

MATTHEW SHAFFER



Dr Matthew Shaffer is the Chief Executive Officer of DataGene, Australia's national genetic evaluation centre that provides leadership in herd improvement and data-related services on behalf of dairy farmers. Matt led the transformational change from the former Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme to a contemporary organisation with broad industry support as demonstrated by its membership base of 27 cross-sectoral organisations. At a time when the genetic improvement sector was at cross-roads, Matt was instrumental in establishing the Herd Improvement Industry Strategic Steering Committee, a whole-of-industry approach to tackling significant challenges. Matt's gravitas and personal approach made it work. Matt delivered a well-supported business case that

resulted in the formation of DataGene through his leadership, astute ability to manage inter-organisational relationships and unwavering personal commitment. In creating an environment where consultation and collaboration were his team's priorities, he increased resource availability, and this has significantly improved service delivery to farmers and industry.

A pig farm in Pennsylvania, USA was Matt's early home. His first paid job was milking cows for a neighbour, signalling a long career in agriculture. He earned his BA degree in International Relations at Penn State University (USA) in 1993 before completing both a Masters (1994) and PhD (1998) in International Relations at Cambridge University (UK). Matt started his career working for Hancock Agricultural Investment Group as Director of International Operations. While working for Hancock, Matt was transferred to Australia to open a subsidiary and later immigrated with his family. Matt was first introduced to the Australian dairy industry as Chief Executive Officer of the Holstein-Friesian Association of Australia where he was appointed to the board of the Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme and then became Program Manager of Genetics and Data Management at Dairy Australia.

Matt's significant influence on the genetic and herd improvement industries has stretched beyond Australian shores. He is a past chair of the Interbull steering committee of the International Committee for Animal Recording and was instrumental in re-shaping the governance of Interbull. He was a founding innovator in establishing the International Dairy Data Exchange Network. He is also a past president of the World Holstein-Friesian Federation where he was the first president from Oceania and the youngest to ever hold the position. He has been generous with his commitment to global-scale collaboration to advance dairy genetics and is very highly respected across the world for his contribution to the genetics and herd improvement sectors.

The Australian dairy herd improvement industry has been heavily influenced by Matt's leadership over the past two decades. His breadth of experience, networks and focus on delivering for farmers has benefited research and industry organisations and lead to ground-breaking initiatives. Examples include Ginfo (national reference herd of genomic information), modernising the infrastructure that supports the centralised data repository and genetic evaluation system, ImProving Herds, and the rapid acceleration of genetic gain towards an agreed national breeding objective. The successful delivery of DataGene, and its programs, is one of his greatest professional achievements.

Matt is respected by his peers in Australia and overseas for the way he works with people to listen, promote diversity and find common ground, especially when the issues are complicated. He is a leader, mentor and friend. For his outstanding contributions to the genetic and dairy herd improvement industries in Australia, the Association for the Advancement of Animal Breeding and Genetics is pleased to elect Matthew Shaffer as a Fellow of the Association.