



Peter Parnell says feedlot buyers are significant sources of influence over the Australian breeding industry, and if they started making recommendations to their suppliers on selection for traits like BRD resistance using market profiles, that could impact on test uptake.

## Education challenge in new HD 50K package

**E**DUCATING potential customers about how to apply new genetic selection tools within their breeding strategies will be one of the key challenges for Pfizer's new High Density 50,000 (HD 50K) marker DNA test, according to a leading Australian seedstock industry stakeholder.

Peter Parnell is chief executive officer with Angus Australia, the nation's largest breed society which typically registers about 65,000 calves annually.

He is well qualified to comment on recent developments in genomics-based selection tools, having worked earlier in his career as a geneticist and animal breeding scientist within the New South Wales state government's Agriculture Department.

Dr Parnell (pictured) also worked closely with Angus Australia during the late 1990s on Breedplan herd recording development before joining the organisation as CEO a year ago.

"At this early point, the message about the arrival of the new HD 50K test is still filtering out, but we've already fielded a lot of inquiry from members interested in knowing more about it and what it might offer

within their breeding programs," he said.

But transferring that interest into broader adoption might take time. Many breeders might be fairly conservative in their rate of adoption, because of their general lack of understanding about the expanded DNA test.

"What they do understand well is Breedplan and Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs, the Australian equivalent to US EPDs), and Pfizer is working closely with the Australian Angus industry to incorporate the 50K genomic information into marker-assisted EBVs," Dr Parnell said.

"That will be the quickest path to successful uptake in this country, because breeders don't have to think too far beyond their current knowledge set.

"They simply need to understand that the test will add information that will ultimately improve the accuracy of existing EBVs."

The significant level of investment involved in using the 50K test could also be a limiting factor in early adoption, he suggested.

Before breeders would pay a higher amount of money to get additional

information on an animal, they would inevitably have to be convinced that the information would be of value to them.

There was still some further work to be done in Australia to really underscore the value proposition behind the product, Dr Parnell said.

Pfizer is currently working with scientists at the University of New England's Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit (AGBU) to quantify the impact that the panel is likely to have on individual EBVs.

While Pfizer's early economic analyses using US cattle populations looked very positive, AGBU was now independently validating some of the underlying assumptions for Australian conditions — particularly the relationship between the 50K marker panel and the various traits already supported in Australian Breedplan, Dr Parnell said.

Essentially, the aim was to see how well the marker panel predicted differences in marbling, retail beef yield or feed intake (to use some examples) in Australian populations. That work was taking a little longer than anticipated, but provided the results were favourable, it should

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