

Large recipient program

Total Livestock Genetics has completed an embryo transfer program featuring a massive 1000 recipients.

TLG Managing Director Shane Ashworth said the program was one of the biggest ever handled by his staff.

"We have done some very big dairy programs but I can't remember ever having a thousand recipients lined up – usually it's more like two or three hundred!"

The embryo transfer program in Camperdown was for Wagyu business Samurai Farms.

"Our business strategy was around getting scale, quickly," Samurai Farms' principal Bob Talbot said.

"And that required a fairly intensive ET program and an ET partner to help us do that."

Shane Ashworth and TLG embryo technician Gary Sivesind were heavily involved in the ambitious ET program over two days, the third and largest conducted for Samurai Farms.

"Shane's insights from a business management perspective and Gary's expertise - Shane devised the program and Gary was in charge of executing it - ensured it worked extraordinarily well," Mr Talbot said.

"We've gone from a small number to 700 full-blood females in a relatively short space of time."



The recipients were provided by local farmer Andy Wilson's commercial herd.

Mr Talbot said the embryo transfer program was a massive logistical exercise which took about six months of planning.

"A thousand recipients doesn't sound very many ... until you see them in the yard!"

"We had a highly detailed plan which brought in a lot of farming people and technical people, and everything had to come together.

"It's what happens in the two months leading up to that day which determines how successful or otherwise you are.

"It comes down to one

day and you get one shot at it."

The resulting pregnancy rate result was 68% which, considering frozen embryos were used, was "a sensational result", Mr Talbot said.

"We've broken a lot of ground in terms of the scale of what we wanted to do and all things considered it's been a terrific outcome."

Shane Ashworth said big ET programs could be done in a commercial or semi-commercial setting.

"This particular program shows TLG can handle big volumes and do it comfortably within a farm's management program.

"Bob Talbot's program is very ambitious and we've been doing it for three years or more now.

"We've now programmed up to a thousand recipients in a session and synchronised them so we can transfer the embryos in quick succession.

"The beauty of this program is that it didn't hold up Andy Wilson's commercial herd (where the recipient animals came from).

"Andy, because he's always had a good well-managed cattle herd, wants to have a tight calving pattern, so it was important that we fitted this job in around that requirement.

"By using the progesterone devices Cue-Mates in his cows we can get two rounds of embryo transfer in them within three weeks.

"It's not only efficient in
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A little Talent can go a long way

TLG played a key role in the recent groundbreaking export of the first Australian Holstein semen to Japan.

A 3500-dose shipment was produced by Semex sire Ladino Park Talent, who is housed at TLG Camperdown.

Semex Pty Ltd General Manager Jim Conroy praised TLG staff for their hard work in achieving the export.

"TLG, due to its EU status, is our preferred place of housing and managing our bulls," Mr Conroy said.

"Aside from that, the quality of product TLG is able to produce is excellent and second to none in Australia, which is why we prefer to work with them rather than anyone else."

Mr Conroy praised TLG's Deb Emeny and Bronwyn Aitken for their diligence in the export process. The two staffers worked closely on the project with Semex Administration Manager Karen Phillips, who supervised the export permit.

Ms Phillips said the process wasn't overly difficult – just time-consuming.

"Japan's requirements are no more stringent than the rest – but, because it has not been done before, it took five years to establish a health protocol," she said.

The semen was imported by Nosawa and Company, a Japanese trading house that has imported large volumes of heifers and feedstuff from Australia over the years.

The export will have ramifications for many other sections of the industry, she said.

"At the end of the day, this shipment is not just about Ladino Park Talent or Semex – it effectively opens up the whole Japanese market for the



Australian livestock industry."

Mr Conroy said the shipment was yet another milestone in what has been a truly stellar career for the 10-year-old sire.

"Talent graduated as the No. 1 Type and Udder sire in Australia in February, 2003, and then in Canada six months later," he said.

"In doing so, he became the first Australian Holstein sire to be marketed throughout the world via the Semex Alliance.

"To date, more than 800,000 doses of semen has been sold in 40 different countries over the past five years.

"To get access to Japan, which is arguably the most discerning market in the world, is yet another endorsement of the quality of this sire."

TLG co-ordinator Deb Emeny said it was great to see Talent – a good-natured bull affectionately known among TLG staff as 'God' – receiving more international recognition.

"I was involved in putting put him through his PT program so I've had the benefit of seeing him right through, from a baby to layoff to coming through as a proven bull. It's great to see him doing so well."

Ladino Park Talent was bred by Max Harges of Ladino Park Holsteins, Aberdeen, NSW, using imported embryos.

He is a son of the legendary Maughlin Storm and from Markwell Leader Rose EX91-2E, the Kinglea Leader daughter of the world-famous Stookey Elm Park Blackrose*RC EX-7E USA.

Busy season for export continues

It's been a busy few months for TLG, according to Semen & Embryo Import/Export Co-ordinator Bronwyn Aitken.

"TLG has managed to keep up with the demands of the EU with a number of exports for Semex to Holland, Germany, Spain and the UK," Bronwyn says.

TLG also co-ordinated the first ABS Australia export to the UK since Australia was relisted for European

Union trade late last year.

TLG is now exporting ABS Australia's consignments, including one to Brazil.

"This will hopefully top off the past couple of months where we have been successfully clearing ABS Australia's imports and working alongside the ABS team at Table Top," says Bronwyn.

Meanwhile, Te Mania Angus has completed its first embryo export to the UK, which has been exciting for all

involved. Total Livestock Genetics has also been heavily involved in exports of bovine/ovine semen and embryos to South America, including Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and the Falkland Islands.

"While the EU and South America has kept us busy we have been quietly working away on exports to destinations such as New Zealand, Canada and the USA for our valued private clients and Semex."

IVF strategies continue

Breeders are increasingly looking to TLG's in-vitro fertilisation service in order to boost their herd's genetic footprint.

TLG centre veterinarian Geoff Collyer says the service is producing some exciting results with so-called problem cows.

"We've been able to generate pregnancies out of animals which have previously been considered hopeless cases – you couldn't get a pregnancy or an embryo out of them," Geoff says.

"These cows have often had lots of things done to them and are considered infertile.

"With IVF, we are now getting productive use out of those animals."

Geoff says the IVF technique also ensured the optimum use of farmers' bull semen supplies.

"Another advantage of IVF is that you get to look at the egg quality and the egg production on any given day before deciding what semen to use.

"You make the decision on semen only after you've got an indication of what the results will be."

Geoff says in some cases farmers might be intending to use semen from a bull which was no longer available or in short supply, so it was important not to waste any of this valuable product.

"So on days when production is bad, you wouldn't thaw that semen but instead save it for another day."

Geoff says the IVF service can be used on farm, where it can be organised around farmers' other programs.

"We can do IVF runs on farmers' problem cows at times when farmers are going to do other embryo



TLG embryo technician Gary Sivesind performs an IVF procedure

programs, so the embryos produced for IVF will be available at the same time as the embryos from traditional embryo programs.

"On some farms, I do the normal insemination programs and the IVF program at the same time.

"They will be inseminating and I will be able to give the farmer an indication of how many recipients I will need when I am there.

"As the recipients have to come on heat at a particular time, we can pick out the ones I will need to use and then the others can be joined as usual.

"Then a week later I am back to put the embryos in." Geoff says the IVF program also offers the farmer a degree of flexibility.

"Because we don't do any drug treatment on any of the donors, IVF is more flexible in terms of days and times.

"With traditional embryo programs, the schedule of

treatment starts three weeks before we go on farm; with IVF you can change days and times more easily than with other programs."

If, for example, all the recipient animals came on heat 24 hours earlier than expected, the donor day could be brought forward without drama.

"You couldn't do that with a normal embryo program, but IVF offers that flexibility," Geoff says.

IVF can also be performed at the TLG facility, which Geoff says may work better for some cows.

"These often older cows which aren't able to be productive by any other means are coming here to TLG, where we can work on them every week or every fortnight.

"The cows with problems are the ones which are harder to get good results from, especially if you just do them on-farm as a one-off."



Where We Are

This edition of the *Total Times* echoes where TLG is at right at this moment - as it always does and as it should!

We continue to have a strong focus on export, and since we've moved through the EU issues (which were discussed in the last edition of *TT*), we've moved on to do many more exports.

This *Total Times* also shows that as well as moving into new areas, TLG hasn't forgotten its original, core businesses.

Custom collection is something we've been doing for almost 20 years now, and some of the customers we're servicing now we were servicing way back then, so that's testimony to the loyalty of our customers as well as our desire to service them as well as we can.

The fact we're exploring possibilities with IVF shows we've been faithful to our mission statement, which is to try to be at the leading edge of technology.

It's challenging new technology but we're using it because we want to ensure that as these techniques become commercially viable, our clients have access to them.

So it's really pleasing this *Total Times* is able to encompass all the things TLG tries to be - we want to be cutting edge, we pride ourselves on being solid and reliable for our customers and we're really keen to promote Australian genetics on a global scale.

Shane Ashworth
Managing Director
Total Livestock Genetics

Clients back service

One of the first services ever offered by TLG continues to be just as popular almost two decades on.

The custom collection service involves TLG staff collecting semen on-farm using people's own private bulls.

Regan Burow of beef stud Yerwal Estate has been using the custom collection service for about 10 years.

"We tend to use it if we have a bull where we're really excited about the genetics or if we've made a valuable purchase of a new stud sire.

"We use it basically as insurance so if something happens to the bull, we've still got the genetics."

Yerwal Estate has also had some great results with semen collected on-farm.

"From a custom collected bull, we were able to use one straw for AI on a flush which produced 22 A-grade embryos."

And would Yerwal estate recommend

the service to others?

"Most definitely! I think it's better value than insuring a bull - if something happens, the insurance money doesn't bring the bull back ... or its genetics."

Yerwal Estate, based in Naracoorte, South Australia, is a breeder of Simmental, Angus and Red Angus, which has a sale of 60-plus bulls annually.

The custom collection service has been offered by TLG since 1989.

TLG Managing Director Shane Ashworth says the only difference in the custom collection service today is that TLG staff have access to all the latest technology out in the field and back in the lab.

However, stringent quality controls still apply to the semen.

"But while the semen is collected away from TLG, the semen is processed in a similar fashion to semen collected here," he said.

"If it does not pass our rigid quality assurance system, then it is discarded."

Large Wagyu ET program

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terms of our time on the property but it is also efficient in terms that it doesn't disadvantage Andy with his calving spread."

TLG staff harvested the embryos required for the Wagyu transfer program all during the year.

On the day of the ET program, four staff were involved - two embryo transfer technicians and two veterinarians.

Shane Ashworth says TLG staff are available to travel anywhere in Australia to achieve a similar program.

"We think there are some big beef herds who could do this kind of program, perhaps using some of their beef herd as a recipient source. We have some beef operators who provide their herd as a recipient source because the embryo calf can provide a more reliable income stream than a commercial calf.

"There is also an opportunity there for beef herds to work in with stud operations in the right context."

Dairy herds could also benefit from such a large-scale program.

"Certainly, in large dairy herds it is possible, but of course the added factor is the lactational stress and how you fit it in with your calving pattern."

TLG has clients wishing to run a similar program to that of Samurai Farms; commercial beef farmers who would be in a position to offer recipients should contact TLG.



Custom collection in process

Travel charges forced to increase

Total Livestock Genetics has been reluctant to increase its prices but, as Accounts Manager Kathryn Cecil explains, the time has come for change. "It's been more than 10 years since we increased our travel costs and, unfortunately, with the rising cost of fuel and on-road expenses, the

time is now here." The new charges begin on September 1, 2008, and are:

Travel Victoria	\$75.00
Travel SA	\$150.00
Travel Tasmania	\$200.00
Travel NSW	\$250.00
Other destinations	P.O.A.

A reminder to clients regarding insurance

A reminder that whilst all care is taken, semen and embryos stored at our facility and cattle on centre are not insured.

If insurance is required, we can facilitate this on behalf of our clients.

Contact TLG

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