

SE **Business**

HD **Heifer exports record**

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**DAIRY** heifers worth almost \$200 **million** were exported from Australia last financial year, a rise of 30 per cent on a decade ago.

The year ending June 30 saw the highest volume and value of cattle exported since at least 2002-03, according to Australian Bureau of Statistics data.

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**China** continued to dominate, buying 85 per cent of the 92,629 head **sold**, paying an average of \$2155.

Exporters' advertisements quoted prices up to \$1600 for 120-320kg Holstein heifers, while older and heavier heifers attracted more.

Prices also varied depending on production and volume of cattle offered as the many exporters fought for supply.

The effect of prices offered by exporters has spilled into saleyards, with strong demand for young Holstein heifer calves as well as pregnancy tested in-calf Holstein cows and heifers.

Major exporters Landmark Global Exports declined to comment, while Elders International did not return calls to The Weekly Times.

In 2012-13 **China** picked up 59,235 head while only six years ago the total sent to **China** was 15,448.

During 2008-09 the average value of the 15,448 heifers was \$2290 a head. **Dairy** Australia analyst John Droppert said last year was a "catch-up" for **China** on its path to self-sufficiency after cow culls in the biggest Asian nation, some due to a mad cow disease outbreak.

He said high prices of **dairy** commodities — such as those last year — put more pressure on countries to become self-sufficient than if prices of **dairy** products are lower, like this current price cycle.

Australia's second-largest customer for **dairy** cattle last financial year was Pakistan, which bought 6425 head for \$12,739,293.

The Russian Federation bought 3595 for \$873,745.

Bangladesh entered the market, buying 59 head for \$83,000, while the smallest customer was the Philippines buying four head for \$12,540 — an average of \$3135 a head.

United Dairyfarmers of Victoria president Tyran Jones said farmers had **sold** heifers to supplement their cash flows and it was now up to the industry to demonstrate that they would make more money if they retained the animals for milking.

He said building the confidence in the industry to keep the heifers and grow the nation's "stagnant" **milk** production required a "multifactorial" approach. This included demonstrating how our farm systems can be tweaked to be more profitable, positive outcomes from free trade agreement negotiations, favourable exchange rates and, of course, favourable weather conditions.

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