

The Australian Dairy Conference 2019

Herbie Watson, Young Dairy Network Member, Sunshine Coast

The Australian Dairy Conference was held in Canberra during February 2019 and it was a very informative and progressive event. The opening presentation by Dr Brendan Nelson focused on the leadership of the industry and was an inspiring speech that had the international speakers looking for a citizenship. This set the theme of the conference.



Herbie Watson (far left) and other YDN members from around Australia

The second session was directed at activities behind the farm gate. This session focused on antibiotic resistance and the effect of blanket treatments, with a case study of a farmer from Leongatha, Victoria who adopted a new approach. This was followed by Nuffield Scholar, Dr Sarah Bolton, who spoke about bobby calves and their future management options.

The third session was about genomics and genetics, which featured a couple of international speakers (Professor Andrew Cromie and Brad Nosbush) discussing their experiences and perspectives of genomics and how it can boost genetic gain.

The main session that had every attendee on the edge of their seats was titled "Insight into Milk Processing". This session featured a panel of processor CEO's, Barry Irvin (Bega), Rene Dononcker (Fonterra), Greg McNamara (Norco) and Lino A. Saputo Jnr (Saputo Inc.). This was an interesting session that had the panellists answering questions from the audience via text messages. The takeaway message was that they were all interested in investing in the industry generally.

The final sessions were about the shifting diets of consumers and why they may prefer alternative milks over dairy milk. Dr Judith Bryans, President of the Ireland Dairy Foundation, discussed the impacts that veganism and animal liberationists have had on the Irish dairy industry and their responses to their protests. Dr Annaline Padayachee discussed why people choose alternative milks and the nutritional components of each. I was involved in a short session on technology which featured five different phone apps that were reviewed by young farmers from every state.

And the last and most emotional session was hosted by Virginia Haussegger, with a panel of three women who have all celebrated their 70th birthdays and are all still milking cows. They talked about the trials, tribulations and tears behind their stellar careers in the dairy industry.

All in all, the conference was, as promised, innovative, insightful and informative. If you have the time to go, I would say it is nearly compulsory to be able to progress in a changing industry.

Herbie's attendance at the Australian Dairy Conference was sponsored by Dairy Australia through the Young Dairy Network Australia project.



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