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OUR COVER

Ellie Hourigan with the 2019 International Dairy Week All Breeds Youth Show grand champion heifer Darryn Vale Tequila Satin. Read the full report on page 88.



Picture: Carlene Dowie

CHRISTOPHER

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How a plan can make a difference

THERE'S been a lot of talk lately in the industry about leadership, unity and finding solutions to our problems.

Some have queried the value in developing another plan or have criticised leaders for being out of touch, while others have called for a unified front, questioning those who have rushed to government with suggestions for fixing problems.

I want to share a story with you about how taking the time to develop a plan, listening to everyone's points of view and thinking about a solution beyond a handout can make a difference.

I'm on the board of our local football/netball club.

The changerooms at our ground, like hundreds of others around the country, are in dire need of an upgrade. The away rooms are not-so-affectionately referred to as the chook sheds. The home rooms aren't much better.

We've been banging on about the need to replace them for years.

We whinged to anyone who'd listen. We showed politicians and bureaucrats around the place, who'd nod sympathetically, before heading off to the next community group asked for their help.

We were all becoming increasingly frustrated with the local council, who we saw as being uninterested in helping, and disgruntled at the seeming uncaring state politicians and bureaucrats.

Then two years ago we took another tack.

We were challenged by one bureaucrat to come up with a plan — a plan that took a much broader view of what we wanted and how it could be used in our community.

So we took a step back. We worked as a group to develop a new vision for the recreation reserve, which pitched it not just as the sporting hub of our small town, but a facility that would be the home of women's football in our region, a facility that could be used by local health services wanting to reach farmers in our area, a facility that would have the latest conferencing technology to allow all the clubs in our region to tap into high-level coaching and training advice and a facility that could be used as a base for local emergency groups facing natural disasters.

We visited other sporting facilities, we sat down and nussed out what each group wanted. We engaged a local consultant to identify how our vision aligned with various local and state government priorities and to prepare the document. We had an architect develop a rough concept design of what we wanted.

From this, we developed a plan.


The 30-page document (with a handy double-page summary for the time-poor politician) identified clearly what we wanted, what it would achieve and how it fitted with government priorities.

But more importantly, it changed the way we talked.

We still showed politicians and bureaucrats around the facility and let their dire state speak for themselves, before presenting them with a solution that went way beyond upgrading a changeroom.

The outcome: firstly the local council identified the project as its number one priority for the state election. And then by luck of being in a marginal seat, we were promised significant funding by both sides.

The council has now engaged an architect to come up with the final plans for the \$2 million we've been promised.

It started with being willing to work through our differences and develop a plan. Maybe there's something in that for all of us. 



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www.facebook.com/AustralianDairyfarmer



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Win in discount milk war

Key points

- ✓ Woolworths agrees to lift price of \$1 a litre milk
- ✓ Move a game changer for dairy
- ✓ Coles and Aldi refuse to budge

AUSTRALIAN Dairy Farmers (ADF) has secured a major victory in the fight against discount dairy products with supermarket giant Woolworths committing to remove \$1 per litre fresh milk from sale.

The move will see the supermarket sell two-litre and three-litre varieties of Woolworths-branded fresh milk for \$2.20 and \$3.30 respectively. Every cent of the increase will end up with Australian dairy farmers.

ADF and Woolworths have engaged in constructive discussions in recent months around the damage wrought on the dairy industry by \$1 milk and other discount dairy products.

Australian Dairy Farmers chief executive David Inall said the move was a “game changer” for the dairy industry, which had been long frustrated by discount dairy products.

“It is reassuring that Woolworths has committed to deliver the full 10-cent increase back to those farmers who supplied the milk into that product category,” Mr Inall said.

“Removing \$1 milk is not just intended to restore farmers’ financial confidence, but it will also boost confidence in regional communities and small businesses that rely on the industry.

“Consumers can buy fresh milk from Woolworths knowing they are supporting the Australian farmers who supplied it.”

Woolworths attributed the move to wanting to protect the long-term sustainability of the Australian dairy industry and regional communities.

Woolworths chief executive Brad Banducci said: “In our consultation with industry bodies, including Australian Dairy Farmers and its state members, we’ve heard the outlook will continue to be extremely tough for dairy farmers right across



Australian Dairy Farmers chief executive officer, David Inall, with dairy farmers Erika Chesworth, Dubbo, NSW, (NSW Farmers), and Graham Forbes, Gloucester, NSW, (Dairy Connect), and Woolworths managing director, Brad Banducci, with bottles of two-litre private label milk, which lifted in price to \$2.20 in Woolworths’ stores in February.

the country. This is affecting milk production and farm viability, which is devastating for farmers and the regional communities in which they live.

“It’s clear something needs to change, and we want to play a constructive role in making this happen.

‘Removing \$1 milk is not just intended to restore farmers’ financial confidence, but it will also boost confidence in regional communities...’

“We’re acutely aware of the budgetary pressures facing many of our customers and have not taken this decision lightly. We believe it’s the right thing to do and a key step in shoring up fresh milk production in Australia. We’ll continue to work very hard to offer great value to our customers across their total shop.”

Under the model, the extra 10 cents customers pay on each litre is distributed in full to dairy farmers by processors in line with the usual

payment cycles. The distribution of the additional funds will have continued oversight and be independently audited. Woolworths will continue to consult and engage with dairy industry bodies on longer term reform and payment mechanisms.

Coles has so far refused to follow Woolworths with a similar initiative, instead proposing an industry-wide 10-cent levy on all milk products, while Aldi rejected calls to raise the price of its discount milk line, which retails for 99 cents.

Mr Inall said the retailers could not continue selling cheap milk while simultaneously raising the price of other products to help drought-stricken farmers.

“Coles has just raised the price of bread due to high grain prices, and both Woolworths and Coles have raised the price of roast chicken so there is no reason why they shouldn’t also acknowledge the hard work and tight margins of their dairy suppliers,” he said.

“We would love to work with Coles and Aldi on devising a mechanism that would get fair returns back to farmers because this issue is gaining momentum and it won’t go away for them.”

Coles previously stated that rather than raise the price of its cheap milk line, the supermarket would instead “continue to look at ways to support Australian farmers, including by collecting customer donations at our supermarket registers”.

Mr Inall said any call by the retailer for public donations was a slap to their suppliers.

“Any suggestion that Coles can rattle the collection tin to help struggling farmers is an insult,” he said.

“Farmers don’t want a handout. They run businesses and like all businesses owners, they want a fair price for their product.

“The dairy industry has suffered from the debilitating effects of dollar milk for eight years, since Australia Day 2011, and the retailers have an opportunity to come to the table and help us implement change.” **D**

How to deal with on-farm activism

Key points

- ✓ Prepare and plan the farm for possible activism
- ✓ If approached, keep calm and communicate to those affected
- ✓ Secure the property
- ✓ Prepare for the media and get support

In January 2019, The Aussie Farms Repository posted an interactive map of thousands of commercial farms and abattoirs across Australia based on information the organisation and its affiliates have gathered over eight years.

The map includes 748 farms identified as 'dairy farms' and includes some or all of business name, address, status of operation and GPS coordinates.

Aussie Farms describes itself as an "animal rights charity, dedicated to ending commercialised animal abuse and exploitation in Australian animal agriculture facilities by increasing industry transparency and educating the public".

There was significant media attention following the launch of the map, leading to a heightened risk of activist activity targeting farm properties.

Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) is offering practical advice for dairy farmers should they become the target for on-farm activism motivated by concerns for animal rights or welfare.

Responding to on-farm activism

1. Prepare

It's not possible to entirely protect the farm from being the target for activists. Perhaps the best protection from activism is trying to limit the visibility of farm operation that may attract the attention of activists from public roads, such as calving sheds, calving pads, hospital paddocks, animals awaiting knackery collection and anywhere animals may be receiving veterinary care.

- Limit unannounced visitors to the farm through clear Biosecurity signs at all entrances, requiring visitors to request approval before entry.
- Write down protocols for everyone, including staff, if they encounter an intruder. This could include: local police numbers, if and how they should be approached, and what information they should record if they suspect an



The clickable map encourages members of the public to upload information, photos or video about any site highlighted on it.

intruder (car description and plate numbers, description of individuals, where they were, if anything was taken or damaged).

- Consult the dedicated National Farmers Federation web page for advice on what steps to take to limit the publication of the farm's location — farmers.org.au/news/fighting-back-against-the-activist-farm-map/.
- Think twice about having veterinarians performing treatments in areas highly visible to the public.

If a farm owner becomes aware of or suspects unauthorised access to farm:

2. Communicate

- Keep calm and approach the activists, asking them to leave the property.
- If they are not willing to leave, make clear the intention to contact the local police, and follow through if required.
- If possible, ask the group to identify the organisation with which they are affiliated.
- Ensure to communicate with staff and any farm visitors to let them know about the situation and give clear instructions as to what work can safely continue, or otherwise where they should gather.
- Try to manage the response to avoid accusations of inappropriate aggression or criminal threat, including confronting the activists carrying anything that could be perceived as a weapon.

3. Secure the property

- Secure all on-farm facilities possible — lock sheds and gates, limit access throughout the property as much as possible.
- If aspects of operations are open to public, for example retail or hospitality operations, consider the safety and reputational risks and decide whether there is a need to close. If so, think about the need to communicate this on social media or through other channels to those who may be affected by the unexpected closure.

4. Prepare for media

- The activity may attract local media attention or discussions online through social media. If comments are posted directly to the business or family page, resist the urge to respond in the heat of the moment.
- If comments are abusive, contain expletives, or directed to the owner or the family or staff, hide and delete the post, and consider blocking the poster from accounts.

5. Get support

Get in touch with state dairy farmer organisation (SDFO) or Regional Development Program (RDP) to report the activity and get advice. They can assist navigate any media or social media attention that may arise, connect resources available to support and get in contact with parent organisations directly.



Firm trade stand vital

- Key points**
- ✓ Australia negotiating free trade agreement with EU
 - ✓ EU wants to restrict product names and labelling
 - ✓ Technical barriers should not be included in trade deals

By Terry Richardson
ADF president

AUSTRALIA needs to stand up to the European Union and ensure our local dairy industry doesn't suffer under a new free trade agreement.

The federal government is clearly enthusiastic about the prospect of securing a \$100 billion trade deal.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison went so far as to pledge to "accelerate" negotiations for greater Australian export access into Europe at last year's G20 leaders' summit.

But as part of the negotiations, that started in mid-2018, the EU is pushing for Australia to accept and implement strict labelling rules that could spell disaster for our dairy industry.

Called geographical indications (GIs), the stated purpose of these rules is to "protect distinctive EU food and drink products from imitations in Australia", but in practice imposing such restrictions poses a grave threat to existing locally produced dairy products.

Such a move could see a ban on locally produced Feta, Parmesan, Haloumi and eventually Greek Yoghurt.

Dairy producers will be forced to change the names of these products, and consumers will be confused and frustrated at no longer being able to find some of their favourite dairy products on supermarket shelves.

Not only that, but European negotiators are also arguing to extend the scope of GIs beyond the name of products to include colours, flags, symbols, script or anything that might evoke the source of a product.

A quick look in any supermarket cheese section will show you that many Australian dairy manufacturers have built their brands on their cultural heritage and now face the possibility of having that taken from them.

This is a nightmare scenario we cannot let play out.

Australia has a prominent dairy



Australian dairy producers would be forced to change the names of a range of products, if the EU gets its way in trade negotiations.

sector, worth \$4.3 billion at the farm gate alone, and is still the country's third largest agricultural industry.

We produce more than 22,000 tonnes of cheese varieties that are of risk each year, with a value of production equalling more than \$180 million per annum and export sales averaging more than \$55 million.

'The EU is pushing for Australia to accept and implement strict labelling rules that could spell disaster for our dairy industry.'

And alarmingly, the EU wants to reserve the right to add names to the GI list in the future.

Greece is currently applying to have the term 'Greek Yoghurt' protected as a GI.

This is just a taste of things to come if Australia allows GIs to be included in a trade deal with the EU.

The dairy industry does not oppose the concept of GIs that are

linked to a specific place, but we do have concerns with restricting common food names — for example, the use of Camembert as a common name, in comparison to Camembert de Normandie, which is clearly linked to Normandy in France.

A further 45,000 tonnes of local cheese production, averaging \$300 million in domestic and export sales per year, could face future restrictions on production and sale if strict GI evocation rules are applied under the FTA.

It is vital that the free trade agreement has benefits for both sides, considering the ease of access European dairy manufacturers have to the Australian market.

These trade negotiations should allow both Australia and the EU to capitalise on an improved commercial relationship.

But we need to ensure this deal frees up the trade relationship rather than creates technical barriers such as GIs.

The future of the Australian dairy industry depends on the federal government's courage to stay firm in trade negotiations and push back against the EU's demand to enforce GI restrictions.



Ramping up disease surveillance

Key points

- ✓ New project to help farms lift biosecurity
- ✓ Uses Foot-and-Mouth Disease as a model
- ✓ Aims to create local education programs

GROUPS of producers from across Australia are jumping on the biosecurity bandwagon and ramping up their on-farm disease surveillance through a program called the Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) Ready Project.

The project aims to strengthen preparedness for an emergency animal disease outbreak and facilitate an earlier return to trade for Australia following control of such a disease. While the project is using FMD as a model, it is much broader than that and improved surveillance can help producers with a host of health and welfare issues.

Through the project, animal health stakeholders including producers, agents and private and government veterinarians will form local pilot groups to improve surveillance through strong partnerships. Each group has access to funding and technical resources to create a local platform that designs and trials education programs and innovative solutions to animal health surveillance and disease management problems, which will assist their industry in on-farm surveillance.

This might include designing and running training workshops for producers on what symptoms to look for to identify disease/conditions of concern, who to contact if anything suspect is seen and what happens then. For goats, this might include for example Caprine arthritis and encephalitis (CAE), Johne's disease (JD) and Q fever as well as conditions like footrot, coccidiosis, pulpy kidney, scabby mouth and tetanus.

The goat pilot group is based in South Australia and met to brainstorm ideas in December. The group was excited about the possibilities and what could be achieved over the course of the project for the greater good of not just the SA industry, but Australia wide. This will hopefully be an opportunity to create stronger connections across the SA goat industry and to work together to address issues, starting with surveillance.



A new project aims to strengthen preparedness for an emergency animal disease outbreak in Australian livestock industries, including dairy.

'There are also pilot groups running in the dairy and pork industries.'

A sheep pilot group is based in Western Australia and is exploring options for better feedback systems to producers from abattoirs as well as gathering information about how the National Significant Disease Investigation Program might fit into producers' management of their animals. They are also working to improve general awareness by producers and the community as a whole about emergency animal diseases, what to look for and what to do if something suspicious is found.

The beef pilot group is based in Queensland and is working on developing a framework for enhanced surveillance and biosecurity practices on their farms. The group includes beef producers, local vets and state government representatives and will also trial a new training program, which is being

developed by the Queensland government in partnership with private vets to improve producers' awareness and practical skills in the detection of signs and symptoms of both endemic and exotic diseases of concern.

There are also pilot groups running in the dairy and pork industries.

This project is supported by Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), through funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources as part of its Rural Research & Development for Profit program, and by producer levies from Australian FMD-susceptible livestock (cattle, sheep, goats and pigs) industries and Charles Sturt University (CSU), leveraging significant in-kind support from the research partners.

The research partners for this project are the CSIRO, CSU through the Graham Centre for Agricultural Innovation, the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and the Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, supported by Animal Health Australia (AHA). 

Read more about the program at <https://research.csiro.au/fmd/>.



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Making the best of a difficult situation



By **David Nation**
Managing director
Dairy Australia

Key points

- ✓ Farmers should reach out for support, especially from Regional Development Programs
- ✓ Hold onto something positive
- ✓ Improvements in herd genetics

THE current season continues to build on the cost pressures of dairy farming, requiring hard work and clear thinking to make the best of a difficult situation.

The trend of declining milk production continues, and we have revised down the forecast of milk production for the year. The effects of this year, particularly through reduced herd numbers and farms exiting dairy, means that the decline in milk production will continue into next season.

I encourage you to reach out to the support that is around you and contact the Regional Development Program (RDP) that is closest to you and tap into the many resources available in your region. Maybe you just need someone to listen. It's important that

'It's important that you don't tackle problems alone, as this could isolate you from the many other farmers who are feeling just as you are.'

you don't tackle problems alone, as this could isolate you from the many other farmers who are feeling just as you are.

Activities through RDPs such as discussion groups and field days are a good way to connect to others in a similar situation.

It is also important to hold onto something positive, as the tides will change, and it will be important for your business to be well positioned to take advantage of better farming conditions.

A common topic of conversation is the quality of heifers coming through, as well as some herds carrying more heifers than usual and using this as a springboard for the future. This is the reward of many years of effort to improve genetics and fertility and will be so important to the future success of the industry.


It is timely that the Herd 19 conference is being held this month in Bendigo, Vic, starting on March 19, and will bring international experts in herd improvement to Australia. We need to be closely connected into the global trends in herd improvement, as well as celebrate and better understand

the local successes and the world-leading initiatives happening here in Australia.

Global milk prices have also been rebounding for the past two months, which is welcome news and is a positive signal for future milk prices. We have recently released the February update of the *Situation and Outlook* report, which provides a comprehensive update of market conditions.

You can read more about the report on page 45.

Dairy Australia recently held the 20th Australian Grand Dairy Awards. The judges reflected on the increasing quality of dairy products and the breadth of talent across a wide range of dairy, including Australia's best cheeses, ice creams, yoghurts, milks and butters. This is another strength of the industry that we often don't fully recognise. For the record, Tasmania's Lion Dairy and Drinks was named Grand Champion Cheese for their King Island Dairy Roaring Forties Blue Cheese.

You can find out who the rest of the Champions were in our story on page 26. Congratulations to all the champions. 

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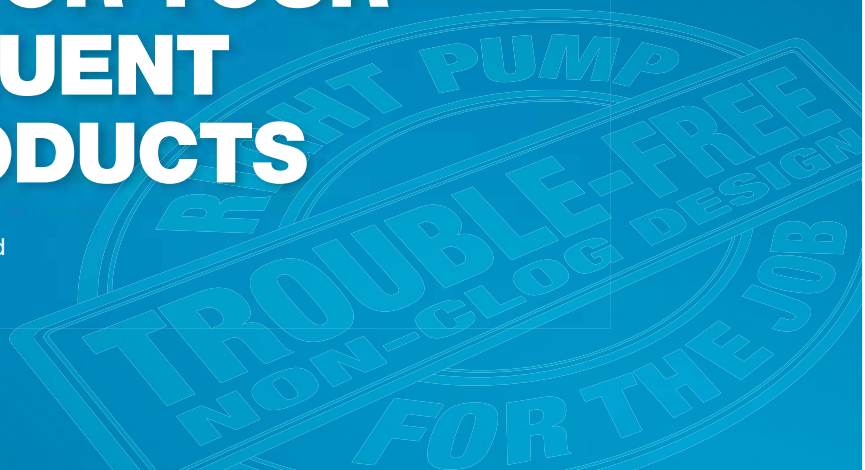


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\$1 milk under fire from processors

Key points

- ✓ Supermarket discount pricing analysed
- ✓ Norco says ACCC got it wrong
- Saputo says \$1 milk agreement a disgrace

By Carlene Dowie

SUPERMARKET discounted milk was in the firing line at the Australian Dairy Conference in Canberra in February. And it wasn't farmers firing the bullets.

Chiefs from leading processors — all of which supply private-label products to supermarkets — said \$1 milk and \$6 cheese fundamentally undermined the value of dairy.

Saputo chairman Lino Saputo Jr, who supplies Coles with its \$1 a litre milk in Victoria and NSW, said processors needed to demand the real value for dairy products when negotiating with retailers.

"I go back to the days when MG (Murray Goulburn) was running the business and they signed a contract with a large retailer for \$1 milk," he said. "It's hard to say this, but it doesn't make any f*** sense."

He applauded the move by Woolworths in February to lift its price to \$1.10/l but said it still was not enough.

"\$1.10 still doesn't make sense when you can buy water at \$3 a litre, when you can buy soda pop at \$4 a litre or those Powerades or Gatorades at \$5 a litre," he said. "It doesn't make sense with all the work that's going behind to produce milk, to process that milk to then sell it for \$1 a litre."

The processors said supermarket pricing influenced the farmgate price for milk.

Norco chairman Greg McNamara said the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission got its findings wrong in its 2018 dairy inquiry.

The ACCC's *Dairy Inquiry Final Report* said it found no evidence that supermarket pricing, including \$1/l milk, had a direct impact on farmgate prices. "Importantly, we found that contracts for the supply of private label milk allow processors to pass the farmgate price paid to farmers through to the wholesale prices they charge to retailers," the ACCC report said.

"This means that processors do not have an incentive to reduce farmgate prices as a result of the lower wholesale prices they receive for private



René Dedoncker, Fonterra; Paul van Heerwaarden, Bega; Greg McNamara, Norco; and Lino Saputo Jr, Saputo, on the panel at the Australian Dairy Conference.

label milk, as the farmgate prices are passed through to the supermarkets."

But Mr McNamara said that was wrong. "Fundamentally the pricing mechanism and how we discuss with retailers and set pricing, their outcome was, in my view, flawed," he said.

Mr Saputo, when asked about the current contracts providing an opportunity for more money to come back to processors for farmers, said he would "love to see that".

'I think it just devalues everything we as farmers do.'

Bega Cheese chief executive Paul van Heerwaarden said supermarket private label products had changed farmgate prices. There was no longer a domestic-market farmgate price and lower export-commodity-market farmgate price.

Mr van Heerwaarden said more than half of the key dairy products — milk, cheese and butter — sold in Australian supermarkets was private label.

"And without speaking too much out of school, the baseline dairy products that go into them, whether it's butter or milk or indeed cheese are commodity prices," he said. "There's not the returns in there that there used to be."

Mr van Heerwaarden said the supermarket label products were driven by commodity prices. "And a lot of those products are being imported today — whether it's from New Zealand or elsewhere," he said.

Milk in cheap cheese and butter was valued even lower than the discounted fresh milk. "And if we think about 10

litres of milk going into a kilogram of cheese, and a block of cheese selling for 6 bucks, that's 60 cents a litre," Mr van Heerwaarden said.

Mr McNamara, whose company supplies Coles with \$1/l milk in south-east Queensland, said the discounted product was now also having a big impact on sales to cafes and small businesses.

More operators of franchise cafes were buying discounted milk in bulk directly from the supermarkets, rather than at a higher price through the route trade.

All agreed that the processors needed to lead the discussion with retailers about the value of milk.

"I think the single biggest issue the industry faces from my perspective when we talk about what some retailers have done in a levy and asking people to put donations in tins, I think it just devalues everything we as farmers do," Mr McNamara said.

"We do not want a generation of welfare recipients. We want a generation of farmers that are business-savvy, that spend the money in the right spots and we've just got to help retailers actually come to that conclusion."

Mr Saputo said the company would honour its existing contracts with retailers.

"But as those contracts expire, we like to sit at the table with those retailers and renegotiate the terms and contracts that make it mutually beneficial as opposed to one-sided," he said.

"I think in some cases some of the contracts are one-sided."

Mr van Heerwaarden said there was a big need for processors to properly have conversations with the retailers. "This is the value chain we should be creating," he said.



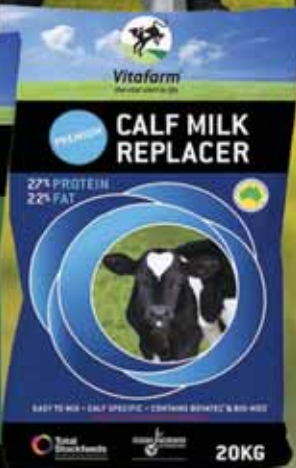


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Milk pricing systems set for shake up

- Key points**
- ✓ Big southern processors looking at milk pricing systems
 - ✓ Bega and Saputo favouring simpler systems
 - ✓ Fonterra looking to offer portfolio of choices

By Carlene Dowie

MILK pricing systems look set for a shake up as southern Australian processors grapple with falling supply.

The heads of Australia's three largest processors — Saputo, Fonterra and Bega Cheese — in a wide-ranging discussion at the Australian Dairy Conference in Canberra in February identified pricing systems as one of the issues that needed to be sorted.

But there appears to be a split about how that will be approached — with Saputo and Bega indicating simplified contracts as the solution and Fonterra talking about offering a range of price “portfolios” to farmers.

The introduction of a mandatory code is also driving the change, with the draft code proposing a requirement for all processors to release a standard form agreement and minimum prices at the same time.

Saputo chairman and chief executive officer Lino Saputo Jr told the *Australian Dairyfarmer*, Saputo would be offering farmers the choice of five or six programs next year and there would be no special deals for select suppliers.

“I will say this categorically there will be no special deals beyond those programs,” he said.

“So any of those large corporate farms that want to have a sideline deal, they should not do it with Saputo Dairy



Lino Saputo Jr: there will be no special deals for corporate farms.



Paul van Heerwaarden: Milk pricing systems need to better suit the whole supply chain.



René Dedoncker: Fonterra operates in a network of different communities.

Australia because we are not going to be doing those things. We tell our suppliers on an ongoing basis we have one class of farm whether you are producing a hundred million litres or you are producing a billion litres of milk, we have one class of farmers.”

Mr Saputo said from July the former Murray Goulburn and Warrnambool Cheese and Butter programs would merge with 5-6 simpler programs offered. “Everyone tries to outdo everyone else by offering these very complicated bonuses and structures,” he said. “We need to simplify that.”

Bega Cheese chief executive officer Paul van Heerwaarden also identified simpler pricing systems as a way to lift farmer returns.

“One of the things we are looking at is what will we do with our milk-pricing systems, which over the last 20 years have become quite complex and, dare I say, have provided an incentive for farmers to produce milk perhaps at a time of the year or in certain practices

that may not be best for the farm,” he said.

Mr van Heerwaarden said he looked at their company's recent investment in the Koroit, Vic, factory as an example of how Bega could take a different approach to help farmers. “We can handle a lot of seasonal milk, we've got a lot of capacity, and so, for example, there we are not looking to incentivise farms to produce milk in February/March when it's very expensive,” he said.

“So investing in assets that are going to fit the farm profile in those regions is how we've got to think about our investments and they are 10 to 20 years out.”

Milk pricing systems needed to better suit the whole supply chain.

“As an industry, historically we have been one of the lowest cost most competitive dairy industries in the world, but we are not there today,” he said.

Farms had become more dependent on inputs that now represented 40 per cent of costs compared with 15-20pc 20 years.

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◀ “We need more control back on farm, where they can make decisions that are better for their farms,” Mr van Heerwaarden said. “Do we move to pasture-based systems in regions that are suitable for pasture-based systems and take cost structures down and importantly take risk down?”

He acknowledged that approach would mean more seasonal milk for processors. “But I think that’s our responsibility to work out how we turn that into value and that’s the key,” he said.

Fonterra Australia managing director Ren, Dedoncker flagged a different approach.

In February, Fonterra offered northern Victorian farmers who were willing to commit to a minimum volume of milk a higher price. The company said the special price for farmers who produced a flatter milk curve was in response to seasonal conditions and heightened competition in the market and was no different to the premium offered for fresh milk and ones it planned to pay for organic and A2 milk.

Mr Dedoncker hinted at the conference that the company was looking at offering more of these types of premiums. “Farmers are all different: different age profile, different risk profile, different propensity to be able to farm flat or through a curve,” he said.

“Is it feasible we are in a world now where we say there is a portfolio and you get to choose, you get a choice? We are testing that.”

Mr Dedoncker also hinted that Fonterra could consider different pricing for suppliers to different factories.

“Fonterra has a network of different communities where we are,” he said. “What if I don’t call it one Fonterra? What if we had the Western State Butter Company, Stanhope Cheese Northern Dairy Company and Tasmania Inc or the Darnum Nutritional Company?”

“What if they were separate businesses, how would they price their milk?”

All three chief executives acknowledged milk supply was an issue.

Mr Dedoncker said Fonterra was looking to activate contingency plans to meet its contracts.

The rebuilt Stanhope, Vic, factory was now producing three times as much cheese as it had before it was destroyed by fire in 2014 but Fonterra was struggling with milk supply to it.

The worst-case scenario could be moving milk from the west to the north. “We don’t regret the investment, it is state of the art and we take a 10-year view,” he said.

‘The introduction of a mandatory code is also driving the change...’

“Yes we are under pressure, there is no doubt about that, and we have to take a long-term view.”

Mr Saputo acknowledged that the company had not grown supply above 1.6 billion litres since taking over Murray Goulburn last year.

The company has set itself a target to get up to 2.1 billion litres of milk in three years. “We are confident that we are going to get there in terms of processed milk,” he said.

“Out of the gate, we haven’t grown our milk base from the 1.6, only because we are sort of changing how milk prices are communicated.”

Mr Saputo said it was rebuilding trust with suppliers that the opening price was the guaranteed minimum price they would receive for the year. “(Last year) we came out with an opening price that we believed was reflective of the dairy markets and we came out first,” he said.

“And we did it to inform our suppliers

that they shouldn’t be overly focused on opening price, rather they should be more concerned with closing price.

“We made a guarantee we would be paying a leading price for dairy at the close of the year. Now, of course, it was very easy for some of our competitors to have a higher opening price than what we had.

“And some of the suppliers criticised us — there was a great opportunity for Saputo to collect more milk had they had a higher opening price. And I reminded them that’s not responsible on our part.”

Mr Saputo said the opening price was the number on which farmers could build their budgets for the year. “We are not going to be taking a step down; we are not going to be doing a clawback,” he said.

Mr Saputo said he was optimistic that once the company convinced suppliers it was “honourable and ethical” it would collect more milk “But it takes a fair bit of time to build the confidence,” he said.

Mr Saputo said the company had taken the same approach after it took over Warrnambool Cheese and Butter in 2014 and had grown milk intake by 25pc in the following four years.

Mr van Heerwaarden said companies need to look at investments in light of what worked best to drive growth and profitability.

Growth was critical for the industry to be successful.

“And in the last 20 years in this country we haven’t had growth, we’ve been in decline or we’ve stagnated,” he said.

“I know that when I’ve worked in industries that are in a growth mode, life is a whole lot easier.”

Mr van Heerwaarden said growth would not be brought about by processors investing in more stainless steel.

“Unless we have more milk, we don’t have growth and that’s where it has got to start,” he said. **D**

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Semen sales hit record levels

Key points

- ✓ Genomics helps drive semen sales
- ✓ Sexed semen sales also increase
- ✓ Holstein remains dominant breed

By Carlene Dowie

DAIRY semen sales hit record levels in 2017-18, according to the recently released Semen Market Survey 2018 report from the National Herd Improvement Association of Australia.

This was driven by farmers having a better understanding of the value of genetics, NHIA chairman Graeme Gillan said.

The rapid and massive improvement in genetics now occurring as a result of the use of genomics was also behind the trend.

The total number of doses of semen sold in Australia leapt to 2,196,456, up 8 per cent on the previous year and up 30 per cent in the past decade.

Mr Gillan said although the increase would have also reflected people needing to buy semen after clearing out their tanks following the milk price crash in 2016, the fundamental change in the market due to genomics was the main factor.

"All of a sudden the range of bulls and value that people pay for bulls is really improving quite dramatically year on year," he said.

Although Australia had not been an aggressive adopter of the use of genomically proven semen, use had



Graeme Gillan: Inbuilding good genetics helps improve efficiencies.

'There was also a wider range of bulls available at different pricing points.'

increased steadily and was now fast approaching sales of daughter-proven semen.

The rapid advancement in genetic merit meant, for example, there were now 140-150 Holstein bulls above 300 Balanced Performance Index in the *Good Bulls Guide* compared with just six two years ago.

Genomics had also allowed overseas bulls to be tested on the Australian reference base, providing a more accurate indicator of their perform-

ance here. Mr Gillan said there was also a wider range of bulls available at different pricing points.

"All of a sudden there is three layers of pricing reflected, whereas years ago there was one layer of pricing and then it fell away really quickly on genetic merit," he said.

"Companies are able to make a wider range of product available that is still high genetic merit but is still really good value."

Farmers were starting to understand the value of good genetics in their herds.

"Inbuilding good genetics actually helps improve efficiencies," he said. "It's a free kick."

Genomics had also allowed the development of more accurate ABVs for lower heritable traits, such as daughter fertility and some of the survival traits.

"Genomics has been a boon because it allows us to measure that more accurately than what we could have done historically," he said,

Sexed semen

The survey also revealed increased sales of sexed semen.

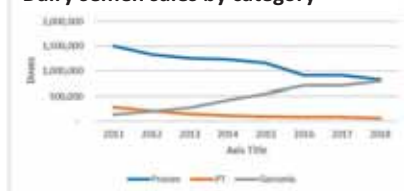
Mr Gillan said he expected this to continue as the reliability of sexed semen continued to improve and people developed breeding programs that better accommodated it.

Larger herds, in particular, were becoming more aggressive with their reproduction programs, with the increasing use of synchronisation and technology such as electronic heat detection.

The trend to sexed semen would also be driven by increasing societal concerns about bobby calves.

Farmers would focus the use of sexed semen in the top end of the

Dairy semen sales by category



Doses of sexed dairy semen sold

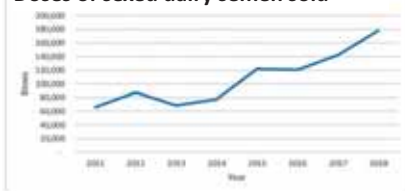


Table 1: Dairy Sales by Breed by year

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Holstein	1,334,892	1,530,057	1,525,776	1,470,581	1,498,275	1,597,106	1,516,992	1,609,595	1,733,733
Jersey	250,873	278,307	277,744	235,391	294,569	327,186	270,795	281,648	301,945
Illawarra	11,578	57,584	30,738	12,738	11,915	12,281	14,540	11,216	16,845
Brown Swiss	12,897	15,292	17,581	18,552	17,965	15,351	12,545	11,832	11,481
ARB*	54,809	51,897	55,487	61,083	56,842	55,180	48,210	58,512	67,151
Montbeliarde	4322	8556	8106	7563	6852	2563	2736	1972	1770
Ayrshire	8841	11,734	8692	8530	7378	9,193	13,671	8427	7251
Guernsey	4164	5431	5759	3058	4878	4374	6043	3707	5012
Kiwi Friesian	10,826	14,794	14,105	20,560	29,246	34,577	48,475	41,375	43,278
Other	2605	12,053	1977	3068	3578	3485	6091	4721	7990
Total sales	1,695,807	1,985,705	1,945,965	1,841,124	1,931,498	2,061,296	1,940,098	2,033,005	2,196,456

*Australian Red Breed

herd — whether they identified those animals by genomic testing or herd testing or their own methods.

If the export heifer market was strong, people would be also more likely to use sexed semen in the middle portion of the herd.

Beef semen increasingly would be used over the bottom end of the herd.

"If you've got an Angus-cross Holstein or whatever, you can probably sell it to someone for \$200 at a week's age versus a \$40 straight Holstein

bobby calf," Mr Gillan said. This was also driving a trend of increased beef semen sales.

Breed

Holstein semen continue to dominate sales, accounting for 79 per cent. Jersey semen accounted for 14pc of sales, Australian Red Breed semen 3pc and Kiwi Friesian 2pc.

"Holstein continues to maintain its position and grow its use," Mr Gillan said. "That reflects much better avail-

ability of daughter fertility, health traits and survival traits, and genomics has been one of the key drivers to help that.

"Jerseys continue in a consistent position. The Aussie Reds, to their credit, they have grown even though they are quite a small what I call registered group but are actually quite a large commercial group."

These three breeds were all able to leverage off developments in other countries. D

Semen exports continue to grow

DAIRY semen exports from Australia continue to grow, according to the recently released Semen Market Survey 2018 report from the National Herd Improvement Association of Australia.

NHIA chairman Graeme Gillan said this was a reflection of hard work by Genetics Australia and Total Livestock Genetics in identifying and working to establish markets. "For us to be growing semen exports is a real credit because ... the breeding values of currency around the world are still the United States," he said.

"Developing these relationships internationally is really a long-term business arrangement that needs companies to invest in before they get returns."

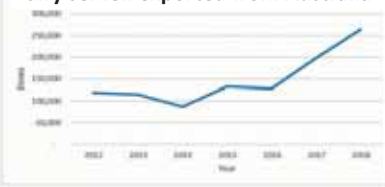
However, the international market did allow Australian companies to get more value out of bulls standing in Australia, particularly if those animals were not at full production capacity.

Mr Gillan said there was an opportunity for Australia to better promote the value of its dairy genetics.

"We undersell the genetic merit of our animals and their ability to perform in diverse environments," he said.

"I think that's one of the things as an

Dairy semen exported from Australia



industry we need to collaboratively work together to present — not only our genetics but our systems and how they can translate into other countries.

"We have yet to really do anything with heat tolerance into countries like Indonesia, Vietnam, and places like that where they have to work their way through managing cattle in hot and humid environments."

"We probably haven't done enough on our feed efficiency side of things to promote that."

Part of this involved not just selling bulls, but selling how the breeding values were developed and the system in which they operated.

New Zealand had been successful in doing that. "They sell a whole system when they go into a country in South America," Mr Gillan said.

"They don't go in there and just sell bulls. They go in and sell grass-fed low-cost management system and say by the way here's the genetics that work the best. And here's the breeding values that identify these genetics for you."

Mr Gillan said it was not about promoting a bull, it was a more holistic approach.

"Even though we are late into the market, I think Australia can be well positioned because we have a diverse environment, we have people who operate in different systems whether its low-cost pasture through to high-cost part-pasture part-intense management, and we have these animals that perform extremely well and they can go into these different environments," he said.

The Australian genetics industry could also leverage off the country's health status.

The export market would help grow the Australian genetics industry.

NHIA played a role in the export side by facilitating the discussion between the government, quarantine people and the industry. It was vital export protocols were based around science and not around trade protection, Mr Gillan said.

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Labor proposes milk floor price scheme

Key points

- ✓ Labor proposes minimum farmgate milk price
- ✓ Proposal short on detail
- ✓ Mixed reaction from dairy industry

By Mike Foley

A SHORTEN Labor Government will task the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission with testing the efficacy of a minimum farmgate milk price and to make recommendations on the best design options.

Labor believes government intervention is needed to save the dairy sector and dairy farmers and as such brought a motion to debate its policy for a dairy floor price to parliament in February. It was defeated.

It was doomed to fail on the numbers, but pursued by Labor in an attempt to create negative headlines for the Nationals.

Labor agriculture spokesman Joel Fitzgibbon said the dairy industry was “broken” because farmers and processors could not make sustainable returns, while supermarkets were generating marginal returns. “This is a national emergency,” he said. “It’s not an option to do nothing.”

Mr Fitzgibbon expects the policy would be implemented by an independent authority and implemented regionally, calculating a floor price above the production cost of milk in each district.

He said any Labor scheme would avoid the pitfalls of past experience with the wool price, which collapsed dramatically in the 1990s, and was based on a guaranteed purchase of a set amount of production.

“We will direct the ACCC to assess, test and design a scheme. We’ll be making it clear, we don’t want to hear why it’s difficult, we want to hear how we best make it work,” Mr Fitzgibbon said.

Agriculture Minister David Littleproud dismissed Labor’s floor price move as a stunt that had already been dismissed earlier in the year by the ACCC, in its review of milk prices. “It’s a cruel hoax to try and politicise the issue,” Mr Littleproud said.

The proposal was met with mixed reaction from the dairy industry.

Some of the biggest names in dairy processing were taking part in a panel

discussion at the Australian Dairy Conference the day after the policy was announced.

Bega Cheese CEO Paul van Heerwaarden said he’d spoken to Mr Fitzgibbon since the announcement and was concerned about how much thought had gone into the policy development.

Mr van Heerwaarden said Mr Fitzgibbon was keen to set a price based on the cost of production which he noted varied according to different milk systems, locations and seasonal conditions.

“If I talk to farmers up in northern Victoria, the cost of production at the start of the season when water cost 100 bucks and now its costing 550, the cost structure is changing within the year,” he said. “How do you practically set this?”

‘This is a national emergency. It’s not an option to do nothing.’

Norco chair Greg McNamara said industry needed to be more united in its approach to federal and state parliamentarians.

“How do we stop people racing off to government, and five different organisations turning up at parliament house and having a different view about what the industry does,” he asked.

“Presenting a paper to Joel Fitzgibbon around setting a floor price. Has the industry discussed it? We haven’t even had the conversation.

“How do we have those conversations internally and nut it out, so we all get a fair say in it but we actually present a proposition that actually makes value.”

Saputo chairman and chief executive officer Lino Saputo Jr said governments needed to “stay out of the way” when it came to markets.

He also said the terms of the proposal were vague, making it hard to pass judgement on the idea. “We will have to see what’s in the details of that to have a better definition of whether it makes sense or not,” he said.

“I can tell you that speaking to some dairy farmers, I don’t think that is going to solve the problem. That’s not really where the problem lies.”

Fonterra Australia managing director René Dedoncker is also concerned that Mr Fitzgibbon doesn’t understand the issue noting “he’s asking questions that are quite narrow”.

“And a floor price for farmers is interesting but only in the context of what does it mean for the whole value chain and he was buying into that?,” he said

Mr Dedoncker said he had been surprised to learn of Labor’s plan. “Regulation is a serious challenge and could change the face of the industry and not necessarily for the good,” Mr Dedoncker said. “My initial reaction was ‘it’s too hard, regulation is always bad’.”

ADF chief executive David Inall said the organisation was committed to working constructively through this proposal “because farmers are telling us that something must change to secure the future of the Australian dairy industry,” he said.

“We appreciate the recognition from the federal Opposition and other stakeholders, but there are no immediate or simple solutions to address all problems afflicting farmers.”

President of the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria (UDV) Paul Mumford welcomed the ALP’s acknowledgement that changes were needed in the embattled sector, but said his organisation would have to look over any proposals carefully before giving it their stamp of approval.

“We are pleased they see the need for change and that farmers are doing it tough at present, but equally, those with long memories will cast their minds back to the old wool floor price scheme, which did not go so well,” Mr Mumford, who farms in Gippsland, Victoria, said. “What we definitely don’t want is the wool floor price scheme 2.0.”

He said the UDV welcomed anything that boosted farmgate prices from current unsustainable levels, but said there were a number of regional nuances to work through..

Dairy Connect chief executive Shaughn Morgan welcomed the federal focus on the industry, but said he would hold judgement until more detail emerged. “The devil is always in the detail. We will welcome the attention on this issue, which acknowledges the market failure of the Australian dairy industry,” he said. **D**

One-stop shop for would-be manufacturers

Key points

- ✓ Online hub of information for manufacturers and exporters
- ✓ More than 200 webinars available
- ✓ Covers all areas in easily accessible format

DAIRY farmers looking to manufacture and export dairy products can now access a new one-stop-shop for the latest expert advice.

Dairy Australia's Dairy Manufacturing Resource Centre is an all-inclusive online hub containing the latest information and advice on manufacturing and exporting for current and prospective dairy manufacturers.

It aims to address the challenges that most commonly face dairy farmers seeking to enter the manufacturing or export sectors, including investigating government funding programs, keeping abreast of changes in legislation, or even co-ordinating training.

Dairy Australia program manager Ian Olmstead said a number of farmers had entered or considered entering the manufacturing space in recent years.

"The Dairy Manufacturing Resource Centre equips you with and directs you to the tools and knowledge you need to successfully make the jump into manufacturing," Mr Olmstead said.

The centrepiece of the Resource Centre is the Manufacturing Workforce Webinar series, an affordable subscription-based program of webinars featuring insights from global dairy experts.

A recent webinar focused on negotiating the supply chain maze to the benefit of the business, presented by US dairy farmer Zoe Brickle.

Subscribers also heard from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources's Phil Gollidge, who presented on Australian export codes and requirements.

More than 200 previous webinars from the past eight years are free to access and housed in a comprehensive learning centre, which also lists registered training courses and providers, as well as food safety information.

A resource library containing sus-



A number of farmers have entered or have considered entering the manufacturing space in recent years.

'The centrepiece of the Resource Centre is the Manufacturing Workforce Webinar series, an affordable subscription-based program of webinars featuring insights from global dairy experts.'

tainability reports, technical research studies, decision-making tools and insights from industry experts is easily accessible.

Also readily available are details of Dairy Australia's other manufacturing support initiatives, as well as advice on accessing manufacturing-related funding through national and state funding programs.

In an industry first, the website also contains Dairy Australia's *Are You Trade Ready?* and *Trade Ready China* online resource hubs, which bring together crucial information for manufacturers seeking to export Australian

dairy products for domestic and international markets.

With tools tailored based on manufacturing and export goals, *Are You Trade Ready?* includes a self-assessment questionnaire, which produces a PDF summary for the user to download and helpful links containing up-to-date information.

"These are in-depth self-assessment tools aimed at predicting what you know, and need to know, to get started in the export space," Mr Olmstead said.

Australian Specialist Cheesemakers' Association secretary Alison Lansley said she would not hesitate to recommend the Resource Centre to dairy farmers and manufacturers, however large or small their business.

"You need to be across a range of rules to enter the manufacturing area or the export area and a Resource Centre is so needed to help people go through the maze," Ms Lansley said.

"Any dairy farmer or cheesemaker or small to medium manufacturer will greatly benefit from these resources — to have something that guides them through the different processes and regulations at all different levels is invaluable.

"The *Are You Trade Ready?* section of the site is especially great because it pulls out virtually every issue that I can think of for those considering selling within Australia or exporting their dairy products."

The Dairy Manufacturing Resource Centre is now live and can be accessed online at <manufacturing.dairyaustralia.com.au>. Dairy farmers seeking advice on entering the manufacturing sector can contact Mr Olmstead at email <ian.olmstead@dairyaustralia.com.au>.

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Michael McNamara, Pecora Dairy, NSW |
| April 10: | Managing seasonal variations in cheese making
Paul Thomas, consultant, UK |
| May 1: | Key elements of aseptic packaging
Hilton Deeth, Emeritus Professor, University of Queensland |

Greater access unlocked to key market

Key points

- ✓ Thai Australia Free Trade Agreement improved
- ✓ Australia's seventh-largest dairy export market
- ✓ Allows dairy to improve position

AUSTRALIAN dairy farmers will have greater access to a key export market following significant improvements to the Thai Australia Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA).

The changes to the agreement will save Australian dairy exporters \$1.3 million in tariffs in the next two years, after Thailand increased special safeguard measures on products such as milk fat, whey and cheese, and expanded the tariff rate quota for skim milk powder.

Dairy Australia international market access manager Peter Myers said the changes to the agreement would make Australian dairy products more competitive and attractive to Aus-



In 2017/18, Australia exported 36,000 tonnes of dairy products to Thailand, worth more than \$130 million.

'This presents an exciting opportunity to increase exports of Australian dairy to the Thai market.'


tralia's seventh-largest dairy export market.

"This presents an exciting opportu-

nity to increase exports of Australian dairy to the Thai market," Mr Myers said.

"We have shown the Thai Government that we are a collaborative partner of the Thai dairy industry, and we look forward to continuing to enhance the trade relationship."

In 2017/18, Australia exported 36,000 tonnes of dairy products to Thailand, worth more than \$130 million.

The agreement will allow Australian dairy to maintain and improve its leading position in the Thai market by providing high quality, competitively priced dairy products to Thai customers and consumers. 

For more information on tariffs for key export markets, access Dairy Australia's Export Market Dairy Tariffs Guide at www.dairyaustralia.com.au/industry/exports-and-trade/dairy-tariffs.

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Trusted Dairy Industry



New campaign to lift trust

Key points

- ✓ New communications approach called Dairy Matters
- ✓ Aims to demonstrate an understanding of public expectations and values
- ✓ Dedicated website to provide answers to key consumer questions

front foot, and ensure that our consumers are exposed to credible and transparent information about the health of dairy and our commitment to doing the right thing as an industry.

"Our new approach to communications does exactly that — provide our most engaged consumers with information they need to make informed opinion of industry."

DAIRY Australia is leading the response to changing consumer expectations for the dairy industry and its products by launching a proactive new approach to communications this month.

The Dairy Matters communications approach will highlight the industry's values and standards and demonstrate an understanding of public expectations and values.

Dairy Australia's Glenys Zucco said the new approach moved beyond simply promoting dairy's nutritional value.

"The community's approval and trust is key to the long-term sustainability of the industry," Ms Zucco said.

"We know more than ever before consumers are exposed to a range of views on the health of dairy products and opinion of the industry.

"We need to be on the

Starting this month, Australians will see ads featuring three dairy farmers on their televisions, at the cinema and on the web, which promote the industry's values and commitments.

The ads will focus on core themes including environment, health and nutrition.

To support this advertising, a new website — dairymatters.com.au — has been developed to provide a central source of credible information about dairy.

The centrepiece of the new website is the 'You Ask, We Answer' functionality, which uses the latest research and expert opinions to answer questions about the issues consumers care about.

The website will explain why certain practices are used on farm, how farmers care for our animals, why dry conditions are affect-

Three ways farmers can support the campaign

- Visit the website at dairymatters.com.au.
- Like and share Dairy Matters Facebook posts.
- Keep in the loop with the local Regional Development Program.

Vital consumers understand what farmers do

GIPPSLAND dairy farmer Lauren Finger said Dairy Australia's new campaign was good news for farmers.

"The population is becoming more and more concentrated in the city, increasing the gap in understanding of where our food comes from and how it is produced," she said.

"These days, less and less people grow up on farms, so the basic things farmers take for granted need to be explained.

"It's really important that consumers understand what we as farmers do and how we do it — and even more importantly, why we do it.

"The industry's social licence to operate is essential — without it, we haven't got an industry, and I don't have a business."



Lauren Finger at her Gippsland dairy farm.


'The community's approval and trust is key to the long-term sustainability of the industry.'

ing farmers, and how farmers care for the environment.

It will address sources of confusion on dairy and health, and answer other frequently asked questions on farming, processing and products.

In addition to having access to readily available answers on a range of questions, consumers will be able to submit new questions.

The launch of the Dairy Matters communications approach and website will be accompanied by a comprehensive engagement program with key health influencers including dietitians and GPs, drawing from the latest consumer research.

Farmers can access Dairy Matters communications resource kits including key messages, channels and frequently asked questions through their local Regional Development Program from late March. 

Farmers can also access the website at dairymatters.com.au.

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Australia's finest products honoured



Receiving the Grand Champion Cheese award Tasmania's Lion Dairy and Drinks national business manager specialty cheese - industrial and international Chris O'Keefe, head cheesemaker Ueli Berger and national business manager Lisa Di Benedetto.

Key points

- ✓ Australian Grand Dairy Awards celebrate 20 years
- ✓ Mundella Foods Greek Honey Yoghurt Grand Champion Dairy Product
- ✓ Lions Dairy and Drinks King Island Roaring Forties Blue Cheese Grand Champion Cheese

AUSTRALIA'S best dairy and cheese products were announced at this year's Australian Grand Dairy Awards, held in Melbourne in January.

Celebrating its 20th year, the Australian Grand Dairy Awards (AGDA) are the most prestigious dairy awards in the country, highlighting the quality and excellence of Australia's best cheeses, ice creams, yoghurts, milks and butters.

Led by chief judge Russell Smith alongside a suite of cheesemongers

and technical specialists including guest judge, US-based specialty cheese buyer Mariah Christensen, the 12-strong judging panel critiqued more than 400 products across 18 categories to determine the finest Australian dairy produce.

In addition to naming 18 category champions, two grand champions were awarded for being the overall highest scoring dairy product and cheese on judging day.

Western Australia producer, Mundella Foods took home Grand Champion Dairy Product award for its Greek Honey Yoghurt, praised for being thick and creamy with the perfect balance of sweet, subtle natural honey flavour.

Mundella Foods's Fiona Loke said receiving the highest accolade at the 2019 Australian Grand Dairy Awards was a proud moment for Mundella.

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Champion Dairy Product is a testament to the hard working team we have at Mundella," she said.

"We're extremely proud of the Greek Honey Yoghurt and it's great to see it be awarded today."

Tasmania's Lion Dairy and Drinks was named Grand Champion Cheese for its King Island Dairy Roaring Forties Blue Cheese. Applauded for its beautiful network of blue, grey mould, it was the sweet, fruity flavours that give the cheese its distinct flavour that the judges loved.

Lion's head cheesemaker, Ueli Berger, accepted the award on the evening and said receiving the overall best cheese award was a great achievement for Lion Dairy and Drinks.

"This makes us and the team at Lion extremely proud," he said.

"We have won the Grand Champion award before and it means so much to the business, the team and the local community."

For the second year, the Australian Grand Dairy Awards also opened voting to the Australian public with a People's Choice Award. Queensland producer Maleny Dairies was recognised as the people's pick with their Farmer's Choice Non-Homogenised Full Cream Milk proving most popular.

Dairy Australia's Australian Grand Dairy Awards Convener, Alexandra Kury, commended the 2019 champions for their success during a difficult year.

"Congratulations to all of our award-winning products," she said.

"The dairy industry has recently been through challenging times, including significant drought, so to see such high-quality products across the board this year was phenomenal and a testament to Australian producers."

Table 1: 2019 Australian Grand Dairy Awards Champions

Award category	Producer	Product
VIC		
Fresh Unripened Cheese	Montefiore Cheese Aust	Montefiore Trecce
White Mould	Apostle Whey Cheese	Apostle Whey Cheese Southern Brie
Hard Cheese	Floridia Cheese	Floridia Cheese Pecorino Pepato
Goats, Sheep or Buffalo Milk Cheese	That's Amore Cheese	That's Amore Buffalo Ricotta
Natural Yoghurt	Jalna Dairy Foods	Jalna Biodynamic Organic Whole Milk Yoghurt
Ice Cream	Dooley's Ice Cream	Dooley's Premium Chocolate Ice Cream
Dairy Gelato	Fritz Gelato	Fritz Gelato Hazelnut
Butter	Fonterra Brands (Aust) - Cobden	Western Star Salted Butter
WA		
Semi-Hard Cheese	Dellendale Creamery	Dellendale Creamery Torndirrup Appenzelle
Flavoured Cheese	Dellendale Creamery	Dellendale Creamery Torndirrup Native Herb
Flavoured Yoghurt	Mundella Foods (Grand Champion Dairy Product)	Mundella Greek Honey Yoghurt
Milk	Parmalat Australia - Harvey Fresh	Harvey Fresh Farmhouse Gold Full Cream Milk
TAS		
Blue Cheese	Lion Dairy & Drinks - King Island (Grand Champion Cheese)	King Island Dairy Roaring Forties Blue
Washed Rind Cheese	Lion Dairy & Drinks - Burnie	Tasmanian Heritage Red Square
QLD		
Modified Milk	Barambah Organics	Barambah Organics Light Milk

The annual Australian Grand Dairy Awards recognise and reward excellence and quality in Australian dairy produce, paying tribute to the achievements of the highly-skilled specialists who develop and make these products.

The Australian Grand Dairy Awards are Australia's most prestigious national dairy awards and the highest accolade for Australian dairy producers.

Visit www.legendairy.com.au/dairyawards for more information.

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Search on for 2019 Legendairy Capital

Key points

- ✓ Nominations open for Legendairy Capital
- ✓ Finalists to be selected from each of eight regions
- ✓ Up to \$10,000 available for community projects

THE search is on again to find Australia's unsung dairy communities to recognise their contribution, hard work and community spirit, by becoming Australia's Legendairy Capital for 2019.

Dairy Australia's bi-annual Legendairy Capital program celebrates regional communities around the country by highlighting how dairy farmers and the industry contribute to their town, their community and the Australian economy.

Nominations are encouraged from regional communities across Australia's eight dairy regions to put their town in the running for up to \$10,000 in community grants.

One finalist from each of the eight regions will receive \$2500 to invest in a community project and one of those towns will then go on to secure the coveted title of Australia's Legendairy Capital 2019, receiving an additional grant of \$7500.

Dairy Australia community relations manager Natasha Busbridge said DA was excited to open the nominations for this year's program to honour and celebrate regional communities' strength and resilience and the vital contribution dairy farmers made to towns across the country.

"An integral part of our economy, Australia has a lot to be thankful for in its rural and regional communities and it is only fitting that they be recognised for their extraordinary contribution, particularly during the tough times that many farmers are experiencing," Ms Busbridge said.

In its third year, Dairy Australia's award-winning Legendairy Capital program was set up to showcase communities that are the epitome of the Australian spirit of mateship, loyalty and hard work.

"These characteristics are what pull rural and regional farming communities through when times are difficult," Ms Busbridge said.



DairyTas regional manager Jonathan Price presents the Legendairy award to Ringarooma dairy farmers Simone and Marcus Haywood.

'These characteristics are what pull rural and regional farming communities through when times are difficult.'


"We celebrate the resilience of Australia's dairy farming communities through the Legendairy Capital program. It's been another tough 12 months for the dairy industry, with extremes in weather as well as higher input costs putting many farmers under pressure.

"Despite this, we still see farmers continuing to support their communities and help create strong bonds that are the cornerstone of these small towns."

In 2017, Ringarooma in Tasmania's north-east was named the national Legendairy Capital and used their community grant to renew recreational areas of the Ringarooma primary school, maintain the town's defibril-

lator and start restorations on the schools historical dairy.

Locals from dairy regions, Gippsland, South West Victoria, the Murray region, Tasmania, NSW, South Australia, Western Australia and the Subtropical region are encouraged to nominate their communities for the prestigious title by telling their unique story of how their town is Legendairy.

Nominations open in April 2019. 

For more information on Dairy Australia's Legendairy Capital program, including how to nominate, visit dairy.com.au.

For information about the program, email Dairy Australia at legendairycapital@dairyaustralia.com.au.

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Dairy leads way toward sustainability

Key points

- ✓ Australian Dairy Industry Sustainability report released
- ✓ Shows marked improvement in key areas
- ✓ New targets reflect emerging issues

AUSTRALIAN dairy farmers and processors are setting their sights on a sustainable future after navigating difficult market and environmental conditions in recent years.

The latest *Australian Dairy Industry Sustainability Report* shows farmers are delivering on key goals as they work to improve the wellbeing and livelihood of dairy communities, provide best care for their animals and reduce their environmental impact.

Australian Dairy Industry Council chair Terry Richardson said the report highlighted the positive on-farm outcomes of the industry's Sustainability Framework.

"While it's been a tough few years on farm, dairy farmers are showing they are taking tangible steps toward sustainability in their farm operations," Mr Richardson said.

"Whether it's natural resource management, animal health and welfare, or farm business management, our Aussie farmers know how important sustainable farming is."

The report shows 81 per cent of farmers are safeguarding some of their land for conservation and biodiversity — up from 45pc in 2015.

More than one-third of farmers have created a formal biodiversity plan for their farm.

Dairy farmers are also working to make their farming operations more resilient and sustainable by reinvesting in on-farm projects and undergoing formal training.

Latest figures show 84pc cent of farmers have made investments in their operations such as cooling infrastructure for cows, fencing to protect waterways, energy and water efficiency.

At the same time, 57pc of farmers underwent training activities in 2017 to boost performance in areas such as farm safety, farm business management, herd improvement, pasture performance and animal nutrition — up



The latest Australian Dairy Industry Sustainability Report has been released.

from 29pc in 2014.

Now linked to both the Paris Agreement and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the report features revised targets to a 2030 timeline.

The positive figures from Australian dairy farms come as the Sustainability Framework's goals and targets have been reviewed to reflect changing expectations of consumers.

The new targets also reflect emerging issues, technological advances, and changes in the regulatory environment.

New goals related to anti-microbial stewardship, food waste and human rights have been added.

The latest Sustainability Report can be viewed at www.sustainabledairyoz.com.au.

Five things to do to make the farm more sustainable

1. Re-invest in infrastructure such as waterway fencing or energy and water efficiency systems.
2. Safeguard some of land for conservation and biodiversity.
3. Use the Dairy Carbon Calculator at www.dairyclimatetoolkit.com.au to identify potential greenhouse gas emission reductions.
4. Stay up-to-date with new industry standards for animal welfare.
5. Contact a Regional Development Program to take part in upcoming training sessions.

Burra Foods commits to long-term sustainability

GIPPSLAND-BASED dairy processor Burra Foods has entered into a large-scale Renewable Corporate Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Melbourne-based energy retailer Flow Power.

The deal will bring Burra Foods closer to meeting its energy efficiency goals, and give the business direct access to secure low-cost renewable energy for a 10-year period.

The renewable power, sourced from Ararat Wind Farm, is expected to deliver annual savings in excess of 20 per cent and can be used in real time to offset grid electricity consumption.

Burra Foods supply chain and manufacturing general manager Stewart Carson said Burra Foods had bold sustainability targets and had invested heavily in renewable energy solutions that fitted its usage demand.

"Partnering with Flow Power and sourcing a steady supply of clean, renewable energy is a major step toward our facility being powered by 100pc renewable energy," Mr Carson said.

"We remain committed to playing our part in sustainable dairy manufacturing."

Last year, Flow Power announced the availability of its Renewable Corporate PPAs, giving Australian businesses the opportunity to tap into a globally recognised trend that lowers energy costs and benefits the environment and economy.

During peak periods, Burra Foods can receive up to 1.5 million litres of fresh



Dairy processor Burra Foods is set to use more renewable energy.

farm milk for processing every day. The dairy manufacturer required an energy solution that would support its rigorous production schedule, improve its energy efficiency and provide price certainty.

Flow Power managing director Matthew van der Linden said: "We look forward to working with Burra Foods and are pleased to welcome them as a customer."

"Traditionally, the dairy industry is a heavy power user that requires a significant amount of power at all stages of the supply chain.

"This agreement will deliver secure

cost-efficient power for the long term, without compromising on Burra Foods's sustainability goals.

"Above all else, Australia's dairy industry needs cost-effective, sustainable energy. PPAs deliver this."

Renewable Corporate PPAs allow businesses to contribute to a lower carbon economy and reduce overall emissions, while potentially saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in energy costs.

Burra Foods has recently installed 600 square metres of solar panels — expected to deliver 2.4pc of its electricity needs.

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Dairy needs courageous leadership

- Key points**
- ✓ Dairy leaders urged to be courageous
 - ✓ Look to create the future they want
 - ✓ Understand the cost of not taking action

By **Carlene Dowie**

AUSTRALIA'S dairy industry leaders have been exhorted to step outside their comfort zone and be courageous to help tackle the industry's problems.

Global leadership expert and author Margie Warrell draws on her background growing up as one of seven children on a Gippsland dairy farm to explain how courage is at the core of transformational leadership.

Ms Warrell told the Gardiner Foundation's Australian Dairy Leaders' Luncheon in Melbourne in February that leadership was at the heart of all positive change in the world.

Anybody could effect positive change and be a leader, regardless of their position, formal authority, title or age.

"I think at the heart of your ability to lead the change and to adapt to the environment and to find the opportunity in what they call a very VUCA world — a world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity — is going to require courage," she said.

"Courage starts from the inside out."

Ms Warrell said leadership was not about what people did but who they were as people.

"Your ability to connect with other people, to get them to think bigger, to make it safe for people to share ideas, to build trust, to really tap into the potential of others, to build the collaboration, to get the ingenuity, all of that really comes from how you show up and how you connect," she said.

"And sometimes our fear of losing face, our fear of making a fool of ourselves, our fear of making a mistake, of not having what it takes gets in the way ... of us connecting with other people in that way."

Leadership happened on three levels.

The first was dealing with what was happening right now — and that needed to come from a position of listening.



Margie Warrell: anybody can effect positive change and be a leader.

"Good leaders ... take time to try to understand what is going on for those around them, and that's listening for both what's being said and also what's not being said," Ms Warrell said.

The next level was the future.

People needed to lift their eyes beyond the immediate "default future", one, two or five years from now, to the "invented future" or what might be possible in 10, 15, 20 or 25 years.

"The default future, that's what's probable, if you keep going on with the ways things were happening before," she said

"But really to create the change and to be able to find the opportunities in the changes that are afoot comes from what's the invented future we want to create.

"A leader who cannot inspire people with a vision that gets people on board towards something that they feel excited about is like a river without water — dry and depressing."

Leaders also needed to embrace the discomfort of change.

"All of us have a set of mental maps about how to get from point A to point B," Ms Warrell said.

"And it is based on assumptions and beliefs and past experiences and your own stories about what can and can't be done and your own biases.

"We are wired to always look for evidence that supports our way of seeing

things and likewise we are wired to defend our way of seeing things."

People needed to get comfortable with challenging how they saw things and become willing to take risks, even if they did not think it was going to work.

"The more often we do things that are uncomfortable for us, the less uncomfortable they become," she said.

By getting into the "courage zone", where they were willing to try new things, people could find the opportunity and innovate in an environment where there was uncertainty.

People often discounted the cost of not taking action.

"We are wired as humans to focus more on what could go wrong than what could go right," Ms Warrell said. "Actually there is a far bigger cost of sticking with the status quo than most people like to admit or to acknowledge."

Building trust was also critical to good leadership.

"Can people count on you to do the right thing and to trust you?" she asked.

"Do people know that you genuinely care about what they care about? That you've got their back?"

"That you would do and say what is needed to be said, even if you knew other people would find it hard to hear.

"You know anywhere trust is missing ... it exacts a steep hidden cost."

Ms Warrell said it was vital for people to develop a wide repertoire of skills

for dealing with situations and not fall back into approaching challenges the same way. People needed to understand the stories they told themselves about problems.

"So take a step back and say what is another way I can look at this because the story you are telling yourself about the problem may actually be the biggest part of that problem," she said.

"Because our stories create emotions — it may be that you are ambitious and you are excited and saying what can we create here.

"But maybe you are like there's no way out here, it is just not possible, it is impossible to deal with these people, I don't have what it takes, we are never going to get this happening.

"(If the story) is leaving you feeling resigned or resentful or hopeless, then that is getting in the way of taking other actions that could produce better outcomes.

"Take a step back and ask what's another story I can tell here."

'The more often we do things that are uncomfortable for us, the less uncomfortable they become.'

Ms Warrell said this also meant not focusing on the doors that were closing or closed but finding the open doors.

It was also vital to create a culture where those who might not see themselves as leaders or changemakers were encouraged to step up and lead.

"If everyone you know thinks exactly the same way as you think, you are missing out on a lot of people thinking differently or sharing opinions," she said.

"Make it safe for others to share and pushback and challenge — the best solutions don't come from everyone

thinking alike, they come from people having that sense of safety where they can speak up, they can challenge, and together you come up with better ideas."

Ms Warrell encouraged those in the room to think about what they could do individually and collectively to create change.

That was going to require an element of discomfort, of laying pride on the line and trying things where this wasn't a guarantee of success.

Gardiner Foundation chairman Bruce Kefford said the dairy industry always sought effective leadership, "probably more when things get tough".

"We have an industry in need," he said.

"This room has many of the leaders that the industry has to bring to bear, we have put in a pretty good effort but I think the effort we need now is greater and teamwork we need is greater and the conviction we need to follow that with is going to be greater too." **D**

Gardiner awards 7 tertiary scholarships

THE Gardiner Dairy Foundation has increased the number tertiary scholarships it awards annually from four to seven.

Three new scholarships in honour of the late Niel Black have been awarded to students in each of the major Victorian dairy regions. The four other scholarships are named in recognition of services to the dairy industry by Shirley Harlock, Jacob Malmo, Bill Pyle and Doug Weir.

Scholarships are awarded to students from Victorian dairy regions who are commencing study in 2019.

The 2019 Gardiner Dairy Foundation Tertiary Scholars are: Carley Einsiedel, Boisdale (Bill Pyle scholarship); Isabella McCluggage, Allansford (Niel Black scholarship); Jasmine McJames-Court, Pound Creek (Shirley Harlock scholarship); Lauren Brewer, Warragul (Doug Weir scholarship); Lauren McIlveen, Camperdown (Jacob Malmo scholarship); Olivia Betts, Granite Rock (Niel Black scholarship); and Sharna Hagendoorn, Cohuna (Niel Black scholarship).

Niel Black left a bequest to the Gardiner Dairy Foundation, part of which will support a tertiary scholar from each Victorian dairy region. Mr Black was involved in most aspects of the dairy industry. He was a pioneer of the herd improvement industry, a founding partner of Demo-



The seven scholarship recipients: Isabella McCluggage, Olivia Betts, Sharna Hagendoorn, Jasmine McJames-Court, Lauren Brewer, Lauren McIlveen and Carley Einsiedel.

DAIRY research centre in Terang and an advocate and supporter of the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria for more than 50 years.

Gardiner Dairy Foundation chief executive officer Dr Clive Noble said the tertiary scholarships supported the develop-

ment of young professionals who might not have had the opportunity to pursue higher education and who intended to bring their skills back to a dairy region in the future.

Applications for 2020 tertiary scholarships will open in August 2019.

Draft mandatory code released

Key points

- ✓ Draft mandatory code released for comment
- ✓ Requires processors to release standard form agreement on set date
- ✓ Will outlaw retrospective step downs

THE Federal Government released a draft mandatory dairy code of conduct in January, following consultation across all eight dairy regions last year.

Agriculture Minister David Littleproud said the draft code was released as part of a second round of consultation to ensure everyone was able to have their say. The second round of consultations was held via teleconference and in Victoria in February.

"A mandatory code will be an industry-defining moment so I want all dairy farmers, processors and stakeholders to stay involved in shaping it," Mr Littleproud said.



Damian Drum, David Littleproud and Anthony Peating on Mr Peating's Toolamba, Vic, farm during the first round of consultations on the mandatory code.

"Milk levies come and go but the mandatory code would help balance the market power between dairy

farmers and processors and improve farmers' bargaining power."

Mr Littleproud said the draft code

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ILANNE	142	\$26	\$22	137	112	115	92 Easy/Very Easy
CRASAT	137	\$25	\$20	104	111	112	91 Easy
LOGIN	135	\$24	\$20	119	112	105	91 Easy
LOTMAN	131	\$22	\$18	128	112	114	90 Normal/Easy
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would require processors to publicly release their standard form agreement on a set date each year.

"The code will also establish a dispute-resolution process, preventing unilateral changes to agreements, and outlawing retrospective step downs," he said. "The dairy industry called for

a code and we're getting on with delivering it with as much consultation as possible."

A Regulation Impact Statement has also been released for comment to refine assessment of the cost the code would have on farmers and processors.

The code would cover about 87 dairy processors and 5800 dairyfarmers with the voluntary code to remain in place as it is being developed. **D**

More information about the code and consultations can be found at haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/dairy-code-conduct.

Draft clauses for a dairy code — overview for farmers

OVER the past 20 years the Australian dairy industry has undergone a number of changes.

Deregulation and the decline of co-operatives as the main business model have led to a more competitive business environment for farmers. As a result, farmers face greater levels of risk and a weaker bargaining position in the supply chain. A code of conduct would set the rules between farmers and processors, and help to rebalance the level of commercial risk that farmers face.

Between October and December 2018 the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources consulted farmers, processors and other interested parties on what should be included in a new code of conduct for the dairy industry. Based on these consultations and the feedback received, the department has prepared draft clauses for a dairy code.

This article identifies key changes to industry practice that would be introduced through a dairy code.

Overview

A dairy code of conduct would apply to all farmers and first purchasers of milk, and cover agreements of any length. The draft clauses would lead to changes to industry practice including:

- Preventing unilateral changes to agreements (clause 6).
- Requiring that on a set date each year processors publicly release a standard form agreement that includes the minimum price (and a pricing mechanism for longer-term agreements) and covers the term of the agreement (clauses 17-21).
- Preventing retrospective price step downs (clause 22).
- Preventing arrangements with exclusive supply and two-tier pricing (clause 32).
- Prohibiting processors from withholding loyalty payments if a farmer switches processors (clause 47-48).
- Introducing a dispute-resolution process (clauses 56-57).

Standard form agreement

The requirement for all processors to release a standard form agreement and minimum prices at the same time would improve farmers' ability to compare prices

and conditions. A standard form agreement would benefit farmers by including a base offer they could accept or use to negotiate with processors.

The introduction of standard form agreements would not result in a requirement for farmers to operate under an industry-wide arrangement. Each processor would have their own standard form agreement and farmers could negotiate terms with processors. Clause 93 provides a list of clauses that could be covered by a code but would be open to negotiation.

Standard form agreements would be written in plain English and contained in a single document. This would consolidate content that is currently spread across multiple documents, such as a milk supply agreements and milk supply handbooks.

Under the draft code, farmers and processors would be required to have written agreements in place within a period of time of commencing supply. This period is yet to be determined.

Pricing

The code would require that agreements provide a minimum price for the first year, and for longer-term agreements a method for determining the minimum price over subsequent years of the agreement. This change would mainly affect longer-term agreements where farmers agree to supply milk for several years but are not advised of the price for the full agreement period.

A code would ban retrospective step downs. However, the department sought feedback on two proposed models for prospective step downs.

The first model would ban all prospective step downs that reduce the price to below the minimum price given in the standard form agreement. However, pricing changes occurring in multiple-year agreements would not be considered a step down as long as the processor continues to pay no less than the agreed minimum price. A processor could also provide a minimum price lower than that provided in a previous year as long as the price or mechanism used was clear when the agreement was entered into. This option would allow processors to continue to offer price increases during the agreement and provide greater certainty to farmers.

The second model would allow a prospective step down only in the event of a major change for a business, such as force majeure.

A code would allow farmers to supply multiple processors and prevent farmers from having exclusive supply arrangements with a two-tier pricing model. However, agreements could be negotiated to have exclusive supply arrangements.

Unlike previous practices, a code would not allow processors to withhold loyalty payments from farmers who switched processors.

Dispute resolution process

The dispute resolution process would support farmers or processors to address contractual issues that may arise, such as when either party has breached agreed contract terms. Costs for the dispute resolution process would be at a determined rate and each party would pay its own costs. A mediator or arbitrator would not be able to direct one party to pay the other's costs.

The Australian Consumer and Competition Commission (ACCC) would only become involved in disputes if a breach of the code may have occurred. The ACCC would assess alleged breaches and award penalties if allowed and relevant under the code.

Issues not addressed

Industry codes of conduct are used to manage the development and operation of contracts between two parties.

Some issues raised during consultations were outside the scope of a code of conduct and could not be addressed in the draft code. These include:

- Re-regulating farmgate prices.
 - Addressing pricing and contract arrangements between processors and retailers.
 - Addressing milk swaps between processors.
 - Developing multiple codes depending on geographic locations or whether processors supply domestic or export markets.
- Establishing an independent milk ombudsman to regulate aspects of the industry.

—Department of Agriculture and Water Resources



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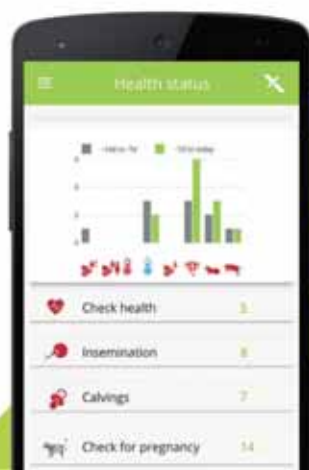
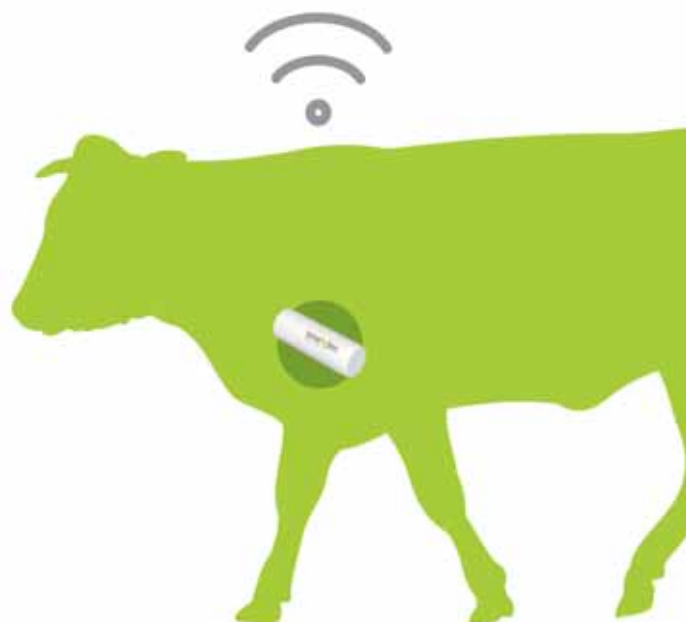
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Costs and season restrain confidence

- Key points**
- ✓ High input costs hitting milk production
 - ✓ Impacts area from Northern Victoria through to Queensland
 - ✓ Anecdotal evidence of more farmers exiting industry

By Alastair Dowie

THE Australian dairy industry continues to be at the mercy of high feed costs, water prices and seasonal conditions. National milk production is currently about 4.8 per cent below the 2017/18 season with areas hit by drought most affected and northern Victoria showing a fall of 22.6pc for December alone.

Figures announced in the Dairy Australia February *Situation and Outlook* report show the impact of rising feed costs and high cow culling percentages.

Dairy Australia senior industry analyst John Droppert said milk production levels were expected to deteriorate further as cost inputs bite.

Inputs were the key as hay and grain prices and irrigation water were expected to stay high for the balance of the year.

"It will take until late spring into summer, when the new crops of hay and grain are harvested, for a change," he said. "Until then there is nothing to disrupt prices, particularly for hay."

Mr Droppert said hay prices were expected to be more volatile due to large variations in hay quality.

Dairy Australia was now forecasting 2018/19 milk production to reach 8.45 to 8.65 billion litres, a fall 7 to 9pc relative to 2017/18.

The *Situation and Outlook* report said Queensland and New South Wales were expected to be hardest hit by the ongoing feed shortage and drought conditions.

Anecdotal evidence showed that the number of dairy farmers exiting the industry was higher than normal and culling rates were well up.

"Cow numbers are critical and these are expected to be down 5pc by

the end of the season," Mr Droppert said.

The *Situation and Outlook* report showed that global dairy markets were positive with growth in import demand in China of 3pc, Japan 5pc and south-east Asia 6pc.

Mr Droppert said global supply was partly balanced on the back of small increases in New Zealand, matched to Europe which was slightly lower.

He said commodity prices were "well supported" and that provided comfort when converted back to farmgate pricing — particularly at the current exchange rate of US72 cents.

The report said there was also growth in higher-value areas including flavoured milk, premium dairy desserts, cheese and dairy spreads.

Mr Droppert said anecdotal evidence showed confidence levels among dairy farmers were down, particularly in northern Victoria and north to Queensland. In Gippsland, levels were mixed depending on the season.

D





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Naturally ahead

Political fight erupts over basin plan

Key points

- ✓ Labor promises to remove cap on basin buybacks
- ✓ Proposal to hold more water in Menindee Lakes
- ✓ Both would mean less water for irrigators

By Mike Foley

BIPARTISAN support for the Murray Darling Basin Plan is drying up and the upcoming federal election presents a stark choice for the future of the \$13 billion reform to recover water from irrigation for the environment.

Political reactions ran hot in February following the release of the Labor-commissioned report on the Menindee fish kills, prepared by a panel from the Australian Academy of Sciences.

Labor environment spokesman Tony Burke said the scientific evidence showed significant changes were needed to the Basin Plan, including potentially a rewrite of its major feature, the water recovery target.

Federal Water Minister David Littleproud rejected Labor's position and backed the current form of the Basin Plan, which he said was due for completion by 2024.

Mr Burke said he expected the weight of evidence in the report, and others, would prompt the Murray Darling Basin Authority to review the volume of water available to irrigation across the basin — also known as the sustainable diversion limit.

"I would be astonished if the MDBA doesn't go with the latest scientific information available and work out if the sustainable diversion limits are indeed sustainable," Mr Burke said.

Mr Burke also pledged in February to remove the government's 1500-gigalitre cap on voluntary water irrigation buybacks, saying it would ensure the environment received its fair share of water under the Basin Plan.

The buyback cap was made as an amendment to Basin Plan by the Abbott government in 2015.

Mr Burke conceded that communities would be nervous about more buybacks, but argued they may be needed if efforts to return water to the environment fall short.

"By removing the cap we are making clear that if we end up having to provide more water for the rivers then



The Labor Party is proposing changes to the Murray Darling Basin Plan in light of problems in the Menindee Lakes, including fish deaths.

this will not be a barrier to being able to do that," Mr Burke told ABC radio.

"If you don't remove the cap on buyback, what do you do if the (MDBA) does end up recommending more water needs to be returned to the rivers?"

The Academy report recommended more buybacks from willing sellers of irrigation entitlement — including 70GL more in the Northern Basin.

Mr Burke backed these recommendation, despite Labor having last year voted with the Coalition to create new laws to reduce irrigation recovery in the Northern Basin by 70GL.

ANU professor and chairman of the Academy of Science's panel Craig Moritz said his review found that "there isn't enough water in the Darling system to avoid catastrophic outcomes".

"This is partly due to the ongoing drought. However, analysis of rainfall and river flow data over decades points to excess water extraction upstream."

The report called for changes to the legal status of northern water licences to enable new pumping embargoes on Commonwealth-owned environment water and for a new management regime for the Menindee Lakes.

It said Menindee should be re-engineered by an environmental-recovery strategy, with a minimum of 400GL held in reserve to insure against fu-

ture ecological disasters like the recent series of large scale fish kills.

The reserve strategy could result in more water for the environment and less for river towns in Queensland and NSW along the Barwon-Darling River. It would also mean the Southern Basin in Victoria and NSW would likely need to supply more water to meet the eastern states' commitments to SA.

To date, an interstate agreement has prioritised flows from Menindee to meet cross-border requirements. Putting the lake system into recovery mode would likely see more water from Hume and Dartmouth dams go to SA, making less available for irrigation.

Federal Water Minister David Littleproud said it was "deeply disappointing" that Labor had politicised water reform.

"Many findings and recommendations in this document are political, not scientific. It's a shame the Australian Academy of Science seems to have done the Labor Party's bidding and opened itself up to claims that he who pays the piper calls the tune," Mr Littleproud said.

"The recommendation to scrap the 1500GL cap on water buybacks is purely political. Scientists should not be concerned about how water is recovered; only how much of it goes down the system, when, and what en-

vironmental outcomes that produces.

"The Coalition continues to choose to recover water in a way which doesn't cost jobs, and clinched crucial agreement from all states on this is December 2018."

National Irrigators Council chief executive Steve Whan agreed with Mr Littleproud's assertion that drought had been the determining factor in the fish kills.

"The panel does acknowledge the impact of drought and management of Menindee Lakes," he said. "But, it seems to miss the fact that the Darling's NSW tributaries have experienced the lowest inflows in recorded history.

"For the last six months of 2018, the NSW Northern Basin rivers received inflows less than 1 per cent of the average for the 10 years prior.

"We also know that for the 10 years prior, 80pc of the inflows into those rivers stayed in the river and were not extracted. No irrigator has pumped anything on the Barwon Darling for more than a year."

MDBA executive director of science and knowledge Colin Mues said the agency would consider the Academy's

'Unfortunately, the shock move by the Senate to consider legislation to remove the 1500Gl cap on water buybacks provided in the Water Act, is just the start.'

findings, but argued the current form of the Basin Plan is addressing the need for more Northern Basin flows, which was identified by the report.

"The key (Australian Academy of Sciences) finding, that flows in the northern rivers needs to be improved, is exactly what the Basin Plan sets out to achieve," Mr Mues said.

"As noted in the AAS report, this is especially challenging during drought.

"Some of the Academy's recommendations are dealt with by actions that are already underway. For example, Basin governments are working together to plan for when the drought breaks to return sufficient flow in the Darling River."

Farmers are becoming more concerned about potential negative socio-economic impacts from the \$13 billion Murray Darling Basin reform, following Labor's announcement it would scrap the cap on water buybacks.

The National Farmers' Federation has launched a petition, which it will present to Labor and Greens representatives, who have committed to rewrite laws that limit the amount of water that can be recovered through voluntary buybacks by the Commonwealth.

NFF chief executive Tony Mahar said farmers were weighed down by the weight of "headline-grabbing, politically-motivated attacks" on farming by ill-informed politicians.

"We are asking farmers and basin communities to help us do this," Mr Mahar said. "One way is to sign the petition to let MPs and Senators know why a removal of the 1500Gl cap would be a disaster.

"Unfortunately, the shock move by the Senate to consider legislation to remove the 1500Gl cap on water buybacks provided in the Water Act, is just the start."



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Temporary bluetongue zone hits trade

Key points

- ✓ Temporary bluetongue zone around Echuca lifted in Dec 2017
- ✓ China bans heifers from the zone
- ✓ Limits sale opportunities

By **Jamie-Lee Oldfield**

A TEMPORARY bluetongue virus zone lifted in December 2017 is still restricting trade to China

from some Victorian properties. And a review into the program, which implemented a temporary exclusion zone 100 kilometres, around Echuca, Vic, is still underway.

The temporary was put in place in October 2017 after BTV antibodies were found in a mob of local dairy heifers, later found to have come from a permanent bluetongue zone in northern NSW,

but not declared by the producer. After a surveillance program by Agriculture Victoria, the zone was lifted in December of the same year.

The Federal Department of Agriculture said in February last year Animal Health Australia would review the National Arbovirus Monitoring Program, which monitors the spread of economical-important insect-borne diseases such as BTV. According to AHA "the report has been made available to the Steering Committee (National Arbovirus Monitoring Program Steering Committee) for their consideration, discussion and determination of next steps; it is not available publicly. The committee is scheduled to meet in March for their next steps."

Victoria's acting chief veterinary officer Dr Cameron Bell said: "Victoria is working with other jurisdictions and industry stakeholders to review national bluetongue virus surveillance and response protocols through the National Arbovirus Monitoring Program Steering Committee."

The Agriculture Department did not want to comment on the review.

With cattle producers 95km from Echuca having as recently as November had heifers refused export to China, the placement of the temporary zone is still a contentious issue.

Landmark International's Andy Ingle said it was unlikely the restrictions to China would be lifted anytime soon.

"Under the NAMP guidelines, the zone should be removed for China access after two years, which would be in late 2019 however it is highly likely that China may continue to simply state that the zone will remain in place for this market," he said. "The temporary bluetongue zone continues to severely limit available numbers of breeding Holstein heifers and as a result exporters are pushing business to the likes of New Zealand and South America to ensure supply of animals."

Mr Ingle said the negligence of the producer and agent providing incorrect information on the origin of the cattle, whether intentional or unintentional, had dramatically impacted exports for some producers. "Then the negligence of the Victorian DPI investigating this has resulted in approximately one-third of south-eastern Australia's dairy producers being locked out of a major source of income at a time of drought and challenging milk prices," he said. **D**



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The importance of your mental health

- Key points**
- ✓ Identify the support network
 - ✓ Communication is the key
 - ✓ Stay connected to avoid feeling isolated
 - ✓ Seek help

By Warren Davies
The Unbreakable Farmer

DAIRY farming can be a challenging business, with mounting business and seasonal pressures, focusing on how you are travelling as a person, and the state of your mental health can at times be neglected.

I understand this all too well. This was me, focusing on the day-to-day operation of my farm, I overlooked the steady decline in my mental health until it was nearly too late.

The harsh reality of being a dairy farmer become all too evident to me with the constant battle of economic pressures, commodity prices, water issues, flood and drought all had an impact on my young family, relationships and finances, but most significantly on my mental health, all culminating with a decision to leave our farm.

Generally, people living in rural communities are known for being resilient people, they face stressors caused by a range of factors such as isolation, weather, nature of their work and financial issues, which is why mental illness in rural communities is of major concern.

While the stigma associated with mental health problems is slowly reducing in Australia, in rural communities the stigma of "too tough to speak up" about your emotional and mental health is rife and the suicide rates are consistently 40 per cent higher than the rates in metropolitan areas.

'You need good mental health to help you get through life's challenges, to have healthy relationships with others and to enjoy life.'

Mental illness is made harder in rural communities with reduced access to local services and professionals. Additionally, people generally have feelings of embarrassment or fear to ask for help, so they manage their problems by themselves.

However, recognising when help and support are needed, either for yourself or for someone else, is very important.

I learnt four vital lessons from my journey.

- **Identify your support network**, the people who you love and trust and can call on for support when you are struggling to cope or simply need a chat.
- **Communication is key**, communi-

cating how you are feeling is hard and at times hardest with those who are closest to you. Having vital conversations can save lives.

- **Stay connected**, staying connected to your community and support network helps negate the feeling of isolation, especially when you are struggling. It also promotes conversation and gives you the opportunity to share and gain wisdom from those around you.

- **Seek help**, not always the easiest of steps, recognising the seriousness of a mental health challenge and the importance of gaining the right support can influence the rate of your recovery.

To normalise the conversation about mental health it needs a whole community approach to nurture a safe environment that removes the stigma making it more acceptable for people to seek help. This starts with awareness and education, followed by acknowledgement and action.

Your mental health is critical to your overall health and wellbeing. You need good mental health to help ►

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just reach out, it could make a huge difference in your life.

No one should travel their journey alone. 

Warren Davies: The Unbreakable Farmer

RESILIENCE, persistence and determination are the words to describe Warren Davies. Born and bred in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, Warren is the son of small business owners.

A leader throughout his primary school years, this confidence was eroded once entering secondary school, where he was subjected to bullying and not fitting in. His academic achievement began a downward spiral. This is where his skill of resilience was developed, a skill that would be called upon time and time again in future years.

In 1982 his family made the massive decision to move to the country and pursue his father's dream of becoming a farmer. This gave Warren an opportunity to reinvent himself. A direction, a career path: he was going to be a farmer.

Mentored by one of the best farmers in the district, Warren honed his skills and, by the age of 22, he had purchased his first farm.



Warren Davies is a keynote speaker and workshop facilitator, who learned hard lessons in life through his time as a dairy farmer.

The next 16 years were to be defining years for him.

The harsh reality of being a farmer soon became evident: high interest rates, low commodity prices, flood and

drought; all having an impact, but most significantly, was that on his mental health. These events all tested his resilience, persistence and determination and had a massive impact on his young family, relationships and finances all culminating with the decision to basically having to walk off the farm.

Although with his skills, work was easy to find, managing large-scale operations from Victoria to South Australia, it wasn't the same, he couldn't settle, he assumed that he had lost his identity because not only was the farm his career, it was his home, his life. In his eyes he had failed and carried the guilt of failing as a husband and father.

Being an avid reader of books he searched for a better way, he began the journey of piecing back together his life, but the road has been long. He now imparts his skills as a presenter and speaker and pays forward his unique stories, their moral relevant to everyone.

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 **PERFORMANCE FEEDS**

Domestic conditions remain challenging



By Sofia Omstedt
Industry analyst
Dairy Australia

Key points

- ✓ Challenging seasonal conditions in Australia
- ✓ Global markets remain balanced
- ✓ Australian milk production to be down 7-9pc for year

DESPITE the start of a new year, the stories in Australia's dairy regions remain the same. High feed costs continue to play havoc on drought-affected regions and Dairy Australia's recently released *Situation and Outlook* report shows that water costs continue to weigh heavily on farm profitability.

Overall input costs on dairy farms are likely to remain high for the balance of the year. While domestic conditions remain difficult, global markets offer slightly better news.

The strong New Zealand production season continued to weigh on global markets during the end of 2018. New Zealand experienced a favourable start to the 2018/19 season, with weather conditions across most dairy regions remaining supportive of pasture growth through the spring. For the (June to May) season to January, milk production is up 4.9 per cent on a volume basis. This contributed to a fall in prices of major dairy commodities.

From 2019, global markets have started to recover. The Global Dairy Trade (GDT) platform delivered price increases for the past six events, partly driven by a stronger demand from major markets.

Demand for dairy has grown in the past year in China, Japan, south-east Asia and in the Middle East and North Africa region. Greater China (PRC, Macau and Hong Kong) is home to close to 30pc of the world's dairy exports.

In 2018 dairy imports to China remained subdued, which impacted global commodity prices for major dairy products. Combined with only

Key dairy price commodity indicators



a modest growth in local milk production, stocks of dairy in China has started to run low.

Towards the end of 2018, China re-entered the dairy market and increased purchases of dairy products. In 2019, China is forecast to be an active buyer on the world market and looks set to partly absorb some of the extra supply available this year.

'What is certain is that need for a timely and effective autumn break this season cannot be overstated.'

The most notable development on global markets has been the disposal of the European stockpile of skim milk powder (SMP). This has helped to improve global commodity prices as it has removed a key downside influence overhanging the market.

Worth noting is that most traders are cognisant of the fact that the product has been sold more quickly than it is likely to be consumed. Hence, much of the product has simply moved from public to private balance sheets.

Nonetheless, recent sales have been at progressively higher prices, and fresh SMP prices are also moving up, to the point where SMP and butter are currently offering better returns than cheese. The impact of reduced SMP stock overhang and increased butter production are clear on the graph.

Domestically demand for dairy remains stable. While sale volumes only grew modestly over the past 12 months, sale values increased more. Healthy growth in higher value sub-categories, such as flavoured milk, premium dairy desserts and probiotic yoghurts, drove value growth for these major categories.

Cheese sales continued to expand and butter sales grew 0.9pc in the past 12 months, marking the first increase in sales volume since the global butter price rally.


Limited feed and water availability in combination with high temperatures and limited rainfall will further impact milk production this year. Australian milk production has continued to lag 2017/18 levels, tracking 4.8pc lower for the current season to December.

The year-on-year gap has increased as the season progresses, with December intakes down 7.8pc compared to December 2017.

Dairy Australia's forecast for 2018/19 milk production has been updated to reflect the continuing challenges on-farm. The current forecast is for a national decrease of between 7pc and 9pc relative to 2017/18.

Global demand is improving and looks set to balance global markets in the months to come.

When and if any improvements in global markets will translate to a better domestic outlook is still unclear.

What is certain is that need for a timely and effective autumn break this season cannot be overstated. 

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A FERTIGATION trial in south-east Queensland for the past two years has shown it produces more pasture and cuts labour and fuel costs.

The trial compared a fertigation system — injecting water-soluble fertiliser through the farm's centre pivot irrigation system — with a broadcast nitrogen application system.

The project was undertaken in the 2017 and 2018 ryegrass seasons at McInnes Brothers 500-hectare dairy farm at Harrisville, Qld.

A centre pivot irrigation system was used to compare fertigation against traditional broadcast methods of applying nitrogen fertiliser to a grazed and irrigated annual ryegrass pasture.

One-quarter of the pivot area was fertilised after each grazing with Easy N liquid fertiliser and one quarter was fertilised with broadcasted urea for a comparison.

The Easy N was bought in 1000-litre shuttles for the trial and applied using an EcoDose fertigation system injector pump. Irrigation agronomist Pat Daley, from Daley's Water Service Pty Ltd, provided the advice and support for the purchase, installation and use of the fertigation system.

Soil moisture monitoring equipment (EnviroPro SDI 12 unit with a tipping bucket) was installed in each quarter to monitor irrigation and rainfall.

Pasture dry matter yield was measured before and after grazing, and results indicated that the fertigation quarter produced slightly more feed on offer.

Fertiliser, irrigation and rainfall events were recorded.

Benefits of the fertigation system included labour and fuel savings, in addition to savings on repairs and maintenance of machinery.

The liquid fertiliser was immediately available to the plants and could be distributed more evenly (provided the irrigation system had an even distribution uniformity) compared with granular fertilisers.

Table 1: Pasture Yield Summary

	2017 Aston		2018 Jackpot	
	Q3 Fertigation	Q4 Broadcast	Q3 Fertigation	Q4 Broadcast
Pre-graze yield (kg DM/ha)	24795	24609	20550	19580
Post-graze yield (kg DM/ha)	15585	16250	10790	10760
DM Intake (kg DM/ha)	9110	8359	9760	8820
DM Growth (kg DM/ha)	11460	10539	11460	10500
Av. Growth Rate (kg/ha/day)	61	54	75	67
Irrigation (mm applied)	335	313	371	349
Total fertiliser cost (\$)	\$2192*	\$1367	\$1881*	\$1356

*Bulk Easy N price (\$786/tonne in 2018; \$516/tonne in 2017)

Table 2: Summary of set-up costs for fertigation (shuttle vs bulk storage)

	1000L shuttle (ex GST)	Bulk storage (ex GST)
Pump and fittings	\$2900	\$2900
Installation of power point	\$150	\$150
Consultants time to design, obtain quotes, organise	\$300	\$300
Pipes, fittings associated with bulk storage unit		\$500
Purchase of bulk storage tank (22,946 L)		\$3863
Set-up Cost	\$3350	\$7713
Cost of each shuttle (1000L, ex GST) In addition there is a refundable deposit of \$440 per shuttle	\$795 (ex GST) 2017 \$896 (ex GST) 2018	
Cost of bulk load of Easy N (19,000L, ex GST)		\$516 (ex GST)/1000L 2017 \$786 (ex GST)/1000L 2018

Table 3: Comparison of labour costs

	2017	2018
Q4 Broadcast		
50 minutes to load and spread urea	\$167.50	\$145
(a) Over whole pivot/season	\$670	\$580
Q3 Fertigation		
20 mins/new shuttle + 5 mins/fertigation event	\$67.50	\$45
(b) Over whole pivot/season	\$270	\$180
Labour Savings TOTAL (a) – (b)	\$440	\$400

Applying smaller amounts more often enabled a more optimum growth rate, and liquid fertilisers aren't as volatile, reducing potential losses to the atmosphere.

In times of extended wet weather, a spreader might still be required to avoid unnecessary irrigation applications (and for application of nutrients other than nitrogen).

Observations made during the project included:

- The EcoDose fertigation pump was relatively inexpensive to purchase.

- The fertigation quarter was less labour intensive than the broadcasted quarter.

- Managing the soil moisture profile with the assistance of soil probes was effective.

- Grazing management is a key factor of a cost-effective ryegrass season.

- Getting the right advice upfront when considering fertigation should ensure that the right size injector unit is purchased.

- Soil testing before planting high-►

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Measuring pasture dry matter yield using the C-DAX machine



The EcoDose injector unit.



Participants of the field day held in October 2018.

- lighted potassium deficiencies, if not corrected there may have been an adverse effect on pasture growth.
- No detrimental effects were observed to applying nitrogen through the pivot, smaller amounts of nitrogen were applied regularly as opposed to one big application.
- A comparison of the true cost of each option demonstrates that buying in bulk (setting up a bulk storage tank holding 19,000-litre) will generally be more labour efficient (and more cost effective in years when the bulk purchase price of Easy N is significantly cheaper compared to the shuttle price).

About the McInnes farm

The McInnes farm comprises mostly irrigated crops and pastures. The dairy herd, which supports 500 milkers, is split into two herds, the “fresh herd” and “stale herd”.

The fresh herd is fed a partial mixed ration on a feedpad. The PMR

comprises silage, grain mixes, cotton seed, brewers grain and hay. The herd also grazes ryegrass during the cooler months, and if seasons are favourable, grazes summer pastures or legumes.

The stale herd grazes pastures throughout the year and is supplemented with a mixed ration once or twice per day, depending on the season and herd numbers.

Pasture production is mainly ryegrass in the winter months. A range of pastures and crops are grown as conserved feed to supply the PMR ration, including corn, barley and lucerne, in addition to some ryegrass silage. Other legume crops are grown in the summer to be grazed such as cow pea.

Irrigation comprises of two centre pivots on the home block, with areas of 18ha and 12ha, with the remaining blocks irrigated by soft hose travellers. Water is sourced from Warrill Creek.

About the trial

The 18ha annual ryegrass grazing paddock allocated to the fresh herd with a 56-metre centre pivot was used for the trial.

In the cooler months it is planted to a straight ryegrass sward. One quarter of the pivot area (Q3) was used for fertigation (Easy N) and one quarter (Q4) used for broadcasted granular urea. Each quarter was 4.52ha in area.

It was important that the irrigation system had a good distribution uniformity (DU) so as to ensure the evenness of water and nutrient application. An irrigation systems check was preformed prior to the project, and the DU was deemed to be greater than 90 per cent.

The farmers opted for a liquid fertigation system (as opposed to a soluble system) due to convenience and ease of use. The EcoDose injector pump fertigation unit was purchased, at a cost of \$2900 (excl GST), and installed at the centre pivot site.

This unit uses a positive displacement plunger pump with variable speed motor to give precise doses of nutrients proportional to the flow rate. A controller allows the operator to easily dial up the required flow rate (litres per hour) and it will immediately adjust the speed of the pump.

As part of the trial a reference guide of injection rate per hour was developed for different application rates, which allowed for injection rates to be altered as per irrigation scheduling needs.

Results of the trial

A comparison of weather data for the two years of the trial indicated average rainfall and a milder winter in 2017 compared with 2018.

In 2018, less rainfall was received, and minimum temperatures were noticeably lower, particularly during the winter months, where there were many more mornings below zero as compared with the previous year.

Interestingly, in spring and early summer, minimum and maximum temperatures were much higher in 2018, which contributed to an earlier finish to the ryegrass season, with the final recorded grazing occurring in mid-October, a month earlier than in 2017.

A total of eight ryegrass grazings were recorded in 2017 compared with seven grazings in 2018. The initial grazing in each year was in June.

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- ◀ Days between grazings varied from 18 to 26 days.

A comparison of dry matter production showed that the fertigation quarter provided more feed on offer than the broadcasted quarter.

In 2018 this difference was 970 kilograms of dry matter/ha and in 2017 the difference was 186 kg DM/ha. Interestingly, the cumulative DM growth for the season was exactly the same for the fertigation quarter in both 2017 and 2018. For the broadcasted quarter, a difference of 39kg DM/ha was recorded for cumulative DM growth when comparing the two years.

Utilisation was higher in 2018, at 47 per cent and 45pc respectively for Q3 and Q4. In comparison, utilisation in 2017 was 33pc and 37pc respectively. While not significant, the fertigation quarter had higher daily growth rates (not including the first grazing) in both years.

A greater volume of irrigation water was applied to the trial site in 2018, reflecting the drier winter conditions experienced. A comparison of the fertigation and broadcasted quarters indicated that a greater vol-

ume of water was applied to the fertigation quarter in each year. Fertiliser costs varied; in 2017 the bulk Easy N price was noticeably lower than the following year.

See Table 1 for a summary of pasture yields.

Set-up costs for the fertigation system are summarised in Table 2. Although more expensive to set up, use of the bulk storage system was found to be more cost effective over time.

A record was kept of the labour utilised to fertilise both the fertigation and broadcasted quarters. This information is detailed in Table 3. Fertigation saved labour resources in both years of the trial. This labour saving would be reduced even further with a bulk tank setup.

The trial showed that there were no detrimental effects to pivot hardware by applying nitrogen fertiliser through the system. Also, managing the soil moisture profile with the assistance of soil moisture probes was shown to be an effective means to manage irrigation.

The importance of obtaining specialist advice before installing a fertigation system to maximise the bene-

fits derived from improved nitrogen use efficiency was a key outcome of the trial. Precision is paramount and it is important that the irrigation system is operating at optimum water use efficiency. The initial set up of dosing systems requires somewhat complex calculations but once established, the system is very easy to use.

The results of the fertigation on-farm demonstration highlighted in a practical sense the on-farm and off-farm benefits of improved nitrogen use efficiency. Such benefits warrant further scientific investigation with more replications over a longer trial period.

In 2017 the project was funded through the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme, and in 2018 was funded through the Dairy and Fodder Water for Profit program. The project was delivered by the Dairying Better 'n Better program, a joint initiative of Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation and Subtropical Dairy, with support from the Dairy and Fodder Water for Profit program.

Methods of fertigation

FERTIGATION is the injection of fertilisers, soil amendments and other water-soluble products through an irrigation system.

There are many different ways of applying fertiliser via a fertigation system. This article provides an overview of the different methods available.

Best practice design is one that allows flexibility of concentration rates. This is important in cases of potential soil saturation. It is also desirable to have a system that gives precise doses of nutrients proportional to the flow rate.

It is very important that the irrigation system uniformity is at optimum. The same will apply with traditional broadcasting.

Injection system designs vary and some of these designs are considered out-of-date practices.

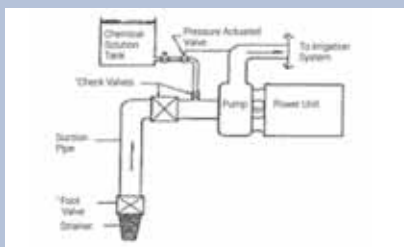
Batch Mixing: A common design is the batch type mixing that is very low cost but is not proportional to flow and has little to no control over the injection rate. A drum or tank is filled from the discharge side of the irrigation centrifugal pump. The bottom of the drum or tank has an outlet pipe that is connected to the suction side of the pump. The desired kilograms of fertiliser is mixed in the drum or tank prior to opening the outlet valve. For example, 20 kilograms may be mixed to irrigate 1ha of area. (This will over time damage the irrigation pump.)

Venturi Style: A similar method to

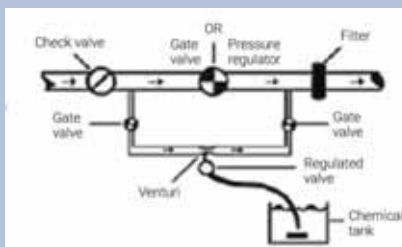
this is the use of a venturi-style injector, which requires a differential in pressure either created by a bypass valve or a pump. This method is difficult to manage as the differential can change depending on the irrigation location at any given time.

Positive Injection: Positive injection or dosing is the preferred option. It allows for greater control of dose rates. It gives the option of using liquid nutrients or soluble nutrients. It is also easily automated which can allow for clean water flushing.

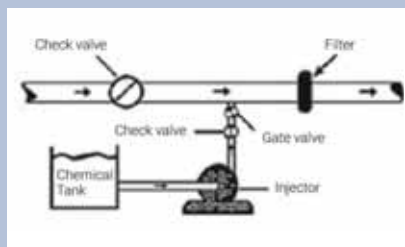
This information is from a fact sheet developed by Pat Daley from Daley's Water Service in conjunction with the Dairying Better 'n Better team as part of the Let the Benefits Flow Project.



Batch Mixing



Venturi style



Positive injection



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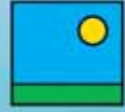
Dry sowing can be successful when conditions are right and the break is looking to come late. A little pre-planning and knowledge is all it takes. Our Territory Managers can assist with pasture varieties and dry sowing advice to ensure the best result and to maximise home-grown feed right across the season.



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Finding pasture management's holy grail

Key points

- ✓ Different approaches to managing and measuring pasture
- ✓ Need to understand advantages and limitations of each



By **Marian Macdonald**

PERFECTION in pasture management is the holy grail of dairy farming: getting it right is both incredibly important and difficult to achieve. *Australian Dairyfarmer* spoke to experts in the field about the latest developments and the pros and cons of different approaches.

Creator of the Feeding Pastures for Profit course Phil Shannon said his approach reflected the practicalities of managing pasture as a key component of feeding cows profitably.

Pointing to Tasmanian research released last year that showed only a minority of farmers used tools such as plate meters to measure grass, Mr Shannon said it made sense to offer other ways to address key questions.

"A priority farm manager question is: 'How do I put the strip fence in the right place and know how much supplement to feed the cows on a daily basis?'," he said.

While acknowledging that Feeding Pastures for Profit did have a focus on leaf counting, Mr Shannon said more recent participants were advised to concentrate on understanding canopy closure.

Pasture allocation is based on visual




Under Feeding Pastures for Profit, pasture allocation is based on visual observations of pasture growth rates and factors likely to affect future pasture growth.

observations of pasture growth rates and factors likely to affect future pasture growth.

"If you are on the correct rotation today, but better growing conditions (longer days, more moisture, warmer weather and so on) are forecast, the rotation should be adjusted," Mr Shan-

non said. "Historic growth rates or leaf appearance rates can be used as a guide but how often are two seasons the same?"

Mr Shannon recommends the "Body of Evidence" process to determine how much supplementary feed cows were offered.



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Changes in supplement levels were tested by visual observations and any milk response.

"If you're allocating a consistent amount of pasture each grazing (a key aim of Feeding Pastures for Profit) and you know the amount of milk you're producing and the amount of supplement you're using, then a quick back calculation will give you a more accurate idea of how much pasture the cows are eating," Mr Shannon said.

"The back calculation is based on scientific research that describes the herd requirement.

'As farms grow, it's becoming more and more important to have good pasture data without tying up skilled individuals on weekly paddock walks.'

"The rough old rising plate meter is a good tool but, while plenty of farmers own one, the percentage who physically take one out into the paddock and use it as part of their decision process is pretty low.

"There are concerns about accuracy, too. There aren't many people around who can calibrate and use a plate meter well.

"The plate meter is a useful tool for those that can use it with confidence but Feeding Pastures for Profit offers an alternative method that delivers a

very similar result. It provides farmers with choices."

While back calculations are common practice, research fellow at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) Pieter Raedts said they did have their own limitations.

"Back calculations are a good tool but no algorithm can replicate what is happening on farm exactly," Mr Raedts said.

"Back calculation doesn't correct for changing bodyweights and you won't know whether the cows have finished grazing because they are satiated or they have depleted the grass in the paddock, for example.

"It is very difficult to have an accurate measure using any method, so my advice is to accept that it's not an exact science, understand the pros and cons of different techniques and find something that you're comfortable with."

Instruments towed behind a quad bike that measure pastures were an alternative for farmers who like the concept of plate metering but struggled to incorporate them into their routines.

"Plate metering is cheap but time-consuming," Mr Raedts said. "Tow-behinds are quicker but costlier and you still need to travel through the pastures."

"They measure compressed or uncompressed height of the grass and specific equations are used to estimate from that how much grass is in the paddock.

"These equations vary depending on pasture species and paddock conditions."

Mr Raedts said the next wave of pasture management technology was

already being introduced on farm. Optical sensors fitted to drones or deployed on satellites had the potential to make pasture measurement less labour intensive.

"While these methods can be faster, for leaf stage and canopy closure you still have to look in the paddock," Mr Raedts said.

"Put simply, optical sensors use imagery to estimate the amount of biomass, commonly using NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index) or 'greenness' of the pasture.

"That can be a problem. NDVI is ►



Instruments towed behind a quad bike that measure pastures are an alternative for farmers who like the concept of plate metering but struggled to incorporate them into their routines.

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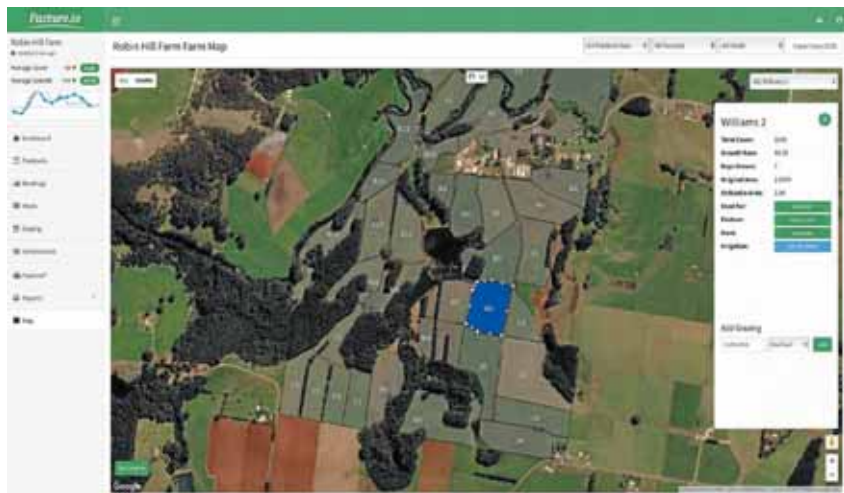


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known to lack accuracy in our dairy pastures, particularly when the biomass exceeds 2500 kilograms of dry matter per hectare due to saturation.

"They can also be unreliable if conditions are not ideal, such as when only some areas the paddock have shadow from clouds and, if you are relying on

a satellite, optical sensors can't see through cloud at all."

While Mr Raedts was unaware of any ready-to-use drone technology for measuring pastures, new software using satellite imagery had been released.

Developed in Tasmania specifically for dairy pasture management, Pas-

ture.io offers readings based on more frequent, higher resolution images than had been available.

Pasture.io's CEO, Ollie Roberts, agreed that relying on NDVI readings alone was flawed.

"Satellite imagery using NDVI without a complete feedback loop will overestimate low covers and underestimate high covers," Mr Roberts said.

"We use red, green, blue and near-infrared light spectrums from the satellites, NDVI, EVI, LAI and SAVI, among 27 calculated indices.

"These are combined with meteorological data and farm records to create much more accurate and reliable pasture measurements.

"The results are constantly ground-truthed, so the system continually improves itself.

"I've used plate meters and tow-behinds for years and, while both of them have a role to play, they are time-consuming and challenging to use reliably on anything other than ideal pastures.

"As farms grow, it's becoming more and more important to have good pasture data without tying up skilled individuals on weekly paddock walks." **D**

Plate meters and satellites for Greenacres

A COMBINATION of traditional plate metering and pioneering satellite technology is the key to pasture management on a Tasmanian farm where absolutely every blade of ryegrass counts.

James Greenacre is currently milking 980 cows on 210 hectares under pivot irrigation at the farm he manages in Cressy, where the average annual rainfall sits at about 600 millimetres.

"At the moment we are milking five cows per hectare and feeding three kilograms of grain per cow per day so pasture is very important," Mr Greenacre said.

Rather than observing leaf emergence rates, Mr Greenacre uses growth rates, average pasture covers and seasonal conditions to determine rotation length.

"With plenty of urea, I'm finding we're approaching canopy closure before the 2.5-3 leaf stage," he said.

"I have been maintaining a shorter rotation length and shorter pre-grazing (2600 to 2800kg dry matter/ha) but now that we are hopefully through the reproductive phase, I will be trying to push out to grazing at around 3000kg DM/ha on a 25-to-28-day round."

Mr Greenacre uses a rising plate meter on weekly farm walks and had been recording the results in the Pasture Coach software.



James Greenacre and farm owner Rob Bradley.

Six months ago, he switched to the Tasmanian-developed Pasture.io program and began matching the plate meter results with satellite data.

Feeding plate meter results into Pasture.io helped to calibrate the algorithms that interpret the satellite information to suit the unique characteristics of the Cressy farm.

During that time, Mr Greenacre has seen a steady improvement in the accuracy of the automated readings. The plate meter and satellites now routinely return results within 50 to 80kg DM of each other.

"The system continues to learn from you so, going forward, I expect this discrepancy to become less and less," Mr Greenacre said.

"While I'm still doing the weekly pasture walk across all of the paddocks, I hope to get to the point where I can just use the satellite data and check it by pre-and-post-graze plate-metering a few paddocks every few days to make sure what I am measuring correlates to what the satellite is saying.

"During busy times, like calving, I could minimise pasture walks for a couple of weeks.

"In the long run, it is possible that satellite technology could do away with the need to plate meter altogether even though I like taking the dogs for a walk and seeing the farm on foot."

Mr Greenacre is also using the Pasture.io system to track and schedule fertiliser applications, generate a real-time pasture wedge and produce a grazing plan for team members.

"Pasture.io is great and you can do more and more with it but it's a tool rather than a silver bullet," Mr Greenacre said.

"It relies on you feeding good information into it (like pasture walk information and grazing events) but if you do this it can provide you with a lot of helpful information."

—Marian Macdonald



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James Clyne has completed Dairy Australia's Feeding Pastures for Profit twice to finetune his pasture management skills.

Careful management helps farm grow

Key points	✓ Completed Feeding Pastures for Profit course twice	
	✓ Uses Excel spreadsheet to plan pastures	
	✓ Electronic pasture monitoring system	

By Jeanette Severs

JAMES and Erin Clyne, Newry, lease a farm, attached infrastructure and herd from his parents, Alan and Christine, in an arrangement based on a family meeting 15 years ago.

At that time, Alan and Christine Clyne underwent estate planning

with their children, with the result that the next generation benefitted from becoming owners of their own farms and Alan and Christine could plan for retirement.

James and Erin are on a five-year lease, in partnership with Alan and Christine, with a transition plan to full ownership for July 2021. "My role, as well as farm manager, is to work with Dad for five years, learning the ropes," James said.

He and Erin lease the 230ha farm and own separately an additional 75ha. They employ four fulltime milkers. They also have a permanent six-month backpacker role — this person also milks and is responsible for

some heifer rearing.

The farm is situated in the Macalister Irrigation District, with a 1500 megalitre August-to-May irrigation right, supported by a swamp, which is filled in May and provides water for growing pasture during the winter, and a 130ML bore.

Some 30ha is dryland, 80ha is supported by pivots and other sprinkler irrigation and the balance is flood irrigated. The bore runs one pivot and some sprinklers on 30ha.

Soils are a mix of river alluvial soils and deep loam soils, laying over clay. The country has a historic issue with bloating, so clover is excluded in the pasture mix. ►

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Calves are raised on the main property until weaning.



The Clyne composite herd calves 50:50 autumn:spring.



James Clyne aims to feed his herd up to 14kg of grass a day.

◀ Prairie grass is endemic to the area. “The soil is very fertile for setting prairie grass seed,” James said.

“From autumn to December, it’s milking-quality feed, but after that it turns rank. In peak spring, we have to graze every 15 days to control it.

“Prairie grass is such a strong competitor, I figure I might as well work with it. So I sow ryegrass to bulk it out.”

The 30ha dryland is sown to annual ryegrass pastures, while the rest of the farm is oversown perennial ryegrass pasture.

In spring 2018, James oversowed ryegrass into 120ha and, with 100 per cent irrigation for a couple of months, the growth was phenomenal. He also sowed 4ha of millet for grazing, but has not seen the benefit, after the crop turned up its toes at the first summer heatwave.

In early January this year, James sowed 10ha of maize and contracted 20ha maize — aiming to harvest 25 tonnes/ha wet silage on the farm and

‘I assess all paddocks visually to see if I agree with the electronic data.’

18 tonnes/ha off the contract block — into pits in autumn.

With a good early growing season, the annual pasture bulked and he harvested 260 round bales, slightly below his target of 300. Last summer, he harvested 150 bales, so is showing steady improvement. He also harvested 450 tonnes of grass silage, the same as spring 2017.

“I try to get as much hay as possible and I’m still learning how to get a good hay yield,” James said.

James has completed Dairy Australia’s Feeding Pastures for Profit twice, firstly seven years ago and then two years ago.

“For me, that course was important,” James said. “I use the principles to help manage pastures.”

He utilises an Excel spreadsheet to record day-to-day grazing, with colours to indicate paddocks where spraying, irrigation and grazing is occurring.

He also has an electronic pasture-measuring system attached to the motorbike and he rides that through the paddocks to gather data. That is followed by pasture walks.

“I assess all paddocks visually to see if I agree with the electronic data,” James said.

“Under the pivot, growth is quicker. In the flood paddocks, growth is slower. What’s the saying — if you don’t measure it, you can’t improve it. This is all about using data that helps with decision making.

“I use the pasture-measuring data to feed my cows grass — in peak spring, that’s 14kg grass/day.

“I also use Rumenate — I start at 15 litres and go up to 40l. I also supplementary feed what I’m comfortable with — for me, it’s 3-10kg, from the bottom to the higher producing cows, but they still go out and eat 14kg of grass.

“I extend the rotation and put silage into the fodder mix when the pasture cover is below 2500 (kg of dry matter a hectare), for a few weeks in a row.”

The farm’s 50-unit rotary dairy platform includes automatic cup removers and yield-sense and cell-sense monitors. The monitors provide milk (in litres), fat and protein percentages and cell count on each cow’s production.

“We installed them as soon as we started,” James said. “At that time, we were milking 700 cows, so the cost was quite equitable against herd testing.”


The herd has since grown to 1000 cows, with an expected increase to a 1050-head herd in May this year.

“I have more data and the cost of installing the sensors was spread over five years,” James said. “With 300 more cows, now, the cost has been minimalised.

“I use the data to feed to production, using a 10-day rolling average; the cows get fed based on it.

“I haven’t herd tested in 2.5 years and I love every second of it.”

The composite herd calves 50:50 autumn:spring. All heifers are bred to artificial insemination to Jersey, with all heifer progeny kept.

The spring heifers are agisted from weaning to point of calving; the autumn heifers are raised to point of calving by Alan on a 40ha outblock. 



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Chicory thrives on SA farm

Key points

- ✓ Chicory better suited than lucerne to acid soil
- ✓ Responds well to summer rains
- ✓ Vital source of summer feed



By Alisha Fogden

CHICORY is thriving at Parawa, South Australia, helping the Williams family get their dairy cows through the long, hot summer.

Angus Williams said they began growing the tap-rooted perennial herb about five years ago after successful FP Ag trials on their dryland farm.

"Where people may use lucerne, chicory is more suited to our acid, iron-stone soils," he said.

"When our permanent pasture paddocks get a bit old and weedy, we put chicory in, to help us manage weeds and add to our productive season."

Past trials in the district have shown chicory responds well to summer rains to provide out-of-season feed and grows a comparable amount of feed (5-7 tonnes of dry matter a year) to other dryland pasture types.

It also competes well against summer broadleaf weeds and can re-establish for up to four years.

The Williams family sows chicory in spring and grazes it a few times during summer, depending on rainfall.

"Chicory has become very important in our feed program to help fill the summer feed gap," Mr Williams said. "We continue to grow more every year."

The 600-hectare Williams Family Dairy comprises about 700 milkers, mainly Holsteins with some cross-breeds, plus young stock.

Mr Williams said they had been lucky this season because while it had been drier at Parawa, their paddocks were still very productive.

"We received about 200mm less rain than average, but still had normal yields for our hay and silage, mainly oats, and grass production has been good," he said.

Mr Williams said growing a number of different silage crops had been beneficial, instead of relying on pastures alone.

"We have had a few timely summer rains," he said. "We would have normally had to source hay by now, which has been expensive and hard to get."

"We should have enough silage up



Tap-rooted perennial herb chicory at the Williams farm.



Dryland pastures are the bulk of the dairy cows' diet.



Bill Thredgold share farms one of the dairies with Angus Williams.



Williams Family Dairy's Angus Williams and partner Katrina McCullough with children Finn, 14, Coell, 12, Briege, 9, and Rhun, 11.

our sleeve to get us through to the break, but if we don't get a normal opening to the season, it could become a problem."

Saving on feed costs will become critical in the next few months as hay and fodder supplies continue to dwindle with the dry conditions.

"If we have to start buying hay and grain, we may end up cutting production back a bit, depending on the economics," he said.

Mr Williams said processors should be starting to take note, as the high cost of feed and other costs like electricity could result in more dairyfarmers leaving the industry.

"The buyers of milk should recognise that we are not going to be able to produce at the same rates as we currently are if they keep paying the bare minimum for our milk," he said.

The operation has been sharefarmed the past two years, following Angus Williams taking a step back from the day-to-day activities to undergo cancer treatment.

Mr Williams and partner Katrina McCullough still oversee the operation, while the two dairies on-farm are sharefarmed by Bill Thredgold and Jason Steinborne, who manage the milking of cows and day-to-day activities with assistance from seasonal workers. 

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Western dairy researchers Peter Hutton (left) and Jessica Andony (right) meet with dairy farmer Matt Brett (centre) on Matt's farm at the site of the 2018 pasture trials, Dardanup WA.

Maximising pasture when season is short

Key points	✓ Including a fast-growing pasture species can boost ryegrass pasture production	
	✓ Trials reveal better performing varieties	
	✓ Grazing at the right time delivers results	

PASTURE is the key component of the dairy feedbase in Australia and Western Australia is no exception. The growing and grazing season for pasture in WA is typically from May to November and pasture is conserved mainly as silage in the spring months.

Annual ryegrass dominates the market because perennial ryegrass does not generally survive the dry summer and the majority of the dry-land farms must be replanted each year.

The work by Western Dairy is focused on how farmers can maximise pasture production and utilisation in the relatively short growing season.

A trial site was set up at Matt Brett's farm at Dardanup, in the WA dairy region, a couple of hours drive

Table 1: Indexes for Milk Production Potential (MPP \$/ha) for commercial seed lines sold by major seed distributors in WA and grown at Dardanup in 2018.

Seed	MPP \$/ha			Seed company	Brand/variety	Type and Ploidy	Heading time
Control fresh	232				Brand	Annual tetraploid	Early
Control 2018	0				Brand	Annual tetraploid	Early
Abundant	-6			Irwin & Hunter	Variety	Annual tetraploid	Mid
Amass	-10			Landmark	Variety	Italian tetraploid	Late
Hogan	-66			Heritage	Variety	Annual tetraploid	Late
Attain	-176			Landmark	Variety	Annual tetraploid	Mid
Astound	-263			Landmark	Variety	Annual tetraploid	Early/Mid
Concord II	-264			PGG Wrightson	Variety	Italian diploid	Late
Vortex	-290			Heritage	Variety	Annual tetraploid	Mid
Ascend	-668			PGG Wrightson	Variety	Annual tetraploid	Late

south of Perth (see Figure 1).

The trials and demonstrations in 2018 included:

- A seedmix trial of oats and ryegrass for early season production.
- A grazing management demonstration affectionately called "the Goldilocks trial", to show the effect of getting the grazing "just right".
- The second year of the WA seed performance trials (WASP). The trial site also included the testing of annual and Italian ryegrass lines for the Pasture Trial Network.

Seedmix trial

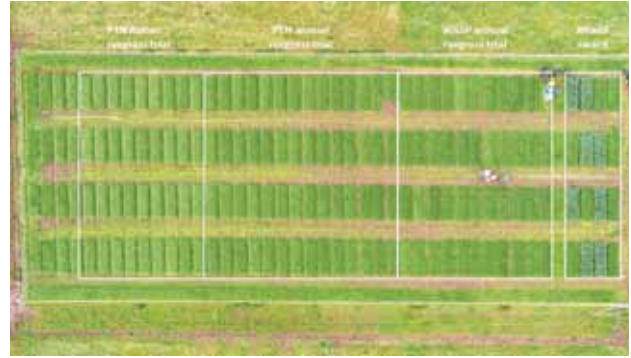
The seedmix trial looked at the question of whether an oats/ryegrass mix improved early season yields and persisted over the growing season.

Forage oats can be used in a pasture program to provide early season feed but have a shorter growing period than annual ryegrass.

A mixture of forage oats and annual ryegrass allows the strengths of one to cover for the weaknesses of the other to give a more even distribu-



Figure 1. The August harvest of the Western Dairy pasture trials at Matt Brett's farm at Dardanup, WA.



A drone map of the West Australian Seed Productivity trials site.

tion of forage throughout the season.

In this trial, researchers included oats in a ryegrass mix to increase the early season dry matter production; and used a higher rate of ryegrass in an oats mix to increase the total season production relative to a lower seeding rate. They found that the oats/ryegrass mix increased the early season yield by nearly 700 kilogram of dry matter per hectare over the ryegrass monoculture (Figure 2).

They did not observe any increase in yield from a higher seeding rate whether it was in the seed mix or in

the ryegrass monoculture. The work highlighted that it can be worth including fast-establishing pasture species in a ryegrass mix to chase early season production without compromising total season production.

The researchers plan to do more pasture trials in 2019 that will test a range of early-season species such as high-performance forage oats and ryecorn in a ryegrass mix.

WA Seed Performance trials (WASP)

The WA Seed Productivity trials

(WASP) were developed by Western Dairy to provide farmers with the power to decide what ryegrass is best for their system. The distinguishing features of the WASP trials are:

- Real time yields that are available on the Western dairy website.
- A productivity index called the Milk Production Potential (MPP). The MPP (\$/ha) compares ryegrass seed for its potential value to the farm business.

This is the second year of the WASP trials and this year the seed companies were on board to make the trials bigger and better. It is a terrific initia- ►



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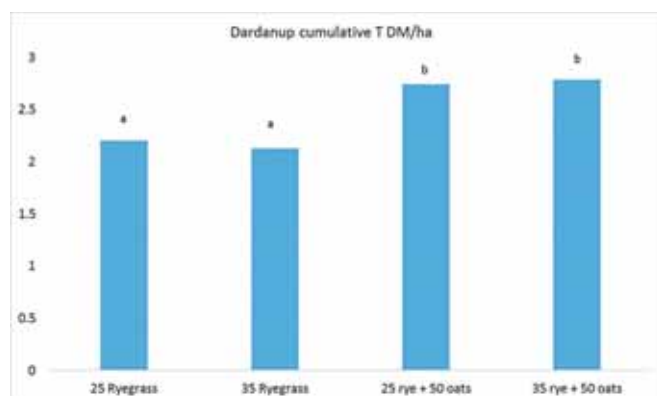


Figure 2: Early season yield (cumulative of two harvests) of annual ryegrass and oats seed mixes (kg per ha). Columns with no common letter superscript differ significantly.

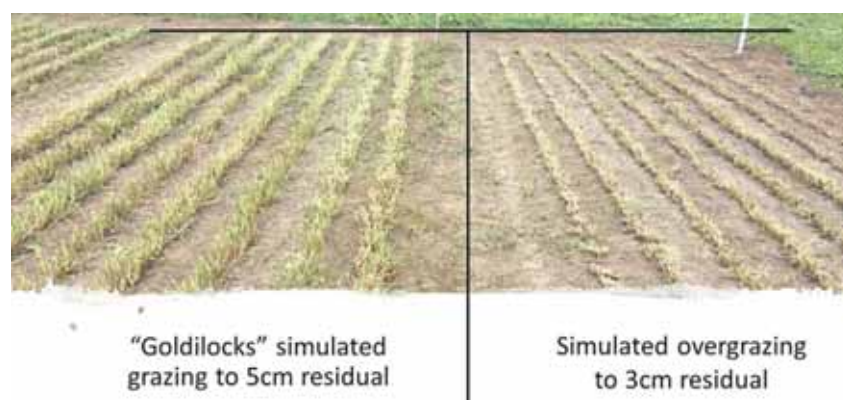


Figure 3: “Goldilocks” simulated grazing (left) produced plants with adequate stem residual to maintain higher production relative to overgrazing (right).

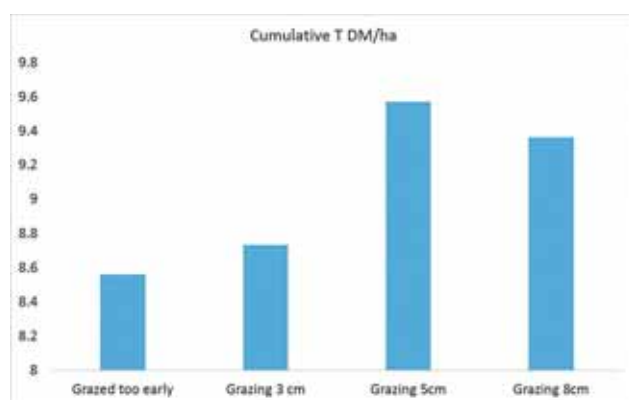


Figure 4: Simulated overgrazing and grazing before the 2.5 leaf stage early in the season reduced dry matter yield over the 2018 growing season.

◀ tive that is producing some relevant information to the WA industry.

The significance of these trials is that Western Dairy can present results from independent and unbiased trials in what is a highly competitive and commercial seed industry.

The MPP \$/ha is calculated as a value relative to Control 2018. Control 2018 is indexed as \$0/ha and all other lines have a positive or nega-

tive index compared with it. The MPP calculation takes into account: energy yield (dry matter x metabolisable energy); energy requirements for milk production; milk price; feed utilization; and sowing costs. Email <peter.hutton@westerndairy.com.au> for details.

Seed lines are ranked by highest to lowest MPP and indexes are significantly different when they do

not share a common coloured bar (see Table 1). For example, in Table 1 Control fresh is significantly higher than Hogan but Abundant is not significantly higher than Hogan. Control fresh is the same ryegrass brand as Control 2018 but will be purchased each year to compare with the Control 2018 seed.

“Goldilocks” grazing


In 2018 researchers put into action the well-researched advice on best grazing management. The Project 30:30, which was overseen by Dairy Australia, identified ideal grazing management to maximise pasture yield and utilisation under rotational grazing.

Ideal grazing is between the 2nd and 3rd leaf stages, no more than 25 per cent of area experiencing canopy closure and results in a post-grazing residual of 4-6 centimetres. Leaving a post-grazing residual of 4-6cm optimises pasture productivity, nutritive value and persistency without limiting the intake by milking cows.

The research explains how to get grazing “just right” but researchers looked at the effect on production if grazing management is a bit off. They nicknamed the demonstration the “Goldilocks Effect” because they simulated overgrazing (residual of 3cm), undergrazing (residual of 8-9cm) or getting it just right (grazing at 2.5-3 leaves and a residual of 5-6cm). Researchers also included a treatment called “grazed too early” to simulate what can happen after a late break in the season, when pasture is immature, but conserved feed is in short supply. In this plot, the initial simulated graze was at the 1.5-leaf stage and a residual of 3cm with subsequent grazings to a residual of 5-6cm.

The simulated grazing at 2.5-3 leaves to a 5cm residual over the season produced (see Figure 4):


- One tonne more of dry matter per ha compared to when the first grazing was too soon. Grazing too early in the season places stress on the plants that sacrifices later yields.
- 0.85t more dry matter per ha compared to overgrazing to a 3cm residual. Overgrazing depletes plants of carbohydrate reserves in the leaves and roots resulting in a slower recovery

This was a demonstration that did not have the robustness of a scientific experiment. However, the results support the findings of well researched work that advocates for getting grazing management “just right”. 

Plantain potential to reduce emissions

Key points

- ✓ Plantain reduces nitrous oxide emissions in autumn and winter
- ✓ Effect in summer opposite
- ✓ Further research needed



USING an alternative plant type like plantain in grazed pastures could help lower a farm's greenhouse gas emissions, AgResearch scientists in New Zealand have found.

The scientists, with funding from the New Zealand Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Research Centre (NZAGRC), set out to compare emissions of the potent greenhouse gas, nitrous oxide, from soils containing different types of forage — perennial ryegrass, white clover, plantain and lucerne — over different seasons at a dairy farm in New Zealand's Waikato region.

Agricultural soils, and the urine deposited by grazing animals, are the main source of nitrous oxide emissions globally and are a major con-



Incorporating plantain into grazed pastures could be an approach to reducing emissions.

tributor to greenhouse gas emissions resulting from human influence.

"A significant finding from this study was that in autumn and winter, nitrous oxide emissions were 39 to 74 per cent less where plantain was planted, compared to perennial ryegrass," senior scientist Dr Jiafa Luo said.

"Lucerne also saw lower emissions compared to the ryegrass in winter and autumn, but smaller reductions than

in the case of the plantain. In summer, we found emissions from the plantain and lucerne were actually higher than the ryegrass, which is something that needs to be explored further."

Dr Luo said previous studies had shown plantain could reduce the amount of nitrogen excreted in the animals' urine, however in this latest study the same urine type (from animals fed ryegrass and white clover) was applied to all of the plant types tested.

"So other factors may be involved, and one may be that plantain releases biological nitrification inhibitors into the soil which reduce the nitrous oxide emissions," he said.

"What this research tells us is that incorporating plantain into grazed pastures could be an approach to reducing emissions. However, we do need to do further work to examine the process by which the emissions are reduced, and how this is impacted by different conditions across the different seasons."



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- Late heading
- Good second year production in favourable seasons
- Ideal for high-quality silage and hay production

Forage Value Index — overall rankings

See website dairyaustralia.com.au/FVI for more detailed seasonal rankings in each region

Legend	
Headings	Description
Cultivar	A plant variety that has been produced by selective breeding. Cultivars are as listed as on the Australian Seed Federation Pasture Seed Database.
Colour Bars	Cultivars with the same colour are not significantly different from each other. Select from any of the cultivars in the green bars.
FVI	The rating is based on the outcome of economic and performance values for each cultivar.
Seasonal Performance	A performance value is based on the difference in dry matter production between a cultivar's seasonal performance and that of Victorian ryegrass. This is a percentage ranking – percent better or worse than Victoria ryegrass.
Autumn	March/April/May
Winter	June/July
Early Spring	August/September
Late Spring	October/November
Summer	December/January/February
Endophyte	A fungus which protects plants from a range of insect pests. Different types of endophyte affect persistence, dry matter production, insect pest species and nutritive value in different ways.
Ploidy	The number of chromosomes per cell in a plant. A diploid ryegrass has two while a tetraploid ryegrass has four.
Heading Date	The date when 50% of the plants of a variety have emerged seed heads in a typical year. Heading dates are as listed on the Australian Seed Federation Pasture Seed Database.
Marketer	The company marketing the cultivar.
No. of trials	To be included in the Forage Value Index database, each cultivar must have data from at least three three-year trials.

Tasmania — Forage Value Index														
Cultivar				FVI Tas	Autumn	Winter	Early Spring	Late Spring	Summer	Endophyte	Ploidy	Heading Date	Marketer	No. of trials
Base AR37				159	115	115	100	96	110	AR37	Tetraploid	Late	PGG Wrightson	7
Bealey NEA2				149	112	115	100	96	113	NEA2	Tetraploid	Very Late	Heritage Seeds	8
One50				136	113	116	99	95	110	SE	Diploid	Late	Agricom	4
Fitzroy				117	107	110	104	96	106	SE	Diploid	Early	PGG Wrightson	5
Kidman				110	108	113	101	96	106	AR1	Diploid	Early	Heritage Seeds	3
Kingston				104	110	113	98	97	107	SE	Diploid	Mid	Agricom	3
Matrix - Festulolium				103	107	115	98	96	110	Unknown	Diploid	Late	Cropmark Seeds	3
Ansa				103	107	115	99	95	107	AR1	Diploid	Mid-Late	Pasture Genetics	3
Extreme AR37				103	111	114	98	95	105	AR37	Diploid	Mid	PGG Wrightson	5
Halo AR37				101	113	113	95	93	112	AR37	Tetraploid	Late	Agricom	7
Banquet II Endo5				89	109	111	98	95	109	Endo5	Tetraploid	Late	PGG Wrightson	8
Endure				87	107	111	100	97	105	SE	Tetraploid	Mid	Vicseeds	4
Arrow AR1				69	103	107	101	98	107	AR1	Diploid	Mid	Heritage Seeds	8
Barberia				66	101	109	102	97	104	Nil	Diploid	Early	Heritage Seeds	3
One50 AR1				65	105	104	98	96	107	AR1	Diploid	Late	Agricom	5
Avalon AR1				55	105	110	97	98	106	AR1	Diploid	Mid	Vicseeds	4
Revolution - Festulolium				36	103	109	97	95	106	AR1	Diploid	Late	Seed Force	5
Ohau AR37				35	105	104	98	96	107	AR37	Tetraploid	Mid	Agricom	3
Impact 2 NEA2				28	105	103	97	97	108	NEA2	Diploid	Late	Heritage Seeds	7
Helix - Festulolium				8	101	106	97	95	103	AR1	Diploid	Mid	Cropmark Seeds	5
Victorian				0	100	100	100	100	100	SE	Diploid	Early	Many	7

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For more information see Website: dairyaustralia.com.au/FVI

Forage
Value
Index



Gippsland — Forage Value Index

Cultivar		FVI Gipps	Autumn	Winter	Early Spring	Late Spring	Summer	Endophyte	Ploidy	Heading Date	Marketer	No. of trials
Base AR37		183	115	115	100	96	110	AR37	Tetraploid	Late	PGG Wrightson	7
Bealey NEA2		180	112	115	100	96	113	NEA2	Tetraploid	Very Late	Heritage Seeds	8
One50		158	113	116	99	95	110	SE	Diploid	Late	Agricom	4
Matrix - Festulolium		130	107	115	98	96	110	Unknown	Diploid	Late	Cropmark Seeds	3
Fitzroy		127	107	110	104	96	106	SE	Diploid	Early	PGG Wrightson	5
Halo AR37		125	113	113	95	93	112	AR37	Tetraploid	Late	Agricom	7
Kingston		122	110	113	98	97	107	SE	Diploid	Mid	Agricom	3
Kidman		122	108	113	101	96	106	AR1	Diploid	Early	Heritage Seeds	3
Ansa		117	107	115	99	95	107	AR1	Diploid	Mid-Late	Pasture Genetics	3
Extreme AR37		111	111	114	98	95	105	AR37	Diploid	Mid	PGG Wrightson	5
Banquet II Endo5		109	109	111	98	95	109	Endo5	Tetraploid	Late	PGG Wrightson	8
Endure		100	107	111	100	97	105	SE	Tetraploid	Mid	Vicseeds	4
Arrow AR1		89	103	107	101	98	107	AR1	Diploid	Mid	Heritage Seeds	8
One50 AR1		82	105	104	98	96	107	AR1	Diploid	Late	Agricom	5
Barberia		76	101	109	102	97	104	Nil	Diploid	Early	Heritage Seeds	3
Avalon (+AR1)		72	105	110	97	98	106	AR1	Diploid	Mid	Vicseeds	4
Ohau AR37		50	105	104	98	96	107	AR37	Tetraploid	Mid	Agricom	3
Revolution - Festulolium		49	103	109	97	95	106	AR1	Diploid	Late	Seed Force	5
Impact 2 NEA2		46	105	103	97	97	108	NEA2	Diploid	Late	Heritage Seeds	7
Helix - Festulolium		10	101	106	97	95	103	AR1	Diploid	Mid	Cropmark Seeds	5
Victorian		0	100	100	100	100	100	SE	Diploid	Early	Many	7

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Forage
Value
Index



Dairy
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South West Victoria — Forage Value Index

Cultivar		FVI Sth West Vic	Autumn	Winter	Early Spring	Late Spring	Summer	Endophyte	Ploidy	Heading Date	Marketer	No. of trials
Base AR37		157	115	115	100	96	110	AR37	Tetraploid	Late	PGG Wrightson	7
Bealey NEA2		156	112	115	100	96	113	NEA2	Tetraploid	Very Late	Heritage Seeds	8
One50		137	113	116	99	95	110	SE	Diploid	Late	Agricom	4
Halo AR37		116	113	113	95	93	112	AR37	Tetraploid	Late	Agricom	7
Matrix - Festulolium		114	107	115	98	96	110	Unknown	Diploid	Late	Cropmark Seeds	3
Kingston		107	110	113	98	97	107	SE	Diploid	Mid	Agricom	3
Kidman		100	108	113	101	96	106	AR1	Diploid	Early	Heritage Seeds	3
Fitzroy		98	107	110	104	96	106	SE	Diploid	Early	PGG Wrightson	5
Banquet II Endo5		97	109	111	98	95	109	Endo5	Tetraploid	Late	PGG Wrightson	8
Ansa		97	107	115	99	95	107	AR1	Diploid	Mid-Late	Pasture Genetics	3
Extreme AR37		94	111	114	98	95	105	AR37	Diploid	Mid	PGG Wrightson	5
Endure		84	107	111	100	97	105	SE	Tetraploid	Mid	Vicseeds	4
Arrow AR1		75	103	107	101	98	107	AR1	Diploid	Mid	Heritage Seeds	8
One50 AR1		73	105	104	98	96	107	AR1	Diploid	Late	Agricom	5
Avalon AR1		67	105	110	97	98	106	AR1	Diploid	Mid	Vicseeds	4
Barberia		58	101	109	102	97	104	Nil	Diploid	Early	Heritage Seeds	3
Ohau AR37		48	105	104	98	96	107	AR37	Tetraploid	Mid	Agricom	3
Impact 2 NEA2		48	105	103	97	97	108	NEA2	Diploid	Late	Heritage Seeds	7
Revolution - Festulolium		45	103	109	97	95	106	AR1	Diploid	Late	Seed Force	5
Helix - Festulolium		10	101	106	97	95	103	AR1	Diploid	Mid	Cropmark Seeds	5
Victorian		0	100	100	100	100	100	SE	Diploid	Early	Many	7

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Forage
Value
Index



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Cultivar	FVI Nth Vic	Autumn	Winter	Early Spring	Late Spring	Summer	Endophyte	Ploidy	Heading Date	Marketer	No. of trials
Base AR37	131	115	115	100	96	110	AR37	Tetraploid	Late	PGG Wrightson	7
Bealey NEA2	126	112	115	100	96	113	NEA2	Tetraploid	Very Late	Heritage Seeds	8
One50	104	113	116	99	95	110	SE	Diploid	Late	Agricom	4
Fitzroy	89	107	110	104	96	106	SE	Diploid	Early	PGG Wrightson	5
Kingston	84	110	113	98	97	107	SE	Diploid	Mid	Agricom	3
Kidman	83	108	113	101	96	106	AR1	Diploid	Early	Heritage Seeds	3
Matrix - Festulolium	82	107	115	98	96	110	Unknown	Diploid	Late	Cropmark Seeds	3
Ansa	73	107	115	99	95	107	AR1	Diploid	Mid-Late	Pasture Genetics	3
Extreme AR37	71	111	114	98	95	105	AR37	Diploid	Mid	PGG Wrightson	5
Endure	69	107	111	100	97	105	SE	Tetraploid	Mid	Vicseeds	4
Banquet II Endo5	64	109	111	98	95	109	Endo5	Tetraploid	Late	PGG Wrightson	8
Halo AR37	64	113	113	95	93	112	AR37	Tetraploid	Late	Agricom	7
Arrow AR1	63	103	107	101	98	107	AR1	Diploid	Mid	Heritage Seeds	8
Barberia	51	101	109	102	97	104	Nil	Diploid	Early	Heritage Seeds	3
Avalon AR1	45	105	110	97	98	106	AR1	Diploid	Mid	Vicseeds	4
One50 AR1	41	105	104	98	96	107	AR1	Diploid	Late	Agricom	5
Ohau AR37	19	105	104	98	96	107	AR37	Tetraploid	Mid	Agricom	3
Impact 2 NEA2	17	105	103	97	97	108	NEA2	Diploid	Late	Heritage Seeds	7
Revolution - Festulolium	14	103	109	97	95	106	AR1	Diploid	Late	Seed Force	5
Victorian	0	100	100	100	100	100	SE	Diploid	Early	Many	7
Helix - Festulolium	-16	101	106	97	95	103	AR1	Diploid	Mid	Cropmark Seeds	5

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Illawarra takes grand prize again

INTERBREED HONOUR ROLL

Australia's Grand champion: Illawarra: Wallumlands Sunstorm 8th, Gordon, Bacon & Govett, Cohuna, Vic.

Reserve: Jersey: Cairnbrae Valentino Daisy 11, A&J Carson, Irrewillipe East, Vic.

Intermediate interbreed champion: Holstein: Bluechip MH Hero Marion, F&D Borba, D Patten & B Salmon, California, US.

Reserve: Jersey: Windy Ways Galaxies Dawn 7, Windy Ways Jerseys, Tongala, Vic.

Junior interbreed champion: Holstein: Murribrook Solomon Tambourine-ET, Murribrook Holsteins, Moss Vale, NSW.

Reserve: Illawarra: Llandoverly Queens Clarie 1969th, Rachael Barnes, Finley, NSW.

By Carlene Dowie

THE first Illawarra cow to be named Australia's Grand Champion Cow at International Dairy Week has done it again.

Wallumlands Sunstorm 8, exhibited by Glen Gordon, Daniel Bacon and Ben Govett, Cohuna, Vic, first won Australia's top award in 2015 as a four-year-old, and was the grand champion Illawarra cow in 2017.

It returned this year as an eight-year-old to again take all before it and claim the top prize. Wallumlands



Daniel Bacon, Ben Govett and Glen Gordon with Australia's Grand Champion Cow Wallumlands Sunstorm 8.

Sunstorm 8 is only the second cow to twice win Australia's top interbreed award.

Mr Gordon said the win was an honour for the three friends who own the cow. "I guess we are pretty privileged; to do it once was a dream to do it

twice is ... I'm not sure what it is ... it is quite surprising," he said.

"It's great to win with a couple of mates — it's probably the best two-and-half grand we've ever spent. We've had a lot of fun."

Mr Gordon said Wallumlands Sun-



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Brad Salmon, Declan Patten and Dean Malcolm with the intermediate interbreed champion Bluechip MH Hero Marion.



Murray Sowter and Roger Turner with the junior interbreed champion Murribrook Solomon Tambourine-ET.

storm 8, which runs in his herd, was “a run-of-the-mill cow who mixes it with 600 Holstein cows”.

The cow was producing 48 litres of milk a day. “She’s certainly one of the best cows we have ever worked with,” he said.

Mr Gordon said the win was the culmination of a two-year plan to have the cow right for IDW.

“She didn’t get pregnant for last year so we made sure she calved at the right time in the right condition for this day,” he said.

The trio was not sure about their plans for the cow but have bred it back in hopes it would be able to compete again next year. “It would be nice to give her another run because she is so youthful,” Mr Gordon said.

The reserve champion was the Jersey exhibit of Alan and Janine Carson, Cairnbrae Jersey stud, Irrewillipe East, Vic.

Cairnbrae Valentino Daisy 11 is the highest rated Jersey cow in Australia, with a Balanced Performance Index of 387.

“She’s a top-of-the-tree cow,” Mr Carson said. “I don’t think ever in the history that a number one BPI cow has been named champion at dairy week.”

The Jersey championship and reserve interbreed awards complete a lifetime ambition for Mr Carson.

“It’s very, very exciting,” he said. “It would have been great to have won but to have come second to a great

cow like that.

“There have been some tremendous comments about our cow and we are over the moon.”

The Holstein exhibit took the intermediate interbreed award.

Bluechip MH Hero Marion had to overcome an illness and subsequent operation to be ready for the show.

The three-year-old cow is owned by Californians Frank and Diane Borba and Australians Declan Patten and Brad Salmon.

“The cow has ... recovered extremely well, she’s a fighter and the personality of the cow is just amazing,” Mr Patten said.

Mr Patten said the owners planned to bring the cow back to IDW next year.

“We think she’s a cow with a big future,” he said.

“We might do some IVF and make a few pregnancies but right now we are looking forward to the future. The cow has so many great years ahead of her.”

Mr Patten said he had grown up on a dairy farm and had always been passionate about the industry.

He said his parents nurtured his passion.

“I remember reading 20 years of magazines when I was about 12 years old, there was just something in my blood and I’ve just been passionate about it ever since,” he said.

The reserve intermediate was the Jersey exhibit Windy Ways Galaxies

Dawn 7, shown by Frank Walsh, Windy Ways, Tongala, Vic.

Mr Walsh said the win was one of his life’s highlights.

“I played a lot of football in my days and this is up there with it or better,” he said.

“I’ve won premierships, I’ve coached premierships, and this is up there with the best.”

Mr Walsh said the champion had been a standout since it was a calf.

“She’s a magnificent cow — she’s not a cow yet — she’s only a young cow,” he said.

“She’s producing 30 litres of milk at the moment, which we are pretty happy with.”

The junior interbreed champion was also the Holstein exhibit. Murribrook Solomon Tambourine was shown Murribrook Holsteins, Moss Vale, NSW.

Stud principal Murray Sowter said the heifer ticked a lot of boxes.

“To win against such strong competition is always very rewarding and satisfying,” he said.

“The heifer is a particularly good heifer and it is nice that other people appreciate her.”

Mr Sowter said Murribrook Solomon Tambourine was joined to sexed Atwood.

The reserve interbreed junior champion went to the Illawarra exhibit Llandovery Queens Clarie 1969th, shown by Rachael Barnes, Finley, NSW.

Holstein sale reflects tough season

AVERAGE prices were down at the World Wide Sires Evolution Holstein sale at International Dairy Week. The average was \$4755 with 30 of the 33 lots sold on the night and one passed-in lot selling the next day.

Dairy Livestock Services manager Scott Lord said the results were no different than they had expected. "But it was a really good result; people have got to realise how tough it is out there," Mr Lord said.

A Declan Patten partnership sold the top-priced lot for the third year in a row.

Mr Patten set a record two years ago, when one of his partnerships sold a heifer for \$251,000.

This year's top-priced lot a two-year-old heifer, Lightning Ridge Beemer Camilla-Imp-ET, sold for \$16,000 and was owned by Mr Patten in partnership with Brad Salmon.

A New Zealand syndicate picked up the heifer.

Mr Patten said the heifer was a great young cow and "she's also going to be back here next year if all goes well". It was great to see New Zealand interest in Australian genetics.



The \$16,000 top-priced heifer with DLS auctioneer Brian Leslie; Mark Patullo, of World Wide Sires, which organised the sale; one of the buyers Corey Ferguson; one of the vendors Declan Patten and handler Charlie Lloyd.

"We think that this industry is international, it is a very small industry, and we're really excited to have people from out of the country interested in our cattle," Mr Patten said.

The NZ syndicate included Gordon Fullerton and Nathan Bayne from Henley Farms and Corey Ferguson, who bid on the animal at the sale.

Mr Ferguson said the syndicate liked the family lines in the heifer.

The second highest price of \$9000 was for another two-year-old heifer, offered by Rob and Rebecca Walmsley, Myponga, South Australia, and bought by Bruce Walmsley, Numurkah, Vic.

—Carlene Dowie

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The Crawford family from Numbaa, NSW, with their two grand champions: the Guernsey Exkwizit Active Barbell and the Holstein Fairvale Goldchip Melody 770. Pictured are children Harrison, Isabella and Lana Crawford, Abbey and Andrew Crawford, fitter Paul Murphy, from Ireland, and Darren Crawford.

Crawford family takes two grands

By Carlene Dowie

THE Crawford family from Numbaa, NSW, brought nine animals to show at International Dairy Week and walked away with two grand champion awards.

The family backed up its win in the Guernsey show early in the week by taking the Holstein grand championship on the final day.

The champion Holstein cow Fairvale Goldchip Melody 770 won the four-year-old class before fending off the older cows to take the senior champion award and then the grand champion award.

The win was another championship for the famous Fairvale prefix — which has been one of the most successful at International Dairy Week, now producing six champions for four different exhibitors.

The Crawfords picked up Fairvale Goldchip Melody 770 at the Fairvale Holsteins dispersal sale 15 months ago.

“She looked like a good show cow at the time, there was a lot of poten-

tial there,” Andrew Crawford said.

The cow calved a few months ago and was “looking pretty good, so here we are”, he said.

Andrew and his wife Abbey took over the herd from his parents in July 2018. The herd comprises 950 cows, of which 10 were Guernseys and the balance Holsteins.

‘She looked like a good show cow at the time, there was a lot of potential there.’

“We brought eight Holsteins and one Guernsey cow to show and got two champions,” he said. “We ... have champion Holstein and champion Guernsey in the supreme, so it’s a bit exciting.”

Judge Adam Liddle, from New York state, United States, said Fairvale Goldchip Melody 770 was just a beautiful cow. “(She has) a beautiful mammary system, quality, that com-

bination of dairyness and strength,” he said.

The intermediate champion cow Bluechip MH Hero Marion had to overcome illness and a subsequent operation to be ready for the show. The three-year-old cow is owned by Californians Frank and Diane Borba and Australians Declan Patten and Brad Salmon.

Mr Patten said he had been fond of the cow since he saw it as a young heifer a couple of years ago at the Victorian Winter Fair.

“She was one of the best heifers I thought I’d seen in this country,” he said. “So I have been a big supporter and follower of her for a long time.”

Mr Declan took the opportunity to buy into a partnership with the Borbas in the cow about six weeks ago.

“It hasn’t been smooth sailing — the cow got a little sick and we had to operate but she has taken it like a champion,” he said.

“The cow has ... recovered extremely well, she’s a fighter and the personality of the cow is just amazing.”

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◀ Mr Patten praised the efforts of the cow's breeders Dean and Di Malcolm, who prepared it for the show.

"(They) have just done an unbelievable job in preparation," he said. "They are world-class cattle people and we were very confident in their abilities."

Mr Patten said the owners planned to bring the cow back to IDW next year. "We think she's a cow with a big future," he said.

Mr Liddle said Bluechip MH Hero Marion was a long cow with more rib structure all the way through the length.

He said he liked its feet and legs, dairyness and beautiful mammary system.

The junior champion Murribrook Solomon Tambourine was shown Murribrook Holsteins, Moss Vale, NSW.

Stud principal Murray Sowter said he first showed the 18-month-old calf, a Solomon from a Goldwyn, at the Sydney Royal Show in April, where it won its class and was honourable mention. It also went on to win its class at the NSW Nowra Holstein Spring Fair in August.

"Today she's won her class and is junior champion this time," he said.

Mr Sowter said the heifer ticked a lot of boxes.

"I guess we want heifers that could all come out like her," he said. "She's framey, she's dairy, she's technically very correct, and really feminine for her size."

Mr Liddle said the heifer had the "openness and width throughout and the length you like to see". **D**



The junior champion Holstein Murribrook Solomon Tambourine-ET with IDW sponsor Graeme Hargreaves, owner Murray Sowter, leader Roger Turner, Canada, and IDW sponsor Shane Railton.



The Holstein intermediate champion cow Bluechip MH Hero Marion with two of the owners (kneeling) Brad Salmon and Declan Patten, sponsor Scott Lord, judge Adam Liddle and Di and Dean Malcolm, who bred the cow and prepared it for the show.

HOLSTEIN HONOUR ROLL

OVERALL HOLSTEIN SHOW

Grand champion: Fairvale Goldchip Melody 770, Crawford Family, Numbaa, NSW.

Senior champion: Fairvale Goldchip Melody 770.

Reserve: Paringa Braxton Parry, Elm Banks Holsteins and A and S Barron, Crossley, Vic.

Best udder: Fairvale Goldchip Melody 770.

Intermediate champion: Bluechip MH Hero Marion, F and D Borba, D Patten and B Salmon, California, US.

Reserve: Elmar Solomon Jessica 2-ET, Elmar Holsteins, Leitchville, Vic.

Intermediate best udder: Horizon Bradnick Ambrosia 2-ET, Elm Banks Holsteins,

Crossley, Vic.

Junior champion: Murribrook Solomon Tambourine-ET, Murribrook Holsteins, Moss Vale, NSW.

Reserve: Mario Park Walnutlawn Midas MD and JE Polson, Oxley Island, NSW.

Premier breeder: BlueChip Genetics, Zeerust, Vic.

Premier exhibitor: JH and CJ Gardiner, Cardinia, Vic.

RED-AND-WHITE HOLSTEIN HONOUR ROLL

Grand champion: Mitch Chipper Beauty-IMP-ET-RED, Mitch Holsteins and TPM, Bamawm, Vic.

Senior champion: Mitch Chipper Beauty-IMP-ET-RED.

Reserve: Murribrook Starlet Pico IMP ET RED, MJ Sowter, Moss Vale, NSW.

Best udder: Mitch Chipper Beauty-IMP-ET-RED.

Intermediate champion: Whitegold Absolute Satin-ET-RED.

Reserve: Bluechip EV Shesaawesome Apple, Cherrylock Cattle Co. and H Bevan, Tallygaroopna, Vic.

Intermediate best udder: Whitegold Absolute Satin-ET-RED, M and A Rood, Morans Crossing, NSW.

Junior champion: Eclipse BC Red August ET RED, Eclipse Genetics and BlueChip Genetics, Zeerust, Vic.

Reserve: Eclipse Avalanche Delight-RED Robsvue Holsteins, Myponga, SA.



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Grand champion Guernsey exhibit Exkwizit Active Barbell sashed by judge Chris Lang, Ohio, US, with handler Darren Crawford, Numbaa, NSW, on behalf of the owners Andrew and Shelley Crawford.

Qld-bred Guernsey wins for NSW owners

By Alastair Dowie

NSW-BASED Andrew and Abbey Crawford, Numbaa near Nowra, entry Exkwizit Active Barbell took grand champion Guernsey exhibit at International Dairy Week this year. The five-year-old was senior champion cow and also won the John Stephens Memorial Trophy for best udder.

Andrew Crawford said he and wife

Abbey took over the herd from his parents in July 2018. The herd comprises 950 cows, of which 10 were Guernseys and the balance Holsteins. "I've always liked Guernsey cattle," he said.

He said they about cattle from Alan Little and Leesa Ison, Black and Gold Dairies, Monto, Queensland, six or seven years ago. "In 2017 when we heard they were having a dispersal, we went and bought what we thought

was the best Guernsey cow in the sale (as well as some Holsteins)," he said.

Exkwizit Active Barbell was a VG 87 sired by Sniders Gold Dust Activate and was a direct descendant to Brookleigh GH Bronte EX.

"When we saw her we knew she was a show cow and we could set her for International Dairy Week," Mr Crawford said.

They bought the cow in August 2017 and took it to the Sydney Royal

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in 2018 when it was reserve champion. This year's IDW was just its second outing for the Crawfords.

"She has come from the far north to the south coast of NSW," he said. "She should have a few more IDWs in her we think."

Guernsey judge, Chris Lang, Spring Hill Farm, Ohio, United States, said the grand champion was a "slam dunk". "She is an incredible cow," he said. "It's so easy to judge really good cows."

In judging the cow the best udder Mr Lang said Barbell beat a tremendous line-up of cows for the honour. "That cow would do quite well anywhere in the world," he said.

Reserve senior champion was a cow from the same class as the champion, Rockmar Miami Graceful, from M & R Shea, Bacchus Marsh, Vic.

Mr Lang said that from the quality of the Guernsey cattle that came into the ring, it showed the breed's future was "looking promising".

"The cows here are a good indicator and I was very impressed," he said. "This was a great show, I'm very impressed with what I've seen here."

'When we saw her we knew she was a show cow and we could set her for International Dairy Week.'


The intermediate cow was Brookleigh Jocelyn exhibited by LF and JM Cleggett, Glencoe, South Australia. The cow, sired by Indian Acres Prada and out of Brookleigh Jolie, came from the junior three-year-old in-milk class.

Brendan and Corrie Hayden, Pilton, Queensland, presented the reserve intermediate champion, Bruanna Frances 12.

The junior champion heifer was Brookleigh Imeeta by Maradore Gary Pistoll-ET and out of Brookleigh Iona — from one of Cleggetts "I" family cows.

The heifer was shown by Martin Downes, Numbaa, NSW.

Mr Downes said he bought the heifer from the Cleggetts six months ago. "I've been brought up with Guernseys. We will breed from her," he said.

Reserve junior champion heifer was shown by T and S Shea and M and R Shea, Bacchus Marsh, Vic. The heifer, Kearla Latimer Koala 4, was sired by Coulee Crest Fame Latimer and out of Floranda SD Koala. 



Guernsey judge Chris Lang, Ohio, US, with the junior champion heifer, Brookleigh Imeeta, with handler Jess Gavenlock, Tallygaroopna, Vic, and owner Martin Downes, Numbaa, NSW.



Michael Tonkin, Rural Co Finance, sashed the intermediate champion, Brookleigh Jocelyn, with handler Chelsea Walker, Myrtleford, Vic, for the Cleggett family, and judge Chris Lang, Ohio, US.

GUERNSEY HONOUR ROLL

Grand champion: Exkwizit Active Barbell, Andrew and Abbey Crawford, Numbaa, NSW.

Senior champion: Exkwizit Active Barbell.

Reserve: Rockmar Miami Graceful, M and R Shea, Bacchus Marsh, Vic.

Best udder: Exkwizit Active Barbell.

Intermediate champion: Brookleigh Jocelyn, LF and JM Cleggett, Glencoe, SA.

Reserve: Bruanna Frances 12, B and C Hayden, Pilton, Qld.

Junior champion: Brookleigh Imeeta, M Downes, Numbaa, NSW.

Reserve: Kearla Latimer Koala 4, T and S Shea and M and R Shea, Bacchus Marsh, Vic.

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Premier exhibitor: LF and JM Cleggett.

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Illawarra judge Max Hyland with the grand champion Illawarra cow, Wullumlands Sunstorm 8, and happy exhibitors Glen Gordon, Ben Govett and Daniel Bacon.

Illawarra champ goes to a trio of mates

By Alastair Dowie

It was an excited trio of owners, Glen Gordon, Ben Govett and Daniel Bacon who celebrated when their classy mature-age cow took home the broad ribbon for supreme champion Illawarra exhibit at International Dairy Week for 2019.

The group of mates bought the cow, Wullumlands Sunstorm 8, from Terry Tidcombe.

Daniel Bacon said they bought the cow “out of the paddock” because they could see she had a good udder and that she was a cow that was “going to keep getting better with age”.

“We’ve always had a bit of an interest in the Illawarra breed and thought we’d give it a go,” he said. “We’re three best mates, and we just wanted to have a bit of fun as well.”

They first showed the cow under their names in 2015 when it went all

the way being named grand champion interbreed cow that year.

The 2010-drop female sired by Apples Absolute-ET (Red) was the only Illawarra to date to achieve that honour. In 2017 it returned to the ring at IDW and was judged the Grand Champion Illawarra and now again in 2019.

‘She was chock full of dairyness, with a lovely mammary system.’

Mr Bacon said the trio had diverse breed interests — Holstein (Gordon), Brown Swiss (Govett) and Jersey himself.

They have sold a number of females from the cow and Sunstorm 8 has a bull, Gorb BT Sunstorm Supreme, at Agri-Gene.

A heifer from the cow, sold two years ago, was the junior champion at IDW in 2018.

Illawarra judge Max Hyland said the senior judge was a “super dairy cow”. “She was chock full of dairyness, with a lovely mammary system,” he said.

Mr Hyland said the champion had overall dairyness on her side. “When you lined up the cows in the best udder class, they were an outstanding line-up of udders,” he said.

Reserve senior champion was Sun Vale Kian Peta, shown by Dakota Doyle, Ontario, Canada, and Katie and Renee Anderson, Sun Vale, Cashmore, Vic.

The reserve received an honourable mention in the senior championship in 2018.

Honourable mention this year went to Eagle Park Anticipation Pamela shown by R and K Bailey, Carpende-



Taking out the junior champion heifer ribbon was Llandovery Queens Clarie 1969 with handler Rachel English, for the owner Rachel Barnes, judge Max Hyland and sponsor Genetics Australia sales manager Mike Huth.

it, Vic. The cow was out of the four years in-milk class.

Earlier an entry from Brad and Jess Gavenlock, Cherrylock Cattle Co, Tallygaroopna, Vic, was named intermediate champion. it was Panorama Angeline 48 from the two-and-a-half year old in milk class.

Reserve intermediate was Illunga Visions of Victory a senior three-year-old from Robert Coburn, Port Campbell, Vic.

Mr Hyland said the winner and reserve were "quite outstanding cows".



The intermediate champion Illawarra, Panorama Angeline 48, sashed by Max Hyland, held by exhibitor Jess Gavenlock, Tallygaroopna, Vic, and sponsor CRT state manager Stewart Kerr.

In the junior champion section, it was an entry from Rachel Barnes, Finley, NSW, with Llandovery Queens Clarie 1969.

The reserve was Panorama Blossom 2 entered by Cherrylock Cattle Co and A Dorries, Tallygaroopna, Vic.

Mr Hyland said the junior champion had come from a class of one, but "would have stood some competition".

He congratulated all the class winners for an outstanding lineup of heifers.

ILLAWARRA HONOUR ROLL

Grand champion: Wullumlands Sunstorm 8, Gordon, Bacon and Govett, Cohuna, Vic.

Senior champion: Wullumlands Sunstorm 8.

Reserve: Sun Vale Kian Peta, Dakota Doyle, Ontario, Canada, and Katie and Renee Anderson, Sun Vale, Cashmore, Vic.

Best udder: Wullumlands Sunstorm 8.

Intermediate champion: Panorama Angeline 48, B & J Gavenlock, Cherrylock Cattle Co, Tallygaroopna, Vic.

Reserve: Illunga Visions of Victory, Robert Coburn, Port Campbell, Vic.

Junior champion: Llandovery Queens Clarie 1969, Rachel Barnes, Finley, NSW.

Reserve: Panorama Blossom 2, Cherrylock Cattle Co and A Dorries, Tallygaroopna, Vic.

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Tandara takes double in Brown Swiss

By Carlene Dowie

TANDARA Brown Swiss stud, Dingee, Vic, again produced the goods at International Dairy Week Brown Swiss Show.

The stud took the grand champion, senior champion and intermediate champion cow awards, and also bred the junior champion cow.

The grand champion was the intermediate champion Tandara Bosephus Sarajevo 121, owned by Tandara in conjunction with Jayden Drake.

Tandara's Ben Govett said the cow from their successful Sarajevo family had turned heads at IDW last year. "We thought she was pretty special — she's got a lot of admirers from all over the world," he said. "And this year she has developed so much; she's probably the most exciting young cow we've ever had, that's for sure."

The three-year-old cow was on its second calf and was a big cow that produced a lot of milk.

Judge David Mayo, Gerringong, NSW, said the intermediate cow, which he also awarded the best udder, had a bright future.

"This young cow is a tremendous young cow when you get up close to her," he said. "She's a really good long dairy cow with lots of strength in her front end, the openness, the strength and the dairyness."

Part-owner Jayden Drake said he was over the moon with the win.

Mr Drake said he had helped Mr Govett at IDW for 10 years and had shown a few animals, but had never enjoyed the success of an IDW championship before.

Mr Govett bought the senior champion Miss Payssli Lola as a calf from his friends Kelvin and Ronnie Cochrane, Gympie, Qld.

The five-year-old cow's mother was a Queensland champion, and Mr Govett said when the opportunity came up to buy its calf, it was too good to miss.

Miss Payssli Lola had won her class three times at previous IDW shows, slowly building to the championship ranking, Mr Govett said.

He said the cow was the type they aimed to breed: it got in calf every year, had above average production and had never been sick.



The grand champion and intermediate champion Brown Swiss Tandara Bosephus Sarajevo 121 with owners Ben Govett and Jayden Drake.

The Brown Swiss were a fantastic breed for Australian conditions with heat tolerance, longevity and hardiness.

Mr Govett said he was "pretty excited" to have been associated with all three champions.

"It's been a goal to do it one day but things don't always line up," he said.

He congratulated the owners of the junior champion Cameron and Tracey Bawden for the way they had developed the calf.

Mr Mayo said the junior champion was well balanced.

"No matter where you look at her, from any angle she has no holes in her," he said.

Tracey Bawden said the junior champion had been third in its class at last year's event.


She and husband Cameron milk 200 cows on their own at Labertouche, Vic. Their herd comprises Holsteins, Jerseys, Ayrshires and Brown Swiss.

"The Brown Swiss are mainly



The senior champion Brown Swiss Miss Payssli Lola with owner Ben Govett and judge David Mayo.

mine because I like them more," Mrs Bawden said. "They're just so easy going and big loving animals."

The Bawdens plan to breed the heifer as soon as possible and hopefully bring it back to IDW next year. 



The junior champion Brown Swiss Tandara Formula Anastasia with judge David Mayo and owners Cameron and Tracey Bawden and their children Reiley and Ainsley.

'This young cow is a tremendous young cow when you get up close to her.'

BROWN SWISS HONOUR ROLL

Grand champion: Tandara Bosephus Sarajevo 121, Tandara Brown Swiss and J Drake, Dingee, Vic.

Senior champion: Miss Payssli Lola, Tandara Brown Swiss.

Reserve: Artlie Joylene, Judson Jennings, Chapple Vale, Vic.

Best udder: Tandara Bosephus Sarajevo 121.

Intermediate champion: Tandara Bosephus Sarajevo 121.

Reserve: Tandara Biver Sarajevo 125, Tandara Brown Swiss.

Junior champion: Tandara Formula Anastasia, Winsdale, Labertouche, Vic.

Reserve: Dryfesdale Mark Lemon, Jos-feski Family, Stanhope, Vic.

Premier breeder: Tandara Brown Swiss.

Premier exhibitor: Tandara Brown Swiss.

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The senior and grand champion cow Rockvale Burdette Prim with owner Jake Mathews, Shady Creek, Vic.

Gippsland Ayrshire breeders dominate

By Carlene Dowie

A GIPPSLAND-BASED dairy operation dominated the Ayrshire results at International Dairy Week.

The grand champion Rockvale Burdette Prim was exhibited by Jake Mathews, while his mother Anthea Day and her husband Trevor Saunders exhibited the intermediate champion Aruluen Park Jumper Pam.

The animals are all run in the one herd in the family's operation at Shady Creek, Vic. The family has bred Ayrshires since the early 1900s.

Five-year-old Rockvale Burdette Prim was bought by Mr Mathews as a pick from a pen of heifers when Max Hyland dispersed his renowned Ayrshire herd.

Prim has already tasted major success at IDW, being named interbreed intermediate champion and Ayrshire grand and intermediate champion in 2017 as a three-year-old.

Ms Day said she was a great all-round cow, in the top of the production indexes for Mr Mathews's cows. "She's no fuss, she doesn't get any special treatment, she's just a really good cow," she said.

Judge Gregory Evans, from New York state, United States, said the cow had tremendous strength.

'She's no fuss, she doesn't get any special treatment, she's just a really good cow.'

"This cow wears a phenomenal mammary system, she moves around the ring with such elegance and grace," he said.

The intermediate champion three-year-old Aruluen Park Jumper Pam was from a family that Mr Saunders had bred for more than 30 years. "We

AYRSHIRE HONOUR ROLL

Grand champion: Rockvale Burdette Prim, Jake Mathews, Shady Creek, Vic.
Senior champion: Rockvale Burdette Prim.

Reserve: Boldview Dream Peril, Lucy Newman, Prospect Hill, SA.

Best udder: Parkville Burdette Katie, James Dillon, Waaia, Vic.

Intermediate champion: Araluen Park Jumper Pam, Araluen Park, Shady Creek, Vic.

Reserve: Paschendaele Forever Gigi, Eagles Partnership, Gooloogong, NSW.

Junior champion: Regal Park Sicking Shower, Bridget Liebich, Murray Bridge, SA.

Reserve: Ayrborne RD Tornado, B Hentschke and C Liebich, Glencoe, SA.

Premier breeder: Eagles Partnership.

Premier exhibitor: Munden Farms, Warragul, Vic.

just love the cow, she milks really well and just ticks all the boxes for us," Ms Day said.

"Her mother was an awesome Poker that we had a lot of fun with. She won up here as well, so that's the second generation winning up here."

Ms Day said it was amazing for the family to come away with two championships.

She said she liked Ayrshires because they were hardy cows that were easy to get in calf, with really good health traits.

The junior champion was shown by Bridget Liebelt, Torlea stud, Murray Bridge, South Australia.

Ms Liebelt only bought Regal Park Sicking Shower a few weeks ago from David Mayo's Regal Park Ayrshires, Gerringong, NSW.

"I've had an eye on this (Regal Park Shimmer) family for a very long time," Ms Liebelt said.

"They've had a lot of really good cows come out from that family."

"They're just a really outstanding family from NSW and I wanted to bring that family back to SA to play around with and breed from."

Ms Liebelt has a small stud of three Ayrshires and 10 Holsteins that run in



Bridget Liebelt with the junior champion Ayrshire Regal Park Sicking Shower.



Anthea Day and Alex Mathews with the intermediate champion Ayrshire Araluen Park Jumper Pam.

the herd of her employer David Altman.

She won her first Ayrshire when she was 11 when showing at the Adelaide

Royal Show. Ms Liebelt said the win "crazy".

"I can't believe it, I didn't expect this at all," she said.

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Top BPI cow named Jersey champion



Alan and Janine Carson with the grand champion Jersey cow Cairnbrae Valentino Daisy 11, held by leader Brad Gavenlock with judge Brian Leslie.

By Carlene Dowie

THE highest rated Jersey cow in Australia was named the grand champion Jersey at International Dairy Week.

The champion, Cairnbrae Valentino Daisy 11, shown by Alan and Janine Carson's Cairnbrae Jersey stud, Irrewillipe East, Vic, has a Balanced Performance Index of 387.

"She's a top-of-the-tree cow," Mr Carson said. "I don't think ever in the history that a number one BPI cow has been named champion at dairy week."

The cow is a Valentino. Mr Carson said they were one of the first people in Australia to use Valentino and were milking 85 of them in their 350-cow herd.

Cairnbrae Valentino Daisy 11 classified 94 points in the spring. It finished second in its class as a three-year-old at IDW in 2017.

Mr Carson said the five-year-old cow had had four calves — all heifers — and was at the top of the production index for his herd.

Judge Brian Leslie said the champion was from an "incredible" group of cows on show. "I didn't think I would see them this good," he said.

"I want the sort of cattle that can



Owner Frank Walsh with the intermediate champion Windy Ways Galaxies Dawn 7.

JERSEY HONOUR ROLL

Grand champion: Cairnbrae Valentino Daisy 11, A and J Carson, Irrewillipe East, Vic.

Senior champion: Cairnbrae Valentino Daisy 11

Reserve: Broadlin Vanessa 2950, Broad family, Lockington, Vic,

Best udder: Bluechip Galaxies Rory, Ben Pedretti, Tallygaroopna, Vic.

Intermediate champion: Windy Ways Galaxies Dawn 7, Windy Ways Jerseys, Tongala, Vic.

Reserve: Salvation Black Ginger, D and N Schirm, D Jordan, C Lucas and Sun Vale, Cashmore, Vic.

Junior champion: Kings Ville Lassie 37 P, R and K Anderson, Drouin West, Vic.

Reserve: Rivendell Getaway Rose, Rivendell Jerseys, Numbaa, NSW.

Premier breeder: Brookbora, Tennyson, Vic.

Premier exhibitor: Ben Pedretti.

pay bills. The only way we paid our farms off was to get a lot of milk and that's what these cows do.

"I just love this champion cow, she's my kettle of fish. She's just all the things I think we want in a modern dairy cow.

"She's big, she's wide, she's extremely correct through her top, through her rump.

"She has an amazing rear udder, she's just milk to the back teeth and yet she's got so much style and quality with it."

Mr Carson said he was proud of the cow. The championship win completes a lifetime ambition for Mr Carson.

"I've been a classifier in the Jersey breed for 35 years and I have had goals: I've always wanted to achieve winning at dairy week," he said.

"I'm 64-years-old, I don't know how much longer I will milk cows for. This is the epitome of it all."

Frank Walsh, the owner of the intermediate champion Windy Ways Galaxies Dawn 7, said the win was one of his life's highlights.

"I played a lot of football in my days and this is up there with it or better," he said. "I've won premierships, I've coached premierships, and this is up there with the best."

Mr Walsh said the champion had been a standout since it was a calf.

"She's a magnificent cow — she's not a cow yet — she's only a young cow," he said. "She's producing 30 litres of milk at the moment, which we are pretty happy with."

Mr Walsh said he milked 300 cows, which were all Jerseys, at Tongala, Vic.

"I found out in the 2007 drought they don't quite eat as much, so they don't



Meg Anderson and judge Brian Leslie with the junior Jersey champion Kings Ville Lassie 37 P.

eat your profits as quick," he said. "A few years ago, I had 50/50 but it was after 2007, I decided the Friesians were eating too much."

Mr Leslie said the champion was just "way out good news".

"When she came in the ring, I looked at her and I thought 'crikey'," he said.

"She is just so good; I think she's just one of the finest young second-calf three-year-old Jersey cows I've seen for a long time.

"She's just a marvellous, marvellous, marvellous young cow.

"I look at her and I can't see any holes in her — she's a beautiful headed cow, a tremendous long-necked cow, a lovely clean-fronted cow, she's got that beautiful open frame, square rump and marvellous udder."

The junior champion Kings Ville


Lassie 37 was bred by the Anderson family's Kings Ville stud at Drouin West, Vic.

Rob Anderson said the calf was from a family they had developed, the Lassie family. "We've had success with them in the past," he said.

"If we go back to her great-great grandmother, she was champion at the Melbourne Royal Show."

The Lassies were consistent producers and in the top group of cows in the family's 220-cow herd.

Mr Leslie said the junior champion was exactly what he wanted in a dairy heifer at its age and stage.

"She's a big heifer, she covers a lot of ground, she's got tremendous squareness of frame, tremendous length, tremendous depth of rib, she's grown up, she can grow down," he said. 

Champion heifer tops Jersey sale

A HEIFER that won the 2019 International Dairy Week Youth Show topped the Jersey sale at the event.

Darryn Vale Tequila Satin, offered by Darryn Hourigan, Darryn Vale Jersey stud, Milawa, Vic, sold for \$8000 to Carole Swindlehurst, Bayles, Vic.

Auctioneer Brian Leslie said the heifer was "right at the top of the tree".

The two-and-a-half-year-old heifer was the grand champion heifer of the youth show, was the winner of the Great Southern competition and judged the winner of the north-east Victorian on-farm challenge.

The heifer, which classified VG88 maximum score, was sired by Tower

Vue Prime Tequila, which was premier sire at IDW from 2014 to 2017 and at World Dairy Expo from 2012 to 2018.

Ms Swindlehurst who runs her cows with Ian Anderson's Kings View Jersey herd, said she knew the animal would be good because she knew the herd well, as the Hourigans were friends of hers.

"Hopefully I will bring her back to dairy week next January, though she will just go home now and be a normal cow," she said.

The 12 Jerseys in the sale sold in a complete clearance to an average of \$4004.17.

The second top-priced lot was Cher-



The top-priced lot Darryn Vale Tequila Satin with vendors Bailey, Darryn and Ellie Hourigan and buyer Carole Swindlehurst.

rylock Colton Cocoa, offered by Brad and Jess Gavenlock, Tallygaroopna, Vic, which sold for \$7000 to K Barker & D Cole, Riana, Tas.

—Carlene Dowie

Youth Show champion ‘beautiful’



Youth Show champion Darryn Vale Tequila Satin with leader Ellie Hourigan.



Youth Show Champion:Reserve: Pooley Bridge Atwood Jade 2, Jett Easterbrook.

By Carlene Dowie

THE 2019 International Dairy Week All Breeds Youth Show grand champion heifer later topped the Jersey sale at IDW.

The two-year-old Jersey heifer, Darryn Vale Tequila Satin, was shown by Ellie Hourigan, on behalf of her family's Darryn Vale Jersey stud, Milawa, Vic, which milks 220 Jersey cows.

Ms Hourigan said Jerseys had always been a tradition for the Hourigans.

"She's a home-bred cow," she said. "We picked that one out to sell, so we thought we'd give her a whirl in the show and see how she would go."

Ms Hourigan said the win was "pretty exciting".

The 19-year-old works on the family farm and has been coming to dairy week for a few years.

She loved the social aspect of being involved as well as the showing. "Who wouldn't like to show a cow if you like cows," she said.

Ms Hourigan said dairy farming appealed as a career because she was always learning and it providing lots of options.

Judge Brent Walker, from Guelph, Canada, said the champion was "a beautiful young cow".

"She's got width of chest, hardness on top, a beautiful mammared cow and a great set of feet and legs," he said.

The reserve champion grand heifer was Pooley Bridge Atwood Jade 2, shown by Jett Easterbrook, shown on behalf of his family RK and JL Easterbrook and Sons, Tatura, Vic.

Mr Walker said the reserve cows "just keeps growing on me, all the time".

"And this young man here who won't sell me his cow.

"I asked him what the price was after I made her champion in the previous class — I asked him what he would ask for this cow and he never even thought about it, he said 'she's not for sale'."

Mr Walker said the show had featured a lot of good cattle.

The Sheri Martin Memorial Youth Showmanship Competition attracted more than 100 participants.

The senior champion han-



Sheri Martin Memorial Showmanship Competition junior champion handler Shae Tweedle.



Sheri Martin Memorial Showmanship Competition senior champion handler Cally O'Shannassy.



Sheri Martin Memorial Showmanship Competition primary champion handler Mikaela Daniel.



Sheri Martin Memorial Showmanship Competition intermediate champion handler Rebekah Love.

lder (aged 18-20 years) was Cally O'Shannassy, the intermediate champion handler (aged 14-17 years) was Rebekah Love, primary champion

handler (aged 11-13 years) was Mikaela Daniel and the junior champion handler (aged 8-10 years) was Shae Tweedle. **D**

'Who wouldn't like to show a cow if you like cows.'

YOUTH SHOW RESULTS

Grand Champion Heifer

Champion: Darryn Vale Tequila Satin, El-lie Hourigan.

Reserve: Pooley Bridge Atwood Jade 2, Jett Easterbrook.

Senior Champion In Milk Heifer Junior Leader

Champion: Pooley Bridge Atwood Jade 2, Jett Easterbrook.

Reserve: Paringa Dreams Focus, Harrison Moon.

Senior Champion In Milk Heifer Senior Leader

Champion: Darryn Vale Tequila Satin, El-

lie Hourigan.

Reserve: Cairnhill Paradi Windy, Zali Deenen.

Junior Champion Heifer Junior Leader

Champion: Avonlea Jacoby Sarah, Luke Gardiner.

Reserve: Kit Jacoby Marion 2, Claudia Ross.

Junior Champion Heifer Senior Leader

Champion: Paringa Goldchip Alanna: Charlie Lloyd.

Reserve: Brindabella Jacoby Nana Noo, Georgia Sieben.

Sheri Martin Memorial Showmanship Competition

Senior Champion Handler: Cally O'Shannassy.

Reserve: Rachel Boostoppel.

Intermediate Champion Handler: Rebekah Love.

Runner Up: Toby Fleming.

Primary Champion Handler: Mikaela Daniel.

Runner Up: Leah Dickson.

Junior Champion Handler: Shae Tweedle.

Runner Up: Ruby Polson.

Red focus ahead of conference

- Key points**
- ✓ International conference for red breeders
 - ✓ Reds comprise 22 different breed societies
 - ✓ Seeking to find best use of red genetics

By Jamie Brown

BREEDERS of red-factor dairy cattle are using the weeks ahead of the first international conference on home soil in two decades to rally for unity in hopes the commercial breed can continue to excel.

Australian Red dairy cows are third in population behind Holstein and Jersey with more than 9000 registered and probably twice that many currently being milked.

Australian Reds are a society made up of 22 member breeds from Ayrshire and Dairy Shorthorn to Illawarra, although the latter were the instigators of the offshoot that has become "Aussie Red".

Breed secretary Graeme Hamilton, who farms 500 Australian Red dairy cows on his Mt Gambier, SA property, said the international conference, to be hosted in his home town in the last week of March, would help catalyse the breed's future direction and piggy-back off a European Union project that is helping secure the genetic future of European Red dairy cattle.

Visiting professor Professor Georg Thaller from Kiel University says the genetic diversity in red factor dairy cattle has shown them to be more resilient, fertile and able to produce higher fat and protein, however, there is not enough common focus on genetic gain among the various member breeds.

"The reds' diversity is an asset that we need to cultivate," said Mr Hamilton, emphasising production gain plus genetic diversity as qualities that need to be progressed.

He said the breed needed ideas from geneticists and input from artificial insemination companies who trade in those offspring.

Mr Hamilton spruiks the notion of breed unity in the lead up to the conference, because historically not everyone has pulled in the same direction.

"There is no need to amalgamate the different breed societies," Mr Hamilton said.

"But we do need to talk about the best use for our genetics. First we need



Terry Blasche, Fairy Hill via Casino, NSW, has improved his herd genetics through the introduction of Scandinavian red dairy semen.

to get people talking. We need shared visions, shared goals.

"Down the track genomic evaluation would help find the most efficient cows but whether extra funding would be sought for that part of the project was something to be decided at the conference.

'The reds' diversity is an asset that we need to cultivate.'

"While there has been no comparison of cows between breeds we only have anecdotal information that suggest the reds are hardier. We tend to think of them as the 'invisible cow' because she is less of a problem."

Australian Red Dairy cows are more fertile and resilient.

Proven in the commercial world

Some 35 years ago when Siegard Blasche imported Scandinavian genetics into his dairy at Fairy Hill via Casino, NSW, the radical member of the Illawarra society was told he wouldn't be able to register the offspring.

Other dairy breeders found similar trouble, however, the allure of genetic diversity from some 500,000 red-factor cows in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and northern Germany and their proven production record, convinced them that if they had to make a choice, the Aussies would start their own

breed society. These days Siegard's son Terry milks 170 Aussie Red dairy cows, down from 200 because of the dry.

The irrigated black soil paddocks, fed from the Richmond River, have cracks and now there's talk of water restrictions.

It's times like this that he finds himself once again thanking his father for taking the lesser trodden path.

Australian Red dairy cows handle the sub-tropical heat and humidity — when there is some — and converts feed efficiently to produce higher percentages of fat and protein.

Mr Blasche's young herd averages 3.4 per cent protein and 4.3pc fat, at 7500 litres a lactation with a cell count consistently below the level required to receive a price premium. First calf heifers account for a quarter of milkers.

Beyond this Mr Blasche denies any fancy management saying the Viking genetics infused into his herd have resulted in cows with less mastitis, better udders, superior fertility and calving ease.

In 2017 the Blasche herd was acknowledged by the Australian Red dairy breed society for having the greatest genetic gain over the previous 12 months.

The International Red Dairy Breed Federation conference from March 22-29 is being hosted by the Australian Red Dairy Breeds society and will centre on Mount Gambier in South Australia while an adjoining tour will take delegates from Adelaide to Melbourne.

WHAT'S ON

March 19-20 Bendigo, Vic	Herd '19 Conference Website: < www.nhia.org.au >
March 21 Launceston, Tas	Tasmanian Dairy Conference and awards dinner Phone: (03) 6432 2233 Email: < admin@dairytas.net.au > Website: < http://www.dairytas.com.au/ >
March 22-29 SA and Vic	International Red Dairy Breeders Federation conference and tour Contact: Kylie Boston Phone: 0407 231 547 Email: < kylie.smc@bigpond.com > Website: < www.irdbf2019.com.au >
March 29-31 Warragul, Vic	Women On Farms Gathering 2019 Contact: Lyn Link Email: < info@wofg19.org.au > Website: < www.wofg19.org.au >
April 11-14 Warragul, Vic	Farm World Field Days Phone: (03) 5626 1373 Email: < office@lardnerpark.com.au > Website: < https://lardnerpark.com.au/farm-world/ >
April 12-23 Homebush, NSW	Sydney Royal Easter Show Phone: (02) 9704 1111 Email: < enquiries@rasnsw.com.au > Website: < www.eastershow.com.au >
May 3-5 Paterson, NSW	Tocal Field Days Contact: Ruth Luckner Phone: (02) 4939 8827 Email: < fielddays@tocal.com > Website: < www.tocalfielddays.com >
May 10 Melbourne, Vic	United Dairyfarmers of Victoria Conference 2019 Phone: 1300 882 833 Website: < www.vff.org.au/udvconference >
May 14-16 Copenhagen, Denmark	International Dairy Federation Mastitis Conference Website: < https://www.idfmastitis2019.com/ >
May 16-18 Casino, NSW	Primex Phone: (02) 6768 5800 Email: < primex@fairfaxmedia.com.au > Website: < www.primex.net.au >
May 16 Northcliffe, WA	Western Dairy Dairy Innovation Day, dinner and farm tour Contact: Esther Price Phone: 0418 931 93 Email: < esther@westerndairy.com.au > Website: < http://www.westerndairy.com.au/ >
May 19-21 Lexington, Kentucky, US	Alltech One 19 Conference Website: < http://one.alltech.com/ >
June 4-6 Toowoomba, Qld	Farmfest Contact: Fairfax Rural Events Phone: (02) 6768 5800 Email: < farmfest@fairfaxmedia.com.au > Website: < http://www.farmfest.com.au/ >
June 12-15 Hamilton, NZ	New Zealand National Agricultural Fieldays Phone: +64 7 843 4499 Website: < www.fieldays.co.nz >

Women on Farms Gathering to be held in March

THE 30th annual Women on Farms Gathering will be held at Warragul, Vic, in March. Speakers, catering, tours, workshops, fun activities and venues are all organised.

The 2019 weekend event, from March 29 to March 31, includes a celebratory dinner at Gumbuya World, and thought-provoking speakers, including organic farmer from Piedmont Liz Clay and *Weekly Times* senior editor Camille Smith.

Workshops covers a wide range of subjects including equine nutrition, fitness sessions, bees wax food wraps, fundraising and grant applications, gardening without water, line dancing, macrame, making dome desserts, naturopathy,

making sourdough, supporting mental health, women and property and women and tractors.

The West Gippsland group is the longest established in Victoria. It hosted the first, 10th and 20th Victorian Gatherings. It has more than 70 members and has monthly events, usually farm visits.

"All the information needed by those interested in attending can be found on our fabulous website," one of the organisers, Evelyn Lillie, Yarragon South, Vic, said.

Rural women require resilience, tenacity, patience, hard work, the company of like-minded folk and an open mind to new skills and knowledge.

Chairperson of the organising group Lyn Link, Garfield North, Vic, said that she was proud of her team.

"A manager of farm books becomes a treasurer," she said.

"One woman with computer talents sets up an accessible information platform.

"Another woman with leadership skills, me, honed by directing cattle through tricky gateways, becomes a chairperson. Yet another volunteer or two with excellent contacts among agricultural businesses gets to work seeking local sponsorships."

Contact: Website <www.wofg19.org.au>.

The 'bloat' that isn't bloat



By Ee Cheng Ooi*

Key points

- ✓ Vagal indigestion causes bloat-like symptoms
- ✓ Usually affects just one cow, while bloat usually affects multiple cows
- ✓ Treatment is often difficult

BLOAT is one of the few calls we get which is an absolute, full-blown emergency. It happens when a cow eats lush feed (usually lucerne or legumes), which froths up in the rumen, preventing her from burping. The gas builds quickly, and the cow begins to blow up like a balloon. Soon, she's struggling to breathe. There's an extremely narrow time-frame to relieve the pressure by stabbing the rumen (remember: left side, and use a knife with a hilt if possible) and drenching with oil, and it's rarely just the one cow that is affected.

So, we get the call. Heart thumping, you collar the vet student, grab some paraffin, and dash out to the car park. On the way to the farm, you're pushing the speed limit and in your mind the problem becomes bigger and bigger — how many cows are affected? Does the farmer know what to do? Who will be around to help? How many are going to be dead by the time you get there — maybe the whole herd?

You pull up next to the dairy and dash over to the crush, panting and puffing, with trochar in hand.

Strangely, there doesn't seem to be many dead or dying cows around.

Instead, there's just the one cow standing in the yards, chewing quietly. Her left side is blown up, but she doesn't look particularly unhappy. The farmer walks up scratching his head. What's going on here?

You breathe a sigh of relief. It's vagal indigestion.

Vagal indigestion is uncommon but easy to diagnose. The cow looks like a 'papple' when viewed from behind. Both lower quadrants are usually bloated, and the left upper quadrant of the abdomen is bloated (apple),



The cow looks like a 'papple' when viewed from behind. Both lower quadrants are usually bloated, and the left upper quadrant of the abdomen is bloated (apple), while the right upper quadrant is normal (pear).

while the right upper quadrant is normal (pear). Because this happens gradually, the cow has time to adapt to the situation and is unlikely to be in respiratory distress (gasping for air). It's still worth checking that there are no other problems, but diagnosis is generally straightforward.

Unfortunately, treatment isn't quite so simple.

Usually, the cause is damage to the vagus nerve, which runs from the brain and along the oesophagus, all the way to the rumen. It's one of the longest nerves in the body. This exposes it to a lot of potential problems, including drenching injuries, internal abscesses, infection in the chest or abdomen, hardware disease (wire in the guts), cancer, twisted stomach (left displaced abomasum [LDA] or right displaced abomasum [RDA]), and chronic pneumonia. Occasionally, it's caused by something unrelated to the nerve, like a small growth stopping food from moving out of the abomasum, or a heavy twin pregnancy.

Whatever the cause, improper emptying causes a build-up of gas and fluid in the rumen, resulting in swelling of the left abdomen.

It can be difficult to tell what the original cause was without further testing (with the exception of pregnancy). Some of the causes are very treatable — pregnancy, for example, can be cured by calving. Some, however, are

completely incurable, like cancer or scarring from injuries.

My preferred approach is to provide short-term respite by releasing the gas with a stomach tube or a wide-bore needle (this isn't without its risks — I usually clean and prepare the area first, and avoid stabbing too many times). You can almost hear the cow giving a sigh of relief when you do it.

Then, if I suspect hardware disease or cancer, I'm afraid there's not much more to be done.

However, if the cow is not terribly old or seems otherwise healthy, I like to trial a course of antibiotics and anti-inflammatories to cover infectious or inflammatory problems. If there's no response, then I reason that the cause must be irreversible.

For these cases, a trochar can be placed, allowing farmers to release pressure regularly until the cow has made it through calving or a withholding period. On a few occasions, I've left a stomach tube with the farmer so that he can deflate the cow as necessary (with the expectation that I'll get my tube back). This is a time-consuming exercise, so not everyone opts for it.

For highly valued cows, we can try exploratory surgery to find the cause, with a view to correcting it if at all possible. This might work for very small lumps or abscesses obstructing the flow of food, but we can do nothing for problems in the chest or neck. Also, adhesions or hardware disease might be diagnosable this way, but cannot be fixed — even with surgery. So it can be hit or miss (usually the latter, in my experience).

Hopefully, this helps to differentiate frothy bloat from vagal indigestion. Bloat is fast and causes respiratory distress; vagal indigestion is gradual. Bloat affects multiple cows whereas vagal indigestion usually just the one. Knowing this may help to reduce unnecessary stabbings — which are never fun to fix. **D**

**Ee Cheng Ooi is a cattle veterinarian and fertility researcher working with the animal health and fertility team at Dairy Australia.*

All comments and information discussed in this article are intended to be of a general nature only. Please consult the farm's vet for herd health advice, protocols and/or treatments that are tailored to a herd's particular needs.

Data helps deal with drought

- Key points**
- ✓ Herd data helps guide decisions to manage drought
 - ✓ Part of DataGene Ginfo program
 - ✓ Genotyping heifers to determine ones to be sold for export

DATA has helped the Cliff family from East Gippsland better negotiate drought.

Anthony, Prue and Poppy, 5, Cliff dairy farm with Anthony's parents, Barry and Suzanne, at Stratford, Vic, on 445 hectares, including leased land, with 202ha of private irrigation.

With sky-rocketing feed costs, the Cliffs can't afford to be milking "passengers". Herd numbers are down to 600-620 from 750 last season.

They've turned to data to ensure they cull cows without affecting the long-term viability of their business or set-back their breeding program.

This data includes herd records, herd test and pregnancy test results, backed-up by genomic information from their involvement in DataGene's Ginfo project — Australia's genetic information reference herd.

In particular, the Cliffs refer to a cow's production index (PI), which is a measure of a cow's production compared with the herd average.

This was the first season in the family's 74 years at the property that has had a winter crop fail. Harvest was also disappointing — the volume of hay cut was down 86 per cent on last year and the soil's "dry down to six feet". Following a 44-degree day in late January, pasture quality and quantity reduced.

Data was used to determine which autumn-calving portion of the herd — up to 20pc of the herd calves at this time of year — would be dried-off.

"We used it to determine which of the cows were doing the best as some had fallen (in milk production) and were close to having to be dried-off early," Anthony said.

"So, we decided those with a higher PI, for example, the top 20pc of the autumn calvers, would be given a little bit more of a holiday, kept and dried-off earlier."

Anthony said without data, they "would be flying blind" when it came to culling.

Using data for decisions, they don't have any "fringe dwellers", especially



Farm hand Reuben Ellis, farmer owners Barry, Anthony and Suzanne Cliff, and farm hands Gemma Mowbray and Matthew Bryne.

'It (data) is helping the overall farm profitability because we are saving money.'

as bail feeding has been reduced to less than 1 tonne of concentrate per cow/lactation.

"It (data) is helping the overall farm profitability because we are saving money," Anthony said.

"We are putting the slim amount of pasture we have into the cows, so that they are making us some margin.

"If they are not in-calf and they are not putting milk in the vat, the only way to determine that is with herd test and pregnancy test data."

Data has always played a pivotal role in the management of the farm business; during dry times the purpose of this data had changed.

The Cliff family started herd testing in 1975, 10 years after they began using artificial insemination (AI).

They still herd test seven times a year.

Describing data as providing "more tools in the bag" for managing the business, Anthony said the strong history of data was the catalyst for becoming involved in the Ginfo project.

Their Holsteins were genotyped and then matched against the herd-book records as part of the project, which started six years ago.

The Ginfo reports, supplied by Data-

Gene, are also a source for the Cliffs to cross-check their calving book and ensure all breeding details are accurate.

The Cliffs will genotype their spring-calving Holstein heifers in coming months and following pregnancy testing, they will determine the ones to be sold for export.

Looking into the future, Anthony believes data will play an even larger role in dairy farming, but its collection and analysis will be easier.

"There will be more, and better data and you won't have to sit in the office to manipulate that data," Anthony said. **D**

Join Ginfo

DATAGENE is looking for more herds with excellent records to join Ginfo. As well as contributing to improvements to the industry's genetic evaluation system, participating herds have two-year old heifers genotyped and classified for free and the option to have young calves genotyped at a discounted price. They also receive a year's free subscription to the Herd-Data App and early access to DataGene reports and tools. To join, herds need to be regularly herd testing and recording the following in software such as HerdData, Mistro, EasyDairy or at the herd test centre: calvings, matings, sires and dams, pregnancy test results, clinical cases of mastitis, health events and workability. For more information, contact Erika Oakes at DataGene, phone 0427 995 248 or email eoakes@datagene.com.au.

A little mould means big problems

Key points

- ✓ Mycotoxins occur in mouldy forage
- ✓ Present significant animal health issue
- ✓ Farmers can use products to counter the effects

MYCOTOXINS can cause various problems for herd health. GippsDairy's Ruairi McDonnell asked Feedworks nutritionist Ian Sawyer about what to look out for when feeding out silage.

Why should farmers be thinking about mycotoxins?

Mycotoxins are small, highly poisonous, highly toxic compounds that are produced by a fungi, which we know better as mould. So when we have mouldy forage, we have a heightened risk of mycotoxins, which can create several bad outcomes.

So what are the problems they cause?

Mycotoxins tend to produce three broad problems, depending on what mycotoxin you have. They can result in reduced reproductive performance and abortion as well as we also worry about hoof problems, increased cell counts and decreased milk production. They can also lead to the lowering of a cow's resistance to disease. All of those things are bad, but the loss of calves is a pretty overt version of it.

So what are the options for farmers who already have some mouldy silage in the pit?

There are a range of products you can buy in the commercial world that are mycotoxin management products. There's probably 30 or so available in Australia. Some are more effective than others. If I was to advise someone, I would say get something that isn't just a binder but is a binder and deactivator. That way you will capture more toxins and more types of toxins. No product will capture 100 per cent of the toxins, but if you can get your capture rate up, then you have less impact on the herd at the end of the day.

Sometimes you hear farmers say white mould is okay. Is that a bit of an old wives' tale?

It certainly is an old wives' tale.



White mould can be dangerous.

'Moulds don't like growing if there is no air.'

People sometimes look at white mould and say 'that's okay, don't worry about that'. In actual fact, a number of the fungi produce a white mould that is pretty dangerous. One of the toxins that comes out of that would be vomitoxin. Now anything with vomit in its name is not likely to be too flash. There's also a mycotoxin that can cause cows to abort. Both of those come from a white mould.

For people buying feed, how can they reduce mycotoxin risk?

Before you actually go out and test for mycotoxins, which costs about \$300 and takes a while, it's an easy thing to do a mould count first. It costs less than a box of beer these days, so it's pretty good value, especially if you are concerned about where the stuff has come from.

How can farmers minimise mycotoxins before they occur?

Moulds don't like growing if there is no air. What allows it to grow is when air has got in somewhere. So



Mouldy forage means a heightened risk of mycotoxins.

if we're not very good at getting our stack with weight on it and getting the air out of it when we compress it or making our round bales tight and wrapping enough plastic around, then air will get in. When air gets in, mould grows. When the ensiling process is done right, you get really good fermentation and acid. That pickling effect helps stop the mould growing. When we open the face we need to manage it so it has a nice tight face and air doesn't penetrate.

Managing ryegrass grazing in autumn

Key points

- ✓ Get grazing management right to maximise production
- ✓ Renovate poor-performing pastures if break is early
- ✓ Use nitrogen judiciously to lift growth

OVER summer in south-eastern Australia, with limited rainfall on rain-fed areas of the farm, leaf emergence rates slow, pasture growth rates decline and there is increased grazing pressure on any irrigated areas of the farm.

TO get the greatest benefit from the autumn break consider:

- Grazing management.
- Pasture renovation.
- Nitrogen use.

Grazing management

The golden standard for grazing management to maximise the amount of pasture grown is to graze at the 2.5-to-3 leaf stage or before canopy closure. Grazing paddocks past the 3-leaf stage results in wasted pasture, while grazing pasture too early leads to lower pasture production.

If there is not enough pasture in the feeding platform to feed the cows, demand needs to be decreased (e.g. dry-off or cull cows) or supply needs to be increased (e.g. use supplements or nitrogen).

Increasing the grazing area to meet cow requirements leads to lower pasture production as it is likely pasture will be grazing before the 3-leaf stage

and this increases the need for supplement during winter.

There are three principles to follow to maximise pasture consumption and ensure good pasture quality.

1. Grazing rotation based on leaf stage and emergence rate.

Grazing rotation is closely linked to the leaf emergence rate, which varies based on temperature and moisture. After the autumn break, moisture should not be limiting so leaf emergence rate will mainly be driven by temperature (typically 10-15 days per leaf in early autumn). Monitor leaf emergence rates and slow the rotation as leaf emergence rates slow into the winter (13-25 days per leaf). Longer rotations are recommended to build pasture cover as temperatures decrease.

2. Grazing duration.

Grazing duration of an area should not for longer than 2-3 days. If allowed, cows will eat the pasture regrowth, which will slow growth rates and reduce pasture yield. Back fencing can help to avoid this.

3. Post-grazing residual targets are reached.

Aim for a post-grazing residual height of 4-6 centimetres between the clumps. Supplementing the pasture allocation can help match cow demand and allow pasture regrowth when residual targets are not met.

Pasture renovation

Consider renovation if 30-50 per cent of the area being assessed is not ad-

If the autumn break occurs late, it may be better to use a short-term crop ...

equately covered by desired pasture plants. If the autumn break occurs early enough, it is an ideal time to renovate pasture.

If the autumn break occurs late, it may be better to use a short-term crop to grow feed for the milking herd and undertake the pasture renovation in spring. Renovation of pastures on a portion of the milking area each year also allows the farm to capitalise on genetic improvements in ryegrass varieties.

Planning ahead

When the autumn break occurs and how it is managed will have a big impact on feed availability over winter. Update the feed budget to ensure there is going to be enough feed on hand to maintain cow production and body condition through the winter.

Nitrogen use

For detailed information on effective N use in autumn, read the Dairy Australia's story with expert Prof Richard Eckard on page 96 in this edition of the *Australian Dairyfarmer* or visit feed.dairyaustralia.com.au. 

Focus moves to feed planning

AS seasonal conditions across regions and sub-regions continue to be variable and farmers manage high feed and water costs Dairy Australia is providing a stronger focus on feed planning through to spring.

Dairy Australia program manager Neil Webster said Dairy Australia was continuing to encourage farmers to review their situation, monitor feed availability and pricing trends.

"The common thread for all farmers is the need to understand their herd's feed requirements and to continue to revise plans as the season unfolds," he said.

"Everyone's planning horizon is different. The job is to manage through to next spring, though we're

mindful that some farmers have very immediate issues they are managing and continue to operate in challenging feed and water markets".

The Feed Planning campaign involves on-the-ground activities and support delivered through Regional Development Programs (RDPs). This includes seasonal updates, workshops, social events, discussion groups and 1:1 support through the Taking Stock program.

Current and relevant technical information is also available on a dedicated website feed.dairyaustralia.com.au and also through RDPs. To find out what's happening in the region and available support, contact an RDP — details are inside the back cover of this edition of the *Australian Dairyfarmer* magazine.



The Feed Planning campaign includes technical resources for different regions.

Maximising autumn with nitrogen

- Key points**
- ✓ Nitrogen can be cost-effective if soil moisture is right
 - ✓ Understand factors affecting nitrogen response
 - ✓ This season wait until it rains

NITROGEN can be a cost-effective way to grow extra feed this autumn and beat high bought-in feed prices, providing soil moisture is right.

University of Melbourne nitrogen expert Professor Richard Eckard said pasture response to N in autumn was often less than those in spring due to low soil moisture and high soil N, both as a consequence of a dry summer.

“Typically at the autumn break when the rain starts there’s not enough soil moisture — if you apply N too early as much as 30 per cent of the nitrogen can be lost,” he said.

This is backed up by research into Victorian dairy regions that shows only two of the past 20 years have shown profitable nitrogen responses on dairy farms, when applied at the autumn break.

A breakeven response to nitrogen is usually 5 kilograms extra dry matter for every 1kg N applied.

“At the moment with the current nitrogen price at \$690 a tonne — that’s \$300/t of high-quality pasture you are ‘buying’ onto the farm,” Dr Eckard said.

“Once you’ve had the autumn break and you are in May, when soil moisture is higher, then the whole scenario changes. Then you could be getting a 10:1 response to nitrogen.

“If you can utilise that at 100pc then you are getting quality forage on the farm at \$150 a tonne and you just can’t match that with bought-in feed.”

What influences response rate to nitrogen?

The amount of pasture grown in kilograms of extra dry matter per kilogram N applied is the ‘response rate’. For example, at a response rate of 10:1, 30kg N/ha produces an additional 300kg DM/ha of extra pasture.

The response rate is dependent on:

- Amount of available N in the soil: In an autumn following a dry summer, there is likely to be a significant

Table 1: Cost of additional pasture at \$690/tonne urea

Extra Response	Nitrogen Use Efficiency	Utilisation %	Cost (\$/tonne dry matter)
High response	20:1	100	75
		75	100
Average response	10:1	100	150
		75	200
Low response	5:1	100	300
		75	400
Very low response	3:1	100	500
		75	666

‘If you can utilise that at 100pc then you are getting quality forage on the farm at \$150 a tonne.’

amount of N in the soil, mineralised from the organic matter over the summer, but remains unutilised because of low summer pasture growth. Additional N fertiliser at the autumn break may not achieve an N response, as the pasture is short of water not N.

- Soil moisture: Too much (i.e. water-logged conditions) or too little (i.e. water-stress conditions) will lower the N response. The best response is from a soil moisture profile that is not limiting growth. At the autumn break, following a dry summer, there is commonly insufficient soil moisture to support high pasture growth rates. Wait for adequate rainfall, with additional rain predicted before applying N.

- Soil temperature: the warmer the soil, the greater and more immediate the N response. This is less of an issue in autumn but may be a limitation from applying N in late May.

- Plant growth: the higher the growth rate potential, the greater and more immediate the response to N fertiliser.

- Rate of N applied: there is a diminishing response at higher application rates, but also an unreliable response at lower (less than 20kg N/ha) rates. Using a response rate (e.g. 10:1), and




Even at low response rates nitrogen application could be economical this season, due to high supplementary feed prices.

knowing the additional pasture required to fill the feed gap (e.g. 400kg DM/ha), the rate of N required (40kg N/ha) to be applied to an area can be determined.

- The availability of other plant nutrients and soil pH, species composition and soil compaction can affect N response. Get the basics of optimising plant growth first or only apply N together with the limiting nutrients.

Nitrogen-fertilised pasture can be cheaper than purchased feeds, if applied under the right conditions and utilised well. Even at low response rates nitrogen application could be economical this season, due to high supplementary feed prices.

Do not graze perennial pasture for 7 to 14 days after N application, to avoid excess nitrate or non-protein nitrogen in the cows’ diet. 

For more information visit <feed.dairyaustralia.com.au>.

Forage index puts science into sowing

Key points

- ✓ Forage Value Index ranks more than 20 perennial ryegrass cultivars
- ✓ Must meet strict criteria for inclusion
- ✓ Shows performance in different regions at different times of year

DAIRY farmers renovating their pastures in autumn have been urged to refer to Dairy Australia's Forage Value Index (FVI) to help them make more informed decisions when selecting perennial ryegrass cultivars.

The FVI enables farmers to choose cultivars that will deliver the best results based on their location, farming system and forage needs.

Dairy Australia's farm profit and capability group manager, Peter Johnson, said the index ranked the performance of more than 20 of Australia's most popular perennial ryegrass cultivars, relative to typical climatic conditions across the country's south-eastern dairy regions.

"By giving farmers the tools to put a really strong evidence base behind their decisions, the FVI can make a real difference to farm profitability," Mr Johnson said.

Australian dairy farmers invest about \$80 million each year on renovating pastures with perennial ryegrass cultivars.

"Before the FVI, there was very little independently tested information on the traits and capabilities of these existing cultivars so farmers tended to stick with what they knew," Mr Johnson said.

"Now they have an accurate and reliable way to assess the economic value of individual cultivars, it's a lot easier for farmers to make the decision to invest in pasture renovation and increase their productivity and profitability."

To be included in the FVI, each cultivar must have seasonal yield data from at least three, three-year trials using strict experimental protocols. Cultivars are then scored by multiplying their seasonal yield against the economic value, as determined by case studies in different dairy regions.



Australian dairy farmers invest about \$80 million each year on renovating pastures with perennial ryegrass cultivars.

'The Forage Value Index gives me the confidence that this is the best ryegrass that I can sow for my conditions.'

Farmer experience

Since its introduction in 2017, the FVI has become a key part of the decision-making process for West Gippsland dairy farmer Aubrey Pellett. Mr Pellett now uses the FVI information as an independent analysis of what cultivars perform best in his environment. He calves his herd in autumn and the whole herd grazes through winter, so winter growth, in particular, is highly valuable to his operation. "I look at the seasonal tables in the FVI Tables quite closely, as well as the overall FVI ranking," he said.

"I'm looking for cultivars that respond quickly in autumn and grow strongly through winter.

"I've planted the same pasture variety for the past 10 years so I want to check to see that the cultivar I'm using is still a high performer — I'm looking to change things this year, there are a few cultivars that look like they perform better."

The investment in new ryegrass species is one of the biggest decisions that farmers can make — and it can make and break a season.

For Mr Pellett, having a higher level of certainty when it comes to choosing pasture species will help reduce risk in his farm business and capitalise on favourable seasonal conditions.

"One of the biggest barriers to choosing new cultivars is knowing whether you will get a benefit from the new cultivar over and above what you are using already," he said. "Because it is a substantial investment, you need the security of knowing you can get a better yield."

Mr Pellett said he could see huge benefits for farmers who used the tool to select their ryegrass species. "Ryegrass is the foundation of my farming business so I want to make sure when I put in a new ryegrass in the ground, I'm hoping it's going to be there for more than five years, so I want to get the best ryegrass that I can," he said.

"The Forage Value Index gives me the confidence that this is the best ryegrass that I can sow for my conditions."

For more information go to dairyaustralia.com.au/FVI. See FVI tables on pages 66 of this edition of the Australian Dairyfarmer.

What's happening in your region?

Contact your Regional Development Program



Murray Dairy

Ph: 03 5833 5312

dairyaustralia.com.au/murray-dairy



WestVic Dairy

Ph: 03 5557 1000

dairyaustralia.com.au/westvic-dairy



Dairy NSW

Ph: 1800 270 778

dairyaustralia.com.au/dairynsw



Subtropical Dairy

Ph: 0431 197 479

dairyaustralia.com.au/subtropical-dairy



DairySA

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Ph: 0408 951 695

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Western Dairy

Ph: 0429 110 485

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DairyTas

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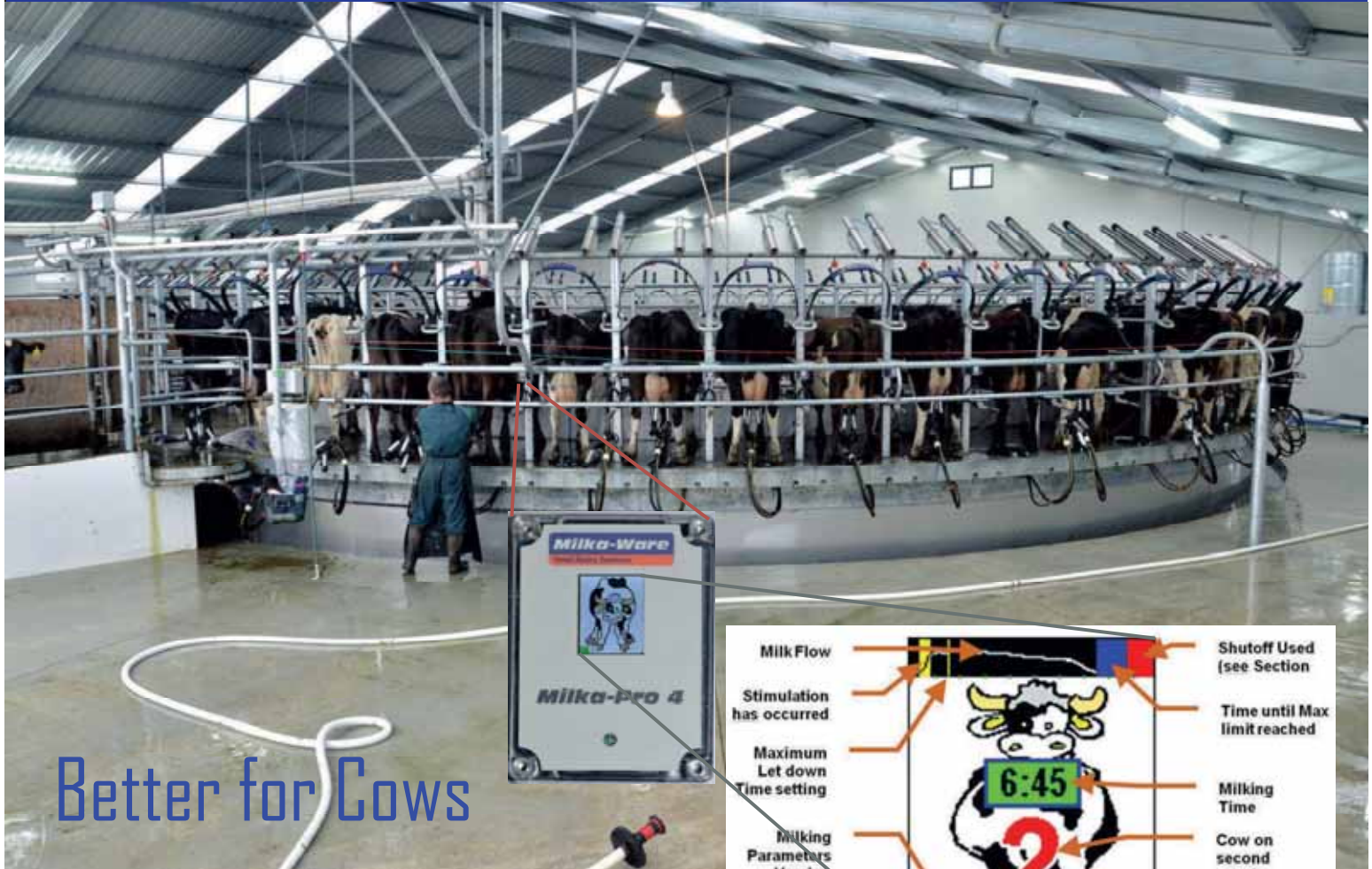
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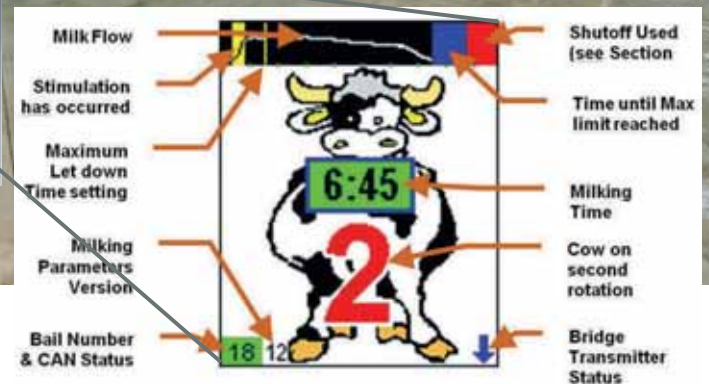


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