in SA, and from 26% of herds with more than 300 cows to 8% of smaller herds. Farms with veterinarian-developed written treatment protocols (19% versus 6%) and those where respondents had attended mastitis training within the previous two years (21% versus 11%) were also more likely to administer teat sealants to heifers.

Just over half of respondents (53%) reported using teat sealants in cows at drying off. Use ranged from 71% of respondent farms in Tasmania to 30% in SA and increased with herd size from 33% of small herds to 79% of XX-large herds. Adoption was also higher among farms with veterinarian-developed written treatment protocols (57% versus 43%) and among respondents who had attended mastitis training within the previous two years (58% versus 49%). [See Figure 8, 9 & 10](#)

Lameness

Lameness is one of the most important health and welfare conditions affecting dairy cattle and is influenced by multiple management, environmental and nutritional factors. Effective prevention requires a whole-farm approach, including good cow flow, well-maintained laneways and dairy infrastructure, appropriate nutrition, and prompt identification and treatment of affected cows. Almost all respondent farms (92%) allow cows to walk to the dairy at their own pace. Similarly, almost all respondents (93%) reported identifying and treating lame cows within two days. Nationally, laneway maintenance was undertaken every six months on 20% of respondent farms, annually on 37%, and on an as-needed basis on the remaining 43%.

Dairy Australia's Healthy Hooves Program

Lameness in dairy cows is always a multifactorial problem, which is what makes having a lameness prevention strategy so important. Key risk factors that have been identified in Australasia occur during the movement of cows between the paddocks and the milking shed. These risk factors include:

- not allowing cows to move at their own pace,
- suboptimal laneway condition and design,
- suboptimal holding yard/milking shed flooring and design.

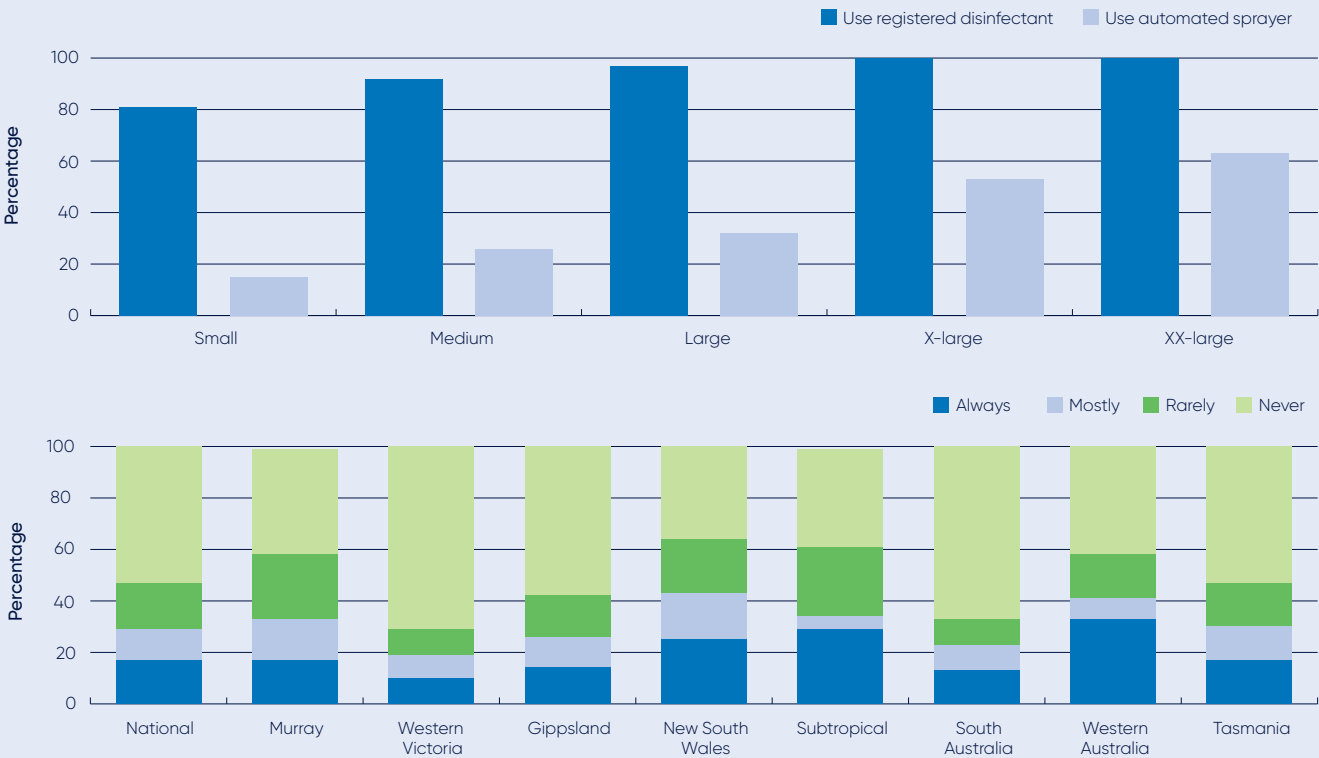
Excessively wet, muddy conditions and nutritional disturbances (such as acidosis) are also thought to contribute to higher levels of lameness.

Prompt treatment of lameness is also critically important to reduce the economic and welfare impacts of lameness, but preventative strategies remain key to minimise the number of cows requiring treatment.

For guidance and training materials on stock handling, visit dairyaustralia.com.au.

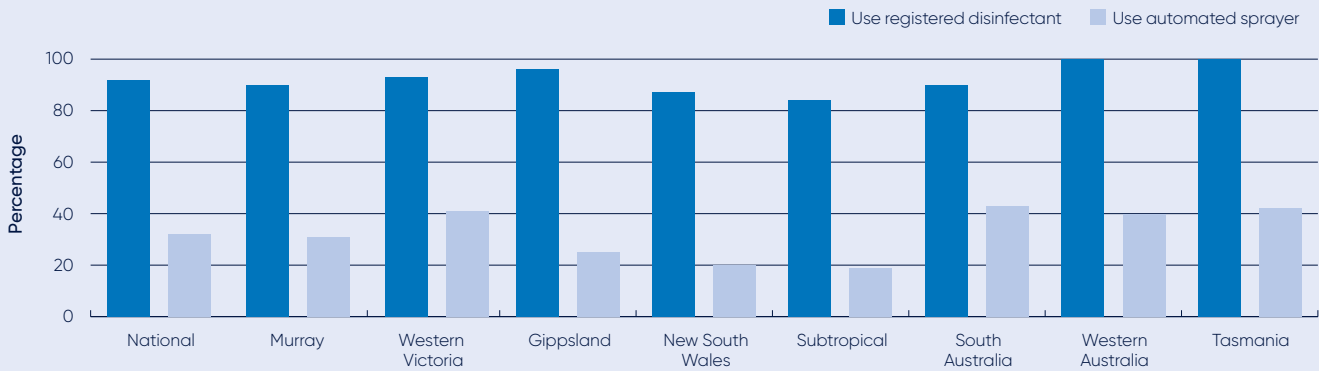
For comprehensive information on the prevention and treatment of lameness, go to the Dairy Australia **Lameness** webpage or download the Complete Guide to **Preventing and Managing Lameness**.

Figure 8 Teat spray management practices by region



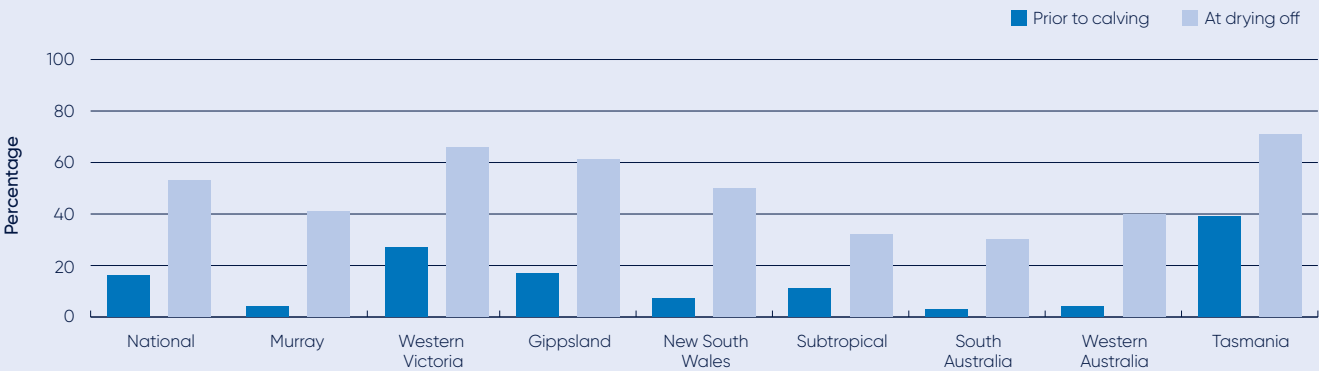
Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Figure 9 Teat spray management practices by farm size



Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Figure 10 Use of teat sealants in heifer and cows by region



Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Management of down cows

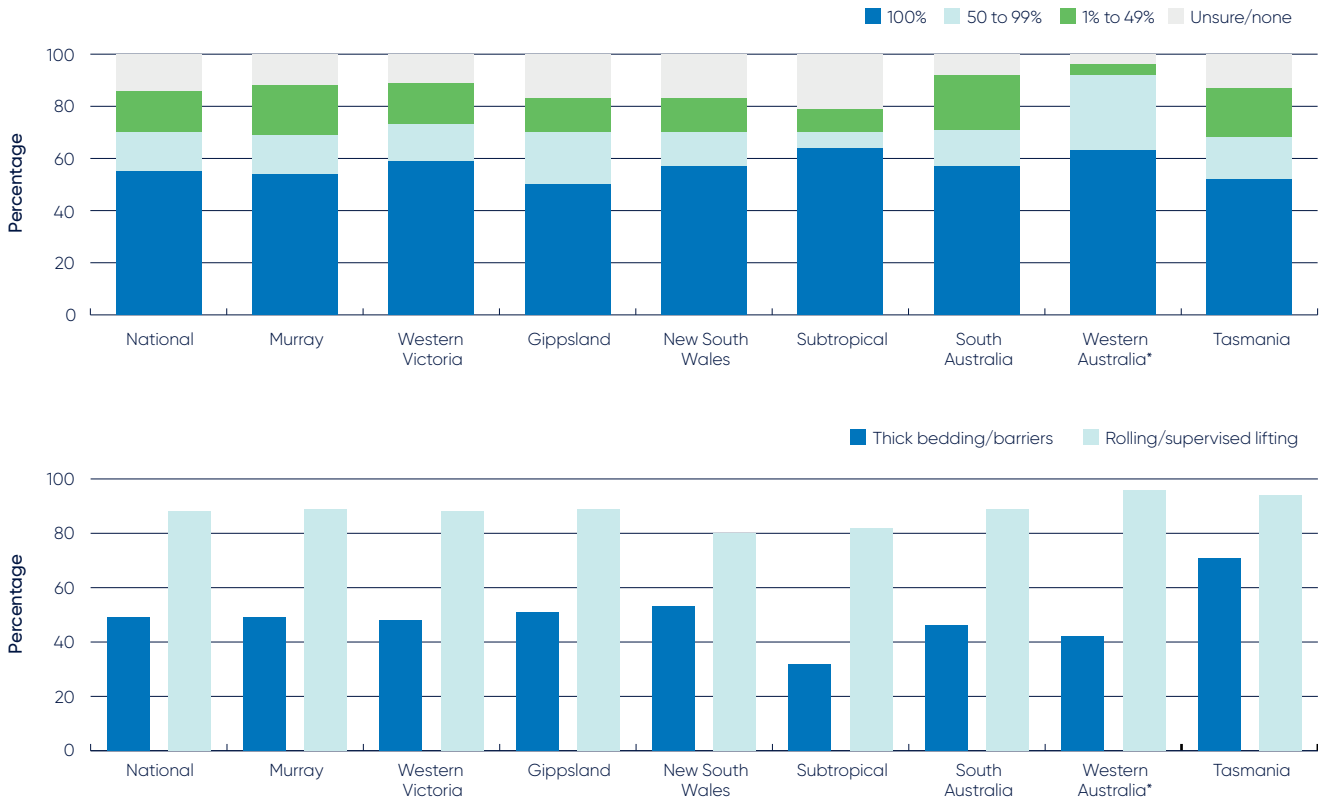
Almost all respondents (97%) had experienced a down cow that failed to respond to initial treatment. Of these respondents, 69% reported providing nursing care within two hours, ranging from 84% in Western Australia to 65% in Subtropical.

The proportion of down cows receiving nursing care also varied between farms. Just over half of respondents (55%) reported providing nursing to all down cows that failed to respond to initial treatment. This was more common in Queensland (76%) than New South Wales (51%) and Victoria (54%), and among herds with fewer than 700 cows (69%) than XX-large herds (42%). A further 15% of respondents provided nursing to between 50% and 99% of affected cows, while 9% reported not providing nursing to down cows that failed to respond to initial treatment. Some farms in this group may have elected to euthanase affected animals promptly rather than provide nursing care.

Among farms providing nursing care, 88% reported using rolling and supervised lifting. Adoption of this practice was high across all groups but varied slightly by state, ranging from 89% in Victoria to 79% in New South Wales, and by respondent age, from 95% among those aged 18 to 39 years to 85% among those aged 60 years and over.

Approximately half of respondents (49%) reported providing thick bedding and barriers to prevent crawling when nursing down cows. This practice was significantly more common in Tasmania than in other dairy regions and was slightly more common among small and medium-sized herds than larger herds. [See Figure 11](#)

Figure 11 Down cow nursing practices by region



Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

* Caution, small sample



Extension and training

Attendance at animal health and welfare training has continued to increase since 2019. Over half of respondents (56%) reported attending at least one animal health and welfare training activity during the previous two years.

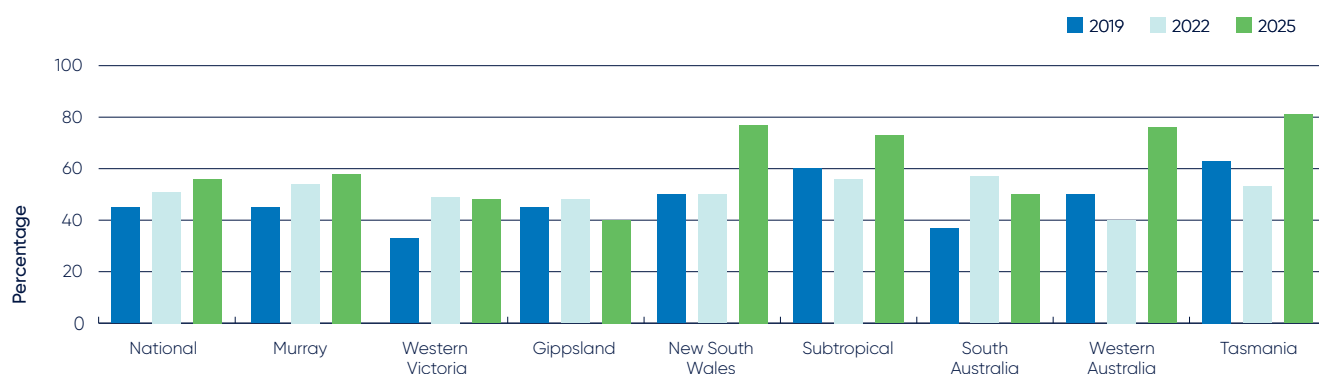
Participation varied across regions, states and herd sizes. Attendance was highest in Tasmania (81%) and lowest in Gippsland (40%). By state, participation ranged from 81% in New South Wales to 47% in Victoria. Larger herds were also more likely to undertake training, with 75% of large to XX-large herds attending training compared with 42% of small to medium herds. [See Figure 12 & 13](#)

Mastitis and milk quality was the most attended training type (43%), followed by calf rearing (39%). Attendance at both training programs has increased since 2019. Compared with 2022, participation in calf rearing training increased significantly nationally, from 30% to 39%, with a particularly marked increase among respondents in NSW.

[See Table 18](#)

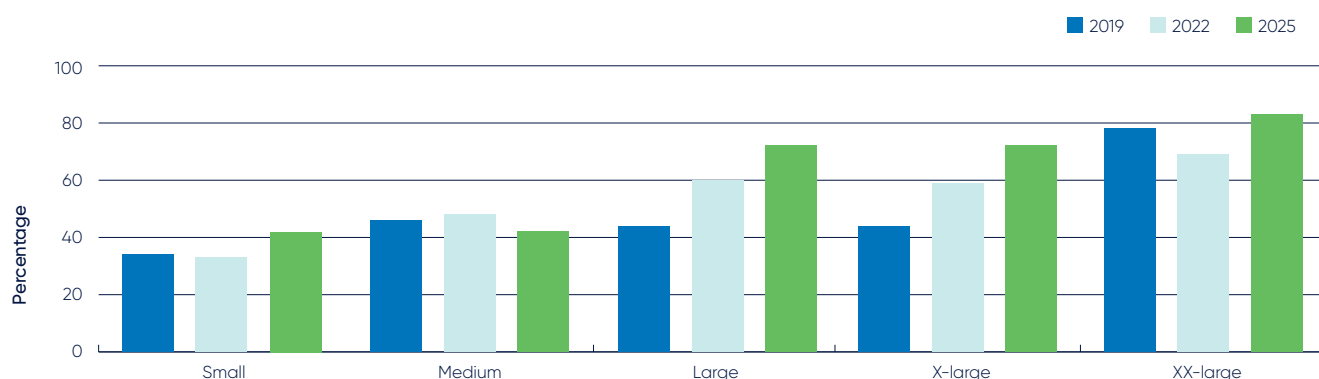


Figure 12 Percentage of farms attending training by region



Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Figure 13 Percentage of farms attending training by herd size



Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Table 18 Animal Health, Welfare and Fertility Workshop Attendance

Workshop attended in past 2 years	% mentioning (base: all respondents)									
	Total	Dairy region								
	2022 n=400	2025 n=400	Murray n=80	West Vic n=82	Gipps n=85	NSW n=30	Subtrop n=37	SA n=30	WA* n=25	Tas n=31
Total: attended workshop	51%	56%	58%	48%	40%	77%	73%	50%	76%	81%
Mastitis and Milk quality	42%	43%	50%	35%	29%	57%	54%	23%	68%	71%
Calf rearing	30%	▲ 39%	43%	33%	26%	▲ 57%	46%	40%	52%	55%
Reproduction management	24%	27%	34%	23%	16%	37%	35%	30%	28%	39%
Heat stress management	N/A	16%	15%	12%	12%	27%	38%	17%	40%	3%
Don't know	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

* Caution, small sample

Training associated with higher adoption

Euthanase Livestock is Dairy Australia's training program designed to support safe, effective and humane euthanasia of sick or injured cattle. The training aligns with the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Cattle, which outline legal requirements for the humane destruction of cattle.

Attendance at Euthanase Livestock training has continued to increase since 2019. Participation increased significantly among Tasmanian respondents between 2022 and 2025. An upward trend was also observed among large to XX-large herds, increasing the likelihood that at least one member of the farm team had completed euthanasia training. **See Figure 14 & 15**

Survey results indicated that respondents who had attended euthanasia training were significantly more likely to report adopting recommended euthanasia practices than those who had not attended training. This association was reflected in greater use of captive bolt devices, more timely euthanasia of cattle where required, and reduced reliance on third-party providers.

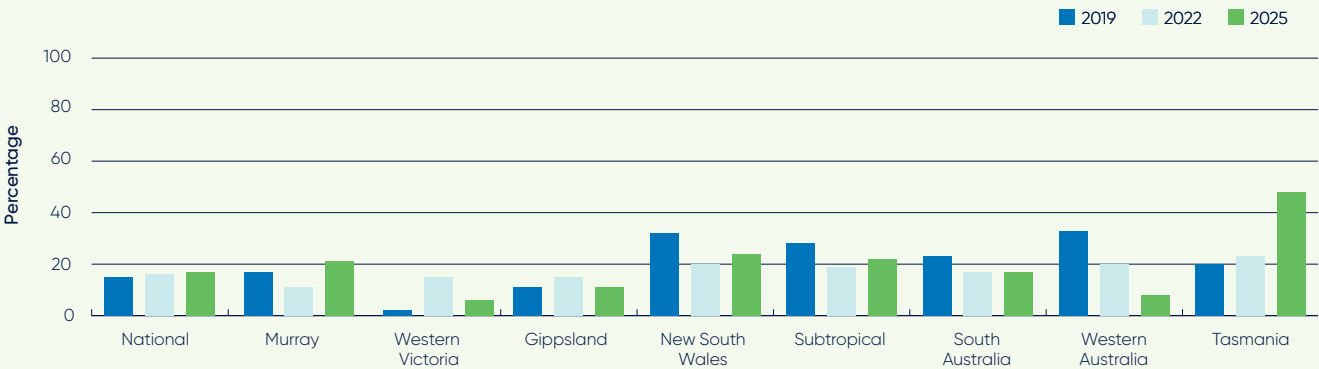
Captive bolt devices are available in all Australian states and territories and, when used correctly, provide a safe and effective method of euthanasia without the licensing and storage requirements associated with firearms. Respondents who had attended training were more likely to report using captive bolt devices, suggesting an association between workshop attendance and the adoption of recommended euthanasia practices.

See Table 19

The Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Cattle are available from Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines. Information about upcoming Euthanase Livestock workshops is available through your local Dairy Australia regional team.

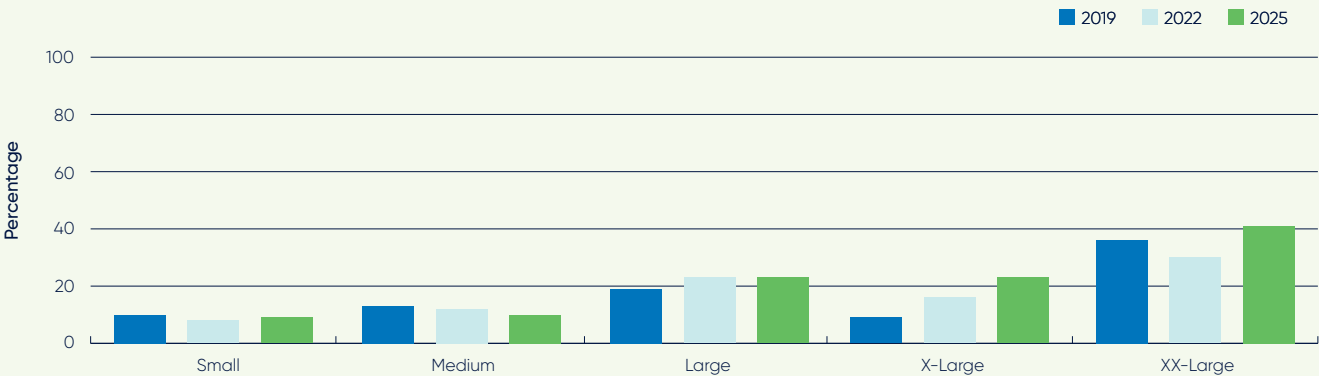


Figure 14 Euthanase Livestock Workshop Attendance by Region



Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Figure 15 Euthanase Livestock Workshop Attendance Farm Size



Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Table 19 Euthanasia practices according to workshop attendance

Euthanasia practices	% mentioning (base: all respondents)	
	Attended euthanasia training	Did not attend euthanasia training
Captive bolt	63%	18%
Gun	62%	71%
Sharp blow to the head	2%	8%
Use third party (vet/knackery)	45%	66%
Do not euthanase	0%	1%
Timeframe to euthanase once identified (base: euthanase animals; n=396):		
Immediately	90%	73%
Within 2 hours	4%	6%
Within 2-6 hours	2%	3%
More than 6 hours	3%	6%
Wait until knackery collects them	1%	8%
Unsure	0%	4%
Total: less than 2 hours	95%	79%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

When asked about their preferred method of animal health, welfare and fertility training for themselves or their staff, respondents most selected one-day workshops (38%) and one-on-one meetings with farm engagement leads or consultants (35%).

Preferences were generally consistent across regions, herd sizes and age groups. One-day workshops were the preferred delivery method for most respondent groups, although small herds and respondents aged 60 years and over showed a slight preference for one-on-one meetings.

While face-to-face delivery methods were preferred overall, 15% of respondents indicated a preference for online training through self-paced learning (14%) and/or webinars (6%). Preference for online delivery was higher among respondents aged 18 to 39 years (26%) than older age groups (13%).

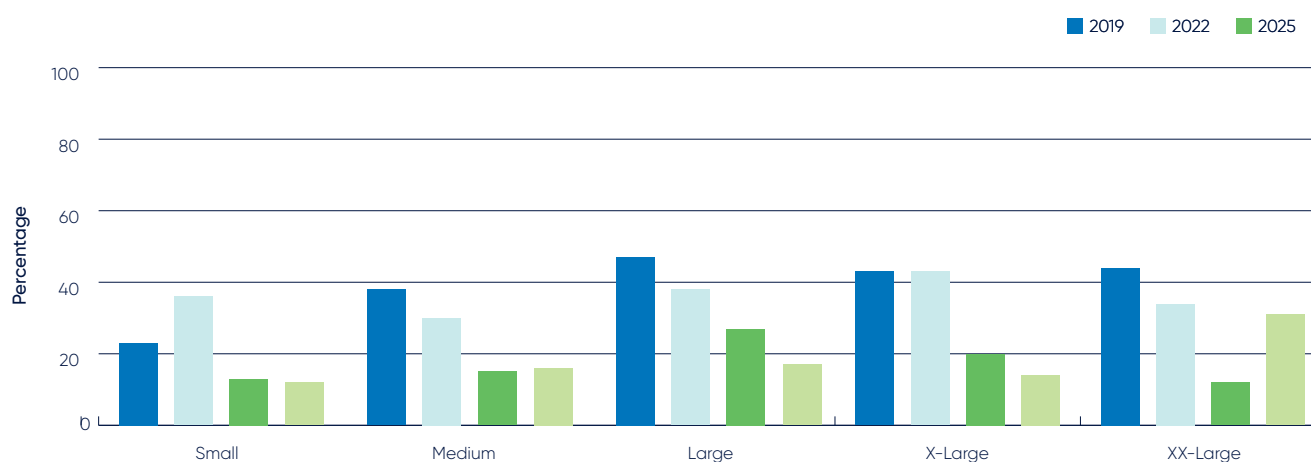
These findings highlight the importance of providing a range of extension and training options to meet the diverse learning preferences of Australian dairy farmers and their staff. **See Table 20 & Figure 16**

Table 20 Preferred delivery method by region

Preferred method of animal health, welfare or fertility training	% mentioning (base: all respondents)											
	Total	Dairy region							State			
	2025 n=400	Murray n=80	West Vic n=82	Gipps n=85	NSW n=30	Subtrop n=37	SA n=30	WA* n=25	Tas n=31	VIC n=239	NSW n=47	QLD n=28
One day workshop	38%	37%	38%	35%	47%	38%	37%	40%	39%	37%	38%	39%
One on one meeting with farm engagement lead or consultant	35%	37%	30%	39%	33%	27%	27%	36%	42%	35%	38%	21%
Discussion group	17%	22%	12%	14%	17%	14%	30%	20%	26%	15%	21%	11%
Multiple day workshop	17%	18%	15%	18%	20%	13%	13%	20%	19%	17%	17%	14%
Online self-paced learning	11%	10%	11%	11%	13%	19%	7%	8%	10%	11%	11%	21%
Large field day (e.g. muster, conference)	11%	14%	11%	7%	13%	22%	13%	8%	3%	10%	15%	25%
Webinars	6%	7%	5%	5%	7%	11%	7%	12%	6%	5%	6%	14%
On farm training	4%	0%	7%	5%	10%	0%	0%	16%	0%	4%	6%	0%

Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025

Figure 16 Preferred delivery method based on farm size



Source: Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey Report, November 2025



Contact

This report provides an overview of the key findings from the 2025 Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey (AHGS). In addition to the survey findings, the report incorporates information from other relevant industry data sources to provide a broader picture of the current state of animal health and welfare on Australian dairy farms.

More detailed results by region, herd size and milk processor may be available on request.

For further information, please contact Andy Hancock, Sustainable Animal Care Manager, at andrew.hancock@dairyaustralia.com.au.

Acknowledgements

Dairy Australia sincerely thanks Heather McLaren from Dairy Australia, and Dan and Pamela Watson from Down to Earth Research, for coordinating the 2025 Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey.

We also acknowledge and thank the Australian dairy farmers who generously gave their time to participate in the survey. Their contribution, together with the ongoing support of dairy farmers through the Dairy Australia levy, made this work possible.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey Methodology

The 2025 Animal Husbandry and Genetics Survey (AHGS) is based on data collected from 400 computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) with dairy farmers randomly selected from Dairy Australia’s levy payer database.

Regional quotas were established to ensure a statistically robust sample, and the data were weighted to reflect the geographic distribution of Australian dairy farming businesses.

A structured questionnaire (Appendix X) formed the basis of the CATI interviews. All interviews were conducted by Market Metrics Data Collection in accordance with ISO 20252 standards. Interviewing was undertaken during October and November 2025. Prior to commencement of fieldwork, all interviewers received a comprehensive briefing from a senior representative of Down to Earth Research (DTER).

The average interview duration was approximately 23 minutes. The survey response rate was 64% (completed interviews as a proportion of completed interviews plus refusals), compared with 76% in 2022, 70% in 2019 and 64% in 2016.

Margin of Error

The survey sample comprised 400 respondents. For estimates based on the total sample, the margin of error at the 95% confidence level is approximately $\pm 4.2\%$ for a proportion of 70%, representing a high level of statistical precision.

The margins of error for the total sample and regional sub-samples are shown below.

Region	400 CATI (stratified by region)	
	Sample size	Margin for error ($\pm$)
Murray	80	9.6%
Western Victoria	81	9.5%
Gippsland	83	9.4%
New South Wales	30	15.6%
Subtropical	36	14.2%
South Australia	30	15.0%
Western Australia	30	14.1%
Tasmania	30	14.0%
Total	400	4.2%

Statistically significant differences

Unless otherwise stated, only statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level and meaningful trends over time are described in this report. Where no comment is made on differences between respondent groups, this indicates that observed differences were not statistically significant.

Sample bases

The sample base varies throughout the report depending on the survey question. The relevant base is identified in all tables, figures and charts.

Definitions

Throughout this report, herd size categories are defined as follows.

Herd size	Small	Less than 150 cows
	Medium	Between 150 and 300 cows
	Large	Between 300 and 500 cows
	X large	Between 500 and 700 cows
	XX large	More than 700 cows
	• Caution small sample	Sample size less than 30, caution is required interpreting results
□	Significance testing unable to be conducted due to question alteration in 2025	

Appendix 2: Total farms by Dairy Australia Regional Development Program

	Subtropical	New South Wales	Gippsland	Murray	Western Victoria	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	Aust
Dairy farms	340	302	917	782	831	166	99	335	3,772

Source: Australian Dairy in Focus Report 2025

Appendix 3: Industry organisations and structure

Dairy Australia works towards shaping a profitable and sustainable dairy industry by providing services that benefit and advance dairy farm businesses and the industry.

These services deliver value by:

- Enhancing farm business management.
- Supporting employment and people development.
- Driving herd and feed innovation.
- Managing climate and environment.
- Promoting Australian dairy and demonstrating the industry commitment to sustainability.
- Supporting international dairy markets.
- Contributing to policy development.
- Responding to critical issues and events.

Dairy Australia invests in Regional Development Programs and has regional teams that are part of dairy communities in Gippsland, Murray, New South Wales, South Australia, Subtropical, Tasmania, Western Australia and Western Victoria.

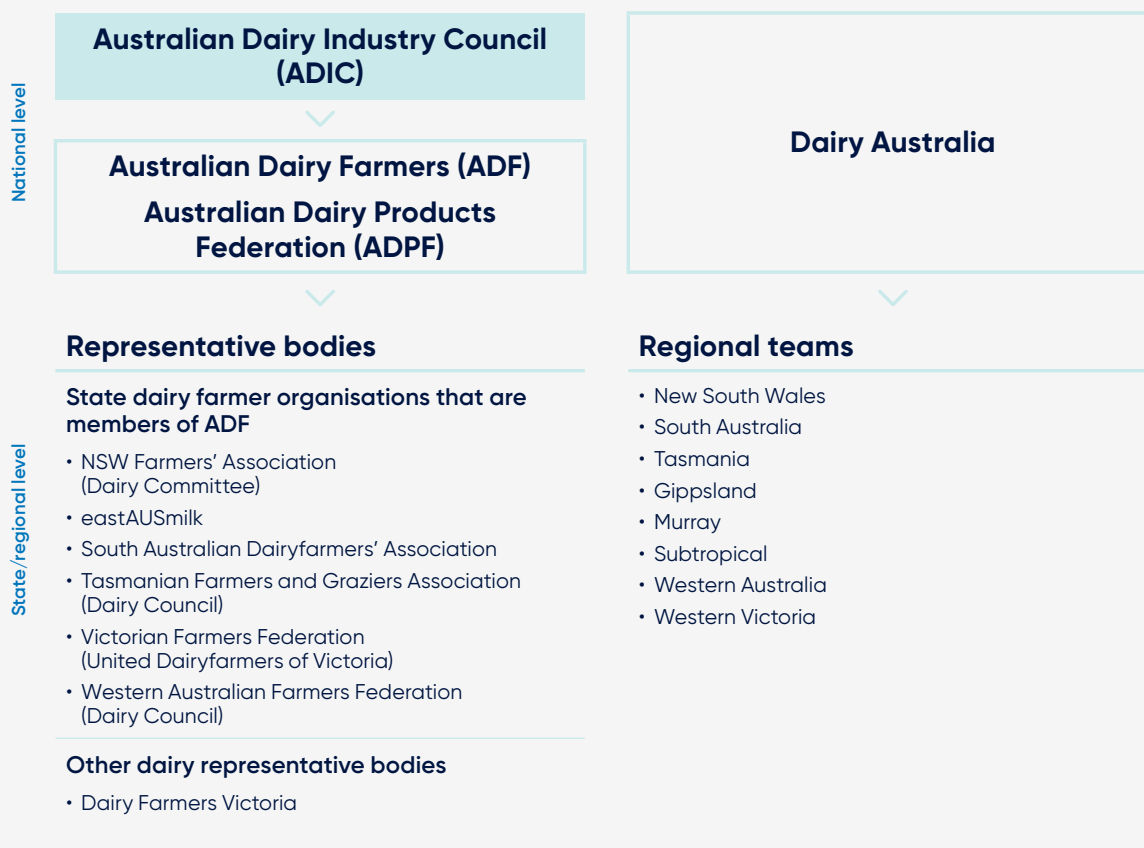
Our regional teams work with dairy farm businesses to understand their needs, deliver relevant services and support industry activities.

We partner with farmers, industry, government and research organisations in our activities. Our key partners include Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF), state dairy farmer organisations, Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF), the Gardiner Dairy Foundation, the Commonwealth and state governments, universities and other research organisations, Regional Development Program Boards and other Rural Research and Development Corporations.

We are funded by levies paid by dairy farmers and matching payments received from the Commonwealth Government for eligible research, development and extension activities.

Our core funding also allows us to attract additional external funding for key programs of work.

The structure of Australian dairy industry organisations



Appendix 4: Policy, research and development

Examples of Dairy Australia's current investments in animal health and welfare policy, research and development are outlined in Table 19.

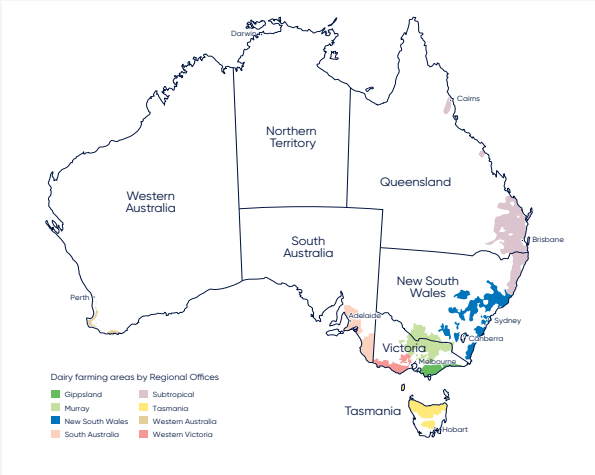
Table 19 Current Dairy Australia investments in animal health and welfare policy, research and development (2025–26)

Project	Objective
Policy	
Access to AgVet Chemicals	Maintain and improve access to AgVet chemicals for Australian dairy farmers by responding to changing farming systems, emerging pests and diseases, and evolving consumer and regulatory expectations. The project supports responsible chemical use while helping maintain farm productivity and market access.
Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework	Support the Australian dairy industry's sustainability goals by reporting progress against key sustainability targets, demonstrating practice change, maintaining market access, and providing a framework for engagement with industry stakeholders.
CalfWays	Improve the management and value of non-replacement dairy calves by supporting economically viable and sustainable market pathways. Delivered through a co-investment between Dairy Australia and Meat & Livestock Australia, the initiative coordinates industry priorities and investment to improve animal welfare and supply chain outcomes.
Growing Beef from Dairy	Support dairy farmers to make informed decisions about non-replacement calf management through practical extension and adoption resources. The project complements CalfWays by strengthening the beef-from-dairy supply chain and improving animal welfare and market outcomes.
Research and Innovation	
DairyFeedbase: Project 4: Improving lifetime production	Develop nutrition and management strategies that increase the proportion of cows reaching their second lactation and improve reproductive performance and longevity in pasture-based dairy systems. The project aims to improve herd resilience, productivity and profitability through earlier identification of animals at risk and more targeted management.
DairyFeedbase: Project 6: Sensing data into actionable insights	Develop methods to integrate, analyse and interpret sensor and farm data to support predictive modelling and practical decision-making. The project aims to improve the use of real-time data to support timely herd management decisions on Australian dairy farms.
DairyBio 3 Lifting the predictive power of ABVs for index traits	Improve the accuracy of Australian Breeding Values (ABVs) by incorporating data generated from sensors, in-line milk meters and other emerging technologies. The project will strengthen genetic evaluation for economically important traits including fertility, mastitis resistance, milk production and liveweight.
Animal health, antimicrobial use and antimicrobial resistance monitoring	Develop a national system to monitor animal health, antimicrobial use and antimicrobial resistance on Australian dairy farms. The project supports benchmarking for farmers and advisers, demonstrates the industry's commitment to antimicrobial stewardship, and provides de-identified data to inform reporting, policy and future investment.
National Bulk Milk Cell Count and bacteriological count statistics	Monitor national trends in bulk milk cell count and milk hygiene using processor data. The project provides industry benchmarking, supports continuous improvement in milk quality and contributes to maintaining domestic and international market access.
National Herd Reproductive Performance Report	Monitor reproductive performance trends across Australian dairy systems using national InCalf indicators from the ADHIS/DataGene NatSCAN database. The findings support benchmarking, identify opportunities for improvement and inform future investment in reproductive performance.
DataGene	Support genetic improvement and herd management through national genetic evaluations, herd improvement services and industry data infrastructure. DataGene enables more informed breeding and herd management decisions, improving productivity, profitability and sustainability.
Development	
ReproRefresh	Improve understanding of reproductive performance across Australian dairy systems by combining national data analysis with farmer and industry consultation. The project identifies barriers, opportunities and priorities to inform the future design and delivery of reproductive extension programs.

Appendix 5: Training and extension

Dairy Australia delivers animal health, welfare and fertility extension programs across all Australian dairy regions through its regional development network. The eight regional teams provide training, technical support, resources and extension activities that address both national priorities and region-specific needs. The number of dairy farms represented within each region is provided in Appendix 2.

Figure 16 Dairy Australia Regional Development Programs



Dairy Australia develops evidence-based resources, supports the capability of regional subject matter experts, and provides training materials to enable consistent delivery of animal health and welfare programs across Australia. The major farmer-focused animal health, welfare and fertility extension programs available to dairy farmers are summarised in Table 4.

Table 20 Animal health and welfare training programs delivered by Dairy Australia’s Regional Development Programs between 2022 and 2025

Farmer-focused extension programs	Content
InCharge Fertility	Dairy Australia's <i>InCharge Fertility</i> workshops aim to create a supportive learning environment in which herd managers and farm owners can learn how to measure, review and improve their herd's reproductive performance and fine tune their existing reproductive management practices. Participants investigate their own herd's reproductive performance and build a plan to achieve their targets. InCharge Fertility involves five contact days, one of which is an on-farm day where the elements of herd reproduction are reviewed in practice. The workshop presents research and reviews the on-farm logistics that allow this knowledge to be implemented on farms. Deliverers of this program must be a ReproRight trained advisor, and it is most suitable for decision makers and more experienced farm staff.
Rearing Healthy Calves	Dairy Australia's <i>Rearing Healthy Calves</i> workshops are offered nationally with focus to improve calf rearing and animal welfare practices on dairy farms. The workshop is suitable for anyone involved in the calf rearing process on farm from casual calf rearing staff through to management and decision maker level.
Rearing Healthy Calves in Practice	Dairy Australia's <i>Rearing Healthy Calves in Practice</i> workshops are aimed at exploring and evaluating participants calf rearing facilities and practices therefore making it suitable for experienced calf rearers and decision makers. Supporting participants to develop a farm specific action plan to enable achievement of their calf rearing goals.
Euthanase Livestock	Dairy Australia's <i>Euthanase Livestock</i> workshops provide knowledge, skills and assesses dairy farm staff/service providers in the humane euthanasia of dairy cattle. It is suitable for anybody responsible for the euthanasia of dairy cattle.
Disbudding Best Practice	Dairy Australia's <i>Disbudding Best Practice</i> is a practical on-farm workshop supporting participants in obtaining the skills and knowledge associated with best practice calf disbudding and pain management.
Milking and Mastitis Management (CoCo 2.0)	Dairy Australia's <i>Milking and Mastitis Management (CoCo 2.0)</i> workshops, previously known as Cups On Cups Off, are offered nationally to improve milk harvesting, dairy hygiene, and udder health practices on dairy farms and is delivered by Australia's most experienced Countdown trained advisors. The workshop is suitable for anyone involved in the milking process on farm, from management level through to casual staff but does assumes participants have some milking experience.
Dry Off	Dairy Australia's <i>Dry Off</i> workshops are completed on-farm and use practical scenario case studies for demonstration reviewing participants' drying off strategies, including discussing the use of selective (part-herd) dry cow strategies. The program is suitable for anyone conducting drying off on farm, but it is recommended that managers attend the training with staff.

Farmer-focused extension programs	Content
Heifers on Target	Dairy Australia's <i>Heifers on Target</i> workshop discusses improved replacement heifer management as one of the simplest measures to help improve herd fertility. It is delivered by trained facilitators or ReproRight trained advisers.
Heat Detective	Dairy Australia's <i>Heat Detective</i> workshop is offered nationally has been developed by Dairy Australia to improve heat detection practices on dairy farms with the objective of enhancing the reproductive performance of Australian dairy herds. The workshop is suitable for anyone involved in heat detection on farm. Deliverers of this workshop are ReproRight trained advisers.
Down Cows	Dairy Australia's <i>Down Cows</i> workshop discusses best-practice down cow management practices to ensure the welfare of down cows. It is a two-part workshop with the first half in the classroom (theory) and the second half (practical) on farm. The on-farm session involves setting up a dedicated nursing area as a basis for discussion and exploring possibilities on the attendees' farms. The workshop is most suitable for decision makers and farm staff involved in managing downer cows.
Transition Cow Management	Dairy Australia's <i>Transition Cow Management</i> workshops are run either face-to-face (one day) or online (over four to five weeks) and sets participants up to measure/monitor cow health issues, understand significant effects of milk fever on the herd, the benefits of successful transition feeding programs and developing and implementing transition programs on farm. There are northern and southern workshops which include the most relevant pasture/forage species.
Cool Cows	Dairy Australia's <i>Cool Cows</i> is a one-day workshop exploring strategies for identifying and mitigating the impacts of heat stress on cattle. The workshop is heavily focused on practical strategies that equips farmers to take proactive steps to protect cows from heat, through planning and management and investments in infrastructure in both the short and long-term.
Healthy Hooves	Dairy Australia's <i>Healthy Hooves</i> is a two-part workshop covering key aspects for the prevention of lameness, how to recognize lame cows early and treat simple cases. First half of the workshop is held in the classroom whilst the second half of the workshop is practical and includes looking at lameness tools required, examination and trimming of hooves and restraint and examination of the cow in a crush.
Genomics at a Glance	Dairy Australia's <i>Genomics at a Glance</i> is a one to one-and-a-half hour workshop introducing genomics, including how to take a sample and what to do with the results. It includes key insights into how farmers nationwide are utilising the technology to improve productivity and profitability on farm.
Genomics in Practice	Dairy Australia's <i>Genomics in Practice</i> is a practical, on-farm workshop for farmers who are thinking about or ready to start genomic testing. Demonstrations include using tissue sampling units (TSUs) and accessing and interpreting results using DataGene's DataVat web portal. Participants gain insights from the host farm and others about how genomic results influence breeding and business decisions.

In addition to the farmer-focused extension programs, Dairy Australia provides training for farm advisors who work with farmers to ensure consistent, evidence-based, best-practice messages are disseminated throughout the industry. These advisors also often play a critical role in reaching those farms who may be less inclined to engage in group workshops and other events provided through Dairy Australia Regional Teams.

Table 21 Animal Health and welfare advisor extension programs

Advisor-focused extension programs	Content
Countdown MQ	Ten-month intensive program focusing on mastitis prevention and milk quality improvements. Alongside technical information on mastitis, milk quality, preventative health, and antibiotic stewardship, much of the training centres on practice-change and communication strategies. Open to all farm advisors including milking machine technicians, herd improvement staff, milk processor field services staff and veterinarians.
ReproRight	Ten-month professional development program for dairy reproduction advisers to improve their ability to provide intensive problem-solving and whole herd reproductive management services to dairy farmers.

*These two advisory programs will be undergoing redevelopment

Appendix 6: Regional Contacts

Regional contacts

Gippsland	03 5624 3900 info@gippsdairy.com.au	Murray	03 4811 6008 murray@dairyaustralia.com.au
New South Wales	1800 004 377 info@dairynsw.com.au	South Australia	1800 004 377 southaustralia@dairyaustralia.com.au
Subtropical	0431 197 479 brad@subtropicaldairy.com.au	Tasmania	03 6432 2233 tasmania@dairyaustralia.com.au
Western Australia	1800 004 377 westernaustralia@dairyaustralia.com.au	Western Victoria	03 5557 1000 info@westvicdairy.com.au



1800 004 377
dairyaustralia.com.au