The Australian Dairyfarmer

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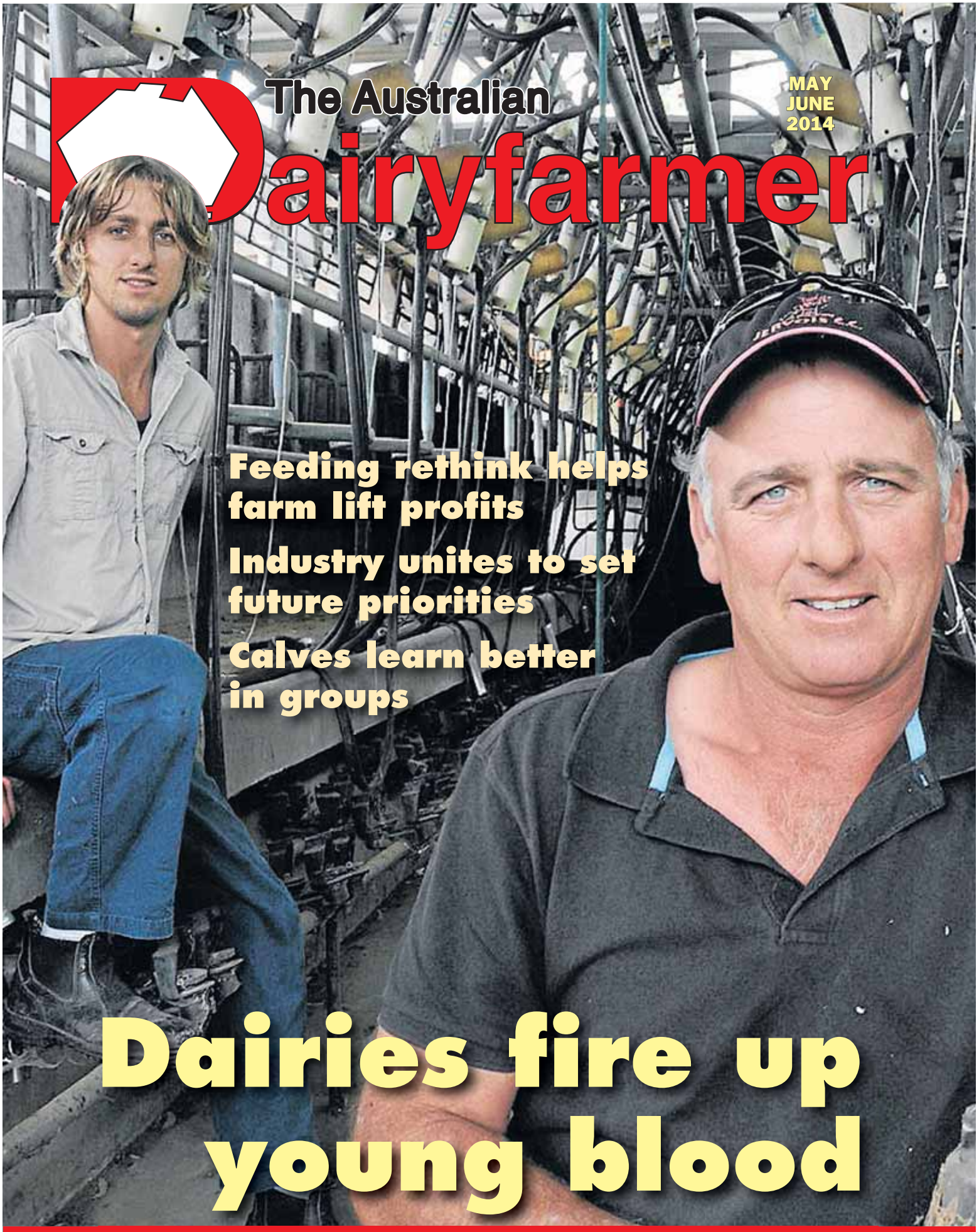

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Vol 29, No. 3 May-June 2014

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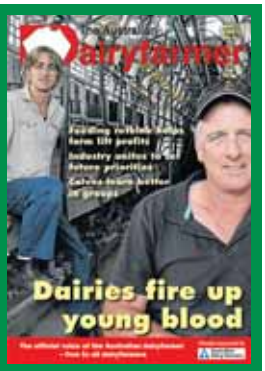

Young farmers are being drawn to dairyfarming in South Australia with old dairies re-commissioned.

Picture: TERRY GRANVILLE

NEWS

ATTRACTING AND DEVELOPING PEOPLE

PROMOTING & PROTECTING DAIRY

AUSTRALIAN BREEDING VALUES

UNDERSTANDING FEEDING

CALF REARING

VICTORIAN WINTER FAIR PREVIEW

INCREASING FARM PROFITABILITY

ON FARM

COLUMNS

Production-profit paradox

THERE'S been a lot of discussion in the dairy industry of late about profitability. It's vital that the discussion continues.

Carlisle River, Vic, dairyfarmer Matt Reid set the scene at the Dairy Summit in March with an impassioned plea for the Australian industry to take a leaf from its New Zealand counterparts and put profitability at the centre of farm operations.

But there still seems to be some confusion about what profitability means, how it should be measured and the steps farmers can take to improve it.

For a start, some still confuse production and profitability.

Higher production doesn't necessarily mean higher profit. The DemoDairy at Terang, Vic, has turned around a disastrous position in the past 12 months by reducing stocking rate and production. As the farm's consultant Paul Groves says in our story on page 68, the farm had been achieving more milk solids (MS) per hectare than the profitable farms in the region (1248 kilograms MS/ha compared with 775kg/ha) but production costs were prohibitive. So it was losing money.

The challenge is to unlock the production-profit paradox.

The heart of this paradox is that for some isolated parameters, more production does mean more profit.

For example, if two individual cows in a herd were being compared — the pair are living in an identical environment, are receiving the same amount of feed, are at the same stage of lactation and are the same age — then the one with the higher production is probably the more profitable. It's still only probable, because the one with the higher production might have fertility or health issues that cost more and, if inherent, might be being bred into the herd. It also depends on whether that production is being measured in litres or milk solids or, as Victorian dairyfarmer Bryan Dickson says in our story on page 51, whether the cow's "producing Physical" or milk high in solids. Again, if it's the Physical, it may not be more profitable.

Another example of the production paradox is if the whole farm production is compared from one day to the next. Farmers talk about knowing something's not right because they can see it in the vat. Again it makes sense. If there's been a sudden spell of hot weather, overall production might fall overnight. Clearly the farm is less profitable on that day than the previous one.

The challenge is setting the farm up right so that the production level is at the sweet spot — where the income and costs are aligned to produce most profit. And that sweet spot changes from day to day. Consultant Phil Shannon says there is a unique most-profitable feeding point for each business on any day of the year (see story page 74).

The production paradox also applies when looking at the industry level compared with the farm level. At an industry level — particularly when considering Australia as a dairy exporter — more production can make us a more reliable supplier of product into markets. That doesn't necessarily mean more profit but it is an important factor when dealing in fast-growing international markets. No customer wants to be relying on a supplier who can't supply more product when they are planning to ramp up production. For processors, more production can also mean better utilisation of the factory plant. Again it doesn't necessarily mean more profit but it can help.

At the farm level, the challenge is to get a handle on the farm system and have an understanding of the factors that drive profit — and at times to ignore those pushing the "more production" mantra.

Associate editor

Carlene Dowie

Follow me on Twitter @DowieDairyEd

The Australian Dairyfarmer

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EDITORIAL

Editor: ALASTAIR DOWIE
Associate editor: CARLENE DOWIE
PO Box 59, Carisbrook, Vic, 3464
Email: <carlene.dowie@fairfaxmedia.com.au>
Phone/fax: (03) 5464 1542
Mobile: 0418 553 282

ADVERTISING

Advertising manager: PETER ROACH
GPO Box 257, Melbourne, Vic, 3001
Email: <peter.roach@fairfaxmedia.com.au>
Telephone: (03) 8667 1127
Fax: (03) 8667 1141
Mobile: 0417 371 364

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Industry unites in future priority setting

THE world is run by those who turn up. These words spoken by the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, captured the spirit of the inaugural Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) National Dairy Farmers' Summit.

More than 150 farmers, processors and industry representatives attended the summit in March to heartily discuss, debate and churn ideas on the future of Australian dairy.

Farmers from every dairying region of Australia attended, including many previously not involved with the industry at a representative level.

ADF president Noel Campbell spoke for many in the audience when he paid tribute to the family members who, in many cases, stepped up to run the farm for the day.

"For many of you it's no small matter to pack your bags and travel the length of the country to be here," Mr Campbell said.

A key focus of discussions around the summit and the subsequent workshop sessions was on boosting farm profitability and driving industry investment and growth.

Mr Joyce opened the summit with a rousing address on the Federal Government's support for the industry and the opportunities available to Australian dairy, now and into the future.

"There is a great future for Australia dairy," Mr Joyce said. "The Asian market is coming to our doorstep and saying they want to buy. In the past we have had to go to markets but now they are coming to us."

The Minister also said that the industry was well-placed to meet increased demand for dairy products in Asia because of its reputation for quality and safety.

"Australian dairy products sell because they are clean and green and because our industry is reliable and our health standards beyond question," he said.

ADF CEO Natalie Collard, Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce and ADF president Noel Campbell.

Other guest speakers at the summit, supported by the Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC), Dairy Australia and Coles, included futurist Dr Robert Burke; dairyfarmer and Horizons 2020 working group member Matt Reid; Birchip Cropping Group chair Caroline Welsh; and owner and founder of Blackmore Wagyu Beef David Blackmore.

Carlisle River, Vic, dairyfarmer Matt Reid spoke about his experience with the Horizons 2020 working group and the need to improve Australian dairy's business culture.

"We all know people who make money and they'll say to you 'We've had a really good year last year but don't tell anyone'," Mr Reid said.

"We have to get better at promoting ourselves, build our self-esteem and build it fast."

Delegates hotly debated and voted on 18 priorities tht were presented from the six uniquely themed workshops.

ADIC deputy chair and Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF) president Robert Poole commented on delegates' passion during the priority-setting exercise.

ADF president Noel Campbell said

Vox pops

SIMONE Renyard
VICTORIAN dairyfarmer
WHAT are the challenges of running a dairy farm? *Tough years around milk price and input costs have made it hard for us to break even. Labour is a big issue, attracting good people and being able to keep good people is very difficult, and land prices have been very subdued.*

How do you see this summit helping you, if it can? *The fact we feel we have a direct line to Canberra, and Barnaby Joyce came here today. From a grassroots level, I think we are being heard.*

MICHAEL Partridge
WESTERN AUSTRALIAN dairyfarmer
WHAT challenges do you have at the moment? *Western Australia faces a shrinking industry where demand is going up and supply down. We don't have access to the world market and the domestic market isn't doing what it should as far as the value chain goes.*

If there is one thing that comes from today, what would it be? *Recognition of how important the dairy industry is going forward: that we do care about the environment and our animals and we need to make a profit at every level.*

Farmer Power secretary Karrinjeet Singh-Mahil voices opinion to the summit plenary room.

dairyfarmers, processors and industry representatives could take great heart from their collective efforts on behalf of the Australian dairy industry.

"Our future will be what we make of it, and it's fair to say that today we have taken a first, significant step towards achieving a positive vision for the future of Australian dairy," Mr Campbell said.

What Barnaby Joyce had to say:

"The first thing I would say is we need to have confidence in the industry. I believe there is a great future, you've seen that — no matter what side of the debate you're on — with Saputo Warrnambool Cheese and Butter issue."

Australian dairy has "the right demographics around us, with the right income stream coming into those households in Asia.

If we get out genetics right, our pastures right, our costs under control, I think we have a great future."

"Today I am here to listen; I am not the font of all knowledge. I want to walk out the door knowing more than I did when I walked in."

What the media had to say:

"The summit focused not only on what needs to happen at the farmgate but also across the broader supply chain, in the different markets we operate and among the general community.

"At the end of the day, the proof will be in the pudding: how we as an industry promote and progress the priorities for our joint benefit." — Rob McIntosh, *The Land*, New South Wales

South Australian MP, Robert Brokenshire said: "In more than 30 years of dairyfarming it was the first time he had seen all the States come together united and focused on growing the industry." — *Simone Smith,* Weekly Times*, Victoria*

Futurist Dr Robert Buke said: "Developing strategy stemmed from the conversations people had. People need to develop their 'story' for what they want in the future." — *Carlene Dowie,* The Australian Dairyfarmer*, Victoria*

Birchip Cropping Group chair Caroline Welsh said: "The key to success is collaboration. The people we need to talk to are the people we don't know yet. They're people who don't think about agriculture as (being) important to them." — *William Vallely,* Stock & Land*, Victoria*

Top three priorities:

1. Develop an industry strategy for innovation, investment and growth;
2. Identify pathways to success to encourage investment and confidence in the industry; and
3. Government to continue with the trade reform that benefits dairy.

To view the entire list of summit priorities, visit website <www.australiandairyfarmers.com.au>.

What's next?

ADF has commenced work on the *Summit Outcomes Report*, which will be delivered in April and made publicly available on the ADF website.

The report will contribute to the ADIC's strategic forum as the next stage of the industry's priority-setting process.

The forum, to be held in upcoming months, will involve a focused group of industry leaders from both the farming and processing sides of the industry.

The agreed summit priorities will guide the industry's collective work and will be presented to State and Federal politicians from all sides, including at industry events to be held in Canberra later this year.

ADF welcomes govt drought relief measures

THE Federal Government announced a $320 million drought relief package in late February, following lobbying from the National Farmers Federation (NFF), Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF).

The package will offer financial and social support to farmers and their families and communities currently in the grip of severe drought and aims to address rising debt levels, capacity to make household payments, limited water for livestock, personal stress and managing pest animals.

The NFF and ADF will continue to focus advocacy efforts on long-term drought policy reform to ensure outstanding proposed measures are also included in this package.

For more information on the package, visit website <www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/drought>.

Vox pops

LISA Dwyer
VICTORIAN dairyfarmer

HOW has the summit been helpful for farmers? *It is engaging dairyfarmers who aren't generally engaged in this kind of thing. I am really hopeful that we can get some grassroots ideas of how we can collectively progress our industry.*

What ideas would you like to promote today? *The biggest challenge is that we need to instil confidence in what we do. Our future is certainly looking a lot brighter than in the past and we need to focus on moving forward.*

CHERYL McCartie
TASMANIAN dairyfarmer

WHAT is the industry's biggest challenge? *Australia's dairy is so different across all States, which makes it harder to get things happening. Bringing everyone together under one roof today certainly goes a long way towards improving this.*

What do you think the future holds? *The future is about risk management and adopting a good business culture that puts in place effective strategies to deal with the effects of things we can't control.*

DairySA | Dairy Australia

DairySA Innovation Day 2014

From GLOBAL *to* local

Join the DairySA Innovation Day where we hear from some of the dairy industry's leading researchers and leaders as they describe the future of the dairy industry and how this relates back on farm.

Featuring will be **The Global Dairy Story**. What is the role and structure of the Australian dairy industry into the future? How today's dairy farms will need to adapt their businesses to capitalise on any change and be strong into the future.

We'll also explore the **"food bowl to Asia"** hype. Is that really what we are aiming for? What is the relevance to the Australian dairy industry?

Showcased will be the **NZ Robotic Dairy Arm**.

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Farmwalk steals a march

AUSTRALIA'S Longest Farmwalk, a series of 26 events held throughout the country's dairy regions to give farmers a direct say in the National Breeding Objective, finished at the end of March.

"If you connect all the places on a map where events were held, the total distance covered was about 9000 kilometres — the distance the Chinese army claimed to have traversed during its famous Long March in the 1930s," Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme (ADHIS) extension and education manager Michelle Axford said.

"It was an incredible effort by all 47 farm families to host Australia's Longest Farmwalk, with hundreds of dairyfarmers walking among their cows and voicing their views about the National Breeding Objective."

Altogether almost 600 dairyfarmers participated in the events, talking about the kind of cows they wanted to milk and making sure they were involved in setting the breeding direction for the Australian herd.

Ms Axford said Australia's Longest Farmwalk had achieved:

- awareness of the National Breeding Objective and the opportunity for farmers to be heard;
- better understanding of the current Australian Profit Ranking and its component Australian Breeding Values; and
- an acceptance that a single index wouldn't match every farmer's individual preferences but that farmers would still be able to pick and choose bulls from the *Good Bulls Guide* that met their specific needs.

Dairy Science Olympics scores white gold

Two important International Dairy Federation Symposia on dairy science, sponsored by Dairy Australia, were held in Melbourne in March. "Altogether we had nearly 200 of the top dairy scientists from all over the world for both symposia, and the feedback on the speakers, papers given and research findings has been excellent," Dairy Australia's program and chairperson of the symposia co-ordinating committee, Neil Van Buuren, said.

The IDF Symposia — international events held every four years — are among the most prestigious conferences on the science of dairy in the world. "It was a real coup to have these meetings held in Australia," Mr Van Buuren said.

Australia's Longest Farmwalk included an event at Gundowring in North East Victoria.

"The biggest driver to bring the symposia to Australia four years ago was the need to galvanise more interest in dairy science, and I'm happy almost every dairy scientist in Australia, through CSIRO and the University of Melbourne, attended the event," he said.

One of the largest delegations at the symposia was from Kazakhstan, a country determined to develop its evolving dairy industry.

Representatives of the Kazakhstan state and university sectors met with industry leaders after the symposia to discuss possible collaboration.

"It is thought that having the symposia in Australia may have contributed in some way to the development of that fledgling nation's dairy industry," Mr Van Buuren said.

New executive officer for Subtropical Dairy

Brad Granzin has been appointed as the new executive officer of the Subtropical Dairy (SD), one of eight regional development programs under Dairy Australia, which extends from the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland to northern New South Wales.

Dr Granzin, who holds a PhD in dairy science and has worked in the industry for 25 years as a researcher for the milk processing sector and recently in departmental management roles, will take up his new role on May 5.

"Brad's appointment is an excellent choice and I am delighted we have secured such a highly experienced expert who knows the region well," chair of Subtropical Dairy Ross McInnes said.

"Brad has been on the board of Subtropical Dairy and held the position of deputy chair from 2009 to 2011 so has an in-depth knowledge of the overall strategy and workings of our organisation."

Ready for Legendairy country footy?

The footy season is well under way — and it's going to be a Legendairy one.

As part of its focus on sports fans and physically active young Australians, Dairy Australia is partnering with the *Weekly Times* newspaper to promote Legendairy messages about the role milk plays as the ultimate sports recovery drink and the importance of dairyfarming to regional communities.

During the 2014 Victorian Country Football League season, the *Weekly Times*' Legendairy Country Footy Ladders page will feature a focus on the dairy industry for 28 weeks, including logos and advertising. There will also be a weekly Legendairy Snap photo competition at selected matches, giving fans the chance to win a Legendairy Sherrin football by being photographed barracking for their favourite local footy club.

The *Weekly Times* has a circulation of more than 59,000 copies each week.

DairySAT upgrade

Dairy Australia has launched an upgraded DairySAT self-assessment tool so farmers can keep up with current industry best practice and the latest science for natural resource management on their farms.

The revised version of the tool features new online functionality to help farmers through the 10 modules, which include soils, fertilisers and effluent management, so they can gain an overall view of the environmental issues facing their farms.

The new online DairySAT tool also offers comprehensive information and resources for specific issues as well as creating a personal action plan for farmers to follow.

To access the DairySAT tool visit <www.dairyingfortomorrow.com>.

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Young take lessons from NZ study tour

By CARLENE DOWIE

A STRONG business culture, clearly defined career pathways and a focus on quality were three key lessons the Australian dairy industry could take from New Zealand.

These were among the findings presented by five young Victorian dairy industry participants who took part in a New Zealand study tour in February.

The Gardiner Foundation/United Dairyfarmers of Victoria (UDV) tour visited the Waikato region in NZ's North Island and was led by UDV councillor Tim Leahy and UDV officer Yaelle Caspi.

Participants in the 2014 New Zealand study tour: Chris Potts, Kallan Young, Thomas Lindsay, Katherine Snell, Bradley Missen and William Ryan.

Focus on business

Denison, Vic, farmer manager Bradley Missen said the tour had inspired him to refocus on his farm business. "It gave me fire in the belly — I want to get more involved," he said. "The NZ farmers we met were the most enthusiastic group of farmers I have ever seen."

Mr Missen, who has been farming for 19 years, said career options and progression were better in the NZ industry. He said he planned to apply some of the ideas around succession planning and employment structures to his own business.

Farm managers generally had more training than those in Australia, with most holding degrees.

Mr Missen said he had been surprised that about half the number of workers employed on NZ farms were from overseas, reflective of an easier visa system — something that Australia needed to match.

He was also surprised that farmers were not regarded as highly as he had expected, with community concern around effluent issues, which made it a major management challenge.

Effluent systems that would have been regarded as good-quality in Australia were being replaced to ensure farms met guidelines.

The New Zealanders also had a stronger focus on quality, with milk rooms showing high levels of cleanliness.

But not everything was better. Mr Missen said the variation among cows within herds was noticeable and farmers still faced herd fertility issues, particularly in higher-producing herds.

Career pathways

The strong career structure for people in the NZ dairy industry appealed to Longerenong Agricultural College student Kallan Young.

Mr Young started working on a dairy farm on weekends when he was 16 before undertaking a school-based Certificate I and II on the farm in Years 11 and 12. He is now studying for an Advanced Diploma of Agriculture and a Diploma of Agronomy.

"Every farmer in NZ seemed driven; they were not lazy," Mr Young said.

All had goals and could clearly articulate those goals.

They also selected jobs on how they could give them wider experience and allow them to build assets. They budgeted for a wage they could live on and accepted the rest in assets (cows).

Sharefarmers saw their position as a job but with a different way of being paid.

Mr Young was particularly interested in the contract milker positions offered on farms. These staff were paid for kilograms of milk solids produced, were responsible for most stock activities and paid for inputs including power, rubberware and labour. They could be employed by 50:50 sharefarmers.

Mr Young said the Kiwi attitude to work could be summed up by a statement from one of the people they met: "Work like your next boss is watching". ▶

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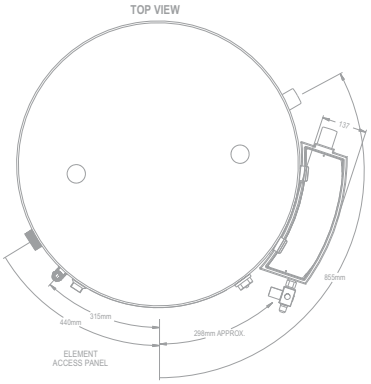

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Supplementary feeding

Thomas Lindsay, Picola, Vic, whose family manages a high-input partial mixed ration farm in northern Victoria, was interested in finding out more about NZ cow nutrition, supplementary feeding and pasture management.

He said the maize crops were impressive. Maize was seen as a good choice to use effluent water and was harvested and fed when there was less pasture to graze.

Other crops included chicory, plantain, grazed turnip and rape.

Mr Lindsay said all farmers fed palm kernel expeller (PKE), with the maize to help balance the diet. PKE was cheaper but the dependency of the NZ industry on it could be a risk, he said.

There was a trend of increased supplementary feeding in NZ, with more mixer wagons being used and a variety of supplements being fed, including tapioca, molasses, potatoes, corn and PKE.

But the Kiwi approach was generally to "milk off the cows' backs", particularly when grass was in short supply. Many farmers had adopted a three-times-in-two-day milking regime post peak lactation to try to help cows maintain body condition.

Industry confidence

Maffra, Vic, veterinarian Katherine Snell said the thing that struck her about the NZ industry was the pride farmers and service providers had in what they did and how they presented themselves.

Everyone involved in the industry set goals, was keen to share information and had a mentor. "Mentors — get one and be one," Ms Snell said was one of the lessons she had learned from the tour.

Other lessons included the benefits of getting involved in industry, hard work got people places and to not be afraid of risk but also be prepared to walk away if something was not right.

Ms Snell said the NZ industry was also unified and cohesive — partly as a result of having the one dominant processor in Fonterra.

Profitability focus

Fonterra milk supply policy officer Chris Potts, who has a background in agriculture and banking, said profitability was front-of-mind in NZ. It was the key to why NZ had grown in the past decade despite having higher costs of entry into the industry than in Australia.

NZ had higher land and cow prices and farmers had to buy shares in Fonterra to supply it.

But farmers in NZ understood margins — for example, they understood they must get a return for the cost of feeding grain.

Although there were farmers in Australia who also understood that, there seemed to be a "longer tail" here of farmers who did not. "They are having the right conversations there," Mr Potts said. Farmers talked about creating wealth.

Profitability paid the bills but the reason they invested was equity growth. "The ability to grow equity gives the ability to reinvest," he said.

Mr Potts said Australia needed more bigger farms that could accommodate sharefarmers if it wanted to match NZ's growth.

An 800-cow farm gave the opportunity for a sharefarmer to grow equity quickly, making it appealing. This also grew wealth for the farm owner.

Mr Potts said he planned to develop spreadsheets and tools to allow young farmers to understand their equity growth and to help attract outside investors to 800-cow farms that would appeal to sharefarmers.

Future bright

Student William Ryan also gave a brief presentation. Mr Ryan had been selected for the tour but was unable to take part as his father died just before it started.

He said he hoped to have another opportunity to be part of the tour because he saw the future of the dairy farm sector in Australia as bright. D

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Woolies strikes 10-year deals for milk

WOOLWORTHS has signed up Parmalat and Fonterra as its preferred supplier to bottle its $1-litre Select brand milk in Queensland and Victoria for the next decade. The deal follows a similar arrangement between rival supermarket chain Coles and Murray Goulburn Co-operative, which begins supplying private label milk in NSW and Vic in July.

Fonterra, which has traditionally turned its milk receivals into dairy products such as butter, cheese and milk powder, said the proposed long-term arrangement in Victoria would give its farmer suppliers market certainty to invest in their businesses with the confidence.

The Woolworths contract has also provided Fonterra with the confidence to spend more than $30 million installing new modern milk-processing facilities to supply private label milk from its Cobden site in South West Victoria by early next year.

Parmalat also picks up the Woolworths house-brand contract in NSW for two years, while Brownes will have a new contract to supply West Australian stores for the next seven-and-a-half years.

Lion will continue on a yearly contract basis in Tasmania, South Australia and Northern Territory.

Fonterra said it was still working with Woolworths to finalise contractual arrangements and reach a binding supply agreement.

Woolworths's existing contracts with the New Zealand-owned processing giant were for periods of one year.

Woolworths supermarkets managing director Tjeerd Jegen said the long-term contracts were a win for farmers and Woolworths customers, keeping milk in the State in which it was produced. This would be especially significant to consumers and suppliers in Queensland and WA.

"Fonterra has told us that with the certainty of a long-term contract they and their farmers can invest and innovate," he said.

"Changes like integrated seals for milk containers and new, modern processing equipment would not be possible without the investment brought about by this certainty. It's these innovations that will see better tasting, fresher milk available in Woolworths stores.

"We don't want to see milk shipped long distances which only adds cost and increases the time between the farm and the supermarket shelf."

Woolworths said because its Select private label milk was sourced from milk processors rather than direct from farmers it would have no direct control over farmgate prices.

Japan FTA dud deal for dairy

THE Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) has expressed its extreme disappointment about the proposed Australia-Japan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) announced by Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, last month.

Japan is the single most important market for the Australian dairy industry, with $511 million in exports in 2012/13. Under the terms of the agreement, the Australian dairy industry will save just $4.7 million in the first year of its implementation rising to an estimated $11.6 million by 2031, out of a total export market of $511 million.

This is just 0.1 of a cent per litre for Australian farmers in 20 years' time.

ADIC deputy chair, Robert Poole, said the agreement fell well short of the industry's expectations with minimal progress having been achieved in reducing a range of trade barriers.

"There has been no movement in this agreement on fresh cheese — the number one objective for Australian dairy, with tariffs to remain at 29.8%," he said. "While Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status has been put in place for cheese in Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreements, the exclusion of all other product lines leaves us vulnerable to one of our competitors reaching a more wide-ranging deal with Japan, that could leave the Australian dairy industry worse off.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott and his Japanese counterpart, Shinzo Abe, seal the Free Trade Agreement. Photo: Alex Ellinghausen

"This deal sends all the wrong signals to our key trading partners and is particularly troubling in the context of the upcoming FTA negotiations with China. As we seek to grow dairy exports to China we have one opportunity to get a China trade agreement right and it's time for the Federal Government to recognise the potential in dairy food export growth and prioritise this in trade negotiations."

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Industry growth needed: MG chair

THE Australian dairy industry must return to growth, chair of Murray Goulburn Co-operative (MG) Philip Tracey told the Australian Dairy Conference opening function in February. Mr Tracey said the industry needed to get past the nine-billion-litre level on which it now seemed to be stuck.

He said Asia offered a prime opportunity but more milk needed to be produced to take advantage of that. The industry needed to be competitive on the world stage and that required processor investment in new plant and equipment. That would help deliver higher prices to farmers to allow more investment and growth on farm, he said.

Mr Tracey said MG was disappointed to have missed out on the opportunity to buy Warrnambool Cheese & Butter to consolidate the industry but he said he was proud of the co-operative's efforts in a complex bidding process.

However, he said that was not the most important story for dairy. "The market is amazingly strong," he said.

Asian demand had driven a swift recovery in prices since last season and the Australian dollar was now sitting at a "more pleasing" level around the US90-cent mark, Mr Tracey said.

MG would continue to lift its efficiency and cut costs so it could lift underlying milk prices by $1 a kilogram of milk solids to boost farm returns and drive increased investment on farm, he said.

Murray Goulburn chair Philip Tracey: market is amazingly strong.

—— CARLENE DOWIE

Looking at past to shape future

THE United Dairyfarmers of Victoria looked to the past to find lessons for the future at its annual conference in Melbourne in March.

Former Australian Dairy Farmers chief executive John McQueen gave a history lesson about how the industry had developed in the past 40 years.

He said the number one lesson was that the industry needed to be united. "Division is death," he said.

But driving unity was tough because there would always be differences of views, emphasis and opinion within and between states and within and between processors.

They way to get past those differences was to engage and consult regularly and to understand that sometimes the only answer was to agree to disagree.

Mr McQueen said the 1970s were a pivotal time for the industry. In 1971-72, there were 48,000 farms producing 7.5 billion litres of milk, but then Britain joined the European Union, wiping out Australia's largest export market.

"The industry was in free fall," he said.

Some 10 years later, there were just 22,000 farms producing 5.3 billion litres.

The industry made a choice at that time to invest in research and development and to take the path to growth.

A key investment had been the establishment of the Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme that had laid the groundwork for the productivity gains through genetics.

John McQueen: division is death

—— CARLENE DOWIE

Latest news

WANT to catch up with the latest dairy news as it happens?

Visit *The Australian Dairyfarmer* website <http://adf.farmonline.com.au/> for news reports, on-farm stories and more.

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Looking at fixed-time AI?

By CAROL MILLAR

MORE farmers are considering the use of synchronisation and fixed-time artificial insemination (AI) programs to concentrate their breeding, but what are some of the most important considerations to take into account?

Plan, plan, plan

Fixed-time AI programs don't just happen; they require a great deal of planning. The beauty of this type of program is that the breeding season is concentrated into a short period of time. But, on the other side of the coin, they do require a lot of planning and homework.

Fixed-time AI programs are dependent on the administration of a number of medications at precise dosages and precise times according to a strictly laid-out program. It is absolutely vital to stick to the program that is laid out by the adviser and to be accurate with timing and dosages — any mistakes may result in poor results and a waste of time and money.

Get good advice

There are a number of different options for synchronisation and fixed-time programs — too many to list here. There is no "one size fits all" program that will work for every farmer in every herd so individuals should work out the one that best suits their situation.

It will pay to work with an adviser who is experienced in this area and who is across the latest information in the field. Talk to fellow farmers and find out who they recommend.

Sort out cow ID

Fixed-time AI programs tend not to work well in herds that have poor methods of cow identification or poor data records.

Using AI means the herd has access to the best genetics.

This is when previous investment in good freeze-brands or visible eartags will pay off. This is especially true if the program is not being done on the entire mob of heifers or the whole milking herd, because it will be important to ensure that, for example, pregnant animals are not injected with prostaglandin (PG) or that controlled internal drug release (CIDR) devices are not put into the wrong cows.

How many calves can the farm handle?

Sometimes it seems the perfect solution to breed the whole herd on one day in a fixed-time AI program but it is important that, at the other end of the pregnancy, the farm can handle a big bunch of calvings in a short period.

Are there adequate facilities in the calf shed? Does the farm operation have the staff to cope?

AI heifers — it pays

Fixed-time AI programs are ideal for use on heifers, especially if they are tucked away in an outpaddock and it is difficult to perform heat detection for an extended period. There are programs, for example, where the heifers need only be handled on three separate occasions in a seven-day period.

The heifers should be the best genetics in the herd and, if they are well grown, probably the most fertile animals. Recent advances with sexed semen — specifically fresh sexed semen — have resulted in many anecdotal reports of good results. But it is important to make sure the bull used is definitely a calving-ease bull.

It has become apparent recently that many Australian dairy farms do not have adequate supplies of AI-bred heifers as herd replacements — probably a result of the financial pressures and the attraction of the live export market. By joining heifers to superior AI bulls and using sexed semen, a farmer will be able to ensure a good supply of heifers coming through that will allow selection pressure to be applied in the future.

Book the AI technician early

More service providers these days are providing farmers with a complete repro service, from identifying which cows to breed, to inserting CIDRs and injecting according to the particular program, to supplying the semen and doing the AI and, finally, to doing early pregnancy checks.

Farmers who are not using one of these 'complete service' providers and are doing most of the injecting and programming themselves but need some extra help from a professional AI technician on the day of the fixed-time AI should ensure they contact their local service provider as soon as possible to book the AI technician. The experienced ones naturally become booked out fairly quickly.

Contact an National Herd Improvement Association of Australia (NHIA) service provider for more information and to discuss requirements.

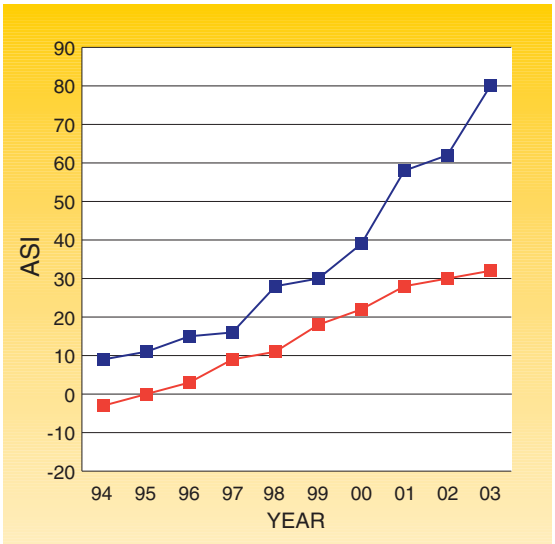
Joining more heifers to AI increases production growth

A f b i n Genetic prog ress in ASI. n in your heifers gives your herd faster genetic gains.

Whatever your breeding goals, your heifers are closer to that goal than your mature cows because they have the latest genetics. Breeding more of your heifers to high genetic merit AI bulls increases your genetic progress.

Joining more heifers has other benefits to your farming business also. The higher the number of heifers selected and joined into the herd, the faster the genetic progression of the herd. This also potentially reduces the average age of the herd, depending on your culling policies and allows greater flexibility in those culling decisions. Heifers also enjoy higher fertility rates than older cows and are therefore the ideal animals for your most valuable semen.

The progeny from your heifers will have greater genetic merit than progeny from the older cows in the herd.



Typical ASI trend in average herds (red line) with higher heifer AI rates (blue line).

Joining your heifers is easy.

Your local Herd Improvement Centre can advise you on which bulls will work on your farm. There are numerous high profit bulls with good calving ease ABVs suitable for use in heifer mating programs.

Many Herd Improvement Centres work closely with the local veterinarians so that access to synchronisation technology can be straightforward.

Discuss your heifer breeding program with your local Herd Improvement Centre today and unlock the full benefits of the investment in your current heifer genetics.

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Murray Dairy celebrates NCDEA ag graduates

NEARLY 40 new graduates from the Murray Dairy region were celebrated at the National Centre for Dairy Education's (NCDEA) graduation dinner. The graduates who completed study during 2013 received qualifications ranging from the Certificate II to the Advanced Diploma in Agriculture.

Dairy farm manager Theresa Hicks, who completed the Diploma of Agriculture, claimed the graduation's encouragement award.

The night's outstanding student of the year title was awarded to Kristen Clark, who was recognised for dedication to both her study and her farming commitments.

As a qualified engineer Ms Clark made a decision after four years in the field to return to the family farm, where she prefers the challenges and opportunities of a 700-head dairy farm.

The Finley, NSW, dairyfarmer completed a Diploma of Agriculture online with the NCDEA and praised the benefits of a course that provided her with flexibility and up-to-date industry-specific skills.

NCDEA 2013 Murray Dairy graduates.

"The flexibility of studying online was very useful as it saved travel time," Ms Clark said. "I was able to work right up

to class time and was still on-farm in case there were any issues.

"The material we learned was applicable in the management of the farm and there are a number of things I've now implemented such as a business plan and breeding plan."

Speaking at the awards ceremony, Dairy Australia (DA) chair Geoff Akers said it was great to see that farming families — who made up 98% of the dairyfarming businesses in Australia — recognised the vital importance of training and up-skilling their workers.

"The NCDEA gives individuals like Ms Clark the confidence of understanding their skills and how to develop them so they can use them directly on-farm, " Mr Akers said.

Mr Akers said the NCDEA had the structure, people and latest industry resources to develop knowledge and skills along the supply chain from the farm to the factory.

"Better trained and skilled workers increase productivity and profitability," he said. "This is why DA invests in the NCDEA to provide education and training opportunities for our industry.

"Providing and gaining formal credentials or 'benchmarking by qualification' gives individuals, industry and the community confidence that we will continue to make advances in productivity and profitability."

Ms Clark is passionate about continuing her commitment to the dairy industry and her family farm. Despite preparing for the birth of her first child in June, she has taken on another challenge and enrolled in further study, a Bachelor of Agricultural Business Management.

"I believe the medium to long-term outlook is good for the industry, which augurs well for young people choosing to pursue a career in dairying," she said.

For more information on NCDEA courses visit website <www.ncdea.edu.au>.

Kristen Clark was named NCDEA 2013 Outstanding Student of the Year.

Understanding how to write a position description

DEVELOPING an employee position description (or job description) is essential for the successful growth of a dairy farm business.

For an employment relationship to be successful both the employer and employee must share the same expectations about the job, and to make sure both parties are on the 'same page' a position description is vital.

A position description is a statement that explains a job and helps to clarify the skills an employee needs to perform the job. This enables dairy farm employers to identify the right candidate in the recruitment and selection process and also creates role clarity for a new employee.

To write a position description, the employer must think carefully about what is required in the position and of the new employee:

- What work will be undertaken?
- What skills are required?
- What hours will the employee need to work?

Employers should also think about their obligations in the partnership:

- What are the minimum wages?
- What other conditions may the employee be entitled to?
- What reporting structure will need to be in place for the new employee?

Developing a clear job description and keeping it up to date is time well spent.

A position description gives dairy farm employers a better chance of attracting and retaining the right people on-farm, as farms that have been successful in growing their business often have the right people in the right positions.

Tool to generate job descriptions

TIP: Both Dairy Australia's The People in Dairy website and Employment Starter Kit initiative (ESKi) have resources and templates to help make the recruiting process straightforward.

The Generator is a downloadable tool available from The People in Dairy website that helps to create simple Microsoft Word documents.

Once the tool has been downloaded and installed onto the computer, operators can use it as often as they like. The documents that can be created with The Generator include:

- position descriptions for the people working on the farm;
- standard operating procedures for a particular person, task or the entire farm;
- safety procedures for a particular person, task or the entire farm; and
- safety protocols related to safety procedures.

To download The Generator visit website <http://www.thepeopleindairy.com.au/recruitment/generator.htm>.

For recruitment information visit The People in Dairy website <http://www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/eski/employing_someone.htm> or refer to the *Employing Someone* tab in the ESKi for further information and templates.

Position descriptions

POSITION descriptions are important because they set guidelines and expectations for the employer and employee. They are also often used as the basis of performance appraisals.

A position description should include:

- job title and location;
- duties, responsibilities and tasks — what you need the person to do, who they are in charge of and who they report to;
- any required skills, qualifications, licences and experience;
- any other requirements — such as physical demands;
- employer expectations — such as production targets;
- any benefits — such as accommodation; and
- whether the position is full-time, part-time or casual.

Note: Do not include anything that is not necessary for the job such as gender, age or family responsibilities.

Developing Australia's future dairy leaders

SIXTEEN aspiring dairy industry leaders have started the 2014 Developing Dairy Leaders Program to build their skills in dairy industry policy, regulation and decision-making.

Developed by Dairy Australia and Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF), the program aims to build the leadership skills of people who are committed to the future of the Australian dairy industry and who have been identified to have the potential for state-level industry leadership roles.

Participants will learn how to articulate, present and debate ideas, provide advocacy representation, participate as a member of a board, participate in a media interview, and lead and manage community or industry organisations.

This year's program is aligned to the leadership programs of dairy organisations Bonlac Supply Company/Fonterra and Dairy Farmers Milk Co-operative and involves a diverse group of participants including farmers, farm managers and service providers from across Australia's dairy regions.

Dairyfarmer Tammy Negus applied for the program to build upon her leadership and management skills. From Tutunup, near Busselton, Western Australia Mrs Negus is a trained agronomist and married into a dairy farm where she enjoys the lifestyle of living and working on a 1300-cow farm.

"I applied for DDLP to improve my leadership, management, communication and confidence skills, personally and professionally," she said.

"There needs to be people with the skills and abilities to become leaders in the dairy industry, to take on board member roles and responsibilities and be advocates for dairyfarmers."

As a regional feedbase co-ordinator, WA Young Dairy Network co-ordinator and a policy advisory group member for people and human capacity with Australian Dairy Farmers, Mrs Negus said she would like to build upon her skills to become a better industry leader.

Developing Dairy Leaders Program participant Tammy Negus from Western Australia.

"I would like to be a dairy industry advocate, promoting to dairyfarmers and the community about our safe, healthy, dynamic industry that is wonderful to be a part of. I aim to be a better leader in the project areas I cover — feedbase, young farmers, people and human capacity," Mrs Negus said.

ADF president Noel Campbell said the program was a key activity in supporting the development of the dairy industry's next generation of leaders, and that the

dedication and willingness of participants to put something back into their industry was inspiring.

"It is encouraging to see a group of farmers so keen to build on their dairy careers, which just goes to show the future of our industry is in extremely good hands," Mr Campbell said.

The program started in March with a five-day residential in Melbourne with state and national industry leaders. The next phase of the program will involve a regionally based project with the support of an industry-leading mentor, and will conclude in June with a four-day residential in Canberra where participants will learn about advocacy and policy development at a national level.

Dairy Australia Industry People and Capability group manager Shane Hellwege said that the 2014 program had attracted passionate people from across the dairy industry.

"Dairy Australia is proud to support people who are committed, who want to build upon their skills and who aim to become future leaders of the dairy industry. It's great to offer a program that allows potential leaders to learn about industry-specific advocacy, networking and government issues," Mr Hellwege said.

2014 Developing Dairy Leaders program participants at Dairy Australia.

Dairy leaders program

2014 Developing Dairy Leaders Program participants:

- Andrew Beale, Cororooke, Vic
- Brian Schuler, Crossley, Vic
- Ryan Tuckett, Strathmerton, Vic
- Paul O'Malley, Cobram, Vic
- Leigh Schuuring, Smithton, Tas
- Rachael Finch, Denison, Vic
- Colleen Laws, Catani, Vic
- Georgia Sherborne, Burrawang, NSW
- Jane Sherborne, Burrawang, NSW
- Jane Sykes, Ringarooma, Tas
- Kate Bartlett, Woods Point, SA
- Luke Stock, Laidley, North Queensland
- Adam Blower, Forest, Tas
- Jessica Westwick, Warrnambool, Vic
- Stephanie Tarlinton, Cowaramup, Western Australia
- Tammy Negus, Tutunup, WA

The program was developed in response to the *Australian Dairy Industry Council Dairy Leadership — An Industry Blueprint 2010-15*, which identified that 200 leadership roles are required across the industry.

Contact: the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia, website <www.ncdea.edu.au>.

Learning from the experts

FOUR passionate new graduates have trained with some of Australia's leading dairy manufacturers, as a part of Dairy Australia's 2014 Dairy Manufacturing Scholarship Program.

Since February Mathew Boyd, Ruby Smith, Rebekah Sullivan and Brooke Smith have been learning about the relevant aspects of dairy manufacturing. They spent up to five days at the factories of sponsoring companies Murray Goulburn, Parmalat, Warrnambool Cheese and Butter, Fonterra, Lion Food and Drinks, Bega and Barossa Cheese where they learnt directly from dairy manufacturing experts.

The two-month program also included training through the National Centre of Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA) where the graduates learnt about Dairy Science Foundation studies, practical cheese making, market milk and milk fat products, and evaporation and spray drying of milk.

Recent Food Science and Technology graduate, Mathew Boyd, grew up on his family's dairy farm at Kerang, Victoria, and said the program has opened his eyes to what was possible in the industry.

"At university you're not aware of the whole picture — you have to meet the people," he said. "From talking to people in the factories you can see where they've come from and what they've gone on to do. The industry has plenty of opportunities for us to follow our interests.

"The NCDEA courses also helped to focus on the different facets of the manufacturing processes to better understand how all the different sections work together in the factory. I want to thank Dairy Australia and the participating companies, I feel privileged to have participated in the program."

Food Science and Nutrition graduate Ruby Smith grew up in Tasmania's Tamar Valley and said that the scholarship program had increased her passion to achieve her desired career pathway.

"I liked seeing how each company produces their own products and really enjoyed the interactions with the farmers and how they work together with the companies," Ms Smith said. "The program has made me even more passionate about my career pathway. I still want to work towards research and development, but I now also want to include the innovation side — something I didn't think about before starting the program."

Rebekah Sullivan, who completed a Bachelor of Applied Science in Food Technology, said she valued having access to large manufacturing sites.

"The most valuable part of the program was getting an overview of the various companies: how they operate and how the companies use the by-products from cheese manufacture," she said. "It was good to meet people who work in the industry. I want to work in product development and quality and also spend time on the production floor."

Brooke Smith, who recently completed a Bachelor of Food and Nutrition with a major in Food Science, said the experience had strengthened her interest in the dairy industry.

"I'd like to thank Dairy Australia and the sponsoring companies ... I've discovered the dairy industry is a very exciting field to be in," she said. "The program has not only confirmed, but also strengthened my interest in the dairy industry. Having a nutrition background, I've always wanted to incorporate it into my food science career. The dairy industry will allow me to do this as milk and its products are so nutritionally beneficial."

Dairy Australia program manager Dr Mani Iyer said that the scholarship program focused on attracting talented young people into the industry who had a passion for dairy. Forty-two graduates applied for the 2014 program and the judging panel had a challenging task of selecting the four winners.

"The aim of the program is to attract new graduates into the industry and train them, so they can build long-term careers in the dairy industry," Dr Iyer said. "Dairy Australia would like to thank all the sponsoring companies who make a fantastic contribution to the program by hosting the graduates and providing a good learning experience."

The graduates concluded the scholarship program at Dairy Australia on April 14, where they presented what they had learnt and gave an overview of their career aspirations to 40 industry guests. The program has an 80% success rate in attracting and retaining new graduates in the dairy industry, and the four 2014 graduates look forward to a rewarding career in the dairy industry.

The program is funded and managed by Dairy Australia and strongly supported by the dairy manufacturing industry. Applications for 2015 scholarship program are expected to open in October 2014. D

Contact: website <http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Education-and-Careers/Scholarships-and-Awards-V2.aspx>.

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Dairies fire up young blood

By ALISTAIR LAWSON

KEY POINTS

RETURN TO DAIRYING

- ✔ Younger farmers taking up dairying
- ✔ Demand for milk a driving force
- ✔ Building up herds gradually

ABOUT eight years ago, a combination of high feed prices, low milk prices and a family illness ahead of the drought forced the Zarantonello family at Jervois, South Australia, to cease dairying.

Since then, Rodger Zarantonello has run beef cattle, and bought more river flats and highland ground for cropping and hay production.

But the family's dairy has now roared back to life. At the time of going to press, the Zarantonellos were planning to start operating the dairy again by the end of April.

The main reason for the decision to restart the dairy has been the interest shown by Mr Zarantonello's eldest son, Joel. After Joel finished school he did an agricultural exchange program in Canada, fuelling his passion for farm work.

In between swings working in the mining industry, he helps Mr Zarantonello on the farm at home and has shown interest in moving back to the farm permanently to work.

"Doing what we were doing — running beef cattle and cropping — is not viable where we are when we're set up for dairying," Mr Zarantonello said. "We were milking 300 cows and, not long before we stopped, we extended the dairy to a 20-a-side double-up.

"Since we got out of dairying I always thought 'You never know what might happen', and the only way I thought we could make it work with Joel coming back on the farm was if we started milking cows again."

Mr Zarantonello has noticed a considerable difference in the attitude of milk processors since they left the industry. They were all "screaming out" for milk.

"Years ago when we got out they were all saying 'If you don't like it, get out'," Mr Zarantonello said. "Now they're all chasing more milk so they've certainly changed their tune a bit."

The Zarantenollos plan to supply United Dairy Power (UDP).

He cites the improvement in milk price as another reason they will start milking again. "I wouldn't do it if the milk price was still like it was eight years ago," Mr Zarantonello said.

"Nowadays I do all the hay and grain myself, whereas we used to buy it all in, so by doing that and not buying in from outside sources it will be different."

The Zarantonellos now own about 100 hectares of river flats, which Mr Zarantonello has laser-levelled, and just more than 400 hectares of highland for cropping and hay.

Mr Zarantonello said they had organised to buy 50 cows at first and would gradually build up numbers to a milking herd of about 150.

For the time being, Joel would continue to work in the mines but as he worked as ▶

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◀a two-week on-off fly in-fly out worker, he will work on the farm in his off weeks.

It is a similar story at Mount Compass, South Australia, where Perrin Hicks is going it alone after years of working on other people's dairy farms.

His father bought a dairy when Mr Hicks was 18 but for the past five years it had been leased out.

Mr Hicks said it was his overwhelming passion for the industry that had pushed him to run his own farm. "I couldn't describe the amount of excitement I have about running my own dairy," he said.

"It is a passion born years ago when Dad bought the farm and from working for other people.

"That has been invaluable in building my experience, and now I'm 37, I'm ready to dig in and give it a go.

"Tough times or not, I would still be doing it."

The farm comprises 190ha with a six-a-side double-up herringbone dairy which Mr Hicks will extend out to a 10-a-side.

He will start with 160 cows when milking kicks off in July before building up to about 200 milkers.

"The challenging part is the topography of the land. It's a bit steep in spots and not really the sort of land you can feed out on that easily so it will be mainly a pasture-based system," Mr Hicks said. D

Rodger Zarantonello and his son Joel in the family's Jervois, SA, dairy. Joel's keen interest in the dairy was the main reason for the decision to return to the industry.


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Community pitch for GM

By LOUISE PREECE

WITH genetically modified (GM) ryegrass on the cards in the near future, the dairy industry should act now to get the community on side. Those were the words of Dairy Australia's Paula Fitzgerald, who told the crowd at the recent Murray Dairy business forum at Moama, NSW, that the industry needed to be having a transparent dialogue with consumers now about the story of GM ryegrass.

Dairy Australia's Paula Fitzgerald says the industry needs to build up "community capital".

And with a GM legal battle playing out now in Western Australia, she said it was important to be having that talk from the get-go.

At the moment, Dairy CRC is working on developing a high-energy ryegrass, which has been made possible by the addition of two extra genes that store sugar. The pasture should be commercially ready by 2020.

Mrs Fitzgerald said the modelling to date suggested it was "nothing to be sneezed at". "It should deliver a benefit of $300 per hectare per year to our farmers," she said.

But she warned there were a few challenges ahead before the GM ryegrass reached that point.

"There are a number of things that influence consumer opinions," she said, adding that was where GM opponents came into the equation.

"There are large groups, internationally, who don't like GM crops and food. My view on that is they are often celebrities, they wear costumes and they create chaos."

If the dairy industry decided to take GM pasture to the next step, she said, the sector needed to engage with consumers and the entire supply chain.

The live export debate, and the subsequent reaction from the community, also highlighted the dire need for the dairy industry to have "community capital".

"Community capital is all about dialoguing with our community," Ms Fitzgerald said. "These days, it's not just the one in Australia — thanks to social media, it is actually a global community. It's about listening to our community and about having transparent dialogue."

Ultimately, she said, the dairy industry's ability depended on building trust so farmers had the freedom to operate in the future. She said agriculture in general needed to lift its community capital.

In 2000, a study revealed that 50% of primary school students believed farmers never used computers. A decade later, in 2011, a similar study was conducted by the Kondinin Group that revealed 75% of Year 6 students thought cotton socks came from animals.

"We weren't tracking that well then, either," Ms Fitzgerald said. "We have a challenge ahead to build up our young people's understanding of agriculture."

And while the sporting sector put their heroes on a pedestal, she suggested agriculture could do the same in a bid to lift community capital.

"If we take the emotion out of the debate — when and if we take our ryegrass forward — the question needs to be how do we explain this story," she said.

Improving farm profitability

Tyran Jones, Gardiner director and president of the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria, on his third-generation dairy farm at Gruyere in Victoria's Yarra Valley.

INSET: Tyran Jones with his wife Catherine, daughters Rori and Asha, and dog Huey.

By ALEXANDRA DE BLAS

CREATING sustainable profitability is one of the biggest challenges facing the dairy industry and one of the highest priorities for the new president of the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria (UDV), Tyran Jones.

"We need dairy farm systems that can ride the economic, seasonal and environmental volatility without too many people experiencing disaster," Mr Jones said. "Volatility is here to stay and we need to handle it better."

Mr Jones, a third-generation Gruyere, Vic, dairyfarmer milking more than 500 cows, is in his third year as the farmer representative on the board of the Geoffrey Gardiner Dairy Foundation. His interest in the dairy farm feed base is evident on his dryland dairy farm in Victoria's Yarra Valley, where March/April calving is well under way.

After five years as a structural design engineer, in the mid-1990s he returned full-time to the family farm, a property he runs with his father, Ivan. He's held a number of leadership positions, including seven years on the GippsDairy board (four as its chair).

"One of the biggest obstacles to improving profitability is cultural," Mr Jones said. "New Zealand's production has doubled in the past decade while Australia's production has declined.

"New Zealanders also carry higher debt levels and buy their right to supply the milk company."

But as he sees it, the biggest difference between Australian and NZ is "attitude".

"They are more positive and have a stronger business culture of knowing how to run profitable systems," Mr Jones said.

"Farmers who do well there are held in high regard, whereas farmers who succeed in Australia are subjected to the 'tall poppy syndrome'. If the industry is going to grow in Australia, a cultural shift is needed."

The industry struggles with the diverse geographic spread of farms and the seasonal diversity within regions but "there are profitable farmers in every circumstance, in every region, and we are not learning from those farmers running sustainable, resilient systems".

"We need to take the next step to embrace and learn from our successful farmers," he said.

Mr Jones sits on the Gardiner board's innovation committee as the organisation transitions from supporting a larger number of smaller investments to a smaller portfolio of larger projects.

Post-farmgate there may be potential for the industry to invest in research and development capability building to enhance innovation for the processors and manufacturers, while pre-farmgate the next step is to identify where Gardiner can best add value to the sector in line with the na-

tional research, development and extension framework.

"The industry needs to work out what its priorities are in the genomic space, as the Dairy Future CRC's funding comes to an end in 2016," Mr Jones said.

He is in a provocative mood right now, with a UDV draft vision paper doing the rounds.

"There are some tough debates that need to be had," he said.

"The industry doesn't know where it wants to be in the next 10 to 20 years. If we can get agreement on a vision for Australian dairy then a whole lot of investment programs can fall into place."

A good feed base is important when running more than 500 cows on a dryland milking area of 150 hectares.

No value in blanket treatment with GnRH at AI

BLANKET use of Gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) at the time of artificial insemination (AI) should cease, and its use in the majority of cows could in fact be harmful. That is the finding of a research project funded by the Gardiner Foundation and supported by HiCo and Bayer Animal Health.

Maffra, Vic, veterinary epidemiologist, Dr Richard Shephard, of Herd Health, was seeing an emerging trend in the use of GnRH at the time of AI and was concerned that there was no evidence to support its use.

It is an expensive drug, at five to six dollars a dose, Dr Shephard said. "And I was concerned that farmers could be adding complexity to the AI process and wasting their money," he said.

GnRH is proven to be effective as part of a synchrony program before AI, but not when administered at the time of insemination.

"As the reproductive performance declines in Australia, farmers can clutch at straws, thinking if it has worked on occasion overseas it may work here," Dr Shephard said. "It had got into the psyche of some vets and farmers that it might lift conception rates."

Dr Shephard said he had expected it might work in a proportion of cows, but found it was effective in only 10%, a much smaller proportion than he initially thought.

The research was conducted in 16 spring-calving herds in the Macalister Irrigation District. All farms used AI, performed early pregnancy-testing and herd recorded. All cows were natural heats and 3000 inseminations from 2350 cows were available for analysis.

Dr Richard Shephard has completed a study showing the use of GnRH at AI is ineffective in most cows.

It found a 12% increase in conception rate in about 10% of cows. These cows can be clearly identified:

- with a milk protein greater than 3.75%;
- with milk protein between 3.00% and 3.50% and less than 40 days since calving.

It is harmful to treat cows with milk protein concentrations of 2.75% or less and this is strongly discouraged.

There also appears to be a small reduction in conception rate in all other cows.

There is an opportunity for farmers who stop using GnRH in the wrong cows to markedly reduce cost, effort and negative effects, while if they want to go to "the extra effort of identifying the 10% of cows who respond positively to it, they will make a fantastic return on their money", Dr Shephard said.

A paper by Dr Shephard and his colleagues was published in the peer reviewed international journal *Animal Reproduction Science* in January and has been one of the journal's most downloaded articles this year.

The Gardiner Foundation is assisting Dr Shephard to present his findings at the World Buiatrics Congress 2014 in July. The biennial conference on the study of cattle and their diseases will be hosted by Australia in Cairns, Queensland.

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

— ALEXANDRA DE BLAS

Australian dairy leads global bone health study

IN A world-first, Australian researchers are leading a major internationally funded clinical trial into the impact of increased dairy consumption on bone fractures among the elderly.

Dairy Australia has formed partnerships with six organisations in the United States, Europe and Australia to help co-fund the $3.7 million, five-year project.

"Fracture rates are high in the elderly, and higher still among elderly in aged care," said Dr Sandra Iuliano, a bone researcher at the University of Melbourne who is leading the trial. There is evidence that dairy foods are a potential solution.

While many people may try to start and end the day with dairy foods such as milk, cheese and yogurt, most Australians are not getting enough. This is especially true for those living in aged care, where Dr Iuliano said the intake of the dairy food group was typically less than half the amount recommended in the Australian Government's 2013 Dietary Guidelines.

More than 3000 residents at 60 Victorian aged-care facilities will take part in the trial, which is already underway. Half of these residents will be served a dairy-enhanced diet for two years and half will continue with their usual diet. Dr Iuliano's team will assess fracture rates, falls, mortality, cardiovascular health, muscle maintenance, physical function and malnutrition.

With better healthcare, Australians are living longer. But it comes at a price as aged care is a reality for an increasing number of people, and so too are rising healthcare costs.

As people live longer their bones also need to live longer. But for far too many Australians, bone deterioration — or osteoporosis — is a serious issue. It currently affects 1.2 million Australians, most of whom do not know they have the disease. Without intervention, this number is expected to increase to three million by 2021.

"Not only are fracture costs a significant drain on healthcare budgets, they are often the trigger that forces people to give up independent living," Dairy Australia's program manager, nutrition research and science, Dr Anita Lawrence, said. "It's a really significant and much-needed study."

The choice to conduct the study in Australia was a logical one.

"Thanks to Dairy Australia funding we were able to conduct previous studies into dairy and bone health in aged care settings," Dr Iuliano said. "We've built up a lot of credibility and expertise in the area."

New-look bones week planned

WITH osteoporosis rates rising in Australia, it's more important than ever to encourage Australians to take action to boost their bone health.

Now celebrating its 20th anniversary, the Dairy Australia-led National Healthy Bones Week has had a facelift for its 2014 campaign, to be held from August 3 to 10.

With a new logo and a new name, Healthy Bones Action Week continues to be an important dairy education event on the national health calendar.

Healthy Bones Action Week promotes three simple, low-cost ways to boost bone health: by eating dairy foods, exercising and getting vitamin D from the sun.

School and community-based awareness activities, as well as media coverage and free programs run by employers, will help spread the word.

HEALTHY BONES ACTION WEEK

Stronger Bones, Stronger You

This year's *Stronger Together* campaign focuses on women, and in particular mothers aged between 30 and 50, to help combat osteoporosis.

For more information and to get involved visit website <www.healthybones.com.au>.

There has never been a trial specifically investigating dairy intake and fracture rates. But if the trial directly links increased dairy consumption to a reduction in fractures, the benefits could be significant to the dairy industry and the Australian healthcare system, including potential policy changes.

"Providing the required daily serves of dairy ideally would be part of an aged-care facility's accreditation process," Dr Iuliano said of the trial's potential impacts.

"There's also the public health point of view; we could use evidence from the trial to promote dairy as being directly responsible for fracture reduction."

Supplements such as calcium and vitamin D tablets have been used in aged care facilities to try to counteract fractures, but there is growing evidence that these are ineffective, costly and do not meet all the nutritional needs for some residents.

"The elderly are often deficient in a whole range of other nutrients as well," Dr Iuliano said. "Dairy foods are a complete package of more than 10 essential nutrients that makes them better still.

"Increasing dairy food intake can also help to reduce unwanted weight loss in elderly people, decrease reliance on dietary supplements and potentially lead to significant cost savings for the facility."

Research is underway on the health benefits of dairy foods for older people.

Dr Lawrence said: "People don't want to be taking more tablets. This isn't a one-nutrient story. We need a food-based solution." But Dr Lawrence said the study could also help with lifestyle decisions, well before aged care was a consideration — demonstrating the importance of an adequate dairy intake for bone health in all adults.

"Strong bones can mean being able to run after your grand kids and being active around the farm for longer," she said.

Other funding partners:

- California Dairy Research Foundation
- Dairy Management Inc.
- University of Aarhus/Danish Dairy Research Foundation
- Fonterra Australia (Primary provider of dairy products for the trial)
- Dutch Dairy Association
- Dairy Council of California

Dairy Australia
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Key market insights at hand

MORE than 800,000 tonnes of Australian manufactured dairy product (40% of national milk production) is exported each year to 107 countries, generating more than $2.7 billion for the economy per year.

About 60% of all manufactured dairy product in Australia is exported, which is mainly made up of cheese, skim milk powder, whole milk powder, butter and butter oils. Australia's key export markets are Japan, China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan), South East Asia and the Middle East.

Last year Dairy Australia (DA) identified a growing demand for information about Australia's role in key dairy export markets and its competitive positioning within these. This led DA to start development of a suite of country market briefs covering 25 destination markets to inform dairy companies, farmers, government officials and politicians.

The first tranche in this series of country market briefs has now been completed.

The aim of the country market briefs is to equip stakeholders and representatives of the Australian dairy industry with a snapshot of Australia's activity within key markets and to enhance the potential for positive outcomes in key demand markets.

The briefs cover specific country information on imports, Australian market share, market developments, tariff environment and DA's activity to maintain market access and strengthen country to country relationships. They also include graphs and charts summarising key trade data for easy reference.

Key elements from each market brief will be covered in *The Australian Dairyfarmer*. In light of the recent Free Trade Agreement, the first market to be highlighted will be South Korea.

The briefs will also available on the Dairy Australia website.

The briefs are compiled by Amy Bellhouse, Dairy Australia analyst, email <abellhouse@dairyaustralia.com.au>. D

South Korea

AUSTRALIAN market share: The Republic of Korea is Australia's ninth largest dairy export market (in terms of value) and was the destination for 21,000 tonnes of Australian dairy products for the 2012/13 financial year, worth US$87 million. Cheese represented 34% of these exports (by USD value), followed by skim milk powder (23%), infant powder (15%), condensed milk (7%) and liquid milk (6%).

Exports of infant powder from Australia to Korea grew by 46% (in USD value terms) across the five years between 2008/09 and 2012/13.

Market developments: Cheese represents 47% of Korea's dairy imports (by USD value). Both the number of milking cows and Korean raw milk production increased by 12% (2.18 million litres) between 2011 and 2012.

However, increased milk prices and rising labour costs have seen a decrease in the proportion of raw milk used for products such as cheese, despite rising demand. Total production of fresh and processed cheese was 25,000 tonnes in 2008, while consumption was 72,000 tonnes (a shortfall of 47,000 tonnes).

In 2012, production was 22,400 tonnes, consumption 82,400 tonnes, and the shortfall 60,000 tonnes.

Mozzarella is the most popular cheese type, and is used in pizza fast-food outlets and European restaurants. Unusually for the region, consumer preference for chilled fresh/pasteurised milk results in limited retail demand for long-life/UHT milk (USDA-FAS GAIN report KS1347, 2013).

Tariff environment: The United States (March 2012) and European Union (July 2011) both have FTAs in place with Korea. Australia is at a commercial disadvantage as a result.

Under the FTA agreement concluded by Australia and Korea (known as KAFTA) in December 2013, import duties and volume restrictions will cease to apply to most Australian dairy products in the long-run. KAFTA tariff phase-down periods are three or five years longer than those agreed under the US-Korea FTA (known as KORUS), and will not start until KAFTA is ratified.

For example, if the KORUS phase in period is 10 years, then KAFTA will be 13 years — and if the agreement is ratified in 2014, the phase-in period will be completed in 2026.

The exceptions, which will not be liberalised for Australia, are milk powders and evaporated milks (All 0402 tariff lines), buttermilk (tariff code 0403901000), curdled milk (0403902000), kephir (0403903000) and other acidified milk or cream (0403909000).

Figure 2: Top Australian dairy exports to Korea by volume.

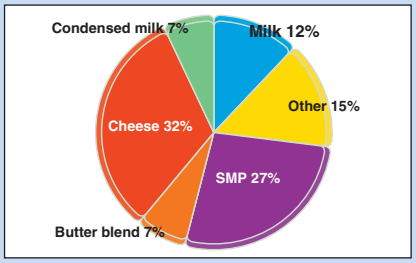
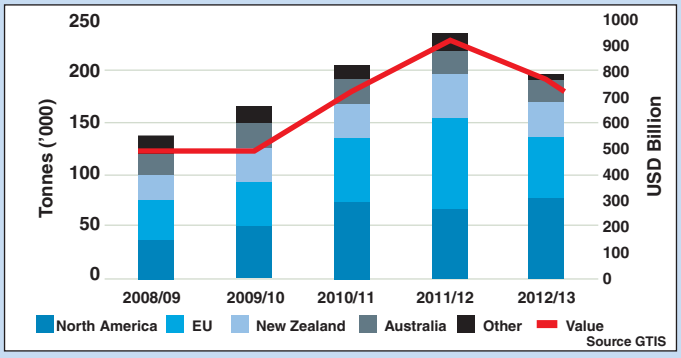


Figure 1: Korean dairy imports.



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Be prepared: focus on managing potential issues

THE benefits of all the great work happening in the dairy industry can be wiped out in a stroke by a negative story in the media or a health or food safety scare.

The impact can be severe: increased government regulation, falling consumer confidence or retailers introducing new terms of business.

Dairy Australia plays a c-oordination role to ensure the entire dairy value chain speaks with one voice when the industry's reputation or credentials come under scrutiny. Through a well-established 'issues management framework', threats arising at local, State or national levels are addressed before they escalate into a crisis.

"Most people remember the melamine scandal in China a few years ago," Dairy Australia's issues manager Dr Julie Iommi said. "We triggered our process at that time because consumers in Australia and in our international markets wanted reassurance that our systems were robust and a similar deliberate contamination crime could not happen here.

"Our focus is on risk management and issue prevention and preparedness. Maintaining a network of key contacts across the industry is crucial because we need everyone to be on alert for potential threats to the industry's reputation."

If people have concerns, it is helpful to raise them directly with Dairy Australia or via a local dairy farm leader.

"Everyone has a role to play to protect the industry," Dr Iommi said. "We can all act as an industry custodian and champion."

The issues management framework com- ▶

On a mission in China

THE Australian dairy industry is pulling out all stops to remain top of mind with key customers and government officials in the major export market of China. Top of the agenda was reinvigorating progress towards a free trade agreement (FTA) with China, which was part of Prime Minister Tony Abbott's week-long trade mission last month to countries including South Korea and Japan.

Dairy Australia (DA) managing director Ian Halliday, Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) president Noel Campbell and Murray Goulburn chief executive Gary Helou were part of the Prime Minister's trade mission in China, which also coincided with Australia Week, where Australian dairy was showcased to key clients.

"To be involved in such an unprecedented mission for the Federal Government was a valuable opportunity for dairy to reinforce the importance of our trade with government leaders," Mr Halliday said. "Considering the strong reputation and relationship Australian dairy has in place with China, it is important we have a seat at the table on such trade missions, and we used the opportunity to push the benefits of an FTA with China which would aim to overcome the competitive disadvantage we currently face with New Zealand due to its FTA.

"Our involvement has ensured dairy remains at the forefront of trade discussions with China, which is critical for Australian dairy exports and in turn the growth of our industry. Existing tariffs restrict our ability to have open access to key markets, sometimes adding up to 30% on contracts."

DA international market manager Sarah Xu and Mr Campbell led the dairy industry's program in Australia Week, which involved a joint seminar with Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) and Wine Australia. Ms Xu took the opportunity to highlight the dairy industry's renowned food safety reputation and traceability processes across the whole value chain.

"The food safety and quality system of the Australian dairy industry is of the highest standard across the world, which is very important to our Chinese customers," Ms Xu said. "We have an excellent track record of producing safe and quality dairy foods — and it is something we can easily demonstrate."

Other key messages delivered throughout various meetings and dinners highlighted Australia's flexibility across the whole supply chain, through farm production systems and the breadth and diversity of processing companies. Key clients were also reminded of Australia's ability to satisfy a diversity of needs with a range of value-added products, functional ingredients, infant formula and retail package products.

At the same time, DA conducted its annual international market development program seminars in Japan for key customers across trading houses, cheese processing companies and food manufacturing companies.

DA international trade development manager Peter Myers and commercial research and analysis manager Norman Repacholi conducted a number of seminars in the Kansai region (home to Australia's cheese customers) and Tokyo. The agenda covered an update on the Australian industry, including company movements and the global market and commodity prices.

DA chairman Geoff Akers was also involved in a trade mission to the Middle East with Federal Minister for Agriculture Barnaby Joyce. The delegation, which included representatives from the meat, livestock and grains industries, travelled to Saudi Arabia and visited one of the Middle East's biggest dairies in Riyadh.

Mr Halliday said the recent program was a great example of all dairy organisations working in collaboration both for the good of the industry and to secure its future.

"The important point to make is while we have seen a lot of government trade activity take place, we have been able to lift the profile of Australian dairy, reminding our leaders dairy is important to the Australian economy and a major export industry," he said. "The industry will continue to work together to seek the best outcomes in trade policy and market access to maximise profits for Australian dairyfarmers."

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◄ plements other Dairy Australia initiatives such as on-farm animal husbandry skills development, farm and factory quality assurance and food safety improvements and national animal disease eradication projects.

It is all about being on the front foot. In the same way that a farmer can look at his or her business and identify and plan for risks, the industry has developed controls to identify threats early, be clear about when they are escalating, prepare to communicate in one voice and, ultimately, minimise damage to reputation.

Government agencies and livestock industries are participating in a national program, Exercise Odysseus, to raise awareness and test aspects of Australia's readiness to manage an exotic disease outbreak.

Exercise Odysseus is a series of discussion exercises and field activities throughout 2014 to help assess plans and procedures to implement a national livestock standstill in the event of a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak.

According to animal health and welfare manager at Dairy Australia, Dr Robin Condron, if Australia had a foot-and-mouth outbreak, a critical step to limit its spread would be to stop the movement of all susceptible livestock across the nation, initially for a period of 72 hours.

Exercise Odysseus aims to raise awareness to manage an exotic disease outbreak and protect the dairy industry's reputation.

"A livestock standstill is an essential disease response activity that would help to contain the disease and allow authorities to conduct tracing and surveillance to determine and implement further response measures," he said.

While the major focus of Exercise Odysseus is on carrying out a national livestock standstill, the dairy industry will take the opportunity to assess plans to manage the biosecurity for the transport and handling of milk when the standstill is implemented.

"The dairy industry has worked very hard over the last decade to make sure the plans and arrangements for managing milk during a disease emergency are practical and recognised by government," Dr Condron said.

In spite of its fearsome reputation, the virus that causes foot-and-mouth disease is readily killed by pasteurisation. It is not considered a human pathogen and it has no implications for the safety of the human food chain.

An equally valuable outcome from Exercise Odysseus is that farmers recognise the importance of being on the lookout and investigating any unusual symptoms in their herd.

Lessons from the Exercise Odysseus activities will be reported on later in the year. D

Dairy Australia
Your Levy at Work

Global analysis fresh from the farm

WHAT dairyfarmer doesn't relish the opportunity to give his son a reality check when they work in the big smoke? More often than not, however, the son doesn't take heed.

But for John Droppert, he actually asks for it. As Dairy Australia's global market industry analyst, it's an invaluable luxury that helps him ensure he is providing value to the industry.

"If there's something I want to test or see if it hits the mark, I'll be on the phone to dad and vice versa," he said.

Mr Droppert's parents, Gerald and Jenny, operate a dairy farm in the heart of the Macalister Irrigation District in Gippsland, Victoria. It was the Melbourne University graduate's playground growing up.

"Mum and dad bought the farm and built it up across a number of years and I helped out wherever I could on holidays with fencing and paddock work," Mr Droppert said.

Unlike most economic analysts, Mr Droppert still has his feet firmly planted on farming soil. He commutes to Melbourne every day from his 16-hectare hobby farm in West Gippsland, where he loves nothing better than jumping on his tractor after a week of number crunching.

John Droppert feels right at home on his tractor at his small Gippsland farm where he lives with wife Laura.

Mr Droppert, who has a degree in Agricultural Science and Commerce, started with Dairy Australia in April 2012. Throughout his university days he worked with Cowbank, Warakirri Dairies, Rabobank (in the Food and Agribusiness team under Tim Hunt) and also completed work placement with Dairy Australia in 2009.

Before Dairy Australia he was with Rabobank working on credit submissions, but it was his connection with the dairy industry that drew him to Dairy Australia.

"I thought it would be a good opportunity to combine my dairy background with my degree and put it to good use for the industry," Mr Droppert said.

"Having that dairyfarming background and knowledge gives me an extra level of understanding of the link between pre and post farmgate and export, which is important when it comes to making our analysis meaningful.

"I'm two years in and it is amazing how quick you find your feet, but there are still things I am learning. I think it is important to get a feel for what is going on in the market and understand how the relationships work between companies and markets."

Mr Droppert's role involves taking global dairy market information, distilling it into useful insights and providing value to farmers and processors through data they can use in business planning. About one third of his time is dedicated to answering queries from processors, government and media.

"And this side of it is just as important because it's about helping the public understand the industry," Mr Droppert said.

Building connections: going social

WHETHER you love it or hate it, there's no denying that social media can pack a punch. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and countless other platforms have quickly become powerful communications tools for both individuals and companies.

"Social media is a great way to connect with people not just in Australia but all over the world," said avid Twitter user and Margaret River, Western Australia, dairyfarmer Stephanie Tarlinton. "Being part of that sharing, communicating and connecting with both our consumers and other farmers is so important for us."

Ms Tarlinton is one of a growing number of dairyfarmers of all ages who have embraced social media to spread positive messages about the industry and help run the farm business.

"As a farmer you can often feel quite isolated on your farm, but social media gives us an outlet to strategically connect with people and let them know what happens on our farm every day," she said.

Sporting the Twitter handle @ProudlyDairy, Ms Tarlinton tweets on topics ranging from photos of what's happening on her own farm to bigger questions about how the industry can more positively promote its future, including her opportunity to meet federal Minister for Agriculture Barnaby Joyce at the Australian Dairy Farmers Summit in Melbourne in March.

She also joined in the recent buzz around a Facebook competi-

New Legendairy website now live

AUSTRALIA'S dairy industry has a new website, <www.legendairy.com.au>, launched in April by Dairy Australia (DA).

The new site is full of industry facts and figures, nutritional science, information on how dairy products are made and Australia's largest collection of dairy recipes.

It also showcases farm life with striking photographs from farms right across Australia and a growing series of videos in which farmers share their own experiences.

"It's an opportunity for city-dwellers to get a glimpse of farm life," DA's group manager of industry promotions and product innovation, Isabel MacNeill, said. "At the same time, the videos focus on a range of topical information such as sustainability and business planning that will be of interest to other farmers.

"It will be a great reference for teachers, students, food lovers and health professionals and also help people working in the dairy industry provide easy answers to all those questions that we do get asked regularly."

Anyone who wants to show their industry pride can also buy Legendairy merchandise from the Legendairy online shop.

Dairy Australia
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Margaret River, WA, dairyfarmers Stephanie Tarlinton and Bryn Jenkins are keen advocates for the industry.

tion on the dairy industry's Legendairy page, which saw more than 60 farmers jump on the global 'selfie' craze by snapping pictures of themselves with their cows and posting them online.

"People drive the dairy industry," said Ms Tarlinton, who's a vocal supporter of the Legendairy messages. "Dairyfarming is not just on the farm; it's also in our local community, right across our State and nationally and internationally. Legendairy is a great way to create a connection between the farmers and the people in our community who we support."

Embracing the dynamic nature of social media is just one element of making the dairy industry more accessible to both the public and a new generation of potential dairyfarmers.

"I think there's a challenge in people really understanding the opportunities that are in the dairy industry," she said. "A lot of people have perceptions about our industry but haven't had the exposure to it growing up. I've been fortunate to milk cows in seven different countries and gain some great perspective."

Bryn Jenkins, Ms Tarlinton's partner, agrees.

"We're both fortunate to have done a bit of travelling and you soon realise the quality of the dairy products that we have in Australia," Mr Jenkins said. "We're producing some of the best milk in the world. I don't think we're being false to stand up and say that."

With dairying in their blood, it's safe to say they're firm believers in the many benefits dairyfarming can offer young people.

Ms Tarlinton's family has farmed in Cobargo near Bega, New South Wales, since 1829. The sixth-generation dairyfarmer headed west last year to join Mr Jenkins, a Margaret River native whose family moved from England to join the local dairy industry more than 30 years ago. The couple milk 300 Holsteins with Mr Jenkins's parents on their property.

"It's important to have young people for the regeneration of the industry, for new ideas and enthusiasm, and to challenge the status quo," he said. "Dairying has to constantly evolve and move forward."

Ms Tarlinton said: "We're so fortunate to be able to work with each other and at a young age be our own bosses and really drive the business, plan our future and see the results from the effort we put in."

Part of that effort is also focused on the broader industry. Ms Tarlinton works two days a week as dairy executive officer for the Western Australian Farmers' Federation, looking after policy work, and the couple has come to appreciate what building a strong reputation can do.

"It's really important to promote the industry to the broader community," Mr Jenkins said. "But we also have to support the understanding within the industry of what we do and how great it is."

For more information visit <legendairy.com.au>.

Brighter close for 2013/14 season

By GLEN FISHER*

Dairy Australia
Your Levy at Work

MILK production has continued to turn around since late 2013. Dairy Australia's statistics reflect the improvements in production across the south-eastern dairying regions, which have taken the national output for the year-to-date (from July to end February) to just 1.8% below the level achieved in the same eight months of the prior season: at 6.6 billion litres or about 123 million litres behind the year-to-date production at the same point last year (see Australian milk production by month chart).

February milk production was 625 million litres: +1.4% up on the same month's in 2013.

Continued strong growth from Tasmania (+7.9%) and Victoria (+4.3%) is helping to narrow the gap in year-to-date output, which was -4.1% down in October 2013. With the current outlook based on continued favourable conditions in south-eastern dairying regions, Dairy Australia's full year forecast output is for total milk production to finish in the range between 9.0-9.2 billion litres.

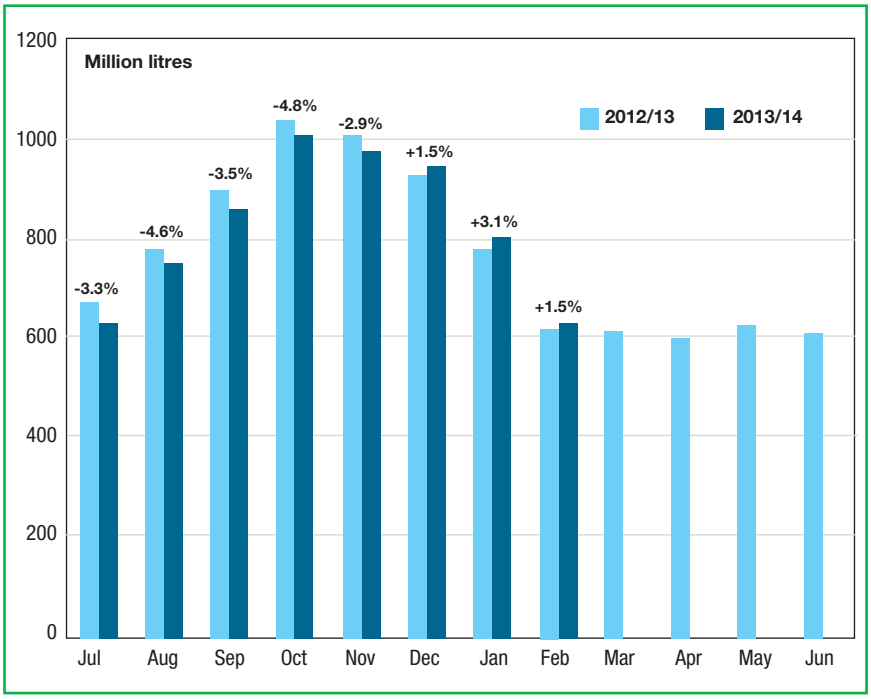
The turnaround in production also reflects stronger farmgate milk prices on top of the improved seasonal conditions that have boosted dairyfarmers' confidence, according to preliminary readings of findings coming out of Dairy Australia's National Dairy Farmer Survey (NDFS).

Across Australia's dairying regions — with the exception of Queensland, where successive floods, drought, higher input prices and less favourable financial positions continue to test many dairyfarmers — the broader picture is positive.

Indeed, the recent NDFS findings indicate that the combination of farmgate milk price increases, lower Australian dollar and continuing robust demand in Asian markets pushed confidence to levels not recorded since the heady 'soft commodity boom' days of 2008. Survey respondents indicated that weather conditions and the possibility of increasing input costs were the main concerns in the near-term.

After the more challenging season 2012/13, the current season's more favourable milk prices and seasonal conditions are also supporting a pickup in on-farm investment intentions.

Figure 1: Australian milk production by month



The NDFS findings also suggest that higher returns for milk are expected to assist eight out of 10 dairy enterprises record an operating profit for the 2013/14 season, with profits at higher levels than averaged across the past five years.

Look out for more coverage and analysis of the NDFS findings in Dairy Australia's upcoming *May Dairy Situation and Outlook* report.

The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Science (ABARES) released its preliminary estimates of farm financial performance data at the Outlook 2014 conference in March.

ABARES's dairy farm survey figures for 2013/14 suggest an encouraging recovery in average farm cash incomes to a national average of $129,000, up from $44,200 in 2012/13, and about 29% higher than the 10-year average to 2012/13. But there is ample variation within the range of state averages reflecting different circumstances: from an average of $80,000 per farm in Queensland, $127,000 in Victoria and up to $210,000 in Tasmania.

In drinking milk and export-focused corners of the industry there has been a succession of significant developments: from the rearrangement of the Woolworths private label contracts to changes of ownership affecting Western Australian-based Harvey Fresh and Victorian-based United Dairy Power.

On the face of it, farmers and industry players stand to potentially benefit from the stability and certainty provided by Woolworths's long-term contracts with processors. And there is also some scope for expectations about new supply arrangements and changes of ownership triggering some further investment that will ultimately provide some flow-on benefits.

In addition, at the time of writing, recent changes to some payment structures suggest that there may have been some headway made to at least partially address concerns about managing sustainable systems in a rising input cost environment.

But in the more immediate future, despite robust demand, there are also indications emerging that export-focused players may see international dairy commodity prices continue to moderate (see article on the facing page) — so another batch of cautious optimism wouldn't go astray either. Still, as season 2013/14 draws to a close, the picture remains relatively brighter. D

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

Supply increase sees global prices fall

By JOHN DROPPERT*

Dairy Australia
Your Levy at Work

THE extended plateau of global dairy prices at or near record levels came to an end in recent weeks as the foreshadowed correction pulled returns back below $US5000 a tonne for most key commodities. At the time of writing, the market is yet to bottom out but sentiment remains positive.

Booming supply is underpinning this dampening of prices but seasonal demand factors have also come into play.

As some of these demand drivers improve, the chances are that markets will stabilise.

If this occurs in the low-mid-$US4000/tonne range, as current indications suggest, pricing will not only be more sustainable for buyers but will allow reasonable margins for lower-cost producers.

As we hit mid-autumn in the Southern Hemisphere and spring in the north, three of the world's four biggest dairy export regions are enjoying steady production growth driven by high farmgate milk prices and relatively subdued input costs.

New Zealand's bumper milk production season continues apace, with official data to January showing 7% growth for that month compared with January 2013 and 6% for the season to date.

Preliminary numbers suggest growth for February will exceed 10%, and given the drought-induced curtailment of the 2012-13 season, double-digit percentages are virtually inevitable for the remaining months to June.

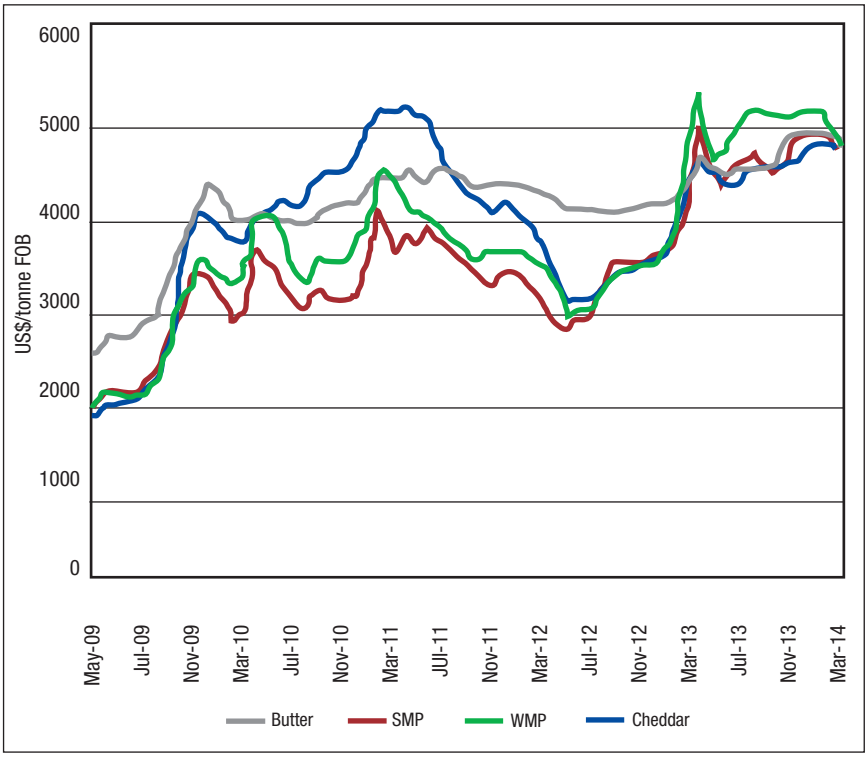
Local analyst NZX Agrifax indicates that supplementary feed usage is growing in popularity — due largely to the record milk price on offer.

In contrast to last season, when purchased feeds were primarily used out of necessity to replace pasture, this season farmers are also using such inputs strategically to extend their production peak and capture attractive margins on offer.

The likely result is increased availability of NZ product right through the traditional shoulder season.

In the Northern Hemisphere, the growth spurt in European Union-28 milk production that began in July 2013 continues.

Figure 1: Global dairy commodity prices



January data from Eurostat suggests 5% expansion for that month, after the 2013 calendar year finished 1% up on 2012.

High and unseasonably stable milk prices are boosting margins and confidence, even as feed crops begin to need rain after progressing rapidly through a mild winter. Northern Europe (the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands and Poland) continues to lead the way while southern members such as Italy, Portugal, Austria and Hungary still trail last year.

Across the Atlantic, United States growth has tracked about 1% for January and February but the state-level data tells a two-speed tale.

On one hand, California — the largest milk-producing state — continues to increase both its dairy herd and per-cow milk production. February United States Department of Agriculture figures put the state's milk output at 3.4 billion pounds (1.5 billion litres) — 5% higher than in February 2013. However, this growth remains precarious, with recent rains doing little to ease the drought conditions that threaten feed supplies for the months ahead.

The situation is markedly different in the Midwest and Northeast. These regions only recently emerged from an extremely harsh and cold winter that slowed per-cow production and restricted operations such as livestock transport that would facilitate growth. As a result, Wisconsin — the second-largest producer — saw a 2% decrease for February. With winter conditions receding and margins remaining favourable, however, these regions are set to drive national growth in the months ahead.

At the same time the supply recovery has been gathering pace, demand for dairy commodities has slackened — mainly due to the Northern Hemisphere spring flush and a seasonal post-New Year slowdown in Chinese purchases.

This easing of the frenetic activity that supported pricing through late 2013 comes amid healthy stock levels and indications of a better season for China's farmers.

China is expected to re-engage more actively in the next few months, and in the meantime buyers of other nationalities that were priced out through much of 2013 will not ignore opportunities once prices settle.

The current supply rally may have some way to go but demand shouldn't be left too far behind for long.

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

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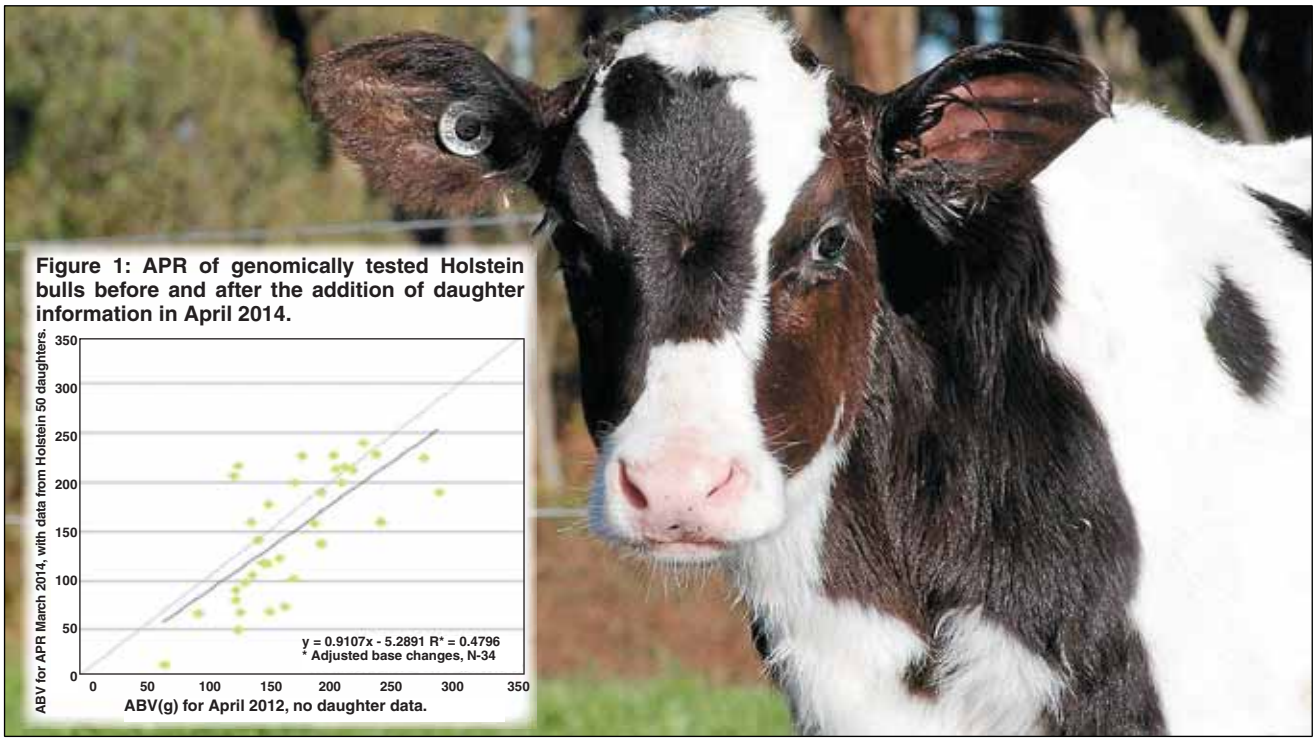


Figure 1: APR of genomically tested Holstein bulls before and after the addition of daughter information in April 2014.

Genomics can identify top animals at a younger age — and latest data suggests genomic proofs are holding up once bulls are proven.

Genomics on track to deliver better ABVs

KEY POINTS

GENOMIC PROGRESS

- ✔ Top-ranked bulls proven profitable
- ✔ Methodologies and information improving constantly
- ✔ New-look reports available online

GENOMIC breeding values (Australian Breeding Values genomic [ABV(g)s]) were introduced in Australia in 2011. In the latest release, young genomic bulls released in 2011-12 have moved from "genomic" to "proven". Essentially, farmers and industry want to know:

- If I had used the genomic bulls when they first came onto the market, was it a good choice?
- How good is genomics today in predicting a daughter proven ABV?

Was it a good choice in 2011?

The top group of bulls selected on their ABV(g)s in 2011 are still much better than the bottom group of bulls. After adjusting for the annual base change, the Australian Profit Ranking (APR) of genomic bulls in 2011 was over-estimated by about $50.

For a dairyfarmer who selected the top 10 APR bulls using ABV(g)s in 2011, the group would have averaged 254 (adjusted for base changes). It turns out that this group now averages 195 for APR.

In comparison, the bottom 10 bulls started at an APR of 115 in 2011 and now have an APR average of 72 as described in Table 1. Choosing the top bulls has delivered almost double the profit — $123 more than the bottom bulls.

Meanwhile, individual bulls moved up or down as daughter performance data were added to their ABVs. This movement is expected for bulls with reliabilities shown in Table 2 and emphasises the need for farmers to pick the best team of bulls for use in their breeding programs. It is safe to say that farmers who used the top group of genomic bulls in 2011 are now milking more profitable cows than those sired by lower-ranked bulls at the time.

How good is genomics in 2014?

Today, the gains to be made from genomics are even more significant. ▶

Table 1: Average APR for the top/bottom 10 Holstein genomic bulls in April 2011, top/bottom 10 genomic bulls in April 2012 and the group's average APR in April 2014.

	ABV(g) April 2011 51 bulls, adjusted for base changes	ABV April 2014 With daughters	ABV(g) April 2012 34 bulls, adjusted for base changes	ABV April 2014 With daughters
	APR	APR	APR	APR
Average of top 10 bulls	254	195	230	209
Average of bottom 10 bulls	115	72	120	105
Profit from using top 10 bulls	$123 profit per cow per year		$104 profit per cow per year	

Table 2: A comparison of ABVs between April 2011 and April 2014 for a selection of Holstein bulls

	ABV(g) April 2011 adjusted for base changes		ABV April 2014	
	APR	Reliability	APR	Reliability
CANBEE	251*	50	348	78
GOLDCREST	248	57	274	74
CHRISTMAS	260	51	225	78
GOLDBANGLE	261	51	218	79
CHICO	94*	54	218	79
CARGLO	140*	60	214	82
JETFINN	316	57	184	79

* August 2011 data

Alongside a full schedule of research and development, the movements in the ABV(g)s of bulls such as Jetfinn and Canbee have been closely investigated with each ABV release. These have led to improvements in the methodologies and information supporting genomics so that today's ABV(g)s are more reliable than the initial genomic evaluations. The full list of improvements is extensive, but some highlights are:

- a reference population that now includes more than 12,000 Holstein and 5000 Jersey animals;
- better techniques to handle over-estimated parent average breeding values;
- improved blending of information; and
- the new model introduced for calculating the Fertility ABV that has improved this component of the APR.

This process of improvement for genomic evaluations continues as the technology is refined.

An analysis of this proof run demonstrates that the predictions from 2012 are better than from 2011. For anyone who selected the top 10 APR bulls using ABV(g)s in 2012, the group would have averaged 230 (adjusted for base changes). It turns out that this group now averages 209 for APR with the addition of daughters. In comparison, the bottom 10 bulls started at an APR of 120 in 2012 and now have an APR average of 105 as described in Table 1.

To gauge the current status of genomics, it is also interesting to compare before and after the addition of daughter performance information. With perfect information and techniques, the bull's ABV(g) without daughters would be exactly the same as with daughters. Figure 1 compares the April 2014 before and after.

The solid line (line of best fit) is close to the dotted line (ideal), indicating that the relationship is good and movements are in the range of what would be expected with a reliability of 62% for genomic bulls. Figure 1 indicates that ABV(g)s for APR are over-estimated by about $5.

Jump in bulls screened

Hundreds of additional bull genotypes have been loaded following a low-cost screening program sponsored by the Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme (ADHIS). This screening process enables bull companies to scan a much broader group of bulls to select those bulls most suited to Australia.

New-look ABV(g) reports

Farmers who are genotyping their cows will notice some changes to the April ABV(g) reports.

Individual cow reports now include

- Traditional ABV;
- Genomic ABV(g); and
- the difference between these values for almost 40 traits.

To see the sort of information revealed in an ABV(g) report, take a look at a sample at <http://www.adhis.com.au> (look for Extension — Genomics Support).

Boost to fertility data

SIGNIFICANTLY more fertility records will influence the Fertility Australian Breeding Values (ABVs) in this proof release.

Between October and December 2013, dairyfarmers submitted 858,110 mating records, of which 123,325 were from cows that had not previously been part of ABV calculations.

This is more than double the average increase across the past three years for the same period.

Latest update to a herd's genetic trends

DAIRYFARMERS can track their herds' latest genetic trends twice a year, with updated Genetic Progress Reports available with the April and August releases of Australian Breeding Values (ABVs).

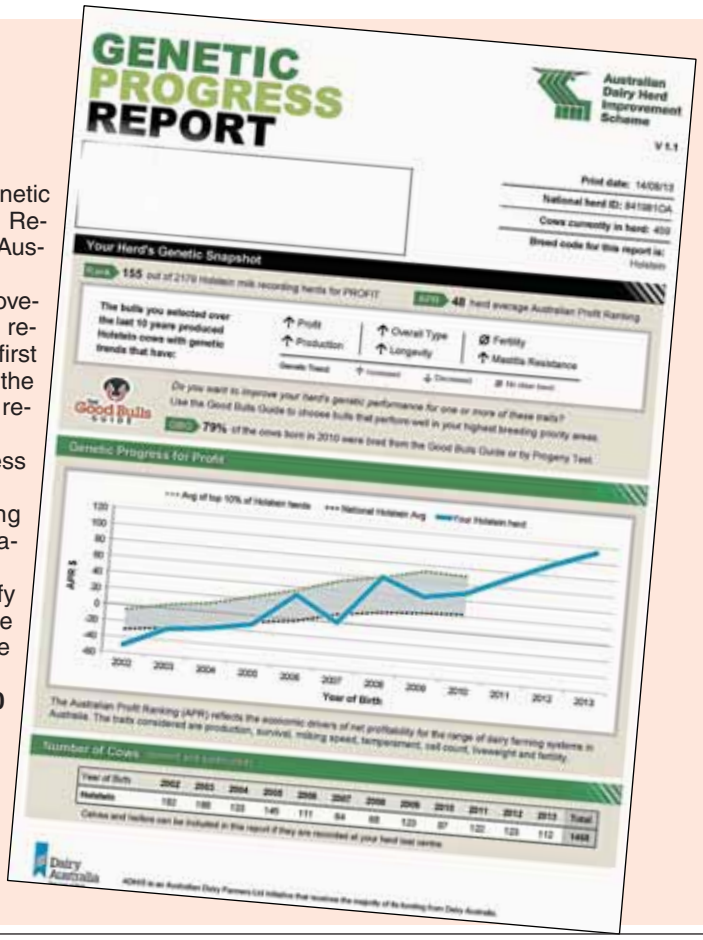
Michelle Axford from the Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme (ADHIS) said many dairyfarmers had received Genetic Progress Reports since they were first released in 2013 and they would be keen to see how the most recent group of heifers has changed their latest reports.

"Anyone who herd records can get a Genetic Progress Report through their herd test centre," she said.

"It is a simple way to see the impact of breeding decisions and benchmark your herd against the national herd.

"Use your herd's *Genetic Progress Report* to identify breeding priorities and the *Good Bulls Guide* to make bull choices. Both are updated twice a year with the ABV release."

Contact: Michelle Axford, phone (03) 8621 4240 or email <maxford@adhis.com.au>.


GENETIC PROGRESS REPORT

Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme

Your Herd's Genetic Snapshot

Genetic Progress for Profit

Number of Cows

Dairy Australia

An example of a Genetic Progress Report that herd-recording dairyfarmers can now access with each ABV release.

Fertility ABVs have been improved with the inclusion of more data.

The increase follows a recent upgrade of one of the key herd management software packages used on dairy farms, Easy Dairy.

This is the direct result of the collaborative work by ADHIS, the Dairy Futures CRC, Department of the Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI), Dairy Australia and others to improve fertility through genetics.

It builds on the release of the new Fertility ABV with higher reliabilities that was released in April 2013.

Your No.1 Jersey Source

Dtr: Edi Tbone Blackie - EX91

Richies Jace TBONE A364

Jace x Lemvig x Declo

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Australia's No.2 APR Jersey Sire

- Tbone has retained his No.2 APR ranking at +257. He transmits high Type at +116 which ranks him amongst the Top 5 Sires for Overall Type.
- He is the breeds No.1 Sire for improving Temperament and Likeability at +106.
- He will improve Components, Longevity and will drop Cell Counts and most impressive is his faultless Type Linear with over +110 for no less than 10 Individual Type Traits including Type, Mammary, Stature, Angularity, Pin Width, Centre Ligament, Front & Rear Teat Placement, Teat Length and Loin Strength.

Dtr: Kaddy Sandy Ilagay - EX90

Nowell SANDBLAST

Flowerpower x Admiral x Hermitage

Australia's No.3 APR Jersey Sire

- Sandblast is a former A2/A2 No.1 APR Sire who shared this feat for over 6 consecutive proof runs and now ranks at No.3 position on APR, an accomplishment no other Australian Jersey bull has achieved.
- Sandblast has added 100 daughters over the past 12 months and has maintained his good Milk Production, Udders and positive Components.
- Great Type and Functional traits, his daughters display added Strength and Capacity with deep bodies and high and wide Rear Udders with very good Ligament and Teat Placement.

Dtr: Philmar Vasilis Lady - GP83

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Parade x Passive x Admiral

New Australian Graduate Sire

- Vasilis is a New Graduate Sired by "Parade" out of a high Component "Passive" sister to "Valerian".
- He debuted at No.11 on the APR list with positive Milk, good Components and good functional Type.
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Science is believing

By CARLENE DOWIE

KEY POINTS

TOP GENETICS

- ✔ Bull choices based on APR
- ✔ Fertility management
- ✔ Profitability also important

TERANG, Vic, dairyfarmers Bryan an Jo Dicksons are believers in science. And that belief has helped propel their herd to being one of Australia's best Holstein herds.

Science also underlies the approach to pasture management, which has seen them create a successful farm business that has had just one loss since 1996.

The Dicksons milk 700 cows off a 324-hectare milking platform that is part of a 700ha farm. They own a second farm at Glenfyne that they bought in 2009 and lease additional land for young stock.

The split-calving herd (80% March-May and 20% August-September) is all bred by artificial insemination.

The Dicksons have a passion for breeding — and that passion was rewarded last year when their herd was named the number one Australian Profit Ranking (APR) Holstein herd in the August Australian Breeding Value (ABV) release. The herd was number five in the April release while one of their bulls, Emu Banks Christmas, was number 20 on the Holstein proven bull list.

"I guess the number one herd — that was sort of a hobby and a passion," Mr Dickson told visitors to his farm during the Australian Dairy Conference.

"The main thing is to be using the best bulls on science. We all have our trusty AI rep who has the best bull, but sometimes on science it is not always the best bull.

"I used to use the 'best bulls' years ago and I ended up with a nothing herd and then we started sticking to science and every time we had a brochure we questioned whether it was true and whether they had any evidence of it being true and that's when our herd started to get more consistent and increase.

"We stick to APR, which is the Australian system. And we find it actually works."

The Dicksons select cows on APR, using about 60% proven and 40% genomic progeny-test semen. They use GeneScreen to avoid inbreeding.

Mr Dickson said if he did not have a passion for breeding and flushing cows and was totally commercially focused, he would use 100% genomic progeny-test semen from Genetics Australia (GA). "GA has 40 (genomic PT) bulls and they test 500 — and you are still only paying $8-$10 compared with marketed bulls at $50-$60," he said.

Jo and Bryan Dickson have a highly successful dairy farm based on top genetics.

The Dicksons use a mix of imported and domestic semen from a range of AI companies.

They cull animals on solids production based on herd test data. "I look through our cows and our biggest-producing cows are not our best cows," Mr Dickson said. "Our 50-litre cow might only be doing three kilograms of solids while our 40-litre cow is doing 4kg solids. Unless you herd test, you've got the test bucket and you think 'I've got a great one here', but she's only doing Physical."

They have recently started to focus more on fertility — but still with the main emphasis on protein and fat production and APR. In practice, it means bulls are initially selected on APR but any with a negative ABV for daughter fertility are rejected.

But Mr Dickson said it would take time to improve the herd's fertility results. "That's the frustrating thing with breeding — it doesn't happen in one year; it's six or seven years before it starts to change," he said.

The herd's overall empty rate for the year is about 10% but the autumn-calvers have a higher empty rate and 15-18% are rolled into the spring herd. Spring-calvers are normally joined and sold to keep the spring component at 20% of the herd. Only "sensational" spring-calvers are retained.

The Dicksons work hard at their joining program. "Fertility is also to do with management," Mr Dickson said. "As farms get bigger, different people are doing different jobs and some are not as keen as me. We paint every day when we are joining, we heat detect every day and we AI every day.

"I put a lot of effort into it. You talk to some other farmers and they say 'I've joined for a week and I'm sick of it so I'll throw the bulls out'. They don't really care."

Heifers are run on several outpaddocks. Controlled internal drug release (CIDR) devices are used to synchronise the heifers before they are artificially inseminated (in two rounds). They are then run with Jersey bulls.

Sexed semen has been used on the heifers a couple of times with mixed results and is no longer used. Mr Dickson said sexed semen was available from only a limited number of bulls — and not always the top bulls — and the result ended up about the same with a higher heifer rate but at a lower conception rate.

The high herd genetics have provided opportunities for selling excess stock. Heifers are sold to China — or whatever market is paying the best for them. Genetics Australia genomically tests all the Dicksons' young bulls and some are put into AI, while other bulls are sold to China.

Profitability focus

And while the Dicksons are passionate about breeding good cows, they acknowledge that pursuing the top cows is at times a "costly hobby" — though without good herd genetics their operation would not be profitable.

"I am no more profitable being the number one herd than being number eight," Mr Dickson said. "But you see people trying to be profitable and their herd is -100 APR and that's worth $150,000 to them. They could be profitable by just having different bloodstock. They are probably bet- ▶

◀ ter off selling them all and starting again."

Profitability is important to the Dicksons. "We all farm for money — I like farming but I am not going to do it for free," he said.

Mr Dickson's philosophy is to keep systems as simple as possible, which places less stress on the Dicksons, their staff and their cows.

"We are trying to do things as easily and as quickly as we can without making life too complicated," Mr Dickson said. "The less complicated you make it, the fewer errors or stuff-ups you are going to have."

The farm is all sown to perennial ryegrass, grazed according to the leaf-stage principles. Silage is harvested and, in good grass years, hay is also cut.

Cows are fed wheat, maize and pellets in the bail at about 2-2.5 tonnes/cow/year. Silage is fed out in paddocks in the winter while oaten and vetch hay (bought in to fill the feed gap in autumn/winter) is fed out on a simple gravel-based feedpad.

Contractors are utilised for silage harvest, with the Dicksons owning little "heavy metal". "I've never seen a rich contractor yet so why would you want to have your own machinery — especially when you've worked out that by the time you've paid for it it's actually wrecked and you have to buy a new one," he said.

The operation has good labour efficiency with 169 cows per labour unit. Most of the staff are long-standing. The second farm has a manager who works only at that farm, while the other staff work where they are needed on either farm or in the outpaddocks where the heifers and dry stock are run.

The Dickson herd was named Australia's top herd with the August ABV release.

Mr Dickson said the dairy industry was a good one and it was unfortunate there were some "knockers" who criticised it all the time.

"Last year was a pretty tough year for dairyfarming and we didn't make money," he said. "We didn't make a big loss but we didn't make money.

"But that was the first loss we've had since 1996. We've made a load of money over the years but no-one wants to know about that."

But last year has forced a rethink on stocking rate. Two different consultants have recommended numbers be reduced to about 620 to reduce reliance on bought-in feed.

The Dicksons kept the herd at 750 this year because the numbers looked good with a higher milk price and lower grain price. "But as soon as we get the next downturn in the next 12-18 months, we will dump a heap of cows really quickly," Mr Dickson said.

He is also not keen to pursue production at any cost. "Production is not everything — benchmarking shows the sweet spot is around 7000-8000 litres," he said.

"It's also about what risk do you want to take — sometimes easier is more profitable.

"It's good fun bragging that you have 10,000- or 12,000-litre cows but if you are sitting at home at night really stressed, maybe you should forget about the bragging and go back to 8000 (litres)." D

AUSTRALIAN BREEDING VALUES — APRIL 2014

For more information contact ADHIS (03) 8621 4240,
email: <dabernethy@adhis.com.au>
website: <www.adhis.com.au>

THE Good Bulls GUIDE

Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme

Key Source	Company		
ABS	ABS Australia	RAG	Raging Bulls
AGR	Agri-Gene	RED	AUSRED Genetics
ALT	Alta Genetics	SEM	Semex Australia
CRV	CRV Australia	VIK	Viking Genetics
GAC	Genetics Australia	WAS	Woodlands Ag Services
LIC	Livestock Improvement	WWS	World Wide Sires
		WYA	Wyatt AB

Dairy Australia
Your Levy at Work

Good Bulls Guide for Holstein — Profit — Australian Proven Only

						Profit		Production									Survival		Conformation Traits			Workabiliy				Dtr Fert		Source
Rank	Bull ID	Bull Name	Genetic Codes	Gen-omics Inc	Aus Prov or Int	APR $	APR Rel	ASI	Prot kg	Prot %	Milk L	Fat kg	Fat %	ASI Rel	No. Dtrs	No. Herds	Sur	Rel	Over Type	Mam Syst	Type Rel	Milk Spd	Temp	Like	Rel	Dtr Fert	Rel	
1	CANBEE	COUNTRY ROAD ROUMARE CANBEE		g	A	348	78	311	49	0.21	1393	57	-0.03	84	87	35	105	62	108	106	75	104	103	103	74	95	63	ALT
2	SOLACE	ECLIPSE ROUMARE SOLACE	CVF	g	A	305	72	225	28	0.46	156	25	0.26	79	36	17	106	58	102	95	64	103	102	101	70	102	65	GAC
3	ROUFECTOR	BUNDALONG ROUFECTOR		g	A	284	81	231	26	0.41	171	41	0.49	87	86	35	107	66	110	107	77	105	103	104	79	98	67	ALT
4	GOLDCREST	TOPSPEED GOLDYN-ET	CVF	g	A	274	74	203	28	0.14	781	46	0.19	79	49	27	104	61	101	102	70	103	100	102	69	100	62	GAC
5	SHOLTZ	ST. CLAIR SHOLTZ-TWIN			A	273	74	184	36	0.01	1317	27	-0.42	82	49	27	105	59	104	103	72	100	104	104	65	102	61	ABS
6	WESTGATE	GALLRAE JOCKO 3438	A22^,DPF	g	A	268	83	176	36	0.06	1218	14	-0.54	89	94	47	110	69	110	107	78	103	103	103	84	97	74	GAC
7	USEAGE	KAARMONA CALEB	A12,DPF^	g	A	260	85	190	35	0.19	933	13	-0.39	91	111	47	107	73	101	108	78	102	100	103	81	99	78	GAC
8	29HO12772	BALLYCAIRN OMAN PELLO		g	A	260	81	137	28	-0.16	1360	35	-0.33	86	56	25	105	69	96	95	81	100	101	102	77	109	69	ABS
9	29HO12470	INDIJKS BABYLON	A22	g	A	255	87	174	29	-0.01	1092	42	-0.07	93	199	65	102	73	102	99	81	100	101	102	87	104	72	ABS
10	DEANCOX	MANNA FARM DEANCOX	A22,DPF^	g	A	244	82	198	39	0.03	1381	27	-0.46	88	87	43	105	69	107	103	77	101	102	103	82	97	71	GAC
11	LAIDLEY	GLOMAR LAIDLEY	CVF,BLF	g	A	244	72	196	32	0.29	600	15	-0.15	79	45	20	106	57	100	97	67	100	101	100	70	101	57	GAC
12	BUDDHA	BUSHLEA PERFECTOR BOLD-ET	A12,DPF^	g	A	240	84	169	25	0.01	901	49	0.16	90	103	49	105	70	108	105	79	102	102	102	81	100	69	GAC
13	JIFFEY	RENGAW SHOTTLE JIFFEY		g	A	240	79	85	14	0	514	21	-0.02	85	68	26	109	64	100	101	72	102	103	102	76	104	68	AGR
14	REALM	ECLIPSE ROUMARE REALM	A22^	g	A	236	77	237	26	0.44	104	41	0.53	84	67	34	104	62	97	100	72	103	102	101	74	94	66	GAC
15	MOTOWN	ECLIPSE ROUMARE MOTOWN	CVF		A	234	75	175	21	0.34	127	23	0.26	80	65	34	104	67	101	100	73	102	101	102	78			GAC
16	7H8081	ENSENADA TABOO PLANET ET	RDF,A22^	g	A	228	95	125	27	-0.1	1207	23	-0.41	98	480	105	109	88	105	111	96	101	103	104	94	100	90	GAC
17	DELSANTO	MANNA FARM DEL SANTO	A22^,DPF	g	A	226	86	211	16	0.39	-160	58	0.93	93	169	65	100	71	105	105	73	100	101	102	87	100	74	GAC
18	ROLLBAR	EMU BANKS ROUBAR		g	A	226	77	173	25	0.4	142	6	0	82	72	33	103	65	102	105	78	102	102	101	78	101	62	GAC
19	CARMARE	KAARMONA CARMARE	A22^	g	A	226	76	143	18	0.1	482	38	0.25	83	56	30	107	62	106	103	74	102	102	103	75	104	65	GAC
20	CHRISTMAS	EMU BANKS CHRISTMAS-ET	CVF,A22	g	A	225	78	192	18	0.32	26	47	0.66	84	90	32	104	65	108	104	78	102	101	102	76	100	66	GAC
21	CURIO	COUNTRY ROAD ROUMARE CURIO	A12^	g	A	223	76	187	31	0.24	696	17	-0.19	82	55	30	104	61	105	102	70	101	100	101	77	97	66	GAC
22	STOLJOC	STOL JOC	A22	g	A	220	92	193	39	0.06	1323	21	-0.52	95	148	44	104	85	106	104	90	100	103	103	87	97	87	AGR
23	LAZZARO	GLOMAR LAZZARO	A22	g	A	218	74	152	20	0.19	375	27	0.16	81	54	18	106	57	108	106	66	104	100	101	75	102	60	ABS
24	CHICO	CARENDA CHICO	A22	g	A	218	79	134	22	0.28	249	1	-0.13	85	79	37	108	64	106	104	76	103	104	102	80	100	65	GAC
25	DOLBY	GUM RIDGES ROUMARE DOLBY	A22	g	A	216	74	134	15	0.34	-113	12	0.24	80	54	28	106	59	103	107	68	102	102	102	73	102	63	GAC
26	CARLIN	KAARMONA CARLIN	A12	g	A	212	76	137	14	0.3	-64	21	0.34	82	65	36	105	62	100	104	73	104	102	102	75	98	61	GAC
27	GOLDPIPER	CLYDEVALE SHOTTLE PERSIS		g	A	207	80	138	25	0.06	802	21	-0.2	86	73	38	102	66	100	102	73	100	104	104	72	105	71	AGR
28	DURIS	ADLEJAMA JARDIN DURIS		g	A	207	78	138	20	0.12	512	26	0.06	84	91	35	103	64	101	110	76	99	102	102	82	103	57	GAC
29	SHOTTLE	PICSTON SHOTTLE		g	A	207	98	59	15	-0.16	859	19	-0.25	99	2609	432	110	96	108	106	99	100	104	104	98	105	98	ABS
30	COPIER	CURRAJUGLE COPIER-ET	A22		A	206	82	110	12	0.14	175	28	0.29	89	95	44	108	65	106	105	73	102	101	101	82	105	68	GAC
31	QUARTERMILE	ECLIPSE ROUMARE QUARTERMILE		g	A	201	75	156	15	0.3	-30	34	0.51	81	53	22	105	60	106	104	69	105	101	102	75	101	62	GAC
32	AVIATOR	BUNDALONG GOLDWYN PILOT		g	A	201	78	114	14	0.13	266	26	0.21	86	74	27	106	62	99	100	67	103	100	102	67	102	72	AGR
33	DITTMAR	MANNA FARM DITTMAR	CVF,A22	g	A	200	78	182	20	0.18	392	51	0.49	84	76	33	102	64	101	108	75	101	101	101	79	99	65	GAC
34	DELJARDIN	BUNKERS HILL DELJARDIN	A22	g	A	200	74	131	26	0.07	837	11	-0.35	80	52	23	103	59	99	103	68	101	101	100	72	103	62	GAC
35	DEALMEIN	ECLIPSE ROUMARE DEALMEIN	CVF,BLF	g	A	199	76	219	26	0.3	391	45	0.41	82	66	21	103	62	104	99	74	102	100	100	76	96	61	GAC
36	SKETCH	DELL ROY ROUMARE DREW-ET		g	A	198	75	170	29	0	1059	39	-0.08	81	56	27	105	61	102	104	68	102	102	100	76	97	65	GAC
37	RUSTARGA	KIRK ANDREWS RUSTARGA	A22		A	196	68	147	27	0.16	701	9	-0.3	76	39	19	105	54	103	101	62	101	100	102	64			ABS
38	GOLDSMITH	TOPSPEED H POTTER	A22^	g	A	193	99	207	24	0.3	310	42	0.41	99	3527	434	102	97	94	90	97	101	100	101	99	98	98	GAC
39	HOSALVADOR	LEADER SALVADOR	BLF,CNF	g	A	193	81	34	16	-0.17	924	-1	-0.59	90	118	51	110	62	107	106	71	102	100	103	78	105	65	SEM
40	HOTAYLORMADE	TAHORA TAYLORMADE		g	A	192	84	110	12	0.04	358	41	0.37	91	89	43	106	71	106	113	79	101	99	101	70	108	74	SEM
41	DECORUM	INVERWOOD DONANTE DECORUM 955	CVF	g	A	190	77	166	36	-0.07	1459	24	-0.55	83	67	32	104	63	110	114	70	100	102	103	80	94	66	GAC
42	NZGMILLER	GLENMEAD MILLER	CVF,A12^	g	A	190	87	134	14	0.32	-111	19	0.34	94	154	32	98	74	95	96	78	101	100	98	75	105	80	LIC
43	GONZO	CURRAJUGLE GONZO		g	A	189	78	76	18	-0.08	817	13	-0.32	84	83	39	107	65	98	105	78	102	99	103	77			ABS
44	ARCHILLES	COOMBOONA ROUMARE ARCHILLES	CVF	g	A	187	73	112	21	0.03	728	15	-0.23	80	44	21	106	59	102	103	67	103	100	101	69	102	64	GAC
45	EUROSTAR	ECLIPSE EUROSTAR	A22^,DPF	g	A	187	84	102	7	0.27	-281	22	0.49	91	121	61	104	67	105	108	73	100	100	101	84	105	72	GAC

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THE Good Bulls GUIDE

Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme

Key			
Source	**Company**	**RAG**	Raging Bulls
ABS	ABS Australia	**RED**	AUSRED Genetics
AGR	Agri-Gene	**SEM**	Semex Australia
ALT	Alta Genetics	**VIK**	Viking Genetics
CRV	CRV Australia	**WAS**	Woodlands Ag Services
GAC	Genetics Australia	**WWS**	World Wide Sires
LIC	Livestock Improvement	**WYA**	Wyatt AB

Dairy Australia — Your Levy at Work

Good Bulls Guide for Holstein — Profit — Australian Proven Only

						Profit		Production									Survival		Conformation Traits			Workabiliy				Dtr Fert		Source
Rank	Bull ID	Bull Name	Genetic Codes	Gen-omics Inc	Aus Prov or Int	APR $	APR Rel	ASI	Prot kg	Prot %	Milk L	Fat kg	Fat %	ASI Rel	No. Dtrs	No. Herds	Sur	Rel	Over Type	Mam Syst	Type Rel	Milk Spd	Temp	Like	Rel	Dtr Fert	Rel	
46	VOSAC	VOSAC MAN		g	A	187	93	49	9	0.13	75	-5	-0.11	98	837	125	106	79	98	102	91	100	101	100	94	110	80	AGR
47	29HO13053	GRAN-J OMAN MCCORMICK		g	A	185	96	55	-1	0.2	-438	18	0.53	99	3126	401	106	86	99	98	97	101	99	100	98	112	94	ABS
48	NLDCANVAS	DELTA CANVAS	RDC,A22	g	A	184	95	206	37	0.02	1328	39	-0.26	97	303	54	101	90	94	99	92	102	101	102	92	91	91	CRV
49	JETFINN	JET STAR INFORMER FINN-ET	A22^,DPF	g	A	184	79	128	26	0.04	886	13	-0.35	84	86	44	106	66	103	106	78	102	100	103	81	100	63	GAC
50	ABSTENNYSON	BURLANE TENNYSON		g	A	182	97	109	24	-0.13	1125	25	-0.33	99	1871	303	103	92	104	102	96	100	102	103	98	102	96	ABS

Good Bulls Guide for Holstein -— Profit — Genomic ABV(g)s

						Profit		Production				Survival		Conformation Traits			Daughter Fertility		Source
Rank	Bull ID	Bull Name	Genetic Codes	Genomics Inc	Aus Prov or Int	APR $	APR Rel	ASI	ASI Rel	No. Dtrs	No. Herds	Survival	Rel	Over Type	Mam Syst	Type Rel	Dtr Fert	Rel	
1	JUMPON	RENGAW KMA JUMPON		g	A	290	57	242	66	0	0	104	41	104	104	43	99	41	GAC
2	ROYALMAN	HINDLEE GOLDWYN OMANROYAL 121003	A12	g	A	287	63	154	70	0	0	108	49	104	105	51	108	48	GAC
3	CRVBOUWROCKY	BOUW ROCKY		g	A	276	51	152	61	0	0	109	33	105	104	35	107	33	CRV
4	JUSTLE	RENGAW MOM JUSTLE		g	A	275	56	158	65	0	0	107	38	101	101	41	106	37	AGR
5	DIMAGGIO	BUNDALONG JETSTAR CANBEE DIMAGGIO	A22	g	A	274	59	211	68	0	0	105	42	105	103	46	99	43	GAC
6	UPTEMPO	JET STAR UPTEMPO-ET		g	A	273	57	227	66	0	0	105	40	102	101	43	102	40	AGR
7	SASSOCAR	KAARMONA SASSOCAR		g	A	269	57	187	66	0	0	106	40	102	103	42	104	40	GAC
8	CRVESTEFANO	ETAZON STEFANO		g	A	269	69	156	71	0	0	107	58	107#	107#	69	105#	65	CRV
9	WRANGLER	RENGAW MANOMAN WRANGLER-ET		g	A	268	59	177	68	0	0	105	42	101	101	44	107	41	GAC
10	PICOLA	ADLEJAMA DELSANTO PICOLA	A22	g	A	266	59	188	68	0	0	104	43	103	105	45	104	43	GAC

Good Bulls Guide for Red Breeds — Profit — Australian Proven Only

						Profit		Production									Survival		Conformation Traits			Workability				Dtr Fert		Source
Rank	Bull ID	Bull Name	Breed	Genetic Codes	Aus Prov Int	APR $	APR Rel	ASI	Prot kg	Prot %	Milk L	Fat kg	Fat %	ASI Rel	No. Dtrs	No. Herds	Sur	Rel	Over Type	Mam Syst	Type Rel	Milk Spd	Temp	Like	Rel	Dtr Fert	Rel	
1	ATOSIKKO	ASMO TOSIKKO	U	A22	A	234	82	154	23	0.07	718	35	0.06	89	86	13	106	63	108	105	83	100	105		73	99	75	VIK
2	VRSOLERO2851	VR SOLERO	U		A	199	72	156	22	0.16	490	29	0.12	82	34	10	100	42	103	104	52	103	104		67	102	61	VIK
3	ARBBONJOVI	BOSGOWAN BON JOVI	U	A22	A	187	89	136	13	0.25	-14	30	0.43	96	360	111	104	72	102	102	78	101	102	102	92	106	75	GAC
4	FASTRUP	R FASTRUP	U		A	174	80	86	13	0.1	289	13	0	86	66	13	108	61	109	105	58	97	101	101	81	107	74	VIK
5	ARBPOTSIE	GRAZIN POTSIE	U	A12	A	173	83	126	7	0.3	-341	35	0.71	91	122	52	102	64	94	92	65	98	100	100	83	106	73	GAC
6	ARBLEVER	LOUVIC LEVER	U	A12	A	170	73	140	19	0.08	557	35	0.16	82	67	29	102	52	106	106	56	98	97	99	77	100	54	GAC
7	ARBFROSTY	MERIBEN PARK JACK FROST	U	A22	A	154	79	92	14	0.16	210	6	-0.04	88	91	38	104	56	102	104	62	101	103	103	81	101	61	GAC
8	RANDERSDAVID	R DAVID	U		A	152	86	64	18	-0.1	857	5	-0.45	90	104	22	110	73	105	104	77	102	100	98	84	103	83	VIK
9	ARBLIPPMAN	BOSGOWAN LIPPMAN	U	A11	A	144	81	112	19	0.01	681	24	-0.07	91	123	40	103	57	106	107	51	100	99	99	84	100	69	GAC
10	ARBLONGBOW	LOUVIC LIBBA	U	A12	A	144	78	98	18	0.02	636	16	-0.15	88	95	38	103	51	103	101	54	99	101	100	82	100	61	GAC

Good Bulls Guide for Brown Swiss - Profit

					Profit		Production Traits					Survival		Workability				Daughter Fertility		Source
Rank	Bull ID	Bull Name	Genetic Codes	Aus Prov or Int	APR $	APR Rel	ASI	ASI Rel	No. Dtrs	No. Herds	No. Dtrs 1st Cntry	Sur	Rel	Milk Spd	Temp	Like	Rel	Dtr Fert	Rel	
1	GGEVENT	EVENT		A	159	76	74	89	102	32		108	56	103	102	102	73	101	65	ABS
2	GGHURAY	HURAY		A	116	58	74	77	52	12				96	101	103	66			ABS
3	SWISSEDGE	ELM PARK JUPITERS EDGE		A	114	86	37	96	317	84		103	76	98	99	100	86	106	83	GAC
4	BOSPIUS	SUPERBROWN PIUS		A	88	40	68	55	19	10				102	102	102	42			CRV
5	76B0900	VICTORY ACRES SIMON EVEN		A	87	75	31	87	79	37		103	56	103	101	103	65	97	66	

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Glomar LAZZARO A2A2 NEW

Roumare x Laudan x Alberto

- High APR with fertility
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- Excellent components

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Man O Man x Goldwyn x Oman

- Calving ease specialist at 5.1% with high APR
- Outstanding health traits with high, wide rear udders

Dtr: Kings-Ransom Arm Element-ET

SHOLTZ

SHOTTLE x DONOR x VALE

- Top 10 APR sire with outstanding health traits
- Great rear udders with added teat length

Dtr: The Points Sholtz Silvia, owned by I&K McKie, Pirron Yallock, Victoria

NEW CSC Riverside CSCAMBITION

NAVARA x Berretta x Storm

- Quality udders with excellent centre ligament
- High APR with very good health traits
- Excellent fertility

Dtr: Wallacedale Ambition Melanie VG-85, owned by Wallacedale Jerseys, Poowong North, Victoria.

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THE Good Bulls GUIDE

Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme

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Source	**Company**	**RAG**	Raging Bulls
ABS	ABS Australia	**RED**	AUSRED Genetics
AGR	Agri-Gene	**SEM**	Semex Australia
ALT	Alta Genetics	**VIK**	Viking Genetics
CRV	CRV Australia	**WAS**	Woodlands Ag Services
GAC	Genetics Australia	**WWS**	World Wide Sires
LIC	Livestock Improvement	**WYA**	Wyatt AB

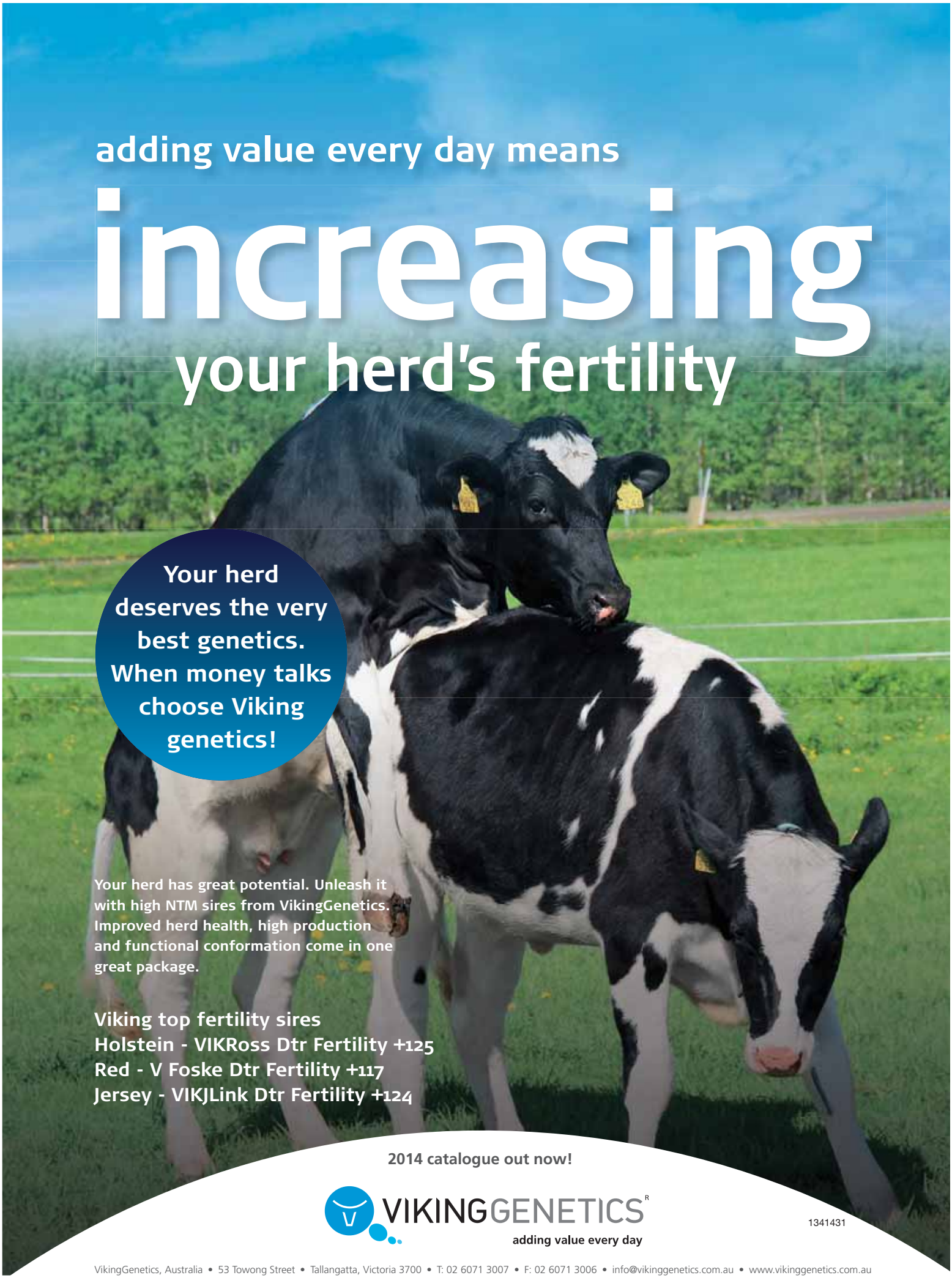
Dairy Australia — Your Levy at Work

Good Bulls Guide for Jersey — Profit —Aust Proven Only

						Profit		Production									Survival		Conformation Traits			Workability				Dtr Fert		Source
Rank	Bull ID	Bull Name	Genetic Codes	Ge-nom-ics Inc	Aus Prov or Int	APR $	APR Rel	ASI	Prot kg	Prot %	Milk L	Fat kg	Fat %	ASI Rel	No. Dtrs	No. Herds	Sur	Rel	Over Type	Mam Syst	Type Rel	Milk Spd	Temp	Like	Rel	Dtr Fert	Rel	
1	NAVARIAN	COLNARCO NAVARIAN	A12	g	A	288	73	241	36	0.16	835	41	-0.07	81	58	31	104	55	108	109	63	101	101	103	76	100	58	GAC
2	TBONE	RICHIES JACE TBONE A364	A22	g	A	257	88	182	17	0.5	-172	32	0.77	93	163	45	107	78	116	114	89	104	106	106	87	100	81	AGR
3	SANDBLAST	NOWELL SANDBLAST	A22	g	A	247	87	196	27	0.34	327	23	0.1	93	194	51	98	71	104	108	81	101	103	104	88	105	72	AGR
4	ELTON	CAIRNBRAE JACES ELTON		g	A	243	96	202	18	0.2	255	66	1	99	2245	308	104	87	113	107	95	104	104	103	98	98	92	ABS
5	RACEWAY	ABERDEEN VALERIAN SANDOWN-ET	A22	g	A	242	80	210	29	0.18	614	38	0.09	85	86	35	105	67	110	113	81	105	104	105	83	98	63	GAC
6	CSCAMBITION	RIVERSIDE AMBITION		g	A	240	72	193	22	0.17	412	51	0.55	79	44	21	102	58	105	110	69	104	100	101	71			ABS
7	VANAHLEM	PANNOO ABE VANAHLEM		g	A	210	80	148	23	0.1	537	22	-0.14	86	80	34	107	67	125	118	78	103	106	106	78	99	68	ALT
8	ROUNDHILL	ABERDEEN VALERIAN ROUNDHILL-ET	A22	g	A	209	72	160	18	0.35	54	26	0.43	78	50	27	104	56	108	106	65	103	102	102	72	101	59	GAC
9	BROADSIDE	BROADLIN 2420 SPIRITUAL	A22	g	A	206	74	166	26	0.14	568	22	-0.16	81	53	33	104	61	106	106	73	100	101	102	72	99	57	GAC
10	LARFALOT	LIGHTWOOD LUCRATIVE	A22	g	A	200	96	164	15	0.34	-7	38	0.72	99	1691	264	106	88	110	104	95	100	102	103	98	97	92	GAC
11	VASILIS	KAARMONA VASILIS		g	A	198	72	187	23	0.3	252	34	0.38	79	49	19	105	54	104	100	60	103	101	102	69	96	60	AGR
12	MAXAPPEAL	RIVERSIDE MAXIMUM APPEAL		g	A	197	70	165	18	0.04	474	55	0.56	77	36	20	103	52	103	99	61	102	103	102	67	98	59	ABS
13	SOVANN	KAARMONA SOVANN-ET	A22	g	A	196	81	158	15	0.24	109	44	0.72	86	107	46	104	68	105	98	81	102	103	104	85	100	58	GAC
14	TENGEN	MOROKA TENGEN	A22	g	A	189	74	160	17	0.42	-72	23	0.51	82	62	26	103	57	100	103	65	102	102	103	77	102	56	GAC
15	LOCKSMITH	WHITE STAR LOCKSMITH	A22	g	A	188	73	135	10	0.53	-437	20	0.83	80	50	26	103	60	101	94	71	100	103	103	72			GAC
16	BOSMURMUR	OKURA LIKA MURMUR S3J	A22		A	179	88	138	15	0.28	63	26	0.43	94	237	38	101	72	95	95	87	99	102	102	87	101	64	CRV
17	TAILBOARD	NOWELL TARSAN	A12	g	A	178	97	146	12	0.38	-172	34	0.81	99	1379	253	102	93	105	103	90	100	101	101	97	98	96	GAC
18	AMBMANHATTEN	OKURA MANHATTEN-ET SJ3		g	A	174	98	197	24	0.37	190	32	0.4	99	1799	260	100	96	97	93	95	101	100	100	98	97	97	CRV
19	GAINFUL	KAARMONA GALEAO	A12	g	A	158	83	134	15	0.06	353	41	0.42	89	85	48	104	68	113	112	72	100	103	102	84	93	73	GAC
20	ARIES	NOWELL ZODIAC		g	A	156	73	132	11	0.46	-302	20	0.68	79	44	17	102	59	96	98	68	104	100	102	72			CRV
21	VAVOOM	ROCKLEIGH PARK VALERIAN VAVOOM		g	A	155	76	149	12	0.63	-501	15	0.79	84	69	27	102	57	99	98	65	101	102	103	75	100	61	ABS
22	VALERAGAY	BROADLIN 2429 VALERIAN	A12	g	A	153	76	120	13	0.35	-106	14	0.38	84	67	30	102	58	102	97	66	102	102	103	76	101	61	GAC
23	DELIAN	LOXLEIGH DELIAN	A22	g	A	148	78	146	18	0.3	127	20	0.25	85	77	43	104	59	113	107	66	102	99	102	79	98	62	GAC
24	JURACE	KAARMONA JURACE		g	A	127	91	110	19	-0.19	826	30	-0.26	97	577	136	103	76	101	102	87	102	103	104	94	94	76	GAC
25	BETAHEAD	KINGS VILLE OUTDO	A12	g	A	126	85	108	11	0.11	173	30	0.4	90	117	46	102	71	106	98	73	99	101	102	86	97	75	GAC
26	SARATOGA	BERCAR SARATOGA	A22	g	A	126	95	62	-1	0.47	-666	9	0.84	98	476	153	105	88	102	101	85	99	101	99	94	103	92	GAC
27	BARTPOWER	DARAWAY FLOWERPOWER SATIRA	A22	g	A	126	95	48	10	0	290	1	-0.28	98	784	205	106	88	114	115	89	101	100	102	97	102	92	GAC
28	BAKARI	MELDAN BAKARI	A22	g	A	122	80	129	12	0.43	-246	18	0.6	87	90	44	100	61	98	102	63	102	100	102	82	93	67	GAC
29	PASSIVE	BERCAR PASSIVE	A12	g	A	122	97	80	3	0.27	-269	23	0.71	99	1167	238	105	94	103	101	92	101	100	100	97	101	96	GAC
30	FRONTIER	BEULAH FRONTIER	A12	g	A	115	74	92	15	0.2	175	0	-0.17	81	58	29	104	57	99	95	65	99	99	102	77	100	61	GAC

Good Bulls Guide for Jersey — Profit — Genomic ABV(g)s

						Profit		Production									Survival		Conformation Traits			Workability				Dtr Fert		Cell Count		Lwt		Source
Rank	Bull ID	Bull Name	Genetic Codes	Ge-nom-ics Inc	Aus Prov or Int	APR $	APR Rel	ASI	Prot kg	Prot %	Milk L	Fat kg	Fat %	ASI Rel	No. Dtrs	No. Herds	Sur	Rel	Over Type	Mam Syst	Type Rel	Milk Spd	Temp	Like	Rel	Dtr Fert	Rel	CC	Rel	Lwt	Rel	
1	DOUBLEUP	BROADLIN DOUBLEUP		g	A	333	44	304	39	0.54	397	44	0.44	54	0	0	103	25	102	102	29	102	101	102	36	101	24	100	38	102	32	GAC
2	LEVIGENES	BROADLIN LEVI	A12	g	A	265	51	230	29	0.38	336	38	0.37	60	0	0	105	34	112	108	38	102	103	104	48	98	33	96	46	102	41	GAC
3	SANDSTORM	KADDY ELTON SANDSTORM		g	A	254	60	234	30	0.08	787	59	0.31	67	0	0	102	46	102	100	48	104	107	105	57	94	45	116	55	105	50	
4	BORAT	BROOKBORA TBONE BORAT	A22	g	A	252	52	190	20	0.49	-78	28	0.61	61	0	0	106	36	106	105	40	104	106	105	49	97	34	115	47	103	43	GAC
5	CRVBRAX	PANNOO BRAX		g	A	238	48	182	28	0.04	781	32	-0.19	58	0	0	107	31	123	115	35	103	105	107	46	97	30	100	42	104	38	CRV
6	STACKER	BROADLIN STACKER		g	A	237	46	209	28	0.25	488	34	0.16	56	0	0	102	30	108	106	34	100	100	101	39	102	29	110	41	101	36	GAC
7	VALAIS	WHITE STAR VALAIS	A22	g	A	228	66	218	27	0.43	211	30	0.35	78	36	15	103	43	103	103	43	100	102	101	68	97	41	92	63	100	45	GAC
8	CSCBABAXI	KAARMONA VANHLEM BABAXI		g	A	228	49	163	14	0.27	50	47	0.84	58	0	0	106	31	119	112	36	102	104	105	46	101	30	103	43	103	38	ABS
9	0200JE08165	BROADLIN HATMAN	A22	g	A	225	55	193	23	0.36	177	32	0.43	64	0	0	104	39	108	108	44	102	103	104	52	98	37	106	51	102	47	SEM
10	CSCEDISON	CAIRNBRAE TBONE EDISON		g	A	225	56	184	18	0.41	-28	37	0.73	65	1	1	103	40	103	103	45	103	105	104	53	99	39	118	53	105	48	ABS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your herd's fertility
Your herd deserves the very best genetics. When money talks choose Viking genetics!
Your herd has great potential. Unleash it with high NTM sires from VikingGenetics. Improved herd health, high production and functional conformation come in one great package.
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Highest APR in Red Breeds group

AUSTRALIAN Red dairy breed farmers, the Graham family, from New South Wales, have taken out the top Australian Profit Ranking (APR) herd in the red breeds group. Their herd average for 550 cows is 78.

Only two units separated the top two herds in the Aussie Red group, which has experienced tremendous growth during the past 10 years.

The number of herd-recorded Aussie Red cows has doubled during this time, despite the decline in the total amount of herd-recorded cows.

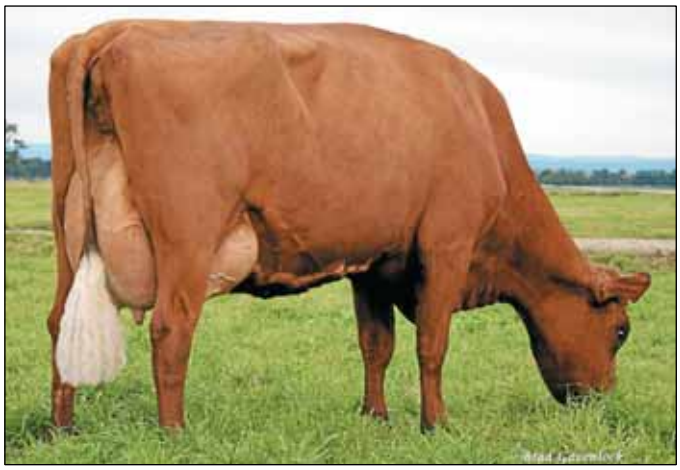
"It is exciting to be named the number one herd, as there are some top commercial red herds in Australia providing tough competition," Sam Graham said.

"Our herd is our second biggest asset, and we have always wanted our cows to be as profitable as possible.

"For our system, we want a medium-size cow, which can efficiently turn the pasture into milk.

"Dad started from scratch, his parents weren't dairyfarmers, so we have had a strong selection emphasis on components and solids production to pay the bills. Investing in the best semen to achieve this has always been a high priority for us to achieve our goals.

"Another driver in our bull selection process has been cattle fertility. Getting cows back in calf is so important to the success of our business, so breeding Aussie Reds was an obvious choice for us, as we couldn't afford to lose cows during calving, or to carry empty cows.



In February, Beaulands Aks Katie EX 92 was named the inaugural Australian Red Cow of the Year.

"There is a big difference between the best and worst genetics in the Red Breeds group, so we ensure that the bulls we are putting in our tank are also found in the *Good Bulls Guide*.

"Then every heifer coming into the herd should have a higher genetic merit than her dam to continue to improve our herd's potential."

It has been an exciting year for the Graham family. In February, Beaulands Aks Katie EX 92 was named the inaugural Australian Red Cow of the Year.

Sam Graham says Aussie Reds have played a key role in building their farm from scratch.

Jiffey increases production trait ABVs

THE release of the Australian April Australian Breeding Values saw Agri-Gene's highest proven Australian Profit Ranking (APR) bull Jiffey increase for all its production traits despite this year's April ABV roll back.

It is now sitting at number 13 on the Australian proven APR list, up from 27 where it debuted 12 months ago. It also remains as the breed's number two sire for improving cell counts.

Other bulls to hold their places among the breeds leading APR and APR(i)s sires include highly proven sire of sons Stoljoc; impressive European index leader Doubledutch; and the world-renowned fitness trait leader Freddie.

Another health and fitness trait leader to impress that now has Australian milking daughters is the highly profitable Superstition, which sits at number three for longevity, number four for fertility and number 14 for cell counts in the April *Good Bulls Guide*.

Farmer favorite Ernesto now has more than 1100 Australian milking daughters and is an extreme udder improver and one of the best available for all udder traits.

In the Australian genomic bulls lists, Agri-Gene debuted with new Lexor son Uptempo, which joined Justle and Jakovich among the top APR bulls of the breed.

Uptempo has a fantastic production proof with more than 1000 litres of milk and is one of the best protein improvers at 36 kilograms with +0.16%.

US high profile Freddie son Galaxy also debuted on the Australian genomic list at +241 APR(g) to go with its already impressive US proof.

In the Jerseys, farmer favourite TBone retains it number two APR ranking at +257. It transmits high type at +116, which it among the top five sires for overall type.

It is the breed's number one sire for improving temperament and likeability at +106. It will improve components, longevity and will drop cell counts and most impressive is its faultless type linear with more than +110 for no less than 10 individual type traits including type, mammary, stature, angularity, pin width, centre ligament, front and rear teat placement, teat length and loin strength.

Number three sire is Sandblast, who was number one sire for six consecutive proofs runs, a feat no other bull has achieved in the breed. It has added 100 daughters in the past 12 months and has maintained its good milk production, udders and positive components.

Vasilis is a new graduate sired by Parade out of a high component Passive sister to Valerian. It debuted at number 11 on the APR list with positive milk, good components and good functional type.

There has been a lot of hype from Agri-Gene sales staff who viewed daughters on a recent daughter tour with daughters displaying great udders, dairy strength, plenty of middle and transmitting outstanding temperament.

Article supplied by Agri-Gene, phone (03) 5722 2666, website <www.agrigene.com.au>.

Tosikko tops for Viking

EACH year Viking delivers its clients the best proven sires from Scandinavia's health and profit driven Nordic Total Merit (NTM) proven bull system.

Viking A Tosikko is the latest sire to graduate to the top of the Red Breeds Australian Profit Ranking (APR) list for Australian-proven sires, with Viking VR Solero in second and Viking R Fastrup in fourth. These sires have all had strong rankings in their country of origin as well.

VR Solero was a genomic sire sampled both here and in the Viking population at the same time and has joined the elite sires in each population now as a proven sire demonstrating the strength of the Red genomic program in Scandinavia.

Viking also holds seven of the top 10 positions for profit for Australian and international proven sires and six of the top seven for type. Vik R David leads the list for longevity, with seven of the top 10 sires from Viking, displaying the suitability of Viking sires under Australian conditions.

Vikings Holsteins are also making inroads into the Australian system, with VikHStrong and VikHGrafit both tied on APR 266 and ranked 13th and 14th on the Australian proven or international list for profit. They offer well-rounded proofs led by high production, followed by nice health mammary and type.

Another Viking Holstein that has converted well to the Australian APR system is an exciting outcross sire VikH-Basten. VH Basten's sire pathway is D Banker x T Lambada x T funkis, which is a real sire with a difference for Australian bloodlines. VH Basten's APR is 216, with 108 for daughter fertility, 106 for mammary and 107 for overall type.

VikVHMogens is also a sire that has a good APR of 208 and specialises in calving ease in maiden heifers. The calves are born smaller but then have excellent growth rates, which is identified through the growth index in the NTM. VH Mogens's daughters mature to be average stature with a lovely chest and body and are predominately black cows, with positive daughter fertility, milk and components.

The Viking Jerseys are leading in the health traits in the latest ABVs, with VikIzzy ranked number one for mastitis resistance and VikJante number one for daughter fertility. The Danish Jerseys are a genuine outcross for Australian bloodlines and produce incredibly profitable milk with a national average of 6871 litres, 5.91% and 406 kilograms of milk fat and 4.12% and 283kg of protein.

Article supplied by Viking, phone (02) 6071 3007, fax (02) 6071 3006; email <ertho@vikinggenetics.com> or website <www.vikinggenetics.com.au>.

◀ The cow has been flushed twice during it seven lactations, and still managed to have a 12.6-month calving interval. It has averaged 9344 litres at 4.3%/402 kilogram butterfat, 3.4%/314kg protein in 305 days, and is ready to calve again. Its has also been the overall champion in the Genetics Australia NSW Red On Farm challenge for the past two years.

Following the release of the April ABV's, two young bulls bred from the Graham herd have been moved into Genetics Australia's proven team. While it is early days, ARBObama (APR 231), sired by OBrolin, and Katie's son ARBHilly (APR 153), sired by Delta look promising.

Article supplied by Aussie Reds, website <aussiereds.com.au>.

Dairyfarmers to benefit from renewed ABS focus

AUSTRALIAN dairyfarmers are set to benefit as genetics company ABS Australia rolls out a business strategy with a renewed regional focus.

ABS Australia general manager (Australia and New Zealand) James Smallwood said the company had bolstered regional product and service delivery and technical services capability. The initiatives were undertaken to better align the way the company did business with clients, he said.

The major changes include the appointment of new regional managers to oversee the company's operations in western Victoria, South Australia and northern Vic. Neville Pulham and Klint Wagstaff have taken on the roles of regional managers in western Victoria/South Australia and northern Victoria respectively. "This move recognises each region has a special set of challenges requiring a more flexible approach," Mr Smallwood said. "This includes how clients are serviced and the type of products required, in particular, bull teams to suit differing production systems and farming types.

"As a truly global supplier, we are able to provide the full range of bulls — but recognise some will suit management systems better than others. Having regionally focused teams will ensure farmers receive the most suitable products for their business."

Originally a dairyfarmer, Mr Pulham has worked in the dairy genetics industry for 15 years, including the past decade with ABS as retail sales manager based at Warrnambool, Vic. Mr Pulham said the experienced and adaptable workforce at ABS Australia was able to tailor programs to help farmers achieve optimum profit from their herds.

Originally a dairyfarmer in Victoria's western districts, Klint Wagstaff has worked in dairy genetics for nine years and the industry as a whole for 18 years. Now based at Kyabram in northern Victoria as regional manager, Mr Wagstaff said ABS Australia was focused on providing the products, technical services and specialist knowledge in a complete package.

New to the ABS team is Boorcan, Vic, dairyfarmer Marcus Rees, who will take up the role as key account manager at Terang, Vic. Mr Rees and his wife, Bec, milk up to 280 cows, operate Glamorgan Holstein stud and bred the number one genomic Freddie son, CRVGlamorgan.

Mr and Mrs Rees are on-farm challenge winners and were co-owners of the International Dairy Week 2014 Semex Spectacular $12,000 sale-topping heifer Gorbro Uno Tiffany.

Mr Rees said the role with ABS would take his passion and skills for dairy genetics and bull selection to a new level, helping farmers with breeding decisions to maximise returns.

Mr Smallwood said ABS Australia had refocused the efforts of the technical services team "in recognition of the importance of maximising genetic investment and the need to improve the Australian dairy industry's breeding performance". The technical services teams now operate regionally with Matt Aikenhead based in western Vic/SA and George Malinov in northern Vic. "ABS is committed to having the best technical support team in place to provide information and advice on reproductive performance," Mr Smallwood said. "Matt and George will deliver this service directly to users in Australia, and provide access to the ABS Global Tech Services support network."

Article supplied by ABS Australia, phone (03) 8358 8800, website <www.absglobal.com/aus>.

GLOBAL TOP SIRES FOR YOUR AUSTRALIAN DAIRY FARMING SYSTEM

BEST APR SIRES FOR PASTURE AND BEYOND

CRVSTRAVA

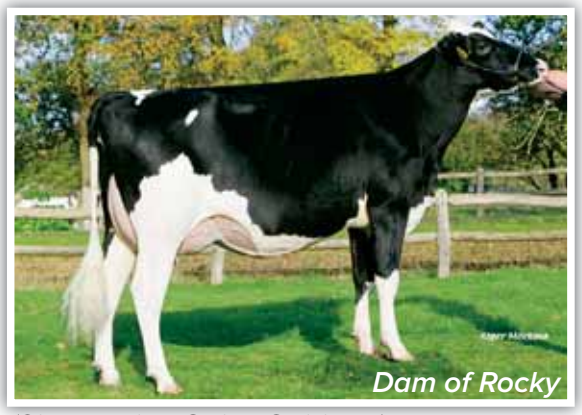
SEXED

(Roumare x Pierre x Skelton)

APR	296	ASI	232	Milk	1058L
Protein	36kg	Fat	43kg		
Overall Type	104	Mammary System	102		

- Outcross
- Calving ease
- Excellent protein and A2A2

CRVROCKY

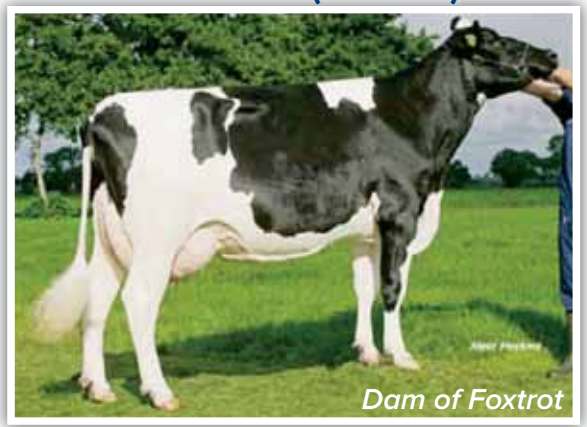


(Shamrock x Goli x Goldwyn)

APR	276	GNVI	294	GTPI	2347
ASI	152	Protein	22kg	Fat	33kg
Milk	650L	Overall Type	104	Mammary System	102

- #3 Genomic holstein for APR
- International headliner in USA and Holland
- Outstanding health and fertility

CRVFOXTROT (Polled)



(Mitey P x O-Man x Jocko Besn)

APR	224	GNVI	151	ASI	128
Protein	21kg	Fat	24kg	Milk	629 L
Overall Type	101	Mammary System	101		

- #1 APR polled sire available
- Tops for fertility
- Improves health and longevity

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1341450

HEALTH AND EFFICIENCY **FOR IMPROVED FEEDING SYSTEMS**

CRVATLANTIC

(Ramos x O-Man x Jocko Besn)

NVI	318	Udder	109	Total Score	113
Protein	35kg	Fat	20kg	Milk	562
Better Life Health	11%	Better Life Efficiency	5%		

- #1 NVI sire
- Short gestation, calving ease sire
- Excellent health and fertility traits

CRVASTRO

(Goldwyn x O-Man x Jocko Besn)

NVI	227	Udder	110	Total Score	113
Protein	32kg	Fat	49kg	Milk	710
Better Life Health	6%	Better Life Efficiency	3%		

- Same maternal line as CRVATLANTIC
- Improves protein performance
- Adds capacity & superior udders

CRVCOOKIECUT

SEXED

(M-O-M x Shottle X Goldwyn)

GTPI	2190	UDC+	2.08	PTAT	2.77
Protein	50 lbs	Fat	71 lbs	Milk	1225 lbs
Better Life Health	2%	Better Life Efficiency	9%		

- Outstanding udders with improved teat length
- Outstanding daughter fertility & longevity
- Super ‘efficiency’

CRV Australia

1341451

Aussie-bred bulls lead the way

A NEW crop of Australian-bred sires has emerged after the April Australian Breeding Values (ABV) release.

"We are excited by the team of bulls we have on offer and our Australian-bred and proven bulls, when combined with the offering from World Wide Sires, means we have the strongest team available," Genetics Australia's commercial manager, Anthony Shelly said.

The new proven sires offer a range of bloodlines and trait profiles adding to an already diverse product line-up.

Mr Shelly said Christmas was a new total performance sire with a "no holes proof". It is one of two new bulls sired by Roumare, with type specialist Barbados also released.

Decorum is a son of Donante, one of the best type and protein sires available, while Dittmar is from the same family, with an outcross pedigree that should have widespread appeal.

Rounding out the new additions is Goldcrest, a son of the highly regarded Goldwyn, which possesses many of his sire's characteristic traits.

Calving ease, health and fertility specialists are also present in the Holstein team from Genetics Australia.

A daughter of new Genetics Australia sire Christmas, which the company says is a new total performance sire with a "no holes proof".

Carglo and Eurostar stack up as two of the better fertility bulls available with real Australian fertility data.

Useage combines calving ease, cell count with super udders and Bullbar is still a top-choice calving-ease sire and retains its position as Australia's go to bull for healthy, long-lived, easy-care cows.

A daughter of the number one Jersey sire Navarian

Genetics Australia dominates the Holstein genomic list with 22 of the top 30 standing at Genetics Australia.

"Our commitment to genomics is vital for our future and provides dairyfarmers to access the next generation of sires bred for Australian performance ahead of time," Mr Shelly said.

The number one and two spots for profit in the genomics Holstein list are occupied by Genetics Australia bulls; however the strength of the group lies in the diverse pedigrees and traits that the FutureGen genomic team offers.

Progeny test farmers can also benefit from genomics at a cost-effective price with all Genetics Australia progeny test-bulls genomically tested.

"Our Jersey result highlights our commitment to the Australian Jersey cow," Mr Shelly said.

"The Valerian sons have come through this year demonstrating our aim to develop genetics for Australian farming conditions ▶

Need more cows back in calf?

Switch to Aussie Reds today.

- We select for fertility, so you can get your cows back in calf.
- Only bulls with high genetic merit and extreme health profiles are approved for Aussie Red progeny testing.
- Our minimal Holstein content policy makes our progeny test bulls ideal for cross breeding as well.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT ARDB SECRETARY
EMAIL: info@aussiereds.com.au OR PHONE: 0422 271 657

New Semex sire offers top health traits

REGARDLESS of herd size or management style, dairyfarmers want a healthy herd of profitable and efficient cows. The path to breeding and developing this kind of herd was made easier when Semex launched its patented Immunity+ sires.

These sires have a naturally high immune response (HIR) and with a 25% heritability, they can help improve the overall herd health and longevity.

The system is based on the HIR technology developed by Dr Bonnie Mallard and her colleagues at the University of Guelph in Canada, with the research surrounding this technology spanning decades.

The research shows that HIR cows have 19-30% lower disease incidence compared with herd averages. These cows respond better to commercial vaccines and produce higher quality colostrum. As a result, they are more profitable by bringing in more revenue, lowering costs and wasting less of the farmer's time.

"The discovery of HIR was a game changer," Semex global dairy solutions manager Jay Shannon said. "It revealed that high immunity is passed on from parent to progeny at rates much like production and some conformation traits.

"Compared with most health traits with low heritabilities of less than 10%, immune response is considered moderately to highly heritable at 25%.

"This means it can be selected for and improved upon with each generation."

Joining the proven Immunity+ lineup following the April 2014 genetic evaluation is 0200HO06198 Gen-IBeq Halak.

It is from an internationally popular pedigree — a Planet from a VG-87 5 Goldwyn full sister to the 2013 Reserve All-Canadian Aged Cow, Layla. The next dam is EX-94 18 Lila Z.

Proven in the US, Halak is an extremely popular Genomax sire. Its daughters are described as the modern kind, being average in stature with the strength needed for several lactations. They excel in their mammary systems, having high, wide rear udders with a strong udder cleft and shallow udder depth.

Halak delivers high components, great calving ease and productive life and is also Immunity+. The bull is already popular internationally and is designed to help meet the top priority on any dairy getting healthy calves on the ground.

It is also a high fertility Repromax sire, so will help any herd's reproductive performance, longevity and profitability.

As a HealthSmart sire, its daughters will be healthier, more fertile and will last longer. It is also Semex's number one new release for calving ease.

Halak has debuted at number 22 on the Holstein profit Australian proven or international listing in the *Good Bulls Guide* with an Australian Profit Ranking of +253. It ranks highest for mammary system for all bulls with an APR above +250.

"Our customers are looking for sires that give them daughters that are healthier and contribute more back to the bottom line," Semex Australia general manager Jim Conroy said. "Our Immunity+, HealthSmart, Repromax lines are to do just that, and Halak is all three making him an extremely profitable choice."

Article supplied by Semex Australia, website <www.semex.com>.

◀rather than simply following the global trends."

Navarian, Raceway and Roundhill lead the Valerian son charge with Navarian the number one Jersey sire available for profit.

Full brothers Raceway and Roundhill share some common characteristics, however their profiles provide enough differences for both the bulls to warrant places in the proven line up.

Spiritual son Broadside rounds out the list of newcomers to the proven team.

The FutureGen genomic sires provide Jersey enthusiasts with some real options.

"Whether it is profit, type or health, there is a FutureGen Jersey sire for you and like the Holsteins, every Jersey progeny test sire is genomically tested," Mr Shelly said.

Three new emerging Aussie Red sires have joined the Genetics Australia team.

ARBObama, ARBNick and ARBHilly all had their first daughters milking and had enough information to give confidence that they should be included alongside stalwarts ARBLex and ARBBonjovi in Genetics Australia's proven line up, Mr Shelly said.

"We are expecting big things from these bulls and are confident they represent the next generation of Red genetics," he said.

Article supplied by Genetics Australia Co-operative, phone (03) 5367 3888, wesite <www.genaust.com.au>.

Prize for electronic heat detection device

KEY POINTS

HEAT DETECTION

- ✔ Electronic device developed in Gippsland
- ✔ Strapped onto cow's leg
- ✔ Glows brightly when cow is in heat

A CREATIVE yet simple invention to help dairyfarmers determine when their cows are ready for artificial insemination has the potential to revolutionise the dairyfarming sector.

The innovative Heat Strap device has won $10,000 from Rural Finance's Great State of Ag's 2013 Seed Fund program to help turn his dream into a reality.

Robert Low, a seasonal dairyfarmer from Trafalgar, near Moe, Vic, began developing the Heat Strap four years ago after his herd suffered a poor submission rate when they showed they were in heat and ready to be joined using artificial insemination.

"As my herd only calves once a year it was disastrous," Mr Low said. "After a lot of analysis, I realised my heat detection equipment was simply not good enough."

Although heat detection aids were available to Mr Low, he said they were costly and required a major effort to computerise and upgrade his dairy — so he decided to develop his own system.

He teamed with a Sydney electronic engineering firm, LX Innovations, to develop the Heat Strap, an uncomplicated system with a strip that clips around a cow's lower leg and uses an algorithm to analyse behaviours consistent with the peak of a cow's reproductive cycle.

The strap can be observed each time a cow visits the dairy and glows brightly when the cow is in heat.

Mr Low said there had already been a number of trials with dairyfarmers to help improve results as well as test the resilience of the Heat Strap and the waterproof, shock-proof "enclosure" that housed the sensitive electronic components.

"We are about to go into a trial involving 4000 of the latest batch of prototypes," he said. "If the results are positive, I'll get it manufactured commercially.

"Thank you to the Great State of Ag selection panel for deeming my invention worthy of the prize."

Mr Low said he would use the prize-money to cover manufacturing and development costs.

Rural Finance general manager of agribusiness, Andrew Smith, said the award proved that innovative and creative thinking was at the heart of Australian agriculture and he was thrilled to see a Victorian designed and manufactured innovation take out the award.

"Robert Low's Heat Strap is a great example of some of the wonderful innovations taking place in Victorian agriculture," Mr Smith said.

"The Heat Strap has the potential to revolutionise dairying around the world, and it stemmed from a single farmer who identified an immediate need and put a great deal of time and effort into bringing that idea to reality. Congratulations, Robert."

Mr Low's website is <www.karobine.com.au>. D

RIGHT: Robert Low with the prototype low-cost Heat Strap he has invented.

Feeding rethink helps DemoDairy lift profits

KEY POINTS

PROFIT DRIVERS

- Reduced stocking rates more efficient
- Cutting production costs imperative
- Bought-in feed a major expense

A FOCUS on profitability and cost control rather than high production has helped DemoDAIRY to reverse its financial situation.

The Terang farm in Victoria's Western District has reduced its stocking rates and implemented strict cost controls to achieve savings of more than $530,000 this year.

It has turned the substantial losses of the past two financial years into a profit of about $60,000 due to big savings in feed, herd, repairs and maintenance, and labour costs.

The farm is now sharing its experiences with the dairy industry.

DemoDAIRY farm management consultant Paul Groves told a Focus on Profit — How to Cut Costs and Achieve Profits workshop in April that "margin is king".

"You can cope with good and bad years provided you have that margin," he said.

Mr Groves said the first step in achieving profit was looking at costs and making sure they were under control.

He said that on the DemoDAIRY farm, costs were brought under control by reducing the stocking rate by about 75 cows to 220 cows (from 2.5 to 1.9 cows per hectare).

The farm had been achieving more milk solids per hectare than profitable farms — 1248 kilograms of milk solids per hectare compared with more profitable farms producing 775kg/ha — but production costs were prohibitive.

"For this farm, it all came to adopting a reasonable stocking rate and reviewing costs, particularly feed costs," Mr Groves said.

"Before you listen to a sales rep saying you will get more production by adding this product, ask 'Does it make me more margin?'.

"This farm had a history of putting in more feed to get more production but it didn't make more money. You make more money if you use more home-grown grass but more cows does not always mean more grass is consumed. It's very difficult to achieve high per-cow production; it is almost impossible to do high production and high stocking rate."

Mr Groves said that if the 2011-12 costs had been repeated, even with the improved milk prices, the farm would have lost $150,000 this year. "The changes have improved the business by $210,000 at today's milk price and will result in a profit of more than $60,000," he said.

Paul Groves and DemoDAIRY chairman Bryan Dickson have overseen a change in direction at DemoDairy that has produced more profit.

For similar farms to compare to DemoDAIRY they need to remove finance and labour costs. The DemoDAIRY profit in 2013-14 (excluding finance and labour costs) will be more than $260,000, or $1155 per cow.

Before the changes were made, the farm was paying $211,103 for feed above industry averages for the amount of milk coming off the property.

"Because of the heavy stocking rate, the farm had been pushed into the corner to have buy-in feed," Mr Groves said.

"The production cost per hectare was very high because of $1200 per cow of brought-in feed; it should be about $500 for the level of production that was achieved.

"With this stocking rate we have more control. This autumn we have the decision to feed more because we have a good milk price or feed with the feed we have.

"It's about having the right number of cows for the property and finding out what sort of cows you have and feeding them appropriately. Not every cow is built to do 600kg of milk solids. There are 1500 farms in western Victoria and close to 1500 different ways to make money."

Mr Groves said the changes had improved not only the bottom line.

"I think the farm looks better and the cows are in better condition than 12 months ago, which is due to the new stocking rate," he said.

Mr Groves said the high stocking rate had affected repair and labour costs. "The repairs and maintenance bill was almost double the best-performing farms, which is symptomatic of a high-stocking farm," he said.

The total farm cost/kg in 2012-13 was $5.90 compared with a five-year average of $6.40. The total kilograms of milk solids production in 2012-13 was 102,000 compared with an average of 140,220 in the previous five years.

Mr Groves said this meant a $240,000 drop in income but that was balanced by the decrease of more than $500,000 in costs.

"You need to go through a lot of hard thinking to achieve this but every farm should go through that process," he said.

He said farms would benefit from monthly budget reviews. "If people spend too much money in one month they should try to make it up in the following month," he said. "You need to control your business and know where your expenditure is."

The farm expects to increase to 260 cows this year as more land becomes available due to trials finishing on about 20ha. Mr Groves said the stocking rate would remain about the same.

He said he did not believe the farm could achieve much more in cost-cutting but could increase production from appropriate feeding and improved calving rates.

"We aim to demonstrate how to produce milk and make money rather than step back into trials," he said.

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Feedpad considerations

By MICK O'KEEFE

KEY POINTS

FEEDPAD PLANNING

- Compare various types of feedpads
- Weigh up installation and operating costs
- Check local council requirements

MAKING a significant change to a feeding system, such as introducing a feedpad, is likely to change the cost structure of a business. The new integrated feeding system should provide the flexibility to utilise different feed ingredients and reduce feed wastage to boost milk production and increase milk income, less the purchased feed cost.

It is important to understand a business's current financial profile (including revenue, operating finance and capital costs) before investing in a new system.

In the mid to late 2000s feedpads and freestalls were constructed throughout Victoria in response to drier seasonal conditions, uncertainty about water availability, fluctuating supplementary feed and fertiliser costs, and lower milk prices.

Types of feedpads

Feedpads can be classified according to their permanency (for example, semi-permanent or permanent) and the manure management method used (for example, scraping or flood washing).

An effectively sited, designed, constructed and managed feedpad should provide cattle with easy access to feed, minimise feed wastage and prevent adverse impacts on amenity and the surrounding environment (that is, natural resources such as soil, water and air).

Semi-permanent feedpads usually consist of a formed earthen or rubble pad located adjacent to the dairy or the main farm laneway. Feed can be placed directly onto the ground or rubber matting or into modular steel or concrete troughs. Accumulated manure is scraped away from the pad. Earthen and rubble pads cannot be flood-washed to remove manure.

Permanent feedpads usually consist of a concrete pad located adjacent to the dairy or the main farm laneway. The pads generally consist of a concrete alley that is used by vehicles for delivering feed (the drive alley) and a separate alley that cattle stand on while feeding (the feed alley).

The pad usually has a longitudinal slope of 0.5-3% (that is, along the entire pad length). Accumulated manure can either be scraped or vacuumed from the alleys or flood-washed into a containment sump or pond.

Feed wastage and winter paddock management

Dairy Australia's Grains2Milk program investigated feed wastage across 50 Australian dairy farms.

The project considered six different feeding systems, ranging from temporary systems such as delivering feed onto the ground or into hay rings (low capital cost) to semi-permanent earthen feedpads and permanent concrete feedpads (high capital cost).

The project found that the total estimated feed wastage for temporary systems was about 18% while semi-permanent and permanent feedpads had low wastage rates of 1.5-2.0%.

The results showed that significant amounts of feed could be wasted when delivered directly onto the ground or into hay rings, and the price of bought-in feed could dramatically reduce the payback period on a semi-permanent or permanent feedpad.

Planning considerations

A successful feedpad or freestall development requires a lengthy consultation, planning and design process to ensure compliance with the local planning scheme and to provide ease of operation and management for the farm.

When considering the development of a new feedpad or the expansion to an existing system, it is important to bear in mind the legislation that might apply.

In particular, it is necessary to consider:

- whether a feedpad is an allowable use, having regard to the zoning of the site and other relevant planning provisions;
- whether a planning permit is required;
- whether an Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria Works Approval is required; and
- which other government authorities may be involved in the assessment of any planning permit application and, if so, the information they might require.

A dairy farm is defined in the Victorian Planning Provisions as "extensive animal husbandry", which is land used to keep or breed farm animals (including birds) at an intensity where the animals' main food source is obtained by grazing, browsing or foraging on plants grown on the land.

This includes any emergency and supplementary feeding or incidental penning and housing of cattle, provided they obtain the majority of food from the land.

Permanent feedpads usually consist of a concrete alley that is used by vehicles for delivering feed (the drive alley) and a separate alley that cattle stand on while feeding (the feed alley).

In the Farming Zone, land can be developed and used for extensive animal husbandry without requiring a planning permit, while in other rural zones a planning permit may be required.

Some farmers may wish to build a feedpad to increase the productivity of their farm by supplying the majority of feed on the feedpad. This enables the farm to be stocked at a higher rate than it otherwise would be if relying solely on the farm's pastures. This is intensive animal husbandry and will require a planning permit.

A planning permit for intensive animal husbandry can be applied for in the following rural zones: Farming, Rural Activity and Green Wedge.

In addition to the planning permit requirement for the "use" of a site for intensive animal husbandry, any associated "buildings and works" (including earthworks) may separately trigger the need for a planning permit.

For example, within the Farming Zone a permit is required to construct or carry out earthworks that change the rate of flow or the discharge point of water across a property boundary, or earthworks which increase the discharge of saline groundwater.

A useful starting point for farmers wishing to plan a feedpad is to obtain a property report that will outline the planning zones and overlays that effect the proposed development site.

Property reports can be downloaded at no cost from <www.land.vic.gov.au>.

For more information contact Michael O'Keefe, DEPI Rutherglen, phone (02) 6030 4548 or email <michael.o'keefe@depi.vic.gov.au>.

Article courtesy of the Department of Environment and Primary Industries' Dairy Bulletin.

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WA project looks at feed practices

By FRANK SMITH

KEY POINTS

HOW AND WHEN TO FEED

- Calibrating feeders vital
- Ration formulation program developed
- PMR can offer benefits

IT IS not only what is fed, but how and when it is fed that matters to dairy cows. That's one of the findings of newly completed Western Australian research.

Traditionally cows in milk are fed concentrates in the dairy and pasture, hay or silage in the paddock. But that may not be the best system in all circumstances.

In Western Australia few of the 160 dairyfarmers have enough irrigated land, or water, to supply pasture throughout the dry summer. Therefore most farms use a hybrid feeding system where they feed cows eight to 12 kilograms of grain per day during summer and autumn when there is no pasture available for grazing.

Usually grain is fed in the dairy, so cattle have an intake of 4-6kg grain across a relatively short-period.

"High levels of grain intake during a short-time period is not optimal for cattle's rumen to work," WA Department of Agriculture and Food's (DAFWA) dairy team leader John Lucey said.

"They are fed energy and carbohydrate-rich grain in the parlour and as a result rumen pH can fall quickly sometimes causing acidosis. Often acidosis is subclinical, so while no clinical signs can be seen, production is reduced.

"As part of the Flexible Feeding Systems — WA (FFS-WA) project, co-funded by DAFWA, Western Dairy and Dairy Australia, we are evaluating in-parlour grain feeding compared to feeding grain mixed with forage outside the dairy as a partial mixed ration (PMR).

"Cows consume their grain mixed with forage, which takes more time, which is better for rumen function."

DAFWA senior research officer Dr Martin Staines is just completing Phase I of the FFS-WA project to evaluate management practices adopted on farms around PMR and in-dairy feeding systems to identify critical success factors.

Some 13 partner farmers in the South West of WA, ranging from Harvey to Warner Glen, have taken part in a trial comparing in-dairy with PMR feeding systems.

Participating farmers keep records and share information on what they feed, in quantity and quality, time and labour costs and milk production.

While the partner farmers have not been encouraged to make changes during the on-farm monitoring, many have made feeding system improvements as a result of their involvement including more regular in-dairy feeder calibration plus weighing of bales of silage before feeding.

DAFWA staff visit each farm monthly to monitor record keeping.

"The first thing we found was that many farmers are unaware of the need to regularly calibrate their feeders," Mr Lucey said. "Some were delivering up to 33% more than or under the amount of feed intended.

"It takes an hour to calibrate feeders. Calibration could potentially give the highest return for time spent of any on-farm task.

"Feed costs are critical on dairy farms so the development of balanced rations are essential. Many farmers employ dairy nutrition consultants, but they cannot be on farm the whole time.

"Many WA dairyfarmers are now using a farmer-friendly ration formulation program called Rumen8, developed by Dr Staines and a fellow colleague Richard Morris, which formulates rations based on available feed in real time. They can then to check it with their consultant during farm visits."

The FFS-WA project is associated with a bigger Flexible Feeding Systems project currently being undertaken at the National Centre for Dairy Research and Development at the Department of Environment and Primary Industries at Ellinbank, Victoria.

Victoria DEPI senior researcher Dr Bill Wales said partial mixed rations were an efficient way of giving nutrients to cows.

"A number of ingredients are mixed together and presented on a feed pad — typically concrete in troughs," he said.

Dairy cows generally graze in several bouts per day, but with the PMR system cows are grazing more often.

The Victorian researchers haven't found any negative health problems with cows fed using the PMR system so far.

"There is potential that standing and walking around on concrete could wear the hooves down and the cows will end up with more feet problems," he said. "But there's no evidence of that in the research across several lactations."

Researchers John Lucey and Martin Staines are looking at feed practices in WA as part of a national project.

He also said evidence was emerging that feeding canola meal as part of the concentrate ration improved the rumen environment and encouraged more grazing.

However the PMR system, as devised in Victoria, cannot be applied holus bolus in WA where there was little or no grazing for part of the year.

DAFWA's senior dairy research officer Dr Martin Staines said it was too early to tell if the capital cost and extra labour involved in the PMR system was worthwhile in WA.

"In some cases the cost doesn't outweigh the benefit," he said.

"The objective of this work is to try to identify when can you justify doing this and when are you better to stick to a more simple and lower cost system and manage that effectively."

WA farmer Warwick Tyrell said he has a better view of what was going on with feeding on his farm as a result of his involvement in a WA project.

One of a FFS-WA Partner Farmers who runs 300 cows and rears his own heifers on 122ha at Dardanup is Warwick Tyrell.

He produces 2.5 million litres of milk at year averaging 3.8-4% butterfat and 3.2% protein for processor Lion, which is owned by Japanese conglomerate Kirin.

Mr Tyrell, a vet by training, returned to full-time dairy farming with his wife Emma in 2006. In 2012 they were WA regional winners of the Westpac Agribusiness and Dairy Australia Dairy Business of the Year competition.

He has 28ha of pasture flood irrigated with water from the Wellington Dam, but has to contend with high salt levels.

"We manage our irrigated paddocks as perennial ryegrass pastures in the cooler months and kikuyu pastures during summer," Mr Tyrell said.

"Cows go on the irrigated pasture at night from November with silage feeding in dry shady paddocks during the day, supplemented with high levels of grain in the dairy. We feed 4kg/day of concentrate — mixed crushed wheat and lupins in winter and 12kg/day in summer.

"We've made no changes to management practices since we joined the project, but I have a better view of what is going on, especially due to quality testing the pasture.

"That is the big black hole in ration formulation. We always used to take the pasture at book value, so having quality measurements of our pasture during summer has been beneficial."

He is now trying out the ration formulation program Rumen8 to formulate optimum rations.

The goal of this feeding systems research is not to find a single best system, Mr Lucey said. Each farm was different and had different goals and risk profile.

The research should provide the information for each farmer to choose the best system for their situation, he said.

Phase two will look at a broader range of industry expansion options including purchasing cheaper land in lower rainfall country or becoming more intensive on an existing acreage. D

Contact: John Lucey, email <john.lucey@agric.wa.gov.au> or phone (08) 9777 0124.

‘Concept thinking’ good measure of performance

By ALISTAIR LAWSON

KEY POINTS

OPERATING SYSTEMS

- Some systems better than others
- Open discussion with other operators
- Beware of ‘hidden feedlot’

DAIRYFARMERS attending the DairySA central conference at Hahndorf, South Australia, in March were challenged to open their minds and start the discussion with like-minded or different operators about different operating systems.

Victorian consultant Phil Shannon, who runs Shannon Farm Consulting, said all systems could work — from feedpads to grass-only farms — but some systems would always work better than others, given certain external factors such as milk price and feed price.

“I think you’ll find the great majority of farmers operate their farms on a concepts basis, rather than sitting down and crunching a heap of numbers and budgets to say ‘what should I do next?’” he said.

“Data is great, but the trouble with data is it’s always about what happened in the past.”

Mr Shannon said that to him, concepts were a way of understanding why things happen the way they do.

“It’s a way of working out what you do, rather than waiting until it’s past and trying to measure what you should have done,” he said.

“Good managers generally repeat high performance, but they’re not always going to have the highest return on asset.

“This will be a classic year where if you’re grass-only and not dependent on supplements at all, you’ll struggle to get the return on asset that someone who’s very dependent on purchased feed with lots of cows will be able to achieve.

“You’ll still be a good operator, but the difference with a good operator is they don’t have the highs and lows — they seem to be able to adjust and manage and ride out the storms.

“They apply concept-thinking — they don’t wait for the benchmarks at the end of the year to say ‘what do I do this year’ they actually get in and do the job.”

Mr Shannon said another reason concept thinking worked well was because every business was “unique”.

While there was no one right farming system, Mr Shannon said there was a right one for every farmer, pointing to an example of someone who operated a feedlot dairy milking 1400 cows.

However, he said they were going backwards because they were not particularly good at it and were not willing to feed to that system.

“So really they only had 700 cows and they had a lot of money being lost on 500 cows,” he said.

“I had them to the point where they were

Shannon Farm Consulting's Phil Shannon says all systems can work — from feedpads to grass-only farms — but some systems will always work better than others.

going to sell the 500 cows and then what happened? The milk price went up.

"I'd be a fool if I didn't say 'don't sell those cows' and now I'm estimating their return on asset is going to be between 25% and 30%, because they've got everything in place for it."

Mr Shannon said cheap feed or direct-grazed feed was one of the only links he had found that had a high relationship with profit.

He preferred about 60% of cows' diet to be home-grown feed and the other 40% made up of bought-in feed, but some farmers had it the other way round.

"My theory is that a lot of farmers have moved to this and aren't doing okay, but haven't realised it yet," he said.

"What I try and point out to some farmers is the 'hidden feedlot' that sneaks into businesses.

"There were a number of farmers who got caught tweaking their system, which eventually turned into a 'leak'.

"How I start to try and tackle this is to say, let's try and split our business quite simply into an investment business and an operating business.

"My concern is sometimes farmers' investment business is wrong for their perception of where they would like to be, but they're damn good operators.

"Everything is right but the cost of production is high.

"Until they change their investment business, they find it hard to use their operating skills to improve their position."

The most challenging operational decisions generally involved a trade-off between hectare performance and cow performance.

"That's such a critical skill for all farmers to have is to know when to feed more and to feed the right amount every year for the conditions they have got," he said.

"The interesting thing is regardless whether you're very high input or very low input, there is a unique most-profitable feeding point for your business on any day of the year.

"We think that for all the high inputters and production per cow people, they've got a different spot.

"But it's the same spot — all you've got to do is figure out where that is."

A winter home for the herd

By WILLIAM VALLELY

KEY POINTS

HERD HOUSING

- Jarrod and Lyndon Smith, Winnaleah, Tas, using two Herd Homes
- Using homes to boost winter milk volume
- Growing protein crops to reduce input costs

NORTH-EAST Tasmania's sodden winters had finally taken their toll on Winnaleah dairyfarmers Jarrod and Lyndon Smith. In 2010, between July and October the pair lost an unusually large number of calves, prompting father Lyndon to initiate a change.

"I said to Jarrod 'If we're going to carry on dairying we need to do something different' — it was devastating," Lyndon said.

Jarrod jumped online, initially looking for covered calving barns, and quickly realised the best solution was Herd Homes: concrete, steel and plastic structures designed to house cows during the bleak winter months.

Cows will be fed every day through the Herd Homes but will also graze pasture for part of the day.

As Jarrod said, cows were a superstitious bunch, which made getting them into the homes a challenge initially.

"The first day they came up the lane, stood on the edge of the concrete slates and wouldn't go in," Jarrod said. "The next day every single one of them ran up the hill; they loved it."

The cows' affinity with their new 60-metre-by-10.5m surrounds developed to such an extent that Jarrod had a job on getting them out to milk in the morning.

"If it's a horrible day when you go to get them for milking, you open the gate and they just look at you and say 'No way — I'm not going anywhere' so you have to push them out," Jarrod said.

The first year of the Herd Homes in 2011 provided instant relief for the pair, who didn't lose a calf to the weather and managed to keep their cows well-fed. However, they began searching for ways to capitalise on such a large investment.

"We're sort of locked in," Jarrod said. "We had to make it work so we went from spring-calving to a split-calving herd to try to push some winter milk through the system."

Split calving proved difficult to manage as Jarrod and Lyndon were either always over- or under-feeding a portion of the herd, depending on the stage of lactation.

This prompted a recent decision to dry-off the whole herd of 350 cows in late December and move to February calving.

The pair say a uniform calving pattern will enable them to feed their cows more efficiently in order to produce the winter milk for which processors pay a premium.

Tangible benefits of the Herd Homes thus far have been increased milk production due to improved feed utilisation, quieter cows and, surprisingly, more heifer calves.

Cows were fed through the winter in herd homes last year on a mixture of maize, grass silage and brewers' grain.

"They came through the winter as fat as mud," Lyndon said. "And they were fat in the spring; they hardly dropped levels of production since July-August, which is impressive considering most of them were in very late lactation."

Growing maize silage and fodder beet has also reduced input costs for the pair.

Jarrod estimates that during winter the Herd Homes are 8-10°C warmer than the outside environment and a similar degree cooler in summer.

"The percentage of feed going into energy and into production has altered considerably because they don't need nearly as much feed," Jarrod said.

A warmer and more controlled feeding environment has reduced the vagaries of milk production.

"It's helped flatline production. If you string a couple of rough nights together we don't see it in the vat as much as others would," he said.

"We have much more control over their lead-feed before they calve, which is critical to levels of production. We used to have springers in the paddock and we'd put lead-feed pellets under the fence, which was pretty unreliable."

Producing their own feed has been, and will continue to be, critical in making the herd homes work.

An 80-hectare adjoining block has just been bought by the Smiths to grow maize and other protein crops.

The plan is for cows to be fed pasture in the morning and silage at midday and placed in the Herd Homes in the afternoon from February to May, while in winter (May-September) they will go into the Herd Homes overnight and graze during the day.

Attention to detail is an intrinsic part of the Herd Homes' continued success.

"It doesn't matter what the weather's like, if it's a nice night they'll still go in the Herd Homes so we can maintain our rotations and give them consistency of feed," Jarrod said.

With a 200-head capacity, the two Herd Homes are, at present, a perfect fit for the herd size, making further plans to increase numbers and build a new home dependent on the next two seasons.

"Milk prices need to sustain their present level ($6.10-$6.30 per kilogram of milk solids) for a while before we can think about getting another one," Jarrod said.

Lyndon Smith with his herd, which has improved milk production since the introduction of herd homes.

Two herd homes — each with a 200-head capacity — at the Smiths' farm at Winnaleah, Tas.

Feed saved boosts bottom line

By ALISTAIR LAWSON

KEY POINTS

FEED EFFICIENCY

- Feedpad cuts forage volume fed by 20%
- Cows fed mixed ration including hay, brewers' grain, citrus pulp and potatoes
- Alleviates risks associated with feeding out

IT TOOK only a little bit of maths for Inman Valley, South Australia, dairyfarmer Tristan Mulhern to realise how much money he was losing in feed wastage. In the past 10 years, the Mulhern family — Tristan, wife Dolly, father Rob and mother Lyn — had tried a number of different things to reduce feed wastage.

Farming Hilltop View Dairy, the Mulherns had tried everything, from using a Waste-Not feeding system on treated rubble, where they found their cows were still not getting full feed intake, to buying a mixer wagon to bring in other commodities besides hay and silage and feeding that out under fencelines.

But about two years ago, Mr Mulhern did the figures on what it would cost and how much wastage they could cut if the family was to build a feedpad and feed a partial mixed ration or total mixed ration.

"For about five months of the year, we were wasting 30-40% feeding under fencelines and for the other two or three months we were feeding we were wasting 10-15%," he said.

"Just saving 20% overall for eight months was working on $250 a tonne of dry matter and I worked out we could save ourselves about $90,000 a year."

Inman Valley, SA, dairyfarmer Tristan Mulhern (right) noticed an improvement in feed wastage when his feedpad became operational at Christmas. He is with employee Hubertus Nieder, Germany.

The Mulherns milk 520 Holsteins under a year-round calving system across 275 hectares of dryland on sandy glacier, acidic, non-wetting soils with the help of four full-time labour units, supplying milk to United Dairy Power (UDP).

Mr Mulhern did his research on feedpads by visiting the Hurrell family's set-up at Torrens Vale, SA, and the Altmann family's set-up at Murray Bridge, SA, to see how much they had saved in wastage when they switched over to a feedpad system.

"More and more people are starting to look into it because it gives you more control over how you operate," he said. "You can't control milk prices or input costs but you can control what you feed to get the maximum yield out of your cows."

The timing of building a feedpad worked out well resources-wise, with work beginning in January 2013 when the housing industry was tough so materials such as concrete and steel were all bought at a reasonable price.

"Had I waited another year it would have cost me another $100,000 so the opportu-

nity was there to take advantage of a flat housing market," Mr Mulhern said.

But many dairyfarmers remember the 2012-13 season as an extremely challenging one, with a low milk price and high feed costs, meaning most farmers were trying to tighten their belts and investing in new infrastructure was relegated to the backs of their minds.

"When we started building the pad, I had confidence in the money we were going to save by having one," he said. "The way I saw it, we were going to keep dairying for at least another five years and couldn't afford to keep losing the money we were by wasting feed.

"It is even more of an eye-opener in a bad year when the hay price is high too, because then you're losing more money.

"It was a bit of a gamble but we had good financial backing from the banks."

While it should have taken about four months to complete, bad weather and other hold-ups meant the project took about 11 months and was finished two weeks before Christmas, with the cows having their inaugural run on the new pad on Christmas Day.

Now completed, the feedpad measures 190 metres long by 15m wide — enough room for 550 cows.

Mr Mulhern said it proved to be a success straight away in reducing feed wastage.

"That day the cows first went on the feedpad, I took out 20% of the forage that would normally go in the feed ration but production stayed the same and the cows were still full," he said.

But it is not just less feed wastage that Mr Mulhern has noticed.

"When we used to feed the ration in paddocks under the fencelines, our employees would be driving a tractor towing a 15-tonne mixing wagon in drizzly conditions on a hilly property," he said.

"It gets quite dangerous in that scenario and I didn't like that, but feeding on the feedpad is much more advantageous in terms of workplace safety.

"The raceways will also hold up a lot better as they won't be getting as much heavy vehicle traffic."

The Mulherns' feedpad measures 190 metres long by 15m wide — enough room to accommodate 550 cows.

He said he also expected to see benefits in pasture improvement.

"In time it will save our pastures in spring and summer in readiness for autumn as we are looking to plant more perennials in spring such as lucerne and chicory for summer grazing, which will also hold soils together and stop erosion," Mr Mulhern said.

After the cows are milked in the farm's 50-unit rotary dairy morning and afternoon they leave the yard and walk up to the feedpad to eat a ration that varies.

"Currently it's all bought in and it consists of vetch hay, brewers' grain, pasture hay, citrus pulp, potatoes, sugar, minerals, urea and three kilograms a cow of barley, which is taken out of the feed ration in the dairy," Mr Mulhern said.

"However, I want to get a more consistent diet going and my idea is to have them feeding on silage, medic hay, pasture hay, brewers' grain and a base grain and have them on that for eight months of the year when the herd is not on grass."

While production benefits are not evident straight away, he is expecting that to shine through in a year's time.

"Over the years we have moved to a year-round calving system to achieve flatter production because that is what the milk companies prefer," he said.

"The feedpad will help us to achieve that too as we can feed all the time, and if we decide to buy in more cows we know we can fully feed them.

"It's given us many options and we can go different ways."

While Mr Mulhern is no stranger to the volatility of the dairy sector and the roller-coaster ride his milk price might take, he is confident about the industry in the next 12 months.

Beyond that, however, he is not too sure.

"It's hard when you keep having one good year then one bad year," he said.

"I think it will start to improve and be a lot better than what it was, but I'm only 60% sure on that.

"My optimism is being driven by the confidence of UDP, which has said from the beginning it would be paying in the high $6/kg-milk-solids (MS) bracket and is now in the low $7/kg MS.

"It gives you confidence when a company sticks its neck out over other companies, which is what farmers need." D

The undercover sheepyards were retrofitted with the infrastructure necessary to raise calves. Bails, teats and buckets are in several pens.

Calves in the Blackshaw dedicated rearing sheds.

Rob Broadbent finds it easy to move the calves around the yards.

Calves provide four income streams

By JEANETTE SEVERS

KEY POINTS

INCOME STREAMS

- ✔ Split-calving 450-head Friesian herd
- ✔ Four income streams from calves
- ✔ Old sheepyards converted for calf rearing

CALVING is an intense operation that delivers four income streams at Dennis and Rick Blackshaw's dairy farm at Romawi, outside Bairnsdale in Victoria. The Blackshaws keep every calf — so calving and calf rearing are critical parts of the operation.

The Blackshaws milk 480 Friesian cows at the peak of their season, culling the herd heavily after each herd test to a maintenance figure of 450 by Christmas. In 2012-2013, they produced 3,030,400 litres of milk, containing 132,617.63 kilograms of butter fat and 100,601.72kg protein.

There are two calvings every year — the first begins on March 10 and the second on July 10. The 150 autumn calvers get up to 12 weeks rest, while the 300 spring calvers cows get nine weeks.

"We keep everything we calve down and allow 100 heifers through each year, expecting 90% will make it into the replacement herd," Rick Blackshaw said. "It also means I can keep every calf and grow them out and choose when I want to sell them, adding to cash flow at times I need it."

The dairy farm was developed on a former sheep site, and they utilised existing undercover sheep yards beside the shearing shed for the calf-rearing area.

Bails and segregating fences were added to the yards, which were also extended to include a nursery room to house the newborn calves until they are old enough to go out on pasture.

"The sheepyards lends itself well to rearing calves when on the bucket," Mr Blackshaw said.

Every morning Mrs Blackshaw collects the calves that were born in the previous 24 hours and delivers them to the nursery pen. This is the most intense part of the operation, as Mr Blackshaw ensures each calf learns how to use the bucket-and-teat feeding system before it moves into the other pens when it is about five days old.

"It's important each calf gets its six litres of milk each morning," Mr Blackshaw said. "I mark the calves [with colour] as they finish feeding so I know at a glance who's had their six litres, who's still to drink. A different colour tells me if a calf has scours.

"It's a bit more hands-on but I try to keep a lot of touch on the calves. I tell the workers to handle them a lot — if one is a bit bullying, take it aside and handle it for 10 minutes, quiet it down. We persevere to give the calves the best chance from the start."

Handling the calves pays off in the paddock and, as they get older, particularly when introducing the heifers into the 50-stand rotary dairy.

The calves are fed a mix of colostrum and 'blue' milk — the milk from cows getting antibiotics or other treatment — that goes directly into a separate vat in the dairy. It is then fed into a mobile tank, a small heater is put in and it is transported on a trailer to the calf yards. A pump, hose and trigger are connected to pour the milk into the buckets attached to each bail.

Calves are moved into the bails in small mobs and supervised to ensure each one gets its own bucket and completes drinking it. This is also an opportunity to check each calf for visual signs of ill health, such as scours.

"Nothing in the dairy gets wasted," Mr ▶

Every morning during the split-calving period, Dennis Blackshaw collects the newborn calves and brings them to the nursery pen in the undercover calf yard, where they remain for five days.

It's a very simple setup, but this tank is filled every morning and transported to the calf yards where each calf receives six litres of milk.

Once out of the nursery pen and into the calf yards, calves have ad lib access to pasture, pellets and silage, as well as water, in a sheltered 3.5ha paddock.

Rick Blackshaw selects bull calves born from his 20-30 top performing cows to be grown out as replacement mop-up bulls.

Export heifers are grown out to 180 kilograms at 8-10-months-old and sold to the Chinese export heifer market.

Rick Blackshaw uses 607ha of dryland pasture to grow steers out to 10 months.

Transforming sheep country to a dairy

DENNIS, Maureen, Rick and Tracey Blackshaw started a dairy farm in the centre of 'traditional sheep country' near Bairnsdale (south-east Victoria), 12 years ago.

While Dennis was brought up on a dairy farm, he and Rick were plumbers before the change.

It was while Dennis was contemplating retirement that a piece of land he liked came on the market and he put in a bid for it 13 years ago. The property was running 5500 sheep but Dennis thought it was ideal for a dairy.

"Dad rang me and said he'd found an ideal farm for dairying and wanted me to come in with him," said Rick Blackshaw. "There was an existing irrigation bore from where we could irrigate 81 hectares.

"We built the 50-stand rotary dairy and bought a herd of Friesians from John Stewart of Leongatha."

Within 12 months of buying the farm they began milking 210 cows — they now milk a 450-head mostly-Friesian herd.

The work and the income is enough to support five families, as the Blackshaw's employ three full-time workers on the farm.

Mr Blackshaw speaks highly of the three workers. "They're all more than 40 years of age and reliable about turning up for work and showing initiative about what needs to be done," he said. "We do everything ourselves — milking, fencing, cutting hay and silage.

"All the workers know how to use all the machinery. We wanted to become so self-reliant we can do without external factors.

"The farm keeps all of us in full-time employment all year round."

He has taken the business skills he learned as a tradesman and applied them to running the farm.

"We're happy with this industry," said Mr Blackshaw said. "I think the dairy industry is a good one to be in and this farm really lends itself to farming.

"It's very easy for forward planning — at the start of the year I know what figures I can expect to make and I get a cheque every month.

"We try to put a business aspect on everything. I've been able to develop the business plan around my business principles."

The family irrigates 129.5ha to graze the dairy cows on 31 paddocks.

They cut silage — round rolls of mixed rye and clover pasture, oaten hay and lucerne silage that will be cut and baled at least five times each season.

The grazing regime is supported by a further 607ha of dryland pasture — 36.5ha oats and the remainder a mix of ryegrass, clover, cocksfoot and prairie grass — predominantly to grow out replacement heifers, but also to bring the steers and heifers to be sold up to 10-months-old.

"The whole system is complementary," Mr Blackshaw said. "We grow all our own feed and grow the heifers out on the excess pasture.

"That's the beauty of the dry country — no agistment fees and no transport fees cuts down our expenses.

"Keeping 100 heifers each year makes culling replacement cows easy. Plus, resting the cows for as long as I do, cuts costs in the dairy."

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Blackshaw said. "I used my plumbing background to set up a system that works.

"Everything goes into the littlies and we have a good success rate."

Once out of the nursery pens, after their morning milk, the calves have access to 3.5 hectares of ad lib pasture, lucerne and pellets. They can move between their pens and the surrounding paddock, which is protected from wind. They also have unlimited access to water in each pen from day one.

Moving the calves is easy in the purpose-built sawdust-floored undercover calf yards that replaced the previous farm's sheepyards.

Calves housed on sawdust

THE calves are housed on sawdust which is replaced each year.

"The sawdust is cleaned out to bare earth annually," Mr Blackshaw said. "We spray with disinfectant, lime heavily, then lay down 23.5 centimetres (8-inches) of sawdust.

"We do that annually unless it needs replacing sooner."

The tank, hoses, trigger, buckets and teats are cleaned every day after the calves finish drinking.

"After they've been in the calf pens for eight weeks, I start to wean the calves onto pellets, then grass, silage and pellets," Mr Blackshaw said.

"Weaning normally takes 1.5 weeks, so by the time they are 9.5 weeks old they're completely weaned off milk.

"By 12 weeks they are on pasture."

This is when the calves are drafted into separate lots.

Replacement heifer calves run together on a highly nutritious pasture, supplemented by oaten hay and lucerne silage. These will be culled to a remaining 90 each year, with extra heifers sold into the dairy market.

Calves identified for the Chinese heifer market are drafted into another paddock, where they too are fed pasture and silage and sold at 7-9-months-old, at 180kg. Mr Blackshaw relies on a local stock agent to organise this annual sale.

Heifers for both these streams are selected on maternal performance indicators.

Replacement mop-up bull calves are selected from the top-performing cows in the herd, with the hope that those maternal attributes will show up in progeny — such attributes as producing most milk and milk solids.

At 12-months-old these bull calves will be checked for temperament and soundness and culled if necessary.

Remaining bull calves are turned into steers and drafted into a fourth paddock on pasture, to grow out to 10 months when they are sold as store cattle. Angus-cross heifers born from replacement milkers are also grown out to 10 months for the store cattle market. Again, Mr Blackshaw relies on a local stock agent to advise when to put these cattle to market.

"The dryland paddocks allow this to happen," Mr Blackshaw said.

"When we bought the farm, dad's plan included using the additional land to benefit from these income streams. The amount of dryland we've got, we've got the capacity to hold the calves and grow them out.

"We don't have to budget for transport, agistment and buying feed in. We keep every calf and they are all grown out here.

"Diversification takes a load of worry off me. It makes farming easy and I'm a big fan of easy." D

Rick Blackshaw fills each bucket with six litres of fresh milk from the dairy each morning.

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Lift colostrum quality

KEY POINTS

COLOSTRUM

- ✔ Colostrum supplement
- ✔ Provides high quality
- ✔ Improves calf health

GIVING calves the best chance to start off is essential: that was the message from Gippsland dairyfarmer Shawn Hollingworth.

Mr Hollingworth and his wife, Tracey, have farmed their current property at Koonwarra, just south of Leongatha, Vic, since mid-2011 and like most farmers have always done their best, given the tools at their disposal, to ensure their calves receive adequate levels of antibodies through colostrum.

"I always tried to take the colostrum from the older cows to feed the calves," Mr Hollingworth said. "It is traditionally of a higher quality than that produced by first-calvers.

"While visual testing and checking colour, consistency and tackiness is the most common method of determining colostrum quality on farm, it is also the least accurate as these factors are merely an indication of the level of antibodies contained in maternal colostrum."

The only truly accurate way to test colostrum is by using a refractometer. With farmers encouraged to discard colostrum that doesn't make the grade, this can leave farmers without enough high-quality colostrum to feed all their calves.

The alternative is to feed the lower-quality colostrum at a higher rate in order for the calf to receive adequate antibodies, which can be an issue as it could mean that a calf would potentially have to receive up to eight litres, or four feeds, in its first 24 hours — something few farmers have the time to provide.

Recent studies in the United States have shown the effect on calves that received inadequate levels of antibodies through colostrum went far beyond health issues during rearing.

A heifer that received 200 grams of antibodies milked 1000 litres more in its first lactation and a further 1500 litres in subsequent lactations.

In Mr Hollingworth's case, he has been using Kick Start colostrum supplement by Dasco for the past two seasons to add extra antibodies and increase the quality of his maternal colostrum.

"Last year every calf received Kick Start and this year I changed my process and used it selectively," he said.

"I think last year's calves were much better overall.

"We had no fatalities last year and the calves seemed to be full of energy.

"This year the calves that didn't receive Kick Start seemed to be doughy and they didn't seem as happy or as active as last year."

Kick Start is a powdered supplement made from bovine colostrum. It contains immunoglobulins — the antibodies found in colostrum — and is designed to assist farmers in making sure their calves receive adequate antibodies in those crucial early stages of life.

"We normally lose one or two but last year we had no fatalities and no scours, which was amazing, whereas this year we used Kick Start selectively and we've had a few get crook and we've already lost a couple," Mr Hollingworth said.

"I'll be using it on all calves next year." D

Shawn Hollingworth with calves on his Koonwarra property. For the past two seasons he has used a colostrum supplement to boost the level of antibodies received by calves.

Calves on the Hollingworth property.

For further information, contact Brendan Johnson at DASCO Pty Ltd, phone 0419 950 044, or DASCO direct, phone 1800 155 369.

Article supplied by Daviesway.

Tas calf-raiser embraces unconventional methods

By MICHAEL PORTEUS

KEY POINTS

CALF-REARING

- ✔ Raise 400-plus calves per year
- ✔ Administers IV fluids to about 13%
- ✔ Horticultural hothouses used as shelter

KATRINA Sykes laughs that there was no mention before she wed Tasmanian Jersey breeder John Sykes in 1981 that the marriage would mean raising thousands of calves in sickness and in health. But today she raises more than 400 calves every year, including about 30 that she nurses with intravenous drips.

Mrs Sykes does not come from a farming background but said she soon got the dairying bug when she started looking after the calves on the Sykeses' first farm at Kamona in north-east Tasmania.

In 1982, she raised 50 heifers in an old dairy and a disused piggery, carrying milk in buckets and improvising to protect them from the cold.

Many thousands of calves later, Mrs Sykes still doesn't call herself an expert. But she said she did love raising the calves on the current farm at Ringarooma near Scottsdale, an hour east of Launceston.

Their Minstonette stud has been a Tasmanian farm of the year, and it has brought home reserve-champion and class-winner ribbons from International Dairy Week.

Mr Sykes and their daughter Jane are passionate Jersey breeders who source semen worldwide to breed sturdy grass-eaters with good udders. They already have heifers in calf to genomic bulls.

The Sykes run more than 1100 Jerseys and about 40 Ayrshires and crossbreds on two properties, with a total of 380 hectares of alluvial and volcanic soils. They irrigate up to 160ha. They are now milking about 620 head. Last year, they supplied Fonterra with 145,000 kilograms of butterfat and 100,000kg of protein.

In the past 12 months, they have also exported 117 heifers to China and sold about 100 bull calves to farms building herds for an expected boom in Tasmanian dairying.

The Sykes calve more than 500 head from August to mid-November. More than 20 calves arrive per day at the peak time, when Mrs Sykes can't even leave the farm to go shopping. The rest of the herd calves in autumn.

The stud raises calves in two hothouses and two barns. It has four automatic calf feeders and is getting another four. However, Mrs Sykes still gives the calves hands-on care and feeds many with bottles and buckets.

When needed and in consultation with her vet, Mrs Sykes uses IV drips to deliver fluids, glucose and antibiotics into the jugular veins of about 30 calves each year. She often brings some into her living room, where she changes the IV flow by raising the drip packs on chairs.

"A lot of people around here think we are a bit eccentric the way we do things," Mrs Sykes said. "But it pays off. If we don't look after the calves the way we do, we loose too many. Unless we look after them, they come into the herd too small and they don't produce.

"The heifers have to come in well enough grown and carrying enough condition to be able to compete in a 600-cow herd. We are putting 130 two-year-olds into the herd each year and they are looking well, milking well and getting back in calf."

The hands-on care also produces cows that are used to being handled. "We know them, and they know us," Mrs Sykes said. The farm rarely uses a crush, even when inserting the IV drips. The calves grow up to be easy to bring into the dairy.

The Sykes family defers to Mrs Sykes as the boss of the calves, and she in turn praises the input of her husband and daughter, sons Jason and Mark, her mother (who makes calf blankets) and her boilermaker father Wal (who builds pens and equipment). Mrs Sykes's parents relocated buildings in which they grew carnations to Ringarooma to set up the calf hothouses.

Mrs Sykes said all the support had been needed since she tore a shoulder muscle three years ago, reducing the strength in her right arm.

She said anyone at the start of a calf rearing career should be prepared for a lot of

Katrina Sykes bottle-feeds a calf after treatment with an IV drip.

The Sykes herd grazes at Ringarooma, Tas.

hard lessons. "Be prepared to ask questions and be prepared to think outside the box," she said. "Just because I rear my calves my way doesn't mean it's necessarily the right way for someone else.

"Basically, you ask questions and you learn, and you look, and you ask more questions: 'How did you do that again?'" She works closely with her vets and often collects blood, faeces and urine samples for analysis in Scottsdale.

Mrs Sykes once bottle-fed for weeks a calf that had lost its mother in a premature birth. She devised a travel tub so the calf could join the family's annual pilgrimage to the Scottsdale show. But, despite the attention, unfortunately, that calf did not survive.

"There's a lot of calves you'll lose but there'll be a lot of wins as well," Mrs Sykes said. "Don't be afraid to ask questions of your vet and don't be afraid to have a go. Make the best out of the facilities you have.

"It makes a huge difference if you have passion. Anyone who doesn't like rearing calves won't rear good calves.

"Our biggest gain was when we put the hothouses in. The calves are now in out of the cold: there's no draft, it's warm and it stays dry."

The walls of the hothouses are 70% shadecloth which can be rolled up in summer. The pen floors have about 15 centimetres of annually replaced wood shavings. The buildings are sprayed twice a year.

"Your rearing facilities are your biggest hurdle," Mrs Sykes said. "You have to get ventilation and not overcrowd — a lot of issues are caused by over-crowding."

The Fairdale cows calve in a paddock beside their home, 1.5km from the dairy, where Mrs Sykes can watch them as she does the paperwork, which she said was a vital part of raising calves. She has noticed a steady increase in Jersey birth weights, which now range from 18 to 30kg. Newborns that haven't fed from their mothers are bottle-fed colostrum milk before going into heated four-calf nursery pens.

"They are fed twice a day for the first three to four weeks and then once a day," Mrs Sykes said. "They are offered water, hay and grain from day one."

She said it took the calves up to a week to get over the shock of being born. They then moved to 30-calf pens in sheds with outside access and soon start exploring the grass. They are given grain for a year and then graze on the farm's run-off block.

All the newborns are given equal treatment but Mrs Sykes said some caught her eye from the moment they hit the ground "because of the way they stand and hold themselves".

This year, they have three calves out of top cows, nicknamed Gold, Silver and Bronze.

A calf from the Fairdale stud in north-eastern Tasmania.

Mrs Sykes said they had been born with an attitude that said: "Look at me — I'm gorgeous".

"There's nothing better than to be in the milking herd or a mob of calves where they will just walk up to you and want a scratch or a cuddle," she said.

"You suddenly think 'Oh, I reared that — that's been through my calf shed and I've contributed to the well-being of this little body that's running around my feet and trying to suck my trousers'.

"It is satisfying. I enjoy it. I love what I do.

"It gives you warm fuzzies when you walk into the pen and they mob you."

CALF REARING

Calves learn better in groups

KEY POINTS

GROUP HOUSING

- ✔ Calves housed in groups studied
- ✔ Learn better and faster
- ✔ Gain more weight

PREVIOUS research on milk-fed calves has shown that calves are highly motivated to consume at least twice as much milk as they have traditionally been provided (that is, about eight litres per day versus four litres/day). When allowed to consume more milk, calves gain weight more quickly and are less hungry.

Faster-growing calves turn into faster-growing heifers that are are able to calve out at younger ages and ultimately produce more milk, particularly during the first lactation.

For these reasons the new Canadian Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle states that calves should be offered a minimum total daily intake of 20% of body weight in whole milk (or equivalent nutrient delivery via milk replacer), ideally via a nipple-based system.

These new calf-feeding methods work well for individually housed calves and also facilitate group housing because well-fed calves are less motivated to perform abnormal sucking behaviour (such as crosssucking).

Group housing of dairy calves provides a number of advantages to both calves and producers. In particular, group living allows calves (like other social animals) to learn from social interactions with penmates.

New University of British Columbia (UBC) research results show that group rearing also allows calves to better adapt to changing environments, meaning they transition more smoothly to new diets, new feeding systems and regrouping.

One key advantage of group housing is that calves take advantage of 'social learning' to more quickly discover and make use of solid feed.

This means that young group-housed calves start ingesting solid food earlier than individually housed calves; these calves benefit because early intakes of solids helps to minimise weaning distress and improve calf performance after weaning.

The simplest approach to group housing is to keep calves in pairs. When compared with single housing, pair housing doubles solid feed intake during the pre-weaning period.

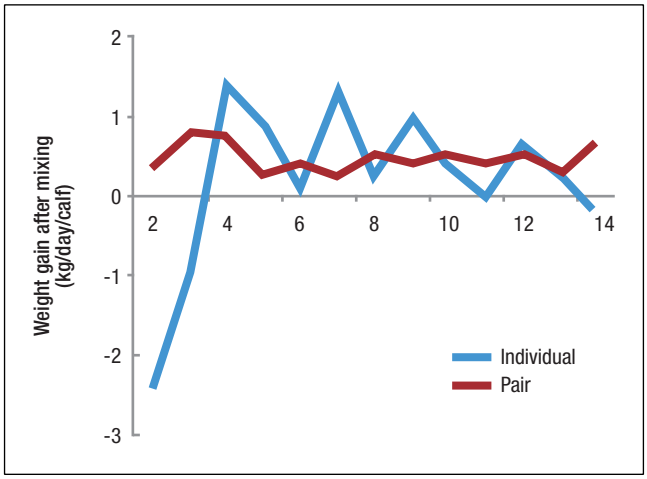
Moreover, when pair housed calves are weaned off milk, they vocalise much less than do individually housed calves, in part because they are better established on solids and thus less dependent on milk.

Work on other species has also shown that having a social companion reduces an animal's response to stressful events like weaning.

Pair housing also has longer-term advantages for the calf. For example, when calves are introduced to a novel group pen after weaning and need to operate automatic feeders for the first time, those that had previously been single housed require almost two days before they are eating starter in comparison to just nine hours for the pair-housed calves.

This delay in consuming starter by individually housed calves

Figure 1: The effect of mixing pair and individually housed dairy calves on growth rate (kilograms per day per calf). Calves reared individually lost weight during the first three days after mixing.



At the University of British Columbia, Canada, pairs are created simply by removing the partition between adjacent calf pens.

reduces calf weight gains soon after mixing (Figure 1) and reflects an inability to properly adjust to novelty, probably due to both social and cognitive deficits.

The social deficit becomes especially clear when individually housed calves meet unfamiliar calves for the first time.

Individually housed calves explore and run less, tend to spend more time standing idle, defecate more, kick more and engage in fewer head-to-head interactions (an indicator of social cognition) and synchronous running events (an indicator of social cohesion) than do pair-housed calves.

Individually housed calves also require more time before they initiate physical contact with calves they are not familiar with, but when they do, they become highly persistent in maintaining contact compared with pair housed calves.

This difference seems to reflect an inability of individually reared calves to regulate their social behaviour.

Individually housed calves are also more sensitive to a novel environment than pair-housed calves. When introduced to a novel area, they defecate more and are more cautious when exploring.

In combination, these results indicate pair housing during the milk-feeding stage reduces calf negative responses to weaning and improves performance after weaning (when calves are typically housed in groups).

Moreover, it appears that individual housing during the milk-feeding period results in cognitive and social deficits in calves. It is not known if calves recover from these deficits with later exposure to social housing.

It is possible that deficits in calf cognition have long-lasting effects on how these animals thrive in commercial systems. For example, on modern dairy farms cattle must learn to interact with new technologies such as robotic milkers and computerised feeders, as well as to learn to navigate the social complexities associated with frequent group changes and changes in housing, diet etc.

Thus, providing calves with early social experience may be especially beneficial for the management of cattle on larger farms that are more likely to encounter these practices and technologies.

The simplest group is a pair, and producers who are interested in transitioning to group housing are encouraged to start by keeping calves in pairs.

Pairing can occur soon after birth but calves likely benefit most from social contact after the first week of life. D

To watch a short video on how individually housed calves respond to unfamiliar companions, see this webiste <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pzVB3iY4nE&feature>.

Article courtesy of the animal welfare program at the University of British Columbia, Canada, and Dr Andreia de Paula Viera. This report is based on two papers published in the Journal of Dairy Science.

Cutting out the competition

KEY POINTS

CALF FEEDERS

- ✔ Automatic feeders saves time
- ✔ Help rear better-grown, healthier calves
- ✔ Regulate milk and grain to individuals

Julie Newnham says installing automatic calf feeders has been one of the better investments made in the dairy business she operates with husband Andrew.

JULIE Newnham admits she initially resisted the suggestion to install automatic calf feeders when the family decided to increase the herd size from 500 to 700 cows. Once they were installed she quickly saw the benefits, however, and now wonders why they didn't do it years earlier.

Julie and her husband, Andrew, dairy at Lancaster, near Shepparton in northern Victoria. This season they will milk 780 cows, calving three times a year. The installation of automatic calf feeders was part of an expansion plan that also involved building a covered feedpad and setting up to feed a total mixed ration (TMR).

"Andrew initially suggested the automatic calf feeders to save me time because we were going to be rearing a lot more calves to increase the herd size," Mrs Newnham said.

"The system is great in that way — it is very simple and easy and does save a lot of time. But I think its greatest value is in rearing healthier, better-grown calves."

The Newnhams installed four DeLaval automatic calf feeders (CF150x), which handle both milk and grain, managed by a central processor located in the calf shed.

"The system is very easy to use and I love the fact we can control how much feed each individual calf gets," Mrs Newnham said.

"With our old system the calves were fed twice a day and I had no control over individual intake. There were always dominant calves that got more than their fair share of milk and often got scours, and then it went through the whole group. Plus, the less dominant calves got less so there was quite a difference in size, even though they were the same age.

"With the automatic feeders, calves don't have to compete: each individual gets its allocated amount, regardless of its place in the pecking order. And they can have smaller feeds, regularly through the day and night, which is more natural."

The Newnhams' main calf shed is divided into three pens, each with an automatic feeder. A nearby shed houses a fourth pen and feeder. Each pen holds 20-25 calves and from about three weeks of age calves have access to an outside area.

Each calf feeder has a grain bin that holds about 30 kilograms of pellets — enough for about two days. The refrigerated vat is plumbed to the calf feeders so there's no need to handle buckets of milk.

Mrs Newnham said that although the task was much less physically demanding than the old system, her routine still included two visits a day to the calf shed.

"The first thing I do when I get there in the morning is look up the computer to find out if any calves have missed their morning feed," she said. "This means sick cows are identified and treated earlier so our calf health is much better since we installed the automatic system."

Mrs Newnham hand-feeds newborn calves with colostrum for the first two days.

"When they first come in they get as much colostrum as they will take — about 5-6 litres," she said. "On the third day they

Australia drives calf feeder development

AUSTRALIAN dairyfarmers are having a big influence on the development of new models of automatic calf feeders.

DeLaval Australia, managing director Murray Antram, said that Australia was where the world came to ask farmers what they wanted in the next generation of calf feeders.

"A lot of DeLaval's development work in calf feeders has been done in Australia, partly because herds are bigger here so farmers tend to be rearing large batches of calves compared with overseas," Mr Antram said.

"Feedback from Australian dairyfarmers has resulted in added safety features for calves and operators and the ability to access the calf feeder computer system remotely, for example from a home computer or a mobile device."

Mr Antram said Australia was DeLaval's biggest market for automatic calf feeders, which had been sold here for about 10 years.

"It has been a popular product. I think that's because it's easy-to-use, robust and only needs standard household power so it is not expensive to install or to run. And of course it does what it is designed to do well: it raises really good calves," he said.

The Newnhams say one of the main benefits of the automatic calf feeders is healthier, more robust calves.

are introduced to the automatic feeder."

Training calves was one of Mrs Newnham's main concerns when her husband brought up the idea of an automatic system.

"I wasn't sure they would go into the feeder by themselves but in reality they pick it up after two or three feeds and then they are very happy to go in," she said.

Mrs Newnham trains calves by guiding them into the feeder and nuzzling their nose to hit the feed button.

"Once they work out to hit the button to get their feed they don't look back," she said.

The morning routine also includes topping up the grain bins if needed and cleaning the concrete around the feeders.

In the afternoon, she again checks calves that haven't fed, gives colostrum to newborns and assists any calves in training.

The system allows individual calves to be allocated different amounts of milk and grain but Mrs Newnham generally has it set for younger calves to receive up to five litres of milk a day in total but never more than 2-2.4 litres in a single feed. As they get older, she increases the milk allocation up to seven litres and later gradually reduces it as they eat more grain.

Calves are weaned at about 8-10 weeks when they become Mr Newnham's responsibility.

"By the time they are weaned, the calves are all a pretty standard size because they don't have to compete to get their daily feed allowance," Mr Newnham said.

After weaning, calves spend a couple of weeks in an outdoor pen close to the calf shed where it is easy to monitor them. At this time their main diet is grain and hay and they are gradually introduced to pasture.

Calves are kept on the home farm until they are about six months of age, when they are sent away for agistment until just before their first calving.

Mr Newnham said heifers were definitely better grown when they left the farm for agistment.

"Not only do the automatic calf feeders make it possible to rear a lot more calves but we get better and more even growth rates," she said.

Mr Newnham estimates heifers are now 450kg when joined at 15-16 months compared with 400kg before the couple installed the automatic calf feeders.

"This translates into a much better conception rate at first joining," he said. "It sets our heifers up for a long, productive and fertile life in the herd."

Mr Newnham said the automatic calf feeders paid for themselves within two years through saved time, a better growth response from calf pellets and better conception rates at first joining.

Julie Newnham helps train a young calf to use the automatic calf feeder.

Both Newnhams agree it was one of their better investment decisions.

Article supplied by DeLaval, phone 1800 817 199, website <www.delaval.com.au>.

Fortified milk feeding

By CARLENE DOWIE

KEY POINTS

ACCELERATED REARING

- ✔ Milk powder added to whole milk
- ✔ Lifts growth rates
- ✔ Reduces scours incidences

FORTIFYING whole milk with milk powder could be the key to adopting accelerated calf rearing programs in Australia, a veterinarian told the Australian Dairy Conference in February. Dr Gemma Chuck, from The Vet Group, Timboon, Victgoria, said adding 100 grams of milk powder to one litre of milk created a high energy, high protein feed in a smaller volume.

Accelerated calf rearing programs were popular in the US where calves were achieving growth rates up to 0.9 kilograms/day when being fed 8-9 litres of milk a day.

"However, Australian calf rearing conditions can differ greatly from those in the US," she said. "In Australia, calves are generally born outside, sometimes in challenging weather and they are often reared and fed in groups from a young age.

"It would seem reasonable that calves reared under these conditions have a higher exposure to pathogens and stress compared with US calves born in undercover parturition barns and reared in individual hutches until 10 week-of-age."

Dr Chuck said in her experience Australian farmers struggled to get higher volumes of milk into calves without causing them to scour.

Where multiple pathogens were present in the environment, it could be difficult to feed young calves even the Australian recommended volume of four to five litres of milk per day.

The problem was the lower feed volumes compromised the nutritional requirement of the calf leading to lower weight gain.

"Fortified milk feeding enables calves to receive the same nutritional content as a higher volume of milk but in a lower volume feed," Dr Chuck said. It also allowed for once-daily feeding.

The other advantage with the lower volume of milk was that it allowed calves to consume more grain as the milk provided less fill factor. "Grain consumption is essential for the development of the rumen lining (papillae)," she said.

After weaning it was essential for the calf to get its nutrients from rumenal digestion, so a well-developed rumen was paramount for valves to continue to grow.

Dr Chuck said when fortifying milk a good quality milk replacer was essential.

The key requirements were that the powder could readily dissolve in milk, the protein/fat percentages were right and that the fat source was a dairy ingredient not an animal fat such as tallow, she said. She recommended ProfeLAC Gold or ProfeLAC Silver from Provico/Murray Goulburn.

It was also essential that individual feeding systems were used to avoid overfeeding. If fed at usual volumes in a single feed, it could cause nutritional scours or abomasal bloat.

The milk replacer powder should be added to the milk, which needed to be agitated. Add 200 grams of milk replacer to two litres of whole milk to make about 2.6 litres of fortified milk. Each calf receives this volume of feed once daily.

It was absolutely essential that calves had access to clean fresh water and ad lib grain. D

Changes cut sickness, deaths

FORTIFIED milk feeding was one of the changes a Western Victorian dairy farm family introduced to its calf-rearing program that helped slash mortality and sickness rates.

Kevin, Francis, Paul and Peter McDowall, from Childers Cove, took a holistic approach to solving their calf-rearing issues in conjunction with vet Dr Gemma Chuck.

Paul McDowell told the Australian Dairy Conference the family operated two farms about two kilometres apart — with 550 milkers on the home farm and 450 milkers on a farm they bought in 2012.

Before July 2012, the McDowalls had run their calves in two large pens with an automatic feeder. All calves received high-quality colostrum within 12 hours with quality measured with a brix refractometer. This had usually been frozen and then defrosted.

Calves were initially placed in a training pen to learn to feed and were then put into a big pen — with sick and healthy cows run together. The pens had a black scoria base and were cleaned twice a year.

Once the shed was full, calves were moved into paddocks where they were fed with a calfeteria. In the peak of the season, the sheds filled quickly so calves were quickly moved through the system.

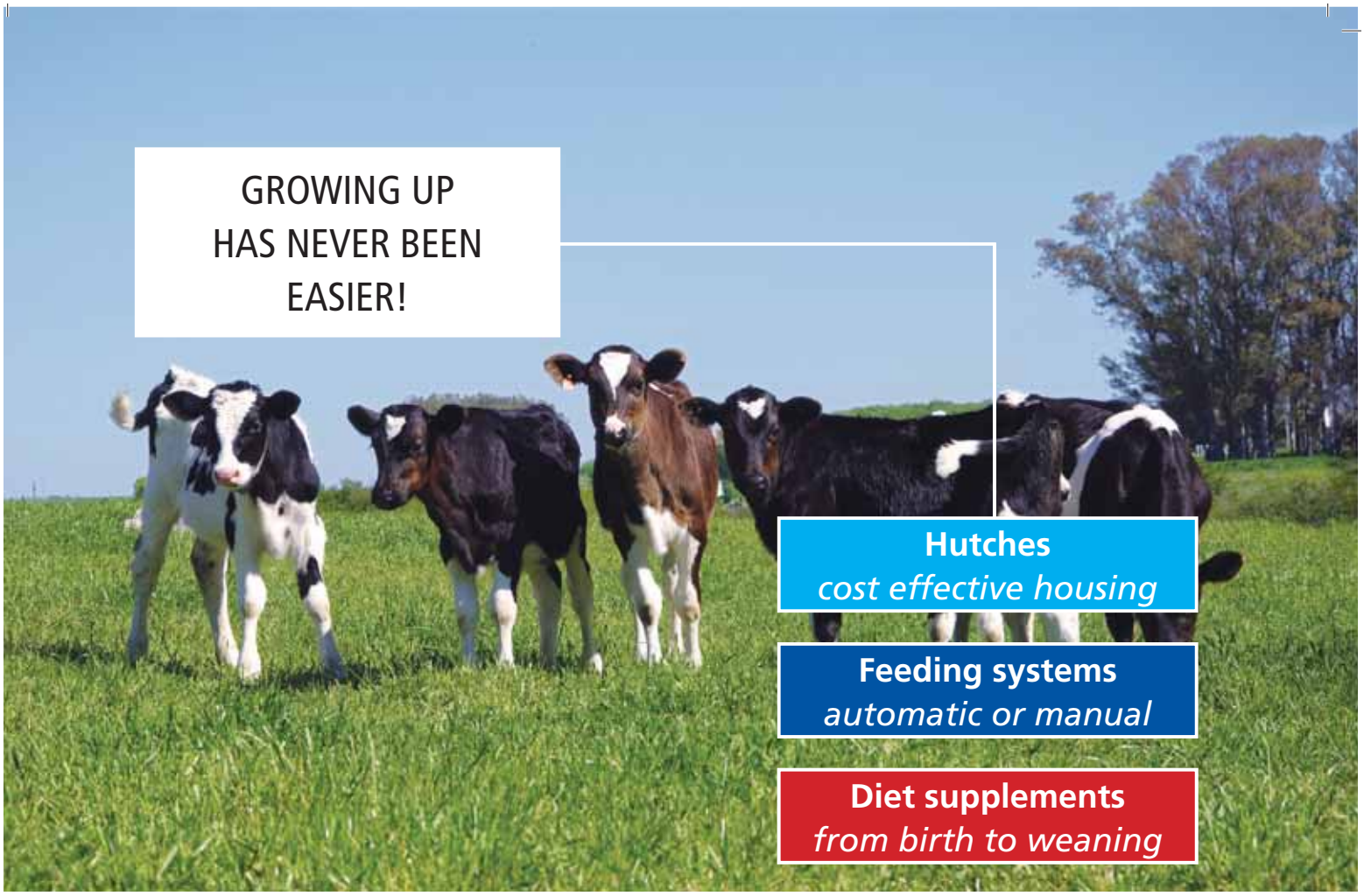
Morbidity (sickness) rates were high with most calves developing scours at some point. Dr Chuck said the McDowalls were skilled as looking after these calves and could administer intravenous drips to help them recover, but the calves would never reach their potential. Mortality rates were 20-30%.

Dr Chuck said there was no one key to fixing the problems. Calf rearing was like a puzzle — all the areas were integrated. The McDowalls introduced a range of changes, including:

- **Colostrum management:** Cows are vaccinated at dry off with bugs known to be on the farm to boost colostrum quality. All calves are fed two two-litre feeds of fresh high quality colostrum within 24 hours and preferably within 12 hours, with a visual recording system to show calves have been fed. Fresh colostrum is refrigerated and potassium sorbate added to prolong its life. It is clearly labelled to show date collected and grade.
- **Housing:** An all-in all-out system is used with calf sheds rebuilt with four pens to accommodate 20 calves. Bedding comprises large scoria overlaid with shade cloth and wood chips, which can be easily removed by dragging out the shade cloth. Solid, non-permeable partitions between the pens help prevent contact between calves. Whirly birds in the roof help create ventiliation. Last year a new calf shed was built.
- **Nutrition:** Fortified milk is fed in individual feeders placed in front of locking head bails to ensure calves cannot overfeed and that each calf is fed.

The farm now has a morbidity rate of less than 5% and a mortality rate of less than 2%.

Dr Gemma Chuck and Paul McDowall spoke about calf rearing at the Australian Dairy Conference.



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NHD NATIONAL HERD DEVELOPMENT

VICTORIAN WINTER FAIR

NATIONAL HERD DEVELOPMENT VICTORIAN WINTER FAIR

HOSTED BY THE NORTH WEST SUB BRANCH OF HOLSTEIN AUSTRALIA

2ND to 4TH JULY 2014

Bendigo Exhibition Centre - Judge: *Mr Mike Deaver,* Sherona Hill Holsteins, Wisconsin USA

- **Incorporating the first Red Holstein show in Australia**
- **Youth orientated event**

- Wednesday 2nd July: Victorian Centenary Celebration Dinner
- Thursday 3rd July: Victorian Branch of Holstein Australia AGM and General Meeting
- Thursday 3rd July: Innovative Dairy Seminars
- Thursday 3rd July: 100 Years of Excellence Centenary Sale
- Thursday 3rd & Friday 4th July: Dairy Produce Market
- Friday 4th July: National Herd Development Victorian Winter Fair (All-Australian Holstein Show)

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY:

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Check for updates on our facebook page **"Victorian Winter Fair"**
or our website **http://victorianwinterfair.webs.com/**

Entry forms available to download or can be posted on request in May

Clare Modra: 0419 200 981
Adam Dee: 0427 530 011
victorianwinterfair@gmail.com

Bendigo is the location for the inaugural Victorian Winter Fair.

Showcasing autumn-calving

By CARLENE DOWIE

A NEW event on the dairy show calendar will be held at the Bendigo Exhibition Centre on July 2-4.

The inaugural Victorian Winter Fair will be held in conjunction with events to mark the centenary of Holstein Australia.

The fair is being organised by the North West Victorian sub branch of Holstein Australia and the major sponsor is National Herd Development.

"We wanted to create a new event to complement International Dairy Week," one of the organisers Gunbower, Vic, dairyfarmer Clare Modra said.

"There's no large show for autumn-calvers, with some a bit stale by the Melbourne Royal Show.

"So the show is a chance to see cows not normally seen at shows."

The show will be held on Friday, July 4.

Top international judge Mike Deaver, who has judged at numerous high-profile shows including the World Dairy Expo, will preside in the show ring.

Mrs Modra said the show would feature a Red Holstein show and a youth section as well as the traditional black-and-whites. Animals would be paraded together but separate ribbons would be awarded for the three categories.

The show is being held during school holidays, making it ideal for young people to be involved.

The show had already attracted a lot of interest with 40 sponsors on board. Organ-▶

Dinner to mark centenary

THE Victorian branch of Holstein Australia (HA) will hold its Victorian Centenary Celebration Dinner in conjunction with the inaugural Victorian Winter Fair.

The dinner will be held at the Bendigo RSL on Wednesday, July 3.

Event organiser Liz Clowes said the event would be an opportunity for people to get together and celebrate the Holstein breed.

Mrs Clowes said the eight Victorian sub branches were busy collecting memorabilia to be displayed on the night both on boards and in a rolling slide show.

She was hoping this would include photos from the early days, such as of a herd test train that used to travel around the State. One HA member was putting together memorabilia from the Royal Melbourne Show, which had played a pivotal role in promoting the breed.

There would also be a board about Victorian bulls and the history of artificial insemination in Victoria, Mrs Clowes said.

A highlight of the dinner — one that's sure to create some debate — will be the naming of the top 10 Victorian cows that have had the biggest impact on the Holstein breed.

Contact: Liz Clowes, email <holstein.victoria@bigpond.com>, phone (03) 5822 0176.

Sale to feature Australian cows

A sale featuring featuring an elite collection of Australia's most distinguished Holstein cow families will be held at the Bendigo Exhibition Centre on Thursday, July 3, in conjunction with the inaugural Victorian Winter Fair.

One of the organisers, Holstein Australia board member Patrick Glass, who milks 540 cows at Gundowring, Vic, said sales had been a huge part of promoting Holstein genetics around Australia.

He said the 100 Years of Excellence Centenary Sale would honour that role.

The sale would be unusual in that only live animals from Australian-proven cow families would be offered.

There would be no imported embryos or international cow families featured, Mr Glass said.

The sale had already attracted a great deal of interest with 35 vendors from every State in Australia committed.

Australasia's leading dairy auctioneer, Brian Leslie, from Dairy Livestock Services, will conduct the sale.

NHD major sponsor

THE Victorian Winter Fair committee is proud to announce the major sponsor for 2014 is National Herd Development (NHD).

Northern Herd Development co-operative was established at Cohuna, northern Victoria, in 1974.

Forty years later the co-operative now trades as National Herd Development to better reflect its growing area of service provision.

NHD provides dairy herd testing services throughout northern Victoria, the Riverina (NSW), the Western District of Victoria and throughout all of South Australia.

Milk analysis laboratories are located at Cohuna, Kyabram and Timboon, Vic.

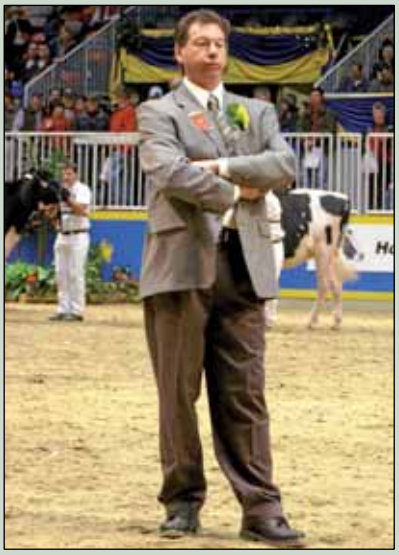
Many other herd improvement services and products are provided to both dairy and beef farmers.

isers had planned for 180 exhibits but early indications were that it would be more than that, Mrs Modra said.

Entry forms would be available in May and entries would close at the start of June, she said. Late entries would not be accepted as partitioning needed to be hired for the event.

Innovative seminars will be held at the venue the day before the show, on Thursday, July 3.

These have not yet been finalised but organisers hope they will cover a range of issues from heat detection to lead feeding



Mike Deaver is an acclaimed judge.

High profile judge for event

JUDGING the first National Herd Development Victorian Winter Fair is Mike Deaver, owner-operator of Sherona-Hill Farm and Sherona-Hill Livestock Transportation at Edgerton, Wisconsin, United States.

Mr Deaver found and developed KHW Regiment Apple-Red — ET EX95, along with many other high-profile animals. KHW Regiment Apple-Red — ET EX95 won grand champion Red and White Holstein at the 2011 World Dairy Expo (WDE).

Mr Deaver has also judged in many countries, including the WDE four times (Holstein 2001, Ayrshire 2003, Jersey and Red and White Holstein 2004). He has also judged at Canada's Royal Winter Agricultural Fair (Holsteins in 2006 and Jerseys in 2009).

This will be Mr Deaver's first time at judging Holsteins in Australia. He is acknowledged worldwide as one of the best judges, who is exceptional at delivering the reasons for his choices.

and alternative uses for dairy waste, including biofuels.

Bendigo was chosen for the event because the Bendigo Exhibition Centre was a great facility that offered the opportunity for everything to be under one roof. Bendigo was also central for Victoria and offered a range of accommodation so everyone could stay in the same location.

"The City of Greater Bendigo is really excited to get a dairy event and is sponsoring some of the events," Mrs Modra said.

Organisers also plan to showcase the dairy industry as a whole at the event.

A dairy produce market will be held at the venue on both days, with stallholders exhibiting boutique cheeses, icecreams and chocolates. Milk processors will also have samples of their milks available.

The Bendigo Exhibition Centre was chosen as the ideal venue for the Victorian Winter Fair because it offers the opportunity for everything to be under one roof.

Mrs Modra said they hoped the event would attract people from Bendigo and give them an idea about the dairy industry.

Organisers also hope the show will become an annual event and plan to invite other breeds to be involved in subsequent years. D

Contact: Clare Modra, phone (03) 5487 1127 or mobile 0419200981. See Facebook page Victorian Winter Fair.

Victorian Winter Fair program

Wednesday, July 2: Victorian Centenary Celebration Dinner

The Victorian State Branch of Holstein Australia invites all past and present members to help celebrate 100 years of the association. This feature event will include a three-course meal, special guests, memorabilia and entertainment.

Bendigo & District RSL, 73-75 Havilah Road, Bendigo

Contact: Victorian branch secretary, email: <holstein.victoria@bigpond.com>

Thursday, July 3: Victorian Branch of Holstein Australia annual general meeting and general meeting

Julie-Anna Comfort Inn
268 Napier Street, Bendigo
Phone: (03) 5442 5855, email: <info@julieanna.com.au>; website: website <www.julieanna.com.au>

Contact: Victorian branch secretary, email: <holstein.victoria@bigpond.com>

Thursday, July 3: 100 Years of Excellence Centenary Sale

Bendigo Exhibition Centre — Prince of Wales Showgrounds, Holmes Road, Bendigo

As part of the centenary celebrations, Holstein Australia is proud to announce the 100 Years of Excellence Centenary Sale. The sale will be one of the premier events of the association's 100th year, featuring an elite collection of Australia's most distinguished Holstein cow families.

Contact: Holstein Australia, phone: (03) 9835 7600
Agent: Dairy Livestock Service DLS, phone: (03) 9338 9259

Thursday, July 3, and Friday, July 4: Dairy Produce Market

Celebrating all things dairy and showcasing some of Victoria's finest dairy produce on display to sample and purchase in the foyer of the Exhibition Centre, including cheese, chocolate, icecream, flavoured milk and much more.

Friday, July 4: National Herd Development Victorian Winter Fair

Hosted by the north-west sub-branch of Holstein Australia, this event will showcase Victoria's finest Holsteins. It will feature additional youth classes and special Red Holstein classes alongside conventional All Australian qualifying classes.

Judge: Mike Deaver Sherona-Hill Holsteins, Wisconsin, US.

IVF offers elite cow breeding opportunities

FOR dairy stud breeders having trouble getting progeny from the elite cows in their herd or getting them back in calf, there are now tried and true options available.

Scott Somerville, of Somerelle Holsteins, said he had been lucky enough to be able to produce progeny from his elite cows where normal options had not been successful. He used the services of specialist dairy reproductive company OvaSem, based at Kyabram, Vic.

"The opportunity to be able to have your difficult cows brought back to normal reproductive performance by the use of ultrasound technology is a huge advantage," Mr Somerville said. "The ovaries of the cows can be checked and you get to see first-hand what is actually happening with the ovaries. This allows you to see if there are cysts or poor follicular growth and what is actually going on within the cow.

"By using the ultrasound to remove the cysts or harvest off the existing follicles, you get to bring on new follicles that then can be allowed to develop and then AI the cow with great success.

Leader Iron Satin EX2E (fourth-generation Queensland cow of the year winner) was unable to be flushed conventionally but owner Scott Somerville was able to get four daughters using IVF technology.

"If the cow is very valuable, you can use the harvested eggs to produce embryos through the in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) embryo production system. I bought a cow in Queensland which I was unable to successfully flush normally and I used IVF technology and I now have four daughters that I would otherwise not have."

Mr Somerville said he as aware of a number of farmers throughout Australia who had had success using the services of Rob Yelland from OvaSem.

Natalie and Tim Cochrane, of the Illawarra Eagle Park Stud, Nowra, NSW, have also used Mr Yelland to produce a number of their award-winning cows.

The Cochrane family found that through the IVF process they were able to breed from cows that had not responded to the

normal ET/MOET (flushing) technique and older cows whose breeding potential had become limited.

"It has also enabled us to fast-track our genetics through the flushing of pregnant cows," Mrs Cochrane said. "They can be collected up to five months pregnant. The process of IVF is simple: no injections, stress free for the cows and owners, the eggs collected — if sufficient in number — can be split between multiple sires, conversely to be able to share expensive or rare semen across multiple cows and handled capably by the OvaSem team.

"It means we don't necessarily have to interrupt the show careers of our top-end cows in order to complete in vitro embryo work with them. We have found IVF to be wonderful for helping return cows to reproductive health that have been challenging in the past."

OvaSem offers a broad range of animal reproductive services and travels to many parts of Australia. Farmers are now using its pre-mating assessment services where a representative will assess the reproductive state of cows well before mating, and can assist with advice and management to help maximise the results of artificial insemination programs. Farmers are now getting the OvaSem team to ultrasound their empty cows and assess and advise on the best way to return them to reproductive health.

The OvaSem team is offering flushing and IVF embryo production, semen collection and processing, semen testing and large-scale AI and ET programs in most regions of Australia. Its top-of-the-range mobile laboratory that is export-accredited allows it to offer its services in the most cost-effective and professional manner.

OvaSem is one of the sponsors of the inaugural Victorian Winter Fair.

Article supplied by OvaSem, phone (03) 5852 2626, email <rob@ovasem.com>.

One of Natalie and Tim Cochrane's IVF heifers, Eagle Park Monarch Morgana IVF, which won the under 2.5 year old dry heifer class at International Dairy Week 2014.

One of the Cochranes' IVF cows, Kangawarra Heather 3188 IVF VG89, which won the five-year-old in milk class and best udder of class at International Dairy Week 2014.

Keeping it simple

By ALASTAIR DOWIE

DAIRY herds have grown, farm numbers have fallen and dairyfarming has become more complex in the past 28 years.

But the message repeated to the dairyfarmers from across south-eastern Australia who attended the latest and final field day at the Poowong, Vic, farm of Peter and Elaine Notman was to "not make your business too complicated".

In 1986 Mr Notman, a dairyfarmer and pasture enthusiast, began inviting dairyfarmers to the couple's South Gippsland farm to talk about pastures.

At this year's field day Mr Notman said many things had changed — 28 years ago there were a lot more farms in the immediate area (family farms), the herd sizes were about 150 cows, there was no supplementary feeding, there were few rotary dairies, not many farms had laneways and the largest milk tanker carried 12,700 litres.

As part of the 2014 field day in February four industry leaders had their say on a number of topics related to dairyfarming businesses today.

Question: What can farmers do about better managing their businesses?

John Mulvaney: "It's boring, but you have to do the basics. Walking the farm — it gives you a feel for pasture growth rates and consumption."

John Gallienne: "Simplify feeding in the bail — if at all. It has got too complicated."

There was a common theme coming from the four leading dairy industry stalwarts — John Gallienne, John Mulvaney, Chris Hibburt and Peter Notman — at the final Notman Pasture Seeds Field Field Day: "don't make it complicated, and look after people".

Q: What are the concerns/challenges for the industry?

John Gallienne: "Rising costs and falling profit margins."

John Mulvaney: "We have moved positively as well. Smart farmers in particular grabbed the idea of feeding cows better. (But) you need to 'net' your production — take imported feed away. Don't make your dairy system too complicated — complexity will undermine your ability (to manage the business)."

Chris Hibburt: "In 1983 the average herd size was 105 cows; now it's about 300. You need to, one, have a plan and, two, realise it's a business and the plan needs to be based on merit — based on resources and capabilities.

"People and attracting people is integral to our farms. We need to invite them in and look after them. You need a simple approach to farming based on our people.

"Year after year we need to design a plan around people."

Matt Hall: "My clients are very good at growing pasture, getting milk out of cows and getting them in calf. It is difficult to perform year after year when there are so many variables.

"Challenges are succession — getting young people into the industry; and labour — a real issue.

"Farmer lifestyle — the dairy industry is a really good industry."

Question: what three things are required to ensure profitability and resilience?

John Mulvaney: "The management ability of the farmer; calving date; and stocking rate."

Chris Hibburt: "Invest in people and training; invest in the farm; and invest in the future — keep up."

John Gallienne: "Maximise returns from pasture in the diet; best-practice milking routine; and diligent, caring staff — paid well."

Matt Hall: "Equity — enough for debt servicing and enough to make the best decisions; getting cows in calf; and getting live heifer calves." D

Merit testing for pastures

THERE are major benefits for dairyfarmers from the development in New Zealand of "merit testing for grasses", according to NZ Plant Breeding and Research Association technical committee member Tim Cookson.

Mr Cookson, a technical adviser for Cropmark Seeds, told the 2014 Notman Pasture Seeds field day that the forage value index (FVI) developed by DairyNZ "valued" grasses and how they fitted into dairying systems. The program identified forages that maximised profit.

The system provides an estimated profit index expressed as dollars/kilogram of dry matter/hectare for perennial ryegrass cultivars in different regions of NZ.

Mr Cookson said the availability of FVI in NZ improved farmer confidence, improved the fit of various cultivars to systems and regional zones and improved the rate of genetic gain.

The figures were based on the NZ National Forage Variety Trials and the data was expressed relative to a genetic base.

The economic values (EV) for perennial ryegrass were estimated for seasonal dry matter for winter, early spring, late spring, summer and autumn for four regions of NZ: Upper North Island, Lower North Island, Upper South Island and Lower South Island.

EVs for short-term ryegrass categories (12-month and winter feed) were estimated for seasonal dry matter production, for establishment in winter, early spring, late spring and summer (late spring and summer values did not apply to winter feed).

An EV was related to the effect on profit ($/ha) of a one-unit change of a trait. For example, if dry matter production was increased by 1kg/ha in early spring, the effect on animal performance, feed conserved, supplement saved and, ultimately, farm profitability was calculated.

Mr Cookson said the system was easy to use.

EVs were based on trial data using regional average farms with financial assumptions updated annually to derive new economic values.

In the future the system would take into account feed quality and persistence.

Note: The New Zealand Plant Breeding and Research Association comprised seed companies substantially involved in the development and marketing of improved plant varieties for the NZ arable and pastoral sectors.

Contact: Website <dairynzfvi.co.nz>.

The Australian Dairyfarmer

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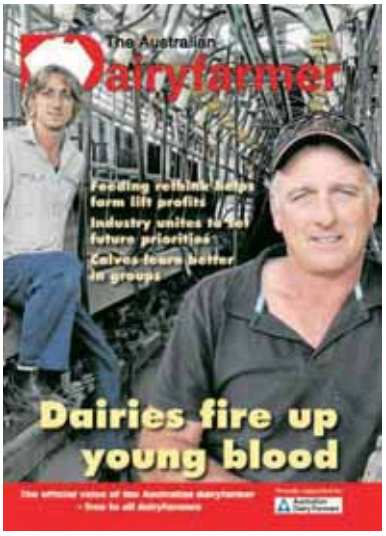

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The Australian Dairyfarmer

1341683

Technology could take the sting out of calving

KEY POINTS

CALVING TECHNOLOGY

- ✔ Rumination monitor
- ✔ Monitoring cow activity
- ✔ CCTV use

CALVING cows adds extra work and stress in any dairy operation. The demands are intense in seasonal or split calving systems where large numbers of cows calve during brief periods. In year-round calving systems, it's an on-going chore. The FutureDairy team is assessing some technologies that could make the job easier.

In this article we give you a sneak preview of some of the technologies Dr Cameron Clark will present at this year's Dairy Research Foundation's symposium to be held at the Hunter Valley from June 19-20.

The first technology is a rumination monitor. Cows wear a collar around their neck that contains a miniature microphone that records rumination sounds. Dr Cameron Clark and his colleagues have shown the day of calving can be predicted for most cows by comparing day-to-day rumination levels.

One of two weather-proof CCTV cameras installed in the calving paddock as part of FutureDairy research.

"Our study specifically looked at the ability to predict that a cow was going to calve the following day. The results were very clear: the day before calving, rumination levels were down by 33%," Dr Clark said.

The findings support previous work with rumination monitors, but this is the first time they have been used successfully for calving predictions with grazing cows.

Dr Clark and his team believe further analysis of the FutureDairy data will enable them to predict more precisely the timing of calving — within a day. The next task is to determine the rumination and activity profiles that give the most accurate prediction of the hour of calving for a grazing cow.

"This is certainly an area where we will be doing more work," Dr Clark said. "The collars we used are commercially available for heat detection. Our research would add another function — calving prediction — to the collars."

The second technology the FutureDairy team assessed was an accelerometer to monitor cow activity. This was incorporated in the same collar containing the rumination monitor.

The results showed that activity levels alone cannot predict calving. Daily cow activity did not change in the lead up to calving, although it did increase in the days after calving. However, there is some hope that monitoring activity levels could be used to alert farmers to cows with calving difficulty or post-calving health issues.

Cows that deliver easily spend more of their delivery time lying down than those with malpresentation. Cows with a difficult delivery spend more time standing up.

"We also expect that cows with post calving health issues, such as retained foetal membranes, will be less active and have lower rumination rates in the days after calving than their healthy counterparts," Dr Clark said.

The study also investigated the use of CCTV cameras in the maternity pad-

dock for remote monitoring of cows close to calving. A small number of Australian farmers are already using CCTV cameras in maternity sheds or calving pads to monitor calving progress from a home PC or mobile phone.

The FutureDairy team installed two weather-proof CCTV cameras in the small calving paddock used for the rumination/activity collar trials.

"We had the cameras set to record the whole time so we can review the visual record of cows when their rumination or activity levels change," he said.

These visual records related the time of calving to rumination and activity levels. Dr Clark's team is looking to use the same data to teach the camera what to look for using a process called machine learning.

"We could tell future cameras what to look for so they could alert us to behaviours associated with a cow having trouble calving," he said.

While the FutureDairy team's work is at an early stage, the potential practical application is quite exciting.

Dr Clark said the combined technologies could reduce the amount of time farmers spend checking cows due to calve, by allowing them to focus their time on cows that require assistance.

It could create the possibility for earlier intervention when calving difficulties occur and take the guess work out of deciding whether or not a cow requires assistance, leading to fewer losses and reduced calving-related complications.

"I would expect the application on farm to vary, but one scenario could be for farmers to put rumination collars on cows due to calve in the coming weeks, based on herd records.

"While continuing to graze, these cows could be monitored, with the farmer receiving regular reports on cows expected to calve in the coming day (or hours) and alerts given for cows having difficulty calving or requiring health treatment," Dr Clark said. D

Technology such as CCTV cameras (pictured) and collars to monitor rumination and cow activity could be used to monitor calving and alert the farmer when a cow needs attention, such as calving assistance or treatment for post-calving health issues.

The Dairy Research Foundation Symposium will be held on June 19-20 in the Hunter Valley. For more information: website <http://sydney.edu.au/vetscience/foundations/drf/symposium>, email <esther@estherprice.com.au> or phone 1800 177 636.

Biosecurity — keeping infection off your farm

By ROD IRWIN*

IN the past few issues of *The Australian Dairyfarmer* I have been looking at some of the many factors that cause outbreaks of infectious disease.

Infection is brought into sharp focus when large numbers of individuals — such as dairy cows, heifers or calves — are affected and loss of performance, production, animals and genetics occurs. Coupled with these losses are the financial costs and stresses on farmers and workers. Outbreaks are a real worry.

In the last edition we looked at how reduced resistance in a group of animals can cause a disease outbreak. Cattle are used to contacting low levels of infection from their herd mates or wildlife as they go about their daily life. Indeed low levels of infection result in a healthy immunity, but when resistance drops, normal levels of infection can overwhelm an individual's immunity and a disease outbreak can result.

There are other ways disease outbreaks can occur. One of the most important is when infection that has not been present on a farm is imported on to it. The reason why this factor is so important is that the animals are unlikely to have immunity to the "new" infection, and the risk of an outbreak is high.

The most obvious way for infection to arrive is through the purchase of new cattle — be they calves, heifers, cows or bulls. Let's look at some real life examples.

Buying calves from market or even directly from other farms is a high-risk strategy. Firstly, their colostrum intake may be questionable, and then they are subject to transport stress. Stresses increase the risk of subclinical infection developing into clinical disease. However, the main risk is that they come from a different environment. For example, bugs that cause scours such as coronavirus and rotavirus, salmonella or cryptosporidia may be new infections to a farm. Homebred calves may not have immunity to these new infections despite good colostrum management, and an outbreak can quickly develop.

Buying healthy yearlings might seem to pose lower risks, but are they carrying Johne's Disease? It might be years before a problem surfaces.

Buying adult cows is a quick way to boost herd numbers, as is "parking" cows, which can help other farmers who need to offload cattle for a while. But subclinical mastitis can be brought onto that farm even though the udders of the introduced stock look normal. In particular, *Strep agalactiae* is highly contagious and can cause a dramatic rise in cell counts and cases of mastitis. Countdown Downunder resources contain clear guidelines with respect to buying and parking cows.

In the case of bulls, venereal diseases such as vibriosis can be introduced at mating and wreck the breeding performance of a herd.

Then there are diseases that can also be introduced irrespective of the age or class of livestock.

Pestivirus is an obvious example, with risk of outbreaks of abortion, foetal deformities or infertility in breeding heifers or cows.

Maintaining a closed herd may be considered ideal but if a herd is in a rapid stage of expansion or has suffered heavy losses, this is not always possible. However, for each of the examples above, there are simple precautions that can be taken to minimise risk.

Of course, there are other ways infection can arrive on the property.

Floodwater, run-off from higher paddocks and contaminated drains or creeks are all possible sources of water-borne infection.

Purchased pellets, grain, silage, hay and other stockfeeds likewise can be contaminated and are sources of food-borne infection.

Wildfowl and vermin such as mice, rats and foxes can also carry infection onto the property. Infection can arrive in the air and on the boots of visitors.

With a quick look at that list, it is obivous that it's impossible to isolate the property from its surrounding environment, but sensible precautions, and vigilance with respect to observing "something new" within the herd are wise steps in reducing the risk of disease outbreaks.

Biosecurity — the use of strategies to minimise the risk of importing disease onto a property — is a relatively new term in dairyfarming, but as farms become more intensive and margins tighter, the concept will become increasingly important.

A dairy vet is the first person to call regarding outbreaks of disease in a herd and is a great source of local knowledge about biosecurity and disease control. If buying cattle, ask the vet what precautions to take to prevent importing disease along with the new introductions.

Until next time, good milking.

**Rod Irwin is a practising cattle veterinarian and herd health consultant based at Warragul, Vic.*

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Diligence and delegation

By KERRY RYAN*

think again!

THE first four months of 2014 have seen a high-demand start to my professional year, with a significant number of sizeable assignments started for clients. This reflects a combination of a buoyant New Zealand dairy economy and increased willingness by top operators to make themselves accountable to best practice by putting key aspects of their businesses under the spotlight.

A decision to access new professional support brings an opportunity for farmers and their chosen experts to develop new ways to operate without compromising standards. There can be equal value from reviewing the role and performance of a business's existing professionals to ensure technologies are harnessed and the risk of complacency from long-term relationships is minimised.

Effective professional relationships depend on professional development and growth for both parties. This means a focus on continuous improvement so services empower the business and avoid creating a dependency. When this approach is combined with proactive collaboration between professionals, duplication is avoided and cost-efficiency is enhanced.

Such relationships require commitment from a business so its owners or key personnel learn systems that result in enhanced engagement with important business processes. This has been made easier through using a range of online accounting and budgeting programs that enable farmers and their professionals to each take part in information gathering and recording, freeing their professionals to concentrate on vision and strategy rather than be constrained by the time and cost demands of a more process-focused role.

Here are some areas where this is delivering benefits in my agribusiness consultancy role.

The first is forecasting and monitoring. I have found that when clients take responsibility for their financial recording and budgeting systems, their management and investment decisions are more consistent with their budgets and longer-term business plan.

Self-managed forecasting enables my focus to be on validation of budget assumptions and overall credibility.

The quality of strategic planning is also enhanced by this collaborative approach in areas such as strategic reviews, benchmarking business performance and developing growth strategies.

When clients' commitment to best practice is combined with collaborative input from their other professionals, there is even greater synergy. Developing close working relationships with accounting, agronomy and other specialist professional support can result in powerful combinations of professional disciplines to resolve issues and drive strategy.

A second area is people management and staff selection.

I was impressed recently by new clients who asked for support with recruitment of a key staffing role. Our respective commitments and their location meant we were not able have face-to-face contact so it was agreed to collaborate by phone and internet and use the resources on my website.

Job descriptions and an advertisement were quickly developed with shared input. Online advertising generated an impressive number of quality applicants, which the clients screened, reference-checked and interviewed after guidance from our conversations. A staff member was selected within the target timeframes and at about one third of the cost compared with having my full involvement.

Taking responsibility for the quality of professional relationships is a two-way responsibility. Farmers can't necessarily rely on their professionals to do this. If ideas aren't forthcoming from existing experts, then they must take time to find alternatives.

Farmers should also take ownership of key business management processes and learn to balance diligence with delegation to grow business capability and reduce costs.

Most importantly, it's vital to develop a culture where professionals know they need to constantly "win" the right to stay involved so that relationships built on dependency that risk complacency are eliminated. This is a real catalyst for collective growth.

**Kerry Ryan is a New Zealand-based agribusiness consultant available for face-to-face or online for advice and ideas. He can be contacted at website <www.kerryryan.co.nz>.*

ADHIS AUSTRALIAN DAIRY HERD IMPROVEMENT
The dairy industry's independent genetic evaluation service
Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme

Fertility and survival on breeding wish-list

AUSTRALIAN dairyfarmers are passionate about the direction of current national breeding objective, expressed as the Australian Profit Ranking (APR), and are suggesting refinements — for example, giving more weighting to fertility, survival and mastitis.

This is some of the initial feedback from Australia's Longest Farm Walk, which visited 46 farms, involved almost 600 people and covered 8800 kilometres in March.

Michelle Axford, who co-ordinated the farm walk segments, said the feedback would be considered as part of the review of the national breeding objective, which also involved a survey, industry consultation, scientific review and technical analysis.

Mrs Axford said some farmers were prepared to compromise on production for better fertility and survival in the herd while others were strongly focused on milk solids as it "pays the bills".

"The APR already accounts for fertility and survival but we did hear farmers say they would like both traits to be given more weighting, even though they understand this would slow gains in production," she said.

Another common message from the farm walks was that farmers wanted to breed cows that were resilient and flexible to respond to changing dairying environments.

"As one farmer put it, he wanted a cow that could change gears between low and higher input depending on the seasonal conditions," she said.

"Mammary system — or better udders — was discussed at almost every farm walk. While udder depth is indirectly included in the APR through survival (longevity), mammary system warrants further consideration."

Another theme raised was the idea of an "easy-care" cow that was resistant to mastitis and required little intervention, or as one farmer put it, "I want a cow that I don't notice".

Mrs Axford said discussion about the "ideal" cow highlighted the many and diverse traits sought by farmers.

"The farm walks revealed certain differences in preferences for different breeds, especially around stature and possibly volume," she said. "For example, some farmers focused on kilograms of milk solids per kilogram of liveweight, fertility and no-fuss cows, while others focused on taller, more capacious animals with better overall type."

Some dairyfarmers at Australia's Longest Farm Walk said they were prepared to compromise on production for better fertility and survival of cows in their herds.

Neil Joiner, who dairies near Orbost in East Gippsland, Vic, drove a 3.5-hour round-trip to attend the farm walk at Maffra, Vic.

"I was very interested to hear what other farmers had to say and to see if their breeding priorities were similar to my own," Mr Joiner said.

Like most people at the Maffra farm walk, he wanted to see more weighting given to fertility in the APR.

"There was general agreement in our group about putting more emphasis on fertility, and there was also a fair bit of agreement on the desire for an Australian Breeding Value for feed conversion efficiency," he said.

But there were varied views about breeding for size. With a mixed herd comprising Jerseys, Holsteins, Aussie Reds and crossbreds, Mr Joiner paid particular attention to size when selecting sires, especially Holsteins.

"I don't want our cows to get any bigger, especially the Holsteins, so I avoid bulls with an ABV of more than 110 for stature," he said.

While some people at the farm walk shared Mr Joiner's view on size, there were others who wanted to breed bigger cows.

Mrs Axford said the Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme (ADHIS) expected diverse views. "We don't expect everyone's breeding objective to be the same," she said. "What is important about the review is to get the big priorities right. The national breeding objective needs to be a true reflection of the overall breeding direction for the country, from which individuals can pick bulls that meet their own breeding objective."

The second step in the review process was an on-line survey, conducted in April. The survey data is being analysed.

A second round of regional consultation will occur in July before final decisions are made later in the year. The refined national breeding objective should be ready for implementation with the April 2015 release of Australian Breeding Values (ABVs).

For more information contact Michelle Axford, ADHIS extension and education manager, phone 0427 573 330; email <maxford@adhis.com.au> or website <www.adhis.com.au>.

Dairy Australia
Your Levy at Work

Pre-weaning calf feeding rethink

THE way young calves are fed can influence milk production in their first and subsequent lactations. There is a growing body of international research that demonstrates that the pre-weaning period is a critical stage of life where the udder undergoes major developmental changes and that lifetime milk production may be directly linked to the level of nutrition from birth to weaning.

These findings challenge the current accepted calf-feeding strategies and have the potential to dramatically change the way calves are fed and reared in Australia. Conventional calf-rearing methods have focused on minimising milk intake to promote concentrate intake and early weaning. However, for some time leading calf rearers in the US have been manipulating the calf diet during the pre-weaning period, a concept often referred to as accelerated calf rearing.

Interestingly the best results are seen when these extra nutrients come from colostrum, milk or milk replacer. Calves are born with the ability to thrive on a milk-only diet. It appears that liquid milk-based feeds are the best sources of nutrition to maximise calf growth rates and improve their subsequent milk production.

The new evidence suggests that restricting the calf's liquid feed intake may actually reduce its potential to produce milk as an adult. Conversely, feeding heifer calves more before weaning has the potential to significantly increase their milk production throughout their adult life.

The action of milk or milk replacer on improving lifetime productivity appears to be twofold.

Firstly milk and milk replacer provide an energy-dense source of nutrition that is readily digestible to the pre-ruminant calf. Feeding of milk and milk replacer above currently recommended rates therefore increases average daily gains beyond what is achievable with concentrates alone.

It is also believed that this feeding strategy may somehow stimulate the development and future function of mammary cells in the immature udder, priming the mammary tissue, but this theory is still a long way from being proven.

In addition, colostrum appears to confer growth promotion effects, which cannot completely be explained by the established benefit of providing antibodies to the newborn calf.

Lifetime milk production may be directly linked to the level of nutrition from birth to weaning.

Research has shown higher levels of colostrum feeding at birth can improve calves' average daily weight gain — both pre and post weaning. How this occurs is not completely clear but factors in colostrum such as growth factors and hormones may alter gene expression or improve the way the calf absorbs and utilises nutrients.

Evidence is emerging that increasing the supply of colostrum and milk/milk replacer in the pre-weaning period has multiple benefits for the life of the animal.

An ongoing US study is reporting that for every extra 1kg of liveweight gain per day before 42-56 days-of-age, heifers produced an extra 522kg of milk. The 450 cows in this group have now been studied for up to three lactations.

Looking at their production across a longer period, the effect of the accelerated rearing produced more than 2200kg of extra milk depending on pre-weaning growth rates.

It has also been suggested that the improvements in calf growth rates may bring other benefits such as improved immunity to disease and better reproductive performance.

Dairy Australia is supporting research into how these new findings could be best applied in Australian dairy systems.

The results from this research will be incorporated into Dairy Australia's Healthy Calves program in the near future. D

Contact: Kathryn Davis at Dairy Australia, email <kdavis@dairyaustralia.com.au> or phone (03) 9694 3723.

Dairy Australia
Your Levy at Work

Course teaches mastitis best practice

DAIRY Australia's Cups On Cups Off training course will be available soon in all dairy regions.

The national training program aims to help dairyfarmers to achieve best practice in milk harvesting, with an emphasis on the detection and treatment of clinical mastitis.

The two-day course is suitable for anyone who milks cows on a dairy farm — from dairy farm owners, managers and sharefarmers to family members and farm employees — and is delivered by the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA) and Countdown 2020-approved veterinarians.

Cups On Cups Off forms part of Dairy Australia's Countdown 2020 program — the national mastitis and cell count control program that promotes better udder health, milk quality and dairy farm profitability.

Mastitis lowers farm profitability and reduces milk quality and quantity. However, Countdown has clearly shown that increases in farm profitability can be made by applying good mastitis management to achieve higher-quality milk.

Cups On Cups Off training considers the whole of the milking process, from mastitis management and control to the roles of people in the dairy.

Participants will learn how mastitis infections occur, how to detect and deal with mastitis, how the milking process can influence the risk of infections, how to develop an action plan for achieving best practice in milk harvesting, and how to develop a list of potential actions that could enable the farm team to work towards best practice in milk harvesting.

Upon completion participants will gain a certificate through the NCDEA.

To register interest in a Cups On Cups Off training course, contact the local regional development programs (see details page 114).

The Cups On Cups Off training program is intended to promote "udderly better health".

Dairy Australia
Your Levy at Work

New videos to help manage downer cows

DAIRY Australia has developed a series of videos demonstrating how to correctly manage downer cows to help farmers with this challenging area of animal health.

The six short videos cover several aspects of downer cow management, providing detailed veterinary advice and practical tips on how to achieve the best health and welfare outcomes. The videos, presented by Dr Phil Poulton — a leading authority in downer cow management in Australia, cover the areas of:

- assessment,
- housing,
- moving,
- rolling,
- lifting, and
- caring.

Dairy Australia's program manager, animal health and fertility, Kathryn Davis, managed the development of the videos. "Recent Australian research has clearly demonstrated the need for farmers to make early and informed decisions in relation to managing downer cows," Dr Davis said.

"The first decision that must be made is whether to nurse the downer cow or euthanise her. Of the 218 cows in the Australian study, only 32% were ever able to walk again. Obviously the initial assessment of the severity and cause of the recumbency must be figured into the decision-making process, but the odds are not favourable in most cases.

"One of the new videos focuses specifically on this critical period and helps farmers with determining the cow's condition and the possible reasons why she is down.

"If a decision is made to then nurse the cow, the way she is nursed directly impacts on her chances of making a full recovery. Nearly 90% of down cows that were cared for periods up to 14 days did not recover due to extra problems arising during the nursing period.

"Even with the best intentions, poor nursing care dramatically decreases the likelihood of the cow recovering. The new video clips were developed to provide farmers with easy access to information on how to correctly house, move, feed and care for downer cows to avoid these problems and achieve the best outcomes."

Dr Davis said the videos have been developed in an easy to understand style, reflecting the common, practical conversations between farmers and their vet and can be readily viewed on a smartphone, tablet device or computer.

"Vets are commonly asked by farmers 'What is the likelihood of this cow getting up?' The research undertaken by Dr Poulton indicates that the overall chances of recovery are not great, so if the farmer is not able to provide good nursing, a decision to euthanise the cow should be made quickly," Dr Davis said.

"If you wish to nurse a downer cow, take a look at these videos and then develop a simple management plan. Bringing a cow into a dedicated nursing environment versus managing her in out in a paddock can increase her chances of survival by 30%."

"The videos show how simple it is to create a suitable nursing environment and provide tips on how to safely move and lift a downer cow. All these techniques will improve cow welfare and achieve better outcomes for your downer cows." D

Take a look at the videos and develop a management plan.

Contact: Dairy Australia website <www.dairyaustralia.com.au>.

Dairy Australia
Your Levy at Work

Key results from differential feeding review

A RECENTLY commissioned review by Dairy Australia has examined the potential benefits of individualised feeding of concentrate supplements to pasture-based dairy cows.

Computerised bail feeding and milk monitoring systems are increasingly being installed on dairy farms.

These systems enable farmers to provide different quantities and, if multiple feed heads are installed, different combinations of concentrates to each individual cow in the herd, based on the cow's individual milk production.

Under this system, low producing cows are usually fed less concentrate and higher producing cows are usually fed more concentrate. But, is there any benefit in targeting supplementary feeding to a cow's milk production rather than just feeding at a simple flat rate to all cows in the herd?

A research team led by Dr James Hills from the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture examined this question and found that while there were a number of examples where there was no difference in the milk yield between cows fed different amounts of concentrate supplement according to their milk yield (compared with all cows fed the same amount), in the majority of these trials the cows had access to an unlimited forage source as well as the concentrate supplement.

In a recent trial where cows were given limited access to forage, which is typical of the rotational grazing practices on many pasture-based dairy farms, cows fed concentrate supplements on an individual basis had a 7% higher yield of fat and protein compared with cows fed at a flat rate.

This review has identified complexities in both cow (eg genotype, milk yield, days in milk, body weight, body condition score and parity) and system level factors (eg pasture allowance and substitution rate, among others) that could affect an individual cow's response to a particular supplement.

There is a requirement to consider these factors when determining how best to allocate supplements to individual cows.

The potential use of factors other than milk yield and/or body weight is however, limited by the lack of routinely available data of suitable quality that could be used to support a decision-making process and knowledge of what combination of factors could be used in achieving the most efficient response to supplements.

The significant gaps that exist in the understanding of the consequences of individualised feeding in a restricted pasture-based grazing system highlights the need to develop an integrated research factors that analyses the potential of factors discussed in this review under more controlled research conditions. D

Research reveals role of PMR

PRELIMINARY results from a Dairy Australia research program show there are significant milk production benefits to increasing amounts of pasture consumed by grazing cows receiving supplement as a partial mixed ration (PMR).

Department of Environment and Primary Industries research manager Dr Bill Wales said the research program into the role of partial mixed rations (PMR) for grazing cows would be completed this year.

The grazing experiment was conducted in spring 2013 and another was planned for autumn this year.

Dr Wales said the experiment found that as the pasture allowance was increased from 15 to 25 kilograms of dry matter offered to each cow (described to ground level), milk production increased in the order of 2kg to 5kg of energy corrected milk per cow across a range of PMR intakes from 6-14kg dry matter.

Intake of pasture was about 8-13kg dry matter, with the increased milk yield at the same amount of PMR coming from additional pasture consumed.

"That is to say, cows grazed harder when there was more pasture on offer as they were yet to satisfy their intake requirements," Dr Wales said.

PMR promotes significant production benefits.

When the allowance of pasture was further increased to 40kg dry matter, pasture intake was not increased any further and hence milk production was not observed to increase above that of cows offered the medium allowance of pasture.

Dr Wales said this has important implications for farmers because it set an upper limit for intake during spring, and helped avoid wastage and inefficient use of pasture, while optimising the value of the more expensive PMR.

Complementary experiments also explored the effect of these diet combinations on the digestibility characteristics of the total diet, grazing behaviour of cows and the recovery of the different pasture areas in subsequent grazings.

Dr Wales said the remaining question was whether the results found in spring would be repeated in the autumn experiment.

Dairy Australia
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New discussion groups for Gippsland

NEW farm discussion groups are forming in Gippsland creating further platforms for farmers to talk about on-farm issues, network and keep up with local news.

Four new groups in Orbost, South Gippsland, the Macalister Irrigation District and wider Gippsland have formed in the past six months with help from GippsDairy and Dairy Australia.

Orbost, Vic, farmer Scott Robinson said the new group in his region was set up to give younger farmers an opportunity to learn about how to manage their farms more effectively from their more experienced peers.

The group has already met four times this year with about eight to 10 people in attendance at each meeting.

"Things change in farming all the time so a discussion group is an excellent way to keep up with what's happening.

"As farmers we tend to get stuck in our own worlds at times so it's great to get out and see someone else's farm — even if it's just to get out for a bit and talk with a few other people."

Mr Robinson, who has been farming with his father for the past 15 years, said the group chose the areas it would like to focus on and had looked at budgeting, grass seed, feeding and pasture management so far.

Dairy Australia extension co-ordinator in Gippsland, Tony Platt, said it was pleasing to help establish farmer-driven groups in areas where they previously didn't exist.

"I enjoy working with the groups and get to as many meetings as possible," he said. "I add value where I can to let farmers know about the programs and support available from Dairy Australia."

"Gippsland has a strong network of existing groups focusing on profitable production. Some have been going for a very long time so it's great to add to that and help farmers in this way."

Discussion groups provide the opportunity to get out for a bit and talk with a few other people.

Leongatha discussion group

In Leongatha, Vic, farmer Ben Croatto has been meeting with the local discussion group for seven of his nine-year career in dairyfarming. Facilitated by Onfarm consultant, Matt Harms, the group has been active for 20 years.

"Discussion groups are not for everyone, but they are a great non-competitive way for people who want to learn how to farm more profitably by picking up information from smart operators," he said.

Mr Croatto said the discussion group provided a valuable opportunity to benchmark farm performance.

"Each meeting we submit our cow numbers and our litres produced and from that we get a spreadsheet detailing our profit per hectare and per cow," he said.

"If someone is, for example, twice as profitable as your operation you can simply ask some questions around how they do it and follow their lead. It's ideal for young famers who are starting out."

Another positive of being involved was simply being aware of any issues that arose in the region as they happened said.

Mr Harms said those involved in the Leongatha group came from a broad range of farm sizes from 100-to-600-cow operations, but were all a similar style of business.

"They are a very business-focused group that want to meet and really want to see each other succeed," Mr Harms said.

"As a whole they are not so much focused on the nuts and bolts of farming because they are already successful in those areas, but they like to discuss things like structure, growth, equity and business performance."

Mr Harms said newcomers shouldn't be afraid of getting involved.

"Starting off can be daunting for the new player and some farmers are shy to begin with, but tend to find their place after a while and enjoy it and get some information they can use," he said.

Dairy Australia is providing funding support to up to 90 discussion groups throughout Australia's dairy regions during the next three years.

Anyone who is interested in applying for funding for a discussion group should contact their Regional Development Program or Dairy Australia extension co-ordinator.

Farmers wishing to create or re-establish a discussion group in their area should also get in touch with their Regional Development Program and Dairy Australia extension co-ordinator, who can provide support and advice to get started.

Contact: Tony Platt, mobile 0477440339 or email <tplatt@dairyaustralia.com.au>.

Discussion groups

REASONS to get involved with a discussion group:

- Talk through business matters common to you and other farmers.
- Gain confidence in your decision making.
- Network with other farmers and service providers.
- Develop your skill and knowledge and learn from others.

Regional Development Programs and Extension Coordinators

WestVic Dairy
Ph: 03 55571000
www.westvicdairy.com.au

Ian Linley
ilinley@dairyaustralia.com.au
M: 0422 814 579

Murray Dairy
Ph: 03 5833 5312
www.murraydairy.com.au

Troy Mauger
tmauger@dairyaustralia.com.au
M: 0417 870 038

GippsDairy
Ph: 03 5624 3900
www.gippsdairy.com.au

Tony Platt
tplatt@dairyaustralia.com.au
M: 0477 440 339

Dairy NSW
Ph: 0412 825 466
www.dairynsw.com.au

Mid Coast region
Mark Neal
mneal@dairyaustralia.com.au
M: 0488 277 133

Hunter region
Sheena Carter
scarter@dairyaustralia.com.au
M: 0427 434 412

DairySA
Ph: 08 8766 0127
www.dairysa.com.au

Mount Gambier
Liz Rymill
erymill@dairyaustralia.com.au
M: 0409 919 564

Central
Nerida Ewart
newart@dairyaustralia.com.au
M: 0409 825 938

Subtropical Dairy
Ph: 07 3396 6229
www.dairyinfo.biz

Jo Gorman
jgorman@dairyaustralia.com.au
M: 0439 555 322

Western Dairy
Ph: 08 9525 9222
www.westerndairy.com.au

Rob La Grange
rob@westerndairy.com.au
M: 0448 939 344

DairyTas
Ph: 03 6432 2233
www.dairytas.com.au

Liz Mann
lmann@dairytas.com.au
M: 0428 121 655

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DEANCOX	244	198	107	$26.00	$22.00
WESTGATE	268	176	110	$24.00	$20.00
STARSHIRAZ	255	220	105	$22.00	$18.00
DIMAGGIO	274	211	105	$20.00	$18.00

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PICOLA	266	0.25	0.53	$26.00	$22.00
DELSANTO	226	0.39	0.93	$26.00	$20.00
GOLDCREST	274	0.14	0.19	$22.00	$20.00
ZINGER	245	0.23	0.29	$18.00	$16.00

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Code	APR	ASI	Overall Type	RRP $	Pack & Genetic Check Price $
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AUSSIEGOLD	190	153	110	$24.00	$20.00
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