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NEWS

Archibulls' udder brilliance	8
Program to bring Latin Americans to Australia	8
Farm economists 'missing in action'	9
Breeding objective to be reviewed	9
Food safety gives Australian dairy edge	11
NSW industry wants to be part of boom	13

ATTRACTING AND DEVELOPING PEOPLE

Teaching the next generation	20
Understanding employee leave entitlements	22
Building a dairy career	23
Making good dairy staff easier to find	24
ESKi launched at GippsDairy and DairyTas	24
Shining a light on dairy careers	26
Growing capability is a priority for DA	26
Connecting young leaders	27
Dairy industry scholars boost skills	27

PROMOTING & PROTECTING DAIRY

Man behind DA's market research	44
Clean Technologies Award	45
Cheeses from Spain talk	47
Bringing Legendairy to life	48
Dairy courting potential investors	48

INCREASING FARM PROFITABILITY

Aus dairy sustainability credentials recognised	109
Focus Farm program improves bottom line	110
Survey reflects tough year in Qld	111
DA launches body condition scoring app	112
Farmers embrace mastitis control tech	112
Genetics adds value to Australia's dairy herds	113
Gippsland co-ordinator connects farmers with info	114

ON FARM

Solid succession plan helps farm grow	28
Lucky young farmer lives out dream on land	30
Nuffield scholar to probe future productivity gain	34
New pasture mix helps cut nitrogen use	38
Why take a risk buying seed?	40
Applying nitrogen to pastures profitably	56



OUR COVER

Bettina McLeod and her adviser have worked to breed one of Australia's top Holstein herds. See story p108.

INTERNATIONAL DAIRY WEEK PREVIEW

IDW promises to be bigger, better	61
2014 program of events	62
IDW site map	62
Judges for 2014 shows	64
Getting young people involved in showing	68
Range of free seminars	70
Progeny and farm tours	74
Field days an event highlight	78
Dairy organisations to showcase information	78
Technology saves time and money	80

IMPROVING HERD HEALTH

Teatseal: a mastitis game changer	82
From calving to joining: cleaning up 'dirty' cows	83
Preventing retained foetal membranes	85
Irish tackle dairy fertility problem	87
Aus tackles breeding conundrum	88
Negative energy balance causes fertility decline	90
UK lessons valuable in mastitis war	90
Minimising mastitis matters most	91

DAIRY TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION

Automation update	94
App for registering Holsteins anywhere	95
Robots convert run-off block to profitable dairy	96
Winning combination: a passion for cows and data	98
Young farmers look to future	100
System allows phone access of herd records	101

COLUMNS

At my desk	5
Milk Matters	6
Dairy Australia Roundup	15
NHIA News Roundup	18
Update from the Gardiner Foundation	32
Australian dairy market	54
International dairy market	55
What's On	104
Think Again — the Ryan Report	106
Snippets and Titbits	107
ADHIS	108

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Keeping up with technology

THE rapid pace of technological change is a challenge for all industries — and dairyfarming is no exception.

The challenge is not in developing technologies that can be used as a bewildering array of new equipment seems to be on offer every year, but lies in working out which technologies to invest in, when to invest in them and when to change to something new.

This becomes even more complex in a business such as dairyfarming that's fundamentally based on biological processes. These are subject to the variables of nature, such as the weather, and can mean that technology does not work in the way it was intended.

It is also more complex for an industry such as Australia's that operates without market support and in which farmers need to keep costs under control to be competitive on the world export market.

It means farmers have to take a hard look at any technology and work out what it can offer their business and whether they can get a return on an investment in that technology.

Downloading a low cost app to the smartphone to see if it will be a useful tool for the farm is not a difficult decision to make.

If it doesn't work, you can quickly revert to the old system or find something better without having any impact of the farm business other than perhaps a few wasted hours trying to work out how to use it.

But spending hundreds of thousands on something for the dairy or a new feeding system can have a major impact, particularly in a subsequent tight year if it puts pressure on the cashflow.

It can also have an impact if it causes a change in the farming system that pushes the business into a higher risk position or reduces profitability.

We feature stories about farmers investing in technology in the magazine because it is interesting to see what is new on farms. Sometimes we get feedback that we are pushing farmers to get bigger and to adopt these high-tech systems.

That's certainly not our intention.

Any investment decision on an individual farm needs to be made with the whole business and whole farm system in mind. It needs to take into account the skills, capabilities and interests of the farmers and farm staff involved.

Technology itself will never be the an-

swer to solving the problems of a failing business.

If a farm is not profitable or is having issues managing staff with its current set up, then a new piece of equipment, particularly one that people are going to need to time to learn how to use properly, is only going to make those problems worse.

On my travels around Australia, I have often observed that those farmers who have a really clear understanding of their farm system, what drives it and what makes it successful in terms of business profitability, physical sustainability and people management make good choices around technology.

They seem to have a knack for finding things that enhance their systems — sometimes at low cost — and they seem to take the technology beyond what its developers envisaged.

This issue we feature several stories about what's new in the IT and technology areas.

The development of dairy-specific apps for smartphones is bounding ahead and offers farmers a range of tools they can have in their pocket. We feature stories about the new body condition scoring app, the mastitis app released late year and an app to register Holstein calves.

Perhaps the challenge for farmers and staff is going to be making sure they aren't spending all their time head down looking at a screen instead of around them while working on the farm.

I know as a parent it seems at times almost impossible to get teenagers to look up from their screens — so I hope that doesn't become an issue on farm as well.



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The Australian Dairyfarmer

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A year of challenges and triumphs

By NOEL CAMPBELL

WITH the new year starting, it is an appropriate time to reflect on the highs and lows of the year that has passed and to look to the future and the opportunities it presents.

The past year has seen many challenges and triumphs for our industry. The year began with floods in Queensland and ended with drought spreading across northern Australia. Coupled with the ongoing impact of \$1 per litre milk and the high Australian dollar, many farmers were facing the most challenging circumstances they had ever experienced.

Australian Dairy Farmers' (ADF) lobbying to the former Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Sid Sidebottom, was instrumental in securing the Farm Finance Package, announced in April to assist farmers in desperate need of help.

While the roll-out of the package has taken some time to get underway, it has still provided much needed relief to many farmers, and ADF will continue lobbying to ensure all farmers in need of assistance get the help they need.

Dairyfarmers have faced many lows this year but we've also had some highs.

A change in government brought a renewed focus on agriculture and several policies that should have a positive impact on

the dairy industry. The finalisation of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Korea and Australia following five years of negotiation will unlock new opportunities in a key Asian market, while the fervent interest in one of Australia's oldest dairy processors in Warrnambool Cheese and Butter indicates that there is much confidence in our industry's capacity to grow.

As we enter a new year in 2014 it is heartening to feel that the foundations exist for a boost in farmer confidence and — we all hope — in returns to dairyfarmers in the year ahead.

Election 2013

The 2013 Federal Election campaign was unprecedented in that it was the first time an election to be held in September was called in January, and that there were essentially two changes in government, from Gillard to Rudd and then to the Abbott Government — all in the space of three months.

In early 2013 ADF identified three priority areas for Federal Government action:

- **Markets and trade:** to maximise the potential for secure market access and maximise value chain returns along the whole supply chain through FTAs and a mandatory Code of Conduct.
- **People and workforce:** to attract, develop and retain a highly skilled workforce for the dairy industry.
- **Sustainability:** to establish the dairy industry as part of the solution for a healthy Australian population, with improved natural resource management in productive farming systems, while ensuring the industry maintains the right to access key natural resources that are integral to a successful industry.

ADF developed policies in support of these priority areas following extensive consultation with farmers, dairy food manufacturers and their representative groups, and provided every member of the Parliament with a copy of the *ADF Policy Priorities for Federal Election 2013*.

I am proud to say that several of our policies were adopted by the two major parties in the lead up to the election, and we are working with the Abbott Government to

influence policies important to the dairy industry.

Key wins for dairy in particular are the 1500 gegalitre cap on water buybacks in the Murray-Darling Basin, \$20 million towards biosecurity, a re-commitment to the Roads to Recovery infrastructure program, and \$2 million towards the inclusion of agriculture in the national curriculum. There have also been significant gains in FTA negotiations, which was one of our highest priorities.

We have already met with several key ministers in the new government and their senior advisers including the Ministers for Agriculture and Trade and Investment, and look forward to continuing our engagement with the new Government into 2014.

Trade & the Korea-Australia FTA

Trade was, and remains, a key focus for ADF. ADF began 2013 with a clearly stated objective for the finalisation of free trade agreements with key markets in Asia including China, Japan and Korea, and lobbied the government hard throughout the year to make significant progress on these negotiations.

The Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) commissioned a Dairy Australia report, *Trade and the Australian Dairy Industry*, launched in August, which emphasised the growth opportunities for the dairy industry if we are able to unlock trade barriers in with key trading partners.

We also heard the insights of former diplomat and leading free trade commentator Alan Oxley at the annual ADIC Industry Leaders Breakfast in November, who delivered a keynote address on the breakfast theme, *Catching the dairy wave: Free trade opportunities in Asia*.

Mr Oxley spoke of the assumption that Australia's proximity to Asia gave us an advantage over trade rivals, pointing out that the shipping costs from Melbourne to Shanghai were actually higher than those between Shanghai and Los Angeles, while the distance was only marginally shorter,



Alan Oxley addressing the ADIC breakfast cautioned against seeing free trade agreements themselves as the panacea to cure all that ails the dairy industry.

and warning that we mustn't be complacent about securing trade advantages over our competitors.

Mr Oxley's address struck a chord with many in the room, particularly when he cautioned against seeing FTAs themselves as the panacea to cure all that ails the dairy industry. FTAs are merely a tool that can help us improve our competitiveness in new markets — the rest is up to us. (See more on Mr Oxley's address on page 8).

One of ADF's key targets for the new government was realised in early December with the finalisation of the Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement following five years of negotiation.

Korea is a significant dairy market for Australia and currently ranks 10th by value with \$88 million worth of exports in 2012/13.

The agreement provides some benefits for the dairy industry with the removal of tariffs on specified volumes of cheese, infant formula and butter under Country Specific Quotas (CSQ) from day one of the agreement, and reduced tariffs on a majority of dairy lines throughout specified time frames. However, the implementation periods for 'out of quota' lines still remain significantly longer than the United States and European Union.

The commercial reality of this is that Australian dairy liberalisation will be five to seven years behind key trade rivals, the US and EU. It is vital that the FTA is implemented as soon as possible to kick-start the liberalisation process to ensure we do not fall further behind our competitors.

While not delivering everything that the dairy industry wanted, the Korea-Australia FTA is an important step in the right direction towards greater trade liberalisation with Asia. ADF particularly appreciates the Federal Government's engagement with the dairy industry during the negotiation process, and looks forward

to their contribution in helping secure a better deal for dairy in negotiations for the China and Japan FTAs, which are vital to the future of our industry.

Janet Moxey honoured

We are fortunate in the dairy industry to have many men and women of outstanding talent and ability that demonstrate leadership, dedication, commitment and provide outstanding service to the benefit of our industry.

The Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) Outstanding Service Award recognises these qualities and each year ADF and the Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF) nominate individuals who have gone above and beyond for the dairy industry.

At its annual Industry Leader's Breakfast in Melbourne, held at Flemington Racecourse in November, the ADIC honoured an industry pioneer in NSW dairy farming and director of Moxey Farms, Janet Moxey.

Gooloogong, NSW, dairy farmer and former vice-president of the NSW Farmers Association Mrs Moxey was the recipient of the ADIC Outstanding Service Award for her contributions to the dairy industry.

Mrs Moxey and her late husband, Paul, expanded the family business with the development of the The Angle dairy at Gooloogong near Forbes in central NSW. Incorporating some 4000 head of cattle and a large number of staff, The Angle is one of the biggest and most complex dairying operations in Australia.

After entering agri-politics in 2002, Mrs Moxey served on the NSW Farmers' Association Dairy Committee, NSW Dairy Industry Conference, NSW Bovine Johne's Disease (BJD) Summit Executive Committee, and was the first female vice-president of the NSW Farmers' Association.

During this time, Mrs Moxey earned a reputation for being a strong and com-



Noel Campbell presents the ADIC Outstanding Service Award to Janet Moxey.


mitted advocate for the dairy industry and women in agriculture.

Her career in the dairy industry is a shining example of the immense contribution that women make to Australian agriculture and dairy in particular, and I congratulate her on her many achievements.

ADF AGM

ADF also held its annual general meeting in Melbourne in late November, which saw Dr Anne Astin and myself re-elected as ADF business directors unopposed for another three years. I am humbled to have the support of ADF members to continue representing you and advocating on your behalf.

ADF worked tirelessly last year to lobby on behalf of our industry, and we've achieved many of our goals, but there is still much to be done to improve the profitability and competitiveness of our industry, domestically and abroad.

I wish you all a safe and prosperous New Year, and look forward to advocating for you, and on behalf of our fantastic industry, throughout 2014. 

Voluntary Code of Conduct released

FOLLOWING 14-months of negotiations, Coles, Woolworths and the Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) released its draft voluntary Code of Conduct in mid-November.

The draft voluntary Code is belated recognition by the major supermarkets of a fundamental imbalance in the supply chain — something that ADF has been highlighting for more than three years.

ADF has consistently advocated for a mandatory Supermarket Code of Conduct during the last two-and-a-half years, and while the draft agreement falls short of that, it serves to highlight the difficulties many farmers

are experiencing due to the conduct of the retailers.

We have worked closely with the Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO) in developing a proposed mandatory Supermarket Code of Conduct. Our proposed mandatory Code includes the creation of a Supermarket Ombudsman who would have the power to impose significant financial penalties against transgressors.

We know the major retailers have been taking advantage of their market share to squeeze the profit margins of farmers and help inflate their bottom lines. In dairy's case, \$1 per litre milk as well as the rise of private label lines has had a devastating impact on

the viability of many farmers across the industry.

The new draft Code of Conduct includes restrictions on the major retailer's ability to change agreements with suppliers and sets out guidelines for the treatment of branded and home-branded products; however, it does little to ensure a fairer farm-gate price.

We take solace that our campaign for a mandatory code has helped to force the major retailers to take action, and we will be closely monitoring adherence to the new Code when implemented, and continue advocating on behalf of farmers and others involved across the supply chain for the imposition of a mandatory Code of Conduct.



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NEWS IN BRIEF

Archibulls' udder brilliance

FORGET the Archibalds, the Archibulls is where it's at. Some 37 schools from across New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory entered last year's Archibull Prize — an Art4Agriculture competition designed to engage primary and secondary students in sharing agriculture's story with the help of a blog, video and a life-sized fibreglass cow.

For Nowra's Shoalhaven High School, the result was, well ... udderly brilliant.

The school claimed grand champion Archibull for its entry which told the story of the dairy industry — from milk production and natural resource management right down to the workings of the ruminant digestive system.

Science teacher Deb Hargraves said participating in the competition had given students a great insight into the dairy industry. "Even though we're in a rural area, not a single student involved in the project came off a farm," she said.

"But they really get the big picture now about farming and what farmers do and how they manage their natural



Shoalhaven High students Marni Killick, Rochelle Taylor, Deborah Nelson and Marjorie Evans with their winning entry.

resources — right down to the need for farmers to get a fair price for their milk."

Ms Hargraves said while the Archibull team was officially made up of about 23 students from Years 8, 10 and 11, it had sparked input and conversations about agriculture across a much greater number of the school's 688 kids.

It had also allowed the school to build new connections with the local dairy industry that they hoped would be ongoing and lead to scope for work experience and possible employment opportunities beyond school.

—SALLY WHITE

Program to bring Latin Americans to work on Aus farms

A NEW not-for-profit association plans to bring young Latin Americans into the Australian dairy industry to work on farms for up to six months. The program is an initiative of SED Advisory — a regionally based advisory firm, and the Lawson family at Yea, Vic, who are heavily involved in the beef industry. It follows a visit to Chile, sponsored by the Chilean Government, during 2012.

In July 2013 the initiative received funding support from the Council of Australian Latin American Relations and in kind support from Dairy Australia and Marcus Oldham College.

Don Lawson said about 25% of the New Zealand dairy herd was currently milked by Latin Americans.

The new PIIAA program had been established to initially attract a small group of young Latin Americans into the Australian dairy industry, he said. The program aimed to bring young people from Chile and Uruguay to gain work and experience on dairy farms.

The program would also help solve current labour shortages and, in the longer term, develop stronger relations and trade with the region,



Don Lawson: program aims to develop stronger relations and trade between Australia and Latin America.

particularly in livestock genetics, Mr Laweson said.

Participants will live and work for on one property for up to six months and then moving to a second for the next six months before returning to their home country.

PIIAA plans to establish scholarships for Australian youth to undertake the program in South America and for participants to undertake courses such as the Marcus Oldham College Rural Leadership Program.

For further information or to register an interest in employing these hands-on young people, contact Don Lawson at email <dlawson@piiaa.org.au>.

Farm economists 'missing in action'

Dear editors,

Xcheque dairy analyst Jon Hauser is quoted by *Stock & Land* as saying, at a United Dairyfarmers of Victoria (UDV) meeting in Warrnambool: "Half of the milk is generating a return on capital that is better than 5% (averaging the years). The challenge is to get ... people that aren't generating 5% on capital, to improve their performance."

Farmers deserve better farm economics information. There is excellent material produced on day-to-day dairy-farming matters, but the professional farm economists are largely "missing in action" when it comes to talking about the financial basics and the factors that tend to result in financial success.

The latter is difficult; every farm is different and there will always be some exceptions that can be used to question what might be an underlying trend. Analysts like certainty. Certainty is safe. (Certainty would give us a 'deterministic' system, we all know that this just isn't going to happen.)

There are professionals in the industry who know quite well what some of the common financial (planning) errors are on farms, but these are rarely aired in what could be a positive, constructive and educational way.

As an indication, analysis of the published data for one region of the 2011-12 Dairy Farm Monitor Project, Victoria, showed a good number of farms that had done commendably well in terms of 'margin' milk (some more than 5000 litres/cow), but some of these had non-supplement costs/kilogram of milk solids that were \$1, \$2 and even \$3 higher than the good financial performers.

No milk price increase can be expected to cover this sort of range.

The 2012-13 data showed the same relationships (with far fewer 'good' ROA of course). Discussion in general terms of this type of issue has the potential to benefit everybody. The Monitor Project does an excellent and essential job in collecting, tabulating and averaging data, but once you wonder why some have a high Earnings Before Interest and Tax (EBIT) or Return on Assets (ROA), quite an effort is required and not everyone has the time or analytical background to do so.

The summary of the annual data comments on seasonal conditions, milk prices up or down, ROA up or down, etc. We then feel good or bad, depending on the year, but haven't collectively learnt much. The top financial indicator used is Return on Assets (ROA).

This requires good income, low costs and not too many idle tractors in the shed — three pieces of the jigsaw that could do with more analysis and discussion.

Home-grown dry matter (DM)/hectares consumption, universally recognised as important, is highlighted but 'margin' milk, an excellent proxy for the effectiveness of the overall cow feeding approach is ignored.

Of course, milk price differences and 'other income' matter but, for almost all farms, the previously mentioned markers are where the rubber hits the road if you want a good ROA — they help turn raw data from an almost academic exercise into potentially useful information.

My general point, however, is to encourage the dairy analysts and economists to provide more help by writing about these harder and sometimes confronting issues. (I am aware that last season a lot of industry analytical resource was put in to help people in a very difficult environment, but maybe some of that would have been avoided had a less anodyne approach been taken in earlier years.)

Ian Webb
Surrey Hills, Vic.

Breeding objective to be reviewed

THE national breeding objective for the Australian dairy industry is under review. Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme (ADHIS) general manager Daniel Abernethy told an industry forum late last year that the broad review would look beyond the Australian Profit Ranking Australian Breeding Value (APR ABV).

It would ask the question *What cows best meet the needs of Australian dairyfarmers into the future.*

The current objective is to maximise profit and takes into account production, survival, fertility, mastitis resistance, temperament, milking speed and liveweight. The index has evolved since 2000 when it comprised just production traits.

Mr Abernethy said the national objective was different from individual farm's breeding objectives. But the national objective "got rid of the rubbish from the bull lists" and then al-

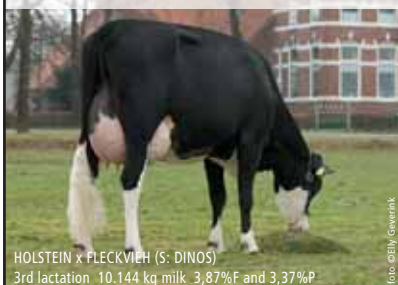
lowed farmers to select animals from those lists to meet their individual objectives.

This review would look at whether the breeding objective needs to be broadened from maximising profit. For example, some other countries had incorporated sustainability into their breeding objective.

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Food safety gives Australian dairy edge

By CARLENE DOWIE

DAIRY food safety could provide Australia with a competitive advantage to increase trade into Asia, particularly China, international trade expert Alan Oxley told a dairy industry leaders' breakfast in November. Trade agreements were important but would initially deliver only small gains, managing director of ITS Global Alan Oxley said.

Australia had to stop thinking it was close to Asia and that its location gave it some advantage over other countries, Mr Oxley told the Australian Dairy Industry Council event. "Succeeding in Asia is not going to be because we are supposedly close — we are not," he said. "It is really going to depend on being competitive and getting into markets."

It was more expensive to send freight from Melbourne to Shanghai than it was to send it from Los Angeles (US) to Shanghai or Rotterdam (The Netherlands) to Shanghai, he said.

"While it is true that free trade agreements (FTA) do produce a result for industry, the reality is that agricultural access is slow," he said. "If you get some access it is never going to be much, you get a foot in the door."

But Mr Oxley said he was struck on a recent visit to China by the growing concern among middle-class consumers about healthy, safe food. Fonterra had a problem on its hand in this regard with two major food safety scares.

But food safety was a huge advantage for the Australian industry and would be a driving source for increased access.

The Australian dairy industry was also

internationally competitive "The fundamentals are very sound," he said.

So it was well-placed to take advantage of the massive growth in demand in Asia, particularly in China with a growing middle-class who were switching to protein-intensive diets.

Mr Oxley said FTAs were now as much about investment as opening markets.

It was just as important that a country could invest in a market offshore to produce goods as it was that it could produce goods at home and ship them to the another country.

FTAs were now virtually the only opportunity to open up markets, with World Trade Organisation unlikely to produce another overarching agreement.

He said the Australia-China FTA had not progressed for 10 years because there had been no basis for a deal. "The Chinese always deal," he said.

But the Chinese had been shocked when a bid by one of their state-owned enterprises (SOE) Chinalco to buy Rio Tinto three years ago was held up in the foreign investment review process. "Then the Chinese realised they had something to get from Australia in an FTA," he said.

So the broad deal was agriculture versus investment.

The Chinese want what New Zealand and the US already had — a billion dollar threshold for investment. But it would be a tough negotiation and would take a long time.

Mr Oxley said the deal for a Japanese-Australia FTA was agriculture versus autos. "I think we should offer cuts in car tariffs,"

he said. "You should get a movement in Geelong to tell people there are more people in Geelong with an interest in dairy than in Ford. I don't think most Victorians realise how important the dairy industry is to Victoria but, of course, as you know it is our most successful agricultural export sector."

Mr Oxley said the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement — between 12-to-13 Pacific nations headed by US — would be one of world's biggest trade agreements if successful.

The Japanese were also involved and regarded it as a substitute for an FTA with the US. This provided Australia with some leverage in that it could allow agriculture to be put back on the negotiating table.

Mr Oxley said negotiating with governments was hard work. "It is bruising; you have to be brutal, there's no point in being nice," he said.

Earlier ADIC chair Noel Campbell told the breakfast that since NZ had negotiated an FTA with China in 2008, its dairy exports there had increased six fold.

At the same time Australia had experienced only modest growth. "This clearly represents a missed opportunity for our industry and Australia as a whole," he said.

"Previously we could rely on higher margin domestic markets to buffer export market return shocks, but unfortunately this is no longer the case."

Mr Campbell said at a time when the domestic industry faced hurdles, it was essential that barriers to free trade were removed to provide a new and enhanced opportunities for the Australian industry. **D**

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NSW industry wants to be part of export boom

By ANDREW MARSHALL

THE supermarket-squeezed dairy industry in New South Wales and Queensland should be looking at building its own low-cost regional milk powder processing plants to soak up production surpluses and keep retailers' discounting tactics in check. With relatively modest investment input from existing dairy processors or new investors, Dairy Connect NSW said greenfield powder sites could be built for about \$25 million at strategic locations.

The drying plants would provide local peak season options for milk that would otherwise be trucked to Victoria at a big cost to northern farmers.

Dairy Connect chief executive Mike Logan said it was inexplicable that producers were copping farmgate discounts of 20 cents a litre for their milk when world production con-

sistently failed to meet demand, particularly in nearby Asia. A "lack of national strategy" also effectively gave Australia's dairy export competitors a helping hand or promoted overseas ownership of processing ventures at the expense of local interests.

"Some analysts believe demand in Asia will be such that dairy products could be described as Australia's new iron ore," Mr Logan said, referring to an industry update compiled by Dairy Connect.

He said Chinese whole milk powder imports were increasing by 20% annually but by 2050 China's overall dairy consumption was projected to have risen by 250% — about 1.5 times more than any other food category.

Dairy was the "absolute bell ringing standout", he said. "It explains why there's so much interest in little companies like Warrnambool Cheese and Butter which

only made a \$7.5 million profit last year and is now worth \$500 million," he said.

Mr Logan said he believed several small scale powder plants servicing the NSW Central West, Illawarra, the Hunter Valley-Mid North Coast and possibly southern Queensland could cash in on a wider global dairy demand and provide a new source of farmgate price competition for the local market.

He accepted the controversial \$1 a litre supermarket label milk might feature in the industry for some time, but he said farmers should be given greater choice of markets including selling to the export market.

Snap-freezing technology developed in the US also offered exciting opportunities to ship pre-packed fresh milk to China at 18 degrees Celsius, giving it a 14-day shelf-life once it thawed. **D**

Freight penalties hurt returns

IN THEORY the stars are aligning and dairyfarmers across NSW should be milking the good times thanks to soaring world prices and demand, but Shane Gee says many will be lucky to break even again this year.

New freight distance penalties imposed by national processor Lion will cost his family partnership at Jerrys Plains in the Hunter Valley about \$10,000 a month. His family's 440-cow enterprise on Dalara is losing almost all the price increase being paid this season to a three cents a litre transport levy because of the farm's distance from the nearest Lion processing plant in Sydney.

Farmers in Central West NSW were copping freight penalties of up to 4.5 cents a litre, said Mr Gee, a co-chairman of Dairy Connect NSW, who farms with his parents Colin and Rita and brother Paul and his wife, Di.

Mr Gee said Lion had closed processing plants (including Hexham, less than 90 minutes away) to cut its production costs, but now expected farmers to absorb its bigger milk transport costs, too.

After spending about \$1 million to build a new 50-cow rotary dairy seven years ago, the Gees were keen to expand their dairy enterprise and make a firm commitment to the industry. But



Shane Gee says a local powder plant could make all the difference to his NSW dairy farm business.

despite the booming global market, the lean domestic market options for milk producers in NSW were making dairying a tough career.

"If there was a local powder or UHT processing plant giving us access to that export market, it could make all the difference," Mr Gee said.



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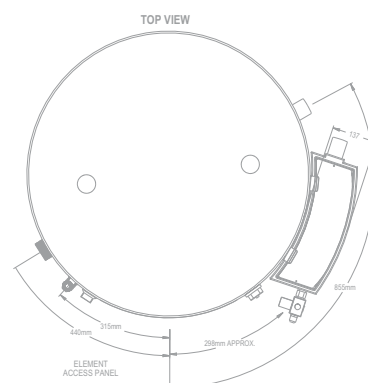
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Dairy Australia Round Up



More than 200 people attended the Dairy Australia AGM in late November.

All constitutional changes passed at DA AGM

DAIRY Australia members voted at its annual general meeting (AGM) in November to accept all 11 changes to the organisation's constitution, proposed by the Constitutional Review Panel.

The most significant changes include increasing the number of directors with dairy farming experience from three to four, and limiting director tenure to a maximum of nine years (unless the AGM passes a special resolution). Outgoing chair Max Roberts said he was delighted the amendments to the constitution had been passed.

"Together with reforms introduced at last year's AGM, the changes voted on put farmers firmly in control of Dairy Australia, something I am convinced will make it work even more effectively for the benefit of the nation's dairy community," Mr Roberts said.

Also voted and passed at the AGM were:

- the election of a new director, dairy farmer Jeff Odgers from Shepparton, Victoria, and re-election to the board of Bruce Donnison and Dr Alan Grant; and
- financial statements and reports for 2012-13 and directors remuneration for the coming year.

Geoff Akers new chair

Geoff Akers, a dairy farmer from Tallyga-roopna in northern Victoria with extensive experience in dairy research, development

and extension, has been appointed chair of Dairy Australia. Mr Akers was appointed to the Dairy Australia board in 2005 and has worked for Victoria's then Department of Agriculture (Target 10 and Operation Mid Lactation) and at the Kyabram Research Institute. He spent four of six years on the Murray Dairy Board as chair and two years on the National Dairy Alliance Board.

Mr Akers has also served as a director of Australian Dairy Farmers board, a central councillor of the United Dairy Farmers of Victoria and is a former chair of the Victorian Farmers Federation Water Council. He is also a former director of the Northern Victorian Irrigation Renewal Project.

"I thank the board for their support of my appointment and will strive to bring my broad experience in business, research and dairy farming to the fore at Dairy Australia," Mr Akers said.

"I would also like to thank Max Roberts for his strong leadership as chair during the past seven years and wish him well in his future endeavours."

\$40 million boost

A research and development partnership between the Victorian Government and Dairy Australia announced in early December is set to bolster the strength of the state's dairy industry.

Minister for Agriculture and Food Security Peter Walsh said the agreement with

Dairy Australia would fund a range of research and development projects designed to accelerate productivity growth in the state's dairy sector.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) and Dairy Australia will each contribute \$4 million a year during the next five years for targeted research to increase the industry's productivity and make it more internationally competitive.

Dairy Australia chair Geoff Akers said the \$20 million contributed by Dairy Australia would seek to improve the profitability and resilience of Australian dairy farmers and ensure Australia's international competitiveness based on optimised pasture management.

"This will include a focus on maximising home-grown feed coupled with the efficient use of purchased feed inputs," Mr Akers said.

Sustainability tick from Unilever

Unilever, one of the largest companies in the world and the biggest manufacturer of ice-cream, has given Australian dairy production accreditation as meeting its exacting Sustainable Agriculture Code (SAC). As a result, all Australian-produced milk is now deemed by Unilever to contribute to the company's sustainable sourcing goal.

"Dairy Australia is absolutely delighted that ours is the first dairy industry in the world to be recognised as meeting Unilever's

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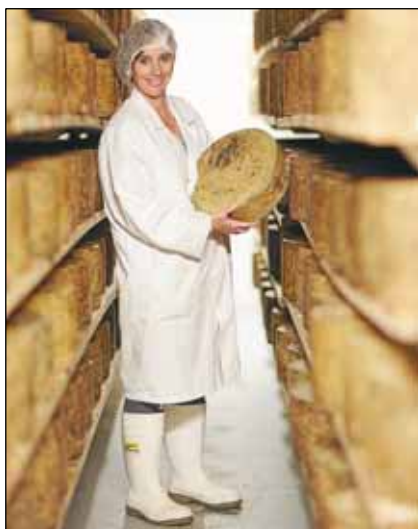
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Tasmanian dairy farmer-producer Pyengana Dairy was one of the 19 winners at the 2014 Australian Grand Dairy Awards, receiving Champion Cheddar Style Cheese for its Pyengana Cheddar.



Geoff Akers, the newly elected chair of Dairy Australia, at home of the farm in northern Victoria.

ple of the pioneering leadership needed to achieve its goal.

"We have worked hard with Dairy Australia during the course of the past year to benchmark the Australian dairy industry's milk production standards against our exacting SAC standards," Unilever procurement vice-president of sustainability and ingredients Dirk Jan deWith said.

The company's benchmarking revealed Australia's dairy industry is 100% compliant with the mandatory requirements of the Sustainable Agriculture Code. Three specific gaps, in soils, biodiversity and waste were identified, and to remedy this Dairy Australia, together with Murray Goulburn, Fonterra and several other dairy companies, have agreed to implement a project involving nearly 100 farms across the country's eight dairy regions.

"The intent is to show continuous improvement in the gap areas towards improving sustainable dairyfarming," Mr Halliday said.

Australian Grand Dairy Awards

Nineteen of Australia's best cheese and dairy products were awarded Champion status at Dairy Australia's prestigious 2014

Australian Grand Dairy Awards in November last year.


The accolade of Grand Champion Dairy Product went to Queensland-based Gourmet Ice Cream Products for its White Chocolate, Salted Caramel and Macadamia Ice Cream, while Tasmania's Heidi Farm, which uses milk sourced from neighbouring farms, received Grand Champion Cheese for its Tilsit.

Both products received the highest overall judging scores in the fiercely contested national competition, which featured a record pool of more than 430 entries.

The awards have recognised and rewarded excellence, quality and innovation in Australian dairy produce for the past 15 years, paying tribute to the highly skilled craftsmen and women who make these products.

Entries must have previously been awarded gold at state competitions during the year. A panel of 22 expert judges tasted and tested the products for flavour, aroma, body, texture, colour and appearance.

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Herd-test arena is changing

By CAROL MILLAR

THE past year has seen arguably more change within the Australian herd recording environment than any other. There have been a number of exciting developments that should see the herd test sector grow from strength to strength.

Australia has traditionally had many service providers to the herd test sector. It is true to say that in almost every state farmers have generally had a choice in the provision of their herd-testing service. While this choice might have been limited in some geographical regions, it remained true that there was genuine competition within the sector for farmers' herd test business.

For many years, this competition has generally resulted in service providers competing with each other primarily on the basis of cost, rather than any substantial differentiation of service offering. This developed a mindset during time, both within the service provider sector and the farmers, of value being equated with cost.

As a result, competition reduced margins leading to reduced resources being available for re-investment in the development of new equipment, systems and processes for the sector.

Ultimately this led to a sector which is a low cost to farmers but paradoxically offered limited value since there were virtually no internal resources for research, development or innovation.

The competition between herd-test service providers has additionally resulted in a system where there has been little industry co-operation in areas such as laboratory services, data processing or transport where cost efficiencies might reasonably

'One of the highlights of the past year has been the Herd '13 Conference in Bendigo.'

have been achieved. Ironically, such intense competition therefore helped to keep costs higher for service providers and further prevented the investment of resources in herd test research and development.

Rationalisation

Change has come recently to Victoria in particular with a substantial rationalisation of the sector in the past 12 months. This rationalisation should yield economies of scale and synergies to newly enlarged service providers such as National Herd Development and Hico — businesses for which herd test is core business.

Additionally Yarram has benefited from an amalgamation of the herd test and artificial breeding businesses into one organisation that has already seen the benefits of new technology in the form of electronic milk meters.

One of the highlights of the past year has been the Herd '13 Conference in Bendigo. The conference was fortunate to have had Neil Petreny from CanWest DHI as one of the featured speakers who provided a fascinating insight into the differences between the Canadian and Australian systems.

It was clear from his presentation that the Canadians have realised great benefits from

rationalisation within their herd test sector and there is cause for optimism that Australia can follow its example.

Another of Mr Petreny's presentations dealt with the development of new services within herd testing.

Pregnancy testing

One of the services he highlighted was pregnancy testing from the milk sample collected during herd test. As a result, at least three service providers in Victoria and Western Australia have now begun to offer this service to their customers. It is convenient, reliable and cost-effective.

This strategy of pregnancy testing from milk samples is a perfect example of adding value to the process of herd testing whereby farmers are offered the maximum return of information from the extra effort that herd-testing requires. It is an exciting addition to the suite of services offered by herd test service providers.

Centralised Data System (CDS) has been talked about the industry for a long time. There is some real progress on this issue thanks to the goodwill and patience of many different organisations including Dairy Australia, and the various herd test organisations. As a first step the herd test centres using the MISTRO software platform will be amalgamated onto one database located in the Cloud.

It is slow and painstaking work but the sector is confident that the results in the long-run will be of significant benefit to the entire dairy industry.

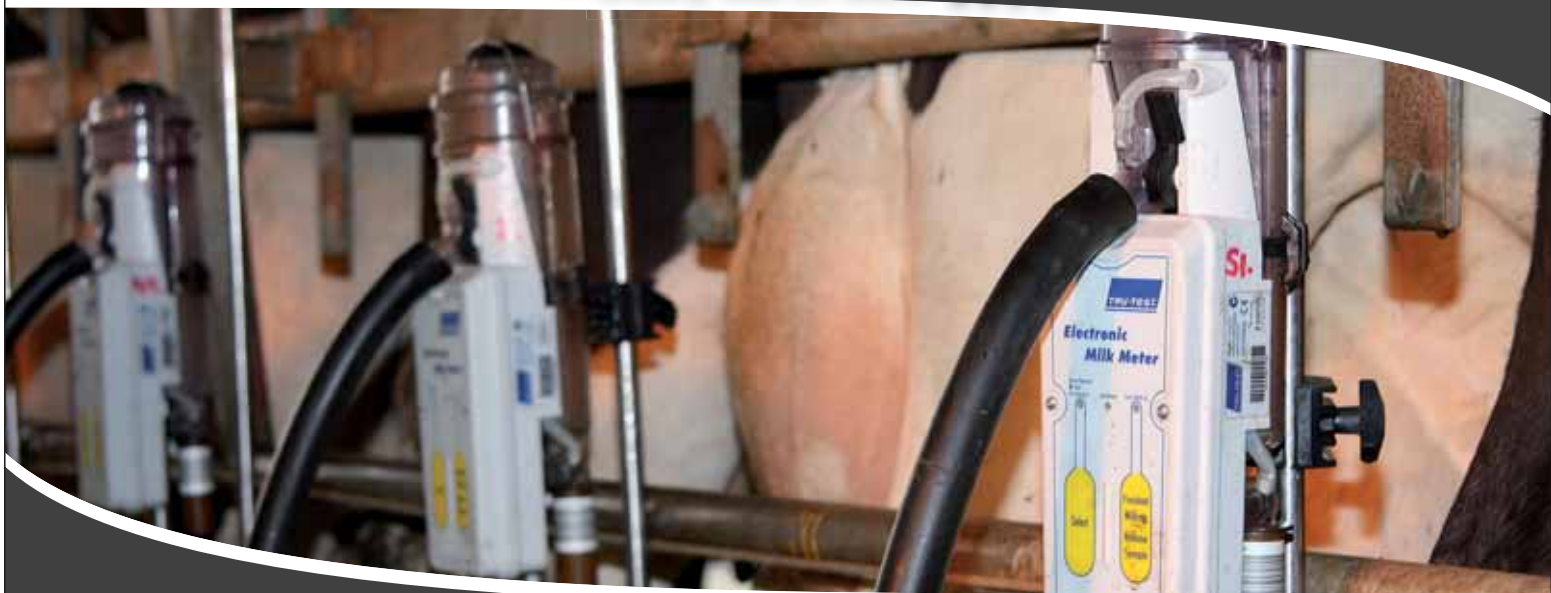
These are certainly new and exciting times for herd test — contact local service providers learn more about how herd testing can benefit the farm.



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Ian and MaryAnn Hortle's Moriarty, Tasmania, farm has been in the family since the 1860s.



Farmhand Kimberly Jones has been learning from her employers' wealth of experience.

Teaching the next generation

IT'S BEEN nearly two years since Kimberly Jones replied to an advertisement for a part-time dairyfarm worker job on Ian and MaryAnn Hortle's farm in Moriarty, 15 minutes east of her home in Devonport, Tasmania.

Then aged 19, the granddaughter of dairyfarmers had limited knowledge of dairyfarming. But her interest had been simmering since Year 10 and she made an immediate impression on the Hortles.

"We could tell by the letter she wrote and her interview that she was keen to have a go," Mr Hortle said.

"She had a good attitude. It was obvious the instinct was there."

Their own two adult children have also been part of the business. Daughter Alana was working on the property at the time Ms Jones applied. Son James, with his wife Alison, manages cropping, dry cattle and yearlings on their 180-hectare property nearby.

The Hortles completed a family succession planning course two years ago and began to implement it. But with James and Alana starting their own families and farm management responsibilities limiting Mr Hortle's time in the dairy, plans changed quickly.

"What I realised with succession planning was once you've done it you can't think 'that's the end of it'," said Mrs Hortle, who manages the farm's finances and works with DairyTas.

"In our case, things have changed so much we've had to revisit it from a different angle."

That angle involved bringing in Ms Jones, who is now full-time. During the past 30 years, the family has employed ex-

tra labour on the 92-hectare property, helping Mr Hortle to move from milking 150 animals on his own to the current herd of 220 registered Holsteins.

"Admittedly it wasn't easy to start with," Mr Hortle said.

"But having good labour who are actually interested in doing what they do, with the handling of stock and managing the cows and looking after their welfare — Kimberly's getting quite good at that."

Ms Jones has quickly latched onto Mr Hortle's passion for breeding.

"Longevity's an important trait for us," he said. "It means the cow will be around for a good few years."

"We always use artificial insemination (AI) and look for improvement when we choose a bull. We get the cows type-assessed by a specialist, and that's what keeps me going."

"When a cow's due to calf, then you think 'that's from a good bull' and you're down there pretty quick to see what it is."

Ms Jones said: "I really love watching our cows get classified because it's not just about them being milk makers. You don't just move on when she doesn't work anymore."

"A lot of people say to me, 'Oh you just milk cows'. No, I don't just milk cows. I know each individual cow that's in the dairy."

"I've brought a lot of friends to the dairy and shown them around. Most of them have been quite interested, partly because they think the calves are cute, which is true, but they've gained a better appreciation of what's involved and that it's not just about the milking."

Up-skilling is a philosophy the Hortles

have impressed upon their staff and children. Ms Jones is finishing her Certificate II through the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA).

"I always strongly encourage accredited training," said Mrs Hortle, who is a teacher by training.

"James has a Diploma of Agriculture and Alana has Cert 4. It's part of having a teacher as a mum or a boss. Everyone who works here does the quad-bike course as well."

Ms Jones has also been training her younger brother Mitchell, who started full-time on the Hortle farm in 2013.

"He enjoys it and gets to use those muscles a bit," she said. "He doesn't go to the gym as much anymore — one calf under each arm and he's alright."

Off the farm, Mrs Hortle is also doing her part to change community perceptions about dairying through Dairy Australia's Cows Create Careers program.

"I have certain farms that are really great advertisements for the dairy industry," she said. "I do some trips with career officers from the Department of Education and it challenges what they might traditionally think about dairying."

"I get upset about the perception that 'you're too smart to be a farmer'. I've been trying to break down some of that misinformation because career officers are a wonderful resource in schools. If they understand the industry, it's a step forward."

Back on the farm, it's easy to see the influence has rubbed off.

"The biggest benefit about learning from Ian is that he loves it," Ms Jones said. "It's not just about making money. It's not just a job and I'm allowed to have fun doing it. That's really important."

D

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Understanding employee leave entitlements

EMPLOYMENT laws have a number of leave entitlements that an employer must provide an employee. However, for many people leave can be a confusing and complex issue.

Rachael Finch is a dairy farm owner with three full-time employees. She has just completed a Diploma of Human Resource Management — Dairy and believes that an understanding of employee leave entitlements is important for both legal compliance and providing a positive employment experience on-farm.

“My husband and I both grew up on dairy farms and have 20-plus years experience in the industry,” she said. “To attract and retain staff, you need to put effort into training, ensuring everyone has a good work/life balance and that they enjoy what they are doing, so they can progress in the industry.”

Mrs Finch believes it is important to show employees they are valued, “and if you understand employment leave laws and provide employees with their entitlements, it is a win-win situation. We have to appreciate that times have changed and we can’t just continue doing ‘what we did in the old days’.”

By law, full-time employees are entitled to four weeks paid annual leave each year and part-time employees accrue paid annual leave on a pro-rata (proportional) basis. Casual employees are not entitled to annual leave as casual loading is paid instead of annual and sick leave entitlements.

The Pastoral Award 2010 applies to all national system employers and states that



To attract and retain staff, dairyfarmers need to put effort into training, ensuring everyone has a good work/life balance and that they enjoy what they are doing, so they can progress in the industry.

17.5% leave loading is to be paid when employees take annual leave. Any accrued annual leave must be paid out on termination.

Understanding employee leave entitlements has provided Mrs Finch with a framework to plan staffing levels and labour. For example, at Easter, employers have to be aware of when public holidays fall and how this will impact business.

“Once you understand the laws then you can plan your staffing levels around this,” Mrs Finch said. “We have an annual seasonal planner in the cowshed ‘office’ and employees write down their leave requests on the planner. This works extremely well as everyone can see when others need time

off and everyone works in together. I cannot recall a time when someone had not had the day off they required.”

It is essential that employers keep records of leave taken and leave balances. This may be through an accounting package such as Quicken or MYOB, on a spreadsheet or paper records, such as a time and wages book. **D**

What are some other types of leave?

- Full time employees (other than casuals) are entitled to 10 days paid personal/carer’s leave for each year of employment. Payment for personal/carer’s leave is at the employee’s base rate of pay. Unpaid carer’s leave may also be taken.
- Unpaid parental and adoption leave of 12 months with a right to request an additional 12 months.
- Community service leave includes

jury service and activities for certain emergencies or natural disasters. This leave is unpaid except for jury service.

- Long service leave laws vary from State to State. In Victoria an employee is entitled to take long service leave after 10 years of continuous employment with one employer, or can be paid out pro rata if they leave after seven years.

Leave checklist

UNDER the Fair Work Act employers have to keep written time and wage records for their employees for seven years, including records of leave taken and leave balances.

- Are there processes in place for employees to apply for the different types of leave?
- Are accurate records of employee leave entitlements maintained?
- Application leave forms and leave record templates are available from the Employment Starter Kit (ESKi) page on The People in Dairy website, <www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/eski>. Or alternatively, refer to the ‘leave’ section in the ESKi folder.

Building a dairy career

PERRIN Hicks started his career in the dairy industry milking 100 cows and now, 18 years later, he manages a 450-cow dairy farm.

Throughout his career, Mr Hicks has continued to learn, develop and up-skill to reach where he is today.

"The dairy industry has been really supportive of me through the past 18 years and has provided every opportunity for me to learn about a career that I love," he said.

He started in the industry when he bought a small farm with his dad, milking 100 cows. When he was 18, Mr Hicks developed his skills by completing a Certificate II and III in Farm Practice through the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA).

Mr Hicks then progressed to manage a 330-cow herd and further developed his industry skills by completing a Diploma of Agriculture through the NCDEA. He now manages a 450-cow farm.

"The best part about my job is that I don't do the same thing every day," Mr


Hicks said. "I spend most of my time outdoors and get to work with animals, people and machinery.

"Most of my time at work is spent overseeing staff, milking and making sure the milking plant is maintained and clean, checking herd health, setting grazing rotations, measuring feed and allocating forage supplements, overseeing pasture renovation, liaising with farm advisers and contractors, organising and implementing breeding and calving programs and heifer rearing."

He recently completed the Developing Dairy Leaders Program, an initiative of Dairy Australia and Australian Dairy Farmers, co-ordinated by the NCDEA.

Mr Hicks believes the training he received has provided him with the skills he requires on-farm.

"The courses provided me with the skills I need to become part of the next generation of dairy industry leaders," he said.

To learn more about dairy industry training visit website <www.ncdea.edu.au>. 



Perrin Hicks has continued to learn, develop and up-skill throughout his 18-year career in the dairy industry.

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Making good dairy staff easier to find

GOOD staff are hard to find — especially for dairyfarmers in need of someone reliable who wants to work hard, learn new skills and go that extra mile when it comes to caring for the cows and keeping them in tip-top condition.

In the past, up-and-coming young farmers commonly learnt the skills and practice of dairying from their family. But with the workload increasing along with herd sizes, more farmers are hiring outside staff and finding, all too often, that the local talent pool is shallow.

Dairy Australia responded to the emerging skills shortage by establishing the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA) in January 2006, in partnership with TAFE institutes.

Courses range from Certificate I to Advanced Diplomas, and the number of student contact hours is rising steadily, but not fast enough to meet demand for skilled staff in the short to medium-term. So, many

farmers are looking to recruit staff from overseas to close the gap.

Here's the rub, though. The Australian Government only grants visas to skilled immigrants, who meet the criteria in a weighty tome called the Australia and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO).

According to ANZSCO, dairyfarmers are highly skilled people with expertise equivalent to a Bachelors Degree or above. But that means visas will only be granted to overseas workers who will be managing the farm on behalf of the farmer. That's not what most farmers want or need.

ANZSCO then goes to the other extreme and deems dairy farmhands to be unskilled labour, and therefore ineligible for visas. It's a catch-22, and all the more frustrating when farmers know unskilled staff cost money in low milk production, sick cows, high calf mortality and poor pastures.

The answer to this impasse may be an overseas labour agreement with the Depart-

ment of Immigration and Border Protection. A labour agreement recognises the need for skilled workers, and makes an exception to the ANZSCO so that farmers can recruit workers with qualifications and/or experience equivalent to the NCDEA Certificates III and above.

Dairy Australia has initiated a labour agreement application on behalf of a pilot group of dairyfarmers. This first step will then pave the way to an industry-wide template labour agreement available to all dairyfarmers to recruit overseas labour.

DA is undertaking this initiative because it will benefit the industry as a whole, as few farmers have the time or resources to attempt an application on their own. The process is expected to take up to eight months and is on track to be completed mid-2014.

Contact: Dairy Australia's manager, Policy Strategy, Claire Miller phone (03) 9694 3739, or email <cmiller@dairyaustralia.com.au>.

ESKi launched at GippsDairy and DairyTas

DAIRY Australia introduced the Employment Starter Kit initiative (ESKi) at GippsDairy and DairyTas, in late 2013.

The ESKi is an easy-to-use employer kit that details all of the mandatory 'human resource' requirements for farms that employ staff.

The idea of the ESKi arose from farmers who had concerns regarding the ability to attract and retain dairy farm employees.

DairyTas executive officer Mark Smith said the ESKi has been well received in the region. "So far the interest has been very good with over 150 ESKis already out to Tasmanian farmers," he said. "We have a target of 200 by June 2014."

Workforce Planning and Action Steering Committees were formed at WestVic Dairy and DairyTas to develop actions and support the dairy industry to attract the skilled people it needs. The ESKi is the first action to be delivered by the committees.

Built from The People in Dairy web-



Dairy Australia managing director Ian Halliday, Penny Williams and Lynne Kosky cutting the ribbon at the DairyTas ESKi launch.

site, the ESKi was piloted by 30 farmers before being initially launched at WestVic Dairy in September 2013.

To access Dairy Australia's people management resources visit website <www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/eski>.

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Shining a light on dairy careers

MORE than 170 students and teachers from Northern Victoria were honoured for completing Cows Create Careers — Farm Module, at Shepparton in November.

The presentation day was coordinated by John Hutchison and Deanne Kennedy from Jaydee Events and recognised nine schools from the Murray Dairy region that completed the program. Prizes were also awarded to teams such as, 'The Crazy Cows', 'Milky Milks' and 'Jersey Boys'.

Cows Create Careers — Farm Module is a six-week program that increases the awareness of dairy industry careers. Secondary students are educated by rearing two three-week-old calves at school, and the school is provided with dairy industry curriculum material for years 7 to 11.

Since 2006 Dairy Australia has worked with thousands of students, teachers, farmers, industry advocates and communities through its investment into Cows Create Careers — Farm Module.

Dairy Australia's industry capability program manager Tracy Lloyd said the program started in 2004 with dairyfarmers in the Strzelecki Lions Club in Victoria and nine Gippsland schools.

With support from Dairy Australia, Regional Development Programs, dairyfarmers and sponsors, the program has now grown to more than 180 schools across Australia with 8357 students completing the program in 2013.

"The success of this program is that it grabs young people's attention at many



Students and teachers at the Cows Create Careers — Farm Module presentation day held at Shepparton.

learning levels and showcases the profile and diversity of careers in the dairy industry," Ms Lloyd said. "We found that bringing calves into schools was a great way to engage students — they have great fun studying and love interacting with them."

The program has gained huge support from dairyfarmers and advocates across Australia. Last year alone volunteers gave 1162 hours of their time across 22 Australian dairying regions. The National Centre for Dairy Education Australia also plays an important role by being an educational link for the schools.

"Program volunteers have a deep knowledge of the industry and play a vital role in encouraging and supporting student career decision-making through links with both education and employment sectors," said Ms Lloyd.

The Cows Create Careers program has



John Hutchison, from Jaydee Events, hosting the Cows Create Careers — Farm Module presentation day.

continued to grow and now also includes a Manufacturing Module — Camembert in the Classroom — where students are educated on dairy manufacturing careers by making their own Camembert cheese.

Last year, 52 schools across Australia completed Camembert in the Classroom with a further 39 schools completing a modified version of the program at AgFest Tasmania and the Royal Agriculture Society in Queensland.

As a result, 44 schools have implemented Camembert in the Classroom as part of their science curriculum and 100% of teachers who completed the 2013 program felt that it was beneficial for the dairy industry to make an investment in school-based curriculum projects.

For Cows Create Careers information visit website <www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Education-and-Careers>. **D**

Growing capability is a priority for DA

GROWING the skills and capability of the dairy industry workforce is a priority area for Dairy Australia this year.

Dairy Australia will provide a range of programs, tools and resources to help the dairy industry to attract, develop and retain the skilled people it needs, both in the short and long term.

Dairy Australia's industry people and capability group manager Shane Hellwege said the 'people programs' this year had been designed with industry and would help to promote

dairy careers, develop the dairy industry workforce and retain skilled people in the industry.

"A key priority of this area is to develop and deliver workforce planning strategies for the dairy industry as a whole, for both the immediate and long term," Mr Hellwege said.

"Dairy Australia programs will also provide a range of development, scholarship and leadership opportunities for people within the dairy industry."

The programs include The People in Dairy, Young Dairy Network Australia,

Cows Create Careers, scholarships, extension and Workforce Planning and Action, which includes the Employment Starter Kit initiative (ESKi).

The National Centre for Dairy Education Australia will be key to the delivery of education and capability development programs, supported by Dairy Australia.

For more information on Dairy Australia programs visit website <www.dairyaustralia.com.au>.

To learn about dairy industry training visit website <www.ncdea.edu.au>.

Connecting young leaders

YOUNG farmers from around Australia connected at a Young Dairy Network Australia (YDNA) Forum held at Dairy Australia in November.

Sharing their ideas and program successes, the young dairy program leaders also provided feedback and learnt about Dairy Australia programs at the two-day forum.

The forum featured 2012 NSW Rural Woman of the Year and co-founder of Ag-ChatOz, Danica Leys, who discussed how young farmer networks can take advantage of social media networking.

Program manager of community and people development at the Geoffrey Gardiner Dairy Foundation, Rikki Andrews, also shared her expertise on how young farmer networks can develop sources for funding and complete funding applications.

South West Western Australia Young Dairy Farmers co-ordinator, Tammy Negus, said Dairy Australia's YDNA forum was important because it drove the support and encouragement of young people in the dairy industry.

"It focuses on the next generation in farming, which is really the farming future," Ms Negus said. "The forum directly benefits the group and my social networks. I can meet and engage in discussions, exchange experiences and contact details with people sharing common interests and a passion for dairy. There are many industry programs in Australia that are currently being used by some groups and co-ordinators that I am interested in applying to WA."

There are a number of Young Dairy Networks across Australia, and Dairy Aus-



YDNA Forum participants representing young people from across Australia.

tralia's YDNA program aims to bring these networks together so there is a national approach for establishing young farmer networks.

"Australia is a large area and it is great to meet and share ideas with co-ordinators and young farmers in other states," Ms Negus said. "WA is somewhat isolated from the other dairying areas, so the contact is beneficial. We have regular teleconferences to link the states and regional activities." **D**

Contact: YDNA program co-ordinator Di Gresham, email <dgresham@dairyaustralia.com.au>.



Co-founder of AgChatOz Danica Leys discussing social media networking at November's YDNA Forum.

Dairy industry scholars boost skills

IN mid-2013, Dairy Australia and the Gardiner Foundation partnered to offer 20 scholarships worth \$2500 to enhance the skills and build the careers of people working in the dairy industry.

Sixty scholarship applications were received from across Australia, and following a formal selection and interview process, 20 successful dairyfarmers and dairy farm employees were awarded.

Through the scholarship fund, 16 of the 20 scholars have gone on to advance their skills by completing an accredited training program with the

support of Dairy Australia's industry capability program manager Tracy Lloyd.

Scholars have completed courses ranging from artificial insemination (AI) training, Certificates III and IV in agriculture and a Diploma of Agriculture through the National Centre of Dairy Education Australia.

"It is great to support people who are working in the dairy industry and who want to develop and progress their career further," Ms Lloyd said.

"Dairy Australia is proud to have partnered with the Gardiner Foundation to offer the 2013 dairy industry

scholarships. It has been a privilege to see how each scholar has used their funding, what they have studied and how they have implemented what they have learnt on-farm."

Dairy Australia and the Gardiner Foundation partnered to offer the scholarships with an aim to improve the capability of the dairy industry workforce and recognise people who are working in the dairy industry.

Scholars have been in regular contact with Ms Lloyd and were required to report on their progress throughout 2013, with final reports submitted in December.

Solid succession plan helps farm grow

By PETER KOSTOS

FARM SUCCESSION

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Sharefarming with parents
- ✓ More prudent to use capital to buy land outside family farm
- ✓ Equity partner in another dairy farm

ANDREW Balfour is one dairy-farmer who will not let the dust settle. The Balfour farm is located in the rolling hills of Willow Grove, about 15 kilometres north of the Princes Highway in West Gippsland, Victoria.

Andrew and his wife, Carolyn, have three sons, Nathan, 13, Luke, 11 and Jacob, 9, and all have a solid commitment to the property, which sustains the milking of 710 cows.

A little history reveals Andrew's grandfather, the Honourable Jim Balfour (MLA for Morwell), owned the original Balfour property. The Balfour brothers — David (Andrew's father), Russell and Peter — share-farmed that farm, and in 1974 David and his wife, Sue, bought a property across the road.

Down the track, successful farming methods combined with a sound succession plan saw the situation change dramatically. David has now retired, but still combines his duties as a councillor in Baw Baw Shire with assisting Andrew on-farm. David insists he can now "sleep in" if that notion exists.

Andrew share-farmed for a number of years after leaving school, with plenty of success. In 2000, he received the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria's Share Farmer of the Year award (sponsored by Genetics Australia).

During the ensuing years, he completed several industry-related courses, one of which was Dairy Farm Management at McMillan College, Warragul, Victoria.

"Never look back, always look to the future" could be Andrew's farming philosophy.

Throughout the 40 years leading up to David's retirement, several neighbouring properties were added to the original, and Andrew now farms 200 hectares for his milking herd, and 150ha for the running of dry stock. While most of this is freehold, he leases some land across the La Trobe River.

Andrew owns the cows and dry stock, plus the plant and machinery.



ABOVE: Andrew and David Balfour inside the 50-cow rotary milking shed, which replaced the old 26-cow shed in 2002.

INSET: Some of the 710 cows on the Balfour dairy farm where NZ Holstein Friesians sires are used.



Operating under a recognised share-for-value arrangement with his parents offers Andrew flexibility and an incentive to improve.

With the solid succession plan in place, Andrew saw it more prudent to borrow capital to purchase more land rather than pay for a farm that was already freehold land in the family.

Part of Andrew's land purchase includes an 86ha property at Nambrok, where along with Mark Wilms he has an equity partnership, and they employ a manager to run this 340-cow farm.

On the home farm, Andrew employs one full-time and four to five part-time workers to assist with the running of the farm. There they milk 700-plus cows in the 50-unit rotary dairy.

Andrew was quick to add their three boys voluntarily assist on the farm, as does David.

Andrew has an all spring (July-August) calving herd, and numerous hands are needed at this time, as 190 calves are raised.

Having these extra hands helps Andrew with his commitments off-farm as captain of the local Country Fire Authority (CFA) and coach of junior football. It also allows for holiday time.

About 10 years ago, Andrew set about switching his herd from Holstein Friesians to New Zealand-breed Friesians, and also increased the enterprise's crossbreeding.

The reason for this was "pure mathematics", he said.

"The NZ breeding influences smaller frame cows, which produce fewer litres, but more solids in the milk," Andrew said. "Smaller frames mean less grass to produce better milk."

To keep the breeding in the herd, Andrew uses an AI program for four weeks then follows up with NZ breed Friesian bulls.

Andrew runs the herd as a pasture-based enterprise, and while using small amounts of grain at milking, the need for larger grain supplement is negated.

In order to grow as much grass as possible, he buys in local hay and vetch as needed.

Contractors play a large part in the management of the farm, during silage and hay harvest and the application of fertiliser, the latter occurring almost daily.

There are also numerous chicory paddocks that have been planted to supplement the cows' feeding pattern.

For many years the Balfours have supplied their milk to Murray Goulburn, and this continues today.

In fact, Andrew's farm, and farming practices were recently filmed for an MG advertising incentive.

He firmly believes it is the best interests of dairyfarming for Murray Goulburn to be successful in taking over Warrnambool Cheese & Butter, and keep it in producer, not international, ownership.

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NEXT GENERATION
THINKING

Lucky young farmer lives out dream on land

FARM SUCCESSION

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Returned to family farm, starting as worker
- ✓ Now in sharefarming agreement
- ✓ Leadership role in discussion group

SOUTH-WEST Victoria's Aaron Crole sees himself as one of the lucky young dairyfarmers as he lives out his dreams on the land. And he says his parents, Wayne and Vickie, are fortunate in the dairy world to have two sons and their families who want to work on the family farm at Simpson, Vic.

Aaron, 30, has been able to get a foot in the industry door by firstly working on his parents' farm and more recently entering into a sharefarming agreement with them on his grandparents' adjoining property, milking 185 cows on a 137-hectare property.

He has three young children of his own and hopes they will follow the family tradition to create a fourth generation on the land, though he won't be pressuring them into it.

"We were never forced as kids to do work on the farm. My brother Andrew and I went off and got a trade but we always knew we could come back onto the farm if we wanted," he said. "I'd love to see the kids continue in farming but I'd never force them."

"My old man is lucky that his two boys wanted to work on the farm, it's not very often that you see that."

Aaron's wife, Cassy, also grew up on a dairy farm so moving back to the industry was a natural choice.

"It's the country life everyone dreams of," he said. "We know what it's about and we want to bring our kids up the same way."

When Aaron and Cassy moved to the share farm, Andrew and his wife, April, returned home to work on his parents' farm.

The arrangement is working well. Not only have Aaron and Cassy stepped up to one-third sharefarming responsibilities in the past three years, he has taken on the leadership for a local dairy discussion group.

Aaron is keen to make a positive contribution to the industry and encourages others to get involved if they can. "I've been with the group for four or five years and

they asked me to take on the leader's role and I said I could handle that," he said.

"We probably average 14 attending once a month. It's quite open discussion and self-run by the group. I've been to other discussion groups and they're very formal, more of a lecture and not so much discussion. We talk among ourselves on general all-round topics."

"You see and hear things you can pick up and take back to your own farm."

Apart from the family and lifestyle benefits of farming, Aaron revels in the challenge and fluctuations of the dairy industry and its economic and climactic influences.

"This season is panning out pretty well but weather-wise it has been quite challenging," he said. "We're probably a month behind in doing everything. We went away to Queensland and came back to what looked like the middle of winter."

"We haven't been able to get silage off until now, but you never know. The weather could change and if we wait two weeks, it could be done for hay."

"Every year is different; that's part of the challenge that keeps it interesting."

On a broader outlook, Aaron sees making the industry affordable to younger farmers as a major challenge.

"We're one of the lucky ones to have family behind us and get the foot in the door," he said. "I know a lot of friends who are keen but can't get money to get in. Generation change is a big challenge — there are a lot of older farmers trying to get out but farms aren't selling."

He also remains cautious about the influence of overseas markets. "When you look at America and their financial troubles, who knows, that could come over here again," he said.

But a return to his building trade is not on the cards as Aaron and his family have no plans to leave the industry and lifestyle that they love. "We're definitely staying;



Aaron and Cassy Crole with their three young children enjoy the lifestyle that comes with dairyfarming.

we're pretty well set up with our little family kicking along and building to our own farm," he said.

They hope to buy cows in the next year to 18 months and move up to a 50:50 share. The ultimate goal is to own a farm.

"You've got to crawl before you walk, start at the bottom and work your way up," Aaron said. "It won't happen overnight."

Aaron's positive outlook for the industry has prompted his support for Dairy Australia's Legendairy promotional campaign, which launched in August and is designed to build the profile and reputation of the Australian dairy industry and highlight the enormous contribution dairyfarmers make to the Australian economy.

"I think it's awesome, a real positive for the industry," he said. "It helps to tell the townies and those from the city what dairy-ing is really all about."



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Vet residents help produce healthier herds

By ALEXANDRA DE BLAS

A PROGRAM to encourage highly skilled dairy veterinarians to live and work in rural Victoria is being well-received by farmers. The Dairy Residents Program enables practising vets to undertake a Masters at the University of Melbourne, while working and teaching in one of four veterinary clinics in Victoria's dairy regions.

Dr Stuart Griffin, a vet who has returned to the family dairy farm in Westbury, Vic, heard the first residents report on their findings in late 2012.

"It was fantastic. They looked at mastitis in heifers; new-born calf management and colostrum; and weight changes post calving and its implications for production," Dr Griffin said. "All three projects had real applications in the Australian dairy industry and their findings were very interesting."

On a recent road trip to see the program in action, chief executive of the Gardiner Foundation, Mary Harney, was impressed by the strength and vitality of the residents. "What an articulate group of outstanding young people," she said.

The Dairy Resident Training Program is a \$1.4 million collaboration between the Gardiner Foundation, Dairy Australia, the University of Melbourne Faculty of Veterinary Science and the veterinary clinics.

The first phase began in 2010 with three residents based at veterinary clinics at Maffra, Warrnambool, and Timboon. The second phase started in early 2013 and included a fourth resident based at the Rochester Veterinary Clinic. Each phase is three years.

The dairy industry has no difficulty attracting new veterinary graduates, the problem is keeping them, once they have four or five years of experience.

The lure of working in a small animal practice in the city with more comfortable conditions, higher pay and more regular hours can make it hard to retain vets in the country.

The dairy resident program counters this urban drift by offering residents the oppor-



Drs Jakob Malmo from the Maffra Vet Clinic with two of the residents involved in the dairy program Lauren Clyne and Stephanie Bullen.

nary Studies, undertake research in the field and teach undergraduate students, while working in a commercial practice. The assumption is that vets with specialised skills are more likely to remain in the industry and make a greater contribution in time.

"I'm working harder than ever, but I'm really enjoying it," said Dr Andy Hancock, a resident in the second round based at The Vet Group at Timboon.

A partner in The Vet Group Dr Peter Younis said: "There was a lot of discussion in the practice before we took it on. But now he wouldn't look back.

"It would be hard for us not to be involved again, there are multiple benefits."

Maffra vet Professor Jakob Malmo took no convincing at all. The Resident Program is based on a model that began at his practice in 1978. The Maffra Model was an international first in veterinary medicine, and many of the Masters students who went through that program are now leaders in the dairy industry.

Heifer mastitis

Dr Lauren Clyne was a resident in Phase 1 and has remained at the Maffra Veterinary Centre as an associate veterinarian.



A partner in The Vet Group Dr Charlie Blackwood discusses research outcomes with dairyfarmer Pat O'Keefe.

Her project looked at heifer mastitis in local pasture-based conditions, assessing the risk factors, and methods for control and prevention. "There was no published data on Australian heifer mastitis at all," Dr Clyne said.

In her two-year study, which assessed 4000 heifers in 19 herds, she found a 12% annual prevalence of mastitis and confirmed that heifers are at far greater risk of mastitis in the first month post calving than cows. Of the animals that developed mastitis during lactation, 67% of heifers acquired it in the first month compared with 40% of cows.

"Using a teat sealant 30 days prior to calving reduced the risk of mastitis in heifers by 50% in the first month," Dr Clyne said.

Drench resistance

Dr Stephanie Bullen, also based at Maffra, is one of the residents in the second phase. Her project is investigating roundworm drench resistance in heifers on 30 dairy farms in the Macalister Irrigation District.

"Drench resistance has never been studied in dairy cattle in Australasia and was first examined in beef cattle, in New Zealand in 2006," Dr Bullen said.

In the four farms tested to date, three were found to have profound drench resistance while on the other — owned by Guy and Leeane Gallatly — resistance was slight.





LEFT: Dr Gemma Chuck examined the passive transfer of immunity in calves via colostrum.

INSET: Gemma Chuck has produced a waterproof, pocket field guide called calf+plus to assist farmers improve their calf-rearing practices.



Dr Bullen provides farmers with a report and recommendations two weeks after testing.

Mr Gallatly said: "I thought it was really good. Drench resistance can be a serious problem. Something I didn't realise.

"I've always drenched and changed paddocks. But the report recommended that I should drench and leave them in the same paddock."

According to Dr Bullen: "This hasn't been studied in cattle yet. But the work coming out of sheep shows that moving stock to a new paddock after drenching will

increase the rate at which drench resistance develops, while returning them to the same paddock will slow it down."

Calf immunity

Dr Gemma Chuck examined the passive transfer of immunity in calves via colostrum. She compared mortality and morbidity (sickness) rates in heifers between the first year — with no management changes — and the second year — in which management changes were made.

Of the eight farms she examined: one cut mortality from 18% to 4%, and another reduced morbidity from 70% to 25%. Outside of this study, a private client implementing her recommendations slashed mortality from 30% to 3%.

Dr Chuck has since converted her masters into a PhD project to examine how immunity in calves relates to production and fertility later in life.

Dr Ash Phipps, the resident based at the Rochester clinic, is also researching colostrum, fo-

cusing on management and hygiene and its effects on colostrum quality. Greg Ault, a dairyfarmer taking part in the trial, said: "This kind of research is great. No farmer wants to lose a calf."

Reproductive performance

Danny Clarke, a farmer from Ecklin South, Vic, is part of Dr Andy Hancock's trial on bull fertility linked to The Vet Group.

"Farming is such an intensive business now," Mr Clarke said.

"This project has been great. We tested nine bulls and 50% came back under a grade that we were happy with.

"So we are just using our best bulls this year."

Pat O'Keefe from Winslow, Vic, said: "We are lucky to have this sort of input from a vet clinic."

He is working with Dr Kelly Plozza, a resident at the Warrnambool Veterinary Clinic, who is looking to improve the reproductive performance of cows with no visible fertility cycle (oestrus).

"This clinic has become a lot more active than reactive," Mr O'Keefe said. "The difference is immeasurable."

Veterinary partners, Doctors Charlie Blackwood, Alistair Murray, Duncan Runciman and Peter Younis strongly endorsed the Dairy Resident Training Program and its role in forging a partnership between vets and dairyfarmers in the management of herd health.



Ecklin South, Vic, dairyfarmer Danny Clarke, The Vet Group partner Peter Younis and Dr Andy Hancock, a resident in program, who looked at bull fertility on farms including Mr Clarke's.

Nuffield scholar to probe future productivity gain

By WENDY MORRISS

PRODUCTIVITY GAINS

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Nuffield scholar to look at productivity gains
- ✓ Need these to maintain farm margins
- ✓ Ryegrass and GM on agenda



DAIRYFARMER Aubrey Pellett, from Hill End in Victoria, was recently awarded a 2014 Nuffield Scholarship at the organisation's national conference dinner in Perth. The scholarship, supported by the Geoffrey Gardiner Dairy Foundation, will allow Mr Pellett to study the future of productivity gain for dairyfarming.

For seven weeks during June and July 2014, Mr Pellett will travel with a group of fellow Nuffield scholars to the Philippines, China, Canada, United States, Ireland and France to investigate agricultural marketing, trade and environmental issues, and to experience the social and cultural aspects of each region.

Following that he will travel individually to study his chosen topic with plans to visit New Zealand where most of Australia's ryegrass is developed to study ryegrass growth, the US to look at GM technology and whether it is applicable to ryegrass breeding, then the Netherlands and Germany to study their robotic technology and farm automation.

He also wishes to visit the United Kingdom, the birthplace of the Nuffield scholarship named after Lord Nuffield, to establish networks with other international Nuffield scholars and contacts in the industry.

Part of the scholarship is to submit a report due in February 2015 and an oral presentation of his findings due the following September.

Nuffield Australia's chair Terry Hehir said the long-term capacity of Australian agriculture to compete and succeed internationally would be determined by the ability of Australian farmers to recognise changing consumer preferences, adopt new technologies and production practices and maintain the sustainability of their operations by protecting their production environment.

"They need the confidence to back their judgement and make the changes necessary to grow, and providing young Australian

farmers with this knowledge and confidence is the heart of the Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship program," he said.

Mr Pellett, initially with a background of various banking roles in rural banking, marketing, product management and strategic planning, holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Information Systems, a Bachelor of Commerce (majoring in Farm Management) and a Diploma in Farm Management. He is a director of GippsDairy and a director of Bonlac Supply Company, which supplies Fonterra Australia.

He has farmed on his Hill End property with his partner, Jacqui Morrison, since 2002. The couple — who have children Anneka, 10 and Jackson, 9 — currently own and manage the 190-hectare farm with a 40-hectare leased support block, and they milk 450 cows.

The couple employs a husband-and-wife team — one as a production manager and one to do weekday milking.

Mr Pellett said his study topic *The future of productivity gain for dairy farms* is based on his view that the industry in Australia hadn't seen any significant productivity gain for quite some time.

"If we don't get productivity gain then effectively our margins will keep getting smaller and our international competitive position will decline," he said.

Through his study, he plans to examine productivity opportunities for Australian dairyfarmers looking 10-20 years in the future that will deliver more from less in the industry. He believes productivity gain is the only way to lift longer-term profitability in terms of the margin.

"Either we produce more from the same level of inputs — the same farm sizes and cow numbers, but producing more milk, or produce the same amount of milk with less labour, more efficient cows or better yields of pasture," he said.

After completing the study he hopes to have a view of what the future of the industry might look like and what is going to lead to productivity gain whether it's large



Aubrey Pellett plans to use his Nuffield scholarship to look at where the next big gains in productivity will be made in the dairy industry.

individual impacts or a sequence of many small things.

He said he hoped to feed what he finds into the industry through Dairy Australia, The Geoffrey Gardiner Foundation, Regional Development Programs under Dairy Australia, individual milk companies, possibly the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) — anyone that had an interest in developing the dairy industry.

"It may mean as an industry we need to do some development extension to capture productivity items or take international productivity drivers and adjust them for our Australian systems and conditions," he said.

Mr Pellett and his partner Jacqui are originally from New Zealand where they worked in banking before becoming sharefarmers there in 2001.

"We moved to Australia in 2002 and found out we could lease farms, which was quite attractive because we could run our own show and make all our own decisions, so that's what we did," he said.

"In 2008, the farm owner wanted to sell and luckily we were in a position to purchase the farm from him.

"We think we have done reasonably well. When we came here, we only had a small car and a tiny amount of money, so it's ►

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been a long and difficult journey, but we have changed the farming system throughout time and made it more profitable."

Their herd is about 10% Jersey, 50% Holstein Friesian and the balance Friesian-Jersey crossbreds of varying degrees. He said initially they put Jersey over the whole herd because they liked the crossbred cows.

"They are a hardy animal with a high fat and protein percentage and relatively easy to get in calf, but we found it difficult to control their temperament and the udder conformation and we realised the price and the market for Friesians was higher giving us more options if we needed to sell heifers," he said.

"We have been using Holstein Friesian sires for some time now and building the herd."

He said they calved in the autumn to try to have pasture in the cow's diet for their full lactation. "When we did spring calving, I became frustrated," he said. "Calves were born in August to October and then by November the farm was drying out and we had to feed out a lot of silage and grain, and calves were being weaned when we didn't have paddock feed.

"The risk with autumn calving is that



Aubrey Pellett in the dairy of his farm that he initially leased and then purchased.

we carry a high stocking rate through winter when other farmers have dry cows and can destock, but the milk price systems that most companies operate during winter are nearly double the price or more than double, depending on the milk company.

"It means we can afford to feed a high level of supplementation then, which we need to do because our pasture growth rate is a lot lower, but with long rotations and good use of nitrogen, we are able to maximise winter pasture growth, and we generally have pasture until Christmas. Our cows are then dried off late January through February when the farm is dry.

"We harvest the spring surplus mainly as silage because it's better feed value and the

grass grows back. There's better pasture then for the cows so it's a pasture management tool as well.

"We have our own equipment so we can control the timing and cut silage fairly close to where we would have grazed it.

"Then we don't have a long lock-up period and there's faster regrowth. The idea is to get it back into the grazing round pretty much without any down time. We do a bit of hay later but only on areas where it's been too wet to get the timing right.

"Getting our grazing rotation right in conjunction with spreading nitrogen fertiliser at the right time, which we do ourselves, increases our production.

"We use the 'Feeding Pastures for Profit' approach, so we have a spreadsheet of every paddock on the farm with its size and a rating of how productive it is and we aim to graze ryegrass close to three leaves.

"At different times of the year the rotation rate needs to be varied so we allocate a certain amount of pasture for every feed, based on targeting a certain rotation length. In the winter it's a much smaller area and in the spring it's a larger area, and then we adjust how much supplement (hay, silage or grain) we feed," he said. D

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Relative Forage Ratings – compared to industry standards*

ITALIAN RYEGRASS	TOTAL YIELD	FLOWERING TETILA = 0	ME MJ/KG DM	CP %	NDF %	EXTRA MEAT VALUE	EXTRA MILK VALUE	NO. OF TRIALS
SF Accelerate	106	+12 days	11.03	24.98	46.00	+\$129	+\$234	30
Crusader	100	+12 days	10.88	25.53	46.50	\$0	\$0	30

* Yields based on up to 30 trials in Australia from 2006–2010. * Italian ryegrass feed nutritive value data based on sample taken prior to each of six grazing periods at Gundagai 2008 and analysed by NSW DPI Feed Quality Service.
* Extra meat value based on 65% utilisation at \$1.70/kg liveweight. * Extra milk value based on 75% utilisation at 35c/litre.

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* based on Pastures Australia trials Shepparton 2010 where both yield and quality measurements were taken

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NOTICE TO ALL DAIRY FARMERS

Make sure that you get the seeds that you ask for from your seed merchant.

In February 2013 Seed Force Pty Ltd sued Notman Agricultural Services Pty Ltd and its director, Peter Notman, in the County Court of Victoria. Seed Force alleged that Norman Agricultural Services Pty Ltd had sold seed to a dairy farmer by reference to the names "Seed Force Accelerate" and "Seed Force Punter", which were not, in fact, those seeds.

In the legal proceeding, Notman Agricultural Services Pty Ltd admitted that:

1. a dairy farmer had asked Notman Agricultural Services Pty Ltd for it to supply the dairy farmer with "Accelerate Ryegrass" and "Punter Chicory" seed;
2. Notman Agricultural Services Pty Ltd had sold the dairy farmer seeds that were not Accelerate ryegrass or Punter chicory seeds without advising the dairy farmer of that fact;
3. the seeds which Notman Agricultural Services Pty Ltd supplied performed poorly;
4. the dairy farmer complained to Notman Agricultural Services Pty Ltd and Notman Agricultural Services Pty Ltd agreed to pay the dairy farmer for its loss but to otherwise keep the terms of settlement confidential.

Seed Force subsequently agreed to settle the case following an offer from Notman Agricultural Services Pty Ltd and Peter Notman on the basis that Notman Agricultural Services Pty Ltd and Peter Notman paid Seed Force monetary compensation and its legal costs.

Notman Agricultural Services Pty Ltd and Peter Notman also undertook to the Court that they would not claim to supply anyone with Accelerate ryegrass or Punter chicory seed if it was not that seed and if they received a request for Accelerate ryegrass or Punter chicory seeds they would disclose the brand of seed which was, in fact, supplied.

If this undertaking is breached then Notman Agricultural Services Pty Ltd and/or Peter Notman could potentially be in contempt of court.

Please note that Seed Force is a member of the Australian Seed Federation (ASF) and is bound by its code of practice.

Notman Seeds, Notman Agricultural Services Pty Ltd and Peter Notman are not members of the ASF.

The outcome of this claim upholds the reputation of Seed Force Pty Ltd, its products and their performance.

Seed Force is proud to be a member of the Australian Seed Federation (ASF), the peak industry body for the Australian seed industry. Like all ASF members, Seed Force abides by the ASF Code of Practice for Labelling and Marketing. As part of the code, information relating to the seed, coating and treatment can be found on the bag or label. In addition, a seed analysis certificate is available on request.



To minimise the risk associated with buying seed, please review the ASF's Smart from the Start checklist.

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New pasture mix helps cut nitrogen use

PASTURE MIX

KEY POINTS

- ✓ NSW trial of alternate pasture mix
- ✓ Pasture comprised lucerne, red clover, white clover, tonic plantain and puna chicory
- ✓ Reduced nitrogen use, increased mineral content



DAIRYFARMERS, as well as beef producers, could save more than \$300 a hectare on fertiliser costs in some parts of NSW according to the results of a two-year trial, the outcome of which is now being adopted across that State.

The trial was conducted near Jamberoo, NSW, at Lemon Grove Research Farm for dairy cattle, and tested the effects of using a mix of legumes and herbs rather than traditional pastures.

Senior consultant for cattle production consultancy SBScius Dr Neil Moss said the results of the trial were exciting, as the test paddock with legumes and herbs outperformed the control paddock in all aspects, including nitrogen input, pasture productivity and dry matter yields, as well as cutting carbon emissions.

Now the results of the trial have been published, the legume/herb pasture system is being implemented in three properties across southern, northern and central NSW.

Dr Moss said one of the biggest impacts of the system for producers could be savings on

nitrogen input costs. "Nitrogen costs \$1.40 a kilogram (with urea at \$644 a tonne containing 46% nitrogen)," Dr Moss said.

"There were savings across two years with 289kg applied to the trial (paddock) compared to 726kg to the control paddock."

This difference in the amount of nitrogen input required amounted to \$306/ha a year, Dr Moss said — with some additional nitrogen being provided to both the control and test paddock through effluent.

While the trial was focused on producing better outcomes for dairyfarmers, Dr Moss said there was no reason other producers couldn't use the same principles and apply them, subject to regional variances.

"(The legume/herb system) would be suited to intensive beef or prime lamb production systems with appropriate regional modifications and control measures for possible problems such as bloat," he said.

"As important as nitrogen (cost saving) will be the improved animal performance based on higher digestibility and possible shifts in stocking rate due to different growth curves of pastures."

Delta Ag agronomist David Strahorn, Dubbo — whose client Peter Squires, Buckhobble, Dubbo, (see box story) had already adopted the trial's concepts — said the benefits of using legumes for nitrogen in the soil were well known, but it was good to see the impact the herbs, such as plantain, had when mixed with the legumes.

"It seems a terrific mix having the herbs in there," he said.

Mr Strahorn was reluctant to put a dollar figure on potential cost-saving for producers based on the Lemon Grove trial results but agreed there would definitely be a saving to be gained. "The savings would be variable," Mr Strahorn said.

This was due to fluctuating prices for urea and differing rainfall and soil conditions across NSW, he said.

"Some areas you could save up to 200 kilograms or 300kg of nitrogen (input), though in dry western areas it might only be 80kg to 100kg," he said.

In the trial itself, the trial and control paddocks were tested before the trial paddock was sown with a mix of lucerne, red clover, white clover, tonic plantain and puna chicory. The control paddock retained its kikuyu base before being sown to oats and Italian ryegrass.

Yield data was validated using pasture cuts and estimation of dry matter during the trial and the nutritive value of the trial and control pastures were tested in both spring and summer at Westons Laboratories.

The test was conducted across 2011 and 2012 and this year has been picked up by other properties following the release of the results.

The total two-year dry matter yields from the trial and control paddocks were 35.3 tonnes and 26.0 tonnes per hectare.

The trial paddock returned better results in pasture quality for protein and a number of minerals, including calcium, magnesium, potassium and lignin. **D**

Farmer hopes for big returns

PETER Squires is hoping for some big results from his mixed pasture at his dairy, Buckhobble, near Dubbo, NSW. Mr Squires is implementing the legume and herb system that was trialled at Lemon Grove Research Farm on the South Coast near Jamberoo, NSW.

He said he decided to try out the system for a number of reasons including limiting his nitrogen input in the soil. "You don't have to apply as much (nitrogen) as on your winter pastures," he said.

Mr Squires has planted a mix of puna and punter chicory, lucerne and red and white clovers, which he will use as his summer and autumn pastures for his 300 Holsteins. "It will be

great for covering the feed gap in autumn," he said.

Another advantage that drew Mr Squires to this system was the longer rotation of at least two years rather than planting ryegrass every year. "The pasture mix will also be good for weed control," he said.

The particular pasture mix at Buckhobble is similar to the mix used in the Lemon Grove trial except that Mr



Peter Squires checks out his chicory, lucerne, clover pasture.

Squires is not using tonic plantain due to differences in the soil and grass conditions between Jamberoo and Dubbo.

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Why take a risk when buying seed?

By BILL FULLER*

SEED BUYING

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Take steps to ensure purchased seed will perform as expected
- ✓ Seed database provides comprehensive guide
- ✓ Be aware of PBR restrictions

SEED quality cannot be assessed just by looking at it. Seed may appear clean and healthy, but could contain weed seeds and have low germination.

Most seed of the same species looks identical, so a buyer cannot be sure of the variety — unless it is certified or quality assured seed. Buyers should always ask for the Statement of Seed Analysis for any seed before purchasing it.

Seed is the most important input into any crop or pasture sown. The quality of the seed bought must be assessed carefully to ensure that the buyer is getting value for money, and not introducing any weeds with the seed. To minimise the risk associated with buying seed, The Australian Seed Federation (ASF) has produced a *Smart from the Start* checklist that suggests some questions to ask the seed supplier.

Seed selection

- **Choosing a species:** Reputable consultants and advisers can provide advice on species most suitable to the farm's requirements.
- **Choosing a variety:** Having selected the species wanted for a particular situation, farmers are faced with a bewildering array of choices. Fortunately, several tools are available to assist with this choice. For example, the ASF has recently released the Pasture Seed Products Database. The database lists all commercially available pasture seed products by species and the intellectual property, marketing and varietal status of the various seeds nominated by their Australian marketer.

One of the major benefits of the database is that it identifies which pasture products are "varieties" and which are not varieties (branded seed products). Implicit in the definition of "variety" is a substantiated capacity to consistently deliver the described genetic characteristics of the pasture seed product.

Anybody can brand a bag of seed and make a claim about its performance but to have confidence in those claims consumers need to know it is a "variety". To qualify

as a variety internationally agreed scientific procedures must be followed to demonstrate that the new variety has the genetic stability and uniformity to deliver the benefits claimed and can do so over successive generations. See website <<http://www.asf.asn.au>>.

Similarly, the National Variety Trial's NVT Online website lists the range of available cereal varieties with details about the breeder, marketers and Plant Breeder's Rights (PBR) status.

In addition, it provides access to independent results on the performance of recently released grain and field crop varieties from trials conducted across Australia. See website <<http://www.nvtonline.com.au/>>.

Good quality seed

- **Varietal purity:** Is the seed a true variety and the variety wanted? After carefully deciding what to grow, the buyer wants to be certain that the seed purchased is that variety. Buy certified seed, or seed produced under a reputable quality assurance scheme, to ensure varietal purity. For details on certification see website <<http://aseeds.net.au/>>.

- **Physical purity:** Does it contain any undesirable weed seeds? Seed may have been produced in another district or state. It may also contain weeds not present on the farm. Weeds prohibited in one state may not be prohibited in another. Weed details are usually not displayed on the label, but weed seeds found in the sample are listed in the *Statement of Seed Analysis*. A *Statement of Seed Analysis* is often referred to as a Purity and Germination or P and G statement.

Reputable seed suppliers will give the buyer a copy of the *Statement of Seed Analysis* if requested. But, seed analysis statements are only as reliable as the sample provided. Samples of certified seed, and seed from reputable quality assurance programs, are representative of the seed lot on sale. Be certain that the seed lot, or seed line number, quoted on the statement matches the one on the bag.

- **Germination:** Will this seed establish a healthy crop? The germination percentage is the percentage of seeds that germinates to produce normal seedlings. Determining normal seedlings requires skill and a controlled environment. A laboratory test is essential. Depending upon the storage conditions, the germination test results should

Smart from the Start checklist	
Is it the species you want?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is it a true variety?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is it the variety you want?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is a current Statement of Seed Analysis available?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the seed lot number on the statement the same as the one on the bag or label?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the seed provided by a member of the ASF?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is infringing PBR worth losing the farm?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Use this checklist to help guide seed buying decisions this autumn.

remain valid for up to 12 months from the date of testing.

- **Disease:** Does the seed carry any disease? Seed of some species, particularly pulses, may carry diseases into the resulting crop. Results of disease tests may also be found on the *Statement of Seed Analysis*.

- **Seed testing services:** Sowing farm-saved seed without knowing its quality, especially germination percentage, can be highly risky particularly for some crop types such as pulses and canola. Cereals can also quickly deteriorate in germination if harvested and stored at moisture levels above 13%. Relative to the costs of establishing a crop, it makes good sense to test saved seed before sowing. Several seed testing laboratories provide a comprehensive range of seed analytical services to farmer and seed industry clients including testing for:

- germination percentage;
- physical purity percentage;
- moisture percentage; and
- weed seed identification.

Reputable testing laboratories that are members of the Australian Seed Federation (ASF) include:

- Agwest Plant Laboratories, website <www.agric.wa.gov.au>;
- AsureQuality, website <www.asurequality.com.au>; and
- Seed Services Australia, website <www.ruralsolutions.sa.gov.au/seeds>.

The Australian Seed Authority (ASA) has authorised these organisations to undertake seed certification activities in Aus-▶

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Australia. These organisations can certify seed under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Seed Schemes and the Australian Seed Certification Scheme.

National Code of Practice

The National Code of Practice for Labelling and Marketing of Seed for Sowing aims to ensure buyers are provided with consistent and accurate information so they can make informed decisions about the suitability of seed for sowing. This code applies throughout Australia. The code was developed by the seed industry and sets out the:

- information required on the label; and
- acceptable conduct for marketing and

dealing with variety performance claims.

All members of the Australian Seed Federation (ASF) abide by the Code of Practice. At a minimum, this will ensure that the label contains essential information about the species, chemical/additive/biological treatments and the availability of statement of seed analysis. In addition, the code sets out acceptable conduct for marketing and dealing with performance claims about a variety. A list of ASF members and a copy of the Code can be found at <www.asf.asn.au>.

Plant Breeder's Rights

Plant Breeder's Rights are exclusive commercial rights to a registered variety. The rights are a form of intellectual property,

like patents and copyright, and are administered under the Plant Breeder's Rights Act 1994 (the Act). Plant Breeder's Rights are one means of conferring seed variety status.

In relation to propagating material of the registered variety, successful applicants have exclusive rights to:

- produce or reproduce the material;
- condition the material for the purpose of propagation (conditioning includes cleaning, coating, sorting, packaging and grading);
- offer the material for sale;
- sell the material;
- import the material;
- export the material; and
- stock the material for any of the purposes described in (i) to (vi).

If PBR-protected seed is bought, there are no restrictions on the use of that particular batch of seed on farm except the farmer is not permitted to produce propagating seed to resell unless they are licensed to do so.

Generally, the use of plant material produced by that seed is also free provided that it is not sold or conditioned as propagating material or contains propagating material exported to countries where PBR protection is not available.

This means producers cannot sell/trade/barter/gift seed between themselves. If in doubt, approach the PBR grantee and determine whether their authorisation is required. Varieties covered by PBR and the PBR grantee are available on the IP Australia website <www.ipaustralia.gov.au/pbr/about.shtml>.

The PBR grantee may initiate legal action against someone who breaks these conditions, seeking damages or an account of profits. The PBR Act provides for penalties for infringement of the breeder's right of up to \$90,000 for individuals and \$460,000 for companies.

The ASF has actively participated in the review of the enforcement of PBR that was started in 2005. The review concluded in 2010, with several recommendations being accepted by government that are currently in the process of being legislated. Two of the recommendations outlined below will make it easier to enforce rights and make the potential cost to infringers greater. These are:

- Including PBR matters within the jurisdiction of the second tier of the Federal Court to provide PBR owners with an appropriate forum for enforcing their rights;
- introducing exemplary damage provisions into the Plant Breeder's Rights Act 1994 (the PBR Act).

If in doubt about actions, farmers should approach the PBR grantee and determine whether their authorisation is required. Be aware that ignorance of the law is not a defence against legal action.

**Bill Fuller is chief executive officer of the Australian Seed Federation*

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Man behind DA's market research

DAIRY Australia's chief analyst Norman Repacholi says his job can be "like understanding a mechanical movement — if this changes what happens to that gear or lever?"

For the past eight years Mr Repacholi has been constantly monitoring dairy data, forecasting and translating trends of the global dairy market into meaningful information for Australian dairyfarmers, manufacturers and the wider industry.

He's no city slicker economist who hasn't stepped foot beyond the confines of Melbourne's concrete jungle. Mr Repacholi grew up on a dairy farm in Tongala, northern Victoria. Despite no more visits to the family farm with wife Bernie and kids Angus and Lucinda now it has been sold, Mr Repacholi understands many of the pressures and demands of being a dairyfarmer in the current climate.

After graduating from Melbourne University with a Commerce degree, Mr Repacholi was offered a graduate position at the Commonwealth Bank. A little more than two years later he joined the industry analyst team at Dairy Australia in 2005.

"From my perspective I was keen to understand how the industry worked beyond the farmgate in terms of trade deals and exports and how that relates to the farm," he said.

"It's also about trying to understand the

driving force behind the decision making of each market player, explaining events and using this to help minimise or maximise impacts of these events depending whether it is negative or positive."

When Mr Repacholi started at Dairy Australia he was charged with looking at the New Zealand market and its competitive position relative to other global players. Then he slowly broadened into each market around the world.

"I have been mostly concentrating on analysing the demand of Australian products and ingredients through South East Asia and the Middle East as well as the impact on dairy demand of economic events such as the Global Financial Crisis," Mr Repacholi said.

More recently he has been concentrating on the global market with more of a research bent and is leading the development of the respected industry report *Situation and Outlook*.

While it appears to be a numbers game, there's more to forecasting and data analysis than crunching figures. "There are hundreds of different products made out of milk, hundreds of markets and thousands of companies worldwide and it is building linkages between all these factors and understanding relationships from a product and personal perspective," Mr Repacholi said.

"I pick up patterns and look at what each



Norman Repacholi fishing on the family farm with son Angus.

country says they are planning to do in contrast to what they actually do — two very different things most of the time. Then it comes down to working out what companies can do to maximise product mix to get optimum return which then flows back to the farmer.

"But I would have to say the most important part of my job is reading between the lines of what I observe and what I have been told directly and indirectly and marrying that together with what messages each market is trying to deliver."

Since starting at Dairy Australia, the biggest change Mr Repacholi has witnessed in the global dairy market was the elimination of government stocks in the United States and European Union (EU).

"As a result of this, market pricing responds more to market fluctuations now, hence market signals translate quicker to the farmgate compared to 15-20 years ago," Mr Repacholi said.

Despite Australia only sharing 7% of world dairy trade, sitting fourth behind the EU, New Zealand and the US, Mr Repacholi said Australia was still considered an important part of the global dairy market.

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Clean Technologies Award

Z-FILTER has claimed the Dairy Australia Food and Beverage Award at the 2013 Australian Clean Technologies Competition.

The competition showcases Australian companies that are developing clean technologies to enhance the competitiveness and productivity of the nation's key industries.

Clean technologies, such as waste treatment, lighting control, energy storage and more, were matched with the needs of Australia's key industries, and awarded in six industry sector categories.

Z-Filter, a company that is developing a leading filtration technology for the separation of liquids and solids, claimed the Dairy Australia Industry Award.

The technology is built around a Z-Filter Sock that allows wet sludge to be inserted and dry sludge to be extracted.

The system can be used for many applications, with one large market being dairy farms. "Waste slurry can be treated through a Z-Filter machine to produce filtered water for irrigation and dry solids removal," Z-Filter company director Neil Graham said.



Charlie McElhone, Dairy Australia; Wolfgang Hofbrucker, Z-Filter; Neil Graham, Z-Filter; Deryk Graham, Z-Filter; and Neil van Buuren, Dairy Australia, at the 2013 Australian Clean Technologies Competition.

The Z-Filter is being trialled with dairy operations in Europe and the company has also trialled the technology in Australia.

"We first worked with the Harvey Agricultural College, Western Australia, on sludge pit separation, and we are presently running a program, on a 60,000 piggery in Gingin, WA, on cleaning up its settling ponds by being able to re-process the water to give the operation a compostable waste," Mr Graham said.

"We are looking at working with dairy

in Australia. For the dairy industry the Z-Filter can be used for farm and factory, we aim to have the first production of the Z-Filter launched in early 2014."

As the Dairy Australia winner, Z-Filter will be partially funded on a trade mission to China to find customers, partners and investors. "Winning the Dairy Australia award has been brilliant," Mr Graham said. "To have the input of the Australian industry is great."

The competition's 2013 overall winner and Leading Emerging Technology Award was claimed by BluGlass Limited for the development of a technology for the global manufacturers of LEDs and solar photovoltaic cells — a technology that will enable manufacturers to produce higher performing devices at a lower cost and with less environmental impact.

BluGlass will participate in a global competition in California against the winners from other countries.

The 2014 Clean Technologies Competition is expected to launch in March. For more information visit website <www.cleantechcomp.com.au>.



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Cheeses from Spain talk

AUSTRALIAN cheese makers and connoisseurs alike were treated to a free *Cheeses from Spain* seminar sponsored by Dairy Australia, in late 2013.

The seminar featured an array of Spanish and European inspired sessions presented by keynote speaker Oriol Urgell.

Mr Urgell discussed the evolution and market of Spanish and European artisan cheese products as well as the manufacture of Mahon, Tetilla and Manchego cheeses.

"While in Australia people have been very interested in what we do in Spain and how we do it," Mr Urgell said. "They have been interested in how we make cheese in Spain, how Europe uses raw milk, the age of our starters and our use of rennet."

The seminar also covered a range of industry-related topics such as food safety in cheese making, utilisation of whey and programs for up-skilling the dairy industry workforce.

Mr Urgell, a trained agriculture engineer and cheese expert from Barcelona, has a wealth of experience ranging from being an adviser on cheese projects to the dairy industry, to starting his own engineering company to service small to medium-sized dairy businesses.

During his two-week stay in Australia, Mr Urgell also visited dairy factories, featured as an international judge for the Australian Grand Dairy Awards and ran practical cheese workshops and webinars with the National Centre of Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA).

"My visit gives people an opportunity to see another point of view," Mr Urgell said. "When you are working in a factory you don't have the time to look at other ways of doing things."

"It's important to have someone with a different background visit, and say, perhaps you can try this. They can learn something new from me, and I can also learn from them."

The *Cheeses from Spain* seminar was jointly organised by Dairy Australia, Dairy Innovation Australia Ltd and the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia. **D**



Oriol Urgell is the international judge at the Australian Grand Dairy Awards.



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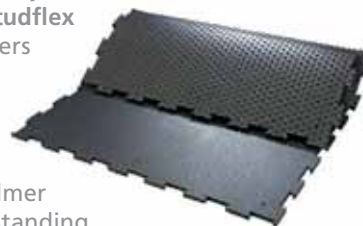
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Bringing Legendairy to life

IT WAS a busy end to a Legendairy 2013 for the Australian dairy industry and 2014 promises to be just as exciting.

The industry has been busy bringing Legendairy to life since the marketing and communications platform was launched in August, with a host of activities rolled out across the country.

Regional Development Programs have helped to build Legendairy's presence in dairy communities through a range of local opportunities.

In October, Cobden, in south-west Victoria, became the first Australian town to fly Legendairy flags, helping to highlight the importance of the dairy industry to the town and the surrounding region.

"Cobden is a good example of where dairy is integrated into the community," WestVic Dairy executive officer Gavan Mathieson said. "We're trying to use Cobden as an inspiration for other towns to get involved."

Legendairy has also had a major presence at state and regional agricultural shows, such as the Brunswick Dairy Showcase and Agricultural Show in Western Australia and the Bega Calf Show in New South Wales.

As a major sponsor at the Royal Adelaide Show in September, Legendairy was seen across education stands, at the 'milk bar' in the Dairy Hall, the dairy judging ring, the infamous, newly named Legendairy Celebrity Milk Off and in the Exhibition Dairy.

"Legendairy had a massive presence at the Adelaide Show," DairySA executive officer Verity Ingham said. "This was a great opportunity to showcase the SA dairy industry to the public and also highlight the fabulous work our dairyfarmers do."

Also in October, Legendairy was a gold partner at the 321-GO fun run in Burnie,



Students at Timboon P-12 School learned about careers in dairy during a curriculum day in November.

one of Tasmania's biggest events for children. Dairyfarming kids wearing special Legendairy t-shirts were among the 1300 participants. Legendairy featured on every runner's bib and participants enjoyed dairy snacks during the day.

As part of Dairy Australia's (DA) schools program, Legendairy attended a November curriculum expo in western Victoria for Timboon P-12 School's Timboon Agriculture Project. The event was an opportunity to educate students and teachers about careers in dairy.

Legendairy also supported the Food SA milkshake stand at Adelaide's annual specialty gourmet cheese festival, CheeseFest, and the launches of new industry initiatives, including SADA Fresh and Green Pastures milk brands in Victoria.

DA continues to profile inspirational farmers and producers in regional and metropolitan newspapers and magazines.

Legendairy has also been building a strong presence with the Australian public.

Eight Legendairy television commercials aired for six weeks in August and September and continue to run online, where



Cobden residents raised the Legendairy flag at the entrance to town in October.

they've been viewed more than 2.7 million times. The commercials will air on TV again in March this year.

Three national radio ads reached an estimated 1.4 million listeners in metropolitan areas and 1.3 million regionally, highlighting dairy's health benefits and contribution to the economy.

Contact website <www.legendairy.com.au>

Dairy courting potential investors

DAIRY Australia will play host to potential dairy investors, banks, government officials and legal firms next month at the inaugural Australian Dairy Investment Forum.

As the Australian dairy industry continues to be a focus for domestic and international customers, suppliers and investors, the forum has been organised to provide interested investors an opportunity to understand the workings of the Australian dairy industry.

The forum will offer information on different production systems and geographical regions, explore case

study investment models, examine the industry's financial performance and provide an overview of Australia's regulatory and operating environment.

Speakers will include leading Australian Government officials and dairy leaders from across the industry.

The one-day event will provide an excellent opportunity to share information, improve knowledge and understanding, network with colleagues and peers and explore opportunities. It will include:

- A conference program with industry

and government experts and specialists sharing their expertise, outlook and strategies, and showcasing Australian dairy industry innovation.

- An exhibition area, providing further information and meeting opportunities.
- A social program to liaise with participants in a relaxed and welcoming environment.

The forum is being held at Zinc in Melbourne's Federation Square on February 24.

For more information visit <www.dairyaustralia.com.au/dairyinvestmentforum>

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"I wouldn't be operating dairy now if I didn't have the MooMonitor system"

Graeme Verrall, Meningie, South Australia

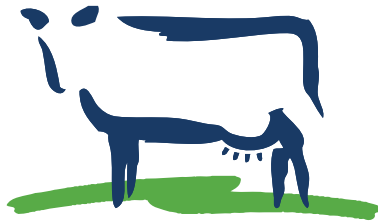
"There is no way I'd go back to visual heat detection. It gives me peace of mind.

I would say it is 99% accurate" Tom Cochrane, Pyree, NSW



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Monday February 24	Pre-conference tour to Warrnambool and surrounds. This tour departs from the Mercure Hotel, Geelong at 7am Monday morning, travelling West to Warrnambool where delegates stay overnight.
Tuesday February 25	Western Districts tour continues, returning to Geelong by 5pm. Australian Dairy Conference welcome function sponsored by Murray Goulburn at Deakin University Waterfront Campus, Geelong from 6-8pm.
Wednesday February 26	Conference Day 1 at Deakin University, followed by the ADC Industry Dinner, sponsored by Rabobank at The Pier, Geelong.
Thursday February 27	Conference Day 2 at Deakin University continuing on for the finale session and Elanco dinner at the Wool Exchange, Geelong.
Friday February 28	Post conference tour, departing Mercure Hotel Geelong at 8.00am and returning to Geelong by 6pm.

THE PROGRAM IN DETAIL

DAY 1

Dairy's image — it's in your hands

8.30am	Paul Roderick Chair Programming Committee	Opening Queensland dairy farmer Paul Roderick provides the opening address to welcome delegates from all over Australia and the international dairying community to Geelong.
8.45am	Ian Cover Master of Ceremonies	What consumers really think about dairy Ian Cover takes to the streets of Geelong to find out what the average person thinks about our industry
8.50am	Trent Loos Loos Tales, Nebraska, USA	Taking control – why every farmer needs to be a voice for agriculture Trent Loos was horrified to discover what some people in his home town were saying about farmers – so he did something about it and now says it's every farmer's responsibility to tell agriculture's story
9.35am	Gary Corbett Fair Oaks Farms, Indiana, USA	People, Planet and Profit – ensuring dairy farming has a future Gary Corbett operates one of the largest dairy farms in the US – but it's much more than a farm. It is also a tourism venture with a philosophy of letting people see exactly how it is run and to taste its products. Gary is committed to sustainability on all fronts
10.15am		Q&A
10.30am		Morning tea break

Taking the long view — creating a golden future

11.15am	Ian Cover	Going global Ian Cover brings onto the stage some of our international guests (including European Dairy Federation delegates) to get a snapshot of what's going on in their part of the world
11.25am	Dion Tuuta Parinini ki Waitotara, New Zealand	Balancing act – preserving the land and producing a profit Dion Tuuta is general manager of a Maori company that is Fonterra's largest milk supplier in the Taranaki. Long-term sustainability of the land and retaining it for future generations is central to the Maori. Dion balances the need to preserve the land and produce a profit to create a future for the Maori landowners
12.00pm	Speaker to be advised	
12.30pm		Q&A
12.45pm		Lunch

Pushing the boundaries – new approaches to old problems

1.45pm		We invite delegates to take a walk around our 'conference farm' and spend some time at the calf shed, milking shed, calving pad and effluent ponds to hear from farmers taking innovative approaches in these areas that are helping improve profitability. (You choose 3 out of the 4) – see next page for Rm4 details.
Room 1	Paul McDowall, Childers Cove, Vic with Gemma Chuck, The Vet Group, Timboon, Vic	Maximising calf nutrition to reduce disease Paul McDowall has implemented fortified milk feeding as part of an integrated program to reduce disease in calves and optimise liveweight gain. The benefits have included minimal sick calves and mortality, along with increased efficiency of the calf-rearing system with reduced labour and veterinary costs. There has been an overall improvement in weaned heifers, in terms of growth and stature.
Room 2	Hugo Avery, VDL farms, Tas. and Greg & Jo Fleming, Finley, NSW with Steve Little, Capacity+ Ag Consulting Vic	Better transition cow management Hugo Avery and Greg & Jo Fleming operate very different production systems, so it is no surprise that they also take very different approaches to transition feeding their springers. Yet both approaches are simple and easy to manage, and very successful in setting cows up for productive, fertile lactations, with minimal cases of milk fever and cow health problems around calving. Hugo lead feeds springers through the milking shed and feeds forages separately, Greg & Jo mix a transition Total Mixed Ration (TMR).
Room 3	Tania and Stephen Luckin, from Mt Clay Farms in Heywood, Vic with Mark Humphris, Maffra, Vic	Hi-tech approach to mastitis control Tania and Stephen Luckin are utilising a new technology to test for milk pathogens and using their IT system to track and assess mastitis control systems with good results.



FEBRUARY 25-27, 2014 GEELONG, VICTORIA

Room 4	Gary Corbett Fair Oaks Farm, US, with Scott McDonald, Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Victoria	Effluency: opportunities in using farm waste For years Gary Corbett's operation has used waste from its 30,000 cows to generate electricity to power 10 barns, a cheese factory, a cafe, a gift shop and a maze of child-friendly exhibits. In 2013 it also started using manure to produce fuel for its delivery trucks, powering 42 tractor-trailers.
3.30pm		Break
Celebrating success – taking up future challenges		
4.00pm	The Feed Central Young Scientists' Award	The future of dairy science Science will play a critical role in a successful dairy industry in the future. The six finalists in the Feed Central Young Scientists Communication Award present step three of their competition: the five-minute presentation of their work
4.45pm	Glenys Zucco, Dairy Australia	Shifting the industry image Dairy Australia launched the new Legendairy industry promotional campaign with a bang six months ago – what has it achieved and how will it make a difference in the industry?
4.55pm	Adam Jenkins, Nuffield scholar, South Purumbete, Vic, and farmers from three Young Dairy Networks	Celebrating Success – getting young farmers involved Adam Jenkins believes the dairy industry must foster the next generation of agricultural leadership and that young farmers have plenty to offer. To show us just what that means, farmers from three Young Dairy Networks present their take on celebrating dairy success.
5.15pm	Legendairy panel	Celebrating Success – your say Ian Cover invites all those who want to be 'legendairy' onto the main stage to 'vox pop' their legendairy ideas
5.15pm	Day 1 Close.	Delegates have time to return to their accommodation and be back at the Pier for the Australian Dairy Conference dinner, sponsored by Rabobank, at 6.30pm

DAY 2

The \$100,000 question – unlocking hidden talent in your business

8.30am	Ian Cover	Welcome back
8.35am	Ian Halliday Managing Director, Dairy Australia	What staff turnover is really costing your business Ian Halliday sets the scene for why people management matters with research revealing that it costs \$100,000 to \$150,000 every time a mid-to-high level employee leaves a dairy farm
8.40am	Frank Costa, Entrepreneur, Philanthropist, Geelong, Vic	People, Passion and Performance Frank Costa built a hugely successful business and reinvigorated a football club by recognising that people had to be at the centre of everything he did. The key was understanding the needs and aspirations of his employees to create a positive work environment and promote an emotional attachment to the business
9.10am	Lee Astridge, Principal Consultant No.8HR, New Zealand	Do you play well with others? Why do people say those things about you? What's the trick to getting the positives out of those negatives? And, why should you care anyway? Understanding your behaviours and those of other people is vital to creating a positive workplace culture through good leadership. This is a fascinating session that helps you take a new look at yourself.
9.40pm	Justine Kidd Business manager BEL Group, New Zealand	Good, better, best – driving performance on farm New Zealand Dairy Woman of the Year, Justine Kidd, realised there was a human resources issue in the BEL Group's 9600-cow dairy operations. So she sought help and put in place the 'Good, Better, Best' program to really lift performance. The Good, Better, Best HR program went on to win the Human Resources Institute of New Zealand (HRINZ) HR Initiative of the Year award in 2011.
10.15am		ADC AGM
10.30am		Break

CHOOSE ONLY ONE CONCURRENT STREAM

OPTION: 1 Secrets of profitable farm systems

11.15am	Neil Lane, Intelact	Sets the scene for the discussion and then asks three top operators with very different farming systems what are the main things that make their systems profitable
11.25am	Paul & Robyn Lindsay, Picola, Vic	High input system A decade of drought prompted these farmers to move from an irrigated pasture-based farm to one of annual pasture with Partial Mixed Ration (PMR) during autumn/winter/spring and TMR over summer. Robyn did a nutrition course so she could formulate the 500-cow herd's ration. But the feeding system is still relatively simple and is generating consistent high returns. The couple were overall winners in the Dairy Business of the Year competition in 2011.
11.35am	The Lang family, Tatura, Vic	Medium input system Werner and Josie Lang started with very little when they moved to Australia 30 years ago. Today they milk 1500 cows on three farms with the involvement of two sons, Phil and Markus. The farm system is based around pasture with use of other inputs to manage variable conditions and to generate higher profits. The family was overall winner in the Dairy Business of the Year competition in 2010.
11.50am	Grant and Mel Rogers, Ouse, Tas	Low input system These farmers have honed a simple, low-cost pasture-based system for their spring-calving 450-cow crossbred herd since they moved to Tasmania from New Zealand 10 years ago. They pioneered the three-milkings-in-two-day system post AI – an example of their efficiency focus. They were Tasmania and low input system winners of the Dairy Business of the Year awards in 2010.

12.05pm	ADC board members Michael Perich and Andrew Tyler	Both have recently returned from overseas study tours and will provide an overview of lessons Australian farmers could learn from South Africa's low-cost systems and Europe's TMR systems.
12.20pm	Panel	Neil Lane gets all the farmers back on stage to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of different systems.

OPTION 2: OR Practical steps to improve your people management

11.15am	Lee Astridge Principal Consultant No.8HR New Zealand	A more detailed look at leadership behaviours and how you can deliver the leadership requirements of your business - your way!
11.50am	Justine Kidd Business Manager BEL Group, New Zealand	This is leadership in action. A look at the "roller coast ride" of how the BEL Group changed their business performance through people.
12.25pm	Lee Astridge	Selection tips to help you get the right people for your business.
12.50pm		The Fonterra Lunch

Discovering where the path might lead

2.00pm	Planning committee members Michael Harvey, from Rabobank, Jo Gorman, Liza Fahey and Beck Middleton	Strategic planning for your future Our committee members set the context for this session that looks at how people enter an industry, negotiate through changes and control their exit
2.05pm	Eliza Brown, CEO All Saints Estate and St Leonards Vineyard	Keeping it in the family Eliza Brown became CEO of her fourth-generation wine family's business overnight when her father was killed in a car accident. With her siblings Angela and Nicholas she has continued her father's formidable legacy.
2.30pm	Matt Harms Gippsland, Vic	Challenge of succession – on the couch We ask consultant Matt Harms – who himself is part of dairy consultant John Mulvany's succession plans – to lead this session and talk with three dairy farmers at different stages of their dairy careers about how they are discovering where the path might lead. Matt puts this into context.
2.40pm	Jim and Jenny Watson and Matt and Caroline Wilson, Poowong, Vic	The Poowong-based Watson and Wilson families are involved in a sharefarm agreement and a vendor finance arrangement on the herd. They came together after several unsuccessful attempts by the Watsons to find a suitable sharefarmer and several unsuccessful attempts by the Wilson family to enter the dairy industry.
2.50pm	Cliff and Marieka, Luke and Mel Wallace, Poowong, Vic	Luke and Mel Wallace sharefarm with parents Cliff and Marieka Wallace. In the past two years they have purchased the remaining 50% of the herd, and 50% of the dairy land assets. Cliff and Marieka Luke were looking to scale back their involvement in dairying, whilst maintaining an adequate income stream, and Luke and Mel Wallace wanted to extend their investment in dairy farming. Hear how they have achieved these aims.
3.00pm	Graeme Mabin Wonthaggi, Vic	Graeme and Mary Mabin were astute enough a couple of years ago to acknowledge that they were asset rich but energy poor, that it was only going to get worse over time and they needed an exit strategy. They have now negotiated a win-win situation, where the skilled younger generation is managing and still growing the older generation's assets, while growing their own asset base.
3.10pm		Question time
3.30pm		Break

Farming a work:life balance

4.00pm	Rob Rendell RMCG Consulting Vic	It's a matter of choice Consultant Rob Rendell spends a lot of time working with farmers and believes as an industry it does not handle work:life balance well. And he knows the challenge getting the balance right involves. Rob runs a business employing 30 people while helping manage the 24-hour care of his disabled child.
4.30pm	Sam Kekovich the 'ambassador'	What can Legendairy learn from lamb? Who better to tell us than the renowned Lambassador Sam Kekovich. As only Sam can do – we finish ADC 2014 with a few politically incorrect lessons on how to celebrate dairy success.
5.00pm		The Incitec Pivot Nitrogen Sundowner: Delegates are invited to the John Hay Courtyard for refreshments and a discussion led by the Incitec Pivot team to explore the Nitrogen loss pathways: A look at rates, timings and products that can lead to greater N efficiencies.
5.45pm		Delegates depart Deakin University for the Wool Exchange
6.00pm		Finale session and dinner sponsored by Elanco
6.30pm		The Moo'in Tranfer This much-loved inter-state competition based on the ABC's Gruen Transfer has five schools, one from each dairying state, compete to create the most effective advert that addresses the challenge: "How to convince the consumer that dairy is an essential part of their diet?"
7.00pm	Neil Gripper, General Manager, Elanco ANZ and Heidi Sutherland, Elanco Southern Region	Heifer International – making a difference one heifer at a time As the world population grows to 9 billion by 2050, everyone is talking about what this means for the global dairy industry and the future prosperity of Australian farmers. In addition to developing new innovation to keep animals healthy and feed a hungry world, Elanco is supporting innovative programs to help thousands of families out of poverty through the gift of livestock. This story is introduced by Neil Gripper and told by Victorian Elanco employee Heidi Sutherland who talks about her personal experience of Heifer International in India and Nepal.
9.00pm		Conference closing speeches



By GLEN FISHER*

Mixed season leads to production decline



SEASON 2013/14 started relatively well with higher farmgate milk prices but mixed seasonal conditions.

South-east export-focused regions: Strong international demand (see article facing page) continues to support elevated global dairy commodity prices and this has in turn underpinned favourable farmgate milk pricing, with step-ups expected to deliver full-year farmgate milk prices well up on 2012/13 levels.

Drinking milk-focused regions: Following realignment of supply arrangements, processors' higher farmgate milk prices suggest the fragile supply-demand balance may be tipping more in producers' favour.

Seasonal conditions have been mixed, with some dairying regions having experienced less favourable conditions in recent months. Winter rainfalls around much of Australia's south-east especially supported good pasture growth earlier in the season. However, wetter than ideal conditions in parts of Tasmania, Gippsland, Western Victoria, and to a lesser extent South Australia constrained production to varying degrees in a relatively late, less than ideal spring.

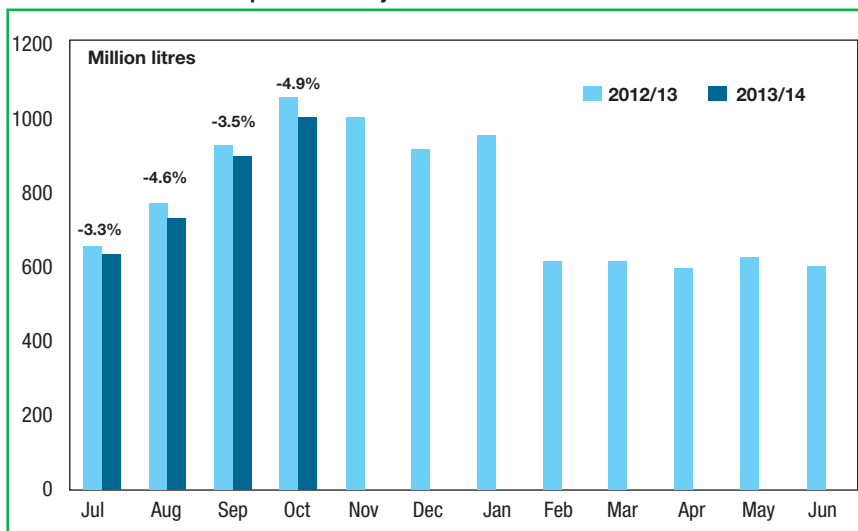
Further north, after floods affected northern dairying regions in the first half of the year, drier conditions have tested many farmers, hindered pasture and crop growth and stressed cows in much of New South Wales and Queensland in the second half of 2013.

Meanwhile, farmers in the dairying regions of Western Australia have seen conditions swing from wet to dry extremes.

Nevertheless, rainfall in irrigation areas has helped to maintain irrigation water availability with allocations at high levels, and, particularly in parts of the south-east, the retained soil moisture should support pasture growth.

Frosts across the south-eastern corner of NSW and in central and eastern Victoria have impacted quality, but put some downward pressure on hay costs. Overall, trends in average grain costs have been mixed; available data for Victoria and WA sug-

Table 1: Australian milk production by month



gests grain prices have softened compared with those seen in the previous season, but prices for wheat, sorghum and other grains have trended slightly up in Queensland and NSW. The prolonged hot, dry weather conditions continuing in the northern regions are likely to spur continued demand for grain and hay, and keep upward pressure on prices in these areas.

As always, further weakening of the Australian dollar might have some mixed impact: putting some upward pressure on the costs of imported inputs such as fertiliser and fuel, but potentially supporting some upside for farmgate milk pricing beyond the current season.

So, at least at the time of writing, season 2013/14 to date represents something of a mixed picture. Despite the positive price signals and initially more favourable seasonal conditions in the south-east and the west, the challenges of bolstering financial positions, herd condition and in-calf rates, sourcing feed at favourable prices – and other handicaps of a difficult previous season and more recently less favourable conditions – have conspired to dampen the full-year production outlook.

Dairy Australia has consequently reduced its forecast full-year milk production volume to 9.0-9.2 billion litres, implying a year-on-year contraction of between 0-2%.

Post-farmgate, there has been unprecedented attention on corporate activity during the fourth quarter of 2013. Part of that attention has served to highlight the industry's export potential.

On that front, there was some good news

for Australian dairy in December with the completion of a Free Trade Agreement with the Republic of Korea (RPK), which is Australia's 10th largest dairy market (in terms of value: 2012/13).

The RPK imports considerable quantities of cheese, whey powder and other Australian dairy commodities. Australian exporters, and by extension dairyfarmer suppliers, stand to benefit from timely implementation of the agreement, which will provide opportunities via additional market access and tariff reductions throughout time.

Of course, completion of the Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement also invites further optimism about the conclusion of free trade agreements with Japan and China, Australia's largest and second largest markets (in terms of volume and value). Dairy Australia continues to work with industry and government to try and get the best possible outcomes.

Back in the Australian domestic dairy trade, on the innovation side the market has seen a number of new products launched including premium yoghurts and yoghurt smoothie beverages. Manufacturers are looking to entice consumers with exotic flavours and formats not only about health and nutrition, but also indulgence and convenience.

So at the close of 2013 the industry has the familiar challenges of growing production and realising new opportunities in expanding markets at home and abroad. **D**

Contact: Glen Fisher, industry analyst — Australia <gfisher@dairyaustralia.com.au>.



By JOHN DROPPERT*

Global prices hold on back of strong demand



GLOBAL dairy markets continue to be characterised by firm pricing across the major commodities, with supplies remaining tight and demand more than sufficient to soak up available volumes.

Most major production regions are showing growth in milk output, however, a further supply response is tipped thanks to robust demand supporting attractive farmgate returns.

GlobalDairyTrade (GDT) auction prices have remained broadly steady in recent months, with the overall index rarely moving more than a few percentage points in any one direction before reversing course. Through November and December, average prices have increased nearly 2% — but were down 2% until the most recent (December 3) event.

Of the volume products, anhydrous milk fat (AMF) has been a big winner, increasing nearly 8% since October to its highest average price since mid-2011. This means that despite having only 21% more fat, AMF is trading at a 44% premium to butter, which has eased 1% in the same period.

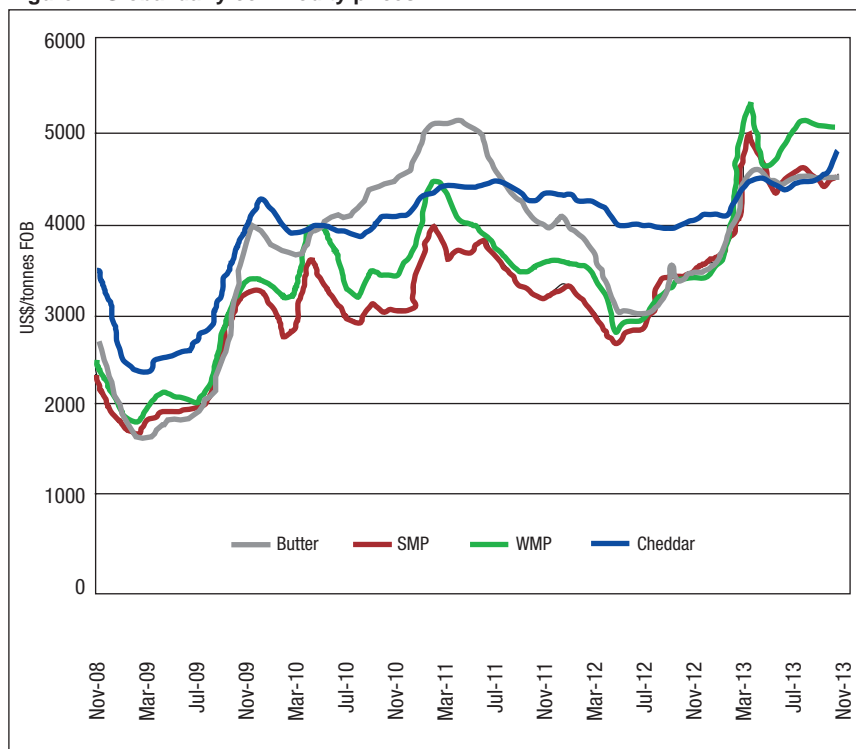
Skim milk powder (SMP) has also seen prices tighten of late (increasing 6% since October), with 'cheaper' options such as US and Indian product having closed the gap on previously more expensive Oceania-sourced SMP.

Brisk trade has also seen discount sources of WMP bid up to values approaching its more expensive counterparts, with Indian WMP most recently selling only \$125 a tonne short of the equivalent Fonterra offering. WMP pricing has been broadly steady, recouping some early November losses to again trade above US\$5000/tonne at the December 3 auction.

This level of pricing is particularly notable given recent weeks have seen record volumes offered for near-term delivery contracts.

Healthy demand from major importing regions remains the key factor driving this level of pricing in the face of a strong supply outlook. China is still the most active buyer as local production remains short — where

Figure 1: Global dairy commodity prices



output can be expanded, feed and other operational costs are such that imports remain a competitive option (to locally produced product) even at current price points.

Reports suggest the composition of Chinese and South-East Asian buyers has changed gradually in recent weeks as many larger players have covered their short-term requirements, leaving smaller participants to secure what's left.

Stock draw down and delays out of India have seen an uptick in Middle East activity as cheaper options are exhausted.

In something of a virtuous cycle for sellers, buyers who had been prepared to wait for a market correction have been coaxed into activity by strong GDT results, only to further support prices through their own scramble for product.

Milk production continues to grow in New Zealand, although the rate of growth reportedly slowed to 2% through November (4% season to date) as some areas experienced drier than average conditions. Intakes are following the seasonal curve downwards, however, with climatic improvements forecast, comparisons with the drought-affected months of early 2013 are likely to see year-on-year growth rates increase again in early 2014.

In the Northern Hemisphere, a 1% increase in US production during October (compared with October 2012) was regarded as sluggish given the prevailing expectations of a rapid supply response. Local analysts are suggesting that fodder supplies remain tight and production margins on the ground are yet to recover as expected, however, few disagree that a significant increase in milk flows is only matter of time.

European Union (EU)-28 milk deliveries have been boosted by favourable weather and better margins, increasing nearly 4% in September. The more expansionary member states have pushed ahead with production growth in anticipation of quota expiry in 2015 — margins are favourable enough that some farmers have expressing a willingness to produce as much as they can and simply pay the super levy fines as required.

While such strong incentives to produce more milk exist, it is inevitable that farmers somewhere will eventually fill the gap between supply and demand. Until that happens — most still expect early to mid 2014 — high prices are likely to remain a feature of the dairy commodity landscape. **D**

Contact: John Droppert, Dairy Australia analyst, email <jdroppert@dairyaustralia.com.au>.

Applying nitrogen to pastures profitably

NITROGEN STUDY

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Pasture growth response to nitrogen varies
- ✓ Study to identify response and potentially profit
- ✓ Will reduce soil nitrogen imbalances

AUSTRALIAN dairy farms are highly dependent on nitrogen (N). Nitrogen provides the building blocks for amino acids, which in turn make up proteins required for most biochemical reactions in living organisms.

"There can be many hundreds of tonnes of nitrogen applied and recycled on a dairy farm each year, yet nitrogen is also the most frequently deficient of all nutrients," senior research scientist with the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries at Ellinbank, Dr Cameron Gourley, said.

"Managing nitrogen on dairy farms is critical to dairy farm productivity, profitability and reducing environmental impacts."



Dairy farms across Australia are spending around \$200 million each year on nitrogen fertiliser.

Nitrogen fertiliser is primarily used on dairy pastures at average rates of about 200 kilograms per hectare per year. However, according to Dr Gourley, this average value can be misleading. "Many farms do not apply any fertiliser nitrogen, while others are applying more than 400 kilograms per hectare per year," he said.

The conversion of this fertiliser nitrogen into extra feed is often low, and with the uncertainty around the extra pasture produced, it is often difficult to determine whether nitrogen fertiliser decisions will be profitable.

"Unlike phosphorus and potassium fertiliser, nitrogen doesn't accumulate in soils, with excess nitrogen lost relatively quickly," Dr Gourley said. "So, this makes the rate and timing of fertiliser nitrogen applications critically important."

This is the focus of the national project Dairy Nitrogen for Profit, which aims to improve the agronomic and economic basis for nitrogen fertiliser decisions on dairy pastures.

The project involves the who's who of scientists and technicians working in nitrogen fertiliser management on dairy farms from Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia, and Australia's leading dairy farm economists, as well as staff from major fertiliser and dairy companies.

"More sophisticated decisions on the use of N fertiliser inputs are required as our dairy farms have intensified," Dr Gourley said. "The Dairy Nitrogen for Profit project is in the process of developing improved tools for farm-specific production and profit responses to nitrogen fertiliser. These will be made available through our partnership with industry."

Recent work has reviewed and utilised nitrogen fertiliser and pasture growth experiments undertaken across Australia in the past 40 years. "We have collected and analyses more than 19,000 experimental results," Dr Gourley said.

"This has largely been facilitated due to the concentration of previous research work in Tasmania, Western Australia and Victoria, and our partnership with associated researchers in each of these states."

This extensive 'meta-analysis' of data enabled the development of an improved predictive model for the relationship between nitrogen fertiliser application and extra pasture grown, applicable to all Australian dairy regions. "The model can be specifically tailored for each State and season of application, and also accounts for overall soil phosphorus status," Dr Gourley said.

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The project team also recognised that these new predictions using historical data sets needed to be tested under current pasture management conditions. "The on-farm research component of this project involves field studies on commercial dairy farms, covering a range of pasture types, soils, irrigation and climate zones," he said.

"The economic, production and environmental aspects of each dairy farm will be monitored and pasture production responses to N fertiliser applications measured at the paddock scale."

Soil and climatic conditions at all sites are also being measured throughout the 12-month experimental period.

"While still early days, the newly derived model appears to be accurately predicting pasture yield response to applied nitrogen," Dr Gourley said.

These new response curves will be further developed in terms of the pasture yield response to each additional increment of nitrogen fertiliser applied.

"The unique aspect of this current project is therefore bringing economics and profit (marginal return over marginal cost) to the fore; linked to improved predictions about pasture responses to N fertiliser applications," Dr Gourley said.

The final stage of this work will be to develop a simple nitrogen fertiliser decision calculator, based on the potential pasture yield response (including variation) and

Case study farmer happy

PETER Edelmaier is a Victorian dairyfarmer participating in the Dairy Nitrogen for Greater Profit project. He operates a 140-cow dairy farm on 206 hectares in West Gippsland.

"I don't consider myself to be a high user of nitrogen," he said. "I apply 40 kilograms of nitrogen per hectare three times a year from May to December.

"Due to the constraints on our business over the past few years we haven't applied any phosphorus or potassium but this year I did apply chicken manure to the whole farm at around seven cubic metres per hectare. I was very pleased with



Peter Edelmaier says he is happy to be part of nitrogen use study.

the results as far as pasture growth.

"I am more than happy to be part of this project as I believe there are efficiency gains to be had with nitrogen use on dairy farms even for conservative farmers like myself."

profitability of nitrogen fertiliser decisions, at the individual farm and paddock scale.

This will bring big benefits to dairyfarmers.

"Australian farmers will be more confident to apply nitrogen fertiliser knowing that their own specific pasture and farm characteristics are considered in the recommendation and that the best available scientific information is being applied," he said. "We expect that dairyfarmers will be able to increase profitability without wasting nitrogen fertiliser."

"This will in turn result in less nitrogen imbalance in soil and a reduction in nitrogen losses from dairy farms to ground water, waterways and the atmosphere, benefiting the entire Australian dairy industry."

The project has widespread support from the Geoffrey Gardiner Dairy Foundation, Department of Environment and Primary Industries Victoria, Department of Agriculture and Food WA, Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, Fertilizer Australia, Incitec-Pivot Limited, Murray Goulburn Limited and Fonterra Limited.



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Champion Udder,
Brisbane Royal 2013
- Jondene Velda 7
(Jondene Ford)



Res Supreme
Intermediate
Udder, Brisbane
Royal 2013 -
Riverwood
Model 6

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13,472 Litres, 444 kgsP, 500 kgsF, 305D

Lifetime Production: 57338 Litres

Res Champ All Australian & Qld Prod Cow of the Year 2009

J P Bourke & Co, QLD

Panorama Angeline 9 EX94-4E

(Lemon Grove Bygold)

DAM OF PANORAMA ANTICIPATION

4 times Champion Cow Brisbane. Real Aust & World Red Cow Photo Comp

10,250 Litres - 329 kgsP - 383 kgsF - 305D

K & A Dorries, QLD

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DAM OF STORMAN JET-SON

Champion Cow, Sydney Royal 2013 & 2011

9055 Litres, 3.3% 301 kgsP, 4.1% 371 kgsF

Lifetime: 4 Lactations - 32,236M, 3.3% 1059 kgsP, 4.0% 1279 kgsF

J Norman, NSW

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THINK DIVERSE MODERN GENETICS, think *hardy*, think *heat tolerance*, **THINK PROFIT.**



Den Dia Minnie 5 EX90

(Fyn Aks)

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RES CHAMP BUTTERFAT COW BRISBANE RNA 2013**

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DAM OF LLANDOVERLY PRIDE'S PROPHET

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Panorama Lady 38 EX

MGD OF PANORAMA LANDMINE

DAM OF PANORAMA ROYAL TREBLE

3 times Brisbane Royal Champion and

1st Aged Cow 2005 Real Aust Photo Comp

Landmine's Dam — Panorama Lady 47 VG 88

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K & A Dorries, QLD

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Date: 19 to 23 January 2014

Venue: Tatura Park Exhibition Centre,
Tatura, Victoria

www.internationaldairyweek.com.au



ADF1330403

IDW promises to be bigger, better

By CARLENE DOWIE

INTERNATIONAL DAIRY WEEK

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **When:** January 19-23, 2014
- ✓ **Where:** Tatura, Vic
- ✓ **What:** Shows, sales, farm tours, seminars, workshops, machinery field days

AUSTRALIA'S premier dairy showing event, International Dairy Week (IDW), promises to be bigger and better in 2014.

IDW director Brian Leslie said entries were every bit as good as last year with more than 1000 head of cattle from every dairy state in Australia competing across six national breed shows and an all-breeds youth show. Several past champions would be back in a number of breeds and would be sure to create interest, Mr Leslie said.

IDW has grown from a humble Holstein show and sale and an all-breeds youth show established in 1990. It now attracts visitors from across the globe and is considered one of the top five dairy cattle shows in the world.

It incorporates a series of top breed sales, information seminars and workshops, farm progeny tours, receptions for international and other guests and the IDW Dairy and Machinery Field Days.

The event includes the national shows for Holsteins, Jerseys, Illawarras, Ayrshires, Guernseys and Brown Swiss, as well as the youth show. A highlight is the presentation of Australia's grand champion dairy cow, selected from the champions of the different breeds.

IDW has also garnered a reputation as the event for Australia's leading sales in all dairy breeds.

Mr Leslie said the offering of cattle this year was as strong as he had ever seen.

The Guernsey breed will be conducting a sale for the first time in a number of years and has attracted strong interest. Elite Brown Swiss, Ayrshires and Jerseys will also be sold at dedicated sales.

The highlight would be the IDW Semex Spectacular Sale where elite Holsteins would be sold, he said.

Mr Leslie said higher milk prices and more confidence in the industry would be good for sales, with buyers being offered to the opportunity to obtain some of the best cattle genetics in the world.

Several lots would be sold with genomic



Supreme champion dairy cow at IDW last year with Judy Drew, Tatura, Vic; exhibitors Chris and Mary Gleeson, Elm Park, Koroit, Vic, and their children Hanna, Stacy and Cleo; handler Stewart Robinson, Cobden, Vic; and Mayor Jenny Houlihan, Greater City of Shepparton, Vic, presenting the award.

was from a dam sold at IDW for \$3500.

He said IDW was where the best pedigrees were sold without reserve so people could buy top genetics at good prices.

Mr Leslie said IDW also offered the opportunity for dairyfarmers to meet up with dairy people from around the world. IDW welcomes international visitors and guests who want to see first-hand a wonderful showcase of the Australian dairy industry. A special reception is held for international guests.



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2014 program of events

Friday January 17

Aussie Red and Crossbreeding Herd Visits

10am: Adrian and Leanne Buykx, 5700 Benalla-Tocumwal Rd, Muckatah, Vic
11.15am: Chris and Cecelia Dale, 541 Churchill Rd, Yarroweyah, Vic
12.30pm: Daryl and Lani Hoey, 160 Christies Rd, Katunga, Vic (includes barbecue lunch and genomics update)
 For further information email <info@aussiereds.com.au>

Sunday January 19

9.30am: Non-denominational Church Service – Blackmore & Leslie Complex
1pm: Youth Clinic – Blackmore & Leslie Complex
6pm: Welcome to IDW 2014 Happy Hour – Wilson Hall
6.30pm: Opening of the 2014 ABS Showcase Display

Monday January 20

8.30am: ABS Australia/Ridley Dairy Feeds All Breeds National Youth Show – Blackmore & Leslie Complex
2.30pm: The IDW Youth Showmanship Classes – Blackmore & Leslie Complex
3.30pm: Holstein Australia Victoria Youth Challenge Trials – Blackmore & Leslie Complex
6.30pm: Holstein Youth Barbecue and Presentation of Awards – Wilson Hall

Tuesday January 21

8am: National Illawarra Show –

Blackmore & Leslie Complex
8.30am: National Ayrshire Show – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

10am: Machinery and Trade Field Days supported by *Dairy News Australia* – Main Oval

10am: IDW Seminars Begin – Main Oval

Noon: IDW Elite Ayrshire Sale – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

Noon: IDW Australian Guernsey National Sale – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

Noon: IDW Australian Brown Swiss Sale – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

1.30pm: National Guernsey Feature Show – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

1.30pm: National Brown Swiss Show – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

6pm: Welcome Reception for International Visitors – Wilson Hall

7pm: International Dairy Week Jersey Showcase Sale – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

7.30pm: National Herd Improvement Association of Australia International Dinner – Cellar 47, Shepparton

Wednesday January 22

7.30am: Zoetis Client Breakfast – Seminar Marquee

8am: RASV Dairy Leaders Breakfast – Ballantyne Centre

8.30am: Semex Holstein Daughter Inspection Tour & Heatime Inspection Visit

8.30am: National Jersey Show – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

10am: IDW Seminars Begin – Main Oval

10am: Machinery & Trade Field Days, supported by *Dairy News Australia* – Main Oval

Noon: Genervations Canada & Australia: Genomics Going Forward: What Next – Wilson Hall

12.30pm: Jersey Australia Futurity Class – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

1.30pm: National Jersey Show Continues – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

4pm: RASV Fine Foods Showcase – Walkway to Ballantyne Centre

6pm: Holstein Australia – Launch of Centenary Celebrations – Seminar Marquee

7.30pm: International Dairy Week Semex Spectacular Sale – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

Thursday, January 23

8am: Feed Central Breakfast – Seminar Marquee

8.30am: National Holstein Show – Class 1 to 8 – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

Noon: Sex Semen Update – Update and Luncheon in Seminar Marquee

1pm: National Holstein Show Continues – Class 9

4pm: Grand Champion Presentations – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

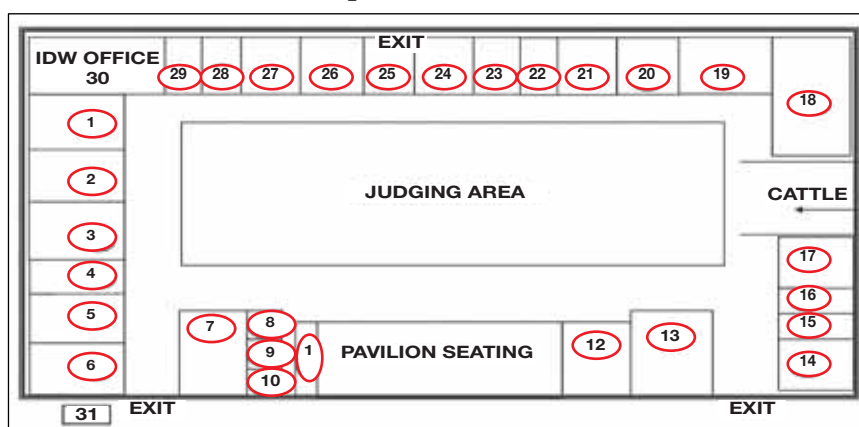
5pm: Presentation of Viking Genetics Health for Profit Award – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

5pm: Presentation of Lex Bunn Memorial Award – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

5pm: Presentation of Australia's Grand Champion – Blackmore & Leslie Complex

IDW site map

ABS Australia	1
ADF Milking	5
Agri-Gene	7
Alta Genetics	2
CCD Animal Health	10
CRV Australia	17
Devondale & Murray Goulburn	14
DLS – Livestock & Real Estate	24
DMSAfirmilk	5
Genervations	3
Genetics Australia	13
Hays Genetics International	9
Holstein Australia	19
IDW Office	30
JEFO Australia	12
Jersey Australia	22
Media Centre	30
Megalac	15
Murray Dairy-Dairy Australia	20
National Australia Bank	27
OvaSem Pty Ltd	8
Performance Probiotics	21
Ridley Dairy Feeds	23



Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria (RASV)	11
RPS Industries (Surefoot)	16
Semex	18
<i>The Australian Dairyfarmer</i>	29
Total Livestock Genetics	4

US Livestock Genetics	26
Export Inc	26
Viking Genetics	28
Visitor/Tourism Information Centre ..	31
World Wide Sires	25
Zoetis	6

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Judges for 2014 shows

National All Breeds Youth Show

Pat Nicholson, Australia: Mr Nicholson is a partner in the family operation Jugiong Jerseys, milking 550 registered Jersey cows averaging 6500 litres. He is the fourth generation to be involved in the stud, which is situated in Northern Victoria. Jugiong Jerseys contains some of Australia's highest classified and highest production cows. Mr Nicholson and his wife, Carmen, have a two-year-old son, Riley.

Mr Nicholson has had the honour of judging in all states of Australia including Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Toowoomba Royals, New South Wales State Jersey show and On Farm Challenges throughout Victoria and South Australia. He was also a judge at the 2011 World Jersey Conference show at the New Zealand Dairy Event.

He has always had a passion for the dairy industry and is committed to encouraging the next generation through various youth programs.

IDW Sheri Martin Memorial Showmanship Classes

Matt Templeton, Australia: Mr Templeton was raised on a registered Holstein farm in Victoria, Australia. For 13 years he has worked as a professional cattle fitter. This work has taken him across Australia, New Zealand, US, Canada, Brazil and Germany — where he has had the privilege of helping prepare some of the best cows in the world including 2012 World Dairy Expo Supreme Champion, RF Goldwyn Hailey, and also working with the Budjon show string at Madison for the past seven years.

Recently Mr Templeton has slowed down the fitting side of his life and is now more involved at home on the family farm with his parents Bruce and Jan Templeton where they operate View Fort Holsteins in

Tarwin, Victoria. Mr Templeton has judged the Victoria State showmanship final, the Queensland State Showmanship final, the Tasmania State Showmanship final and numerous other shows across Australia and New Zealand. He regularly assists with and promotes youth activities throughout Australia.

National Ayrshire Show

Kevin Smith, Australia: Queensland Ayrshire breeder Kevin Smith comes to IDW with significant experience in breeding, showing and judging dairy cattle. He is one of five children and a third-generation dairyfarmer. His family recently celebrated 100 years of breeding and registering Ayrshire dairy cattle. His grandfather was made a life member of the Queensland Ayrshire Cattle Society in 1959 and his father was made a life member of Ayrshire Australia Limited in 2000.

Kevin Smith has been a farmer for more than 40 years, having farmed on Brisbane River flats outside of Ipswich, Queensland since 15 years of age. He milks about 60 cows all year round on 54 hectares (with unlimited irrigation on 26ha) with his wife, Sharron.

He has significant experience in showing cattle, having won Champion Ayrshire cow at the Royal Brisbane Show 17 times in 20 years.

National Illawarra Show

Keith Dorries, Australia: Mr Dorries has been a dairyfarmer and Illawarra breeder (Panorama Illawarras) for 40 years farming at Oakey, Queensland. Together with his wife, Annette, they milk 100 Illawarra cows on 500 hectares that also includes cereal cropping. Mr Dorries is a third-generation dairyfarmer with his grandfather starting with 65ha on the property in 1918.

Mr Dorries feels fortunate to have been involved in the Illawarra breed at a time when the controlled

introduction of Red dairy genetics from throughout the world began. The introduction of the new Red genetics allowed the Panorama herd to greatly improve type and production.

Panorama has shown successfully at the Brisbane Royal Show winning 11 Champion Cow awards, including one Supreme Cow award, many Intermediate Champions, including three heifers gaining supreme awards, and 14 most successful exhibitor awards.

Several Panorama bulls have entered artificial breeding centres including Panorama Royal Treble, which is the highest rated sire in the American Milking Shorthorn Breed.

Mr Dorries has judged at many shows including twice at Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide Royal Shows.

National Guernsey Show

Blaine Crosser, US: Blaine Crosser, from Marysville, Ohio, has served as the official judge for the Guernsey breed in the US and internationally. Twice a judge at World Dairy Expo in 2000 and 2011, Mr Crosser has placed Guernseys at national shows in Canada and on the Isle of Guernsey during the 2013 World Guernsey Conference. In addition, Mr Crosser has judged at the Iowa, Illinois, Ohio and Oregon state fairs, Eastern States Exposition, Pennsylvania Farm Show and the Midwest Guernsey Classic.

A graduate of The Ohio State University, Mr Crosser is employed as the dairy sire product manager and Guernsey sire analyst by Select Sires, Plain City, Ohio. He has bought prominent bulls such as Trotacre Loral Tiller-ET and Sniders Option Aaron-ET that have had a major impact in the Guernsey breed.

Mr Crosser owns a small number of Guernseys that are housed at Marodore Farm, Baltimore, Ohio. His family, (wife, Gail and children, Aaron and Mandy) exhibit at National Guernsey shows and the Ohio State Fair and have bred two All-American heifers.

National Brown Swiss Show

Dr Alfred Weidele, Germany: Since 2000 Alfred Weidele has been the managing director of the RBW, Rinderunion Baden-►



Pat Nicholson



Kevin Smith



Matt Templeton



Keith Dorries



Blaine Crosser

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PLUS

Sweetie Plus latolas Bold latola x Artist



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The All-Round Proven A2/A2 Jersey Star With Good Type, Production & Show Style

SANDBLAST

Nowell Sandblast Flowerpower x Admiral



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Australia's No.1 APR A2/A2 Jersey Sire Who Offers Good Type, Production & Udders

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Wilsonview Jevon Magnum - ET Jevon x Impuls



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Stylish "Connection" Son From The Much Admired "Kookie" Cow Family in Canada

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100% IDW \$18

Excellent A2/A2 Genomic Jersey Sire With Excellent Type, Production & Components

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100% IDW \$16

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TEQUILA

Tower Vue Prime Tequila ET Primotime x Sambo

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100% IDW \$32

TBONE

Richies Jace Tbone A364 Jace x Lemvig

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100% IDW \$32

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Dr Alfred Weidele

Dr Weidele has completed studies in agriculture including a diploma thesis about *Dairy Farming on Major Operations*.

In his spare time Dr Weidele manages a mixed farm operation with his wife and two young children (50 cows, 75 hectares).

Dr Weidele has judged the National Show Bogota, Colombia (Simmental, Brown Swiss) in 2003 and 2010; Federal Simmental Show Austria, 2011; Brumath, France, Holstein show 1998; Formel 50,000, Tyrol, Austria 2008; Fair Wels, Austria, 2008; Fair Ried, Austria, 2007; Vorderwälder National Show, Germany, 2007; Regional Show Lower Austria, Austria (all breeds) 2009; Regional Show Salzburg, Germany, (all breeds), 2010; Regional Show Steier-

mark, Austria (all breeds), 2012; Brown Swiss Day, Waldsee, Germany, 2006, 2012; Central Agricultural Show Munich, Germany, (Brown Swiss, Holstein), 2008, and many regional community cattle shows in Baden-Württemberg.

National Jersey Show

Mike Heath, US: No stranger to the judging ring, IDW is welcomes Michael Heath to Australia. Mr Heath was brought up on Spring Valley Jersey Farm, Westminster, Maryland, US. His father, a well-known photographer, Billy Heath along with grandfather John Stiles and uncles, Wayne and Allen Stiles, had a big influence on Mr Heath's growth in the industry and instilled the passion for Jersey and Holstein breeds.



Mike Heath

Mr Heath has made a living as a cattle merchandiser and breeder. He started as a cattle fitter, which enabled him to have the contacts to start into the buying and selling business. For 25 years Mr Heath has judged some prominent cattle shows around the world

including the 2012 International Holstein Show, 2013 International Red and White Show, 2009 International Jersey Show — all at World Dairy Expo as well as the 2005 Jersey Show at the Royal Winter Fair. He is slated to judge the Holsteins in January at the Swiss Expo before coming to IDW.

Mr Heath has owned, sold and or developed many prominent cows in the Jersey breed. It started with Pensmith TJ Mindy EX94, 1993 National Grand Champion at the All American. Since then the most well-known cow he has owned was Vandenberg Amedeo Gorgeous EX97. He also found and marketed Waymar Patrick Nadine EX97 and Extreme Electra EX95 for their new owners at the time.

Apart from the Jerseys, a few of the prominent Holsteins Mr Heath has owned and sold are Friendly Acres Linjet Murphy EX96 and Kingstead Cheif Adeen EX94. As time went on, the most influential cow he has owned part of and developed is Durham Atlee, the dam of Atwood, Aftershock and Golden Dreams to name a few.

National Holstein Show

Juan José Felissia, Argentina: Juan José Felissia is a well-known Argentine breeder and co-owner of La Magdalena, Rafaela, Santa Fe Province, which was started by his uncle until 1985, when Juan José and his sisters Ana and María bought the firm and the herd. They continued breeding with the same prefix Ninin for females and Ricarm for males and they are proud to have bred, since then, 88 Excellent cows.



Juan José is an official judge for the Argentine Holstein Association since he was 17 years old and has the international category for almost 30 years. He judged most of the important shows in Argentina including the Palermo Show in 1991 and 2013, the National Show twice and the first edition of Mercoláctea in 2001. Internationally he judged in two opportunities the National Show in Uruguay, as well as many of their regional shows, six shows in Brazil, and also Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

In the Holstein Association in Argentina he is a member of the judges' committee, was an official classifier between 1971 and 1977, and member of the Council of Regional Directors many times.

Breeding Holstein cows is not his only passion, he is determined to be a good golfer too.



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Getting young people involved in showing

THE youth of the dairy industry are vital to its ongoing growth and success. International Dairy Week (IDW) is committed to providing opportunities for young people to learn, to be challenged and to participate in events aimed at fostering this development. There are a number of events during IDW aimed at developing the youth of the dairy industry.

The IDW Youth Clinic, to be held Sunday January 19, from 11.30am, is designed to help young people learn more about showing dairy cattle. The clinic is an opportunity for young people to come together to meet experienced cattle showers and participate in a fun, interesting and relaxed format that may include show ring etiquette, preparing an animal for showing, clipping, supplies for a show, showmanship, washing, feeding at a show, and herdsmanship.

There is no charge and the clinic runs for about one hour with free information hand-outs and give-aways. Clinic attendees have the opportunity to learn from and ask questions of some of the most experienced people in the dairy industry worldwide.

Although the clinic is geared towards 8-to-15-year-olds, youth of any age are invited to participate.

For more information contact John Maher, phone 0439 556 348; Paul Quirk, phone 0428 242 589 or Fleur Ferguson, phone 0427 266 291.

The ABS Australia/Ridley Agri Products All Breeds National Youth Show, to be held on Monday January 20, is for interested young people, between the ages of eight



International Dairy Week provides plenty of opportunities for young people to learn about showing with an entire day devoted to various youth events.

and 21-years-of-age. There are 16 classes for junior and senior handlers depending upon age. Renowned and respected industry breeders will be chosen to judge on the day and pass on their knowledge and expertise to up and coming showers.

The Sheri Martin Memorial Youth Showmanship Classes will held on Monday January 20, following the National Youth Show. There are three sections:

- senior section — aged 18-21 years on the day of show;
- intermediate section — aged 14-17 on the day of show; and
- junior section — aged 8-13 on the day of show.

No entry fee or form is required, participants just need to put their names forward to the show stewards.

The Holstein Youth Dairy Youth Challenge will be held on Monday January 20, at 3.30pm.

Teams from dairy youth groups, sub

branch areas, interstate teams or minor breed teams (Guernsey, Ayrshire, Brown Swiss and Illawarra) may enter a national team in the event.


Teams consist of 10 working members, plus a team co-ordinator. There are various rules around the ages of team to ensure a mix of junior and working members in each team.

Cattle for clipping are randomly allocated on the Sunday evening before the competition to each team, which is then responsible for feeding, watering and cleaning their animal leading up to the event. Points will be deducted from any team deemed to have not adequately cared for their animal

Teams are judged on clipping of the animal, judging the classes and parading.

For more information contact Holstein Youth representatives Vaughn Johnston, phone 0408 304526; Ben Taylor, phone 0439 836 503 or Tom Pearce, phone 0409 045 548.



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Range of free seminars

INDUSTRY experts with a vast array of expertise will converge on International Dairy Week to provide dairy-farmers and industry representatives with the latest information on a wide range of topics. Seminars are free to attend and will be held in an air-conditioned marquee on the main oval. Each seminar lasts for between 45 and 60 minutes.

Tuesday January 21

• **10am, Virtual Farm Tour, Dutch Hollow Farm, supported by Jersey Australia, guest speaker, Cherie Bayer, US:** The 2014 IDW Seminars will start with a virtual tour of Dutch Hollow Farm, New York State, US. It was established in 1976, when the Chittenden family moved from Paul Chittenden's home farm, Fair Weather Farm, New Lebanon, New York, to a farm at Schodack Landing, New York. Today Dutch Hollow Farm is operated as a limited liability corporation.

The partners are brothers Brian, Alan and Nathan Chittenden, and their parents, Paul

and Melanie. The herd has grown from 55 cows to 600 cows. About 450 heifers are raised on the farm as well.

Dutch Hollow Farm is the second-largest registered Jersey herd in New York. It ranks among the top 100 herds in the country for Jersey Performance Index (JPI) with an average JPI of +68 on 591 cows.

The Dutch Hollow cropping operation encompasses about 800 hectares of land in the towns of Stuyvesant, Schodack Landing and Kinderhook. An additional 485ha are custom harvested for local customers.

• **11am, Nutrition Management to Improve Conception Rates, supported by Ridley Dairy Feeds, guest speaker, Andre Nel:** The modern dairy cow has impressive genetic potential for milk production. It is vital to unlock that potential to optimise herd performance financially and physically.

Higher production in some systems can come at a cost with lower conception rates, but there is not a direct correlation between milk production and fertility. Good nutri-

tion and feeding management will limit the impact of increased production on conception rates. It is important to understand that nutritional limitations can vary significantly between dairy herds.

This presentation will look into how key nutrients affect conception rates, signs to look for determine what may be compromising conception rates and the best strategies to overcome nutrient shortages or imbalances.

• **1pm, Workforce Development in the Dairy Industry, supported by Murray Dairy and Dairy Australia, guest speaker, Dairy Australia group manager people & capability Shane Hellwege:** Labour will be the theme of the session with a preview of the new Employment Starter Kit (ESKi) followed by Shane Hellwege explaining how Murray Dairy supports farmers with their workforce development needs and helps farmers become better employers. The ESKi has been sourced from the People in Dairy website to provide a folder of information and templates so farmers can maintain their people management requirements. More than simply legal compliance, ESKi works towards improving employer skills and experience for employees. Dairyfarmers can also pick up a show bag when they visit the Murray Dairy stand.

• **2pm, Electronic Heat Detection Can Change Your Life, supported by Genetics Australia, Julian Bentley:** Julian Bentley shows how dairyfarmers can save time and make more money using electronic heat detection systems. With case studies from MooMonitor systems installed across Australia and worldwide, the seminar shows evidence of improved submission, conception and identification of cow health issues. Mr Bentley looks after the MooMonitor ►

Seminars at breakfast and lunch

GETTING cows back in calf: Getting cows back in calf each year continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing the modern dairy-farmer. Almost one in four cows were identified as non-cyclers in a recent Australian trial.

Zoetis is presenting an information seminar during breakfast on Wednesday January 22, from 7.30am in the seminar marquee. Attendees can learn more about the trial and the steps they can take to get non-cycling cows back in calf sooner.

RSVP is essential. Contact Nicole Cannon, Zoetis, email <nicole.cannon@zoetis.com> or phone (02) 8876 0312 to book a place.

Genomics Going Forward: What NextGenerations Canada and Australia will host a lunch on Wednesday January 22, from noon. Guest speakers will be from Mapel Wood Farms and O'Connor Land & Cattle Company Ontario, Canada.

For details contact Peter Semmens, mobile 0488 404 373 or email <peter@genervations.com.au>.



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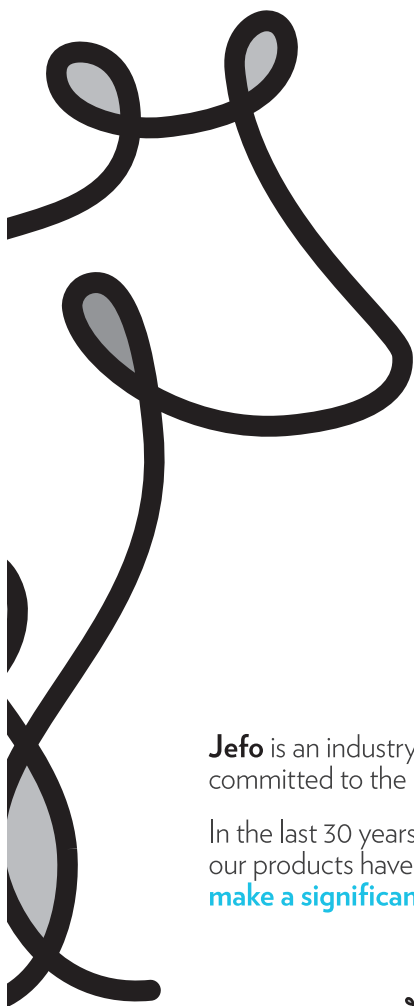
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◀ systems in Australia and came to Australia after working at the Animal and Grassland Research Institute in the UK and has a Master's Degree from Swinburne.

Wednesday January 22

• **10am, Virtual Farm Tour, Germany, supported by Brown Swiss Australia, guest speaker Dr Alfred Weidele:** This virtual farm tour will explore dairyfarming practices in Germany, which accounts for about 20% of total dairy production in the European Union. It has 4.2 million dairy cows and 82,900 dairy farms. The European Union with its present 27 member countries is the largest milk producer in the world. The largest producers within the EU are Germany and France.

As noted by *The Australian Dairyfarmer* in July 2013, dairyfarmers in Europe's largest milk-producing country, Germany, are preparing for a brave new world. The end of dairy quotas in the European Union in 2015 will shake up an industry where the average herd size is just 50 cows. The Germans are also banking on genomics to provide new export opportunities for their genetics — either in the form of semen for artificial insemination (AI) or as live heifers. The Holstein organisation points to the depth of its breeding program based on high rates of milk recording and herd classification and a total merit index that has included health and type traits for more than a decade as key fac-

tors for its future genetic success. Farmers are also cashing in on the German push for renewable energy, with many investing in solar energy and biogas production on-farm.

• **11am, Nutrition Management to Improve Conception Rates, supported by Ridley Dairy Feeds, guest speaker Andre Nel:** Repeat of Tuesday seminar on same subject (see above).

• **12pm, The Newest Tool in the Fight Against Calf Scours, supported by Zoetis, guest speaker Dr Neil Charman:** Dr Neil Charman will present new results demonstrating the performance of Ultravac Scourshield against calf scours on Australian farms. Dr Charman will explore how the vaccine works, indications for its use and discuss practical ways to help reduce the incidence of calf scours on farm.


Dr Charman is the strategic technical manager for Zoetis. He has extensive industry experience and has worked as a dairy veterinarian for most of his career. Dr Charman completed his Masters in Dairy Medicine in 1995 and his MBA in 2006. He has been with Zoetis in the area of clinical development since 2007 where his clinical research has been strongly focused on positive outcomes for dairy cattle and the dairy industry.

• **1pm, Virtual Farm Tour, Argentina, supported by Holstein Australia, guest speaker The Argentine Holstein Association:** Argentina has about 1.85 million dairy cows distributed in 11,800 dairy farms

(SENASA, 2009). Argentina's milk production is based in the central and east-central regions of the country, known as the Pampas, which includes parts of Córdoba, Santa Fe, Buenos Aires, Entre Rios and La Pampa provinces. In these regions, dairyfarming is all pasture-based and depends exclusively on rainfall, with no confinement of dairy herds.

The dairy herd is almost exclusively (98%) of a nationally adapted Holstein breed, the Holando Argentino, totalling more than 3.5 million head. Herd selection and genetic improvement are common to all farms. More than half of the dairy cow population is inseminated with semen from selected bulls, through AI, but it is still common practice for cows to be serviced naturally by bulls after a second failed AI attempt.

• **2pm, GEA Dairy Technologies and SCR Heatime Product — The Next Generation, supported by Semex and GEA/Milfos, guest speaker Vaughn Johnston.** Semex in association with GEA/Milfos is marketing the world renowned SCR Heatime electronic activity and rumination system, designed to assist improved heat detection, improved submission rates, lower levels of drug usage, reduced labour around heat detection and the early detection of digestive and other problems.

Vaughn Johnston is the product specialist and will present real data from customers already using the Heatime product, proving the value of this investment. 

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The Pure Jersey Breeders Association of Australia Inc. consist of Jersey breeders who are dedicated to the preservation of the purity of the Jersey breed in Australia and who strive to uphold the standard for type and production for which the traditional Australian Jersey has long been renowned.

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All correspondence to
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Visitors to International Dairy Week can see top dairy genetics in the show ring or in progeny displays or on farm visits.

Progeny and farm tours

A NUMBER of progeny and property tours are held before and during International Dairy Week.

• **ABS Showcase — Monday January 20, to Thursday January 23, of IDW — Tatura Park:** IDW 2012 saw the inaugural inclusion of the ABS Australia Showcase and ABS was excited by the response it received from breeders and everyday dairyfarmers. This has been backed up by many comments from customers throughout the year on how much they liked the idea. ABS has had a number of phone calls offering cows for IDW 2014. The idea has been around for a number of years with a similar event happening

in the late 1990s, with cows brought to a central location at the previous Warnett AB site, while daughter tours have been a success since the beginning of IDW.

The showcase allows IDW visitors to take the opportunity to walk into an air-conditioned tent and see daughters of ABS Australia's best bulls in the flesh at any time of the day. Showcase 2014 will be showing off daughters of some ABS favorites including the Holsteins Shottle, Bolton, Destry RC, Aftershock, Vindicate, McCormick and Pothole and the Jersey, Vavoom.

Among them are cows that have set

huge records at home — first placed cows at Royals and IDW, bull mothers, On Farm Challenge winners and everyday progeny test daughters who stand out from the crowd.

The animals come to the showcase from far and wide — the Riverina, Northern Victoria, Gippsland and Western Victoria.

The showcase will be located between the cattle sheds opposite Wilson Hall.

• **Semex Holstein Daughter Inspection Tour — Wednesday January 22:** Contact Karen at Semex, phone (03) 9743 0344, to book in for the half-day bus tour.

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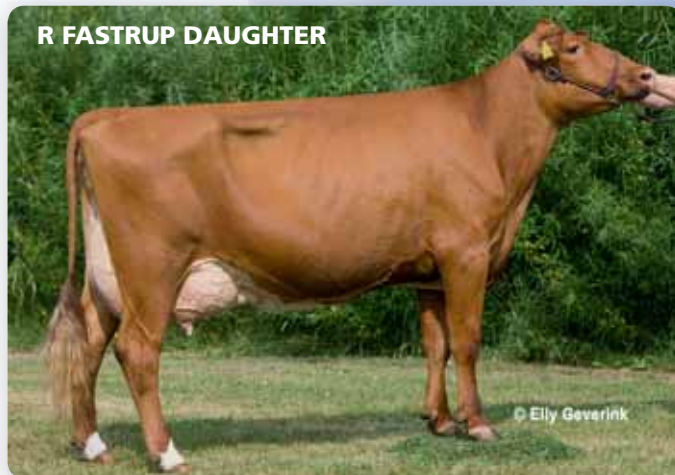


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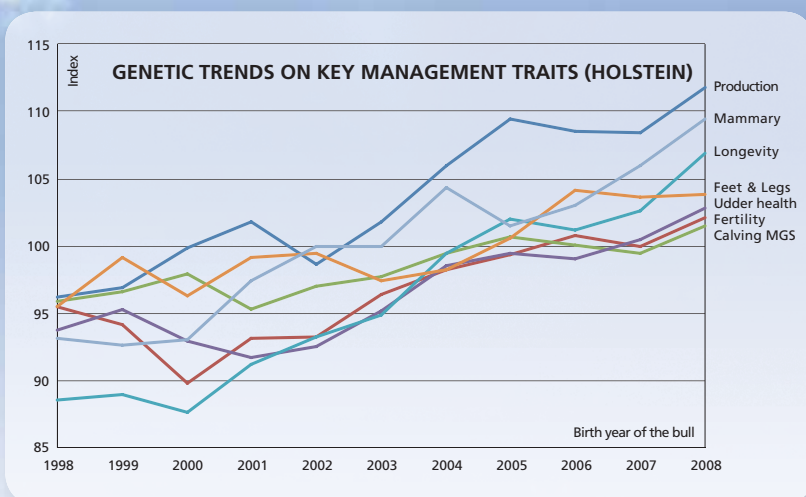
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1 ADHIS statistics 2010/11 2 ADHIS statistics 2011/12



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Adding Jerseys to the herd benefits Vic dairyfarmers

When Victorian dairyfarmers, Stuart and Emily Haberle, had a good look at their business, they realised that if they stayed in the direction they were going, they weren't going to be able to stay in dairying.

When they started up 5 years ago, they noticed they had an issue with their Holstein herd's milk solids after the first 12 months. This led them to introducing Jerseys into their Holstein herd.

They decided to sell 50 Holsteins and replace them with 60 Jerseys. The result has seen their feed costs per kg reduced significantly and achieve a better solid count which is helping them make more money.

Stuart and Emily milk 260 cows comprising of an equal split between Jerseys, Jersey-Holstein cross and Holsteins.

Their farm is located in Nathalia, in the Goulburn Valley, Vic. It comprises of 186 hectares of which 55 hectares is effective milking land. They lease 32 hectares as a runoff block and grow maize silage on 18 hectares.



Stuart and Emily with their 4yo cow Homelands Governess Patsie.

They irrigate around 90 hectares using 600 mega litres a year. The farm is flood irrigated which Stuart finds, "time consuming" but has plans to upgrade his system in the future.

They grow a lot of hay and silage on farm. This season they produced 960 rolls of hay and 200 tonnes of dry matter silage.

As a husband and wife partnership, Stuart and Emily pro-



Stuart and Emily Haberle introduced Jerseys to their herd after re-evaluating the direction they were going.

vide the labour for their farm themselves. They find having Jerseys in the herd means they can manage everything themselves a lot easier. "The biggest thing is it's just me and my wife. I can easily handle the Jerseys myself. With the bigger Holsteins, I just can't do it", Stuart said.

He also said, "One of the main reasons we went with Jerseys is that they are an interesting breed. They have two types of lines of dairy cow. One has big litres with OK fat and protein, the other does 5000 to 6000 litres but massive fat and protein".

Stuart is happy with both lines of cows in his herd and uses bull selection to lift either production or the solids of the cows. They are currently using Valentino, On Time, Blackstone and Elton. He's also been impressed with Van Halen and in particular with TBone who is giving a lot of heifers. They have experienced a 63% heifer rate with him.

At present they calve 3 times a year which Stuart admits isn't the best system but he finds it helps even out the costs over the year.

Stuart and Emily have started to register some of their Jerseys and will register more and eventually would like to have a full herd of registered Jerseys. Although they don't breed for showing, they recently competed in their local Nathalia On-Farm Challenge which saw them win Champion Cow (who also was 1st in the 3y.o. class) and 1st in the 5 y.o. class. They have little interest in showing but found the on-farm challenge easy to participate in and enjoyed the social element and the opportunity to mix with other farmers.

Although they have only been dairying for 5 years, Stuart and Emily are enjoying the challenges of setting up their own operation. Currently they have Jerseys doing over 10,000 litres and find the Jersey's are matching their Holsteins. As Stuart puts it, "That's big production out of a little cow".

For more information on having the Jersey Advantage in your herd contact:



Jersey Australia
PO Box 292,
Ascot Vale VIC 3032
03 9370 9105
www.jersey.com.au

Field days an event highlight

A HIGHLIGHT of International Dairy Week in recent years has been the Dairy and Machinery Field Days. This year they will be held from January 21 to 22.

This two-day event allows anyone with an interest in dairy to browse through a showcase of the best equipment, technology, advancements and dairy management solutions to assist with their commercial dairy operations.

It is a field day aimed predominantly at the dairy industry providing access to Australian dairyfarmers, breeders and industry representatives.

Companies to be featured at the event include:

- Ag Machinery Australia;
- Aquamax Australia Rural Water Filtration Solutions;
- Archards Irrigation Pty Ltd;
- ATEL;
- Australian Cattle Veterinarians;
- Australian Waste Engineering;
- Baldwin Filters Australia;
- Bee Jay Machinery;
- BWR Machinery;
- Dairy Grooving Pty Ltd;
- Dairy Innovation Australia;
- Dairy News Australia;
- Dairy Solar;
- Daviesway;
- Dumac Pumps;
- Eastern Spreaders;
- Easy Dairy Automation Systems;
- Enduro Tag;
- Ezy Rollover Crushers;
- Farm Automation Australia;
- Farm Mart Australia;
- Farm Tech;
- Farm Tender;

Field days a 'must do'

DEREK Modra from Farm Tech Victoria is looking forward to the International Dairy Week Dairy and Machinery Field Days. Farm Tech has been attending the IDW field days for the past eight years and has seen the IDW dairy and machinery field days grow into one of the most prestigious event on the Australian field day calendar.

"We get to display our business and our products to dairyfarmers not only from the Goulburn, Murray and Kiewa Valleys but from every dairy region in Australia," Mr Modra said. "It's a must do on our calendar. During the past two years we have enjoyed strong sales directly generated from our stand at this field day."

Branch manager at O'Connors Shepparton David Collier is ready to showcase the line-up of Case and

Lely products that O'Connors Shepparton offer dairyfarmers. "And what better place to do this than the IDW Dairy and Machinery field days," he said.

"This event attracts the best dairyfarmers from all over, locally, nationally and internationally, we can show our products, meet and talk with prospective buyers at this sole dairy industry focused event."

When Baldwin Filters began operations, it employed just a few people making lube filters in a garage. Today, Baldwin Filters has a presence across the globe. Baldwin operates manufacturing and distribution centres in the US, Mexico, UK, Belgium, China, Morocco, Australia and South Africa.

It will also be featured at the Dairy and Machinery Field Days.

- Farmers Marketing Network;
- Felco Distribution Pty Ltd;
- FutureCow;
- Gaffys Tractor Hire;
- GV Dairy Supplies P/L;
- Haeuslers Shepparton;
- Irrigation Group Australia;
- John Sanderson Machinery;
- Livestock Improvement;
- Metalform - Tow and Farm;
- Michaels Moama;
- MIT Surgical Instruments;
- Northern Feed Systems;
- Norwoods & Kyabram Power Equipment;

- O'Connors Farm Machinery;
- O'Deas Saddlery;
- Peel Valley AB Centre;
- Performance Feeds;
- PregTest Australia;
- Reese Agri;
- Rubicon-Farm Connect;
- Seed Force Pty Ltd;
- Shepparton Ag;
- Skiold Vac Milling Solutions;
- Sofra Partners Chartered accountants;
- Thermal Recovery System Australia;
- W&P Pumps.

Dairy organisations to showcase information

DAIRY Australia, Murray Dairy, the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA) and the Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme (ADHIS) will join forces at International Dairy Week.

The organisations will be on hand to offer advice and information to assist dairyfarmers and other delegates. Starting on Monday January 19, visitors can meet the Murray Dairy team and learn more about existing and new resources they have to help them at their fingertips and resources that can help build the success of their dairy farm business. This is also a great opportunity to tap into the Murray Dairy's Young Dairy Network.

On Tuesday January 20, labour is the

theme of the day and Dairy Australia, a sponsor of the conference, will preview the organisation's new Employment Starter Kit (ESKi) followed by Shane Hellwege explaining how Murray Dairy supports farmers' workforce development needs, helping them become better employers.

More than simply focusing on legal compliance, ESKi works towards improving the employer's skills and the on-farm work experience for employees. Don't forget to pick up a Dairy Australia show bag when visiting the stand.

The NCDEA is exhibiting at the conference. It delivers training focused on recognising and building skills in farm business sus-

tainability, livestock and pasture productivity and whole farm planning. Training is available nationally and is offered from Certificate II through to Advanced Diploma level. Options are tailored to suit all types of learner including: workplace training and assessment; on-farm; blended delivery; face-to-face; and through traineeships. NCDEA also provides pathways through partnerships with schools and other higher education institutes.

Don't forget to drop by and chat to the ADHIS team about the herd's Genetic Progress Report, hear about the latest in genomic research and have a say on the future direction of Australia's national breeding objective.

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Technology saves time and money

EMBRACING new technology may seem costly but dairyfarmer Russell White is adamant the huge labour and cost savings far outweigh the initial pain.

Milking 330 Holstein Friesians on 190 hectares at Leongatha South, Russell, his wife Amy, and parents Les and Dianne, took the plunge three years ago and invested heavily in a new 50-bale rotary dairy fitted with a DMS Afimilk complete herd identification and dairy management system and an ADF milking system.

The combined result is a user-friendly, highly automated cow shed that not only produces a far superior product, but saves hours in labour and thousands of dollars in cost savings.

"There's no doubt the whole package has saved us at least one full-time wage, our cell count has almost halved, herd health has improved with far less mastitis cases and consequently there's more milk in the vat," Russell said.

The DMS Afimilk computerised individual monitoring system records the body weight, milk volume and milk temperature of each cow each milking, allowing early detection of any health issues, particularly mastitis.

"An alarm goes off if the milk temperature is higher than normal, which usually indicates early stages of mastitis," Russell said. "This allows us to treat cows up to 12 hours earlier than they would normally be detected, meaning huge savings on treatment costs as well as time and lost income

from the cow being out of production."

For the benefit of slower milkers, the rotary is fitted with retention bars so if any cow isn't finished, a bar comes down preventing the cow from backing off and it continues until milking is complete.

While the Whites don't use every feature of the Afimilk system — such as the feed-to-bodyweight component that calculates the exact rations needed to maintain cows at predetermined weights — they have embraced its automatic drafting and heat detection functions.

"The automating drafting system is just fantastic," Russell said. "We simply enter into the computer the IDs of the cows we want, come back after milking and there they are waiting in a separate yard."

As part of a high-tech herd, the Whites' cows no longer wear heat detection patches; rather they sport pedometers that alert the Afimilk system when they come into the dairy that they are in season.

"The computer will automatically draft them off after milking which makes the whole job of AI and joining so much easier," Russell said.

For this dairy, the icing on the cake was the installation of an ADF Milking Dipping and Flushing System.

"When we built our new dairy we wanted the latest technology available and the ADF Milking system has some distinct advantages to help us lower our incidence of mastitis, which we weren't getting on top of, and to reduce our cell counts," Russell said.

"What I like about this is it has re-



Amy, Mackenzie and Russ White say a new dairy has saved them time and money.

ally lightweight cups which reduce stress on the udder and prevent over-milking and the cleaning system between each cow means we virtually have no cross contamination. Since installing these systems our cell count has dropped from a little more than 200,000 cells per millilitre down to 110,000 cells/ml."

The ADF Milking system applies teat dip straight into the open pores of the teat, as soon as the cow finishes milking, sealing it to reduce infection. The cluster of cups is then flushed six times with water, a little acid and then a shot of air between each cow to ensure there is no cross-contamination.

Visit DMS Afimilk and ADF Milking at site 5 in the Blackmore Leslie Centre during International Dairy Week.

Contact: ADF Milking system, website <www.adfmilking.com>, phone 1800 233 283; DMS Afimilk system website <<http://dmsafimilk.com.au>>, phone 1800 574 334.

Article supplied by ADF Milking

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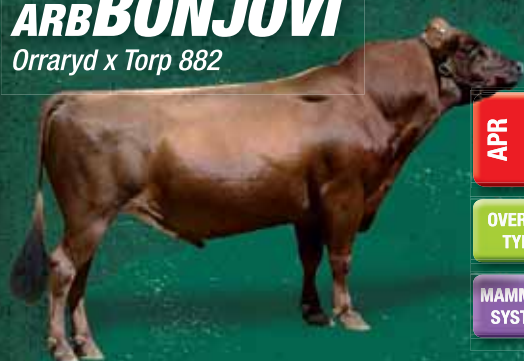


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ARB BONJOVI

Orraryd x Torp 882



APR	187
	Rel 84%
OVERALL TYPE	111
MAMMARY SYSTEM	105
	Rel 71%

ARB BONJOVI is the highest rated Australian red bull available. In addition he continues to be Genetics Australia's most popular red sire. A lift to fat test of +0.37% and protein test of +0.21% as well as his equally impressive Overall Type ABV of 111 are no doubt good reasons for his popularity.

ARB LEX

Orraryd x Christiansborg



APR	140
	Rel 82%
OVERALL TYPE	118
MAMMARY SYSTEM	109
	Rel 59%

ARB LEX is a top all round sire. With a combination of 140 APR, 118 Overall Type, 109 Mammary System and 106 Survival, he stands out as a must use bull. He offers a well balanced production proof and positive ratings for virtually all the mammary traits. Stand outs include fore attachment, front teat placement, udder depth and centre ligament.

ARB LIPPMAN

Tmoberg x Stensjo

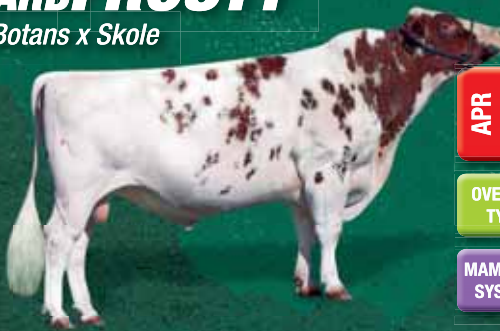


APR	160
	Rel 80%
OVERALL TYPE	108
MAMMARY SYSTEM	109
	Rel 51%

ARB LIPPMAN's proof has continued to improve. He offers significant improvement in the production of Protein, Milk and Fat. In addition he has high ratings for improving type, cell counts and survival. ARB LIPPMAN continues to be a high demand sire. He comes from the famous PRIMULA cow family at Bosgowan. His MGD – Primula 203 EX was the dam of ARBLAWRENCE.

ARB FROSTY

Botans x Skole



APR	143
	Rel 76%
OVERALL TYPE	104
MAMMARY SYSTEM	106
	Rel 62%

ARB FROSTY has a top proof for improving virtually all traits of the mammary system. Standouts include high ratings for front teat placement, fore attachment, centre ligament and udder depth. In addition he is in the top group for improving workability traits, receiving high ratings for milking speed, temperament and farmer likeability.

For full details on the Aussie Red proven team contact:

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Teatseal: a mastitis game changer

TEATSEAL

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Reduces environmental mastitis in herds
- ✓ Must be inserted correctly
- ✓ Can be used successfully in heifers



T EATSEAL has made a huge impact on reducing mastitis in south-west Victorian dairy herds but poor insertion methods are diluting its effectiveness. The Warrnambool Veterinary Clinic ran training sessions last year to encourage farmers to adopt best practice methods when inserting the product.

These practices include wearing gloves and cleaning teat ends with sterile swabs for strict hygiene, making sure the Teatseal is inserted only in the teat canal and not too deeply in the udder, and ensuring it mimics the teat plug by stripping the Teatseal down to the teat end.

Dr Jon Kelly told Warrnambool Veterinary Clinic FarmChat forums in Victoria's Kororoit and Mepunga that Teatseal had a proven track record in reducing mastitis at calving but incorrect insertion methods were weakening its effectiveness.

"Teatseal is a game changer but it has to be inserted properly," he said.

"There is a phenomenal improvement in mastitis when Teatseal is applied. There is a good uptake of Teatseal in the region and it has been used with great success, but we have seen mastitis creeping back up which is probably due to how Teatseal is being inserted.

"There is a constant need for education on how to apply it, particularly when there are staff changeovers and new people have to learn the proper methods.

"The key is putting it in properly. It has to stay in the teat canal, not go as far as the udder, and to treat all quarters in order. It should not be massaged into the udder."

At the first milking Teatseal must be removed in fresh cows by stripping teats 10-12 times.

Dr Kelly said reducing exposure to environmental mastitis bacteria during calving was the major reason for Teatseal's success.

Teatseal also works by stopping milk leakage when a cow is dried off, enabling dry cow antibiotic therapy to work and stopping introduction of the environmental bacteria.



Dr Jon Kelly supervises Charles Sturt University student Sarah Gough in the Teatseal insertion process.

More than two-thirds of mastitis is caused by environmental conditions — mud and faeces or dust — with *Strep uberis* the most prevalent mastitis bug.

Methods to reduce exposure to the bacteria include calving on dry clean pasture or a dry clean calving pad, bringing cows into the shed as soon as possible after calving to milk out and check, and taking care with pre-milking preparations of udders.

"Most mastitis happens in the first month after calving," Dr Kelly told the forums. "Calving is the highest risk factor and it has everything to do with the conditions she is calving in. Controlling mastitis at calving will set up your whole season."

Dr Kelly said farmers needed to rotate springer paddocks as much as possible, and always milk freshly calved cows twice a day.

He said Teatseal, which is formulated to prevent bacteria entering the teat, reduced incidence of mastitis during the dry period and early lactation and also prevented clinical mastitis in heifers at calving.

"Some farmers might think it is worthwhile for heifers, but worry how to do it," he said. "The reality is, with some training and preparation, 99% will stand there and handle it surprisingly well."

Research by Zoetis shows that heifers

produce a similar rate of *Strep uberis* infection to cows, so management of a clean environment to calve and use of teat sealant could be beneficial in reducing the rates of infection, he said.

Dr Kelly cited examples of south-west Victorian farms that had saved nearly \$30,000 in mastitis treatment costs after introducing Teatseal.

One farm had reduced its mastitis rate in heifers from 20% to 4% and in cows from 17% to 4% after applying Teatseal, while another had dipped from 33% to less than 10%. At the same time their bulk milk cell count (BMCC) improved.

"Prevention is always better than treatment," Dr Kelly said.

Countdown Downunder research shows the best ways to reduce mastitis at calving are to reduce exposure to environmental mastitis bacteria, take good care with heifers and freshly calved cows, check that milk is suitable to go in the vat and promptly finding, treating and recording clinical cases in freshly calved cows.

"Drying off will give your cow the best chance for the next lactation," he said.

It is a farmer's only chance to "reset" the cow with regards to milk quality for the next lactation.

Article courtesy of Warrnambool Veterinary Clinic, phone (03) 5561 2255.

From calving to joining: cleaning up 'dirty' cows

By DR SARAH CHAPLIN*

ENDOMETRITIS

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Infection of uterine lining – prevents pregnancy
- ✓ Reduce incidence by good calving management
- ✓ Calve at right BCS, feed transition diet



THE time between calving and mating start date is an important determinant of reproductive efficiency. The cow's uterus needs time to recover after being full of calf and going through calving.

It must shrink back in size (called involution), get rid of the excess fluid that accumulated during pregnancy and repair damaged tissues.

While the uterus repairs itself, reproduction is put on hold. There is no point in a fertilised egg trying to implant until the uterus is back to normal again, so the cow is anoestrous — it doesn't ovulate or show heat.

For a cow that has had a normal calving, this process usually takes 15-24 days, but its first ovulation after calving is likely to be 'silent' with no obvious signs of heat.

However, a cow that has had a hard time calving will take longer to recover. If the cow has had twins, calving difficulty, or retained foetal membranes, the uterus will need longer to bounce back.

After calving, the uterus is likely to be contaminated by bacteria, which can cause an infection in the uterus (endometritis). The cow can usually clear this infection itself, but it needs time to do that, and in some cows the infection can become more serious (progressing into a deep metritis).

Endometritis is a mild infection of the uterine lining, affecting up to 40% of post-calving cows. The uterus contains pus, there may be smelly discharge from the vagina and the cow may look sick. It is important to remember that some cows do not show the vaginal discharge.

Cows that do not seem sick and are still

eating, milking and cycling normally may be hiding a subclinical infection and until the infection clears, they will be unlikely to get pregnant.

Un-noticed endometritis can seriously complicate breeding plans. Farmers may be wasting money on semen, inseminating cows that haven't a hope of getting pregnant. With good management, farmers can take charge of this situation, saving money and improving herd reproductive efficiency.

Knowing the risk factors is the first step.

Cows that have a reduced ability to fight infections and/or have had some challenge to the health of their uterus will be more at risk of endometritis.

Risk factors that predispose cows to poor general health and reduced uterine health are shown in Table 1.

What to do

Maintaining good general health and nutrition is important. Make sure cows are well fed and calve in body condition 4.5-5.0.

Manage mineral levels in the diet two to ►



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◀ three weeks before calving to reduce the risk of problems such as milk fever, ketosis, and retained foetal membranes. Feed a diet that is low in potassium and sodium, supplemented with magnesium and which contains appropriate levels of calcium. It may help to discuss transition feeding with a nutritionist.

If a calf needs to be pulled, make sure good hygiene is used: Wash hands and implements before inserting them into the cow.

Make sure the calving area is as clean as possible.

At calving identify and record all cows that are at risk of endometritis. Then ask the vet to check all 'at risk' cows 14-28 days post-calving. The vet can check inside the cow's uterus and will be able to identify sub-clinical infections. Discuss treatment options with the vet.

If more than 3% of cows have discharge at more than 14 days after calving, take steps to prevent assisted calvings and pre-

Table 1: Risk factors for endometritis

Reduced general health

- Heifers
- Skinny cows
- Poor nutrition
- Milk fever
- Downer cows
- General stress, such as adverse weather, transport, overcrowding, other diseases;
- A selenium or vitamin E deficiency that can predispose an animal to

infection since both support the animal's immune system

Reduced uterine health

- Twins
- Difficult births
- Uterine tears
- Dead calf (stillbirths)
- Assisted calving
- Uterine prolapses
- Retained foetal membranes

vent retained foetal membranes, including:

- reducing calving difficulties through appropriate bull selection, managing heifer growth and maintaining cow condition;
- feeding cows to calve in body condition score 4.5-5.0 (1-8 scale) and checking nutrition in the late dry period;
- controlling milk fever in cows close to calving by using a transition diet; and
- decide whether there is a need to

supplement with vitamin E or selenium.

These can all help reduce problems at calving leading to reproductive problems. **D**

**Dr Sarah Chaplin is with the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI), Tatura, Vic, telephone (03) 5833 5273 or email <sarah.chaplin@depi.vic.gov.au>.*

Article courtesy of DEPI's The Dairy Bulletin

Preventing retained foetal membranes

THE foetal membranes, also known as the placenta, is where the transfer of oxygen and nutrients between a cow and developing calf take place during pregnancy. Retained foetal membranes (RFMs) is one of those frustrating problems that all livestock producers face during the calving period.

Foetal membranes normally come away soon after calving. They are considered retained if they are still present 12 hours after calving.

While the best course of action will vary depending upon the circumstance, usually it's best to do nothing for the first 72 hours as many membranes will come away by themselves.

Never pull on or try to manually remove RFMs — it does more harm than good.

Veterinary attention should be sought if an affected cow goes off milk, loses condition, stops eating or just looks unwell.

There are many causes of RFMs. Some of the main ones include:

- drug induction of calving;
- twin calvings;
- calving difficulties;
- abortions; and
- milk fever.

Prevention strategies should be implemented if more than 4% of non-induced cows have RFMs 24 hours after calving.

Some ways to reduce the incidence of RFMs include:

- minimising assisted calvings;
- feeding cows and heifers to calve in at correct body condition score;
- checking nutrition during the late dry period and calving time;
- controlling milk fever in cows close to calving; and
- ensuring selenium and vitamin E nutrition is adequate.

For further advice contact the farm's veterinarian or Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) veterinary or animal health officers.

—Dr JEFF CAVE, DEPI district veterinary officer.

Article courtesy of DEPI Agnews

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This is one of the many examples of the Dairy Services Levy at work.
For more information on this and other levy investments visit www.dairyaustralia.com.au

Irish tackle dairy fertility problem

By CARLENE DOWIE

IRISH HERD FERTILITY

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Irish modify breeding index
- ✓ Genetics caused deterioration
- ✓ Animal database provided more data



IRELAND would have the most fertile Holstein Friesian dairy herd in the world by 2020, according to one of Ireland's leading animal scientists Dr Donagh Berry.

Dr Berry, principal investigator in statistical genetics at Teagasc (the agriculture and food development authority in Ireland), told a dairy genetics information day in Melbourne late last year, that Ireland had addressed the slide in fertility by changing its national breeding index in 2000.

Fertility was a key factor in dairy profitability in Ireland because the industry was highly seasonal and pasture based.

"A lot of people traditionally in Ireland would have said you can't select for fertility it is too lowly heritable," Dr Berry said. "I would say there's not one person in Ireland now who says that because we have them convinced that we can actually do it."

Dr Berry said genetics had caused the deterioration in fertility in the Irish dairy herd and it was exactly the same throughout the world.

Ireland's national breeding index — the Economic Breeding Index (EBI) — was introduced in 2000, replacing an index based purely on production.

It originally had 20% fertility factors (calving interval and survival) and 80% production but has been modified since to also include other characteristics and a now had only 30% production.

Dr Berry said the apparent low heritability of fertility was due in part to the difficulty in getting accurate data measuring fertility.

"I'm sure there are some farmers or ex farmers in the room, you know you are not getting the calving dates spot on, you know that you are inseminating the cow at the wrong time of the cycle — she's never going to go in-calf — that will depress the heritability," he said.

Part of the solution had been in recognising that heritability was only one factor in driving genetic gain.

Genetic gain was a function of how in-

tensely animals were selected (selecting the top 1% versus selecting the top 10%), the accuracy of identifying the better animals and the generational interval.

Heritability affected the accuracy but it became less important if more data was collected.

Dr Berry said Ireland's national animal database had helped in providing more data.

The database, operated by the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation, has records on all dairy and beef animals. Every animal in Ireland has a passport issued at birth with a legal requirement to record the dam of that animal. About 80-90% of animals also have the sire recorded.

Enormous amounts of data from a wide range of sources are tipped into the database — using the passport as the animal identifier.

This includes from milk recording organisations, artificial insemination centres, breeding organisation herd books, abattoirs, laboratories and milk factories.

"So every single bit of data is stored in the national database," Dr Berry said.

The data also flows out. Researchers, such as Dr Berry, can access data from the database for their work.

The database is used to do genetic evaluations and developed the Irish breeding values.

Dr Berry said the EBI was a pure economic index. "All economic values are scientifically based — industry has no impact rather than advising us that we underestimate a cost — like of the vet to treat animals," he said.

Dr Berry said the majority of farmers, who knew fertility was an issue, were delighted with the index. A small group wanted more emphasis on milk production.

But Dr Berry said an emphasis on fertility improved milk production, because in a seasonal system any reduction in the calving interval created a longer lactation, while an improvement in survival meant there were more older cows in the herd, which produced more milk than first-lactation cows.

Dr Berry said the EBI was accepted and



Dr Donagh Berry: health traits will be the next fertility with breeding indexes needing to place more emphasis in this area.

used by about 70% of Ireland's farmers. "It is a 'unit of currency' with natural bulls and breeding bulls traded on EBI," he said.

Farmers were encouraged to use bulls from a list of the top 75. Seven sub-indexes are also available so farmers can customise their selections to specific goals.

Dr Berry said the EBI was being assessed all the time.

He said at present it did not have any weighing for product quality, environmental load (feed efficiency, greenhouse gas emissions) or health.

He predicted that health traits would be the next fertility with breeding indexes needing to place more emphasis in this area.

Dr Berry said one of the difficulties with animal breeding was identifying what characteristics were being bred.

"The reason we had a fertility problem is that we did not monitor fertility for 10-20 years ago," he said.

The Irish have tried to address the issue of identifying characteristics being bred into animals by last year setting up three research herds with each made up of elite EBI animals and average EBI animals.

The herds are run in three different production systems to reflect possible future changes in the Irish system. They are assessed for a range of characteristics.

Dr Berry said the interesting thing that had been observed so far was that although the milk production of the elite animals was about the same as the average animals, the fertility results (three-week submission rate, conception rate and 12-week in-calf rate) were much higher in the elite animals. **D**

Aus tackles breeding conundrum

By CARLENE DOWIE

A WORLD-FIRST Australian project aims to improve fertility breeding values by studying 100 dairy herds with good breeding records.

Dairy Futures CRC and Department of Environment and Primary Industries researcher Dr Jennie Pryce outlined the new project at the Australian Breeding Values (ABV) Discovery Day in Melbourne recently.

It is part of a three-pronged approach to improve the reliability of the fertility ABV.

The first part was a change in April to the way in which the existing fertility breeding value was calculated. The old value, introduced in 2003, used only calving interval.

The new value uses calving interval, lactation length, days to first service, non return rate and pregnancy rate (see Figure 1).

It had improved the reliability of the fertility ABV from 62% to 68% in Holsteins and had allowed more bulls to get a publishable fertility ABV, Dr Pryce said.

It also passed the Interbull test for fertility, which meant overseas bulls could now receive a fertility ABV— providing Australian farmers with more choice and information.

The second part of improving the fertility ABV was getting more data from farms.

Dr Pryce said about 50% of Victorian farms that provide ABV data also provided fertility data.

But in other States the percentage was low (3-12%) largely because of the herd recording software used on farms.

One program — EasyDairy — had until now not integrated well with the Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme database. But a recent update to the software meant



Jennie Pryce: fertility data tsunami about to hit national database.



Australian researchers are working to improve fertility Australian Breeding Values.

that herd records — some going back as far as 18 years — could go into the database.

In some cases, this had unlocked thousands of records (see Figure 2).

Dr Pryce said a “data tsunami” would hit the national database as EasyDairy users installed the free upgrade.

Users would not need to do anything to initiate the download — the upgrade simply allowed the transfer to happen as part of their usual transfer of information to their herd recording centre.

The third part was the new Ginfo or genomic information herds’ project. Ginfo is a two-year research project, but Dr Pryce said it would ideally be ongoing.

It involves the researchers actively working with 100 dairy herds to get herd records and genotypes into the national genomic reference set.

The herds have been selected on the basis of excellent herd data, particularly for fertility.

They represent about 30,000 Holstein,

Jersey and cross-breed cows.

The first 50 herds have already started their participation, with the remaining 50 due to be selected late last year.

Tail hair samples from all cows in the herd will be analysed to obtain genotypes, while a range of other information will be collected, including pregnancy and mating records, condition scores, type data, live-weight, locomotion scores and health data.

This will then be used in the genomic breeding values (ABV(g)s). Genomic breeding values draw on national genomic data as well as herd records to predict the genetic merit of bulls and cows.

Dr Pryce said it was vital to have updated reference populations to ensure genomic breeding values were current and reliable. She urged any farmers using EasyDairy to upgrade their software as soon as possible.

The final 50 herds selected for the project would be based on the mating records available for that herd so could include herds using EasyDairy that update their software. **D**



Figure 1: The new fertility Australian Breeding Value includes several traits

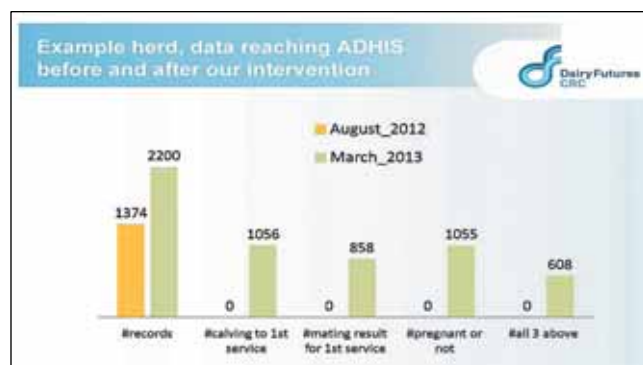


Figure 2: Example of fertility records made available to national database from one farm after EasyDairy upgrade.

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Negative energy balance causes fertility decline

By WILLIAM VALLELY

ENERGY BALANCE

KEY POINTS

- ✓ High negative energy balance post calving negative health effects
- ✓ Impacts liver and hormone levels
- ✓ Leads to delayed ovarian cycles



INTERNATIONAL research has pointed to the high negative energy balance (NEBAL) of lactating cows as an explanation for the worldwide decline in dairy cow fertility rates.

Addressing industry leaders at Dairy Australia's In-Calf reproduction symposium last year, Professor Ron Butler from the Department of Animal Science at Cornell University, New York, said fluctuations in dry matter intake (DMI) during a cow's lactation caused irreparable metabolic changes.

"NEBAL related to DMI during early lactation is the major nutritional link to low fertility in lactating dairy cows," Prof Butler said.

NEBAL — the difference between feed energy intake that a cow was consuming and the requirement for milk production and maintenance of the animal — was common for all cows during and after pregnancy, but it was important to manage the cow properly, he said.

Research had shown that cows with low levels of DMI during the transition period — the period extending from three weeks before calving through the first three weeks of lactation — had delayed early ovulation, which reduced fertility during the breeding period.

"High NEBAL delays recovery of postpartum (post-birth) reproductive function

and exerts carryover health effects like oocytes and subclinical endometritis that have detrimental effects on health and reproductive performance," he said.

Low DMI intake postpartum resulted in the mobilisation of body fat as non-esterified fatty acids (NEFA) in the blood, which meant cows were not creating enough energy to support the early stages of their lactation.

"Cows are unnecessarily tapping into their body fat and energy reserves," Prof Butler said. "The metabolic imbalances that low DMI produces affect the ovarian cycle of dairy cows and the onset of ovulation."

Prof Butler explained the process that linked low feed intake to delayed ovarian activity, starting with the liver.

"I consider the liver one of the most important reproductive organs," he said.

"It's important for the production of glucose to support milk production, fatty acid oxidation and it's the primary source of insulin-like growth factor (IGF-I), which stimulates development of ovarian follicles."

He said the liver's functionality was severely affected by NEBAL. "Glucose production is crucial to support the early and rapid rise in milk production postpartum but a high NEBAL reduces blood glucose, insulin and IGF-I levels," he said.

"It (high NEBAL) uncouples the response of the liver to growth hormone stimulation.

"Less growth hormone receptors means the liver has less ability to produce IGF-1 in response to the high levels of growth hormone that are stimulating milk secretion."

Low insulin and blood glucose levels reduce the responsiveness of ovarian follicles

resulting in a delayed ovarian cycle, Prof Butler said.

"Low levels of IGF-I production reduce the effectiveness of pituitary gonadotropins (protein hormones) that stimulate the ovarian follicles."

Aside from a metabolic imbalance, high NEBAL could produce insulin resistance in dairy cows.

"The combined elevations of growth hormone and NEFA antagonise insulin action and cause insulin resistance," he said.

"Insulin resistance definitely occurs in lactating cows in and around the transition period and this affects the metabolic situation so cows are more susceptible to health issues."

Prof Butler said US studies trialled increasing DMI of dairy cattle during the dry and transition period with mixed results.

"A Cornell University trial in 2011 showed that excess energy intake by dry cows increased insulin resistance during the prepartum period," he said.

"Overfeeding dry cows predisposes them to decreased DMI and higher NEFA during pregnancy."

The delicate balance between blood glucose levels and DMI was exacerbated in cows that were managed for high milk yields.

"During the past 40 years we've seen a remarkable increase in milk production capabilities of our dairy cows, particularly those selected for high milk production capability but the concern is that during that period, reproductive performance — as is measured by conception rate — has declined," he said.

Nevertheless he did offer a means of controlling NEBAL, suggesting producers should maintain consistent levels of DMI during the prepartum phase and increase feed intake dramatically after calving. **D**

UK lessons valuable in mastitis war

DAIRYFARMERS need to improve data recording and change attitudes towards mastitis control to increase overall milk quality and production levels.

Speaking at Dairy Australia's Mastitis Symposium in Melbourne last year, Professor of Cattle Health and Epidemiology at the University of Nottingham, Martin Green, said there was no "silver bullet" to solving the perennial

problem for dairyfarmers across the world but having a wealth of data to depend upon helped.

"Clinical mastitis recording is generally a weakness on farms," Prof Green said. "Rather than being driven by what they see, a farmer needs to be driven by data and farm management patterns."

Prof Green, who helped developed the national DairyCo mastitis con-

trol plan in the United Kingdom, said the program was designed to provide farmers with a skeleton that they could apply to their farm-specific needs.

"The aim of the program was to break the problem down for farmers: was mastitis caused by environmental or contagious issues, was the problem specific to the dry period or during lactation," he said.

—WILLIAM VALLELY

Minimising mastitis matters most

By SARAH BROWN*

MASTITIS MANAGEMENT



KEY POINTS

- ✓ Take steps to reduce mastitis
- ✓ Build these into milking and farm routine
- ✓ Lower counts means more income

MASTITIS is a common occurrence in most milking herds requiring ongoing management to keep cell counts within reasonable levels. The loss of milk income as a result of penalties imposed by milk factories as milk quality declines provides an extra incentive to maintain healthy milking cows.

There are 10 ways to minimise mastitis:

1: Put cups on clean, dry teats. When washing the teat of a cow, water runs from the top of the udder down to the end of the teat, taking any bacteria with it to the teat end. If the udder is not dried sufficiently,

these bacteria then end up inside the cups once they are put on.

During the milking process the bacteria can gain entry to the mammary gland and cause mastitis. To minimise bacterial entry and infection, only wash dirty teats and ensure all udders are dry before putting cups on.

2: Calve on a clean, dry pasture or calving pad. The cow's immune system is lowest around the time of calving. Just before calving, milk accumulates in the udder that may not be removed for a long period of time.

This provides an ideal growing environment for any bacteria that may enter the teats, establish and result in mastitis.

Contact between the udder and wet ground, mud and manure, which often occurs during calving, increases the incidence of mastitis.

3: Disinfect teats after milking with a post milk teat disinfectant and ensure it is mixed as per the label. As mentioned above, bacteria can be spread to the surface

of the cow's teat during milking. Bacteria can then be transferred to a further five to six cows milked after an infected cow has passed through the dairy.

Teat sprays are an effective way to minimise the spread of mastitis. Ensure that the disinfectant is made to the concentration that is specified on the label.

A good source of water is that which has been cooled from the hot water system. Water obtained from dams, dams or creeks may contain bacteria as well as organic matter that can de-activate the disinfectant.

Disinfectant should be made up daily as its effectiveness can decline once mixed. Disinfectants often contain glycerine or another emollient to maintain teat condition.

The whole teat surface needs to be sprayed with disinfectant, which can be best achieved by spraying from underneath the teat. At least 20 millilitres of disinfectant should be used on each cow.

To check if adequate coverage is being achieved, take a piece of paper towel and ►

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wrap it around the teat. There should be a continuous stained/wet area.

4: Monitor Bulk Milk Cell Count (BMCC). If the BMCC is below 200,000 cells/millilitre (cells/ml), a sudden increase of 10% can indicate a missed clinical case of mastitis. A BMCC of 300,000 cells/ml can indicate 30% of the herd is infected with mastitis. Likewise, a BMCC of 400,000 cells/ml can indicate a mastitis rate of 40% of the herd.

However, these numbers can vary with:

- stage of lactation and volume of production;
- time of milking;
- length of time the cows have had mastitis; and
- the type of bacteria causing the infection.

5: Ensure milking machines are working at the right pressure. Milk pressures should be 48-50 kilopascals (kPa) for high line, 46-48 kPa for mid line and 42-45 kPa for low line machines.

If any abnormalities are found with the milking machine, contact the machine technician to ensure vacuum pressures, airflow and pulsation are correct.

6: Change teat cup liners regularly. Teat cup liners should be changed every 2000-2500 cow milkings. The loss of tension during time lessens the effectiveness of milking through a reduction in speed.

It can also increase damage to the teat end. When fitted correctly teat cup liners should have about 5-15% elasticity.

If teat cup liners absorb fat and harbour bacteria, in addition to reduced liner tension, there is an increased risk of mastitis infection.

7: Milk infected cows last. Mastitis episode can be transferred from one quarter to another or from one cow to another by a number of ways.

This may be via splashes or airborne droplets during pre-stripping, or via milkers' hands, teat cup liners and cross-flow



Teat sprays are an effective way to minimise the spread of mastitis.

through the teat cups.

Wearing gloves when handling infected cows and milking them will reduce the risk of spreading the infection.

Clearly identifying infected cows will make it easier to handle them and prevent contamination of other cows.

It will also make it clear to whoever is milking at the time that their milk should be kept out of the vat and the cluster rinsed and disinfected.

8: Identify cows with clinical mastitis: Keep an eye out for any swollen quarters and quarters that don't milk out properly. Monitor the milk filter for the presences of clots.

If milking cows that are identified to be mastitic last, be sure to look at the filter prior to milking those cows.

If there is an increase in the number of clots, strip any cows with swollen quarters or quarters that do not milk out properly, and also cows that have had clinical mastitis within the last month or have been identified as having a high Individual Cow Cell Count (ICCC).

9: Use Dry Cow Treatment (DCT): DCT assists in curing infections that were not cured during lactation and prevents new infections during the dry period.

DCTs are a long-acting antibiotic that kills the bacteria that causes mastitis.

Depending on the DCT used, the antibiotic may be active from anywhere between 20-70 days. DCT can be used selectively or as a blanket treatment.

If using as a blanket treatment, all cows should have all four quarters treated. If using as a selective treatment, treat all cows with an ICCC of more than 250,000 cells/ml and all cows that had a clinical case during their previous lactation.

10: Minimise infection at drying off. The two-week period in between drying off and when the teat seals itself is a significant period of time when the teat isn't sealed and is open to bacteria in the cow's environment.

At drying off the cows teats should be thoroughly sprayed with a teat disinfectant to reduce the number of bacteria on the teat.

After their last milking, cows should not be left in laneways or yards and put immediately on a clean paddock to reduce the risk of infection.

It is a good idea to consider using a teat sealant in combination with a DCT minimise infection before and when calving.

In summary

There are a number of simple management practices that can be done to minimise mastitis infections and sometimes these are put to the back of everyone's mind across time.

Remembering to implement them will help cell counts and, ultimately, milk income.

**Sarah Brown is with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries and Environment*

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Automation update

Advancements in IT applications for farms are opening up many exciting options for automation on dairy farms. In this article FutureDairy's project leader, KENDRA KERRISK* reviews what's on the horizon for conventional dairy farms as well as an update on robotic milking. While she cautions that many will take some years to become commercially available in Australia, she points out that there is a wide range of automation solutions already having a big impact on many Australian dairy farms.

KEY POINTS ROBOTICS

- ✓ Robots gaining momentum
- ✓ AMS farms increasing
- ✓ Automatic milk sampling

AUTOMATION always involves investment in time and money. The capital outlay of automation solutions varies from relatively small (automatic switch timers) to a major investment in the case of robotic milking. And once installed, it takes time and effort to learn how the product works and how to get the best value from it.

When dairyfarmers assess potential automation solutions at FutureDairy, they are most interested in three likely benefits:

- labour savings by automating repeated tasks;
- automatic collection and reporting of data to help decision making; and
- automatic collection of new data that hasn't been able to be recorded in the past.

Robotic milking offers all three benefits, but it involves a major capital outlay and a period of six to 12 months to adapt the farming system to realise these benefits.

Robotic milking

Robotic milking is gaining momentum in Australia with 22 automatic milking systems (AMS) up and running and at least another three being installed.

Of the 22 AMS farms in operation, 21 utilise voluntary cow movement with the other operating with batch milking. Some 13 AMS farms have been operating for more than two years and six of these have installed additional robots since commissioning.

The Dornaufs' Gala Farm in Tasmania operates Australia's only robotic rotary, although there are now three in Sweden and one in Germany with additional strong interest here and internationally.

In Europe, AMS represents about 40% of new dairy installations. This reflects a steep adoption curve, with the proportion of AMS farms increasing from 4% (3% of cows) in 2006 to a predicted 22% of farms in 2016.

Due to the smaller herd size, most AMS farms in Europe have one or two robots, whereas Australian installations two or



Australia now has 22 dairies operating with automatic milking systems, and at least six of these have installed additional robots after commissioning.

more robots, depending on the herd size.

While the use of robots outside the dairy farm is still in the research phase, many automation solutions are already a reality on dairy farms. For example, automatic cup removers have been available for years and dramatically reduce the amount of labour involved in milking.

Other tasks that can be automated in the dairy include yard washing, drafting and weighing cows, individual feeding, milk sampling and testing for composition, oestrus detection and indicating mastitis.

There are numerous robotic arms available overseas for pre-milking teat preparation and post milking-teat sanitation, although they are not available here yet. These are mostly compatible with the manufacturers' own milk-harvesting installations.

Monitoring animal performance

FutureDairy is quite excited about new technologies that allow dairyfarmers to collect information about animal performance. This is an example of products that allow automatic collection of information that dairyfarmers haven't been able to record in the past.

For example, the combined use of activity monitors and rumination sensors is looking promising for automatic heat detection, early diagnosis of illnesses and possibly to provide an automatic alert at the onset of calving.

This technology is commercially available in Australia. In 2014 the FutureDairy team will be conducting trials to better understand the value of the data provided and how to interpret the results.

MooMonitor, an automatic heat detection system based on both activity and animal behaviour, was launched in Australia recently. Cows detected on heat are auto-

matically drafted at the dairy. The system, which includes a phone app, monitors activity and animal behaviour to provide an accurate result for grazing cows.

Technology has also been developed to automatically sample milk from individual cows and analyse it for automatic detection of animal performance, particularly oestrus, mastitis and ketosis. The technology is sold overseas but it is unknown if, or when, it might become available in Australia.

Robots beyond the dairy

Earlier this year, FutureDairy conducted some initial trials on the potential to use a robot to herd dairy cows from the paddock to the dairy. The results were promising. Staff at FutureDairy were amazed at how calm the cows were in the presence of a robot.

FutureDairy has secured funding for a custom-built prototype to continue research in this area, in association with the Australian Centre for Field Robotics at the University of Sydney, which is pioneering the use of robots in a range of agricultural settings.

FutureDairy is waiting for its robot to be built to its specifications before trials begin, hopefully in the second half of 2014.

There is a great deal of interest in the use of robots in agriculture — everything from the automated moving of plants in nurseries, orchard fruit picking, chemical applications in cropping and the use of unmanned aerial vehicles for monitoring and data capture of pests, weeds and cattle on large properties. D

**Associate Professor Kendra Kerrisk leads the FutureDairy project, phone 0428 101 372, email <kendra.kerrisk@sydney.edu.au>. FutureDairy's major sponsors are Dairy Australia, Department of Primary Industries NSW, DeLaval and the University of Sydney.*



Bill Morgan using Eze-Gene app in the field to register his calves.

App for registering Holsteins from anywhere

IT IS now possible to register Holsteins from the paddock, or anywhere, any day, any time, thanks to a new app launched by Holstein Australia.

Eze-Gene is free to download and available for use on smartphones and tablets. It allows the user to complete the whole registration process from the phone or tablet, including incorporating a DNA barcode and taking and submitting a photo with the registration. Once processed, Holstein Australia will send a herd book number.

Dairyfarmer, Bill Morgan, from Mer-rigum, Victoria, was one of the farmers chosen to pilot test the app. He registers his cattle under the stud prefix Waterloo.

"The Eze-Gene app is really easy-to-use and it is so convenient being able to enter the information while in the paddock or at the calf shed. I will definitely be using it next calving season," he said.

Mr Morgan also said it was easy to get behind with registering newborns during the busy calving season.

"In the past, I've usually taken quite a few months after calving to get around to doing the registration paper work. Next season I'll be able to enter calves as they are born so it won't turn into a big job anymore," he said.

Holstein Australia acting chief executive David Jupp said the app could accommodate multiple prefixes making it easy for families with more than one stud name.

"Our members have been asking for a quick and easy way to register their calves when they want to. It's great to be able to

deliver such a user-friendly tool to aid animal data management," Mr Jupp said. **D**

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KEY POINTS REGISTERING APP

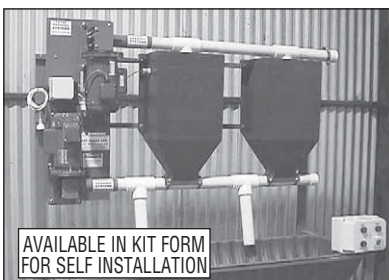
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Robots convert run-off block to profitable dairy

ROBOT SOFTWARE

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Tas run-off block converted to dairy with robots
- ✓ High labour efficiency
- ✓ Using software to improve efficiency, target high pasture utilisation

THE installation of robotic milking units has enabled the Crowden family to convert a run-off block into a highly profitable dairy farm. The 80-hectare property (50ha milking area) supports 205 spring-calving milkers, with the plan to increase to 240 cows next season. The operation involves less than a full-time labour equivalent (0.75 FTE). The family believes the key to the system running smoothly is the integrated herd management software that operates the robots, out-of-parlour feeders and cow traffic.

Marcus Crowden and his wife, Zed, dairy with his parents, Denis and Sheryl, operate two properties at Caveside near Launceston, Tasmania. When their home farm reached its milking capacity, they looked at options for expansion.

"The run-off block is five kilometres away from the home farm, so automatic milking was a profitable way for us to increase our milking herd without buying more land or employing more staff," Marcus said. "It allowed us to increase the combined herd from 320 to 450 (and 500 cows next year) and total milk production from 2.4 to 3.2 million litres."

In mid-2012 the Crowdens initially installed two DeLaval VMS robots and three-out-of parlour feeders but within a year added another robot and three more feeders to increase the herd size.

"We were pleasantly surprised at how quickly we adapted to the new system," Marcus said. "We expected it to take a full season to get used to the three-way grazing, working out a routine and learning the hardware and software associated with the robots. But after just four months, our system was running smoothly and we were enjoying the benefits of automated milking."

A key to its success for the Crowdens has been the ability to manage much of the operation remotely, through the computer at home, or a mobile phone.

"We can see what's happening through two web cams located at the dairy," Mar-



Marcus and Zed Crowden at their robotic dairy on a converted run-off block in Tasmania that operates with a labour efficiency of 270 cows/labour unit.

cus said. "And we have remote control of the robots, smart gates and feeding system through Delpro, the herd management system that came with the robots. So even if we are in Melbourne on holiday we can keep track of what's happening and sort out most issues that arise. We really enjoy that flexibility."

Marcus is pragmatic about the amount of time he spends on the computer.

"DelPro records an enormous amount of data and there's a wide variety of report options," he said. "You could spend 10 hours a day on the computer if you wanted to, but it wouldn't necessarily make you more money. I spend about 15 minutes a day reviewing reports on production, milking frequency and feed intake. And about once a week I'll spend about an hour looking at records in more detail."

All of the herd data is recoded in Delpro so all the records are in the one place and easily accessible.

"Every time a cow does something, it is recorded," Marcus said. "Nearly all of it is automatic. The main data we enter manually is heat detection, inseminations and health treatments such as antibiotics for mastitis. The only one that takes time is the inseminations; I generally record that in a notebook and enter it into the computer on a rainy day."

On weekdays Marcus spends 2-3 hours

at the robotic farm, but prefers to work longer on Friday and Monday to allow him to have most of the weekend off.

"When I'm playing football, I can organise it so that I only need to spend 15 or 20 minutes a day at the farm on the weekends," he said.

Marcus has been particularly pleased with the out-of-parlour feeders that enable individual feeding.

"We installed them primarily to encourage cow flow — so the cows had a reason to want to leave the robots after milking," he said. "Individual feeding means we are getting much better value for our investment in concentrates by directing more feed to the higher producing cows."

Initially Marcus let Delpro determine the feeding level for individual cows but once he gained confidence he adjusted individual feeding levels according to his own specifications.

"DelPro is really user-friendly," he said. "And I liked the way we could run with the system settings in the early days but have the flexibility to customise settings to our own needs if we want."

With such a high stocking rate (currently 4.25 cows/ha and expected to reach 5 cows/ha next year), Marcus keeps a close eye on production per hectare. Now in its second season, Marcus is aiming to produce 2000 kilograms milk solids per hectare. While

cows are fed an average of 2-2.5 tonnes concentrates per lactation, Marcus is also aiming for very high pasture utilisation at 20 tonnes/ha.

"We have to get our pasture allocation right to maintain voluntary cow movement around the system," he said.

"It isn't as hard as I expected. But I am also keen to achieve high pasture utilisation because it has so much impact on our profitability."

The number of cows visiting the robots is relatively even throughout the day and night, although surprisingly, the busiest time of day for the robots is between midnight and 4am.

In pasture-based automatic milking systems, this is often a period when few cows are present to the dairy to be milked. This is because pasture-fed cows typically rest from about 2am to about 5am following a grazing session around midnight.

Marcus has programmed his system to allow access to fresh feed four times a day as follows:

- 1:40am-8:30am: 45% of daily pasture allocation;
- 8:30am-4:30pm: 35% of daily pasture allocation;
- 4:30pm-11:00pm: 20% of daily pasture allocation
- 11pm-1:40am: feedpad (brewers grain or silage)

At the peak of lactation, Marcus aims for cows to be milked three times a day on average, although the higher producing cows will be milked as often as four times a day.

"For example, in November we had a cow producing 70-80 litres a day and she was being milked 3.6 times a day," he said.

The FutureDairy team recently analysed the labour efficiency on the Crowdens' robotic farm. The team estimates that Mr Crowden has 0.75 labour units for 205 cows, which is equivalent to 270 cows per full time equivalent (FTE), more than double the Tasmanian average of 100 cows per FTE and well above the average of the top 25% (137 cows/FTE).

DeLaval AMS systems specialist, Anthony Baxter, said the Crowden family had best performing AMS set up that he had seen in Australia.

"They have an amazing ability with DelPro software," he said. "They picked it up easily and use it to run their farm remotely — so the system works for them rather than them working for the system."

The irony is that Marcus still milks cows on the home farm.

"We'll be ready for a new dairy on the home farm in five to eight years and robots will be the first option we look at," Marcus said.

Article supplied by Delaval Australia, phone 1800 817 199 or website <www.delaval.com.au>.



Marcus Crowden uses the DelPro software to improve the operation and efficiency of his robotic farm.

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Farm owner Richard Worboys with sharefarmer Mal Heath in their combined herd of Worboys Jerseys and Heath Holsteins and Jerseys.

Winning combination: a passion for cows and data

By CARLENE DOWIE

HERD RECORDS

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Computerised data records for herd kept since 1984
- ✓ Top Jersey genetics — nos 3 herd in Aust
- ✓ Fertility info released to national database

ANORTHERN Victorian couple's passion for breeding quality Jersey cows and for accurately recording herd data has proved a boon for the Australian dairy industry.

Ann and Richard Worboys own one of Australia's top Jersey herds — Silhouette Jerseys — and have kept computerised records since 1984. They were among the first users of the herd management program Easy Dairy program, launched by David Chandler in 2002.

A recent upgrade of the EasyDairy program by Mr Chandler, in conjunction with Peter Williams from the Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme, has allowed mating and fertility data going back 23 years to be tipped into the national breeding

values database. The data will be used in a project that is aiming to improve fertility breeding values (see story page 88).

The Worboys, who have been dairyfarming for more than 30 years, are also undertaking the next stage in their dairy business and have recently taken on sharefarmers with a view to eventually selling the farm.

Mr Worboys started dairyfarming after he left school in 1973 on the 87-hectare Kotta, Vic, farm his parents bought in 1960. After a couple of years working for wages, he started as a sharefarmer on the family farm.

He and Ann married in 1984, moving to a higher-order share, before buying the cows from his parents in 1989.

Richard Worboys said he had always had an interest in cows, as had his mother. His parents had been among the early shareholders in Rochester Herd Improvement and had used some progeny test bulls from the early 1970s and were heavily involved in progeny testing from the late 1970s.

The family had used different breeds before introducing artificial insemination (AI) and had experimented with Illawarras for a

while after using AI across the herd but had then settled on Jerseys.

The Worboys's breeding goals with the herd have been to improve production while removing any weakness in each animal, such as poor ligaments or temperament. They used American Jersey genetics — something Mr Worboys said saved the breed in Australia — but were careful to select for high components as well as high production.

They also started breeding for protein before factories were paying more for it. Mrs Worboys was working at a Tongala bull farm with animal genetics researcher Sandy McClintock at the time. Mr McClintock encouraged the Worboys to breed for protein as he identified that milk processors would eventually introduce payment systems that favoured this.

They have also breed for temperament something Mr Worboys said became more important as he got older and didn't want to deal with bad-tempered cows.

They hadn't focused on fertility, partly because it didn't appear to be a problem and partly because they moved from



Mal Heath with one of his favourite Holstein Friesians surrounded by Worboys's Jerseys.

strictly spring calving to split calving (70% spring/30% autumn).

Ann Worboys was a city girl who came to the farm from a background using computer systems.

This meant the Worboys were among the first to use computers to analyse their herd test data with Mrs Worboys loading the paper herd test records onto a simple spreadsheet.

She then started using programs developed by their herd test company Consolidated Herd Improvement Services (CHIS), upgrading to new programs as CHIS introduced them. She also recorded mating and fertility data.

Mr Chandler was working at CHIS when he developed Easy Dairy — eventually going out on his own to launch the program.

Mrs Worboys said she liked using Easy Dairy because Mr Chandler was from a dairy farm background and was interested in developing a program around what dairyfarmers needed. “The advantage was his connection and having insight into it,” she said.

The combination of Mr Worboys's love of cows and Mrs Worboys's love of data has helped develop a Jersey herd that is currently ranked number three on the Australian Profit Ranking (APR) Australian Breeding Values (ABV). The herd was number one for several years but the need to expand when they bought additional land saw new animals brought in that pulled it back.

The Worboys said the use of the data in helping develop the herd was “not a conscious thing”.

“When we got the test results back I'd go through them, see who was the highest percentage, who was the lowest percentage,” Mrs Worboys said. “We'd talk about that. But that was probably more a subconscious carry forward.

“Over the course of the season you'd take in that this one is consistently good, this one is up and down and so you'd build a better picture of which cows to breed from. Just because one cow had a better test once didn't mean it would be better overall.”

The data proved invaluable when it was added to the national database in October. Mr Williams said before the Easy Dairy

upgrade, mating and fertility data uploaded from the Worboys's herd to the national database contained 235 records from 1996 to 2003. After the upgrade, it contained 4252 records from 1990 to 2012.

“It is amazing to think that this data has remained on a farm computer for so long and can be downloaded at the click of a button in a format that we can recognise and fully utilise today in our new multi-trait

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◀ fertility breeding value,” Mr Williams said.

Transition

The Worboys are now in a stage of transition in the dairy industry. Seven years ago — in the height of the millennium drought that gripped northern Victoria — they bought a 65ha farm about four kilometres from their home farm.

They had been considering upgrading the increasingly unworkable dairy on the home farm but were advised that it was probably more cost effective to buy a farm that was no longer operating but that had a decent dairy.

This also allowed them to pick up an extra 200 megalitres of water, something that proved invaluable in getting through the drought.

The plan was to have sharefarmers run the new farm but in the ensuing years several arrangements fell through for a variety of reasons.



The herd comprises some of Australia's top Jersey genetics.

So Mr Worboys operated the new farm with the help of a farm labourer while the home farm was used for young and dry stock and to provide fodder.

They tried to sell the farm last season but with poor milk prices couldn't find a buyer. In the middle of last year they saw an article in the *Country News* about a young couple

Mal and Amy Heath struggling to find a sharefarming position.

They contacted them and the Heaths started as sharefarmers on the property in September.

The plan is for the Worboys to eventually sell to the Heaths and then consider their options for the home farm. **D**



Mal Heath with some of the citrus pulp being fed to the herd. The pulp is a byproduct of V8 juice production.



Amy Heath uses a spreadsheet to monitor feed costs.

Young farmers look to future

MAL and Amy Heath didn't know where to turn when they couldn't find a sharefarming position in the Echuca, Vic, district in the middle of last year. After advertising online and in local newspapers, they eventually contacted the editor of *Country News*, who wrote a story about their plight. Within a week they had received 20 phone-calls expressing an interest — which they narrowed down to five, eventually settling on Richard and Ann Worboy's farm at Kotta, Vic.

Mr Heath has 17 years' experience in the industry, having worked in North East Victoria, New Zealand and south-west Victoria, where he met Mrs Heath. The couple sharefarmed at Swan Hill for a year but found the isolation difficult and wanted to move to the Goulburn Valley.

They are on a 50/50 sharefarming agreement with the Worboys.

The herd size on the farm has increased from 260 cows to 300 cows under advice from the Heaths' consultant Cameron Smith.

The Heaths have brought their own animals to the herd — which now comprises about one-third Holsteins and two-thirds Jersey.

Mr Heath and Mr Worboys said the animals had adapted well to being together in the herd, despite the difference in physical size.

The Worboys had always run a simple low-cost system. Cows were fed mostly pasture but had access to a low-cost feedpad of Waste Not Feeders to supplement their diet. They were fed about 1.3 tonnes of grain a year.

The increase in stocking rate to deliver the returns needed from the farm has seen more feeding options introduced.

The Heaths are sourcing byproducts

including citrus pulp, almond hulls, sugar syrup and oaten chaff to provide more of the cows' diet. These are fed from poly-feeders and old concrete troughs on the feedpad. The Heaths have also sourced a large quantity of silage at a good price from the local area.

Mrs Heath said she used a feed budget spreadsheet developed by their consultant to work out what feed they needed and how much they should pay for it.

Although it's only early days, both couples are happy with the sharefarming arrangement.

Mr Worboys said he was confident the Heaths had the same attitude to cows that he had and was happy to no longer be milking every day.

The Heaths are enjoying farming in an area where there are more dairy-farmers. Everybody helped out in this area, Mr Heath said.



Automation across the farm isn't limited to an integrated software program. Automatic calf feeders save time and manpower.



The Cope herd.

System allows phone access of herd records

By JEANETTE SEVERS

GRAEME Cope of Fish Creek, Vic, has been using the iDairy computer software since 2009 and can see the benefits of upgrading to the latest version, when he can scan a cow's eartag and access her records using his smartphone in the paddock.

He can also check the cow's records in the dairy, using either his smartphone or tablet.

Mr Cope is a career dairyfarmer and five

years ago he fulfilled a long-held dream when he and his wife, Jenny, bought a 405 hectare beef farm and converted it to a dairy farm.

They built a 50-stand rotary dairy, yards with undercover treatment areas and a shed specifically for the calves.

Two dams, a cumulative 25 megalitres, were installed with the aim to ensure three years of drought-proofing water.

All paddocks were reduced to 5-6ha size

and 10 kilometres of laneways intersect throughout the farm.

"I had a big ambition in life, to develop a big beef property into a dairy farm," Mr Cope said.

"We had a whole farm plan done, which I then modified to suit the lay of the land and advice from people such as the tanker driver. We fenced throughout also to suit the lay of the land.

"It's dry-land farming so we had to ►



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With the latest upgrade to iDairy software, Graeme Cope of Fish Creek, Vic, can use his smartphone in the paddock to access a cow's history and input new data, such as the birth of a heifer.



Graeme and Jenny Cope, Fish Creek, with their younger children, Shaun and Lachie and dogs, Snoopy and Macca. Shaun has now joined his father in the dairy, continuing a strong and long family history.



Some of the 200 Friesian heifer calves the Cope family raise every year. All heifers are kept and are used as replacements in the milking herd or sold to the Chinese market.

◀ build some decent sized dams to supply the farm. We also harvest [water] from the shed roofs.

"There are two seasonal creeks that can fill the dam, but we hope the dams have drought-proofed the farm for three years."

Mr Cope was brought up on a dairy farm and his father, uncles and brothers are all dairyfarmers, so you could say being a dairy-farmer is in the blood.

One of his sons, Shaun, has joined him on the farm after two years at Dookie Agricultural College, ensuring the next generation is in dairy too. The family also employ two full-time workers.

They milk a 650-head predominantly Friesian medium-sized herd, with split calving — 180 autumn calvers and the remainder in spring.

Optimum annual milk production has been as high as 4.8 million litres and the cows average 7000-7500 litres per year. Butterfat is 195,000 kilograms and protein is 165,000kg.

All hay and silage is produced on farm from perennial pastures, ryegrass and clover — 1500-2000 tonnes of silage, 1000 round bales of hay and 300-400 round bales of silage.

Wheat, barley, promix and syrup are bought in and a mix is fed to the cows at each milking.

Since developing the new farm in 2008, Mr Cope quickly became a fan of the iDairy software program, installing it in 2009.

The program enables software management of the herd and its health and feed; and shed automation including cups on/

cups off, drafting and alerts for specific cows.

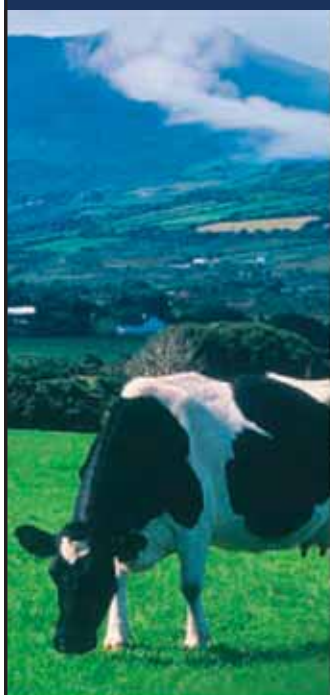
The iDairy program latest upgrade also allows mobile integration across all computer platforms, in the dairy, in the home and in the car or paddock using smartphones and tablets.

The program uses the electronic tag in the ear of each cow, so a calf can be tagged, identified and its initial information uploaded in the system while Mr Cope is checking it after its birth in the paddock.

"Every cow is registered in the computer, so once she calves, the heifer gets a number that is linked to her joining," Mr Cope said. "Each cow after calving is registered as 'fresh' and all AI joinings are added in as we go."

Considering every heifer is kept by Mr

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Shaun Cope checks the cups are fitted correctly.



Electronic ear tags are used by the iDairy software.

Cope, either as replacement stock or for a diversified income by selling to the Chinese market, this means the animal is in the system from day one.

The program enables the cow's oestrus status, pregnancy scan and expected date to be uploaded to the database.

It builds a joining and treatment history specific to each cow that can be accessed anytime, from anywhere on the farm.

The program alerts Mr Cope to dry off the cow, according to the expected calving date. It has a sound and colour alert system that is enabled as the cow enters the dairy and Mr Cope said, as one of the farm workers is deaf, this works well for everyone.

If the cow is receiving veterinary care of any sort, this is part of the alert system.

As the cow walks onto the platform, it is automatically sprayed with water, the cups

lift up and someone walks along ensuring the cups are attached to the cow's udder. Its prescribed feed ration is then supplied, again according to the information in the computer program.

"The system apportions her feed, including regulating the fresh [newly calved] cow's feed to avoid acidosis," Mr Cope said.

When milking is finished, the cups drop off and the tail bail lifts.

If the cow requires treatment of any sort, as it exits the dairy, it is drafted into a separate pen, for Mr Cope or one of the other workers to attend to it.

The software program also calculates the time since the cow calved, again providing the applicable alert.

"It saves us a lot of time," Mr Cope said. "Once the information is in the system, it

helps with breeding. It's helped us to be pretty diligent about record keeping.

"It's very user friendly and not complicated at all; although I'm assuming we use it at a fairly basic level.

"For example, if I had a group of cows I wanted to feed an extra kilogram of grain at each milking, I expect the program could show me which cows benefited from this and produced extra milk.

"But I don't use the program for that type of herd management ... or not yet, anyway.

"We give them a blanket feed ration. But we do group cows according to like — for example, all fresh cows are grouped together; or all bulling heifers are grouped together."

Contact: Farm Automation Australia, phone 1800 183182, email <info@farmautomation.com.au>.



Once a cow's milking is over, the cups automatically drop off and the tail bail lifts, ready to let the cow out when the rotary returns to the bridge. If the computer scan indicates she is bulling or in need of treatment, the cow is automatically drafted to a treatment pen, rather than returned to the main herd.



Graeme Cope is happy all mobile and fixed systems are integrated across the iDairy computer program, making running the dairy easy.



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February 12-14:

Allansford, Vic
Contact:

Sungold Field Days

Field day dedicated to dairyfarming and cattle breeding
Phone (03) 5565 3142, email: <sungoldfielddays@wcb.com.au>, website: <www.sungoldfielddays.com.au>

February 24:

Melbourne
Contact:

Australian Dairy Investment Forum

Forum to share latest news and outlook about Australian dairy industry
Phone (03) 9694 3777, website: <www.dairyaustralia.com.au/dairyinvestmentforum>

February 25-27:

Geelong, Vic
Contact:

Australian Dairy Conference

Top speakers on issues relevant to all Australian dairyfarmers
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March 3-4:

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Contact:

IDF Symposium on Microstructure of Dairy Products

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March 6-7:

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March 12:

Adelaide Hills
Contact:

DairySA Central Dairy Conference 2014

Topics include Horizon 2020, genomics, robotics, dairy systems
Penny Schulz, mobile 0417 853 094, email: <penny@dairysa.com.au>

March 26-27:

Melbourne
Contact:

United Dairyfarmers of Victoria Conference 2013

Conference for Victorian dairy industry
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March 27:

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Tasmanian Dairy Conference and awards dinner

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Diary dates

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By KERRY RYAN*

Negotiation: letting it happen brings success



I'VE been privileged to be involved in a number of negotiations for sale and purchase of some substantial farming businesses in recent times. It's always satisfying to see a "win-win" achieved and witness the inevitable differences of expectations, opinions and negotiation styles managed to advantage.

This reinforces my view that all good business is more about "letting things happen" than "making things happen". When people with complementary aspirations and plans share these in a way that enables them to recognise their synergies and manage their differences, significant value is added.

A key early stage priority for successful negotiation is to evaluate the personality styles of those involved and adopt an approach with which they can best engage. It's also important to develop agendas that achieve the highest quality communication without any party dominating. Given the emotion involved in selling major assets such as farms, which may encompass a lifetime's work, it is understandable that at some stage participants sensitivities will be heightened by these "high-stakes" discussions.

As with any courageous conversation, success will depend on timeliness, structure, making sure discussions occur in the right environment and meetings are led by a facilitator capable of navigating all areas that need to be agreed.

This will usually involve a series of meetings. The early stages will be about establishing rapport and exchanging information so that by being better informed about each party's objectives, a deal can be formulated to deliver preferred outcomes. This phase includes helping people to understand that the best result is likely to come from "revealing" rather than "concealing" facts and perceptions.

Management of these exchanges will be enhanced by ensuring meetings are not allowed to drift. I have seen many otherwise constructive conversations lose their shape by going just 10 minutes too long. I work hard to secure progress by bringing meetings to a close and agreeing to reconvene to address the next stage once tangible progress has been made. This allows agreement to occur through small steps rather



The sale of a farm business is complex and negotiations are best broken into a series of meetings.

than one major decision that can fail because of fatigue or communication breakdowns at key moments.

I also encourage protocols that allow either party to request an adjournment so there can be time to reflect and talk privately and ensure views are aligned.

Some negotiators adopt a position that discloses the least possible. This appears to be built on a belief that to succeed in negotiation you should give nothing away. My experience is that this results in an unhealthy focus on price that often results in lost opportunity. At its worst it is intimidating and promotes distrust that risks conflict rather than collaboration.

Combining a more measured approach with open exchange of information helps build a business case on which the parties can assess value.

This requires patience and time. My experience is that it's difficult to capture full value without enabling the parties to clearly understand just what is being bought and sold.

This is another reason for having a series of meetings. Manageable, focused exchanges enable relationships to grow, credible information to be exchanged and time allowed for buyer and seller to reflect and decide just where value lies.

Breaking the process into smaller steps

reduces the potential for tensions to develop and builds the important trust component in the negotiation.

A facilitator skilled in managing agenda setting and capable of recording and circulating meeting minutes will add significant value by recording what has been agreed and keeping the parties focused on outstanding issues.

Finally, the typical trading of concession for concession in the negotiation needs to be complemented by identifying opportunities to collaborate and synergise. There can be a number of areas that can offer mutual gains such as acknowledging respective tax positions, financing requirements, or proposed set up for the new owner's farming system. A creative thinker leading this type of conversation will be invaluable.

Successful negotiation is about allowing things to flow, giving the process time and maintaining a communication environment focused on solutions and mutual success rather than dominance and disadvantage. It's something I find immensely rewarding and an area where serious value can be added. **D**

*Kerry Ryan is a New Zealand based agribusiness consultant available for face-to-face or online for advice and ideas. Contact him at website <www.kerryryan.co.nz>.



By
ROD IRWIN*

Why infection gets out of control

IN THE last edition of *The Australian Dairyfarmer* we looked at some of the complexities involved in an outbreak of Salmonella. Since writing the article, I have been investigating yet another outbreak of Salmonella, and it has given me cause to reflect on the many factors that cause outbreaks of infectious disease.

Of course we all live and cohabit in a world teaming with bacteria, viruses and other microscopic organisms, and scarcely pause to think about their presence as we go about our daily lives.

Yet for humans and other animals such as dairy cows, infection gets out of control and causes problems for individuals and groups. Infection is brought into sharp focus when large numbers of individuals — such as dairy cows, heifers or calves — are affected by infection and loss of performance, production, animals and genetics occurs. Coupled with these losses are the financial costs and stresses on farmers and workers.

The particular outbreak of Salmonella I have been dealing with is a perfect example of how humans and animals live with infection, yet circumstances can conspire to cause a disease outbreak.

The farm sourced its stock water from a bore that was pumped into troughs servicing each paddock, so the usual water source for the cows was clean.

However, the bore broke down, and the farmer was forced to source stock water from the only dam on the property. The dam was located in one paddock where stock could freely graze around it and drink from it.

Recent heavy spring rains have resulted in manure on the banks of the dams draining into the dam and contaminating it. In addition, wild birds including ducks and ibis could swim and wade in it, further adding to contamination.

Warm weather then pushed up the water consumption of the herd, drawing contaminated water into troughs around the farm. An incubation period for the disease added a further delay, but six days after the pump broke down, the first cases of Salmonella began to appear in the herd.

This is an example of overwhelming infection causing a disease outbreak. The cows are used to contacting low levels of Salmonella from carrier herd mates or wildlife as they go about their daily life.

Indeed low levels of infection result in a healthy immunity. However, the high levels of bacteria overwhelm an individual's im-



Disease outbreaks can occur when an increase in environmental infection, like a contaminated water supply, overwhelms animals.

munity and a disease outbreak results. The outbreak can gain further momentum when affected cows contaminate pasture, leading to yet higher levels of infection.

Outbreaks of overwhelming infection caused by bugs already present in the environment are common in dairy herds.

For example, an outbreak of environmental mastitis may be traced to a highly contaminated calving pad or paddock, or to a length of farm track that has broken down causing dirty udders. A group of heifers may be affected by a worm infestation when heavy rains cause a massive worm egg hatch, and low grazing heights cause a high pick up of larvae. A group of calves may get scours because one calf has sprayed a pen with diarrhoea, causing the rest of the group to be exposed to large numbers of bugs.

Examples of overwhelming infection occur in human populations too — for example when sewerage contaminates flood water or when residents of aged care facilities eat food that has been improperly stored, handled or prepared.

Knowledge of the cause of this type of disease outbreak gives us clues to bringing the outbreak under control.

A key aspect of control is achieving a cleaner environment.

In dairy herd examples, replacing the bedding material of a calving pad or changing a calving paddock may bring an outbreak of environmental mastitis under

control. Changing a paddock for a group of heifers exposed to worm larvae may reduce pick-up. Regularly changing the bedding of a calf pen will reduce exposure to the bugs causing a scour outbreak.

In the middle of a disease outbreak, when the pressure is on, I'm often asked, "Just how clean does the environment have to be?"

"Cleaner than now," is a good starting point.

"Clean enough to stop the outbreak," might sound like a glib reply, but it's true. Farmers can't and don't want to achieve a sterile environment free of microorganisms. But the overwhelming numbers of bugs need to be brought to a level with which the animals can cope, back to levels where they can resume healthy living and well-being.

There can be a tendency to reach for the quick fix treatment, but improving environmental management is likely to yield longer-term success.

I'll look at other aspects of disease outbreaks in the next edition of *The Australian Dairyfarmer*.

Dairy vets are the first person to call regarding outbreaks of disease in a herd and a great source of local knowledge about disease control.

Until next time, good milking. **D**

**Rod Irwin is a practising cattle veterinarian and herd health consultant based at Warragul, Vic.*

Breeding partnership proves successful

BETTINA and John McLeod's herd ranks number 155 for profit among Australian herd-tested Holsteins. It also ranks well above the national average for type, milkfat and protein.

But the McLeods don't spend hours studying bull catalogues. Their achievement of a high genetic merit herd has come through a successful partnership with their breeding adviser, Graham Heaver, in the past 15 years.

The McLeods dairy at Grasmere West, near Warrnambool, Victoria, with help from a full-time employee and Mr McLeod's parents, Neil and Penny. Their 350-400 cow herd is milked three times a day, averaging 11,200 litres a cow and 770 kilograms milk solids/cow (305-day lactation) and achieving a conception rate of 78.5% in a 10-week joining period.

A couple of times a year Mrs McLeod and Mr Heaver discuss the herd's breeding objective, progress towards that objective, and specific priorities for the coming joining season. This year they have been able to use the herd's Genetic Progress Report to monitor long-term trends and the impact of specific decisions.

"Graham understands what we want to achieve — improvements in the herd's genetic merit for profitability and calving ease — and within that brief, I leave it to him to choose the individual sires we use for each joining," Mrs McLeod said. "We have always been happy with the progress we've made and our Genetic Progress Report confirms we are heading in the direction we want to go."

Mr Heaver selects sires from the *Good*



Bettina McLeod is happy with the genetic progress of her herd and keeps track of it with the Genetic Progress Report.

Bulls Guide, focusing on profitability — the Australian Profit Ranking (APR), based on domestic ABVs or overseas proofs — ABV(i)s.

"About 30% of sires are high genomic bulls as we see this as the next big step in genetic progress," Mr Heaver said.

"Within those top APR sires we look to improve specific traits in the herd. All the bulls in the top for APR are pretty good for overall type so we don't look at that specifically. We look at components, mastitis, teat length, rump and calving ease."

The Genetic Progress Report has been useful in fine-tuning the McLeods' selection criteria.

"The report highlighted how much progress has been made for mastitis resistance in recent years; and as a result Bettina and I decided to place higher priority on selecting for fertility within the top sires," Mr Heaver said.

Mrs McLeod finds the Genetic Progress Report particularly useful for identifying and learning from past mistakes. "When I look at the graphs, I'm interested to see the dips — because they show where we made a mistake," she said. For example in 2006, when Mr Heaver was overseas on study leave, another breeding adviser chose the sires, purely for type and no other factors.

While the report shows a subsequent peak in genetic progress for type, it was accompanied by dips in profit, fat, protein, fertility and longevity.

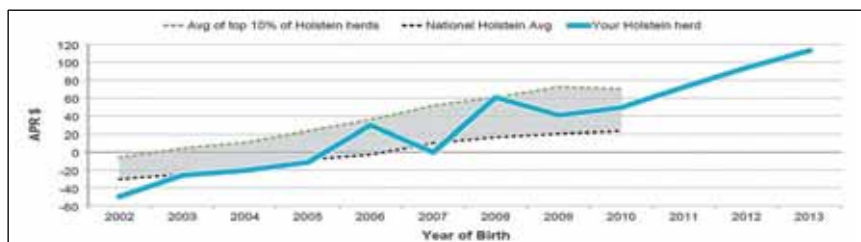
"We now select our bulls well in advance, while we both have plenty of time — the herd was already above average for type and those high type bulls involved too much compromise in other traits that are more important to us," she said.

The McLeods' current Genetic Progress Report includes the herd's 2013 calves, giving them the most up-to-date report possible.

Mrs McLeod is keen to continually improve their dairy operation and uses the Genetic Progress Report as a tool for monitoring breeding progress.

"The Genetic Progress presents our data in graphs that make it easy to see long-term trends," she said.

Contact: Michelle Axford, ADHIS extension and education manager, phone 0427 573 330, email <maxford@adhis.com.au> or website <www.adhis.com.au>.



Bettina McLeod is interested in the dips in her herd's Genetic Progress Report to identify and learn from mistakes.

Aus dairy sustainability credentials recognised

IN DECEMBER, one of the world's largest companies Unilever, gave Australian dairy production accreditation as meeting its exacting Sustainable Agriculture Code (SAC). As a result, all Australian-produced milk is now deemed by Unilever to contribute to the company's sustainable sourcing goal.

The company's benchmarking revealed Australia's dairy industry is 100% compliant with the mandatory requirements of the Sustainable Agriculture Code.

Three specific gaps, in soils, biodiversity and waste were identified, and to remedy this Dairy Australia, together with Murray Goulburn, Fonterra and several other dairy companies, have agreed to implement a project involving nearly 100 farms across the country's eight dairy regions.

The MacAulay family, who have been farming their river country property at Staceys Bridge west of Yarram since 1882, are a leading example of how dairyfarmers work with the environment.

When the property came into the hands of David MacAulay and his wife, Sue, they were determined to keep what remained of the remnant native vegetation and start to create new bushland corridors along the property's Albert River frontage.

"My liking of the bush meant I started thinking that some areas of the farm were better off being fenced off and preserved rather than being cleared for more farmland," he said.

It was a philosophy that flew in the face of accepted wisdom at the time, but Mr MacAulay could see the value of land beyond simply how much grass it could grow.

"I suppose there are some who are more interested in the last blade of grass but I am not so concerned about that, I would rather have the satisfaction of seeing some vegetation," he said.

Towering eucalyptus and riverside forests look wonderful now but it was not so long ago that the farm — and much of the district — was infested with weeds and vermin.

"Farmland in the hill country here was severely infested with ragwort," he said.

"Then with the hill farms being sold and turned into plantations, that started the problems of erosion and poor water quality,



Dairyfarmer David MacAulay in part of the native forest on his 541-hectare Staceys Bridge property.

so I became involved in local committees to help overcome those problems."

Involvement with other programs such as successful GippRip project, which saw large-scale riverside remediation work tackled by farmers with assistance from the dairy industry and conversation groups, saw the rate of fencing and planting increase dramatically on the farm.

Seeing native animals returning to

the bushland has been a highlight of the long-term remediation work done. Lyrebirds and wallabies have returned as have kangaroos, which were never around in Mr MacAulay's younger days.

For his efforts across a range of community groups, Mr MacAulay was awarded the Yarram Yarram Landcare Group Individual Award in 2011.



Focus Farm program improves bottom line

DAIRY Australia is extending the network of Focus Farms that have a 'focus on the bottom line' across more of Australia's dairy regions in 2014 to support farmers with on-farm decision making and to improve farm business performance.

Focus Farms in DairyNSW and WestVic Dairy regions will draw on the successful models already in operation in the Gipps-Dairy and Murray Dairy regions where Focus Farms have proven to be beneficial for farmers who want to make business decisions on a strong understanding of key profit drivers and risk.

The aim is to optimise farm profitability

with a recognition that, within a farm business, the areas of production, financials, people and planning all play a part.

Dairy Australia's extension and change management program manager, Neil Webster, said Focus Farms were an integral part of an overall strategy from Dairy Australia to provide effective extension outcomes and to help farmers build farm business management skills.

"This is an exciting program for farmers to be involved in," he said. "Focus Farms are real farms, making real decisions under real conditions which makes them relevant to other farmers. Evaluation also shows that being involved with a Focus Farm is a

proven way to improve your farm management skills."

The Focus Farm model develops business profitability options by closely monitoring farm activities and expenditure on a commercial dairy farm for a two-year period. Focus Farm farmers are supported by an experienced agricultural consultant as their facilitator who works with them to establish the goals of their farm. The main goals for farmers usually relate to increased profitability, progressing their farming career or more efficient ways to manage the farm.

The facilitator and farmer also put in place a support group made up of farmers and service providers who the host farmer

Focus Farm provides opportunity for growth

NORTHERN Victorian farmer Lee Verhey said becoming involved in Murray Dairy's Focus Farm program was one of the best decisions he had made — setting the farm's direction and gaining greater access to a range of skilled professionals.

A first-time farm owner Mr Verhey (known as Skeeta) milks 280 cows at his property at Koondrook with partner Angela and became a Focus Farm farmer in 2011.

"What attracted us was we wanted to get a better understanding of our business, broaden our skills and knowledge and determine our direction and the Focus Farm project run by Murray Dairy offered all of that as a package," Mr Verhey said.

The family bought the farm in 2005 during a flat period for the dairy industry in northern Victoria due to drought.

"We came in as a low equity farm and we were vulnerable to a price drop in the region, the GFC (global financial crisis) was starting to take effect and it was quite challenging with limited water available because of the drought," he said.

The Focus Farm was facilitated by consultant Daryl Poole and drew on a support group that included first-time farm owners, sharemilkers, mid-range and successful farmers to older farmers who had been in the industry in the region for decades.

Service providers, including an agronomist, nutritionist, vet, banker and accountant who were all connected to the business, also participated as part of the group.

"We were quite apprehensive at the start and not really sure about how much we would have to air but we decided to be very open as we wanted to get the farm up to speed," Mr Verhey said.

"We had nothing to lose, and the more open you are the better the results. We wanted to get the maximum out of the two years we were in the program."

After sharing a position statement, which looked at the physical and financial status of the farm and its history, the group undertook a SWOT analysis of the operation identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

From there short and medium-term goals were set and planned during the two years.

"We first had to decide what system we were going to work best under and that was the pasture-based system," he said. "So the first project was establishing the feedbase so we could feed the cows."

"From there we took on more projects, tracked progress month-by-month and continually reassessed our goals."



Focus Farm farmer Lee Verhey, Dairy Australia extension and change management program manager Neil Webster and Focus Farm facilitator Daryl Poole at the Verhey farm at Koondrook, Vic.

Mr Verhey said other key benefits of the program included developing strong and continuing relationships with group participants and learning to take a more measured approach to decision making.

Group members benefited through exposure to speakers and experts who made presentations to the group and by following new practices implemented on the farm.

Mr Verhey said farmers interested in becoming Focus Farm farmers shouldn't hesitate at the opportunity to create some progress with their farm business.

"If they want to better themselves, be better at what they do and better at their craft, then they should grab the opportunity with both hands," he said.

is comfortable with because lots of the farm's information is shared during the next two years.

At monthly meetings, the support group revisits the farm goals and progress made towards them and any barriers that have arisen. They also discuss the timely technical issues: for example fertiliser application, rotation length, cell count, feed options and pasture renovation.

The Focus Farm process is flexible in approach and is tailored to help achieve the aspirations of the Focus Farm farmers involved by:

- Focus Farmer's setting their business and family goals; and
- the preparation of farm production and financial budgets in a simple form that everyone can follow including the wider dairy community.

GippsDairy executive officer, Dr Danielle Auldish, said Focus Farms had been the flagship program for the Regional Development Program in Gippsland for the past 12 years. Currently there are four in operation in the region.

"Focus Farms offer a level of exposure into a farm business that you can't find anywhere else," she said. "It does a good job of explaining what options the farmer has and then why certain decisions were made. This information is shared with the support group and all other farmers who follow Focus Farms information in the media.

"You get to see the journey of a farm during a two-year period and see how they farm smarter and reach their goals early. We have

people wanting to be a Focus Farmer because they see it is good for their business."

Dr Auldish said farms in the program were all different, which broadened the relevance to other farmers. As an example, one of the current Gippsland Focus Farms operates a small herd of less than 150 cows and runs a tight operation. It has created a high level of interest and has hosted an extra field day to the usual Focus Farm schedule.

"This Focus Farm really hit a need in our region," she said. "Small farms make up more than a quarter of the farms in Gippsland so it has filled an important gap, including for people who are planning to get into farming."

Focus Farm Support Groups value the stimulation from the discussion and decision-making process in the group and they also receive the latest information.

In Gippsland in-depth information from the Focus Farms is available in in GippsDairy's *How Now Gippy Cow* monthly newsletter and on its website. Similarly, Murray Dairy publishes results and information from the Focus Farms in its region. Brief reports from Focus Farms are well read in the rural press, including *Stock & Land*.

The most valued criteria for Focus Farm hosts is the ability to withstand the spotlight on them and their business. Lee and Ange Verhey found the exposure that came with being a Focus Farm in the Murray Dairy region initially challenging, but they embraced it, got used to it and found being open about their business delivered the real value to them. It also provided visibility for

other farmers about the options available and decisions made that they would not have otherwise.

"While we don't look at personal expenditure, pretty much all the other financials are drilled down into at meetings, which means monthly revisiting of figures by the Focus Farmers," Dr Auldish said. "They also have 20 people a month turning up to their farm offering their opinions. This would be challenging to some people, but the Focus Farm farmers know the support group is a brains trust brimming with expertise and experience. Discussing options and decisions with the support group has seen Focus Farms leapfrog years ahead in development".

Mr Webster said the feedback to Dairy Australia was that the focus on business goals and the support was what gave the Focus Farmer the greatest benefit.

"The chance to track options on a real farm and real decisions being made under real conditions is where the benefit for other farmers comes from and what has made this such a great program," he said.

"Dairy Australia is looking forward to working with Regional Development Programs to establish a wider network of Focus Farms to provide insight into a variety of farms and to deliver the benefits to more farmers."

Contact local Regional Development Program GippsDairy, Murray Dairy, WestVic Dairy and DairyNSW. Details <<http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Industry-overview/Dairy-regions.aspx>>.

Survey reflects a tough year in Qld

FLOODING and increasing input prices saw the average Queensland dairy farm's operating profit drop to \$247 per cow in 2012-13 from \$482 in 2011-12 according to a survey by the Queensland Dairy Accounting Scheme (QDAS) and Dairy Australia.

The *Balancing dairy production in northern Australia* report contains physical and financial data from 65 farms from the south east coastal, Darling Downs, central Queensland and north Queensland dairy regions.

Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (QDAFF) senior scientist Ray Murphy, who led the project, said the report reflected the challenging climatic and market conditions experienced

by Queensland dairyfarmers in the 2012-13 season.

Severe flooding affected dairyfarmers in central Queensland, Gympie and other areas. Drought conditions in western Queensland that also affected central Queensland caused feed prices to increase dramatically in the last few months of 2012-13.

Another major effect on profitability was the 2.1 cent per litre decrease in average milk receipts identified in the report.

Yet returns to dairyfarmers varied widely across the state from -5% to 12.2% while the average return on equity was -0.2%, a drop from 1.4% in 2011-12. Return on equity for the top 25% of farms in the study was 4.5% and return on assets owned for these farms was 5.7%.

Mr Murphy said the importance of feed-related costs on profit margins in the State was evident with data showing feed-related costs consuming 52% of milk income in 2012-13 illustrating the dramatic increase of grain, protein and other concentrates in the last four months of the season.

A joint initiative between QDAFF and Dairy Australia, the QDAS report aims to provide a comprehensive data set on the physical and financial performance of dairy farm businesses for use by industry, farmers, service providers and government.

A summary of the report findings is also available at website <www.dairyaustralia.com.au> and following the links to the People and Business and Queensland Dairy Accounting Scheme page.

DA launches body condition scoring app

DAIRY Australia has released a new smart phone app to help body condition score cows more effectively.

Designed in consultation with dairyfarmers and advisers, the Cow Body Condition Scoring Tool app is easy to use, featuring large graphics to help dairyfarmers and advisers get a standardised measure of cows' body energy and protein reserves at critical times of lactation.

Dairy Australia's feedbase program manager, John Evans, said the app would help farmers working with seasonal and split calving herds take

greater control over their herd's feeding. "The app uses a simple scoring method using the graphics and the touch screen and it takes only seconds to score each cow, meaning users can score groups of cows accurately and consistently," he said.

"Three scoring methods are also available to suit beginners, intermediate and advanced users, so anyone is able to use it."

Herd results are provided instantly after each scoring with suggested actions to consider.

A results summary, including a graph, can then be emailed as a permanent record.

Tasmanian-based herd nutrition adviser,

Pip Gale, of Vanguard Nutrition, said the app would make the recording process easier for farmers and the high-quality of reporting would be of great value.

"The great thing about the app is that you can take it anywhere, anyone can use it and you can circulate the information on the spot," Mr Gale said.

"It's often the case that you are out in the paddock with your pen and paper and you are trying to record your BCS average by hand so the app makes the process easier that way.

"Sometimes you lose the piece of paper so to have a permanent record

Farmers embrace mastitis control tech

DAIRY Australia's Countdown Mastitis Toolkit app is proving popular with more than 800 farmers and advisers downloading the tool since it was released in late September, last year.

The app, which can be downloaded for free, was designed in consultation with dairyfarmers, advisers and vets and is based on the Countdown 2020 mastitis control program and associated resources.

Divided into four sections, the app offers a range of the latest information and resources farmers need to manage mastitis in their herd including:

- tools;
- topics specific common to mastitis control scenarios;
- Countdown Farm Guidelines; and
- a library featuring related articles, tips and traps.

Cobden, Vic, farmer Craig Dwyer has downloaded the app and said it was an easy-to-use tool to help manage mastitis in his 330-cow herd.

"What stood out straight away was the liner life calculator," he said. "That's an excellent tool where you can add your details and an alarm is set up on your phone when they need to be changed. It means you don't need to worry about checking your calendar."



Dairy Australia's mastitis app has proved popular with farmers by reducing cell counts.

The cell count calculator, which can calculate savings created both per cow and for the overall herd.

"We don't have a big problem with mastitis but we want to get down to an average bulk milk cell count of 80,000 to 90,000," he said. "You can use the

calculator to see the savings you can make in dollar terms and it just gives you that incentive and something to aim for."

The new app was also helping a new member of his team learn about good mastitis management practices.

"We got him to download the app and showed him the teat gallery and said 'hey this is what you need to be looking out for in the shed'," Mr Dwyer said. "I can see it being great for people like him starting out in the industry who don't have much experience."

Heywood, Vic, dairyfarmers Stephen and Tania Luckin have also used the app on their iPhone.

"I think they have done a great job in creating it," Mr Luckin said. "There is lots of information to access if you play around with it, personally, I have used the teat assessment tool recently.

"For the average farmer to have all of that information in your pocket and to be able to use it anytime, anywhere is very handy."

The Countdown Mastitis Toolkit app is available for both iPhone and Android phones and can also be used on tablets.

To download the app visit website <www.dairyaustralia.com.au/countdown-app> for a direct link.



"Does my bum look big in this app?"

Body condition scoring

What is it?

- It's a visual assessment of the amount of muscle and fat covering the bones of a cow;
- It is not affected by gut fill or pregnancy as liveweight is;
- Involves assessing specific locations on the cow to determine how thin or fat the cow is;
- In Australia, an eight-point scale is used for dairy cattle, which provides a quick, easy, consistent way to assess body condition, and

Why do it?


- Body condition affects milk production and reproductive performance;
- Can compare the condition of cows in their herd with recommended targets
- Manage herd feeding better

saved on the phone for next time that you can immediately compare with, is very handy.

"Farm stakeholders, such as vets and farm owners, could also be kept up-to-date as the results summary is able to be emailed. As the results were also offered in graph form, they were also easier to interpret."

The app is available for Android

smart phones and iPhone. To download the app visit website <www.dairyaustralia.com.au/BCS> for a direct link of visit the Google Play or iTunes Apple store.

For farmers who don't have a smartphone, Dairy Australia has also created a new BCS handbook and recording sheets that will be available on the Dairy Australia website. 

Genetics adds value to Australia's dairy herds

THE new program manager for genetics and data management at Dairy Australia Matt Shaffer said the industry had been slow to create a clear vision of the importance of genetics in the development of the national herd and it was costing Australia's dairy farmers dearly.

"Genetic improvement currently returns \$9.30 extra profit per cow per year, but by lifting this to \$15-\$20 we could add tens of millions of dollars annually to farmer profit, that is ongoing cumulative profit building every year," he said.

Mr Shaffer's role at Dairy Australia is to create an industry-wide strategy and vision that, once implemented, would help transform Australian genetics and improve the sector's international position.

"There is low-hanging fruit in Australia as far as genetics is concerned and if it can be captured, there will be serious ongoing profits for our farmers," Mr Shaffer said.

During the next few months, Mr Shaffer will be consulting with dairyfarmers and industry stakeholders nationwide to create an Australian Dairy Herd Improvement



Genetics holds the key to more profit for farmers.

Strategy. A draft of the strategy is expected to be available for discussion in May.

"The use of tried and trusted genetic methods, coupled with the cutting-edge science coming out of the Dairy Futures CRC, will not only make our industry more profitable, it will make it more sustainable too," he said.


Dairy Futures CRC's work to introduce genomics to dairy cattle breeding has al-

ready created a new market segment for young bulls assessed with genomics and improved farmers' ability to select for fertility.

Other projects underway are aimed at allowing farmers to breed cows that produce less methane, have higher feed efficiency and better tolerance to heat stress.

With new traits come new priorities and increased demand on computing infrastructure.

Through consultation with industry and farmers, the Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme (ADHIS) will be reviewing the national breeding objective, which provides direction and momentum in breeding programs so that farmers can milk the kind of cows that really suit the Australian environment.

To meet the increased computing demand, Dairy Australia is investing in a system that will allow ADHIS to deliver new traits and old, in a timely, efficient and sustainable manner. 

Contact: Matt Shaffer, Dairy Australia, phone (03) 9694 3850, email <mshaffer@dairyaustralia.com.au>.

Gippsland co-ordinator connects farmers with info

TONY Platt grew up on a beef and sheep farm in central New South Wales. He joined Dairy Australia in the dairy extension team in March 2013 after previously working for the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority as a soil and nutrition officer. Mr Platt has a Bachelor in Farm Business Management and a Masters in Environmental Science.

What services do you offer to farmers?

Fundamentally, my job is to provide better planning and co-ordination of extension activities and services for dairyfarmers in Gippsland. This is to ensure that farmers are supported to be profitable with relevant and timely extension activities and information that has an appropriate regional context.

Along with GippsDairy, which I work closely with, the role is becoming somewhat of a 'go to' point for farmers, farmer groups, advisers and service providers with questions or requests for information, be it about Dairy Australia, GippsDairy or a need for extension on a particular topic. It may not be that I have the answer, but our roles can guide farmers to where the correct information is or help find solutions.

Gippsland is a key dairying region with more than 1400 farms. Because of the size of the region, I have focused on connecting with farmer groups and networks where they exist, along with the wider industry. My role also involves connecting with extension providers, including the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) team, private consultants, processors and advisers.

Additionally we have a couple of key initiatives that we manage at a regional level with the current support for discussion groups just one example. This initiative provides funding as an incentive for existing discussion groups and for farmers looking to establish discussion groups as a way of enhancing on-farm profitability or honing their skills in a group environment. This funding has set guidelines and anyone wishing to explore this further in Gippsland is welcome to contact me or GippsDairy.

What have you been working on since you started at Dairy Australia?

Guided by Dairy Australia and the GippsDairy team I have been working on making the connections with farmers and stake-



Tony Platt at work on a farm in Gippsland.

holders across Gippsland that I mentioned earlier.

The discussion group funding has been a great success.

I've been involved in getting groups started based on requests from farmers, which is a great outcome. I think this initiative will open the door to a number of new opportunities for the farmers involved and make some real difference on their farms.

I have also been involved in a couple of extension activities that were in response to a pressing need for information quickly. Having a regionally based contact, who farmers or organisations can get in touch with when there is a pressing issue, means I can help find a solution in a timely manner by co-ordinating a response. It may not always be me who delivers the activity, however, I am able to bring in those with the expertise to deliver the information as necessary.

How do you like working in the region?

Working in the region is a real pleasure. I have been living in Gippsland now for three years, and Maffra for 18 months and it is a great place to work.

Farmers and the wider industry in Gippsland have been receptive to the role and we have made some real in-roads together during the past seven to eight months since I started.

Likewise working with some fantastic individuals across key organisations and private industry has allowed me to have even greater impact on areas that farmers have told me are important to them.

Anything surprised you about the job?

The sheer amount of information and programs available to the dairy industry through Dairy Australia and the Regional Development Programs, such as GippsDairy, is fantastic. I was aware on a surface level of the research and support available, but exploring this in more depth through this role has highlighted how much is out there. It's a matter of making it available to

farmers in a way that it fits to their farm and in the right format.

Can you talk about Focus Farms project?

The current Focus Farm project in Gippsland is funded by Dairy Australia and managed by GippsDairy.

Focus Farms has been run by GippsDairy in various forms for more than 10 years with great success. The project focuses on a real, commercial farm and aims to improve operating surpluses through improved understanding of operational costs, maximising home grown feed and reducing fixed costs.

This is achieved by close monitoring of farm activities and expenditure. The Focus Farm gets support from an experienced farm consultant, who acts as a group facilitator, and a support group made up of farmers and local service providers.

A feature of the Focus Farm concept is the openness of information that is generated from the farm which is featured in local and state-wide media. The current round of focus farms (of which there are four) will wrap up in May. The next round of Focus Farms will begin in the New Year, and there will be expressions of interest ending in January 20. Again, anyone wanting further information can contact GippsDairy.

The success of Focus Farms has seen the concept expand to Murray Dairy, and soon to WestVic Dairy, DairyNSW and Tasmania. This will be an exciting opportunity for farmers in other regions to experience and benefit from the Focus Farm concept, and to build on the information that is generated by Gippsland Focus Farms across different dairy regions.

How is the 2013-14 spring/summer season progressing?

The season is variable across Gippsland. South Gippsland found it very wet through spring with a couple of narrow windows to make silage, whereas Orbost had a good spring. The season has certainly not been without challenges, but with a better milk price, the general sentiment is that it will be a season of consolidation after last year. Farmers are generally positive after what was a pretty tough previous 12 months. **D**

Contact: Tony Platt, mobile 0477 440 339 or email <TPlatt@dairyaustralia.com.au>; Regional Development Programs website <www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Industry-overview/Dairy-regions.aspx>.



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Dinner



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Proudly Supported By



- * First Annual Winter Holstein Expo
- * World Class Facilities
- * First Red Holstein Show In Australia
- * Youth Orientated Event
- * Focus On End Product

Brecon Breeders
Total Livestock Genetics
Midland Irrigation

Sponsorship Opportunities Still Available

For Further Enquiries Contact
Clare Modra (03) 5487 1127 or 0419 200 981

ADF1334677

Hot Genomic SIREs



Adlejama Delsanto Picola

Kaarmona Atley

PICOLA

APR 281

Rel 58%



Components ✓



Health ✓



A2/A2 ✓

One of the highest available Genomic Sires for profit. DELSANTO son with very good daughter fertility.

ATLEY

APR 239

Rel 57%



Type & Mammary System ✓



Health ✓



Outcross ✓

Outcross and health traits specialist. An ATWOOD son with excellent type and production.