



The Australian

JANUARY  
FEBRUARY  
2015

# dairyfarmer

**Dairy dream  
team  
celebrated**

**China FTA  
to offer  
big gains**

**Financial  
analysis key to  
improvement**

**New health  
breeding  
index appeals**



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## TESTIMONIAL

### WELL FUNCTIONING IMMUNE SYSTEM HELPS MAINTAIN HEALTHY DAIRY COWS

**“My cows have never been in as good condition in mid-lactation”**

**- Graham Francis, Yorami Jersey Stud, Yanakie**

Dairy cows are continually faced with stressful events throughout the lactation cycle that can adversely affect their immune system, creating opportunities for infection and disease.

Many events, like calving or weather, produce visibly noticeable signs of stress; however, others, such as cow comfort, pregnancy and lactation are more subtle. Both challenge the cow's immune system and both can result in cows becoming more susceptible to disease, resulting in significant economic costs to the dairy operation.

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#### ***Yanakie dairy places priority on animal health***

Graham Francis started adding *OmniGen-AF* to the feed of his 180 cow mixed dairy herd in March this year, hoping to improve overall animal health while increasing conception rates and lowering SCC. The recommendation to use *OmniGen-AF* came through his feed company after the product was launched into Australia.

Graham says “*OmniGen-AF*, in conjunction with



Graham Francis (right) credits *OmniGen-AF* to helping maintain healthy cows and increase milk production on his Yanakie dairy operation. Shown with him are wife Kylie and son Jack.

other management practices, has seen the most milk ever sent. SCC has dropped dramatically too, down to 60-80,000 from 240,000.” “I always said if I could get the cows doing 25 litres, I'd be happy. The cows have peaked at 28 litres and have sustained their production, still doing 25 litres” Graham proudly explains.

Graham has brought his joining date forward 10 days this year, to bring calving forward. The decision was made easy he says, because the cows were cycling very well and very strongly. They were “heaps better to AI and were easier to get”.

Graham goes on to say “Normally we get a few feet problems, especially over winter. This year, we've had none. Not one. We usually have quite a few RFM's too and this year we only had 3.”

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# Sustainability on the agenda

IT'S DIFFICULT to find food being advertised anywhere these days without some reference to sustainability. Marketers spruik the sustainability credentials of their products — whether that's referencing the environmentally sound methods of production or that foods meet animal welfare standards — at every opportunity.

The trend is driven in part by our increasingly urbanised world, particularly in developed countries, where most consumers have no connection with those who produce their food. So in the past where people had an idea of farming and could trust what they were eating, those living in the concrete canyons no longer have any idea.

Food production has also become more concentrated with huge multinationals responsible for all of the top food brands. This concentration means that activists with particular agendas, like those who oppose the use of animals for food production, can target these large companies to create an impact down the production chain.

This can often be bewildering and frustrating for individual farmers as they see claims about their production methods, made by uninformed consumers or activists, driving demands from food processors or governments about what they need to change.

That's why it's great to see the Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC), with the help of Dairy Australia (DA), getting the industry on the front foot through the Australian Dairy Industry Sustainability Framework.

As DA's sustainability manager Helen Dornom says at its simplest, sustainability is simply ensuring that meeting the food needs of today's population does not compromise the ability to meet the food needs of future populations.

The framework is important because it has helped identify the factors that will allow the Australian dairy industry to thrive into the future.

And it doesn't shy away from the importance of profit as part of that picture. One of the three key themes of the framework is enhancing livelihoods through creating industry prosperity, supporting communities and investing in dairy people.

It also commits to improving wellbeing through ensuring all dairy products are safe, maximising nutrition and caring for animals. And, of course, it includes reducing environmental impact, the area that most farmers associate with the term sustainability.

The framework sets sustainability targets for the Australian industry to achieve by 2020. It is still a work in progress and some of the targets and the ways that they can be measured are still being developed.

But the framework has already kicked some important goals.

Unilever, one of top 10 companies in the world, has accepted the framework and has now accredited all Australian dairy production as meeting sustainability code.

ADIC's dairy sustainability steering committee chair Chris Griffin says this a huge saving for the Australian dairy industry because without the framework, every single Australian processor or dairy manufacturer would have had to go through the process of proving its products meet Unilever's requirements. Unilever has committed to sourcing only sustainably sourced ingredients for all its products, so now all Australian dairy companies can compete to supply it with ingredients.

Individual dairyfarmers are critical to the framework. Every farmer needs to be part of understanding the targets and helping to meet them.

To find out more read the stories on pages eight and 30 of this magazine or go to the website <<http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Industry-information/Sustainability/Industry-sustainability.aspx>> to download a copy of the framework and progress reports.



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## ADIC drives dairy growth

**T**HE future is bright for dairy, with opportunities for real growth just over the horizon. But to realise these prospects, the industry must continue to innovate, and uptake the potential genetic gains that will be key to growing more productive Australian dairy herds, an industry leaders' breakfast in November was told.

Centered on the theme of sustainable farm profitability and innovation, the Australian Dairy Industry Council's (ADIC) 10th annual Dairy Industry Leaders' Breakfast saw more than 230 dairy representatives gather in Melbourne late in November last year to discuss the role innovation will play in developing a more sustainable future for dairy.

Guest speaker, Irish dairyfarmer and genetics enthusiast Patrick Kelly had the room abuzz with the prospect of doubling farm output via improved herd genetics. Mr Kelly talked about the growth Irish dairies had experienced in terms of productivity and profitability across the past 15 years — growth he attributed to genetic innovation.

"Genetic gain in the Irish dairy herd is accelerating at an ever-increasing pace," Mr Kelly said. "Since 2009, we have adopted genetic technology to improve the fertility of our herds and our industry has seen an \$A2.82 profit increase per unit in lactation."

Using genomic selection farmers were able to predict the performance of young animals on farm with a greater certainty. This is why genetic gain was a crucial component of farm profitability that provided excellent returns on investment, Mr Kelly said.

"Genetic gain impacts not only our bottom line but our ability to properly manage challenges in our herds," he said.

"This includes variables such as risk mitigation through running animals with higher fertility rates, better feed conversion and producing a higher quality, consistent product."

Mr Kelly also outlined the Irish breeding framework that works to deliver profit gains to farmers, as well as other herd innovation made possible by these structures.



**'Genetic gain impacts not only our bottom line but our ability to properly manage challenges in our herds.'**  
— Patrick Kelly'

"The Irish dairy industry has developed a live and accurate national breeding database overseen by the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation; a pertinent, agreed national breeding objective based on profit, as well as the Best Linear Unbiased Protection (BLUP) body, which gives accurate genetic and genomic evaluations," Mr Kelly said.

"Having appropriate structures such as these in place is key to delivering the full value of genetic gain."

ADIC chair Noel Campbell opened ADIC's Industry Breakfast, stating that he was proud of the industry's achievements in 2014, in particular the successful conclusion of the China-Australia free trade agreement (FTA), which was a testament to the industry's collective advocacy.

Mr Campbell said by continuing to find ways to work smarter, more strategically and with a common purpose, the industry would be in a better position to take advantage of such prospects for growth.

"While many factors that impact dairy farm profitability are beyond our control, there are some sound principles we can apply for sustainable and profitable farms," Mr Campbell said.

"These include embracing effective risk-management options, understanding and controlling our costs, and applying continuous improvement and best practice approaches across our farm businesses."

Australian industry leaders were on-hand to present on 2014 milestones in working towards improving genetic gain in Australia. Dairy Australia's Matt Shaffer presented the Herd Improvement Strategy, a whole-of-industry plan to develop and improve dairy herds to achieve the further profitability gains that the Irish are already seeing.

General manager of the Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme (ADHIS) Daniel Abernethy officially launched the industry's new National Breeding Objective (NBO).

"The NBO is about improving the profitability of Australian dairy herds, which underpins the success of dairy," Mr Abernethy said.

"It's about giving farmers the tools they need to breed the type of cows they want to milk. Such technology will be essential to ensuring a more reliable production is in place, therefore supplying us with a competitive advantage."

The Dairy Industry People Development Council's John Verstedden also presented on the Model Share Farming Code of Practice. The code promotes share farming as an effective way to operate a dairy farm business and provides dairyfarmers with tools to develop, assess or review share-farming arrangements.

For more information about the ADIC, its partners and their future-shaping initiatives, visit website <[www.australiandairyfarmers.com.au](http://www.australiandairyfarmers.com.au)>.



# Dairy dream team celebrated

**'The best genetics, soils, research breakthroughs and new markets won't succeed unless we are all fully committed.'**  
— Ann Jarvis

**D**AIRY dream team Lindsay and Ann Jarvis have been involved in dairy for more than three decades and their love of the industry has never been stronger.

"Farming for us is a vocation," Mrs Jarvis said. "It is also a passionate calling, with its core the wonderful people on whom the success of the whole industry relies."

Describing their partnership as "one part dreamer, one part doer", the Jarvises each bring a special approach and skill set to dairy. Both are notable for their dedication in helping the industry thrive.

At the Australian Dairy Industry Council's Industry Leaders' Breakfast in November, the Jarvises received the ADIC's Outstanding Service Award (OSA) for their collective commitment to dairy. It is the



Lindsay and Ann Jarvis with ADIC chair Noel Campbell and deputy-chair Robert Poole.

first time in the OSA's history that it has been awarded to a couple.

"Like many men and women who dedicate their lives, professionally and personally, to dairy, the Jarvises are a team," ADIC chair Noel Campbell said. "It would be remiss to recognise the efforts of one without the other."

Addressing a room filled with dairy leaders from across the whole value chain, the couple said they were humbled by the award, which recognises people as the core of what makes the industry work.

"Our ability to thrive (as an industry) requires caring, co-operation, commitment, collaboration and concentration on the well-being of our people," Mrs Jarvis said.

"The best genetics, soils, research breakthroughs and new markets won't succeed unless we are all fully committed."

Mrs Jarvis took the opportunity to remind the dairy leaders present to "look beyond" the dollars when making decisions that affect the industry to the big picture outcomes.

"We must work together to ensure the fu-

ture of Australian dairy for Australians, by Australians, with Australians," she said.

Having spent 31 years as a director at Murray Goulburn, Mr Jarvis, the 'dreamer' of the pair, has transformed the couple's 148-year-old, 280-hectare dry-land farm into a contour flood-irrigated system and used his welding skills to build a swing-over herringbone dairy.

With a belief in educating and encouraging young people and women to engage with new challenges, Mrs Jarvis, the 'doer' of the pair, managed the family farm and its workers while Mr Jarvis was off farm. Mrs Jarvis also spent seven years volunteering for the highly respected Dookie College Advisory Committee.

Actively involved in dairy organisations their whole careers, the Jarvises are respected members of United Dairyfarmers of Victoria, and have each received an Order of Australia for their service to the dairy industry.

ADIC deputy chair Robert Poole commended the couple's achievements.

"As parents, partners, dairyfarmers and advocates, they are an inspiration to the industry and lead by example in everything that they do," Mr Poole said.

A tradition at the ADIC Dairy Industry Leaders' Breakfast since 2006, the OSA recognises individual Australians who, through their leadership, dedication and commitment, have provided outstanding service for the benefit of the dairy industry.



The Jarvises: a dairy dream team.

# Dairy delivering sustainable results

**A**USTRALIAN dairy is delivering results based on its commitment to enhance livelihoods, improve the wellbeing of its people and animals and reduce its environmental footprint by 2020, according to the 2014 Australian Sustainability Framework Report.

The second consecutive report, launched by the Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) and Dairy Australia in December 2014, tracks the dairy value chain's social, economic and environmental impact.

Providing an overview of how the whole dairy value chain is performing against 11 sustainability indicators, the report highlights that while there is still significant work to be done, the industry is on track to reach its ambitious aims by 2020.

Dairy Industry Sustainability Framework steering committee chair Chris Griffin said the report showcased significant improvements in some target areas.

"In the two years since this framework was implemented our industry has reduced the intensity of green house gas emissions generated by manufacturers' use of fuel and electricity by 14.5% — a 30% reduction is the target set for 2020," Mr Griffin said.

"Some 46% of on-farm and factory workers now have a documented occupational health and safety (OH&S) plan — by 2020, the framework aims for 100% to have completed OH&S training."

"Our progress thus far demonstrates just how powerful dairy can be when the whole supply chain works together toward its common goals."




The sustainability report highlights the areas where dairy's approach is working.

ADIC chair Noel Campbell said that the industry's collective progress in the past year was a testament to how committed the whole supply chain was to building a more viable future for the industry.

"We have built on our progress in 2013, with programs and projects that are guiding the industry toward better profits, while minimising our environmental footprint

and improving the wellbeing of our people and animals," Mr Campbell said.

"The report highlights the areas where our approach is working and where we still need to improve." A summary of the 2014 Sustainability Framework Progress Report is available on the Australian Dairy Farmers website at <[www.australiandairyfarmers.com.au](http://www.australiandairyfarmers.com.au)>. 

## Dairy wants competition overhaul

AUSTRALIAN dairy wants the Federal Government to overhaul competition policy to secure a more sustainable, profitable future for dairyfarmers, recommending a Mandatory Code of Conduct to regulate the power of major retailers.

The unequal distribution of market power means that farmers are often backed into a corner when it comes to farmgate prices, a disadvantage that is heightened due to logistical constraints in supplying perishable goods.

Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) president Noel Campbell called on the

government to get behind ADF's submission to the independent Competition Policy Review, the Harper Review, to ensure a more level playing field for dairyfarmers.

"Boosting farmers' profitability will require better negotiating power for processors if farmers are going to see returns at the farmgate and an ombudsman to keep all competitors honest," Mr Campbell said.

"With this review, the Government has a chance to enact some meaningful change."

Mr Campbell said that without a

change in policy, the future sustainability of many farmers would be in question.

ADF has recommended a Mandatory Code of Conduct and a Supermarket Ombudsman "with teeth" to ensure all players are held accountable for their actions.

ADF has also supported the Harper Review's calls for any updated policy to include an Effects Test, which will gauge the impact of retailer actions on suppliers, to prevent potentially damaging situations such as the \$1 per litre milk price in future.





Getting our priorities right ...

# Setting the agenda for 2015

## POLICY PRIORITIES 2015

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Drive markets, trade, farm prosperity
- ✓ Build a highly skilled and productive workforce
- ✓ Develop fair and sustainable access to natural resources
- ✓ Promote animal health and welfare standards
- ✓ Ensure critical Government initiatives are implemented

**O**N THE heels of the successful conclusion of the China-Australia free trade agreement (FTA) in 2014, Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) is fine-tuning its advocacy priorities to establish an even stronger platform, which will ensure dairy can capitalise upon opportunities for growth.

Australian dairyfarmers and the broader dairy industry continue to strive for best practices in all aspects of operations, from natural resource management to animal welfare. Yet as demand for dairy, particularly in China, continues to flourish the

industry must evolve in order to enjoy the long-term benefits.

Instrumental to this evolution will be governmental policy and action that fosters the enduring efforts of dairyfarmers and the broader dairy community across Australia.

In 2015, ADF is focused on addressing five key priority areas: continuing to drive market, trade and farm prosperity; building a highly skilled and productive workforce; developing fair and sustainable access to natural resources; promoting animal health and welfare standards; and ensuring that critical government initiatives are implemented.

ADF is advocating for increased government investment in pivotal road, rail and port infrastructure projects to boost efficiency and productivity gains for the industry, an outcome that will better enable the industry to meet growing demand for dairy. ADF also recommends that agriculture and other agriculture-related courses be classified under the National Priority Band for compulsory HECS-HELP repayments to help skills shortages in these fields.

ADF president Noel Campbell said dairy

had spent the last year establishing the foundations for growth and now it needed the industry and government to take things to the next level.

"The opportunities presented through 2014 policy wins such as the China FTA prove that dairy is a force to be reckoned with when the whole value chain works collectively to achieve its aims," he said.

"That said, challenges including limited opportunities for domestic growth, as well as labour and skills shortages, and government regulation continue to constrain our industry."

Mr Campbell said that dairy needed to continue and address these issues and to identify solutions on State and Federal levels. ADF's 2015 policy priority platform will be integral in facilitating this.

"Our platform proved invaluable in lobbying Parliament last year, and we are committed to doing whatever we can to progress these policies to help dairy become the best it can be," he said.

For more detail on ADF's 2015 Policy Priorities to Government, visit website <<http://www.australiandairyfarmers.com.au/>>.



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# Dairy Australia Round Up



## 2015 Australian Grand Dairy Award Champions

**A**MOUTH-WATERING passionfruit crème gelato and a delectable Tasmanian raclette cheese were crowned Australia's premier dairy products from a field of almost 400 products at the prestigious 2015 Australian Grand Dairy Awards, held in Melbourne in late November.

Now in its 16th year, the Australian Grand Dairy Awards is effectively the grand final of Australian dairy awards, open only to products that have previously won gold at qualifying state-based shows throughout the year.

The Grand Champion Dairy Product was awarded to Sydney gelato producer, Cow and the Moon, for its Passionfruit Crème Gelato. Tasmania's Heidi Farm took out the coveted Grand Champion Cheese award for the second straight year with its Heidi Farm Raclette claiming top honours following last year's title for its Tilsit.

Both grand champions received the highest overall judging scores in the fiercely contested national competition, convened by Dairy Australia.

"We were spoilt for choice when it came to entries and it was a real challenge to choose just one winner for each class," said chief judge Neil Willman, who led the team of 21 specialist judges.

"There was no doubt amongst the judges, however, that our two grand champions were stand out products — both were real

topics of conversation after the judging took place."

### AGM focuses on profitability

Dairy Australia's annual general meeting was held on November 28 at Flemington Racecourse. Chair of Dairy Australia Geoff Akers opened the event with a wide ranging review of what he described as "... a very good year for dairy".

Another focus of the well-attended meeting (live-tweeted using #DAAGM14) was farm profitability as key to the future success of the sector.

"Production growth has continued into the first half of the current year, up 3.8% on last year's opening four months and these conditions resulted in close to 80% of all dairyfarmers across Australia returning a profit and 75% being positive about the industry's future," Mr Akers said.

While the full benefits of the new Free Trade Agreement with China would take some time to flow through to the farm "... make no mistake, the eventual benefits will



**Australian Grand Dairy Awards Grand Champion Cheese, Heidi Farm Raclette.**

be substantial for Australian dairying," he said.

The AGM also voted to elect candidates to the board with the former chair and president of the Institute for Chartered Accountants Jan West AM and dairyfarmer and chair of WestVic Dairy Lisa Dwyer elected as non-executive directors to the board of Dairy Australia for the first-time.

Ms West, standing for a director position ►

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# Dairy Australia Round Up



with finance and governance skills, was elected unopposed. Ms Dwyer stood for one of the two director positions assigned to people with milk producer backgrounds. Dairyfarmer Michael Spitse, from Victoria, who was nominated for the position with support from 100 Group A members, also stood for the milk producer directorship, but was unsuccessful.

Geoff Akers was re-elected as a director unopposed.

The AGM also approved a change to the Dairy Australia constitution removing the requirement for the Minister of Agriculture to approve amendments to the constitution.

For more information see "Latest News" at website <[www.dairyaustralia.com.au](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au)>.

## Genebank to secure Australian dairy pasture

In December, Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, announced that Australian Pastures Genebank, located at the Plant Research Centre at Waite Campus, South Australia, would preserve more than 70,000 varieties of pastures and forage species providing valuable seed for future breeding programs.

"Genebank is an important insurance policy and preserves pasture diversity for future uses, and that is why we are supporting it," Dairy Australia's group manager for farm profit and innovation Chris Murphy said.

The centre is also funded by Meat and Livestock Australia, Australian Wool Innovation, Grains Research and Development Corporation and the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.

This latest announcement follows the opening of the Australian Grains Genebank at Horsham, Victoria, in 2014.

## Collective Bargaining Guide for dairyfarmers

DAIRYFARMERS need to be better informed about the opportunities, realities and potential pitfalls when entering into collective bargaining arrangements. An easy-to-read *Collective Bargaining Guide from Dairy Australia* provides practical advice and insights for farmers interested in forming collective bargaining groups to negotiate with milk buyers.

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) deputy chair Dr Michael Schaper said the guide provided farmers with the key information they needed when considering collective bargaining.

"The ACCC is keen to encourage collective bargaining arrangements as they can be a great way for small producers to work together with suppliers for mutual benefit."

"While collective bargaining has not always been successful, the goal of the guide is to make collective bargaining more straightforward for dairyfarmers," Dairy Australia managing director Ian Halliday said.

The guide can be downloaded from <[www.dairyaustralia.com.au](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au)> or from Claire Miller, email <[cmiller@dairyaustralia.com.au](mailto:cmiller@dairyaustralia.com.au)> phone (03) 9694 3739.

## Foot and Mouth: better prepared than sorry

After a year of activities to test Australia's preparedness for foot and mouth disease outbreak, Dairy Australia participated in the final, government-run Exercise Odysseus workshop in early December.

The meeting brought together the agriculture industry and government communications experts who would be responsible for conveying relevant messages to farmers, manufacturers and the public in the event of a disease outbreak.

Dairy Australia's issues manager Julie Iommi said the workshop highlighted the need to plan well in advance.

"A disease outbreak could occur at any time and the demand for accurate information will be immediate," she said.

"If a stock standstill is declared, farmers will need to be given very clear instructions on what they can and cannot do, the public will need to be reassured about the safety of milk and meat, and international and domestic markets will want to know that the situation is being well-managed."

DA's media manager Mark Pearce said "under promise, over deliver" was a theme for the day.

"Public outrage will be fuelled if expectations are not managed with care," he said. "At the outset, it will not be possible to say with confidence when a stock standstill will be lifted or when the disease will be eradicated."

## Legendaire takes out International Milk Promotion Trophy

The industry's communications platform, Legendaire, has been acknowledged on the international stage after collecting the Yves Boutonnat International Milk Promotion Trophy at the International Dairy Federation (IDF) World Dairy Summit in Paris in December.

The prestigious award recognises the work Legendaire has achieved in Australia in the sphere of innovation and nutritional marketing communication.

The trophy competition was initiated in 1989 to help showcase the best campaigns created by IDF members.

Dairy Australia said it was thrilled with this achievement and credits the entire industry for its ongoing support of Legendaire. D

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# Dairy big winner from China FTA

**T**HE Australian dairy industry was one of the big winners from the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA), announced in November. The deal should provide bigger markets for Australian exporters.

China is already Australia's second-largest market for dairy exports. This market is expanding rapidly with exports nearly doubling since 2008 to more than \$351 million in 2013.

Australia's main competitors are New Zealand, the European Union and the United States. Currently, NZ's dairy produce receives a considerable tariff advantage under its bilateral FTA with China.

ChAFTA will progressively close this gap; tariffs will be eliminated across all dairy products.

Crucially, NZ's FTA with China contains restrictive safeguard measures on a wide range of dairy products, including liquid milk, cheese, butter and all milk powders (where China raises the tariff back to the normal rate when NZ exports exceed a certain volume).

In contrast, under ChAFTA Australia will only face a discretionary safeguard on whole milk powders, with the safeguard trigger volume set well above current trade levels and indexed to grow annually. For all other dairy products Australia will receive unlimited preferential access.

The Australian dairy industry has applauded the successful conclusion of ChAFTA, welcoming an FTA with the biggest dairy market on the planet. China represents 30% of global dairy imports and is the world's largest dairy importing country.

Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) chair Noel Campbell said the long-term the agreement would allow the industry to flourish and capitalise upon robust demand in the Chinese market.

"The FTA will strengthen Australian dairy's competitiveness by providing our industry with a significant advantage compared to other countries in the market that do not have a FTA with China," Mr Campbell said.

"It also puts the industry on a more level playing field against key competitors in the Chinese market, such as NZ."

Managing director of Australia's biggest dairy exporter Murray Goulburn, Gary Helou, said the deal was a vital step for the future of the co-operatives dairyfarmer supplier/shareholders.



Murray Goulburn relaunched its Devondale long-life milk (UHT) in China in November in new bilingual metallic packaging and pack sizes. The design was based on Chinese consumer research and feedback. The range, which comes in 200 millilitre and one litre as well as associated family gift packs, reinforces the dairy co-operative's intentions to maximise the opportunities gained by the Australia-China Free Trade Agreement.

MG exported A\$1.5 billion of dairy product last financial year including more than A\$200 million to China and Hong Kong in the form of infant nutrition, milk powder, cheese and drinking milk.

"China is already the world's largest dairy import market last year importing 2.2 million tonnes, an increase of over 40% on the previous year," he said.

"It is forecast that China dairy demand and dairy imports will continue to grow.

"Chinese customers and consumers trust the quality and safety of Australian dairy products, and increasingly seek it as a premium choice in both the ingredients and grocery dairy foods.

"Therefore it is vital that Australia has excellent and competitive access to the growing and strategic China market.

"The first objective in this FTA was to begin to redress the disparity between

Australia and New Zealand dairy trade to China. Second was to achieve a pathway to total free trade providing a competitive advantage and protecting Australia's long-term competitiveness in China."

Mr Helou said that MG has plans to grow in China.

"MG is already investing in its manufacturing footprint to provide world class dairy foods to China and south-east Asian consumers," he said.

Fonterra Australia welcomed the China-Australia FTA and applauded the Australian and Chinese Governments and industry.

Managing director Judith Swales said expanding market access was critically important to the future profitability of the entire Australian dairy supply chain.

"This is a good time to be in dairy," she said. "The FTA will be a game changer for Australian dairy (and) presents all sorts of opportunities.

"For our Australian farmers, it will give them the confidence to invest in their businesses and confidence that the whole industry is supporting them in providing access to our biggest export market.

"It will bring our milk closer to the Chinese consumer — a market that represents 30% of global dairy imports and is the world's largest dairy importing country."

Bega Cheese chairman Barry Irvin said the deal was "better than expected". "This is a very good opportunity to be able to compete in a market that is obviously growing and wants and needs the products we produce," he said.



## ChAFTA key outcomes

- ✓ Elimination of the 15% tariff on infant formula within four years
- ✓ Elimination of the 10-19% tariff on ice cream, lactose, casein and milk albumins within four years
- ✓ Elimination of the 15% tariff on liquid milk within nine years
- ✓ Elimination of the 10-15% tariff on cheese, butter and yogurt within nine years
- ✓ Elimination of the 10% tariff on milk powders within 11 years

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# Asia spurs proposals

By CARLENE DOWIE, EVERARD HIMMELREICH AND ANDREW WILSON

**T**HE opportunities for Australian dairy in Asia, underlined by the successful completion of the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement late last year, has seen the emergence of proposed huge developments.

The biggest is in South West Victoria, where a consortium is hoping to buy dozens of farms and establish its own processing plants and training facility. Australian mining magnate Gina Rinehart has also jumped on the bandwagon and is planning an integrated development in Queensland, while in Tasmania huge finance company KPMG has done a "pre-feasibility" study on another farming/processing integrated operation.

The South West Victorian operation would be "on a scale not considered in Australia before", according to a spokesman for the consortium. Linear Capital managing director Troy Harper said the consortium, which had links to Chinese investors, aimed to be a major new player in the regional dairy industry and be "vertically integrated", with its own dairy processing plants and training facility.

Mr Harper said Warrnambool, Colac and Mount Gambier, South Australia, were among locations being considered for processing plants. An approach had

been made to the Victorian State Government to lease Glenormiston College near Terang, Vic, to provide dairy industry training for local and overseas workers for the project.

Mr Harper declined to confirm reports the consortium was seeking to buy 40-50 dairy farms but said "it's not going to be small".

In a statement on its website, the Tasmania-based private-investment firm said it was preparing proposals for a major development of infant formula production plants in Victoria and NSW that would export to China.

The project was being developed in a joint venture with the Australian firm Farm Gate 88 Pty Ltd, the company said.

Ms Rinehart has reached agreement with the Queensland Government on a \$500 million dairy export deal to send infant formula to China. Hope Dairies, majority owned by Ms Rinehart's main company Hancock Prospecting, will produce pharmaceutical-grade infant formula and UHT milk at a Queensland processing plant, a statement by Ms Rinehart said.

It will also buy 5000 hectares of South East Queensland dairy land and plans to process 150 million litres of milk a year for export from 2016. A memorandum of un-

derstanding with the Queensland Government was signed in November.

Ms Rinehart's Chinese partner in the venture is a subsidiary of China National Machinery Industry Corporation, which has interests in manufacturing farming machinery and has been looking to invest in Australia for some time.

International financial firm KPMG put forward what it described as the Big Cow project — involving 160,000 head of cattle and a \$215 million milk-processing plant — at the Tas Invest Summit in November. KPMG partner Martin Rees stressed the \$1.1 billion project, which would require 76,000 hectares of land, was a "pre-feasibility" study.

"It will demonstrate whether or not there is interest from the investment side in a project of this scale," Mr Rees said.

"What we have is a pre-feasibility study. It's not a memorandum of understanding; it's a perspective to show what scale could be done in this State."

KMPG's work showed there was land available and access to the cattle was "certainly possible" but it would need additional water. About 44,000 megalitres of water would be sourced through the Midlands and South Esk irrigation schemes. **D**

## Dairy conference to focus on business

THE Australian Dairy Conference is presenting a new style of event in 2015, the ADC Business Forum. The event will be held at Launceston, Tasmania, on February 16-18 at the Launceston Country Club Tasmania.

Conference chair Hank Bruger said the event aimed to be "a new and innovative forum experience". "As delegates we expect you to participate, come prepared with your own farm business key performance indicators (KPIs) and be involved on a level that hasn't been part of a dairy conference before," Mr Bruger said.

Dairy Australia's new DairyBase web-based program that allows farmers to readily compare business data with a range of other farms will be used throughout the forum.

The first day of the conference will focus on three key businesses and their consultants to draw out data and understanding about how businesses operate.

Tasmanian consultant **Basil Doo-**

**nan** specialises in high direct grazing pasture-based systems. He will work through the business of **Paul and Nadine Lambert**, Merseylea, Tas.

Victorian consultant **John Mulvany** has been involved in the Victorian dairy industry and his strength lies in his exposure to a broad clientele. He will work with western Victorian farmers **Bruce and Andrea Vallance**, of Nirranda, to highlight the key performance indicators for a medium direct-grazed pasture system.

Dairy services manager with Ridley Agriproducts **Andre Nell** has been providing dairy nutrition consultancy for the past 18 years. He will focus on a high-input, low direct-grazed system and will showcase a farm business from northern Victoria.

The second day of the conference is about the next level of business management: understanding the connection between physical activities and the profitability of these and how this manifests itself in the balance

sheet; how to manage debt, create wealth and use equity; and how the manager and the business grow.

Deputy principal at Marcus Oldham College **Tony McMeel**, who was originally from a dairy property at Scotts Creek, Vic, will focus on the differences between debt and equity.

Manager at Pitcher Partner's Transaction Services **Leisl Malcolm** will discuss valuation methods and how the discount rate for valuation may vary between different farming systems.

Rabobank business programs manager **Nerida Sweetapple** will discuss the development programs that Rabobank offers to agribusiness professionals, providing delegates with insights into how they can make a difference to their businesses.

**Contact:** website <[www.austaliandairyconference.com.au/](http://www.austaliandairyconference.com.au/)>, phone 0417 347 077, email <[admin@australiandairyconference.com.au](mailto:admin@australiandairyconference.com.au)>. **Early-bird rates end on January 16.**

# Where can we improve herd testing?

By CAROL MILLAR

I AM very fortunate to have recently had the opportunity to visit a herd-testing organisation in the United States, namely AgSource which is based in Verona, Wisconsin. It was very interesting comparing notes with them and hearing first-hand about their operation.

About a decade ago, AgSource was a business in trouble. They were essentially a not-for-profit cooperative that strived to keep prices for services to farmers as low as possible. Their low level of profitability resulted in less investment in new or innovative products and services for their farmers.

They saw themselves as a service business and were reluctant to invest in sales resources.

Their customers came to equate price with value, which made AgSource more vulnerable to outside factors such as energetic competitors or downturns in the dairy industry. They began to lose customers as farmers opted out of herd testing.

Lower volumes of herd testing business meant that their fixed costs were higher, which meant that they had to raise their prices for their remaining customers. And so came the spiral of greater pressure from declining demand.

I would not be surprised if there are some farmer directors of Australian cooperatives reading this article and nodding their heads in recognition.

But this story has a happy ending. Today AgSource is one of the most vibrant, profitable herd-test service providers in the US. Business is steadily growing and they are regarded as one of the most innovative organisations in the industry in the USA. How?

Well for the answer you should consider joining us for the Herd '15 conference in Bendigo, Victoria on March 11 and 12. One of the featured speakers for Herd '15 is Patrick Baier, the chief executive officer who was responsible for turning around the AgSource business and he is going to be sharing his story with us.

## An amazing line-up

Herd '15 features an amazing line-up of speakers from across the herd improvement spectrum, both overseas and local.

It will be a fantastic opportunity for both farmers and service providers to come and listen to many different, stimulating topics concerning genetics, reproduction and how we can make the best use of herd testing to enhance profitable dairying.

Paul Van Raden is one of the most respected animal scientists in the US and he will show us how genomics has made a stunning impact on the US dairy industry. Andrew Cromie from the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation will share the path that the Irish have taken that has seen them take industry collaboration and research to a whole new level, which has been an enormous benefit to a vibrant dairy industry.

Australia is so very fortunate to have scientists of the calibre of Jennie Pryce



Herd '15 will look at topics concerning genetics, reproduction and how farmers can make the best use of herd testing to enhance profitable dairying.

and Ben Hayes and any opportunity to hear about their latest research is to be welcomed.

The Herd conferences only take place every second year and the event enjoys terrific momentum from previous meetings at Herd '13, Herd '11 and Herd '09.

The theme for Herd '15 will be how collaboration between all the various sectors of the dairy industry in Australia will benefit everyone. There is a sense that we are poised on the edge of great things and what we learn at Herd '15 will help to grow dairy. This is, bar none, going to be the best value dairy conference in 2015.

For further details on the program and how to register, go to website <[www.nhia.org.au](http://www.nhia.org.au)>.





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# Understanding individual flexibility agreements

**S**OME dairyfarmers may find the Pastoral Award 2010 terms inflexible or may feel the award does not take into account busy times or the non-standard hours involved in farming work.

However, the Pastoral Award 2010 includes a flexibility term that enables employers and employees to agree to vary the effect of some of the award terms — this is called an Individual Flexibility Agreement (IFA).

This flexibility term allows employers and individual employees to implement conditions of work that suit the needs of the business and the employee, subject to certain restrictions.

An IFA can vary only five award terms, being:

- arrangements for when work is performed, such as working hours;
- overtime rates;
- penalty rates;
- allowances; and
- the 17.5% leave loading.

Award entitlements relating to any of

these five matters can be varied by agreement between an employer and an individual employee provided that, overall, the employee is 'better off' under the IFA.

While an IFA is a relatively simple document, there are a few elements that employers should be aware of:

- An IFA can only be made after the employee has started employment and is entitled to the minimum award conditions contained in the relevant modern award. This means an employer cannot ask a person to agree to an IFA as a condition of employment or at the time of hiring.
- An employee cannot be forced to enter into an IFA or discriminated against for refusing to agree to an IFA.
- The flat rate will need to be recalculated every time there is a minimum wage increase and to reflect increases due to reclassification of the employee — for example, moving from an farm and livestock hand (FLH) level 1 after one year to an FLH3.
- Finally, the flat rate will only be applicable if the employee's hours of work do

not exceed the estimated hours, so accurate record-keeping is crucial.

For more information on IFA contact a dairy or legal adviser or visit website <[www.thepeopleindairy.com.au/eski/ifa.htm](http://www.thepeopleindairy.com.au/eski/ifa.htm)>. **D**

## How to test if an employee is better off under an IFA

AN EMPLOYEE or employer can initiate a request for an individual flexibility agreement (IFA), however it is the employer's responsibility to ensure that the employee is 'better off overall'.

To achieve this, the employer should perform a Better Off Overall Test (BOOT). The test involves comparing the employee's financial benefits under the IFA with the financial benefits under the Pastoral Award 2010.

**TIP:** The People in Dairy website has a step-by-step process, including a Flat Pay Rate Calculator, so employers can work out if an IFA agreement passes the BOOT.

The Employment Starter Kit initiative (ESKi) folder also includes information and resources designed to develop processes and documents to help.

**VISIT:** For more information on the BOOT or to use the Flat Pay Rate Calculator visit <<http://www.thepeopleindairy.com.au/eski/ifa.htm>> or refer to the IFA tab in the ESKi folder.

## Steps to implement an IFA

1. Employer or employee decides they would like an IFA. They approach the other party with their request in writing.
2. Both parties should ensure the IFA is valid by varying only the five terms allowed.
3. The employer and employee discuss the IFA.
4. The employer ensures the employee is 'better off overall' under the IFA (see right text box).
5. Both the employer and the employee sign the IFA (and the employees parent/guardian if under 18).
6. Both parties keep a copy.





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# Cows create community connections

## KEY POINTS SCHOOL PROGRAMS

- ✓ Catering for all learning types
- ✓ Vital platform for dairy entry
- ✓ Hands-on project

**A**FTER delivering Dairy Australia's Cows Create Careers — Farm Module four times at Circular Head Christian College, Tasmanian teacher Josh Smith introduced the project to Smithton High School as a new employee in 2014.

"We started Cows Create Careers at Smithton High this year for all of our Grade 9 students," Mr Smith said. "I had done the project previously at another school and had seen how effective it can be."

Having grown up on a dairy farm, the senior maths and science teacher recognised the importance of a school-based agricultural project and chose to incorporate Cows Create Careers into Smithton High School's science curriculum.

"At the moment we have aligned parts of the Grade 9 science curriculum with the Cows Create Careers project," he said.

"The project caters for all learning types, there's the hands-on calf rearing, computer research, craft, letter writing and scientific reports. In my opinion this is why Cows Create Careers is a good project because it captures the interests and skills of nearly all the students."

One of the great aspects of Cows Create Careers is that it is a community-based project that appeals to people of all ages, not just students.

Local dairyfarmer Penny Williams provides two three-week-old calves to the school for the duration of the six-week project.

"To start with, the students want the calves to suck their fingers and they give them cuddles," Mr Smith said. "Then after a few days, they become quite attached and start noticing the behaviours of the calves. They become experts at weighing them, providing milk and giving general health checks."

Mr Smith also incorporates the knowledge of local dairyfarmers into the project. "This year the students have been spoken to by local farmer Leigh Schuurings and vet

Craig Dwyer," he said.

This is the first year Mr Schuurings has been involved in Cows Create Careers as a volunteer industry advocate. Mr Schuurings visits Smithton High School and shares his industry knowledge with the students throughout the project. He believes that Cows Create Careers is a vital platform to introduce young people to the dairy industry.

"Cows Create Careers is vitally important," he said. "If kids don't experience something for themselves, they are not going to have a go."

"We have to show them that the dairy industry is attractive — it isn't just a job, it's a career. You can make money out of it and it's a lifestyle at the same time."

Before becoming an industry advocate, Mr Schuurings successfully applied for the 2014 Developing Dairy Leaders Program (DDLP). As part of the program he was required to complete a regionally based project — Mr Schuurings focused his study on how the dairy industry could effectively engage teachers to deliver agriculture, particularly dairy, in schools — so it was fitting that Mr Schuurings's next step, after completing DDLP in Canberra, was to become a volunteer Cows Create Careers industry advocate for Smithton High School.

"I've known Josh for many years and when I came back from Canberra, I ran into him in town. I asked him if he was doing Cows Create Careers this year and if he wanted a hand," Mr Schuurings said.

"I really enjoy talking to the kids and letting them know that dairy is a rewarding career. I enjoy it because I was one of those kids once, and my wife and I worked our way up to get where we are now."

During one school visit Mr Schuurings gave each student a copy of *Stepping Stones* — a guide that features real-life case studies of how people have started and progressed their career in the dairy industry.



Leigh and Kellie Schuurings.

One case study features Mr Schuurings and his wife, Kellie, as an example of how they entered the industry, worked their way up and are now 50% sharefarmers.

"The kids thought *Stepping Stones* was awesome," Mr Schuurings said. "They could read where they can start, what they can do, and where they could end up in the dairy industry."

"Normally I start it off by telling the kids: 'I was you once, and through good work ethic, I have gone from nothing to owning 1000 cows' - and then you can see them start to think."

The Schuurings have also hosted Smithton High School's 75 Cows Create Careers students at their dairy farm in Mella, Tasmania.

"With their teacher Josh, we organised to bring all the kids out to our farm. Kellie and I showed the kids the dairy and the calf shed and talked about what we do — and with 240 calves, it blew the kid's minds away. It was unreal," Mr Schuurings said.

However, Mr Schuurings believes the real success of Cows Create Careers at Smithton High School is due to teacher, Josh Smith. "Josh delivers Cows Create Careers at Smithton High really well. There are kids in the class that you can tell the project works wonders with," Mr Schuurings said.



"Josh is enthusiastic about Cows Create Careers and he teaches dairy to the kids in such a great way — I've never seen a class of 75 students be 100% attentive the whole time. He does a really great job at the school."

Humbly, Mr Smith believes the success of the Cows Create Careers lies in the hands-on nature of the project.

"I have had a few students who have gone on to work on farms and to management positions on farms," Mr Smith said.

"In my opinion, the success of Cows Create Careers is due to the fact that we are bringing the 'real world' into the classroom. Cows Create Careers provides a learning experience that is authentic and totally connected to the community." **D**

## Learning dairy through integrated studies

IN 2006 Galen Catholic College, Wangaratta, Victoria, participated in Cows Create Careers for the first time after science teacher Brian Carr responded to a flyer the school had received in the mail. Since then Dairy Australia's Cows Create Careers program has continued annually at the college.

"Cows Create Careers originally started with one Year 10 class in 2006," Mr Carr said. "Now, two Year Seven classes learn about the dairy industry through integrated studies."

"Since 2006, 10 different teachers have taken on the program, they find it interesting and hard work, but all have enjoyed it."

In 2006, 16-year-old Jack Luxford was a Year 10 student at Galen Catholic College and participated in the college's first year of Cows Create Careers. Although Mr Luxford had an agricultural background, he had not had exposure to the dairy industry.

"I come from an agricultural background with my parents having all types of livestock," Mr Luxford said. "My father has been employed at Rivalea, the largest Australian pork producer, since 1988 and my mother has been involved in many other rural projects."

Looking back on his Cows Create Careers experience, Mr Luxford said that the main thing he learnt through the program was that the dairy industry offered many different opportunities due to the size and scope of the industry.

"Before I started Cows Create Careers I didn't have any exposure to the dairy industry," Mr Luxford said, "It was a great opportunity to dip my toes in."

"I was fascinated with the whole supply chain. Learning about all the factors of production that goes into getting the milk from grass to glass was a great eye opener."

"I think the biggest thing that I learnt was the large amount of opportunities that are in the dairy industry, due to the industry's size and scope."

Mr Carr said the college's experience with Cows Create Careers had



**Jack Luxford (far left) receiving 2006 Cows Create Careers award.**

only been positive with the students building caring relationships with the calves.

"The kids love it," he said. "The program is popular with students because it is so different to all the other school activities."

"When the calves first arrive at the school, the Year Seven students are excited and look forward to getting in and trying to feed them. They also have visits to farm and the Murray Goulburn processing plant, so the students get to experience the whole process from farm to factory, to the finished product."

Mr Carr said that while most students did not come from an agriculture background, the program was also beneficial for those who did come from a farming background.

"Some 90% of the students don't come from an agriculture background so through the program their awareness of the industry increases, but for the students who do come from an agriculture background, it's also a good opportunity for them to demonstrate their skills and to build their self-esteem," he said.

Mr Luxford went on to complete the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in 2008 and took a year off to work on a sheep and cropping farm near Ballan, Victoria, for a year.

In 2010 he started a four-year Bachelor of Agricultural Economics degree



**Jack Luxford today.**

at The University of Sydney, and in January 2014, the now 23 year-old, started working as an agribusiness analyst at the National Australia Bank (NAB) where he supports a team of agribusiness managers.

"I started in the graduate program six months ago and have been in this role for two months now," Mr Luxford said.

"Currently I'm working in the Warrnambool agribusiness team and we have a lot of dairyfarmers on our books. Knowledge of the dairy industry is crucial, which all started back with my first exposure with Cows Create Careers."

"We look after the financial needs of anyone in the agricultural industry, my favourite part of the job is being able to help people achieve their business goals."

Mr Luxford's career aspiration is to work his way up to become an agribusiness manager. And his advice for young people considering a career in agribusiness?

"Go for it, there is plenty of opportunity out there especially in the dairy industry," he said. "If you are open to new ideas and have a willingness to learn and develop, you're bound to have success."

# Programs connect school with community

## CREATING CAREERS

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Students learn to make Camembert
- ✓ Part of school curriculum
- ✓ Creates connections with community

**Y**EAR Eight students at Timboon P-12 School in Victoria have been busy learning how to make Camembert cheese through Dairy Australia's Camembert in the Classroom project.

Timboon P-12 School is situated in the heart of the south-west Victorian dairy region. In 2012 it embarked on an innovative and exciting initiative — the Timboon Agriculture Project (TAP), which links the school more closely with the community and agricultural industries.

Since 2013 Timboon P-12 School has delivered Dairy Australia's Cows Create Careers — Camembert in the Classroom project through TAP. The school also delivers a range of other agriculture projects, including Dairy Australia's Cows Create Careers — Farm Module, which increases the awareness of dairy industry careers, and Cows Create Careers — Manufacturing Module, which introduces food and technology students to dairy manufacturing career pathways.

TAP was formed through an innovative collaboration between Timboon P-12 School and Dairy Australia's regional development program for Western Victoria, WestVic Dairy. The National Centre for Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA) also provides training in Certificate II and III in Agriculture and has funded TAP in 2014-15.

The aim of TAP is to increase student engagement, improve maths, science and literacy outcomes, and to create agricultural, especially dairy industry, career awareness. This is achieved by increasing the relevance of student learning and by integrating hands-on interactive projects such as Camembert in the Classroom, into the school curriculum.

Camembert in the Classroom is designed to encourage secondary school teachers and students to learn about the Australian dairy industry while introducing students to dairy manufacturing careers and pathways.



**Timboon P-12 School Year Eight students who are completing the Cows Create Careers project.**

Timboon P-12 School TAP coordinator Andrea Vallance said the project was incorporated into the school's Year Eight science core curriculum, allowing students to get hands-on experience while learning about the science of making Camembert cheese.

"We are seeking to inspire, challenge and educate our students to be aware of the broad career choices available in the agriculture sector, and to encourage students to pursue further studies in the maths and science fields at a senior level and beyond," Ms Vallance said.

Through the project, teachers are first trained to make Camembert cheese by project presenter and deputy chief judge of the Australian Grand Dairy Awards Russell Smith. The teachers then bring this knowledge back into the classroom, and during a term, students are taught to make their own cheese while completing assessment tasks.

Since the project's inception, Timboon P-12 School has received great support from the dairy manufacturing industry and the local Timboon community to deliver Camembert in the Classroom.

"We are indebted to our community and industry supporters who help make our curriculum initiatives as relevant and interactive for our students as possible," Ms Vallance said.

Timboon P-12 School principal Rosalie Moorfield said that offering engaging school-based projects, such as Camembert in the Classroom, provided a positive shift in the level of community involvement within the school.

"Not a week goes by without a parent from the farming community or an industry



**Year Eight students learning how to make Camembert cheese in the classroom.**

representative being in the school talking and working with students," Ms Moorfield said. "It is a real shift in the level of parent and community involvement in secondary education."

Even the school's teachers have become involved by learning how to make cheese as part of their staff professional development day.

In November 2014 the project expanded further with the school opening its doors to host Camembert for Christmas, which allowed the Timboon community to get a hands-on experience and make their own Camembert cheese at the school.

Dairy Australia program manager Dr Mani Iyer said that Camembert in the Classroom was a great platform to introduce teachers and secondary students to the Australian dairy industry, dairy processes and products.

"Since its launch in 2011, the Camembert in the Classroom project has grown significantly in its popularity," he said.

"In 2014, more than 126 schools from Victoria, South Australia, NSW, Tasmania, Queensland and Western Australia participated in the program, with 96% of the schools incorporating the program into their school curriculum.

"It's great to see Timboon P-12 School collaborating with community and industry to deliver Camembert in the Classroom to students," Dr Iyer said.

**Contact:** Dairy Australia's Cows Create Careers project visit website <<http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/People-and-skills/Education-and-careers/Secondary-School-Resources/Cows-Create-Careers.aspx>>.



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# Driving dairy education to the future

## TRAIN THE TRAINER

- KEY POINTS**
- ✓ Latest research explained
  - ✓ Workshops on animal-focused topics
  - ✓ Trainers provide Industry-endorsed learning

**S**OME 35 of the nation's dairy industry trainers recently attended Dairy Australia's annual professional development workshop, held for the first time in the Gippsland dairy region in Victoria.

The three-day workshop provided the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA) trainers with information on the latest research, thinking and resources available for use in dairy education.

The trainers experienced La Trobe University's world-leading AgriBio and Dairy Futures Co-operative Research Centre, where they heard directly from leading researchers in plant and animal biosciences, and toured the Department of Environment and Primary Industries at Ellinbank, Vic, to understand the significant investment into dairy industry research.

The workshop also featured presentations from dairy industry representatives — from leading dairy researchers and veterinarians to Dairy Australia key program managers Kathryn Davis, Tracy Lloyd and Bill Youl — who presented an interesting range of animal-focused topics including rearing healthy calves, mastitis prevention through Dairy Australia's industry priority program called Cups On Cups Off (COCO), lameness

and also the management of downer cows.

Workshop participant and NCDEA trainer Beate Barnes said that learning the latest industry research was not only a great insight, but also very important to understand as a leading dairy industry trainer.

"There is great value in being up-to-date with what is happening in research and Dairy Australia," Ms Barnes said.

"Knowing what research is done and how great the facilities are, was a great insight and is very important to me — to be able to tell my students about the technology and the work done in Australia help us be more up-to-date and informed trainers.

"Trainers are also one of the sources farmers have to find out about best practice, new courses, new information and new possibilities to develop themselves and their business."

The NCDEA is a partnership between Dairy Australia and a national alliance of education partners to deliver industry-endorsed learning, training and development programs for the dairy industry.

The NCDEA has delivered industry specific training across every Australian dairy region for the past eight years.

Dairy Australia Industry, people and capability group manager Shane Hellwege said Dairy Australia was committed to providing annual NCDEA professional development opportunities so Australia's dairy regions were equipped with the nation's best dairy industry trainers.

"Professional development opportunities drive vocational education and training forward, so it is very encouraging to see our nation's dairy industry trainers enthusiastic about their own professional development," Mr Hellwege said.

"The passion NCDEA trainers have in understanding the latest dairy industry research has a direct flow-on effect — trainers can equip students with up-to-date industry research, information on new technologies and priority on-farm information, helping to support and grow the capability of the nation's dairy industry workforce," Mr Hellwege said.

**Contact: NCDEA training at website <[www.ncdea.edu.au](http://www.ncdea.edu.au)>.**



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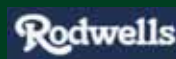
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# Nuffield scholar to look at value-add opportunity

## STUDY TOUR

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Nuffield Scholar heading overseas for 16 weeks
- ✓ Studying intensive calf-rearing and lean management
- ✓ Hopes to see Friesian bull calves raised for beef

**T**HOMAS Snare has been awarded a prestigious 2015 Nuffield Scholarship supported by Dairy Australia (DA).

Mr Snare will visit New Zealand, Europe, the United States, Canada and Japan for 16 weeks to study intensive large-scale calf-rearing (dairy beef) and lean management.

He is the farm manager of the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture dairy research facility at the University of Tasmania, is responsible for pasture and stock management on his family grazing property and runs a pasture measurement contract business servicing three local dairies.

Mr Snare said there was an opportunity to value-add to the dairy industry by rearing Friesian bull calves.

"Dairy beef represents a far more efficient production system in comparison



**Thomas Snare will study intensive large-scale calf rearing and lean management.**

to conventional beef production — I'd like to find more productive options than

slaughtering high-genetic-merit bulls at a young age," he said.

"The challenges I need to investigate include bulk milk procurement, hygiene and housing systems and staff management."

Mr Snare will also use his scholarship to research how the concept of lean management could be applied in agriculture.

"This concept, based on the Toyota production system, is used by manufacturing to eliminate waste and drive continuous improvement," he said.

"I really think lean management has the potential to make agricultural production systems more professional and therefore a more attractive career path."

DA's industry people and capability group manager Shane Hellwege said Mr Snare's research would have a direct benefit on the Australian dairy industry.

"DA is proud to partner with Nuffield Australia to offer this opportunity to a dairy farmer," Mr Hellwege said.

"The scholarship is a fantastic opportunity. It supports innovative research ideas and gives the opportunity for dairy farmers to contribute to the future of the Australian dairy industry. The research that Thomas undertakes will go on to broaden the understanding of dairy farmers in Australia."

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# Sustainability: key to dairy's future

By CARLENE DOWIE

## FARMERS FORUM

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Focus on sustainability
- ✓ Multinational companies define agenda
- ✓ Producers and farmers under scrutiny

**S**USTAINABILITY is no longer a choice for the Australian dairy industry, it is a key demand for it to continue to operate, the New Generation Dairy Farmers Forum at Coffs Harbour, NSW, in October was told. Dairy Australia's sustainability manager Helen Dornom told the conference multinationals companies were now demanding their suppliers show their sustainability credentials.

The world's rapidly increasing population was one of the reasons for the increased focus on sustainability. Sustainability recognised that meeting the food needs of today's population should not compromise the ability to meet the food needs of future populations, she said.

Food waste was another key driver. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations estimated that about 30% of all food produced was wasted with most of this occurring at the consumer end.

"Sustainability is not a fad — it is major economic factor now," Ms Dornom said. "Multinational companies are defining what they want and sustainability is firmly on their agenda."

The top 10 companies in the world controlled a huge number of brands so producers needed to respond to what they wanted. These companies were under increasing scrutiny themselves and were therefore increasing their scrutiny of the producers and farmers who supplied their products.

Ms Dornom said the surveys of consumers showed they were changing the way in which they rated companies.

It was vital for the dairy industry to understand this trend. Companies were increasingly looking to sustainable sourcing of products.

This meant people involved in multinational companies were looking at Australian dairy products and asking questions about how they were produced.

"We are in the food business," Ms Dornom said. "We need to provide evidence to support that our products are being produced sustainably."



**Chris Griffin, from the Australian Dairy Industry Council, and Helen Dornom, from Dairy Australia, presented information about the Australian Dairy Industry Sustainability Framework at the New Generation Dairy Farmers Forum at Coffs Harbour, NSW.**

These large companies were now being judged on their social and environmental performance, as well as their economic performance. The ASX (Australian Stock Exchange) now required companies to report any social or environmental risks as well as economic risks.

## Sustainability framework

Ms Dornom said there was still confusion about how sustainability could be measured. The Australian dairy industry, through the Australian Dairy Industry Council and Dairy Australia, had developed the Dairy Sustainability Framework as a means of doing that. It was the first dairy industry in the world to develop a framework for the whole industry.

The framework allowed consumers to see the industry as responsible so that they would give it a tick of approval and continue to consume its products.

Ms Dornom said the sustainability framework had been embraced by the industry. It meant that the industry and farmers did not have to be frightened about saying they wanted to make money as the framework included profitability as one of its key outcomes. "Profit is not a dirty word," Ms Dornom said.

The framework looked at three key areas:

- enhancing livelihoods;
- improving wellbeing; and
- reducing environmental impact

Within those three key areas were 11 targets and 41 measures. The industry was now reporting and measuring on all these areas with the aim to meet the targets by 2020.

## Farm perspective

Dairyfarmer and chair of the ADIC's sustainability steering committee Chris Griffin said as a third-generation farmer he had a clear idea about what sustainability meant for him. "Sustainability is about our future — our legacy for the future generation of dairyfarmers," he said.

"Sustainability is about what everyone does today to shape the industry for the future. Sustainability is no longer a wish, it is a demand for all farm businesses across world."

The sustainability framework gave Australia the opportunity to display its credentials and could give it a competitive edge. Importantly it was farmer owned and led by industry, he said.

Unilever, one of top 10 companies in the world, has accepted the framework and has now accredited all Australian dairy production as meeting sustainability code.

Australia is the only country in the world where Unilever has worked with the whole industry.

"It is fantastic for us to have achieved that," Mr Griffin said. "It saved considerable expense. Otherwise each single dairy company would have needed to do that."

Unilever has set a target for its business that by 2020 100% of its products will be sustainable.

Mr Griffin said the framework allowed the Australian dairy industry to tell the world it was serious about sustainability.

He said individual farmers were all responsible for ensuring the industry was sustainable.

Mr Griffin outlined examples of how farmers could help meet the aims within the three key areas:

- enhance livelihood — adopt new technologies, create safe working environments, train staff;
- improve well being — produce safe quality milk, meet animal welfare standards, eating three serves of dairy a day, meeting farm best practice; and
- reduce environmental impact — be part of natural resource management programs, undertake energy assessments, maintain farm biodiversity, reduce farm waste.

The Australian dairy industry was at the forefront of this move. Other commodities were now seeking information about how the dairy industry has achieved its framework, Mr Griffin said.



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# Research shines light on dairy bull infertility

By ALEXANDRA DE BLAS



**R**ESearch into the fertility of 'mop-up' bulls finds that one in five dairy bulls are at high risk of having reduced fertility before joining begins, which is a concerning and costly statistic. Farmers put a lot of time and effort into genetics and preparing cows for breeding, while the bulls that service cows after artificial insemination (AI) are often neglected.

"This can be far more important than we realise," researcher Dr Andy Hancock said. "Mop-up' bulls are often required to join a third or more of the herd, so they have a very important job to do."

Dr Hancock is undertaking the dairy resident training program funded by The Gardiner Foundation, Dairy Australia, The University of Melbourne and four private rural veterinary practices (see box story). He is based with The Vet Group at Timboon in western Victoria.

## The research

Dr Hancock studied 32 seasonal calving dairy herds, measuring the effectiveness of 'mop-up' bulls placed with the herd after AI. He undertook bull breeding soundness evaluations (BBSE) before and after the natural service period to determine the rates of reduced fertility in herd bulls, and whether bull fertility could be better managed.

The BBSE involves a physical examination of the bull's general condition and mobility, its testes, penis and internal genital glands. A semen test is performed that looks at sperm motility (what percentage are swimming normally) and morphology (shape).



Dr Andy Hancock, a dairy resident based with The Vet Group at Timboon with a veterinary student, preparing to test bulls on farm.

Dr Hancock said about 10% of bulls failed on sperm morphology, which would only be picked up in a breeding soundness evaluation.

While there's a prevailing view that introducing bulls with a high risk of fertility failure can be counteracted by having a few extra bulls in the mix, Dr Hancock said that was not the case.

"If you've got a dominant bull that's lame, has poor semen quality or penile dysfunction, he can still keep other bulls from joining cows that are in season, but he won't get them in calf himself," he said.

Poor bull fertility can extend the joining period, meaning cows are less likely to recover in time to get in calf at the next mating cycle.

Most high risk bulls were removed before joining and then Dr Hancock repeated the evaluation after the joining period with all the remaining males. He found the rate of high risk bulls had increased to 37%, with one in four suffering from lameness.

This is the first time breeding soundness has ever been measured in dairy bulls post joining.

"Dairy bulls are in a special situation in that they work really hard during joining to mate with cows but they're also walking up and down the track to the dairy," Dr Hancock said. "A lot of them were pulling

up lame because of footsoreness as well as joint injuries."

## Key recommendations

"We strongly recommend that everyone tests their bulls prior to use because 20% of them are going to have a high risk of reduced fertility, and most of the defects we were finding, you'd only pick up by doing a breeding soundness exam," Dr Hancock said.

"The other thing we strongly recommend is that all bulls are vaccinated for Vibriosis."

They found a number of unvaccinated herds had bulls with Vibrio by the end of joining season, which can lead to early embryonic loss and abortion in the herd.



Ecklin South, Vic, dairyfarmer Danny Clarke, with Dr Andy Hancock, who has been testing bull fertility on farms including Mr Clarke's.



Dr Hancock is still in the process of analysing the final post joining data. But he found that age is important; bulls that hadn't been used for joining previously were less likely to fail, and he recommends that farmers use bulls below the age of four.

Another interesting factor emerged when he crunched the numbers on the post joining exam — bulls fed grain in the three months before joining were more likely to fail. "It may be a foot issue but it could even be related to sperm quality," Dr Hancock said.

### Extension

Dr Peter Younis, a partner at The Vet Group in Timboon, has had two dairy residents working in his practice. "I love the fact that their research has a use-today practical component to it," he said. "Our farmers have been really supportive ... and it's certainly addressed a significant issue that we weren't addressing in the past."

Program manager at Dairy Australia, Kathryn Davis, said: "We're getting the residents' findings out there as soon as they've been validated, so the farmers can start using the information."

Dr Hancock's research has already been incorporated into Dairy Australia's InCalf program, which provides advice and workshops about herd reproductive management.

Anyone who missed out on last year's workshops can join an online webinar session on January 29, 2015. Visit <[www.dairyaustralia.com.au/webinars/](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/webinars/)> for more information.



Conducting a bull breeding soundness evaluation.

## University honours dairy vet residents' program

THE Dairy Residents Training Program for veterinarians has been recognised in the University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor's Engagement Awards for its excellence in engaging with the dairy industry. Program leader, Associate Professor Michael Pyman, was presented with a staff engagement grant at an end-of-year ceremony.

The grant of \$10,000 will be put towards placing an additional dairy resident in a western Victorian veterinary practice.

"I'm delighted that the hierarchy of the university has recognised our contribution to this innovative program during the last three years," Assoc Prof Pyman said. "It honours the relationships and linkages developed throughout the dairy industry and the respect the program has been accorded for its performance so far."

The program, co-funded by the Gardiner Foundation, Dairy Australia

and the university, partners veterinarians interested in dairy medicine and production with four leading rural veterinary practices across Gippsland, Northern Victoria and the Western District.

Residents undertake a Master of Veterinary Studies by coursework and a Master of Veterinary Science by research with the University of Melbourne, and through their veterinary practice partnerships conduct on-farm research that is directly applicable in the dairy industry.

"I'm in awe of the development they have shown during two years since entering the program as keen young veterinarians," Assoc Prof Pyman said. "From their growth in skills, to their research methodologies, the findings they're producing for the benefit of local industry and their ability to extend those findings to the general dairy community. It has been amazing."



Michael Pyman: in awe of development shown by young veterinarians.

Contact: website <<http://www.gardinerfoundation.com.au/>> or phone (03) 8621 2900.

—Alexandra de Blas





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# Looking for solutions

By CARLENE DOWIE

## KEY POINTS DAIRY FARMER OF THE YEAR

- ✓ Low point inspires
- ✓ Multifaceted operation
- ✓ Move into robotic dairying

**A**CTIVELY seeking solutions, rather than focusing on obstacles, has enabled Australian Dairy Farmer of the Year Greg Dennis to establish an award-winning farm processing and tourism business.

The turning point for his family farm was a bout of depression that helped Mr Dennis focus on what he wanted to change in his life.

The 150-hectare dairy farm at Tamrookum, west of the Gold Coast, has been in the Dennis family since the 1930s. It began with 20 cows and steadily grew through until deregulation in 1999.

"Post deregulation, which happened in 1999, milk became a profit item in shops, and processors, distributors and retailers made more money out of milk and farmers got less," Mr Dennis said.



Greg Dennis celebrates his win in the Dairy Farmer of the Year competition.

"At that point, a lot of farmers did leave the industry because they were unable to stay afloat. So we left the dairy industry as well and I was always hopeful that we could come back, but it took quite a number of years before that window of opportunity opened and when we did come back we were very happy."

But the changing fortunes of the industry hit again and the family faced the prospect of losing the farm.

That's when Mr Dennis became ill with depression.

"I still looked normal on outside but on inside I wasn't functioning," he said. "There was a sense of loss — nobody died, but I thought I was going to lose the dairy farm again."

But the recovery from depression offered a "real time for reflection" and allowed Mr Dennis to "open up the thought processes". "A lot of the things that have happened on my farm today, honestly I am doubtful would have happened if I hadn't had depression," he said.

"You get to a point with depression where some people become suicidal and if they succeed that's the end; whereas others recover and are able to do more than they would have been able to do with their lives.

"It's probably a level of belief that I now have that anything is possible."

That belief has allowed Mr Dennis and his family to refashion their dairy business into a multifaceted operation that includes its own milk-processing company, Scenic Rim4Real Milk, supplying fresh milk to his local area, a farm tourism business that



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◀ attracts about 15,000 visitors a year and robotic milking.

Mr Dennis said one of the strengths he had developed was taking action.

"It's fine to have an idea, it's fine to think that something will work but to just leave it as a thought is not going to achieve a whole lot," he said.

That philosophy was behind the decision to move into robotic milking in 2010, although he concedes it was not without its difficulties. "However hard you think it is going to be, it is going to be worse than that," he said.

"But there is nothing quite like living the experience because every single farm is different, you have to go through the motion and understand how to make it work for you.

"Are we happy that we did it — absolutely. But whoever makes the decision to go robotic, if you want to go that path, you'll want to be pretty resilient because you are going to be carrying the load of expectation for everyone else on that farm that's telling you this is the stupidest idea we ever had and they've given up on them within weeks or months or years, but you know it will work eventually."

The need to take action was also behind the launch of his own brand of milk in response to the supermarkets launching \$1 a litre milk.

"Something happened that we never saw coming and that was when the major retailers set a price for milk that was below its true value and what that did was cause farmers to be put in a position of not making money out of milk anymore," he said.

"So here was the Dennis family one hour from Brisbane and the Gold Coast being told by all the major milk companies to leave the industry. We chose as a family to build a factory and cut ties with all of those companies."



**Greg Dennis says he had a hunch there'd be strong demand for locally produced, minimally processed milk.**

It was a bold move that paid off. Consumers have embraced the locally produced milk; now stocked in more than 170 retail outlets throughout South East Queensland.

"Our dairy receives 60 cents a litre for the milk, around a 15% increase on the average price paid to dairyfarmers," Mr Dennis said. "It's incredible that most dairyfarmers today are receiving the same price per litre they received in the 1990s. It's not surprising so many have lost their farms."

"This was a do-or-die move to save our 80-year-old farm. We had a hunch there'd be strong demand for locally produced, minimally processed milk. People keep telling us it is great to be able to drink milk the way it used to be."

Mr Dennis said it had been suggested that the business had done some innovative things. "We actually won an innovation award last year in the Scenic Rim ... for putting milk in a glass bottle and we had

cream on top," he said. "So sometimes all things old become new again."

The success of Scenic Rim 4Real Milk is due in part to the business's approach to consumers, of which the agritourism forms an important part.

"We've incorporated agritourism into the business, which is a big part of what we do," he said. "It's open to visitors year-round, and the milk factory and processing has been a very important part of gelling things together."

"It's empowering people with knowledge and they'll go away from our farm and talk to their friends, so there really is a multiplying effect by educating people so that they then want to share the story."

"One of the things we can do is have the kids put their hands on the milk jug — so that is really a strong connection for them — they are seeing something real right in front of them."

Mr Dennis said it was vital that farmers communicated more with "average people who live in the towns and cities".

Social media was important in this regard. "It's not for everyone, but there's no right way to do it either, it's whatever works for you," Mr Dennis said.

The brand is also promoted through open days on the farm that attract 2000 to 3000 people and involvement in local events such as a food festival at a Brisbane high school that attracts 5000 people.

The farm also donated the milk for the Camembert in the Classroom program run through the Ekka, which 6000 children took part in, making cheese across a couple of months. It also was involved for the first time this year in the Cows Create Careers program, sending three calves to Mary Mount College.

**Contact: Greg Dennis, phone 0403 314 895, website <[www.scenicrim4realmilk.com.au](http://www.scenicrim4realmilk.com.au)>.**

## Another award for top farmer

THE accolades keep coming for Queensland dairyfarmer Greg Dennis. The Tamrookum producer has been named Business Person of the Year at the 2014 Scenic Rim Business Excellence Awards, held by his local Scenic Rim Regional Council in late November.

The Dennis family business, Scenic Rim 4Real Milk, took home the Platinum Award for the second consecutive year — the top honour at the event.

"We were thrilled just to be finalists again this year," Mr Dennis said. "To back it up and win in consecutive years, you've got to prove you're doing something above what you did the previous year."

"We're never motivated to do what we do because we think there may be an award at the end of the effort we make. That really is a side benefit."

"A lot of what I do has been as much about promoting the Scenic Rim as it has been about promoting our product, what we're doing and the farm as a tourist destination."

"On a daily basis, I'm creating awareness of the dairy industry and what we do, and I'm building a support base of consumers who now believe and understand the importance of the dairy industry."

While Mr Dennis relishes his role as a vocal and passionate industry sup-

porter while managing the company's public relations, brand and milk sales, he's quick to credit a large support team of 27 staff employed between the farm and factory who keep things running smoothly.

"I'm more than happy and comfortable to be in the spotlight spreading the message, but I'm the public face of a much bigger team behind the scenes doing the hard slog," he said.

Brisbane's *Courier Mail QWeekend* magazine also recently added Greg to its 2014 '50 Best and Brightest' roll call of high-achieving Queenslanders.

"It's a really unexpected honour to be considered worthy of something like that," Mr Dennis said.



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Nigel Cook, Robert Whitaker, David and Sue and their son Aubrey Fish, Simon Davies, Yonah Abongo and Steven Matthews on their Fish farm where staff play a key role.

# Sharing the rewards of farm life

By ANNE BOSWELL

## NZ BUSINESS OF YEAR

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Focus on lifting pasture consumption
- ✓ Brought forward calving date
- ✓ Staff critical to success



**A** NEW Zealand couple finally being recognised for their successes after 20 years in the dairy industry are not entirely comfortable with the recognition, but are keen to demonstrate that dairyfarming can be a rewarding career. David and Sue Fish, who farm near Matamata, New Zealand, have built up their dairy business across the past couple of decades and have enjoyed their “story” as it has unfolded — the latest chapter covering the winning of the 2014 Waikato/Bay of Plenty Dairy Business of the Year.

Both were born and bred on dairy farms, Mr Fish locally and Mrs Fish in the United Kingdom. Mrs Fish completed an agri-

cultural diploma before first visiting New Zealand in 1987 on a scholarship to study dairyfarming abroad.

She returned to the UK after nine months, coming back to New Zealand for good two years later.

In 1987 Mr Fish took over his family’s 36-hectare home farm, which is located down the road from where they live now between Matamata and Tutanui.

Mr Fish first managed the farm and then share-milked for two years before buying the farm in 1990. During this time Mrs Fish managed and lower order share-milked on other farms in the district before they married in 1992.

Mr Fish then bought a spouting business and worked off farm until their first child was born in 1994; Mrs Fish ran the home farm until this point.

In 1999 they bought another 60ha farm nearby. Mrs Fish returned to running the home farm and Mr Fish commuted up the road to run the second block; a nanny at home caring for their three children under four in order to “make it all work”.

## Pasture/supplement

Today, the Fishes have three farms, milking 1280 crossbred cows across a total milking platform of 328ha, plus a couple of support blocks on which maize is grown and calves are reared.

They grow about 50ha of maize annually, an inexpensive supplement to support their predominantly pasture-based system. Pasture accounts for around about % of the herds’ diet, with palm kernel expeller (PKE), maize and a little whey to fill in the gaps.

Last season the Fishes employed Intellect nutritionist Bill Rys, who they say has been instrumental in turning their good farm into a great farm.

“By following his recommendations we have seen a 200 kilogram/ha lift in production,” Mr Fish said. “His input at his monthly visits was the last bit of expertise we needed.”

Staff monitor the property with plate metering and regular whole farm walks, and use the three-leaf grazing system, which

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Farm adviser Bill Rys checks the feed.



Waitoa farmers David and Sue Fish have won the Waikato Bay of Plenty Dairy Business of the Year 2014.

◀ indicates to them when to move the herd on to the next paddock.

"Balancing leaf emergence meant we grew more grass than ever before last year," Mr Fish said. "The seasons are getting a bit warmer and we find the first grass is the best grass of the year."

An ongoing regrassing program occurs on farm, with summer turnips or chicory planted before paddocks are regrassed with tetraploids.

Early maize is grown on the effluent paddocks, which take up one third of the farm. The Fishes aim to expand their effluent paddocks to include more than half the farm. Currently the non-effluent paddocks are fertilised with Pro Gibb, liquid nitrogen and chicken litter.

### Calving/mating

This season the Fishes have brought calving and mating forward. Calving started on July 1 (10 days earlier) to create a longer season and more days in milk.

Mrs Fish said they were aiming for 300-plus days in milk with a staggered dry-off during 50-60 days, as opposed to making the decision due to Body Condition Score (BCS).

Calves are raised on the support block, and they are seeing well-conditioned rising one-year olds at the end of the season.

"Heifers are well-grown by the time they go out and are mated to Jersey bulls," Mr Fish said.

The Fishes were saddened by the recent retirement of their grazier, Ken Fotheringham who has been a "critical" part of their business for 15 years.

They are not looking forward to the dif-

ficult task of finding someone of equal skill to raise their young stock.

This season, mating started during the last week of September. Five weeks of artificial breeding with CRV Ambreed's Friesian semen is followed by five to six weeks of Friesian bulls, which are out by December 20.

"We rotate the lease bulls and they do really well," Mr Fish said. "We are extremely happy with our 7-9% empty rate. We also use a CIDR (Controlled Internal Drug Release) program with 15% of the herd and find it gives a worthwhile economic return."

### Staff

Mrs Fish said the human resources side of the business was incredibly important to them, and it was reflected in their team.

There is eight staff in total between the three farm teams: Yonah Abongo, Simon Davies, Steven Matthews, David Cleary, Tim Rissetto, Rob Whittaker, Nigel Cook and Natasha Petterson.

"They are long-standing team members who are valuable to the success of our business," Mrs Fish said.

"Their support allows us to grow the business further."

Mr Fish said they all take ownership of the farms and ran them well.

"There is a lot of healthy competition between farms, which we encourage," he said. "We run an annual calf-rearing competition, and hold quarterly internal discussion groups on topics relevant to the season."

The Fishes encourage education courses on a "you pass, we pay" agreement, and strive to create the positive culture that is so important on farm.

"The team is encouraged to take ownership of their responsibilities on farm and as a result they thrive," Mrs Fish said. "They are a great team and it is a privilege to work with them."

### Dairy Business of the Year

The Fishes say they were pleasantly surprised and humbled by their win in the Dairy Business of the Year.

They have used Red Sky in the past for financial analysis, but the 2014 competition, which used figures from the 2012-13 season, was the first time they had entered the competition itself.

Nutritionist Bill Rys encouraged them to enter, as they wanted a closer analysis of their figures to back up the decisions they had made on farm.

"It's good to be critiqued," Mrs Fish said. "After 20-odd years farming, you can get blasé, and we wanted to pay more attention to detail going forward. We are striving to be the best in the game."

### Future goals and family

The Fishes' two daughters, Harriet and Geraldine, are studying at Lincoln University and their son, Aubrey, has his final year at St Paul's College in 2015.

He is currently studying at the Centre of Excellence for Agriculture at the school, an initiative the Fishes are keen to promote.

"Farming has had a reputation of being the 'easy option' for people who are not so bright," Mrs Fish said.

"We now know this is not the case, and we would love to encourage high-achieving students to get into the industry."



Silage being cut on the Fish farm.





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# NSW local milk market key to growth

By SHAN GOODWIN

KEY POINTS

## GROWTH POTENTIAL

- ✓ NSW industry set for expansion
- ✓ \$1m dairy project fund set up
- ✓ Local milk accounts for 68% of production

**T**HE big opportunities for growth in NSW's dairy industry will likely come from investment in manufacturing for export markets but the gap between supply and demand for fresh milk on the eastern seaboard is also providing fodder for expansion.

While there is conjecture about numbers, industry leaders and analysts are all pointing toward significant increases in milk production in NSW in the next five years to fill both local and overseas markets.

The State Government is making moves to ensure the potential for that growth is realised. It has set up a \$1 million dairy project fund with the agenda of driving on-farm and supply chain expansion, development of alternative marketing options and business models for investment.

An advisory committee, with members from farmer groups, is being appointed to ensure funds are invested according to industry priorities.

The fund was supported by a report, released in September, commissioned by the

NSW Government and prepared by Victorian consultants Fresh Agenda.

Called *Growing the NSW Dairy Industry*, it highlighted the opportunities in the domestic market with a growing population and demand for milk and found NSW's cost efficiencies in freight compared with Victoria should help stabilise prices in the future.

Local drinking milk is the key market for the NSW dairy industry, accounting for about 68% of the 2012-13 production.

More than half of sales are through supermarkets. Private labels have a higher share of the supermarket channel in NSW than nationally.

The report projects fresh milk demand will increase by just under 5% to 2018-19, while Queensland requirements will lift by 8%.

That is based on Australian Bureau of Statistics population projections and static per capita consumption.

Industry body Dairy Connect NSW's chief executive Mike Logan said the liquid market was undersupplied to the tune of 100 million litres, with the biggest shortfall in Queensland where producers had been subjected to extremely tough seasonal conditions and natural disasters.

NSW farms were expanding to fill that void with Dairy Australia figures showing a lift in production this year in the order of 2-3%.

Increasingly, Victorian milk is being diverted to augment NSW and southern Queensland supplies.

"But for the industry to grow substantially — in the order of 50% as opposed to 10% — we need to attract investment in new manufacturing and we are getting very close to that," Mr Logan said.

The potential was there for growth in the order of 500 billion litres in the next five years.

"The proposal of state-of-the-art milk powder and canning facilities across the State will propel us beyond mere ingredients and allow us to become a small but strategic global supplier of whole products for the savvy infant nutritional market," he said.

In the first instance, Dairy Connect believes those factories would likely be supplied by farms on the upper end of inland rivers such as the Namoi, Macquarie, Lachlan and Murrumbidgee.

A manufacturing facility at the bottom end of the Hunter would provide growth potential for coastal dairies, Mr Logan said.

While the report highlighted substantial export opportunities for investment in large-scale production facilities in areas with a competitive advantage in feed, transport and environment, its author Joanne Bills was much more conservative.

"Given many export opportunities won't

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◀ necessarily return to the farmer what the fresh milk market does and any greenfield development would have to be geared toward a price to the overseas customer that is competitive with Victorian businesses, 100 million litres per annum would be closer to what is required to fill that potential," Ms Bills said.

Dairy industry leaders say the years of "tier two pricing" — which in many cases had meant farmers received less than their costs of production for some of their milk — placed producers in a mindset of reluctance towards growth, particularly in Northern NSW and Queensland.

NSW is the second largest dairy state after Victoria and the industry generates gross value of production estimated at \$505 million, or about 4% of the State's agricul-

tural gross value product, according to the Fresh Agenda report.

The NSW industry is concentrated along the coast, but also has pockets of production in the irrigated southern Riverina region and inland regions.

It is these inland river areas where many analysts see the greatest growth potential, providing farmer confidence is restored.

The Inland Elite Dairy Network's Dr Jess Jennings, from Bathurst, NSW, said the potential in his region for existing family dairies to expand, as well as more land to move into dairying was strong, but would be dependent on increased farmer investment.

For that to happen, there would need to be confidence in long-term market security.

"The trend towards improved productiv-

ity will continue but the reality is the majority of farms are pushing a very efficient line, whether it be grazing, partial mixed rations or total mixed rations systems," he said.

Mr Logan said farmers had been badly beaten up by the market.

"But our surveys show there is the desire to grow, particularly as we talk to them more and more about what is possible with investment in manufacturing," Mr Logan said.

"Their big concern is where the capital will come from to fund that.

"We want to see the (State Government's) \$1 million dairy fund used for capacity building on-farm and encouraging young people into the industry, and then also to fund identification of investors." **D**



Neil and Simone Jolliffe milk 200 Holsteins on their 363-hectare family farm, Currajugle Holsteins, at Wagga Wagga, New South Wales.

## Plans for growth at Wagga operation

EXPANSION is firmly on the horizon for Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, dairy producers Neil and Simone Jolliffe, who milk 200 Holsteins to produce about two million litres a year from lucerne-based pasture oversown with annuals or perennial grasses.

The couple took over the 363-hectare family farm, Currajugle Holsteins, with 80ha of irrigation under centre-pivots from the Murrumbidgee River and a bore, in 2008.

They are focusing on debt consolidation and building equity with the aim of manoeuvring themselves into a position of financial strength so they can invest in newer technologies and capital, allowing for labour-efficient expansion to four megalitres a year.

"Our cow numbers could expand rapidly to accommodate this growth as we are currently selling 50-80 milkers per year in excess of our current needs," Mrs Jolliffe said.

"The biggest thing restraining

growth at the moment is the lack of longer-term supply contracts from milk companies.

"The security of contracts and known pricing provides better certainty and encouragement for investment opportunities.

"High-quality, senior-level staff are also difficult to find, particularly those with exceptional animal husbandry skills. This is a common problem throughout the inland regions where dairy is sparse."



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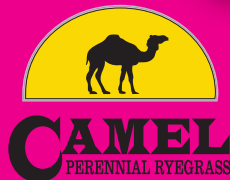
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# Interest in corn snaplage growing

## CORN SNAPLAGE

### KEY POINTS

- ✱ Easy to harvest and ensile
- ✱ High energy and similar protein to corn silage
- ✱ Another option for harvesting corn



**T**HE corn harvesting method known as snaplage is emerging from obscurity as more dairy producers and nutritionists recognise its advantages. Snaplage refers to taking just the cob and husks with a snapper front mounted on a harvester, and is growing in popularity due to its simplicity and high feed value if implemented correctly.

Lallemand animal nutrition technical services manager Trevor Schoorl said the ease of harvest and storage made it very appealing. "Snaplage offers increased flexibility of the time of harvest, it can be stored and ensiled in a simple silage bunker, and you have processed grain ready to feed into a ration," he said.

Mr Schoorl said it was also a high value energy concentrate source that stacked up well against corn silage. "Snaplage is higher in energy than corn silage with similar crude protein levels," he said. "It also improves ruminal digestion compared to dry corn, has some fibre, and starch digestibility increases in time."

The method joins numerous corn harvest

options, identifiable by their moisture content (or dry matter) at time of harvest, including corn silage (whole plant), high-moisture grain and dry grain.

Mr School said he recommended harvesting snaplage at 30-40% moisture (60-70% DM) and to follow good ensiling practices to enhance and maintain the feeding value of the product.

"We recommend using the most advanced inoculant available, Lalsil HC, to protect the snaplage against spoilage and maintain its high feed value at feedout," Mr Schoorl said. "Silostop oxygen barrier sealing film for the silage pit is our preferred sealing option for snaplage."

Crossmaglen, NSW, dairyfarmers Jason and Michele Bake have been experimenting with the harvest method at their farm for a number of years.

In the 2013-14 season, their PAC 735 corn produced 1100 tonnes of normal corn silage and 600 tonnes of snaplage, and their soybeans produced 400 tonnes.

Mr Bake said a change in rainfall and absence of disease helped them secure a 10 tonne/hectare corn yield increase on normal years.



Jason Bake and his daughters Hannah, Jorjah and Danica check out the soybean silage.

"Last season was a relatively drier season where we received 550 millimetres, down from our median annual rainfall of 1500mm, which proved to be a better season for growing corn, and there was no sign of leaf or cob disease," he said.

He said he was pleased they conserved a range of summer crops to help cater for the dry winter that followed and were planning their summer program again.

This summer they are growing PAC 606 for its superior leaf disease resistance and high starch content.

"In a high-rainfall area, you need a hybrid with good disease resistance," Mr Bake said.

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# The risks of drinking raw milk

## UNPASTEURISED MILK

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Not suitable for human consumption
- ✓ Packaging and transport increases risks

**I**N December, the news of the tragic death of a child possibly linked to drinking raw milk saddened the dairy industry and underscored the message that consumers should only drink pasteurised milk.

"Farmers, familiar with their cows and own farm hygiene practices, are known to drink fresh milk directly from their dairy but the law is very clear that the packaging, transport and selling of raw, unpasteurised milk for human consumption is illegal," sustainability manager for Dairy Australia Helen Dornom said.

"Milk is a highly regulated biological product in part because of the potential growth of pathogens during storage and

transport. It is important to reemphasise that unpasteurised milk can never be consumed without real risks.

"As farmers and representatives of the industry we have to be careful not to give the impression that something a farmer might do on farm and fully aware of the risks can safely translate to the broader community."

Unpasteurised milk has been bottled and sold as cosmetic products (labelled 'bath milk', 'for cosmetic purposes only' or 'not for human consumption'). While the sale of these products is not illegal, consumption of the product can present a serious risk to the consumer's health.

"The fact is that cosmetic or 'bath milk' is not produced under the strict standards or supervision applied to the dairy food industry and without the additional critical controls provided by pasteurisation or equivalent treatments," Ms Dornom said.

"It may contain pathogenic bacteria that can lead to life-threatening illnesses.

"Everyone is vulnerable to illness caused by organisms that may be present in raw milk,



**Pasteurisation is one of the many processes ensuring Australia's milk is safe to drink.**

but the risks are even greater for young children and for people who are elderly or those who have underlying health problems, are immune compromised or are pregnant."

The Australian dairy industry has a well-earned reputation for safe dairy products — it's important that is not jeopardised and consumers only drink pasteurised milk. **D**

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Promoting and protecting dairy

## Cows paint pretty picture for classroom education

**M**ORE than 10,250 primary school kids from 128 schools around the country learnt about Australia's Legendairy dairy industry last year through Dairy Australia's hugely popular Picasso Cows and Picasso Cows Make-Over programs, which taught primary school children that yogurt doesn't grow on trees and brown cows don't make chocolate milk.

The Picasso Cows program challenges schools to decorate a life-size, fibreglass cow and document their experiences in a learning journal.

As the kids paint their model cow, they also devour healthy educational messages and learn of the importance of Australia's \$13 billion dairy industry and the nutritional benefits of consuming dairy foods, such as milk, cheese and yogurt, as part of a healthy, balanced diet.

In 2014, Dairy Australia launched the new Picasso Cows Make-Over program, inviting more than 80 schools from dairy regions who had previously decorated a cow as part of the Picasso Cows program to give their beloved bovine a spruce up and compete for the inaugural title of National Champion.

Seven local regional winners were revealed for the Picasso Cows program, while Western Australia's Harvey Primary School was crowned the first Picasso Cows Make-Over National Champion.

Dairy Australia industry promotions manager Kelly Ward said the programs were helping close the divide between 'farm





to plate' for primary school students, successfully teaching them about the principles of a healthy, balanced diet, the contribution of agriculture to Australia's economy, career opportunities and the dairy industry as a whole.

"The programs are a fun and interactive educational tool that increases children's knowledge about where their food comes from and helps them understand the importance of eating foods from the dairy food group as they grow," she said.

Since 2008, more than 95,000 children from more than 700 schools have taken part in the programs. Many are from inner-city and urban areas, where Ms Ward said there was a lack of knowledge about the dairy industry.

Demonstrating the educational benefits of both programs, a survey conducted by Dairy Australia at the completion of the 2014 programs revealed that 80% of participating students understood they needed to consume dairy foods such as milk, cheese and yogurt every day, an increase of 28% from a survey conducted at the start of the year.

The programs have also increased students' general dairy knowledge, with 98.5% of students understanding that dairy helps build strong bones, 98% knowing dairy foods come from cows and 81.5% learning that muesli bars aren't dairy foods.

Harvey Primary School principal Colin Brand said the creativity of the program made the learning process engaging and adaptable for many learning styles and abilities.

"We appreciate Dairy Australia for giving us the opportunity to participate in such an initiative," he said. "As the make-over activity progressed, it gained momentum among the students, resulting in the whole school getting behind the program.

"I'm really proud of what we have produced as a school community."

The two programs have been developed in accordance with the Australian Curriculum. Free hard copy and online teaching resources are available at Dairy Australia's Discover Dairy website <[www.dairy.edu.au/discoverdairy](http://www.dairy.edu.au/discoverdairy)>.

#### PICASSO COWS

##### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Fun, interactive educational tool
- ✓ Connects city children with dairy
- ✓ Increases knowledge about dairy foods



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# School kids and farmers pitch in for cattlemen

## HELPING HAND

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Rural school starts drought-aid program
- ✓ Dairyfarmers donate feed
- ✓ Strengthen ties with urban schools

**T**IMES have been tough for dairyfarmers in south-east Queensland, but not tough enough to stop them from helping other farmers in need.

A stint on a cattle station 13 years ago has inspired Lockyer Valley dairyfarmer Luke Stock to pitch in and help northern cattle farmers as they battle crippling drought conditions.

Late last year, Mr Stock donated 25 big square bales of barley hay to the Rural Connect initiative of St Mary's Catholic School in Laidley where his children attend. The initiative raised funds to buy bales of hay and other important resources to assist drought-affected farmers in Queensland.

From its launch in March 2014 through to November, Rural Connect raised more than \$50,000 in cash and in-kind donations, and donated about 170 tonnes of hay on nine fully loaded semi-trailers, along with more than 4.5 tonnes of lick blocks, 1680 kilograms of dog food, plus personal care packs. The longest trip was seven hours to near Lightning Ridge, NSW.

While Mr Stock worries about the lack of rain on his own farm, he has irrigation to fall back on and a 3.5-hectare block dedicated to growing feed specifically for the appeal.

Mr Stock said the plight of the cattlemen "touched a nerve" for him and his wife, Rebekah.

"As dairyfarmers we're fortunate to have irrigation and can grow our own feed; but, they don't have that and I feel for those fellas and their struggles," he said.

"It was a 12-week process from the tractor first going in to work the ground to the hay being made and then loaded on the truck."

His parents, Alan and Dolores, who run the Daloran Jerseys farm at Glenore Grove in the centre of the Lockyer Valley with Mr Stock, also helped out by driving a ute-load



**Rebekah and Luke Stock with their children Elisha, Sarah, Hayden and Chloe reached out to help drought-affected farmers in northern Australia.**

of donated lick blocks, dog food and other donations to needy farmers.

"It's not just us; they've sourced hay and donations from a lot of places," Mr Stock said. "It's the whole community pitching in to help."

Mr Stock and fellow local dairyfarmers, Mark and Joanne Seng, strengthened their link to Rural Connect by hosting 100 students from St Mary's and Guardian Angels Primary School at Ashmore on the Gold Coast to show them where and how the hay was made and to broaden their understanding about dairyfarming.

As an ambassador for the Legendairy communication initiative to build the profile and reputation of the dairy industry, Mr Stock hopes others can support the cause to help farmers in need.

"I realise it's a difficult situation and not everyone is in a position to help, but I'd encourage anyone to help if they can," he said.

St Mary's principal, Nathan Haley, said Grade Six and Seven students started the initiative after discussing social issues.

"They spoke about drought-affected

farmers," Mr Haley said. "We're located in a rural community and the children are aware of the challenges farmers go through. They saw the generosity of people supporting us after the floods of 2011 and 2013 and they wanted to give something back."

The initial target of \$6000 was "smashed" in the first day and the project now aims to provide \$100,000 worth of assistance.

"It's a lot bigger than we anticipated but as other people hear about it they want to come on board and contribute," Mr Haley said.

"This area — and the need — continues to grow. They're mostly cattle farms across the south-west, about 300 kilometres north and west of where we are."

The project has linked with the industrial union organisation AgForce to identify farmers in drought areas most needing assistance.

Mr Stock is also a director of Regional Development Program Subtropical Dairy. **D**

**Contact: For more Legendairy stories, head to website <[legendairy.com.au](http://legendairy.com.au)>.**



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# Legendairy swimmer dives into dairy

**KEY POINTS**

**LEGENDAIRY**

- ✓ Michael Klim new ambassador
- ✓ New campaign aimed at mums
- ✓ Focus on start and end day with dairy

**D**AIRY Australia has welcomed three-time Olympian and swimming hero Michael Klim as a Legendairy Ambassador to encourage Australians to kick off the new year with healthy habits as Legendairy ramps up the next stage of its Start and End Your Day with Dairy campaign.

"Michael is a strong ambassador for the industry and embodies everything that's

Legendairy," Dairy Australia's group manager for industry promotion and product innovation Isabel MacNeill said.

"As a family man, he fits well with our target audience of mums with primary school-aged kids," she said. "He's always loved dairy foods, and is passionate about spreading the word about the good work dairyfarmers do. It's a natural fit."

As the back-to-school period hits this month, a host of activities is being unveiled, aimed at raising awareness of the health and dietary benefits of dairy and increasing consumption.

"We will be raising awareness in and out of the classroom and you can expect to see more educational activities tying into the back-to-school period to encourage mums



**Australian swimming legend Michael Klim, with his children Rocco, Stella and Frankie, has dived into dairying as the industry's new Legendairy Ambassador.**

to build healthy habits for their kids," Ms MacNeill said.

Dairy Australia's school engagement program is an important way of connecting with kids, teachers and families, and the newly launched Discover Dairy website, which provides curriculum-based education resources, will be a big feature of the program across the school year.

A television commercial focusing on the essential nutrients found in dairy will screen in February, along with online digital ads and outdoor billboards in metropolitan retail areas and shopping centres.

Mr Klim will appear in a range of promotional activities in coming months, including a Start and End Your Day swimming event that will be open to the public.

"Dairy was an important part of my diet throughout my swimming career, giving me essential nutrients my body needed for intense training and racing," Mr Klim said. "I found dairy great for my performance in the pool and recovery."

In an article in Melbourne's *Herald Sun* to announce the new partnership, Mr Klim dove headfirst into the role, telling the newspaper: "It's a great link for us, our kids are mad on milk, yogurt and ice-cream and our farmers are working bloody hard. It's not only about starting the day with dairy, but ending it with it too. Sometimes the farmers get forgotten and we consume it without thinking where it's come from."

For more information head to the Legendairy website [www.legendairy.com.au/startandend](http://www.legendairy.com.au/startandend) and Discover Dairy <[www.dairy.edu.au/discoverdairy](http://www.dairy.edu.au/discoverdairy)>.

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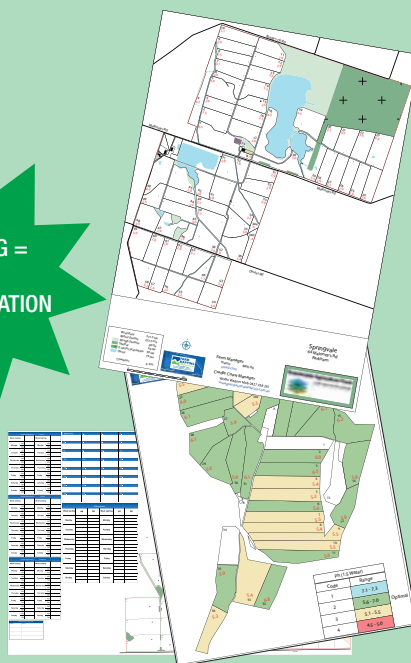
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# Extreme diet risk

## DIET RISK

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Elimination diets lead to nutrient deficiencies
- ✓ Nutrition bloggers invited to symposium
- ✓ People should seek professional advice

**P**OPULAR diets such as paleo and detox diets, which eliminate entire food groups such as dairy, may be increasing Australians' risk of poor bone health and nutrient deficiencies, international nutrition experts have told Australian health professionals at a symposium run by Dairy Australia in Melbourne in November.

"Avoiding dairy foods may place a person at risk of nutrient deficiencies, particularly calcium, and an increased risk of weaker bones," said keynote presenter and calcium research expert Professor Connie Weaver, from Purdue University in the US.

"Our research shows adequate calcium intake helps build stronger bones and could halve the risk of bone fractures in postmenopausal women."

The symposium ran as part of Dairy Australia's ongoing health science seminars, aimed to educate dietitians and nutritionists about the many benefits dairy foods bring to the Australian diet.

Dietitians with strong social media influence were part of the audience, helping to communicate the health benefits of dairy foods to consumers.

Professor Weaver was joined by a psychologist from the University of Adelaide Professor Philip Mohr, gastroenterologist Dr Evan Newnham and head dietitian at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital's Allergy Unit Dr Anne Swain to discuss the unintended health consequences of avoiding dairy and wheat.

According to Dr Swain, high public awareness of lactose and gluten intolerance may be influencing people unnecessarily eliminating dairy and wheat foods from their diets.

"Some people unnecessarily cut out dairy and wheat because they experience bloating or gut discomfort," she told the audience. "But these symptoms can be confused with other medical problems."

"My advice to people experiencing gut discomfort is to seek a medical diagnosis and professional advice from an accredited practising dietician before making any changes to their diet."

One in five Australians avoid or limit their intake of dairy foods, for concerns that include lactose intolerance or a feeling that dairy foods "don't agree with them".

Whether lactose intolerance is diagnosed

or perceived, Professor Weaver said that there was a lack of knowledge that dairy foods could still be included in the diet for some affected individuals.

"Hard cheeses are naturally low in lactose and yogurt may be easier to digest as the natural probiotics in yogurt help breakdown lactose," Professor Weaver said. **D**

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By GLEN FISHER\*

# Production positive ahead of dry summer



**M**ID-2014 saw largely favourable seasonal conditions prevailing across most dairy regions with a good autumn break in the south-eastern regions, positive pasture and fodder growth, combining with firm season-opening milk prices to support high levels of farmer confidence and sustained milk production growth.

National milk production is ahead of last year by 3.8% for the first four months of the season to the end of October 2014. The regional trends are showing Tasmania up strongly by +14.6%, New South Wales +4.1%, Victoria +3.8%, Western Australia +3.7%, Queensland down -6.1% and South Australia -1.8%. Looking at the regional Victoria data: Gippsland is +7.1%, northern Victoria +4.6% and western Victoria +0.4%.

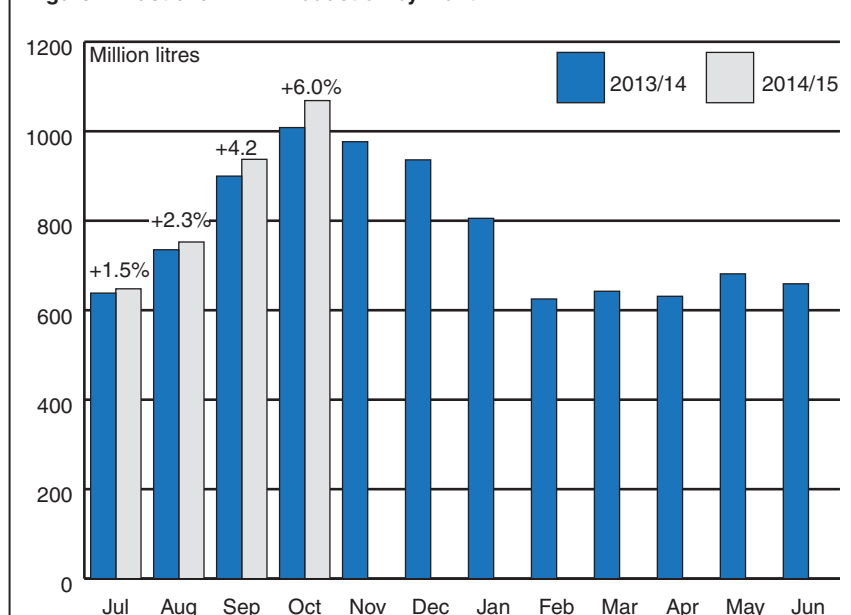
Yet drier conditions have extended through the spring across most dairying regions in recent months: rainfall has been below average in Tasmania, South Australian, western and northern Victoria, inland and northern NSW and Queensland regions in particular.

Some dairyfarmers in the northern regions of Northern NSW and Queensland have endured challenges of prolonged dry conditions, which have stressed farm cash-flows given the reliance on bought-in feed and led to reduced herd sizes in some cases. Patches of rain in mid-November and early December delivered some respite across NSW regions Central, Hunter and Mid North Coast, although heavier rains caused severe flooding in the NSW south coast.

Having earlier in the year downgraded the likelihood of an El Niño, at the start of December, the Bureau of Meteorology elevated the probability of such an event (back) at 70%. Regardless of whether that El Niño occurs, after what the bureau confirmed was the warmest spring on record, conditions across most dairying regions are likely to be drier and hotter. Balancing and sourcing feed requirements, along with managing cow condition and elevated costs in connection with irrigation water (where available) will be critical.

While input costs for feed grains are

Figure 1: Australian Milk Production by Month



less likely to provide relief, there could be some positive impacts from lower fuel prices flowing through to fuel, fertiliser and related inputs. Still, the weakening of the Australian dollar against the US dollar could also potentially offset such impacts.

After all, the Australian dollar hit a five-year low below US0.85 cents around the end of November; at the time of writing, the Australian dollar was forecast to go lower, around US0.80c, closer to where it historically traded pre-Global Financial Crisis.

Australian export volumes increased by 2.5% to 225,459 tonnes in the four months of the fiscal year to October. However, with commodity prices still well down from the higher levels in the corresponding period last year, average export returns per tonne are down 11.0% and the value of export sales in the four months to date is down 8.8% to \$839 million.

Exports of live dairy cattle increased to 87,569 animals in the rolling 12 months to October — for a total value of \$A199 million.

China has cemented its place as the largest market in recent years, and China-bound volumes were up just under 20% year-on-year, taking its share for the 12 months to the end of October from 77% up to 88%. China is expected to maintain that dominant share in the short-to-medium term given the ongoing establishment of large-

scale corporate dairy operations. Pakistan retained its position as the country taking the next largest share at 7%; while the balance was spread among traditional markets such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.

Of course, the depreciation of Australia's currency should also present a silver lining for export returns.

Although, at least in the short-term, that upside is tempered by markedly lower international commodity prices. Nevertheless, with those prices having fallen about 50% through the course of 2014, there is a sense that a positive price correction will occur at some stage with a shift in the supply-demand situation (see article facing page).

Yet actual returns to exporters also depend on hedging policies, product mixes and exposures of the individual companies in the industry. Meanwhile, major companies have held their farmgate pricing, despite the low commodity price environment, which has supported production in the season to date.

Assuming favourable seasonal conditions for the remainder of the season, Dairy Australia's forecast for 2014-15 season milk production remains at between 9.35 and 9.45 billion litres, which would equate to growth of about 1% to 2% on last season.

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





By JOHN DROPPERT\*

# Abundant supply drives price fall



**A**BUNDANT supply remains the key downside influence for dairy commodity prices, which remain weighed down by expanding production in the world's major exporting regions. Demand is generally robust however, and mixed market movements suggest that bearish sentiment has moderated slightly.

GlobalDairyTrade (GDT) results have illustrated a continuing negative trend since the previous update in this publication, with the index down 50% since February (5% since mid-October).

However, universally negative auction results are becoming rarer, suggesting that the momentum behind the correction is finally petering out. Although the market outlook remains subdued overall, some divergence along product lines is emerging.

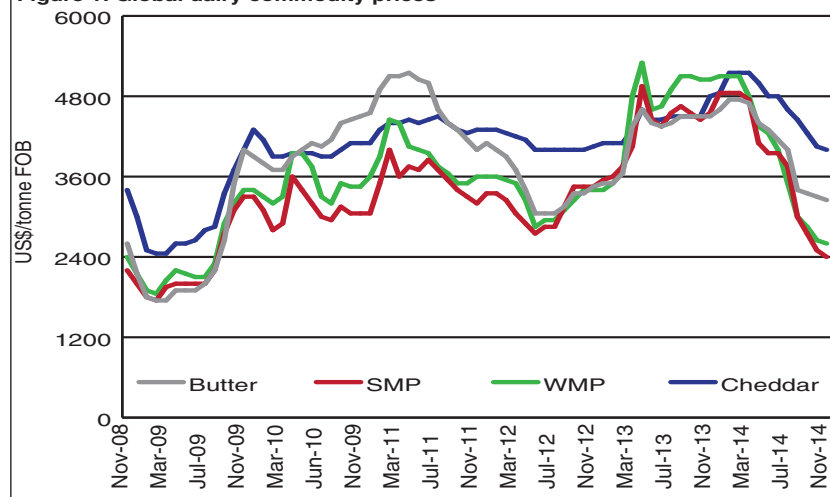
Cheese prices have remained relatively buoyant, and at present (for those processors that have a choice) cheese is the most attractive 'stream' into which to direct milk. Milk fat-based products such as butter, anhydrous milkfat (AMF) and cream cheese are also finding increasing support; including in the Australian domestic market, where strong growth in the dairy spreads category is keeping supplies tight.

The downside of a strong market for dairy fats is that production of their by-product, skim milk, is booming: weighing on skim milk powder (SMP) prices. Even as manufacturers with the ability to switch to SMP/butter or cheese reduce their whole milk powder (WMP) offerings, ongoing strength in the New Zealand season is keeping the market well-supplied.

Despite this, WMP has shown some recent signs of stability: demand for milk powders is reportedly healthy across a wide spread of markets in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, which is not surprising given the significantly lower prices on offer. However, the key constraint to a market recovery remains the current oversupply of milk relative to growth in demand.

As noted in the previous update, the outlook for milk supply growth is moderating, but slowly. By the end of their current season (May 2015) New Zealand is likely to see some retreat from the current 5% rate

Figure 1: Global dairy commodity prices



of increase (to October). Lower farmgate prices will likely impact decisions regarding supplementary feeding and dry-off in the later months.

Fonterra's December review resulted in a reduction of its farmgate milk price forecast to NZ\$4.70 a kilogram milk solids (about A\$4.55/kg MS), as commodity prices look unlikely to recover as soon as early forecasts anticipated. Other processors are also reviewing forecasts, and the vast majority of NZ farmers are likely to be scraping by on under NZ\$5/kg MS (A\$4.84) this season.

European farmers have also continued to produce about 5% more milk than last year, with data to September reconfirming the strength of the supply response across the EU-28.

However, as winter approaches anecdotal reports suggest some regions have seen per-cow output start to slip below last year, particularly in the United Kingdom.

Member states (such as Ireland) that risk exceeding their quotas will be under pressure to slow production to minimise super levy fines: penalties that farmers will find all the more difficult to pay in a lower milk price environment. However, some processors and farmers reportedly expect that fines may be waived in the final year of the quota regime, and continue to target growth. This makes the likely extent and outcome of such pressure difficult to assess.

The EU continues to experience the most direct effects from the Russian ban on most dairy imports, having previously exported a third of its cheese and a quarter of its butter to Russia. Processors have reacted to the embargo by shifting milk from cheese

production to SMP and butter — products eligible for Private Storage Aid subsidised storage, or, should prices fall below trigger prices, intervention purchasing (which looks increasingly likely).

Contacts in the US suggest there may be some months of strong output to come. Production to October increased 2.2%, and looks set to achieve the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) most recent forecast of 2.5% growth for the calendar year. Commodity prices in the US market have fallen significantly from their recent peaks, however remain above international benchmarks at the time of writing.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that farmers are pushing their production systems hard to make the most of cheaper corn and favourable margins before the expected tightening through 2015, so further supply-induced pricing downside is likely. The USDA trimmed its 2015 forecast to 3% growth, which still represents a step up from 2014 and is likely in anticipation of a stronger start.

Although a slowdown in Chinese buying precipitated the 2014 commodity price slump, and events such as the Russian embargo enhanced it, a sustained period of milk supply growth evident across virtually all major dairy-exporting regions has been the driving factor. A 2015 market turnaround will depend on a reduction in this underlying pressure. The signs are increasingly apparent, but the current 'mid-2015' timeline comes with plenty of caveats attached. **D**

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

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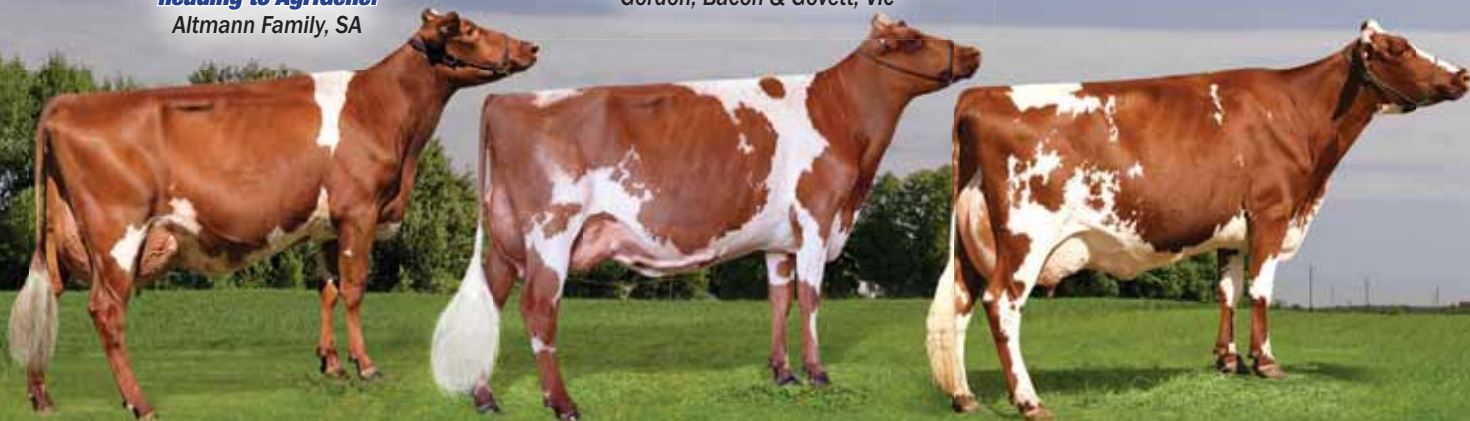
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S. Absolute  
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**2014**  
J2 - 10625ltrs - 364kgsP - 452kgsF  
PI 124 - 463D  
Current lactation:  
2950ltrs - 3.9%F - 3.1%P - PI 105 - 74D cont  
Gordon, Bacon & Govett, Vic

### Den Dia Empress 83

S. Jondene Ford  
• **Champion Cow – Gympie 2014**  
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ARTWORK: Sharon Clark - PHOTOS: Dean Malcolm, Simon Tognola, Fauvic

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## Riversleigh Tulip 10 EX90 STP

S. Helix

(Pictured on 7th Lact @ 9yrs)

- 1st Mature Cow – 2014 Vic OFC
- Champion Cow – 2012 & 2013 Melbourne  
107mths - 11,243ltrs - 3.1% 347kgsP  
- 3.9% 437kgsF - PI 133

**DAM OF RIVERSLEIGH TUCK (SEMEX)**

M Tuhan & Family, Vic

## Kangawarra Pretty 3012 EX90

S. Fyn Aks

- Overall Champion NSW Red Cow  
– OFC 2014
- Res Champion Cow – Spring Fair 2014
- Res Champion Cow – IDW 2013  
S4 - 12215ltrs - 3.3%P - 3.8%F - 472D  
T & K Cochrane, NSW

## Glenbrook Buttercup 29

S. ISKOSCIUSKO (Semex)

- Champion Cow – Adelaide 2013  
88mths - 13700ltrs - 532kgsF - 426kgsP - 305D  
I & J Mueller, SA



PHOTOS: Bradley Cullen, Fauvic, Dean Malcolm

## Treeton Marion 3151

S. ISPINGERLY (Semex)

26mths 7572L 3.4% 282kgsP, 3.9% 331kgsF 305 days  
PI 106  
G & R Williams, SA

## Treeton Princess 2900

S. Red Viking

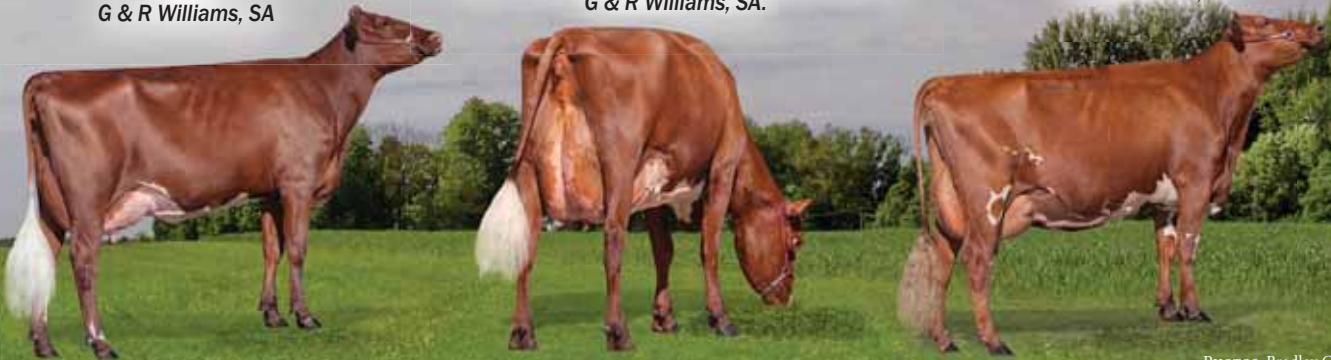
**Half Sister to Treeton Pingerly**

41mths 9523L 3.4% 322kgsP, 3.5% 331kgsF 305 days  
G & R Williams, SA.

## Treeton Sabrina 3038

S. ISPINGERLY (Semex)

27mths 8407L 3.4% 282kgsP, 3.9% 331kgsF  
305days PI 115  
G & R Williams, SA



PHOTOS: Bradley Cullen



## Myrtleholme Charity 13 3E EX93

S. Syd Abru

10 Lactations cont:  
102352L - 3612kgsP - 4319kgsF



## Ovensdale Pixie 78 VG88

S. LCVigorous

7 Lactations cont:  
63270L - 2050kgsP - 2412kgsF



## Myrtleholme Ailsa 14 2E EX91

S. Red Monarch

6 Lactations cont:  
72220L - 2558kgsP - 3180kgsF



## Ovensdale Scarlet 194

S. Scarlet

6 Lactations cont:  
66935L - 2119kgsP - 2052kgsF

# ...and on and on and on



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MARSVILLE LEMUST MELODY GP-84-2YR-CAN

LINWEST LEMUST RACHEL GP-83-2YR-CAN

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VR2042385



# Australia's premier dairy event

**I**NTERNATIONAL Dairy Week (IDW) is the premier dairy event in Australia and ranks among the top five dairy cattle shows in the world. This year's event, to be held from Sunday, January 18, to Thursday, January 22, at Tatura, Victoria, again includes a jam-packed program of events including cattle shows, sales, displays, seminars and field days.

It is the largest expo event in the Australian dairy industry, showcasing the best quality dairy cattle, the latest developments in dairyfarming practice, breeding, genetics, machinery, equipment, technology, environmental issues, livestock marketing and export opportunities. It also has a focus on providing seminars with the latest information, trends and advice for the commercial dairy farm.

IDW promotes the Australian dairy industry to the world and maintains a charter to foster innovation and development in this industry. It is also a great place for



**International Dairy Week features the one of the best line-ups of Australian dairy cows of any show in the country.**

visitors to catch up with friends, bring the family and form new networks.

A number of high quality cattle sales are held during International Dairy Week. The selling agents for all sales are Dairy Livestock Services (DLS).

The IDW Elite Ayrshire sale will be held on January 20 from noon while the

IDW Jersey Showcase Sale will be held on the same day from 7pm. The IDW World Wide Sires Evolution Sale will be held on Wednesday January 21, from 7.30pm.

The sale, conducted by DLS with world-renowned auctioneer Brian Leslie, highlights the best Australian and international Holstein genetics. Leading breeders offer their best animals for the gold class sale and many animals have seen strong international interest and consequently have been sent to all parts of the world.

World Wide Sires Australia's Mark Patullo, who will be the evolution sale manager, said the company viewed the chance to manage the elite Holstein sale as a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity".

"Our team believe there is no better way to promote the value of elite genetics than via the 'premier' sale of the year," Mr Patullo said.

Mr Leslie said he was extremely excited about the opportunity presented by World Wide Sires to manage the sale. ▶

## RASV announces new dairy program

THE Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria (RASV) has announced changes to its Royal Melbourne Show program that will see International Dairy Week become the event at which the Royal Melbourne Dairy Interbreed is awarded.

The partnership with IDW will include RASV's support of the Industry Leader's Breakfast on Wednesday, January 21, featuring keynote speaker,

Norco chairman Greg McNamara.

"Focusing our resources on partnering with IDW is very important to us, because we know it is a highly valued event by dairy producers and to the Goulburn Valley region of Victoria," RASV chief executive officer Mark O'Sullivan said. "We are thrilled to work with IDW as both organisations truly have the best interests of the industry at the forefront."

The Royal Melbourne Dairy Interbreed will be awarded at IDW from 2016, allowing exhibitors to take advantage of the national and international exposure the event attracts.

The changes will also see dairy return to the first week of the Royal Melbourne Show but will not feature traditional in-milk classes. A Dairy Heifer and Youth Classic Competition will replace the in-milk competition.

## Field days to showcase latest in dairy

INTERNATIONAL Dairy Week introduced the field days display three years ago and organisers are thrilled that the event continues to grow.

According to the organisers, this year is looking to be a fantastic showcase of the latest in dairy farm, machinery, products and services.

The field days will be held from the Tuesday, January 20, to Thursday January 22, during IDW with a special Twilight Hours for Field Day Display on January 20, when the field days will be open until 8.30pm with music, food and children's entertainment planned. Companies exhibiting include:

- Ag Machinery Australia;
- Aquamax Australia Rural Water Filtration Solutions;
- Archards Irrigation;
- Brad Cullen Photography;
- Dairy Grooving;
- Dairy News Australia;
- Dairy Tech Refrigeration & Packo Milk Tanks;
- Daviesway;
- Easy Dairy Automation Systems;
- Enduro Tags;
- Ezy Rollover Crushers;
- GEA;
- GeoHex (A+ Plastics);
- GV Dairy Supplies;
- John Sanderson Machinery;
- Kerfab Industries;
- Labour Solutions Australia Agri;
- Northern Feed Systems;
- O'Connors Farm Machinery;
- Organic Dairy Farmers of Australia;
- Premier Genetics & Livestock Solutions;
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- Waikato Milking Systems; and
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\$35.00 (Limited)

No.1 Daughter Proven Sire

## CRV GFORCE



*Daughter of Gforce*

**MAN O MAN X JORDAN**

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New High Daughter Proven

## CRV COOKIECUT



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**MAN O MAN X GOLDWYN**

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New High Daughter Proven

## CRV REGAN



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**SESAM X JENY**

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## DONJACK



*Daughter of Donjack*

**JACKPOT X GORDON**

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*Maternal line of Brax*

**VANAHEM X LARFALOT**

\$20.00 (Limited Avail)

+120 Type & +116 Mam

## CRV MACHETE



*Granddam of Machete*

**VENDOR X NAVARA**

\$18.00 (Avail Jan)

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## Dairy Week seminars address broad interests

LEARNING how to get a dairy farm ready for investment, perfecting a cheesecake and achieving real dollar savings on energy usage are just some of the highlights on the agenda for the 2015 International Dairy Week (IDW) seminars.

To be held at the Tatura Tennis Club in Victoria, the free seminars will be conducted across three days (January 20-22) as part of the activities showcasing the Australian dairy industry.

The seminars are supported by a variety of dairy-focused companies and the Victorian Government through Small Business Victoria.

Event manager Robyn Barber said the 2015 seminar program had something for everyone in dairy and she was delighted with the range of topics being explored.

"IDW wishes to thank all the companies that have so willingly offered speakers to conduct these seminars," Ms Barber said.

"We also thank Small Business Victoria for wanting to support a program which assists dairyfarmers to learn and gain real skills to improve their businesses."

### Guest speakers include:

- Dr John Steinfert, a cattle veterinarian, who will present a lecture on the diagnosis, treatment options and general outcome expectations on a range of downer cow conditions;
- Erica Oakes, who will demonstrate how Dairy Australia's (DA) mobile app, the Countdown Mastitis Toolkit, is not only assisting in improving cow health and milk quality but is also helping to save some farmers tens of thousands of dollars every year;
- Neil Lane, from DA, who will work through what dairyfarmers can do to become investment ready and what pathways are needed to create successful farm businesses;
- Dr Shane Ashworth, of Total Livestock Genetics, who will discuss the evolution of the electronic world of marketing genetics; and
- Jason Chesworth, from Channel 7's My Kitchen Rules, who will show how to make his signature raspberry and white chocolate cheesecake.

◀ "I look forward to the direction that World Wide Sires and their team will take the sale," Mr Leslie said.

"It's a great concept and with World Wide Sires representing the largest breeding organisations in the US, I am looking forward to their knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm in making this sale at huge success.

IDW organisers have thanked Semex

Australia staff for their work in promoting the sale in the previous 20 years and growing the quality of offerings across the years, in particular the leadership shown by Vaughan Johnston in ensuring cattle were well prepared for and displayed at the sale.

**Contact Mark Patullo, mobile 0427 497 555, or Brian Leslie, mobile, 0418 365 934, for more information.**

## 2015 program of events

### Sunday, January 18

- 9.30am Non-denominational church service — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 1pm Youth clinic — Blackmore & Leslie Complex

### Monday, January 19

- 8am ABS Australia/Ridley All Breeds National Youth Show — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 2.30pm The IDW Youth Showmanship Classes — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 4pm Holstein Australia Victoria Youth Challenge Trials — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 6.30pm Holstein Youth BBQ and presentation of awards — Wilson Hall

### Tuesday, January 20

- 8am National Illawarra Show — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 8am National Ayrshire Show — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 8.30am LIC 'Genetics for Profit' half-day farm tour — phone Liz on (03) 5480 3377 for information
- 9am IDW seminars begin — Tennis Club Rooms
- Noon Machinery & Farm Field Days — Main Oval
- Noon IDW Elite Ayrshire Sale — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 1.30pm National Guernsey Feature Show — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 1.30pm National Brown Swiss Show — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 7pm NHIA 2015 International Dairy Dinner — Cellar 47 Restaurant, Shepparton
- 8pm Virtual farm tours: Grange Farm & Van Exel Dairy — Wilson Hall

### Wednesday, January 21

- 8am National Jersey Show — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 8am RASV Industry Leaders' Breakfast — Ballantyne Centre
- 8.30am Semex Holstein Daughter Inspection Tour
- 9am Machinery & Farm Field Days — Main Oval
- 9am IDW Seminars Begin — Tennis Club Rooms
- 11.30am IDW Jersey Showcase Sale — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 1pm Jersey Australia Futurity Class — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 1.45pm National Jersey Show continues — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 5.30pm NAB Agribusiness Cocktail Party — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 6pm Genetics Australia Happy Hour — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 7.30pm IDW World Wide Sires Evolution Sale — Blackmore & Leslie Complex

### Thursday, January 22

- 8am IDW seminars begin — Tennis Club Rooms
- 8am National Holstein Show: Class 1 to 8 — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 9am Machinery & Farm Field Days — Main Oval
- 12.30pm MaxCare Challenge — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 1.30pm National Holstein Show continues — Class 9
- 4.00pm Grand champion presentations — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 4.30pm Presentation of Lex Bunn Memorial Award — Blackmore & Leslie Complex
- 5.30pm Presentation of Australia's grand champion — Blackmore & Leslie Complex

**Visit website <[www.internationaldairyweek.com.au](http://www.internationaldairyweek.com.au)> for updates**



# Quality line-up of judges for 2015

INTERNATIONAL Dairy Week (IDW) has again attracted a team of top quality judges from both Australia and overseas.

## ABS Australia/Ridley National All Breeds Youth Show

Matt Templeton, Australia, was raised on a registered Holstein farm in Victoria. For 13 years he has worked as a professional cattle fitter.

This work has taken him across Australia, New Zealand, the United States, 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 working with the Budjon Show String at Madison for the past seven years.

Mr Templeton is now working with



Coomboona Holsteins as its elite and show herd manager. He also has his own stud, operating under the View Fort prefix with 50 head of cattle.

Mr Templeton has shown and owned numerous all-Australian and grand champions across the country, most recently owning the 2009 and 2011 IDW Supreme Champions, Avonlea Robthom Connie and Fairvale Morty Lady, and also managing under his care the back-to-back 2010-11 Grand Champion Jersey.

He has judged at shows in four states of Australia and New Zealand, including the IDW Sheri Martin Memorial Showmanship Classes, the Victorian State showmanship final, the Queensland State showmanship final and the Tasmania State showmanship final. He regularly assists with and promoting youth activities throughout Australia.

## IDW Sheri Martin Memorial Showmanship Classes

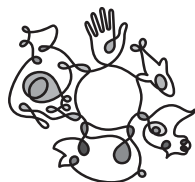
Glen Gordon, Australia, works on the family farm at Cohuna, northern Victoria,

where they milk 600 cows — predominantly registered Holsteins with a couple of Jerseys and Illawarras. Managed by Mr Gordon and his brother Drew and closely overseen by the pair's father, Ross, they have a 50/50 split with registered and commercial cows on 485 hectares.

Mr Gordon has been showing cows since he was nine years old, starting with Elmar Holsteins and then Corra Lea Holsteins. His passion grew from there and now he does all the showing of the Gorbros cows.

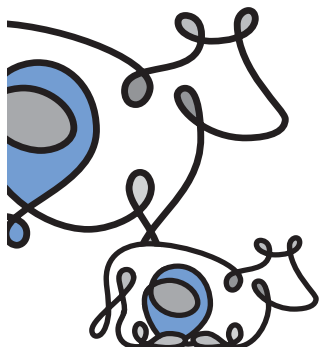
Gorbros has enjoyed showing success in the past two to three years, particularly with Heartlands Goldwyn Patsy and Gorbros Sanchez O Shimmer. In 2013 Mr Gordon received the top price of \$14,000 at the North West Stars of the Future Sale for his cow Gorbros Numero Tiffany.

He was involved in the Semex Youth



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◀Camp as a leader for four years and is involved through the north-west sub-branch of Holstein Australia with the Holstein Youth Challenge at IDW and calf days.

Mr Gordon is excited to be judging the showmanship classes and looks forward to helping younger people with their showing careers.

### IDW National Ayrshire Show

Duncan Hunter, England, is from Berkhamsted in Hertfordshire, just outside the famous M25 (London's orbital motorway) in England. He is married to Sarah and they have four children. He has been a breeder of Ayrshire cattle all of his life under the Haresfoot prefix. He sold his herd in 2011 for a record-breaking average price in the United Kingdom, due to the purchase of Haresfoot Farm, and he has since developed a new horse livery business and commercial lettings at the farm. Mr Hunter is still involved in breeding through his syndicate partnership under the prefix Smartmove.



During his time as a breeder he was fortunate to have bred some great families that helped him to achieve high yields and phenomenal show successes. The families who did particularly well and

which are world renowned are the Bella, Ella and Pamela families. He has judged most of the major shows in the United Kingdom throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, including the National All Breeds Calf Show, Royal Highland, the South West Dairy Show, Great Yorkshire, the new UK Dairy Day and Balmoral, among others.

He has also judged in Finland at the national show and also the Finnish Showmanship Championships at the Winter Show. Mr Hunter has officiated in numerous supreme interbreed championships and has also judged most of the other dairy breeds on many occasions.

Since 2011 he has worked for the UK Ayrshire Cattle Society on a part-time basis as its assistant breed secretary. In May 2014 he was taken on as the full-time breed manager for Ayrshires UK. His job involves developing the breed in the UK for the future, solving membership problems, handling promotion and publicity, representing the breed at industry level, arranging, running and assessing breed judging schools for members, and resolving registration and classification problems. He also sits on the board for CDI (the Centre of Dairy Information), is manager of the breed heritage committee and represents the UK on the World Ayrshire Federation.

Mr Hunter said he was both thrilled and honoured to be invited to come to Australia

to judge the Ayrshire Show and Australia's Supreme Champion Dairy Cow at IDW 2015 and looks forward to meeting Australians and officiating at one of the world's largest agricultural events.

### IDW National Illawarra Show

Laurie Chittick, Australia, was born into Illawarra cows, being the fourth generation to own and operate Lemon Grove stud until its dispersal in April and October 2014. Having been born at Kiama in the heart of the Illawarra district in New South Wales, he and his family ran stud Illawaras until 1989, when Mr Chittick and wife, Sandra, and their children Andrew, Murray and Nicole decided to move to the Goulburn Valley in Victoria to continue dairying and running Lemon Grove stud. The couple farmed at Merrigum for seven years, then moved to Tongala, where they have remained since.



Being heavily involved in Red cows also saw Mr Chittick become active in the breed society, serving for some 40 years on the breed classification committee and more than 20 years as chairman. He was on the board of directors for 17 years, ▶

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[L-R] Dam: Seagull-Bay Darling-ET VG-88. Full sister to dam: Larcrest Cale-ET VG-89. (photos Beth Herges).  
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New Release Breed Leading Sexed Ultra GTPI Sire With Excellent Type, Production, Udders & NM\$ From The "Delicious" Cow Family  
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Famous Fanatic x Beacon



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New Release Sire Who is Clearly The No.1 German Genomic Sire and is The Highest "Fanatic" Son World-Wide From The "Barbie" Cow Family  
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RRP \$28  
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## MEGASIRE

Butz-Hill Megasire - ET Supersire x Man-O-Man



RRP \$150  
IDW \$85

Highly Ranked Sexed Ultra GTPI Sire Who Boasts Superb Type, Production & Positive Components From The Much Admired "Missy" Cow Family  
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## TROY

River-Bridge Co-Op Troy - ET Mogul x Freddie



RRP \$80  
IDW \$65

High GTPI & NM\$ King Who Offers Outstanding Type, Production, Udders, Calving Ease, SCR and is an Elite Fertility Specialist  
Minimum 25 Dose Order

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Coyne-Farms Jacey CRI - ET Altaota x Massey



RRP \$35  
IDW \$18

Elite GTPI Sire of Sons Who Offers Great Type, Production, Udders, SCR & DPR and is a Health & Fitness Trait Specialist  
Minimum 25 Dose Order

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Edelweiss Planet x Roumare



RRP \$28  
IDW \$20

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New Red Carrier "McCutchen" Son from the World Famous "Apple - EX96" Cow Who is Bred to Make the Fancy Ones for Show Ring Success With Superb Type, Udders & Positive Components  
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Orders must be a Minimum of 10 or 25 Straws per Bull as stated above and have Semen delivered prior to the 31st March 2015. This offer is Valid from the 1st December 2014 to 31st January 2015 or while Stocks last. All Other PROVEN Bulls are Available at a 15% Discount for a Minimum of 25 Straws. All Prices are GST Exclusive.



◀ three of which were served as federal president, after which he was awarded life membership at both Federal and State level.

Before the stud moved to Victoria, the Chittick family showed at Sydney Royal for some 70 years spanning three generations. Much success was had there, with the Chitticks showing their first champion cow in 1955, followed over the years with 13 more champion cow awards. The greatest thrill was in 1975 when the Chitticks showed every first placegetter in the in-milk classes as well as the champion cow. Showing bulls was a great challenge but the family were able to win champion bull for 17 years in succession.

Kiama was their major coastal show, where the breed was prominent. Other shows that were attended were all feature shows and the local Spring Fair. Also from their home base at Jamberoo, NSW, the Chitticks showed at Melbourne Royal in 1972 and 1973 before the Shepparton National Dairy Show started, showing there for another six years.

After the move to Victoria, Lemon Grove started once again showing at the Melbourne Royal and Shepparton shows with great success. The family decided with the workload and change of property to give showing a break until IDW started. Lemon Grove figured prominently in the ring, being named premier breeder eight times and premier exhibitor nine times.

### IDW National Guernsey Show

Allan Clark, Australia, is the judge of the Guernsey Show for 2015. Mr Clark is from Lismore on the NSW Far North Coast where he owns and operates the Sunny Valley Guernsey Stud and the Clarkdale Holstein Stud along with his wife, Julie, and daughter Shannon. They run a pasture-based dairy, milking about 200 cows, calving all year round in a subtropical region of Australia.



Mr Clark is the current Guernsey NSW state president and federal president, positions he holds with great honour. The Sunny Valley Guernsey Stud has been breeding and showing Guernseys since 1938 spanning four generations.

Judging and breeding dairy cattle has always been Mr Clark's passion.

His enterprise has bred many wonderful cows with one of the most distinguished Guernsey's bred to date, Sunny Valley Lorry Mareta who scored excellent 94 points as a six-year-old. Judging has taken Mr Clark to many places including three times at Sydney Royal,

twice at Adelaide Royal, twice at Toowoomba Royal and once at Melbourne Royal and Launceston Royal.

State feature shows in Queensland were yearly events where Mr Clark has had the privilege of officiating at five of these along with many country shows throughout Queensland, NSW and South Australia. A huge highlight for Mr Clark was to judge at the New Zealand Dairy Event in 2012.

Exhibiting at shows has been a significant part of his family life and is used to promote his Guernsey and Holstein studs.

Major shows the stud attends include the Brisbane Royal and the North Coast National Dairy Spectacular. In the past he has shown at the Toowoomba Royal and Queensland state feature shows as well as many local shows in the region.

All Australian photo and on-farm challenge competitions have also been rewarding. The Clarks have been awarded All Australian champion numerous times with their Guernseys, and in 2012-13 the stud was awarded its first All Australian Holstein, four-year-old Clarkdale Dundee Brooke.

The Clarks take the opportunity to host overseas visitors to their stud as they feel this is a chance to interact on a global scale. The Guernsey breed and stud industry has been a life-long involvement for Mr Clark

as a judge or taking a position on committees and in turn allowing him to make a contribution and creating many friendships along the way.

Mr Clark said that being invited to adjudicate the 2015 Guernsey show at IDW was truly an honour.

### IDW National Brown Swiss Show

Rebekah Mast, United States, is a native of California, where she grew up and worked on the family dairy: Calori-D Holsteins in Denair. She has enjoyed much success in the show ring at the state and national level



with Holsteins and Brown Swiss. Some of her most recognised animals include: 2004 All-American Senior Two-Year-Old, Lylehaven Durham Marriet-ET; 2012 California Grand Champion, Calori-D Jasper Marigold-ET; and 2012 Western National Reserve Senior Champion, Bekah-Jo Vanguard Sandy.

In 2005, she was the National Youth Ambassador for the Brown Swiss Cattle Breeders Association. Ms Mast continues to be involved in the family dairy and owns registered Holsteins and Brown



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Swiss on her own and in various partnerships.

Ms Mast is a graduate of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo where she majored in Dairy Science and minored in Agriculture Business. While at Cal Poly, she was a member of the Cal Poly Dairy Judging Team that was high team at the 2004 National Intercollegiate Dairy Judging Contest in Madison, Wisconsin. She was second high individual overall at the same contest.

Ms Mast has served as an official for the Collegiate and Post-Secondary Dairy Judging Contests at the World Dairy Expo for the past seven years and has judged numerous shows at local, state and international levels. In addition, Ms Mast was approved last year for the Holstein Association US Qualified Judges List. She has already been booked to judge shows this year, both in the US and overseas.

Ms Mast has worked in the artificial insemination (AI) industry for the past eight years. She is the genetic director for World Wide Sires and serves as the sire analyst and manager of the World Wide Sires international bull programs. Ms Mast plays an integral role at WWS in providing market support and genetic training in many international markets and is also the area director of marketing for several countries in Africa.

### IDW National Jersey Show

Hank Van Exel, US, with his wife, Carolyn, have a family farm in Lodi, California, in the US. They have three children and seven grandchildren who are all involved in the dairy business with their son still on the farm. The Van Exels farm 803 hectares of land and milk 2000 cows of which 1600 are Holstein and 400 are Jersey.



The Van Exels have more than 130 ex Holsteins and 72 ex Jerseys. In the show ring they have had more than 30 all-American nominations and had Reserve Grand with Holstein and Jersey at the World Dairy Expo as well as winning the Jersey jug in Louisville.

Mr Van Exel has judged in 11 different countries and judged Louisville Jersey Show, World Dairy Expo Jersey and Holsteins and Royal and IDW Holstein Shows.

### Jersey Australia Jersey Futurity

Stephen McCarthy, Australia, and his wife, Jenny, own and operate Ascot Jersey Stud at Budgee in Queensland. They exhibit their cattle at the Toowoomba and Brisbane Royal Shows each year. Mr McCarthy is a former tank driver, milk tester



and factory manager. He bought the family farm in 1988 from his parents, as well as the herd that had been established in 1946.

Mr McCarthy has judged calf days, and shows in Queensland and New South Wales as well as on-farm challenges in NSW and Victoria. Mr McCarthy is also on the Queensland Council of Jersey Australia and currently is the Downs Jersey president.

### IDW National Holstein Show

Ken Proctor, England, was born on a dairy farm in Norfolk, United Kingdom. Mr Proctor has milked cows all his life. Presently he farms in partnership with his wife, Rebecca, and two sons Robert and Ralph (their daughter is a self-employed physiotherapist).



The Proctors milk 500 cows on an intensive system and produce all the forage on the 400ha holding in Norfolk under the Airfield prefix. They like to produce trouble-free cows that perform well to help maintain the 10,000-kilogram herd average. Besides high yields they also like their cows to last and find type of great importance. They have more than 90 Ex cows in the herd at present. One of those cows, Lavenham Can Ada, has produced 174 tonnes of milk in her lifetime.

The business has also bred many great individuals and the Proctors have had great

fun and success across the years at local and national shows.

The herd has been in numerous competitions across the years and had great success, being runner up in the Gold Cup (old competition) and winner of the national herd competition in 2001 and runner up on two other occasions.

As Mr Proctor believes in the importance of good cows he has had three terms serving on the board of Holstein UK, having been non-executive director of research and development, breed development and classification, national show director and was president of the breed in 2009 their centenary year. Mr Proctor is also the chair of East of England National Farmers Union dairy board and a member of the National NFU dairy board.

He first started judging in Young Farmers and had great enjoyment competing at county, area and national level winning stockman of the year in 1979 and national judging in 1983. Mr Proctor has judged most of the county shows in the UK, the Royal Show in 2003, the Royal Welsh in 2002 and the Royal Ulster in 1999. He has judged in 10 European countries and is a member of the European judging panel, as well as being a member of the UK Panel for 25 years.

Mr Proctor said that judging at International Dairy Week in Australia would be one of the greatest honours of his farming career. He said he looked forward to judging the show with honesty and integrity to produce the correct result.

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# Scrutiny helps genetic development

By JEANETTE SEVERS

## SHOW TIPS

- ✓ Multiple IDW winner
- ✓ Advice on showing and breeding
- ✓ Focus on improving herd genetics

**H**E HAS been out of the arena at International Dairy Week (IDW) for two years but after a 33-year history showing dairy cattle, Lloyd Burgmann has a lot of experience — with Holstein, Jersey and Ayrshire cows.

Mr Burgmann advised prospective IDW participants to spend 12 months preparing cows for IDW. He also said participation opened herds up to scrutiny that favoured genetic development.

His showing career was studded with highlights right from the beginning. He first showed cattle in 1981 at the Royal Melbourne Show and won the Champion Holstein Cow. In 1998, he won Champion Jersey Cow.

In 1999 he took four Jerseys and one Ayrshire cow belonging to his mother to the Melbourne Show. The Ayrshire, Niellunga Didjago, won the five-year-old in milk class, Champion Cow and Supreme Exhibit and came second in the Best Vessel class. The cow followed up with a win at the 2000 International Dairy Week (IDW) show and in its career received four Champion Cow awards at IDW.

Mr Burgmann added a string of awards to his stud prefix, Encore, in his last 15 years as an Ayrshire exhibitor.

Showing cattle is an itch Mr Burgmann inherited from his parents and it is one he has passed on to his daughter and grandchildren.

When he and wife, Lynda, retired in 2013, their daughter Rebecca, her husband Glen Bawden and their children retained a few of Encore's Ayrshire herd.

"Rebecca has maintained that showing interest and it looks like two of my granddaughters are also keen," Mr Burgmann said.

The Bawdens have prepared four cows for this year's IDW show.

Encore Niellunga Didjago has retired onto pasture under Mrs Bawden's stewardship but the cow's daughters and granddaughters are spread across the nation.

"You're breeding for a show win but also

to sell cattle," he said. "When you see other people win championships with cattle they bought from you, or with their progeny, it's really rewarding."

It is this aspect that keeps people showing cows, he said — to know that cow family is adding genetics to the dairy industry and producing on other farms.

The legendary cow Niellunga Didjago — which had 14 calves — is the only Ayrshire cow to be classified EX nine times.

"Buy the best bred cow, from a great family with more than two generations of data and stability in results," Mr Burgmann said.

"They need a good temperament. You want to be able to handle them and you want them to travel easily.

"If you've got a highly strung beast, it makes it hard to do anything with her.

"They also need great conformation. If you can see through generations that the conformation is there, you can buy a young heifer and feel confident it will develop."



Lloyd and Lynda Burgmann finished their show career on a high in 2013 with wins at International Dairy Week. They are pictured after the event with handler and son-in-law Glen Bawden and grandchildren, Keeley Burgmann, then 8, Josh Burgmann, then 7, Taylah Burgmann, then 4, and Lily Bawden, then 5.

While he enjoyed showing cows, Mr Burgmann said there are stressful times and warns it is not a holiday.

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Health Traits		VH Osmus	Number of daughters: 131
Daughter fertility	120	<div></div>	
Calvings, Sire	105	<div></div>	
Calvings, maternal	100	<div></div>	
Udder health	115	<div></div>	
Other diseases	121	<div></div>	
Longevity	122	<div></div>	
Hoof health	120	<div></div>	



This index deals with the "inner-health" metabolic disorders fertility disorders etc. "Feeling good on the inside reflects on the outside".



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◀ “Showing can be really challenging and can put a stress on your family, as it costs a lot of money, you have to organise relief milkers and other staff so you can have time off and there are the living away expenses at the show,” he said.

“It’s an expensive hobby, so if you’re going to do it you have to plan ahead and do it well.”

Planning begins 12 months ahead.

“You choose your cattle 12 months head and hope to take half-a-dozen of your best,” Mr Burgmann said.

“Give them time walking on the lead. We used to spend time after every milking walking them around.

“A good cow enjoys walking on the lead and showing off in the ring.

“Then there’s managing their diet. You want to build it up across time and back it off gradually after show time.

“The weather at IDW can be quite hot at that time of the year, so you even have to remember to take fans.

“We always chose carriers who were experienced with taking cows to show. They would load them up after the last milking and travel at night, when it was cooler.

“Then when they arrived — hours after we got there — we were all ready to hose the cows down, clean any muck off them so they were fresh and bed them down with water and hay for the night.

“We always liked to be there five days before the show so the cows had time to recover from the trip and get used to the water — sometimes if they always drink spring water and they start drinking town water at the show, they get a bit sick.”

Mr Burgmann advises getting a good fitter and praises Glen Bawden, who worked with him for many years and married his daughter.

“Glen has experience at shows in Canada and the US as well as Australia. He’s learned his skills well,” Mr Burgmann said.

“A good fitter makes a difference in the presentation of the beast.

“Essentially, you want your cow to look her best, feel confident and show off in the ring.

“A good fitter clips her well, she should look clean and the person who leads her needs to be confident.

“I can’t say it enough, you’ve got to have people who like the cattle and want to present your cows in the best way.

“You want to present your cow as if she could win, in the best possible condition; and she’ll feel confident you are a partnership and it will show in the ring.

“When the judge looks at her, he or she wants to see a nicely filled rumen area — not look hollow — a good jaw so she can eat well and produce milk and that she shows off her udder well.

“The udder is very important to the cow — its look, whether it’s capable of producing a lot of milk. You get some cows with magnificent veining on their udder; it just finishes the cow off.

“If the cow doesn’t have a good udder, you might as well leave her at home.”

While a win at the show is welcome, Mr Burgmann advises it is not ‘the be-all-and-end-all’.

“Sometimes the Reserve Champion cow is the one everyone talks about,” he said.

“Who wins is only one person’s opinion, after all.

“So don’t lose sight of why you’re breeding. For me, it was to produce a great milking cow out in the paddock, with good conformation and reliable genetics.”

He also advises catching up with semen company representatives at IDW, as well as looking at the other cows on display.

“It’s a good opportunity to talk with the reps about trends and what genetic traits are coming out in bulls,” Mr Burgmann said.

“It costs a lot of time and money to tour around studs, and at IDW you can look at a lot of cows and their progeny in one place and find out about bulls that are coming up through the ranks.

“Know your cow families and their traits and try and pick bulls that have strengths that offset faults in the cow.

“Our vision was we were breeding five



**Lynda and Lloyd Burgmann finished dairying two years ago after a successful career in the show ring. Mr Burgmann said International Dairy Week was a great event not just for showing but on getting information to improve a herd’s genetics.**

years ahead and so we kept that focus on all the time. If you don’t, you get carried away for the moment and make decisions that take a long time to undo.

“Showing is a good way of getting your herd prefix out there and if you’re fortunate to have a good cow family, people will want to buy your progeny.

“At IDW you also have the opportunity to buy progeny that are the direct descendants of the cows being shown; and invest in those same genetics.”

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## SemexWorks working for Australia

SEMEXWORKS, launched in Australia early in 2014, is proving to be one of the most innovative, user-friendly technologies ever taken on to a dairy.

"At first I was hesitant," Semex area manager Stu Mackie said. "I wasn't sure what my customers would think. We'd always just discussed sires that we thought would be interesting for their programs, and that was that. Now, we have this tool that gives so much more information.

"It gives real economic values and brings different bulls up, and confirms the choices they've already made."

Utilising a simple, touch, step-by-step process, dairyfarmers work with Mr Mackie to define their own breeding strategy based on their individual goals and economics.

The program gives instant results, impressing clients with how easy it is to use and how the bulls really meet their needs.

"Two of the clients who have been impressed are the Payettes at Yinnar (in Central Gippsland, Victoria) and the Sperlings at Koonwarra (in South Gippsland, Vic)," Mr Mackie said.

Marco and Rita Payette are immi-

grants from Quebec, Canada, who settled at Yinnar 10 years ago.

With 220 cows and 100 heifers, they're working hard to maintain their 9000 litres of milk and 320 kilograms fat and 300kg protein levels.

"They're a pasture-based herd, feeding grain as well," Mr Mackie said. "They've typically chosen bulls based on type, udders and dairyness. They've used popular Semex sires like Talent, Outside, Denzel, Power Play, Final Cut, Fremont, Stanley Cup, Regional and Baltimor."

Mr Payette said they were always looking to improve overall type and udders.

"Ten years ago we started with a commercial herd and we've built it up by using better bulls and even some embryos now," he said. "We've always looked through all of the proofs online and in the catalogue and relied on Semex's ProMate mating program."

Before matings in July, Mr Mackie introduced the Payettes to SemexWorks. "Their response was extremely positive and the program gave them a few new bulls they hadn't thought of using," Mr Mackie said.

"Probably most surprising was Claynook Tennessee. They hadn't considered him before but after the program they realised he fitted their needs, and we had the economic data to back up that decision."

Graham and Wendy Sperlings herd of 185 cows and 120 heifers runs on 89 hectares and has been a ProMate herd for 14 years,

"For over a decade we've been working together to improve type, udders, temperament, calving ease and teat placement," Mr Mackie said.

"Before SemexWorks they consulted with Semex and made decisions based on the information they had and instinct.

"With SemexWorks we were able to show them the economics behind their decisions.

"Most surprising to them was the genomic young bulls that fit their needs."

Semex staff will be on hand at International Dairy Week to answer questions about SemexWorks.

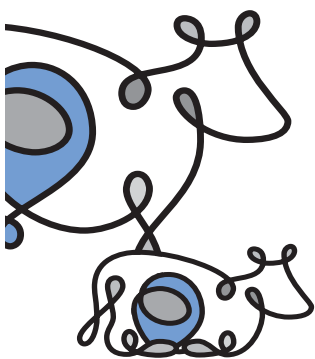
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## Fresh sexed semen boosts conception rates

DAIRYFARMERS are increasingly turning to fresh sexed semen instead of the traditional frozen product in a bid to lift conception rates among maiden heifers. And, with the export market for surplus heifers to China proving lucrative supplementary income, they are increasing the percentage of females born by using sexed semen and boosting their return on investment.

Bovine genetics specialists ABS Australia is one of the few genetics companies to offer the fresh sexed semen product. ABS Australia national sales manager Paul Quinlan said the company had used fresh product with great success compared with frozen sorted semen for the past two years.

"The use of sexed semen gives dairyfarmers an exceptional opportunity to fully use their seedstock (milking herd and yearling heifers) to breed more heifers," Mr Quinlan said.

Mr Quinlan said fresh sexed semen offered improved conception rates compared with frozen sorted semen. "Fresh has the same amount of cells per straw as frozen, but with the added advantage of the semen not being subjected to the freezing and thawing process, which damages cells, reducing pregnancies," he said.

Warrnambool Veterinary Clinic has conducted an Australian first study into conception rates using fresh sexed semen.

The study found conception rates in heifers of up to 70% was achievable, however, 55% was the overall average. This compared to a 40% conception rate with frozen sexed semen.

Director and senior dairy veterinar-



**Elmar Goldwyn Jessica 4, dam of Gerold, one of the most popular fresh sexed bulls in Australia.**

ian Dr Jon Kelly said frozen sexed semen was a compromised product yielding variable conception rate results. Dr Kelly said animal selection, management, semen handling and insemination were critical.

He said a key to success was achieving a critical mating weight of between 55-60% of adult weight.

"An important factor determining the success of fixed time artificial insemination (FTAI) programs is the correct hormone, dose, route of injection and timing is adhered to," Dr Kelly said.

Dairyfarmer Sam McCluggage, of Allansford, Victoria, has worked with ABS Australia and Warrnambool Veterinary Clinic to achieve a 60% conception result using fresh sexed semen on FTAI across 220 heifers last year.

Mr McCluggage had recorded a 50% conception rate in the previous five years using traditional frozen sexed semen on maiden heifers.

"From the data on fresh sexed semen, we thought we would get an im-

provement on the conception level of traditional straws so it was good to get 60%," he said.

"We used the same semen on the milking cows on the first round of AI and achieved a 40% conception rate. The cows had calved six weeks before joining start date and had no calving troubles."

The McCluggage family milk 650 cows and has no plans to expand numbers.

"Our goal is to produce more heifer calves each season as the excess are a good earner on the export market, while some are sold locally," Mr McCluggage said.

"That 120-kilogram heifer calf at weaning is worth \$1600-\$1700 on the export market and has become an important part of our income for the year. We rear nearly every calf — bulls as well — and we want to keep increasing the percentage of females born across time."

Mr McCluggage said managing heifers to achieve a target weight at joining was a key to the success of a fresh sexed semen program.

ABS regional sales manager Neville Pulham, of Warrnambool, said the fresh semen was transported in climate-controlled containers at a constant temperature of 15 degrees Celsius. "With fresh semen, there is a 36-hour window and it's a fixed time AI procedure," he said. "This means forward planning between the client, semen supplier and veterinary supplier."

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# Show ring inspires next generation

By ELIZABETH ANDERSON

## SHOWING

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Showing inspires farmers
- ✓ Breeding SA's largest Ayrshire herd
- ✓ Two registered studs run as one herd

**S**COTT Braendler credits the Boldview Farm Ayrshire stud, Jervois, South Australia, and the show ring, for helping maintain his passion for the dairy industry. "Showing gives us an interest other than the every day dairy work," he said.

Taking cows to shows was a big part of his family's upbringing, and has become important to him and his sister, Cheryl Liebich, as well. "A few times with the drought and when things get tough, the stud side gives a bit more optimism," he said.

"I keep going because I have a few ideas that I want to push through with. The ambition of breeding gives us an extra interest."

He said the show ring was a way of getting the next generation involved, with two of his three children and those of his sister actively involved in preparations for competitions.

The two studs have performed well in the ring, with cows from Ms Liebich's Cher-Bar Ayrshire stud claiming the senior cow title at the Royal Adelaide Show seven times in recent history. They have also competed at International Dairy Week on several occasions.

The siblings are also on the committee of Australian Ayrshire Breeders' Association, where Mr Braendler serves as president.

A typical day at the Boldview Farm dairy operation starts at 5.45am with the first milking, and depending on the time of the year, work can continue into the night.

But that is no problem for Lorraine Braendler, her son and business partner Scott and daughter and co-manager Ms Liebich who enjoy what they do.

The farm in Jervois, SA, was started by Mrs Braendler in 1961 soon after her marriage to Don.

The farm milks up to 250 cows twice a day, with the bulk Boldview Farm Ayrshire stud cows, owned by the Braendlers, and cows from the Cher-Bar Ayrshire herd, which Ms Liebich owns.

The Braendlers began their Jervois enterprise in 1977 on about 160 hectares and over time, built that up to about 550ha.

About 70ha is irrigated, and 120ha used for hay crops. The rest is used to grow out young heifers and replacement stock.

The siblings believe the operation runs smoothly because each of them are responsible for a different part of the business, based on their interests.

Ms Liebich said they were brought up sharing roles to operate the farm, and that had continued into adulthood. She is the calf rearer, inheriting it from her mother. The siblings equally enjoy milking and are actively involved in that part of the operation.

Mr Braendler manages the cropping side of the business, and the breeding operation.

"Scott has a passion for the breeding program; he looks into the pedigrees," Ms Liebich said.

Mr Braendler said it was about being comfortable in the work at hand. "I guess it's part of having your own passion for the job, doing what you like to do, sharing the load and respecting what others in the family enjoy and can contribute," he said.



Cheryl Liebich with brother Scott Braendler and mother Lorraine Braendler of Boldview Farm.

He took over the running of Boldview Farm stud while Ms Liebich started Cher-Bar in 1979 after buying her first cow and working up the numbers. Keeping the two studs together has also enabled them to expand and stay competitive.

Between them, the family now has South Australia's largest Ayrshire herd — and the second largest in Australia.

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The Illawarra breed has long been renowned for its docile nature, ease of calving and milk protein content, but now it is proving that they are capable of milk production of the highest level. The breed has experienced significant production increases in the past 10-15 years, and nowhere has this been more evident than in the Altmann family's Blackwood Park herd at Murray Bridge, South Australia.

The Altmanns milk about 100 Illawarras as part of their 500-cow herd, which is milked three times a day in a full total mixed ration system. Under this system the breed has been able to show that it is capable of extreme production levels, with the top cows milking more than 15,000 litres in 305 days and the Illawarra portion of the herd averaging about 9500 litres.

The Buttercup cow family have consistently been among the top performers in the Blackwood Park herd. Buttercup 225 VG86, sired by top proven artificial insemination (AI) sire RoyalTreble, has produced more than 60,000 litres in four lactations. The cow's most recent completed lactation of 15,196 litres in 305 days saw it set new breed production records for both fat and protein yield, with 649kg of fat (4.3%) and 502kg of protein (3.3%).

Its dam, Buttercup 221 VG88, has lifetime production of more than 100,000 litres in its seventh lactation and is still going strong. What is really remarkable about these cows is their ability to get back in calf easily despite maintaining such extreme levels of production.



One of the impressive Illawarra cows bred by the Altmann family, Blackwood Park Lisa.


Buttercup 225 calved for the fifth time at the age of six-and-a-half, while Buttercup 221 had its seventh calf at nine years and three months.

The impressive total performance of the Buttercup cow family in a strictly commercial situation has not gone unnoticed by AI companies. Agri-Gene has plans to sample the young bull Blackwood Park Butternut early in 2015. The sire is a PrideProphet son of Buttercup 225.

Another bull bred by the Altmann family, Blackwood Park Dan, is housed at Semex. Originating from another successful family within the herd, the Dellas, its oldest daughters are now calving and reports from breeders are that they look impressive.

The Altmanns are not the only ones capitalising on the extreme production potential of modern Illawarra genetics. The breed records show several other herds with animals producing at similar levels under more traditional twice-daily milking regimes. Llandoverly Mario's Poppy, owned by I&J Mueller, SA, has recorded two lactations of more than 15,000 litres and a lifetime total of more than 98,000 litres in eight lactations, while the Lemon Grove herd based at Tongala in northern Victoria had two first-lactation heifers produce more than 11,000 litres in the past year.


**Article supplied by Illawarras Australia, website <[www.illawarras.aust.com.au](http://www.illawarras.aust.com.au)>.**




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## Wilson providing dairy hot water for 50 years

WILSON Hot Water started operations in Melbourne in 1930 manufacturing low pressure water heaters for the domestic market, a product it still manufactures nearly 85 years later. Wilson Hot Water Systems is still Australian owned and operated, however the range of hot water products Wilson manufactures has grown significantly.

Wilson started manufacturing dairy hot water heaters some 50 years ago. The first Wilson dairy hot water heater was the 'D' series, which is still made today.

But as dairy milking systems changed with technology so did the Wilson heaters.

The UD has a bigger outlet allowing for faster water flow.

As electricity charges continued to rise and hot water is an important component in the cleaning regime of the dairy shed, a new style of dairy hot water heater had to be developed to use off-peak power to heat the water. Wilson, using its industry experience and technology, developed the Rapid Flow (RF) style, which is now the mainstay of the dairy industry for washing the plant.

RF heaters allow water to be heated overnight while the large outlet allows for a fast flow of water at about 150 litres/minute.

Ten years ago spray-in foam insulation was introduced, which is 30% more efficient in heat retention than the previously used rockwool and therefore helps cut energy costs.

Wilson supplies dairy hot water



**The Wilson solar system combines evacuated tubes on the roof with a solar pre-heater at the same level as the existing hot water heater.**

**INSET: Wilson Hot Water says solar evacuated-tube technology is the most practical for preheating water for dairies.**

heaters throughout Australia using the network of Rural Trading stores. It has also exported units to a number of countries around the globe.

The last decade has seen a large number of alternative forms of preheating water for the dairy industry emerge, however Wilson believes solar hot water is the most practical in terms of preheating large volumes of water. Wilson's preferred option is the highly efficient evacuated tube technology.

The Wilson system uses roof-mounted evacuated-tube low-pressure solar panels; the solar preheat tank sits at the same level of the existing hot water heater.

The transfer of preheated solar hot water occurs at the same time the off-peak electricity tariff switches on and the pressure to do this is created by

the cold water header tank located on the solar panel.

As water flows into the dairy, hot water heater cold water is replenished in the solar preheat tank for the following day.

Wilson Hot Water has combined the performance of evacuated solar hot water tubes, the proven performance of a copper preheat solar tank, a strong circulation pump and solar controller to provide a robust and cost-effective solar preheat system that is easy to install and maintain.

Staff from Wilson Hot Water will be on hand at International Dairy Week to answer questions about their products.

**Article supplied by Wilson Hot Water, phone 1800 302 050, email <sales@wilsonhotwater.com.au>, website <www.wilsonhotwater.com.au>.**



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Cows on pasture with the SCR Heatime collars.

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tion-monitoring system. It accurately monitors the cows actual rumination time 24 hours a day data. Data is collected and analysed by the system and presented in alerts and easy to understand lists and reports.

The system gives dairyfarmers information that can indicate cow health issues sooner than through visible observation.

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may not appear until much later than the actual onset of the disease, and often not until the cows milk yield has dropped and is unlikely to recover to its potential for the rest of the lactation.

But the effects are already taking place within the cow and are reflected in reduced rumination time.

By monitoring rumination, producers can intervene earlier than if just watching for physical signs of illness or changes in milk production.

Rumination has long been known as a key indicator of cow wellbeing.

A change in rumination can serve as an early indicator of early lactation metabolic issues, and as an early indicator for diseases, such as mastitis. Furthermore, the return of rumination to a normal pattern is an excellent sign of treatment success.

As a significant number of cows in a modern dairy typically suffer from one of the metabolic calving diseases, nutritional imbalances and mastitis (often of a recurring nature), the benefits of early detection — and early confirmation of treatment — are obvious.



**SCR Heatime removes false positives seen in activity-only heat detection, by looking for a corresponding drop in rumination.**

A monitor is particularly useful in pasture-based system as the practicality of visual observation is limited, relies on skill and experience, is not fully accurate and does not allow analysis.

It is impossible to maintain observation 24 hours a day — which means that a significant share of heats are missed and only a small percentage of rumination is observed.

Rumination takes place off and on throughout the day and at night. The rumination routine is highly individual, so rumination needs to be measured per

cow, with each cow acting as the reference for itself.

Visual observation does not allow farmers to monitor rumination on such an individual level.

Rumination also serves to improve activity-based heat detection in pasture-based systems. Heat detection based on activity only can produce more 'false positives' on days when cows move around more than normal.

Basing heat detection on two parameters — increased activity and a corresponding drop in rumination — enables more 'true heats' to be found and

most 'false positives' to be excluded, producing a higher and more accurate level of heat detection.

The system also provides a picture of when cows activity actually peaked, and from this calculates the best time window to inseminate for an improved conception rate.

Staff from SCR will be on hand at the Semex exhibit at International Dairy Week to provide more information.

**Article supplied by SCR, email <info@scrdairy.com>, website <www.scrdairy.com>.**

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# Multi-pronged approach to tackling mastitis

By CARLENE DOWIE

## MASTITIS MANAGEMENT



### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Good springer and calving management
- ✓ Herd recording to identify problem cows
- ✓ Good people management critical

**E**FFECTIVE mastitis management involves doing a lot of things right, according to Dorrigo, New South Wales, dairyfarmer Adam Darley.

Mr Darley, who was last year awarded an Australian Milk Quality Award for being one of the lowest 5% of farms across Australia for average bulk milk cell count (BMCC), said he believed every aspect of using cows to produce milk was a part of getting a good quality product.

“Our motto is a happy, healthy cow will give you a good product,” he told the New Generation Dairy Farmers Forum at Coffs Harbour, NSW.

Mr Darley and his wife, Donna, milk about 360 cows year round on their Dorrigo plateau property off an effective milking area of 120 hectares. Total stock run, including dry cows and replacements, is about 730 on a total farm area of 250ha.

Average annual rainfall for Dorrigo is 2000 millimetres.

The farm is predominantly pasture based. A feedpad is used for feeding of home-grown silage and some bought-in lucerne hay when there is not enough pasture available for the cows.

The cows are milked through a 30-a-side herringbone dairy built initially as a 25-a-side in 2000. Mr Darley said the dairy was easy to milk in and suited the size of their operation.

The Darleys BMCC results are impressive. For the past 10 years the farm has been under 200,000 — the cut off for the quality payment from their processor Norco. In the past four years, it has averaged between 100,000 and 150,000.

“Presently our somatic cell count is sitting at 65,000, and I must really give the credit to my employees,” Mr Darley said. “I don’t tend to milk as much as they do; they are the guys that really drive it.”

Staff was the key to achieving the results. “I believe that your staff is probably

the best asset you can have on a farm because I have come to the realisation that I can’t do everything,” he said.

Good communication was essential to get the most from staff, including taking on their input in how the business could be improved.

Clear processes were also important so everyone knew exactly what was happening and what needed to be done. This was particularly important when people worked rosters, so as soon as a staff member arrived for their shift they knew what cows needed treating or testing.

“One of the key things with that ... is we have four or five whiteboards through our dairy area, whether it be in the vat room, whether it be in the office or whether it be in the pit,” Mr Darley said.

Mr Darley said key areas to focus for good mastitis health included springer management, calving management, identification of cows with mastitis, treatment of cows, drying off cows, environmental management and staff training.

## Springer management

Good mastitis control started with management of springers to ensure they calved down with as few problems as possible. The Darley springing cows are fed a grain mineral supplement, good quality barley straw and fibrous-type silage, made on the farm specifically for this purpose. Their intake of pasture and ryegrass silage is limited in the 30 days before they are due to calve. The grain mix is fed twice a day to try to keep the rumen pH as stable as possible.

This helps prevent cows having retained foetal membranes (RFMs) or getting milk fever and other associated calving problems.

The springer paddock is kept as clean as possible with sawdust heaps for cows to loaf on and onto which they sometimes also calve. They limit mud and manure where the springers feed. The manure is heaped up, taken away and spread on paddocks.

“That all sounds good during last six



The Darleys say many aspects of herd management contribute to managing mastitis.

months when it’s been fairly dry but when it gets wet it is a challenge for all of us,” he said. “We try to keep everything nice and clean and tidy for the cows.”

Mr Darley said cow nutrition was an extremely important part of managing cows. The Darleys use a nutritionist to set their grain ration for the dairy and manufacture their own grain ration as well as the springer mixes, although they don’t make their calf-rearing mixes.

## Calving management

It was vital to manage calving well, Mr Darley said. This meant regular observation of cows due to calve, assisting cows when required and ensuring cows cleaned and lost the placenta after calving.

Mr Darley said he found oxytocin to be particularly useful in helping cows clean properly after calving. Any cow that has needed to have a calf pulled is given 10 millilitres of oxytocin. Any cow that has not cleaned within an hour is also given 10ml and if it has still not cleaned within another hour, it is given another dose.

It was an effective treatment and cows usually cleaned up quickly after it was administered, Mr Darley said. It was also relatively inexpensive at about \$16 a bottle.

Cows are stripped when they come into the dairy. Teatseal is used at drying off so stripping is required. They are then tested with a Rapid Mastitis Test (RMT), which is the solution test.

◀ “We haven’t gone to the expense of buying an expensive monitor because the RMT seems to work for us,” Mr Darley said.

### Identifying cows

Mr Darley said one of the biggest challenges dairyfarmers faced was identifying cows that had mastitis — whether it be clinical or subclinical. “We find the best tool is herd recording,” he said.

Herd recording was critical in general management of cows — working out when they were due to calve, the amount of days they were into lactation, their average fat and protein production and the litres they were doing.

“It’s just a great tool for monitoring each cow and then working out whether she is viable or not,” he said.

Mr Darley uses the herd-recording data to identify any cows with a somatic cell count higher than 800,000. An RMT is used to check that cow. If it does not react to the test, it goes back into supply.

If it does react, it is milked into a bucket and treated. Mr Darley said all bucket milk, with the exception of that from fresh cows, “goes down the drain”. “That gives us the reality that if we were pouring \$20 notes down the drain we wouldn’t want to do it,” he said.

### Mastitis treatment

Cows in lactation are treated with an intramuscular antibiotic. Cows are given two to three opportunities to react to an antibiotic and are then hopefully ready to go back into supply.

If a cow has mastitis in one quarter, that quarter is dried off. “Some people don’t like that,” Mr Darley said.

But the farm system easily manages three titters with each identified. “Most of those cows keep up with our herd average, which is more than 7000 litres,” Mr Darley



**Adam Darley says managing mastitis is the combination of doing a number of things well on farm.**

said. “So if she’s a first calver or second calver, she’s cost you \$1500-\$2000 to get her to that point, I don’t want to shove her on the truck straight away.

“Across the years I have had a lot of different cows that are three titters; I think they are still quite viable. But if they become two titters they are gone.”

The herd’s culling rate for mastitis is quite low at 3%. “I wish I could say the same for cows that won’t get in calf — because that’s around 14%,” Mr Darley said.

### Drying off

Mr Darley said they were fanatical about how cows were dried off. “Everyone is on hand,” he said. “We do put the labour into drying off cows.”

A production line approach is taken with a person performing the same task on each cow to be dried off, before another person goes through and completes the next task.

Each teat is initially wiped with a sanitary wipe, a long-acting antibiotic is administered, teats are then disinfected again, Teatseal is applied, teats are disinfected again and then each cow is marked.

The farm has used Teatseal for about eight years in conjunction with a long-acting antibiotic.

“We have found that extremely good in helping us with those fresh cows coming in and controlling mastitis,” Mr Darley said. “It is not perfect, but it is darn sight better than not using it. When it’s wet at home the water runs away, but we still have the mud, and that’s where I think the Teatseal helps us quite a bit.”

### Environmental management

In an area with high rainfall, maintenance of tracks and laneways was also important, Mr Darley said. He spends about \$10,000 a year on tracks, including new tracks built to improve the way the farm functions.

The feedpad when being used is cleaned twice a week to keep mud and manure to a minimum.

Staff training is also important. Mr Darley said the Dairy Australia Cups On Cups Off workshops were good. The farm hosted a Teatseal application day, which was a really good way to ensure everyone was trained in the correct way to use products.

### Returns on investment

Mr Darley said the effort in managing mastitis was well worth it. Norco’s bonus for being under 200,000 BMCC is 2.5 cents a litre. For the Darley farm, which produces 2.6 million litres, that’s worth \$65,000 a year.

The Darleys also received an Australian Dairy Quality Award silver metal plaque to put on their gate. D



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# Research confirms efficacy of BEF vaccination

**A**S THE summer weather creates peak conditions for disease-transmitting insects, cattle producers in Queensland and New South Wales particularly are being reminded to protect herds from one of the most costly insect-borne diseases, Bovine Ephemeral Fever (BEF).

BEF, otherwise known as three-day sickness, is a viral disease of cattle transmitted by biting insects such as midges and mosquitoes. As the name implies, BEF symptoms may only last a short-time, but infection can result in significant, long-term economic losses.

BEF is a particular concern in larger, valuable classes of cattle and can cost the industry millions of dollars per year.

Three-day sickness can be more severe in bulls, fat, well-conditioned cows and pregnant and lactating cows, resulting in serious economic losses through reduced milk production, weight loss, lowered fertility, mis-mothering of calves and deaths.

These losses take time to regain and can severely impact profitability of cattle enterprises.

In light of the economic burden of three-day sickness, Meat and Livestock Australia's (MLA) donor company co-funded research to examine the efficacy of the current BEF vaccine across a range of BEF virus field isolates collected in northern Australia from 1980 through 2011.

The results confirmed the vaccine reliably neutralises field strains of the virus.

In effect, this means the current vaccine remains effective in protecting against three-day sickness in Australia.

"Vaccination is the only method of preventing BEF," said Dr Georgia Deliyannis, who conducted the research. "The research indicates there has been no significant change to the virus in Australia in more than 30 years, and the current vaccine was shown to be effective across a range of viruses collected in the field. Proper and timely vaccination is one of the most important measures producers can implement to safeguard their business."

The research was conducted by Zoetis Zoetis Veterinary Medicine Research and Development (VMRD). Dr Deliyannis said it provided reassurance that vaccination offered protection against current strains of BEF viruses. However, it was important to recognise that immunity was not instantaneous.

"Based on our research, a peak serological response equated to protection generally occurring around two to four weeks after the initial vaccination course," she said. "The optimal time to provide the initial dose is generally in the months leading up to summer,

with a second dose two to four weeks later. In animals that have been vaccinated in previous years, an annual booster eight to 10 weeks before peak BEF season is recommended."

Producers should speak to their veterinarian for more information on an appropriate vaccination plan for their herd. **D**

Article courtesy of Zoetis, website <[www.zoetis.com.au](http://www.zoetis.com.au)>.

## BEF

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Serious insect-transmitted disease
- ✓ More severe in pregnant and lactating cows
- ✓ Vaccine treatment effective



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**zoetis**

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VR2044090


# Botulism: devastating disease can be prevented

By SARAH BROWN\*

KEY POINTS

**BOTULISM**

- ✓ Can be devastating
- ✓ Good hygiene practices with feed key to prevention
- ✓ Vaccination also an option



**B**OTULISM is a toxic disease that has a rapid onset and is often fatal. Although botulism is not common, when it does occur, the effects can be devastating.

There can be huge losses of stock and flow-on effects causing significant impact on the farm business, including:

- loss of milk production from a decline in stock numbers;
- reduced milk production from mildly affected animals;
- cost of carcass disposal;
- loss and disposal of contaminated feed plus replacement cost, and
- loss of genetics.

In dairy cow herds, Botulism is most commonly caused by animals eating spoiled or contaminated feed.

This disease is not transmissible from animal to animal, although multiple animals can be simultaneously affected as a result of ingesting feed contaminated with the *botulinum toxin*.

In nearly all cases, it is caused by the ingestion of a toxin produced by the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum*.

There are a number of types of toxins produced ranging from A to G, with types C and D most common among cattle in Australia.

The bacterium grows in anaerobic environments (environments with low oxygen levels) including rotting carcasses and decaying organic material.

Although it is not common, botulism can also be caused through the growth of *C botulinum* in a wound or in the gut of the animal producing the botulinum toxin.

The first symptom of botulism is often sudden death or paralysis. Paralysis often affects the muscles in the hind legs first before progressing to the fore legs and head including the tongue, jaw and throat.

During the early stages of the disease, cattle tend to have a stiff gait, however, they are usually found sitting down and unable to rise.

As the disease progresses, breathing be-

comes laboured and paralysis of the breathing muscles results in death.

In severe cases, symptoms can be observed within 12 to 24 hours of ingestion of contaminated material, though losses can be seen for up to 17 days after ingestion.

There is no treatment to cure botulism as there is no antitoxin available in Australia.

Once cows are unable to stand, recovery is unlikely; resulting in death or the animal requiring euthanasia.

Mildly affected cows may be nursed to recovery across a number of weeks.

Farmers can undertake a number of things to minimise the risk of botulism. A number of these are good hygiene which should already be carried out on the farm.

These include:

- check for and remove any animal remains from the paddock before mowing for silage or hay (this will not eliminate the risk of small animals being killed during the mowing process);
- do not feed out rotting or contaminated silage, hay or other feed stuffs;
- control vermin around feed stores and paddocks;
- if chicken manure is used on farm, store it away from feed and prevent cows from accessing this area,
- withhold cattle from grazing and producing silage or hay off pastures or crops that have been fertilised with chicken manure for at least 21 days;
- prevent stock access to cattle and other animal carcasses as these are a source of botulism if consumed.

If the farm has a high risk of botulism (e.g. mixer wagons are not cleaned regularly, risk of feeding spoiled or contaminated feed, using chicken manure with a high load of chicken carcasses), there is a vaccine available which could be used as part of a risk-management strategy.

There are a number of different vaccines that provide protection against the Type C and D botulinum toxins and the length of protection varies from annually to three years.

In northern Victoria and other areas



Ensuring cow feed is free of contamination is one of the ways to reduce the risk of botulism.

where botulism is not endemic, an annual vaccine is recommended.

Some of these vaccines do require a booster shot a short-time after the initial vaccination, with all of the annual vaccines requiring an ongoing annual booster to maintain long-term immunity.

In these situations, vaccines offering two or three years protection are not recommended for use as the animal's immune system needs to be challenged by the botulinum toxin during the two or three year period post vaccination to maintain immunity and this does not occur in non-endemic areas and under some feeding systems.

Vaccine costs vary depending on the type of vaccine in the range of one to three dollars per dose.

If a booster shot is required this should be considered when costing a vaccination program and the costs of vaccination needs to be weighed against the risk and potential consequences of not vaccinating.

There is a lag time between vaccination and the cow's development of immunity. During this time cattle may still be susceptible to the botulinum toxin.

This time period varies with each vaccine, so if considering vaccination this is something else of which to be aware.

If considering vaccination, discuss with a vet or animal health adviser which vaccine will best suit the situation.

*\*Sarah Brown is with the Department of Environment and Primary Industries at Echuca, Vic. Article courtesy of Department of Environment and Primary Industries.*



# Avoiding risk of Q Fever

By DR JEFF CAVE\*

## Q FEVER

- KEY POINTS**
- ✓ Transmitted from animals to humans
  - ✓ Causes flu-like symptoms
  - ✓ Vaccination available to prevent it



**A** NUMBER of diseases are transmissible from animals to humans and these are known as zoonotic diseases.

Q Fever is one of the most commonly occurring zoonotic diseases in Australia and is caused by a microorganism known as *Coxiella burnetii*.

Cattle, sheep and goats are the most common sources of infection in humans and infection generally occurs through the inhalation of infected material.

Placental material or after birth is a particularly significant source of infection so strict hygienic practices should be followed when handling heavily pregnant animals.

People may also become infected by being in contact with infected animals and their waste products, and occasionally through the ingestion of unpasteurised milk.

Therefore, people who are in regular contact with livestock such as farmers, abattoir workers, veterinarians and other people involved with handling livestock are at most risk of contracting Q Fever.

The most common clinical signs of Q Fever include headaches, fever and muscle pain. This could be easily misdiagnosed as influenza.

Therefore, if someone from a high risk group is exhibiting flu-like symptoms it is worth their while to discuss the possibility of Q Fever with their GP.

Q Fever is usually treatable with the use of an appropriate antibiotic.

On occasions, Q Fever sufferers can go on to develop post Q Fever Fatigue Syndrome, which can be quite a debilitating condition.

A vaccination is available to prevent Q Fever and anyone in a high risk group should consider prevention through this vaccination.

For further information on human aspects of the disease contact a medical practitioner and for veterinary aspects contact a local veterinarian or Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) veterinary or animal health officer. **D**

\*Dr Jeff Cave is district veterinary officer with the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Wodonga, Vic.

## Beware of employer obligations

FARM employers need to ensure they provide a safe workplace for their employees. This includes ensuring people are aware of the risks of diseases such as Q Fever.

The People in Dairy website contains a number of documents to help dairy farm employers prepare safety protocol documents for their staff.

One of the documents includes some of the following examples for safety protocols regarding animal handling. The section on Q Fever is highlighted.

- Many farm injuries happen when handling cattle. It is our intention that this business will provide an environment that is as safe to work as practicable.
- The stock-handling facilities are well designed, but the operators should exercise care when working around cattle.
- Staff are expected to take care when working around bulls or cows and calves as they can be unpredictable.

• Particular care should be taken of downer cows as they may thrash around or throw their heads.

• Calving, pregnancy testing and mating may expose the employee to the risk of a zoonotic disease especially if hygiene is poor.

• Gloves should be worn when performing any procedures that may bring an employee into contact with cattle body fluids.

• Needles and syringes used to administer veterinary drugs must be disposed of using the sharps disposal container provided.

• **The herd is vaccinated against leptospirosis and we encourage all employees to be vaccinated against Q fever.**

• All animals are to be treated humanely.

• Should an animal require euthanasia seek help from the manager to ensure swift action.

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Greg Templeton, Nar Nar Goon, Victoria, with some of his Simmental-cross milking herd.


# Fleckvieh lifts herd health

By JESSIE DAVIES

KEY POINTS

**FLECKVIEH GENETICS**

- ✓ Significant health improvements
- ✓ Higher milk protein and fat
- ✓ Improved conception rates



**V**ICTORIAN dairyfarmer Greg Templeton can't speak highly enough of the Simmental Fleckvieh breed.

Eight years ago the Gippsland farmer introduced Simmental Fleckvieh genetics into his Holstein milking herd and saw such significant improvements to his animals' health he vowed never to return to a straight Holstein herd again.

Having dairyfarmed for 40 years, he said the change has improved the health and vitality of his whole business at Nar Nar Goon, not just his herd of 140 cows.

"We were in awful trouble with poor conception rates and low health and we decided there must be something better," Mr Templeton said.

"Since using the Simmental Fleckviehs we've seen a tremendous lift in fertility and in the general health and fitness of the animals, which has translated to a higher protein percentage in our milk, lower cell counts for mastitis, and our antibiotic use has dropped to almost zero."

At first he thought the improvements came from the simple hybrid-vigour of the two animals, but today he is up to his third and fourth crosses and is convinced the "tremendous gains" come from Simmental genetics.

"These days we are trying to get away from the Holstein traits as quickly as possi-

ble because of concerns for their health and because they can get quite skittish too," he said. "Now we've got quieter cattle, which are much easier to handle."

Mr Templeton said the crosses have also made calf-rearing much simpler. "The calves are easier to rear now we have virtually zero instances of scours and pneumonia," he said.

Aside from their health, the beauty of the breed lies in their beef characteristics.

Each year Mr Templeton sells about 80 five-day-old bull calves to calf rearers who then grow them out to bullocks. His Holstein bull calves used to be sent straight to slaughter.

"It's a tremendous thing that we are able to do that now because I don't like to see baby calves wasted like that," he said.

But it's also the returns Mr Templeton likes — the Simmental Fleckvieh-cross calves sell for triple the price of the Holsteins. "We used to take them to market and sell them but now they are so popular because of their meat people buy them from us straight from the farm," he said.

"We got a little bit of feedback from the guys who have gone on to sell cattle as beef over the hooks and they said the carcass quality has been exceptional with carcass yield of more than 60%."

When it comes to genetics Mr Templeton goes for the best.

He used to buy from German company Bayern Genetics, but because of supply problems moved across to Austrian-based company Genetics Austria (not to be confused with local company Genetics Australia).

From them Mr Templeton has been able

to source genetics from the top Simmental Fleckvieh bull in the world.

The bulls are judged on a set of selection criteria that has a 48% emphasis on fitness, 38% on milk production and 16% on beef production.

Mr Templeton orders a batch every two years and at the time of writing had one coming in the following two weeks.

"I've got 500 straws coming so that's going to give us a whole new variety of genetics, something I'm excited about," he said.

"They are priced between \$25 and \$30 a straw, which we don't mind because we are getting such a high conception rate and we are using less straws.

"We buy the best we can because we are getting so much genetic gain in return."

When he introduced Simmental Fleckvieh genetics the protein content in the milk lifted from less than 3% to 3.5-3.6%. The fat content rose from 3.7% to 4%.

Against Mr Templeton's expectations, his milk production didn't decrease.

"The cows are currently doing around about 25 litres a day, and that's stayed the same right the way through," he said.

"Holsteins have always been known to be superior in terms of their milk volume so I didn't expect the Simmentals to maintain that but I have been pleasantly surprised."

Simmental Fleckvieh genetics have also improved fertility rates.

"We were drastically poor with the Holsteins, only getting an actual conception rate of 25% to 30% from our straws, and the last time I calculated our crossed herd we were sitting around the 80% mark," he said.



# Facial eczema alerts

## FACIAL ECZEMA

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Caused by toxins in fungus on ryegrass
- ✓ Early intervention critical
- ✓ Monitoring program alerts farmers



**D**AIRYFARMERS in Gippsland will again have access to a facial eczema pasture spore-monitoring program this summer and autumn.

The service helps dairyfarmers keep track of facial eczema danger levels and make an informed choice on how to handle the risk for their own farms.

The on-farm pasture spore counts, provided by Dairy Australia (DA) and the regional development program GippsDairy, began in mid-December and continue until the risk of facial eczema eases.

The spore-monitoring program is supported by 24 dairyfarmers across Gippsland who act as “sentinel farms”, collecting pasture samples for spore-counting every week or two.

DA’s animal health and welfare program manager, Dr Kathryn Davis, said the program was well received by Gippsland farm-

ers, alerting them to high-risk conditions and allowing them to start zinc supplementation.

“DA and GippsDairy will again work with veterinary clinics across Gippsland to make nearby facial eczema spore-counting services widely available so farmers can use them to monitor their own pastures if spore-counts on their local sentinel farm indicates the risk of facial eczema increasing,” Dr Davis said.

One of the veterinarians involved in the monitoring, Dr Gerry Davis of the Maffra Vet Centre, said the process was vital for farmers in the region.

Facial eczema is caused by a toxin concentrated in the spores of the fungus *Pithomyces charatarum*, which lives mainly on ryegrass, at the base of the sward.

Facial eczema is not well named. It is not a skin disease; it is a liver disease.

By the time a farmer sees some cows in the herd affected by the photosensitisation caused by facial eczema, a large proportion of the herd is likely to have already suffered liver damage.

Early intervention is critical. Farmers must not wait for signs of facial eczema in cattle before taking action.

Neither weather conditions nor pasture

spore-counts alone can predict periods of pasture toxicity — both are needed.

When local pasture spore-counts are trending upwards of 20,000 per gram and weather conditions look favourable for sporulation, dairyfarmers should take action to:

- monitor spore-counts in their own paddocks; and
- implement facial eczema control and prevention strategies.

Zinc works only to prevent facial eczema. It can’t reverse liver damage already done.

Farmers should carefully calculate the amount of zinc oxide included in each tonne of grain/concentrate for “prevention dosing” (20 milligrams of elemental zinc/kilogram liveweight/day) based on the herd’s average liveweight and daily grain/concentrate feeding rate. It is important to avoid under-dosing or over-dosing.

Farmers are encouraged to work closely with stockfeed suppliers, vets and nutrition advisers to ensure their zinc supplementation program is effective and safe.

Anyone planning to feed zinc for longer than 100 days should consult their vet. **D**

Visit the monitoring page on the Dairy Australia website at <[www.dairyaustralia.com.au/facialeczeema](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/facialeczeema)>.

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**LALLEMAND**



Trevor and Anne-Marie Mills with their children Andrew and Kelly inspect the GEA Mlone robotic system on their farm.

## A reluctant innovator

### ROBOTIC MILKING

#### KEY POINTS

- ✓ First Australian GEA Mlone customer
- ✓ Mastitis reduced due to milk meters
- ✓ Milking less physically demanding

**G**IPPSLAND, Victoria, dairy-farmer Trevor Mills doesn't really think of himself as an innovator, but circumstances led him down that path, becoming the first in Australia to invest in the GEA automatic milking system (AMS).

About 18 months ago, Mr Mills, and his wife, Anne-Marie, found themselves at a crossroad, with selling the 122-hectare farm a distinct possibility.

"Milking in a herringbone dairy for many years was taking its toll on me physically, and my health was starting to suffer," Mr Mills said.

"We did the sums on various options such as employing labour, sharefarming or leasing but none stacked up given the milk price and cost of labour.

"Robotic milking was the only way we could see ourselves staying in the industry. And when we did our research, the new GEA system — Mlone — had a lot of appeal over the alternatives; enough to make us decide to be the first in Australia to buy it."

The Mills AMS, which has been running since May 2014, consists of three milking boxes, placed end to end. They are collectively serviced by a single robotic milking arm that slides from one box to another.

"I really liked the design, which is conceptually a bit like a herringbone," he said. "It is very compact — we only needed a 12-metre by 12m shed — which helped contain costs. And the fact that we only needed to invest in a single robot also kept costs down."

Mr Mills liked the way one side of the milking units was designed for cows to move in and out of the milking unit, while the other side was designed for human access, with a pit so that he didn't have to bend down to access the udder.

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"This meant we could check the cows for mastitis in the boxes before drafting them to the vet yard for treatment; plus it is very convenient for training new cows into the system because we start off by attaching the cups manually for the first milking or two," he said.

Mr Mills describes the first three months as very challenging and says it took six months to adjust to a new way of farming.

"Getting the hang of the robot was the easy bit," Mr Mills said.

"The computer system controlling the robot is easy-to-use and it is useful being able to monitor and control what's happening at the dairy and in the yards from within the dairy or remotely from anywhere there is internet access."

The challenges were more to do with training the cows to the new dairy in the first few days and to allocating pasture to encourage cows to move voluntarily around the farm. Mr Mills said it also took some time to get his head around using the reports and information available from the computer system.

"These things are getting easier with experience; we just had to get through those first few months," he said.

Despite the initial challenges, Mr Mills said he noticed the difference in the physical demands straight away.

"Although the initial period involved long hours, it was physically less tiring than milking in a conventional dairy and six months down the track the system was running smoothly enough for me to have some time off away from the farm," he said.

One of the early benefits was improved mastitis management.

"The system monitors the conductivity of milk in each quarter, providing a list of any suspect cows," he said. "I have it set up to automatically divert any high conductivity milk to the calf vat. A report generated daily allows me to check suspect cows and decide whether treatment is required. I've been interested to see how stress — such as cold, wet weather — can temporarily affect milk conductivity levels."

In the first six months, the herd's bulk milk cell count (BMCC) fell from an average of 250,000 (before AMS) to about 150,000.

### More choice for farmers

FutureDairy project leader Dr Kendra Kerrisk said the availability of the GEA AMS in Australia meant more choice for dairy farmers.

"Four companies now offer automatic milking solutions in Australia, each with slightly different designs and functionality," she said. "This means farmers can choose the option which better matches their individual needs."

"The feedback we've had from AMS farmers is that their choice was influenced



**Trevor Mills says the first three months after the introduction of the robotic system was challenging.**

by cost, throughput potential and after-sales support through the local dealer."

Brian Walker, from GEA Australia, said that although the Mills family was the first Australian's to invest in the Mlone AMS, the technology had been used overseas for more than 20 years.

"The Australian system is identical to the one we sell in Europe," he said. "It has been used for many years by dairy-farmers including those in Ireland and

the United Kingdom with grazing-based systems and voluntary cow movement. In that sense, we were confident the Mills family were receiving tested and proven technology."

**Contact FutureDairy: Associate Professor Kendra Kerrisk, mobile 0428 101 372, email <kendra.kerrisk@sydney.edu.au>. FutureDairy's major sponsors are Dairy Australia, DeLaval and the University of Sydney.**

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VR2043434

# Phone app helps run robotic dairy

## PHONE APP

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Management of herd and robotic dairy
- ✓ Allows access to herd info anywhere
- ✓ Sends alerts about potential problems

A PHONE 'app' released by Lely Australia last year enables farmers with Lely Astronaut robotic milkers to monitor and control the system from their phone, regardless of where they are located. The new Lely T4C InHerd Management tool makes their operation even more efficient.

Darryl Light from Drouin South, near Warragul in Gippsland, installed two Lely A4 Astronaut robots two years ago. Up until then he had been milking on a 10-stand double-up herringbone originally built for 150-centimetre tall milkers. Mr Light is more than 180cm tall and he chose to go with the robots from an ergonomic view to relieve the labour stresses on him.

"My knees don't ache like they used to standing on concrete, plus all the things that are bad for you in that situation," he said. "I used to say that I milk cows — now I tell people I'm a dairyfarmer."

A major feature of the Lely Astronaut A4 cow box is the walkthrough design called the I-flow concept, which allows the cow to walk straight in and out of the box avoiding any unnecessary obstacles. The cow-friendly design allows for continuous interaction with the rest of the herd to eliminate unnecessary stress.

Mr Light milks 120 Jerseys at Jadell Jersey Stud, which covers 93 hectares with a 28ha out-block. He took over the running of the dairy from his parents, Alan and Beth, a few years ago and now nobody else is involved in the milking apart from him. His father comes over to hose down each morning.

"I don't have to milk twice a day, it gives me another four to five hours a day to do other things," he said. "But I'm on call 24/7 in case there is an issue with the robots."

Mr Light said he was given the T4C InHerd management app for an early trial. It is able to be used on all smart phones. The phone receives a signal that goes to the server, then to Holland, on to the internet and into his computer — all in three seconds.

"It gives me remote operation of the dairy through each cow's ID," Mr Light said. "It provides readouts or alarms of the herd's performance, so I'm looking at the computer using the phone, from anywhere on the farm — or off it."

"It's a major benefit, not having to write anything down when you're out and about on the farm, particularly if you see a cow on heat, you just punch in her ID on the phone and it goes into the system."

Mr Light said that getting a handle on operating the InHerd management app was a similar process to computer learning. "I handle it myself by working out the programmer's thought processes and it becomes fairly logical," he said.

A major feature of the system is that it provides him with a diary of the day's tasks relating to management of the herd, so it becomes easier to plan the jobs.

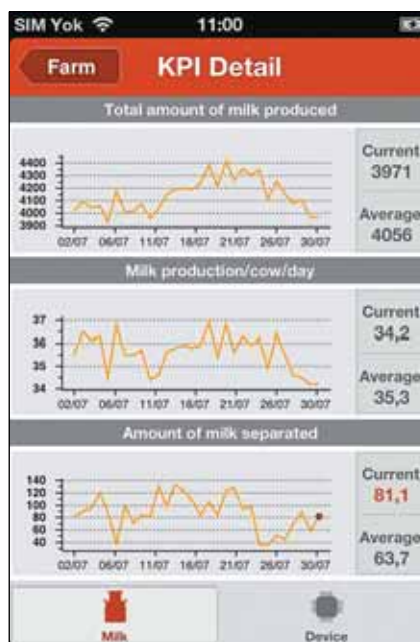
"That's would be excellent if you had a number of workers on the place — everybody would know what jobs are to be done, without having to write them up on a whiteboard," he said.

At the moment the cows are just coming in to be milked twice a day; usually with robots, it is closer to 2.5 times a day.

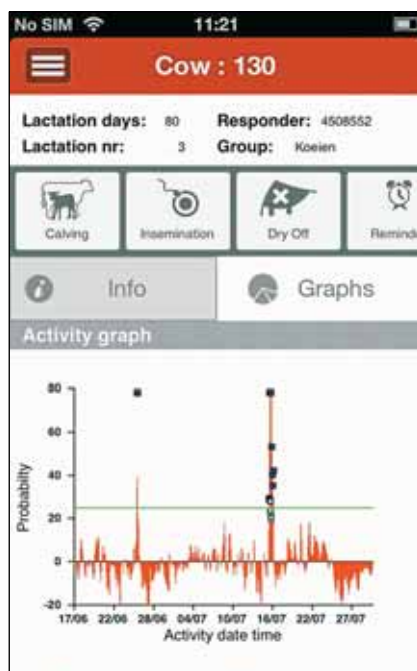
Mr Light said that paddock management with the robotic system had been easier than he thought.

"I just rotate on the two paddocks, A and B, in place of setting up an A, B and C configuration," he said. "There is plenty of grass available."

Mr Light said the smartphone app added another dimension to robotic milking. "You



The Lely T4C InHerd phone app provides a complete overview of the performance of the milking robot.



The app provides an array of information about each cow.



Farmers can run their farm from anywhere in the world with the Lely T4C InHerd phone app, according to Darryl Light.



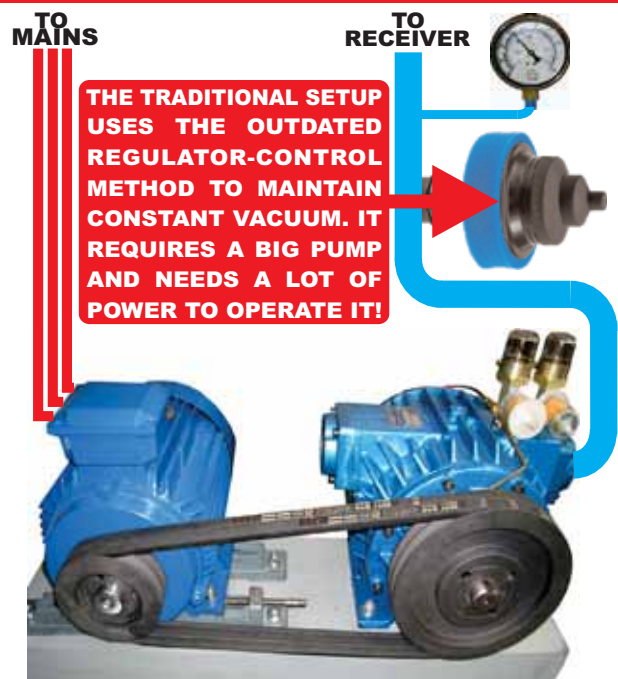
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The daily task list is split into different categories.



A major feature of the Lely T4C InHerd phone app is that it provides the user with a diary of the day's tasks relating to management of the herd, so it becomes easier to plan the jobs.



Darryl Light, Drouin South, says the Lely T4C InHerd app makes it easy to spot a cow on heat when he's out and about on the farm to just punch in its ID on the phone and it goes into the system.

“can run your farm from anywhere in the world,” he said.

Lely Australia said that the T4C InHerd Management app is a unique mobile tool for obtaining a complete overview of the performance of the milking robot. With this new tool operators will be informed when it is time to replace teat liners, brushes and

other parts of the milking robot. When attention or maintenance is needed, items will be marked in red.

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If the computer senses any issues with the programmed milking, it phones Mr

Light an alarm. For example it would ring if a particular cow had not been in either stall for some time.

“This really makes robotic milking what it should be,” Mr Light said. “I reckon it's great.”

Article supplied by Lely, website <[www.lely.com](http://www.lely.com)>

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# Tool to plan rations

By RACHAEL ANDREWS

## RATION PLANNER

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Easy-to-use computerised ration planner
- ✓ Design diets from up to 10 feeds
- ✓ Helps manage milk protein levels

**D**AIRY cow ration and cost management tool Rumen8 has received a much-needed update and is free to the public following support from Western Dairy.

The computer program will make it easier to design a ration and ensure dietary needs are met and for the best price.

Developer Richard Morris spoke at the Western Dairy Spring Field Day last year and said it was great to be able to offer an improved Rumen8. He said the program had the potential to streamline a lot of processes already in place on most farms.

"Rumen8 uses a relatively simple nutrition model," Mr Morris said.

"Many more sophisticated models of dairy cow nutrition exist but they require

a higher level of user knowledge, are less readily available and take more time to use."

Rumen8 was developed by Department of Agriculture and Food staff more than 10 years ago, as an in-house tool for managing the dairy herds on the Vasse research station near Busselton, WA.

The latest version allows users to design diets from up to 10 feeds, compare feed and milk prices, calculate returns and manage milk protein by ensuring there is enough energy provided in the cow's diet.


Work will continue on adding new features in the next 12 months and updates will be automatically downloaded by those who sign up for the program online.

"Rumen8 can be a time saver and a mon-



Dairy cow diet management will be easier with the release of Rumen8 software as a free program for the public, says developer Richard Morris.

ey saver and once you know the basics you can develop some very useful calculations," Mr Morris said

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VR2005957

# Innovation drives growth at VDL

By WILLIAM VALLELY

## PASTURE PREDICTOR

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Using indicator plot to predict pasture growth for whole farm
- ✓ In operation for just over a year
- ✓ Provides six weeks' warning of potential feed shortages

**B**ELIED by its stature, an unassuming plot of land in north-west Tasmania is proving its worth to one of Australia's oldest dairy companies.

The plot, no bigger in size than two utes, is part of a pasture growth prediction system used by Van Diemen's Land (VDL) at Woolnorth to accurately feed 20,000 milking cows.

Cordoned off in a dormant grazing paddock, the chunk of turf is littered with probes assessing soil temperature and moisture every two minutes.

This real-time data is then, alongside rainfall and wind speed readings, combined with the Southern Oscillation Index (which calculates the development and intensity of El Niño or La Niña events in the Pacific Ocean) to simulate grass growth six weeks in advance.

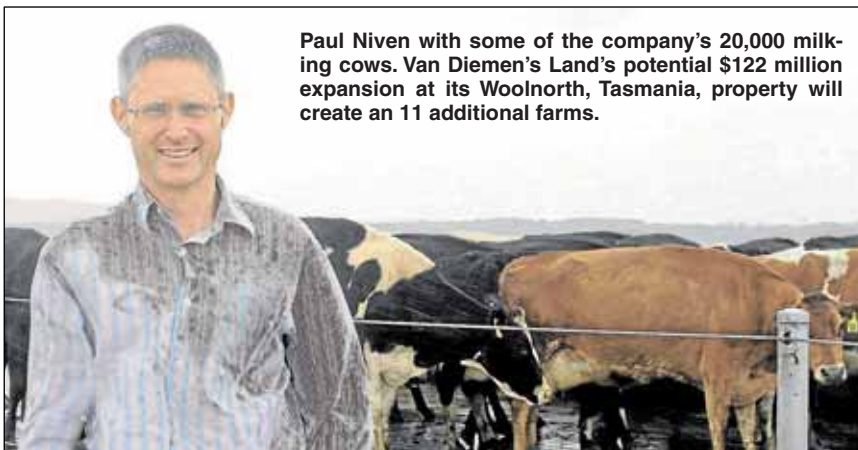
"It's remarkably accurate," said VDL's dairy business manager Paul Niven, who began simulating pasture scenarios through the model since October 2013.

He said the tool, which was developed by Sense-T, the CSIRO and the University of Tasmania (UTAS), was useful in January when the season varies from "Western District desert" to lush green.

"We had average conditions in the end,



Automatic teat spray is just one of a number of on-farm efficiencies introduced by VDL to make farm management more efficient.



Paul Niven with some of the company's 20,000 milking cows. Van Diemen's Land's potential \$122 million expansion at its Woolnorth, Tasmania, property will create an 11 additional farms.

and from early November (2013) we knew what we were going to get, which enabled us to make a decision on how long we could keep cows in milk," Mr Niven said.

Drying off 13,500 autumn-calving cows in December, January and February is no enviable task; however, balancing the timing against feed availability is made easier with the system.

"It (the prediction system) gives me three months' advance warning on whether I dry them (the cows) off — what my milk and grain price is and how much grass am I going to have," said Mr Niven, who described the Sense-T-led project as "almost a game-changer".

"If I had a high milk price and low grain price, knowing it's going to be a desert, I would go and buy a heap of grain.

"Equally, if I had a low milk price and no grass I'd probably dry the cows off, so from a management perspective we would have to make different decisions according to the information.

"Drying off cows doesn't just happen so advance warning is helpful."

The project, in its second year, aims to use data in prototype web and phone applications for producers.

UTAS project leader Richard Rawnsley said he could accurately predict 30-day grass growth with the system.

"A month-long forecast would be pretty useful to a dairyfarmer," he said.

Mr Niven said: "In some ways they don't know the power of what they have."

He suggested the project would develop after its practical application with producers.

VDL's farms produce about 6.25 million kilograms of milk solids per year for dairy giant Fonterra and a compelling 30-minute drive through the 17,500-hectare Woolnorth property makes it hard to fathom how such scale is managed efficiently.

A standardised farm model certainly helps, according to Mr Niven, who manages 25 farms of varying sizes but with identical structures.

So, too, does "attracting and retaining good people".

Alongside the company's 25 apprentices, who are enrolled in Tas TAFE, older farmers have taken National Centre for Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA) courses to put some theory behind their practical knowledge.

VDL is also undertaking a DairyComp 305 program rollout.

The software program, which enables remote access to specific cow information, will give VDL employees synchronised data on all 20,000 cows in the herd.

"One of the challenges for us is we could buy an off-the-shelf Australian product where we could run each farm as a farm, but we really run it as if there's one farm with 25 sheds, so therefore we're forever moving cows," Mr Niven said.

"Getting pregnancy-testing information on a centralised database can be a problem for all the farms."

Mr Niven said it would take until 2016 to integrate the program across the whole farm, with the eventual aim of having vets, artificial insemination technicians and other external people able to remotely edit the central database.



# Smarter cooling lifts energy efficiency

By STEVE HYNES

## COOLING UPGRADE

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Glycol plate cooler installed
- ✓ Cuts energy costs \$200/quarter
- ✓ More reliable system provides peace of mind

**D**AIRIES use a lot of electricity. Milk has to be cooled and water has to be heated, both of which are energy-intensive operations.

But the emergence of new technology is making many farmers realise they use a lot more electricity than they need to and, with increasing power prices, there is a brisk demand for systems that improve energy efficiency.

Tesbury, Vic, farmers Ben and Elise Darcy realised they needed to upgrade after initially trying to make their old vats cope with the increased demands of a larger dairy.

"We built the new dairy in 2009 and used the old vats," Mr Darcy said.

However, the extra volume of milk from 280 cows had the refrigeration units really struggling. "They were flat out doing the job — they would be working until about one o'clock to get the milk down to temperature," he said.

"That was a constant worry, and there was also the maintenance factor. Because the compressors were working so hard there was always something going wrong."

With the Darcys' previous system, a water cooler reduced the milk temperature to the low 20-degree range, after which it went into the vats, which used refrigerant gas. The vats had the task of taking the temperature down to four degrees.

A system upgrade installed by Warnambool company West Fridge has placed a glycol plate cooler between the water cooler and the vats, which reduces the temperature to eight to 10 degrees. The milk then goes into the vats, which have been converted to glycol, for the final cooling to four degrees.

Mr Darcy said the system greatly reduced the cooling time, with the target temperature reached soon after milking.

A substantial cost-saving has also been achieved by eliminating refrigerant gases from the system.

Because the compressors used to work

so hard gas losses were high and expensive regassing was a regular requirement.

A variable-speed motor on the milk pump keeps flow across the water cooler more constant, achieving a more consistent temperature drop through the plate coolers.

Mr Darcy said the \$66,000 upgrade had cut the dairy's power bill by about \$200 a quarter, but this saving was small compared to the reduced maintenance and elimination of re-gassing costs.

"There's also a lot more peace of mind," he said.

"The whole system is a lot more reliable and I don't have to worry about the milk temperature being low enough when the tanker arrives."

West Fridge's managing director, Keith Hammond, said the conversion was a straightforward installation that could be applied in many old dairies still using the combination of water cooling and old-style vats.



Tesbury, Vic, dairyfarmer Ben Darcy said a more efficient cooling system had cut energy and maintenance costs.

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2005254

# Instant mastitis results with iPhone or iPod

## KEY POINTS

## SOMATIC CELL COUNTER

- ✓ Connects to iPhone or iPod
- ✓ Provides SCC in 45 seconds
- ✓ Users report improved herd health

**A**N instant mastitis test that works with an iPhone 5 or iPod 5 will be available in Australia from February. The DeLaval Instant Cell Counter (ICC) measures the somatic cell count (SCC) of a milk sample in just 45 seconds.

The ICC device connects to the iPhone or iPod, which works with an app to display the results. A milk sample is loaded into the device, which then uses the imaging technology in the iPhone or iPod camera to scan the milk.

DeLaval managing director Murray Antram said the ICC was an evolution of the stand-alone DeLaval Cell Counter (DCC), which had been available in Australia for several years.

"The ICC will be about a third of the price of the DCC and will provide the same level of accuracy but with the convenience of being able to take measurements in the palm of your hand," Mr Antram said.

Having the ability to perform an instant cell count makes it easier to make decisions about the treatment of clinical and sub-clinical mastitis in freshly calved cows and cows due for drying off or culling.

"Dairyfarmers in Canada and the United States who have been using the ICC report improved herd health, with some saying it paid for itself within a couple of months through an earlier identification of mastitis, resulting in more effective treatment and less wasted milk," Mr Antram said.



DeLaval is launching an instant cell count device that works with an iPhone 5 or iPod 5.

Farmers who use DeLaval's Alpro herd management system will have the added benefit of being able to integrate the ICC results with the rest of their herd records. **D**

Article supplied by DeLaval, phone 1800 817 199, website <[www.delaval.com.au](http://www.delaval.com.au)>.

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**February 22-26:**

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**March 11-12:**

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VR2006685



By **KERRY RYAN\***

# People, personalities and performance



I'VE just completed a most enjoyable speaking tour in Western Australia. One of the topics my workshops explored in depth was how farmers and team leaders can gain a deeper understanding of how their people are wired. This challenges them to better understanding the combination of experience, qualifications, ethnicity, beliefs and personality they and their staff bring to a working relationship.

These insights are what help teams really synergise as they acknowledge where their respective talents and potential limitations lie.

Fundamental to this is an awareness of what is loosely termed "personality style" — perhaps better described as an individual's disposition or temperament. This topic is usually touched on in people management courses and conferences.

**'This is fundamental to avoiding the risk of promoting people to their level of incompetence.'**

However, I usually find farm teams have only a superficial understanding of how to capitalise on it. My experience has been that a practical application of personality profiling can bring real advantage through more effective people management.

Establishing individual personality styles through recognised and credible questionnaires is the place to start. Comparing an individual's response to the questionnaire with one's experience of interacting with them (either at interview or through working with them as an existing team member) provides some validation of the profiling outcome.

I look for a strong alignment between a person's behaviour and their response to a personality profile to confirm a meaningful assessment has been achieved. I have been equally cautious of selecting or promoting those whose profile and behaviour patterns don't line up.

The primary indicators of an individual's personality style include whether they are more introvert than extravert, fast paced and driven by autonomy or slower to make decisions. The latter group generally demonstrate a preference to follow approved procedures while the autonomy seekers are more intuitive and don't like being constrained by rules and procedures.

The more dominant or accuracy-driven styles tend to be task and results focused while the influencing (sales) personality and steady (empathetic) types focus more on achieving outcomes through relationship and collaboration.

The greatest value in the personality profiling process comes from business owners or team leaders first being aware of how they personally are wired. This helps

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them understand how they are likely to be perceived by their team and how they can modify their behaviour to achieve the synergy that will maximise team performance.

In addition to understanding their talents and strengths, self-aware people acknowledge the limitations that can result from their natural style. For example the dominant, driving individual will need to learn to slow down, listen more and give the structured, systems-focused people around them time to engage with what is being asked of them. Similarly, the reserved and more cautious person will need stretch themselves to be more open to change, creativity and consequent risk.

Knowing the makeup of all team members has important implications for delegation and promotion. This is fundamental to avoiding the risk of promoting people to their level of incompetence.

Every role in a business — whether functional or leadership focused — will require a specific mix of personality, talents, skills and training for the incumbent to succeed. Deciding which personality style is best for the role will result in a more comprehensive description of the most suitable candidate.

Including this in the selection criteria will ensure complementary rather than competitive appointments and promotions are made. Selection and promotion strategies that “build the team around the team”



Understanding different personality styles is critical to getting the most from people.

ensure new appointments increase the likelihood that new staff and leaders will fit in with existing team dynamics.

Finally, team relationships can be enhanced considerably when all staff members understand the personalities and operating styles of their colleagues. I have seen this add considerable value where there are conflicts and tensions between staff. Awareness of the motivations and drivers behind what can on the surface seem confusing or frustrating behaviour offers a productive framework to talk and understand.

Much of the material covered for the Western Dairy workshops is available on my website. There are also plenty of tools and commentary in my online resource centre.

I encourage those who want to take a step up to take advantage of these best practice techniques to give them a go. **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](http://www.kerryryan.co.nz)>.*

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By DR  
SHERRI  
JAQUES\*

# Theleira: blood disease spread by ticks

**T**HEILERIA is a parasite of red blood cells that originates from an infection of ticks, which then acts as a vector (a spreader of disease) that injects the parasite into cattle when it bites, and so the parasite then moves inside the animal's red blood cells. This causes some red blood cells to 'pop'.

Although the bush tick is the recognised vector for Theileria, current research indicates that other ticks and biting insects may also be able to spread this parasite. Clinically we start seeing cases from the start of spring and through summer in the West Gippsland region of Victoria.

There are three main variants of Theileria in Australia: *buffeli* type (the historical one that tends not to cause clinical signs), *ikeda* and *chitose* (both of which are more likely to be found in herds with clinical disease).

Ticks flourish in long periods of moist weather with vegetation cover — they do not like hot, dry weather.

The parasite can be found in the blood cells about 10 days after cattle become infected. Infected cattle entering a property can carry Theileria with them, then ticks can spread it through the herd.

In herds where small numbers of the parasite are often around (endemic areas) the cattle have a low level of parasite infection, which then stimulates the immune system and the cow becomes immune, although it is thought that some may remain carriers and can relapse during times of stress. Generally little sign of disease is seen in such herds, and calves born on the farm seem to become immune by about six months of age.

Outbreaks of infection can occur when the disease first enters a herd that has not been affected before. This is the type of pattern we tend to see.

Cattle that are infected for the first time either when their immune system is lowered or with large numbers of infected ticks can become unwell as the damage done to the red blood cells occurs on a greater scale, faster than the immune system can respond.

These cattle can become anaemic, which causes them to be pale and lethargic. In many of these cases a temporary heart murmur is caused by the anaemia. They may gasp and lag behind when exercised, a milk drop is usually noted and appetite can drop. Heavily pregnant cows are often those worst affected (and are at the highest risk of death) and may abort or have stillborn calves.

The best place to check for paleness in



Outbreaks of Theileria can occur when the disease first enters a herd that has not been affected before.

dairy cattle is by opening the vulva and looking at the colour of the lining membranes. They should be a nice 'musk stick lolly' pink.

If they are pale, white or yellow then Theileria is one possible cause. The parasite can be detected in blood smears of clinically affected cattle. In about 1% of infected cattle the anaemia can be serious enough that death results if treatment is not started.

The management for Theileria revolves around controlling stock movements to prevent the spread from already infected stock to naïve stock and limiting access to large numbers of ticks by avoiding using paddocks containing bush and by practising insect control.

There are a large number of products available for controlling ticks on cattle and a list (with relevant withholding periods) can be found at website <[www.daff.qld.gov.au](http://www.daff.qld.gov.au)>. It should be noted that some of these products are not to be used in lactating dairy cattle. Treatment of clinical cases involves the use of oxytetracyclines early in the disease and blood transfusions in the few very badly affected cattle.

## How do I know if I should give a blood transfusion?

Although most cows will mount an immune response and make more blood cells on their own, some cows (particularly heavily pregnant or recently calved cows) can be affected enough to die. Death is because the anemia — the drop in blood cells — is too great for the cow to respond to quickly enough.

To determine if a transfusion is required,

I do a test called a PCV (Packed Cell Volume). This calculates the percentage of cells compared to 'fluid' in the cows blood — how concentrated the blood is, if you like.

Cows normally have a PCV of between 25 and 35. If the PCV has dropped to about 17 then blood transfusion is indicated. If the PCV drops below 11 then a blood transfusion is required to prevent death. I also check the PCV of the blood donor to ensure that cow can spare the blood.

Generally the jugular vein is clipped and then used to collect five litres of blood from the donor cow, often straight into a clean bucket.

I put a special powder (sodium citrate), mixed with saline, into the bucket to stop the blood clotting before it is transfused. This blood is then put into the jugular of the anaemic cow via a catheter, and in my case a distilled water container that has been converted to a fluid drum.

Transfusion reactions can occur, although they are very rare in cattle (and never personally seen by this author) — anti-histamines and adrenalin can be used to treat this if needed. Blood transfusions are really not difficult to perform and do save the lives of those severely affected cases.

Until next time, happy milking. **D**

\*Sherri Jaques is a practising veterinarian and reproduction adviser in West Gippsland, Victoria. All comments and information discussed in this article are intended to be of a general nature only and may not be suitable for individual herds. Consult your veterinarian for herd health advice, protocols and/or treatments that are tailored to your herd's particular needs.





James Neal is looking forward to using the new Health Weighted Index as a sire selection tool.

## Health high priority

**J**AMES Neal is looking forward to using the new Health Weighted Index as a tool in selecting sires to use across his 600-cow herd. Of the three new breeding indices to be available with the April Australian Breeding Value (ABV) release, Mr Neal believes the health index is well-aligned to his selection priorities.

He dairies near Taree on the NSW mid north coast, with his wife, Katrina, and parents, Peter and Cheryl.

"Ultimately we want an easy-care, efficient cow that lasts longer in the herd, and the two big contributors to that are improving mastitis and fertility," Mr Neal said.

With a herd that is 70% Holstein, 22% crossbred, 5% Jersey and 2% Red breed, Mr Neal said his breeding decisions were commercially focused.

"I spend quite a bit of time researching the options before buying sires," he said.

"I like to use the data from the *Good Bulls Guide* because the information is independent. I download it from the ADHIS (Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme) website so that I can sort sires in a number of different ways," he said.

Mr Neal creates a short-list of potential

bulls sorting for protein (kilograms) and fat (kg) and secondly by excluding any that are negative for fat or protein per cent.

He then examines the sires remaining on the list in detail, paying particular attention to longevity and some type traits. He usually ends up selecting three or four sires for each of the breeds in the herd.

"I think the Health Weighted Index is going to help me short list sires that are well aligned to our breeding priorities," he said.

By selecting bulls from the *Good Bulls Guide*, Mr Neal knows he is using bulls that will improve milk production and components.

Mr Neal said there were many benefits from breeding for longer lasting cows.

"Cows last a long-time in the herd because there's no reason to cull them," he said.

"They are the cows that require less attention — they get back in calf easily and they are healthy and productive, year-after-year. As well as being a pleasure to have in the herd, long-lasting cows bring the added benefit of needing fewer replacements."

Mr Neal is also looking forward to the release of the Feed Efficiency ABV in April.

"This breeding value will be the first tool

we've had to help us breed cows that are more efficient at converting feed to milk using the latest residual feed intake research," he said. "And that will have a direct impact on profitability."

**Contact:** ADHIS extension and education manager, Michelle Axford, phone 0427 573 330, email <maxford@adhis.com.au> or website <www.adhis.com.au>.

### Dairy's three new breeding indices

**Balanced Performance Index:** focuses on maximising net profit through production, fertility and type; will replace the current Australian Profit Ranking (APR).

**Type Weighted Index:** focuses on improving overall type, mammary system, udder depth and fore udder attachment.

**Health Weighted Index:** strongest focus on fertility, cell count and survival.

# Financial analysis key to continuous improvement

## BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Part of Dairy Farm Monitor Project
- ✓ Financial data allows season comparison
- ✓ Pasture consumption key profit driver applied

**T**IM and Grit Cashin's focus on continual improvement of their Gippsland dairy operation means not just a focus on cows and pasture but farm business management as well.

The couple started farming in Leongatha South in 2006 and are a part of the Dairy Farm Monitor project (DFMP), which offers dairyfarmers the opportunity to compare their performance against themselves, other farms and identify areas for improvement.

They milk 280 cows from an effective milking platform of 115 hectares as well as an 80ha run-off, both leased properties, and are focused on equity growth with the aim of buying their own farm.

The business has been in the top 25% of DFMP farms during the five years they have been involved.

Mr Cashin said the DFMP and another annual financial review process with his consultant John Mulvany was a key to tracking their progress across time providing invaluable information for business planning.

"What is really beneficial for us is having that financial data across the years so that we can look back and compare seasons," he said. "We can come back to the figures and for example find out how much grain we used in a certain season to compare with the current.

"At the moment the figures show that we have grown quite a bit. Crucially the numbers are important when it comes to our business planning because we know we are not guessing."

Mr Cashin said the result he was most interested in from the DFMP data was pasture consumption as it was the key driver of profit.

"We do look at the results very carefully when we compare ourselves to others," he said. "What we really look at is the pasture



**Grit and Tim Cashin, with their consultant John Mulvany, keep a close eye on cashflow and business performance.**

side of things to know that we are doing a good job there."

Being on top of management decisions is a focus of the operation. Learning from other farmers and being open to new technologies and ideas is a part of the Cashins' mindset.

"You are never going to get all of your decisions perfect but if you can get it near enough to perfect then you have made the right decision," he said.

"Being more profitable comes down to getting the timing right. For example, planting your pasture.

"You could plant on March 15 or you could leave it until April 15 but if you do that you could miss out on a tonne a half of

dry matter. These decisions affect the bottom line."

Mr Cashin said sharing information in discussion groups and taking note of the more successful farmers was another way to improve.

"We are always looking at ways to become better and different ideas that might help us," he said. "Even in tight years there are things you can do. For example, we have a very wet farm here and some humping and hollowing work across 40 hectares has made that land at least twice as productive."

DFMP is a joint initiative between the Department of Environment and Primary Industries and Dairy Australia. **D**

## DairyBase is coming

IN March Dairy Australia will launch DairyBase providing dairyfarmers, service providers and industry with a national database of Dairy Farm Monitor Project (DFMP) data and other datasets from consultants and other service providers.

Leongatha South, Victoria, dairy-farmer Tim Cashin said using an annual financial review like DairyBase was part of good farming practice and should be a part of an effort by farmers to become better at business.

"Being better business people and knowing where your business stands

financially is key," he said. "We know where our cashflow is at if not weekly then bi-weekly and we know that having a handle on this is just as important in the good years as the tight years. You need to know where you stand."

DairyBase will offer dairyfarmers a free web-based system to enable them to measure their business performance and compare their business anonymously like the DFMP.

**For more information about Dairy Base visit website <[www.dairyaustralia.com.au](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au)>.**



# Hitting reproduction targets

## REPRODUCTION

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ AI used for 14 days, then home-bred bulls
- ✓ Good numbers of replacements, tight calving
- ✓ Induction not necessary

**A** REPRODUCTIVE management system relying on home-bred bulls and selection for high fertility is achieving great results for Victorian dairyfarmers Simon and Kate Fiddelaers.

The couple operate three dairies with Mr Fiddelaer's, parents Hank and Gail near Westbury, Gippsland, Victoria.

About 1100 cows are milked at peak across the three dairies. This number has increased from 500 cows in 2011 and has been achieved without the need to purchase animals.

The Fiddelaers' use of Friesian bulls coupled with high herd fertility means a high number of replacements are kept allowing for flexibility in culling, increasing herd size and the potential for an extra income stream from selling surplus stock.

Friesians comprise 75% of cow numbers with 25% crossbreeds. Average per cow production is about 375 kilograms milk solids, produced from a pasture harvest of 10.5 tonnes/hectare and about 1.2t of grain per cow.

The reproductive performance in this herd is similar to or better than targets for Dairy Australia's InCalf program. In particular,

- heifers and cows calve very quickly and therefore have a greater opportunity to get back into calf; and
- high six week in-calf rates due to high submission rates.

## How is reproductive performance managed?

Transition heifers and cows are brought onto a feedpad where they have access to ad lib cereal and pasture hay. They receive one kilogram grain in the dairy, and magnesium chloride is added daily to the water. Cows that have calved are drafted off after they receive their allocation of grain. Simon has found that heifers are much better adapted

to the dairy routine by being fed on the rotary before they calve.

A 10-week calving period starts on July 20.

The artificial insemination (AI) period lasts for 14 days. Just before mating start date, Kamars are applied to all cows in the herd. Cows are then joined for seven days, after which all unjoined cows are synchronised with prostaglandin. AI continues for another seven days.

In 2013, 89% of 620 cows were submitted to AI in the first 14 days on the rotary dairy.

After AI, Friesian bulls reared on farm are run with the herd for eight weeks. Between the farms 12 Friesian bulls are used in the herds and are rotated two days on and four days off.

Some 36 bulls are required for the bull team to serve the cows. All bulls used are subjected to a physical examination and are semen tested before use.

Heifers are split into two groups of 130-140 and are mated to calve at the same time as the herd. They are run with nine Jersey bulls in each group for eight weeks.

All female calves from heifers are kept. Pregnancy testing undertaken in the heifers usually results in an empty rate of 7-8%.

Cows are pregnancy tested six to eight weeks after the bulls have been removed. Only 10% of the herd was empty in 2012.

In this herd, the replacement rate has been between 27% and 31% in the past three years.

## Selection for fertility and production

The Fiddelaers have four main criteria for sire selection:

- high daughter fertility;
- good temperament;
- ease of calving; and
- good feet.

Milk production has not been actively chased.

The main reasons for culling cows are



**Simon Fiddelaers uses home-bred bulls to maintain a tight calving pattern.**

mastitis, temperament and age. Only about 100 are culled each year and with more than 200 replacements, herd numbers have increased quickly in the past three years. Empty cows are carried over if they are young or better producing cows.

## A no induction policy

The Fiddelaers family have never used calving induction and consider it unnecessary. Simon has observed the consequences on cow health and performance on other farms and thinks it hasn't been good.

Based on his involvement with local discussion groups, he suspects that the profitability of farms using induction is no better than farms not using induction.

The Fiddelaers family see no disadvantages associated with not using calving induction. Advantages include less management hassle, lower costs, fewer health issues and happier staff.

## Why does their system work?

The farm system is simple and the use of a large well-managed team of Friesian bulls rather than AI after the first two weeks of mating reduces the need for heat detection and is likely to produce a better result in terms of fertility than AI.

This results in a high number of potential replacements, which increases options for culling, sale of surplus stock and increasing herd size.



# DairySAT upgrade gives farmers edge

## DAIRYSAT

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Tool to improve NRM practices
- ✓ Offers practical steps and examples
- ✓ Underpins dairy sustainability framework

**D**AIRY Australia's recently revamped Dairy Self-Assessment Tool (DairySAT) is not only helping farmers evaluate and improve environmental management practices on-farm but also maintain the industry's reputation globally. The revised version of the tool was released last year.

Features include new online functionality to help farmers through 10 focus areas such as soils, fertilisers and effluent management so they can gain an overall view of the environmental issues facing their operation.

The tool then creates an action plan for farmers to follow with links to contacts and resources for further information.

Dairy Australia's natural resource management (NRM) technical specialist in South Australia, Monique White, said DairySAT helped farmers identify any environmental management problems on their farms, benchmark their practices against industry standards and provide them with resources to answer their questions.

"After going through the modules farmers develop their own action plan, listing practices they need to improve on farm and resources to help them do this," she said. "The tool also provides a summary of the good and innovative practices farmers are doing, which is equally helpful to understand and communicate."

Ms White said up to 50 farmers had used the latest version of the tool in SA.

"While farmers do login in to DairySAT anonymously, it has also proved useful to identify common areas for improvement so we can apply for funding to help farmers address these issues," she said.

Fonterra Australia's environment manager — farm sustainability, David James, said a number of farmers supplying Fonterra had used the tool and all suppliers had been encouraged to use it.

Mr James, who played a part in the



DairySAT is a yardstick for industry best practice.

industry-wide DairySAT review, said the tool reflected industry best-practice and the latest science for natural resource management.

The robust review process with input from farmers, processors, Dairy Australia and others had proven crucial for the tool's successful upgrade, he said.

"Farmers can actually find out how they sit on a sustainability management scale and it gives them practical steps that they can take to improve, offering examples that are meaningful," he said.

"They can sign in to the new online tool and save and share module results — it is much easier to use and a real step-up on the previous version."

Mr James said from an industry perspec-

tive, DairySAT was important to gauge sustainability and environmental management practice on-farm to prove Australian dairy's sustainability credentials to international customers.

"This is becoming increasingly important for our industry," he said.

Dairy Australia's program development manager Amy Fay said the value of DairySAT is also highlighted by its use as the yardstick for industry best-practice to underpin the Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework.

The tool was also integral to the recent Unilever sustainability project, which led to Australia being announced as the first dairy industry globally to be sustainability accredited by that company. **D**

## DairySAT Factbox

### 1. How do I access the new DairySAT?

Visit website <[www.dairysat.com.au](http://www.dairysat.com.au)> on a computer or tablet.

### 2. Why do I need to create a log in?

The login allows users to create an online profile of their farm so they can work through DairySAT at their own pace and save their results so they can revisit and update their practices across time.

### 3. What are some of the new features?

There is an interactive dashboard tracking progress and results, links to definitions and more information on

practices and an automated action plan that captures what issues need to be worked on, allows dates to be set, notes written and plans shared with others.

### 4. Can I still get a hard copy?

To print a hardcopy just sign up and log into the tool, and click "Download a blank DairySAT questionnaire" on the My DairySAT page.

### 5. Where can I get help?

Contact Dairy Australia program development manager Amy Fay, email <[afay@dairyaustralia.com.au](mailto:afay@dairyaustralia.com.au)>, phone (03) 9694 3848.





Farmers met at Taree, NSW, for dinner and a Heifers on Target webinar session.



The Taree, NSW, webinar night, sponsored by Semex, was organised with the help of the Mid Coast Dairy Advancement Group (DAGs). The night featured Col Cowan, a farmer already using the heat-detection technology who spoke about how it has impacted on his business.

# Webinars for key DA programs popular

## WEBINARS

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Webinars chance to participate on farm
- ✓ Technology easy to use
- ✓ Countdown information invaluable

**D**AIRY Australia webinars are proving popular with farmers offering the chance to participate in workshops for key programs online from the comfort of their homes.

NSW dairyfarmer Sam Tonge said recent webinars he had participated in, including a lunchtime session from the Countdown 2020 program, were useful and practical as he and his staff couldn't always leave the farm for meetings.

"When you are busy you think I just can't get in the car and go to that meeting today but if you know it's just one hour of your time you can come inside watch and participate and be on your way," he said.

"We were made aware of the webinar by our dairy technician who had recently attended a Countdown adviser course. We followed the email link and registered for the webinar. Dairy Australia sent the login details and a reminder email the day prior to the webinar.

"We are by no means technology gurus but it was all quite easy. There were no sound issues and the pictures were clear. I think it will be a very good mechanism to use to keep the dairy community aware of emerging issues."

Mr Tonge, who milks 250 cows producing about 1.9 million litres a year west of Casino, NSW, said webinars were useful

to help with the farms continuing focus on milk quality.

"We have something here to keep people enthusiastic about their job and keep focused," he said. "Like most farms we wrestle with prolonged wet periods.

"This information allows us to make a rational decision about altering our pre-milking teat preparation and gives us a basis for productive team discussion on how we might change our practices and under what conditions."

Dairy Australia program development manager Erika Oakes said the online workshops were being offered so farmers who could not get off the farm could become involved.

"The webinars are easy to register for through the Dairy Australia website and then participate in — all you really need is



Casino, NSW, Sam Tonge says webinars allow farmers to participate in industry seminars without having to leave the farm.

a computer and internet with a reasonable connection speed," she said.

"Farmers and discussion groups have also got together in groups to watch and discuss the webinars creating an event around it. The extension co-ordinators have been great at getting people to them."



## All about webinars

### WHAT is a webinar and how does it work?

- Short for web-based seminar, a webinar is a presentation, lecture, workshop or seminar hosted by an organisation and broadcast to a select group of individuals through their computers via the internet.
- A key feature of a webinar is its interactive elements — the ability to give, receive and discuss information.
- A webinar allows a speaker from the hosting organisation to share PowerPoint presentations, videos, web pages or other multimedia content with audiences that can be located anywhere.

- Participants in the Dairy Australia webinars can communicate with the presenter by typing in questions that the presenter will answer. The audio is one-way coming from the presenter.
- Dairy Australia webinars generally range between 30-90 minutes in length.

### What do you need to attend a webinar?

- All participants need to attend a webinar is a computer, typically a desktop or laptop, an internet connection and a compatible web browser
- To sign up for a webinar go to the Dairy Australia website <[www.dairyaustralia.com.au/webinars](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/webinars)> for registration and login details.

# On-farm biosecurity vital for industry

## BIOSECURITY

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Disease outbreak costly for farms
- ✓ Restrict visitors to farm
- ✓ Composting dead animals reduces risk

**V**ICTORIAN dairyfarmer David Byrd knows the harrowing experience of being involved in a major disease outbreak on-farm and is warning other farmers to take the issue of biosecurity seriously.

Mr Byrd has been farming at Byaduk in south-west Victoria for the past six years but is originally from Cheshire in England, the centre of a major outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in 1967.

He was a Nuffield scholar in Australia when the last major outbreak occurred in

the UK in 2001.

"It's extremely stressful," he said. "My parents lost everything before Christmas in 1967.

"All the stock were shot within 12 hours. I remember my mother crying at the kitchen sink."

In the 2001 outbreak some of his farmer friends also lost all of their herds.

Due to these experiences Mr Byrd urges Australian farmers to be mindful of on-farm biosecurity.

"Biosecurity is very important — you might think Australia might be a long way from anywhere but we are not," he said.

"If there was a serious disease outbreak it could be the end of the business. However, if you do your best you will minimise the risk and if there is a problem you will minimise the outcome."

Mr Byrd takes a number of steps on his 350-cow operation to minimise biosecurity



Signs such as this can help prevent visitors unwittingly bringing serious disease onto a farm.

risks including restricting visitors, composting dead animals and maintaining a closed herd.



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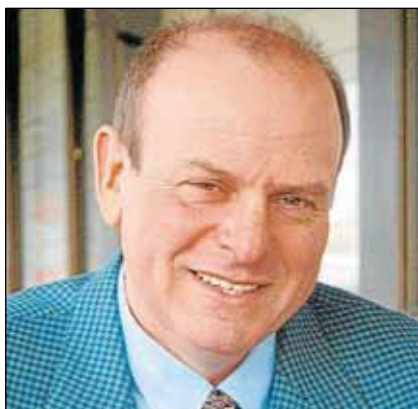
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**David Byrn says biosecurity is vital.**

"To me biosecurity is minimising people and animal contact with the people and animals on my farm so they are not being challenged with disease," he said.

"You perhaps should only let people onto your farm if they have an appointment. We've got a sign at the end of the drive and I restrict cold callers.

"As for your cull cow or knackery coming onto the farm well obviously they are only picking up dead animals from some-

**'All the stock were shot within 12 hours. I remember my mother crying at the kitchen sink.' — David Byrd**

where else and that's a risk so we compost all our dead animals now to minimise the issue."

Being a closed herd, Mr Byrd breeds his own replacements, all with artificial insemination.

The beef stock on the farm were bought in but were from a known source with disease accreditation.

Heifers on the farm have been blood-tested so Mr Byrd knows they are free from pestivirus. Cows are vaccinated on an annual basis and cows and young stock are also wormed every year.

"It's a frightening thing to happen but you are better to be prepared if something does occur," he said. "If I had a serious disease outbreak I would liaise straight away with my vet and with my dairy company." **D**

For more information see website <[www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Animal-management/Animal-health/Dairy-biosecurity.aspx](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Animal-management/Animal-health/Dairy-biosecurity.aspx)>.

## Embracing challenges

DAIRY NSW's newest extension coordinator is Josh Hack, who services the mid-north coast of New South Wales.

Mr Hack, who is based at Taree, NSW, has worked in the dairy community in northern NSW for the past two years. His background is in agronomy in broadacre cropping and pasture-based systems.

Mr Hack said he was looking forward to working with farmers and he had been connecting with dairy groups to determine their needs and identify ways they could be met.

"The modern farmer has a big job to balance everything in their business and I personally enjoy helping farmers through resources, programs and supporting social interaction and development," he said.

"My role as a co-ordinator requires me to be well-connected with the industry and to identify opportunities that help farmers to run successful farm businesses.

"We all have challenges but when we overcome them we are left with a sense of success and that's what drives me — helping farmers resolve challenges.

"I've been amazed at the way the industry works together and the resources we have. Between Dairy Australia, Dairy NSW, the sub-regional groups like the Mid-Coast DAGS (Dairy Advancement Group), processors, the NCDEA (National Centre for Dairy Education Australia), DPI (Department Primary Industries) and Local Land Services there is a lot at our disposal, and there's good examples of where that has all come together to provide benefits for farmers.

"I'm seeing a lot of farmers benefit from the programs we are running up here, like Feeding Pastures for Profit, the Focus Farms and the support available for discussion groups, to name a few. Part of my job is to help groups and farmers to access what's available and bring the value to farmers in local areas, which is very rewarding."

Mr Hack has a diverse background in agriculture, having first completed an apprenticeship on a mixed cropping and sheep property in Cressy, Northern Tasmania.

In 2003 he moved to Tocal Agricultural College, NSW, and completed a Bachelor of Agriculture. He has worked as a jackaroo in western NSW and also held management positions in the cotton industry including



**Josh Hack is the new extension co-ordinator for the Dairy NSW Lower Hunter and Mid North Coast region.**

manager of a 2400-hectare cotton property.

Dairyfarming brings different demands, he said. "I am constantly astonished by the complexity of a dairy system and the skill set a modern dairyfarmer has," he said.

Climatic issues also had provided some tough times for dairy-farmers in the region.

"The north coast of NSW during the past two years has experienced an exceptionally dry period, which followed floods in March 2013," he said.

"This coupled with high supplement feed prices has put pressure on cost of production. Hay

has been sourced from interstate and grain production in NSW has been affected by frost in 2013 and this year a tough dry finish has impacted on yields."

However, Mr Hack said there were a number of valuable programs that he would be involved in delivering to farmers that they could benefit from including Feeding Pastures for Profit, Churn Milk into Money, Eski HR workshops, Discussion Groups and Focus Farms. **D**

**Contact: Josh Hack about Dairy Australia programs in northern NSW on email <[jhack@dairyaustralia.com.au](mailto:jhack@dairyaustralia.com.au)> or mobile 0488 277 133.**

### Extension Co-ordinators make a difference

- Dairy Australia has extension co-ordinators in all regions.
- They are part of the Regional Development Program (RDPs) teams.
- They connect and work with farmer groups and farmers.
- They connect and work with extension providers.
- They connect and work with industry and milk processors.
- With the RDPs they work to deliver extension that is relevant, timely and well-delivered.
- They have contributed to more than 30% of farmers participating in Dairy Australia funded extension activities.
- Contact details can be found on the inside back cover of the *Australian Dairyfarmer* magazine (see page 114 of this issue).

## Regional Development Programs and Extension Coordinators



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