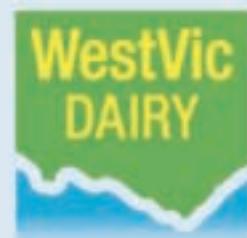


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DAIRY NEWS

NEWS ABOUT HOW DAIRY FARMERS' LEVIES ARE INVESTED

A special *On The Land* supplement



CONFIDENCE IS

HIGH

New statistics for western Victoria farms



Dairy farmers Matt and Allison Reid recently completed an Advanced Diploma of Agriculture with the NCDEA.

Use your work skills to gain a qualification through NCDEA

HAVE you worked on a dairy farm for a while but don't hold a formal qualification?

Did you know that you could gain a qualification from the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA) by having those skills recognised?

The NCDEA offers dairy workers, farm supervisors and managers the opportunity to go through a Skills Recognition process with an NCDEA assessor who can help you determine which qualification you may be eligible for.

Two local farming couples have recently achieved qualifications through the Skills Recognition Program by having their experience and skills formally recognised.

Matt and Allison Reid are dairy farmers and parents to three young children at Carlisle River, and recently completed an Advanced Diploma of Agriculture with the NCDEA, taking advantage of the skills recognition process.

Matt and Allison employ three full-time staff and three casual staff and they

plan to milk 750 cows next year in their expanding dairy operation. They also participate in community organisations, with Matt being vice-chairman of the WestVic Dairy Board.

Matt and Allison regard their experience with the NCDEA staff to be a rewarding one which gave them a boost in confidence to be able to put all the skills they have learnt in running their farm into a qualification. They also believe that this will help them in dealing with finance companies and other professional bodies into the future.

"We would recommend the skills recognition process to anyone," they said.

"The interview process and collection of evidence was actually quite enjoyable; we think if you don't enjoy talking about what you do then something's wrong.

"We try to motivate our staff to look forward to their jobs and increase their knowledge and raise the bar for their personal goals.

"We find education keeps people engaged and keen. We

don't mind if staff leave us to go up the ladder within the industry," they said.

Reggie and Tanya Davis have also been through Skills Recognition with the NCDEA.

They have four children at school, milk 550-600 cows in a split calving herd in Tesbury, alongside Reggie's parents and a staff of six.

Reggie and Tanya undertook the skills recognition process of gaining formal recognition for skills and knowledge that have been obtained through work history, previous study and life experience. Skills recognition is an evidence gathering process without formal training to recognise the existing strengths of the farmer and identify any gaps where further training may be an advantage.

"I found the Skills Recognition Program to be very well presented and because of my many years of farming experience, personally found the process to be non-threatening and very attainable," Reggie said.

"I also found the staff at

NCDEA good to work with. When I consider what was in it for me and my wife Tanya, I believe the most rewarding aspect was receiving recognition for our many years of farming where the years clock past and you don't take time to step back and look at your achievements."

"Being able to say I have an Advanced Diploma of Agriculture after so many years of hard work, learning, farm improvement and expansion is definitely a good thing," Reggie said.

"I also participated in the First Aid and Farm Chemicals User's courses to update my certificates and also found that area of training to be very good."

"I would recommend the process to anyone, to move forward in seeking official recognition for all the skills and knowledge they have gained over many years," Reggie said. "You never know when a formal award may be needed in the future."

For information on NCDEA dairy farming courses visit www.ncdea.edu.au or phone 1300 0 NCDEA (1300 62332).

DAIRY farmers in western Victoria are confident about their future and ready to make more capital investments on their properties.

New statistics released by WestVic Dairy show that 64 per cent of farmers made on-farm capital investments last financial year and 52 per cent want to make capital purchases in the coming year. That number is expected to grow as issues arise during the year.

Machinery, fencing and tracks were the major areas of investment.

Seventy-four per cent of dairy farmers in western Victoria said they were confident about the future, compared to a national average of 70 per cent.

The statistics also show the average herd size in the region is now 300 cows, up from 286 in 2010, and the average dairy farm is 183 hectares. Average cow production remained steady at 6036 litres.

The farm facts were obtained from the National Dairy Farmer Survey.

WestVic Dairy executive officer Mike Weise said the figures showed that dairy farmers were looking forward to a bright future.

Although 53 per cent of dairy farmers said milk price was the main challenge for their enterprise, Mr Weise said step-ups at the end of the financial year were quelling

those concerns and farmers were looking at other ways to ensure profitability.

"Farmers are realising that it is not only milk prices driving their profitability and that there are a number of ways they can become more profitable, through better use of nutrients, training staff to be more efficient and generally driving down costs," he said.

While 29 per cent of respondents expect to milk more cows over the next year, a further 29 per cent believe their herd size will decrease. The average milking herd size is predicted to be about 0.5 per cent higher than this year.

Forty-two per cent of the region's dairy farmers expect higher herd production by 2013-14, while only 2 per cent predict lower production levels.

The vast majority of dairy cows — 96 per cent — are fed grain; grain mixes or concentrates at an average rate of 1.51 tonnes per cow per year.

This was up from 1.35 tonnes in 2010.

Most western Victorian farmers (63 per cent) used seasonal calving.

Meanwhile, 29 per cent used split and/or batch calving.

Only 8 per cent calved all year round.

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Students learn to ride safely

Quad bike and tractor training in schools



Trinity College Colac campus Certificate II in Agriculture students were given further insight into the safe operation of tractors and quad bikes at an NCDEA training day.

THE safe operating use of tractors and quad bikes has expanded into secondary schools with the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA) Terang campus currently training 25 students of Trinity College, Colac.

The year 10 and year 12 students are undertaking the courses as part of their studies in Certificate II in Agriculture, with the training taking place on the Trinity College Colac campus instructed by NCDEA industry trainers, Hugh McLaren,

Heidi Knowles and Stephen Bateman.

The basic quad bike rider training incorporates both theory and practical training so students develop skills in pre-ride checks, basic quad bike operation, body positioning for cornering, safely riding up and down slopes and reversing. There is also an importance placed on the wearing of the correct personal protective equipment. In the operating of tractors, skills are developed in appropriate ratio and gear selection, implement

attachment and reversing. Kyle Driscoll, from Barwon Downs, said he "liked the option of having two different styles and models of tractors to practice on, as both tractors had different features that provided him with well rounded training in tractor operation."

Agricultural studies co-ordinator at Trinity College, Nathaniel Banan, said: "I can see the practical training proving attractive for the students and their growing awareness of agricultural training in the school system".

The tractors used are generously supplied by LandPower Colac. Industry trainer Hugh McLaren said: "The NCDEA would formally like to acknowledge LandPower Colac, and in particular the managing director, Mr Tony McVilly, for making this possible."

For further information on training on the safe use of operating quad bikes and tractors in your area please contact the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia on 1300 062 332 or visit www.ncdea.edu.au

Outlook for spring on-line now

By ZITA RITCHIE
DAIRY SERVICES, DPI
WARRNAMBOOL



THOSE who missed the Milking the Webinar presentation on Friday, August 12 — A Climate Outlook for Spring, can now view it at their leisure on their own computer.

A webinar is an online seminar where images appear on your computer screen at the same time you are listening to a presenter.

This webinar contains a rainfall and temperature update for Victoria, an explanation of Victoria's key climate drivers and what they are indicating for spring, as well as what some global models are predicting for spring.

To view this recording, contact Zita Ritchie at DPI Warrnambool on 5561 9926 or email zita.ritchie@dpi.vic.gov.au and she will email you the link.

Youngsters get a taste of our way of life

EVERY school term, 45 year 9 students from different schools across Victoria descend on the south-west, learning about our environment, our natural attractions, our indigenous culture and our greatest industry: dairy.

The students spend a term at the Alpine School for Student Leadership, Gnurad-Gundidj campus, Glenormiston.

In those nine weeks, they focus on personal development and team learning projects.

It was also a chance to gather more understanding of our region and what it offers than some locals have.

One of their many activities is to spend a morning at DemoDAIRY. Small groups of students spend two-and-a-half hours with DemoDAIRY's project officer, learning about dairying, its relationship with other land uses and the environment, and a short session with

WestVic Dairy's Careers co-ordinator for an overview of the industry and the career paths it offers.

The culminating event of the students' term at Gnurad Gundidj is a Great Debate.

The students are broken into four groups: farming, environmental, indigenous and tourism.

Putting together the information they have gathered over the course of their stay, each group has to argue why they would be the best managers of a substantial parcel of land near Cobden. The Gnurad Gundidj students who visited in August hailed from Braybrook, Debney Park, Rainbrook and Daylesford. It is to be hoped that their brief but compelling exposure to the dairy industry and the south-west region will encourage some of them to put agriculture into the mix when considering their future education and career options.



WVD careers co-ordinator Robyn Vale with some of the Gnurad Gundidj students at DemoDAIRY.

Farmers confident about the future

FROM PAGE 7

Sixteen per cent of dairy cows were sold or culled in the past year.

Hay and silage was purchased by 57 per cent of farmers. More than 50 per cent of dairy farms in the region employ paid staff.

Meanwhile, 37 per cent are run by the owner and a partner or by an owner-operator only.

WestVic Dairy chairman John Dalton said the figures indicated positive times ahead for dairy farmers.

"We appreciate that some farmers are still hurting from the wet conditions and financial pressures, but overall there is a positive outlook in the industry," Mr Dalton said. "It is a good time to be taking advantage of those opportunities."

To view the full report visit www.dairyaustralia.com.au/situation-outlook

WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

Overseas employee option pays dividends for farmers

Work crosses cultures

SOME dairy farmers who have had difficulty finding and retaining staff have hired people from overseas with success.

Dairy Australia's manager of The People in Dairy program, Dr Pauline Brightling, said employing people from overseas involved special considerations, particularly in terms of training, cultural awareness and ensuring workers have a valid Australian visa with work rights.

"Regardless of their background, every new team member needs to understand the farm's procedures and practices," Dr Brightling said. "Communication may be a little more challenging if English is not their native language. Consider placing more emphasis on demonstration and providing visual reminders such as signs. It is also important to be aware of different cultural backgrounds, and to help your new team member(s) become part of the local community.

"The early days can be quite a learning curve for both employer and employee — understanding each other's culture. But making an effort will make the adjustment phase much easier."

It is also essential to check working rights.

"Some visas prevent or restrict the right of a person to work in Australia. And it is the employer's responsibility to check that every worker from overseas has a valid Australian visa with work rights," Dr Brightling said. The Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) service is a safe, easy and quick way to check the work entitlements of new workers from overseas. VEVO is a free, internet-based system that allows you to check the work entitlements of a visa holder online.

"The service gives you current visa information and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week," Dr Brightling said. There are a number of visa options for lawfully operating Australian employers to sponsor and employ skilled workers who have recognised qualifications and skills or experience in particular occupations required in Australia.

These include the 457 — Business (Long Stay) visa, the Employer Nomination Scheme (ENS) and the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS).

For more information contact the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) Immigration Liaison Officer Suzanne Gillham mobile: 0403 395 154, email: suzanne.gillham@immi.gov.au or visit www.thepeopleindairy.org.au

The People in Dairy Program is an example of your levy at work. For more information on this and other examples of your levy at work visit www.dairyaustralia.com.au

The united nations of Cooriemungle

LIFE has changed dramatically for Chris and Julie Vogels and Chris' parents Frank and Dorothy Vogels since they began employing staff from overseas.

The Vogels milk 1500 cows year-round at Cooriemungle, in south-west Victoria, and have a workforce of nine staff, which includes five Uzbeks, three Filipinos and one Australian.

Mr Vogels said their first experience with employing staff from overseas began four years ago and has been a rapid learning curve and rewarding experience.

"When I came back on the family farm in 1985 we were milking around 180 cows and it was all very straightforward," Mr Vogels said.

"But over time we expanded the property and herd. Once we reached 1000 cows we became increasingly dependent on labour. As the herd got bigger, milking took longer, the work became boring and it became harder and harder to find and retain staff.

"Our location was an issue as well — it was a struggle to get quality people and then get them to stay."

By 2001 the Vogels were milking 1500 cows over two farms and staff management was becoming a consuming issue.

"I chose a career in the dairy industry because I liked dealing with cows, but as we got bigger I found I was spending 90 per cent of my time dealing with staff issues for all the wrong reasons and I hated it," Mr Vogels said.

"In 2005, 2006 and 2007 we found we were struggling to get the cows milked and were so desperate we would take anyone we could get, which was far from ideal.

"I couldn't get away from the farm for an hour because I was always worried.

"It was very hard on the family.

"We've got five kids and Julie was always driving them around for sport — I couldn't help her and never got to see what they were doing because I wasn't confident to leave the farm.

"I began questioning why we were staying in the dairy industry — it was hard and we weren't enjoying it at all."



Employing migrant labour has been successful on a number of Australian dairy farms including that of Chris and Julie Vogels, who are pictured (back right) with their staff at their Cooriemungle dairy, in south-west Victoria.

But the turning point for the Vogels came when they were told about the opportunity to employ an overseas student working in Australia through the International Agricultural Exchange Association (IAEA).

The IAEA offers young travellers between 18 and 30 years an opportunity to work on farms in other countries, and organises their travel, work permits and farm placements.

Mrs Vogels said they thought it sounded great and expected to get a person from Denmark or Germany.

"But then we were offered an agricultural student from Uzbekistan who had been working on a cropping property in Queensland for six months and wanted to work in the dairy industry for the remaining six months of his visa," she said.

"We'd never heard of Uzbekistan and had no idea where it was, but we had nothing to lose so said we'd take him."

Mr Vogels said the decision was the beginning of a new direction in sourcing staff.

"I was overwhelmed with his willingness to work and the mutual respect we had for each other right from the beginning," he said.

"He was reliable and he had a great attitude but after six months he had to go back to Uzbekistan." The Vogels were so impressed they took on

INFORMATION

For more information go to **The People in Dairy:** www.thepeopleindairy.org.au
Visa Entitlement Verification Online: www.immi.gov.au/managing-australias-borders/compliance/info-employers/evo-orgs.htm
457 Visa: www.immi.gov.au/skilled/skilled-workers/sbs/
International Agricultural Exchange Association: 1800 257197 or agriventure@bigpond.com

another two Uzbek students on 12-month working visas through the IAEA.

They arrived with limited English but learnt quickly and displayed the same attitude to work.

The students were then joined by another two Uzbeks on 12-month visas through the IAEA, as well as another Uzbek who had been working on a farm in Gippsland, but who felt culturally isolated.

"We soon became good friends with all of them and have learnt a lot in the process," Mr Vogels said.

"There have been major cultural differences. All the Uzbeks we've employed have been Muslim — we'd never had much to do with anyone who was Muslim before so we've learnt a lot about their culture and religion. They live on-farm and we've given them a car so they have taken the opportunity to travel. They have all been very keen on sport and have played soccer and volleyball locally,

which has given them the opportunity to meet people off the farm."

Cultural differences also extend to agriculture according to Mr Vogels, with all five Uzbeks coming from farms where cows are still milked by hand; there is limited, if any, use of machinery and no concept of occupational health and safety.

"We invested an enormous amount of time in training for the first six months of their stay with us and after that we didn't want them to go," he said.

"The Uzbeks wanted to stay as well so we've supported their applications for permanent residence in Australia. Four have been successful and one is currently applying.

The Vogels have also taken on three Filipino staff who are in Australia on 457 visas, which allows them to work for four years. All three have also been granted permanent residency.

The Filipinos had previously worked on a 15,000-cow dairy in Saudi Arabia and were employed by the Vogels through an employment agent based in Western Australia who specialises in sourcing overseas staff for the mining industry. Using an agent meant the Vogels did not have to deal with the complex paperwork and constant changes to immigration law.

Working in such a big dairy

operation meant the Filipinos had expertise in specific aspects of farm management, such as inseminating and herd health, but lacked general farm experience and have required on-the-job training.

The Vogels admit employing staff from overseas is not for everyone and stress the need to be patient and to take time to learn about the culture and values of the people being employed.

They are quick to defend their staff from claims that they "are taking Australian jobs" or undercutting Australian wages.

"We struggled for years to get locals to work on the farm and found it extremely difficult," Mr Vogels said. "We also pay our staff really well — in the range of \$60,000 to \$83,000 a year per person — because we are happy with their performance. Money isn't the issue, getting the jobs done is.

"The people we've employed from overseas are normal, intelligent people, who want work and have been prepared to travel halfway around the world for the opportunity."

"Our overseas staff have been fantastic and have changed my life.

"I love farming again and can take time off to play sport and spend time with the family.

"I'm happy to go to work because there is a great work environment."

Back-packers offer a short-term labour source

BACKPACKERS in Australia can be a source of short-term, seasonal labour for dairy farmers but Australian employers need to make sure backpackers they employ have the appropriate visa. It is the employer's responsibility to ensure the paperwork is in order and to pay award wages.

Dairy Australia manager for The People in Dairy project, Pauline Brightling, said

employers are responsible for checking every worker from overseas has a valid Australian visa with work rights.

"The working holiday maker program is a cultural exchange program which allows visa holders to supplement their holiday funds through short-term work," Dr Brightling said.

"Working holiday maker visa holders can work full-time

during their 12-month stay in Australia but are limited to a maximum of six months' work with any one employer."

Working holiday visa holders who performed 'specified work', in an eligible regional Australian area for a minimum of three months (88 days) while on their first working holiday (subclass 417) visa may be eligible for a second working holiday visa. 'Specified work'

can include working on a dairy farm. Holders of a second working holiday visa may return to work for a further six months for an employer with whom they worked on their first working holiday visa.

"This means if you employed a working holiday visa holder for six months on their first working holiday visa and they successfully obtained a second working holiday visa,

they would be able to return to your employ for another six months," Dr Brightling said.

The People in Dairy is Dairy Australia's program to assist farmers as they improve how they attract, deploy, retain and develop the people they need to achieve the strategic visions of their businesses. For more information contact The People in Dairy (03) 9620-7283 or www.thepeopleindairy.org.au


WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

Preparing for spring

By HELEN CHENOWETH
DAIRY SERVICES, DPI
WARRNAMBOOL



Farming reminders for September

sulphur are unknown, consider using a nutrient blend rather than straight urea to ensure the best response from applied nitrogen. Best results are also found when nitrogen is applied to actively growing, ryegrass-dominant pastures that are not suffering water-logging stress, so use strategically for better, less variable results.

COWS

Muddy tracks and sharp pebbles may be causing foot problems in the dairy herd, particularly in young cows with softer hooves. Walking through a foot-bath or mat as the cows leave the dairy, or using feed additives, may help. Check with your vet for advice.

Track maintenance, improving drainage, reducing muddy areas and using a soft crumbling rock on tracks will reduce hoof problems in the long term. Another cause of hoof damage is pushing the cows along laneways too fast (let them move at their own pace).

Avoid steep grades on tracks or sharp turns at the exit of the dairy. Reducing the number of small stones being carried into the concrete yard area will greatly reduce your herd's



A practical example of safe ATV riding.

hoof wear and damage. This can be achieved by using sand, sawdust, mulch or old carpet on the approaching laneway. Be aware that some sands can be abrasive.

Underfeeding cows in early lactation will have consequences throughout the entire season such as lower conception rates, reduced rumen capacity and lower production potential; restricting cows now will limit their ability to convert feed efficiently later in the year.

Watch for signs of acidosis in cows, particularly if you are feeding high levels of grain

to compensate for limited pasture.

Mastitis and lame cows due to the wet winter conditions are both important issues to continue to manage well. Continue to try to reduce the mud and slush challenges by repairing damaged areas of tracks where possible, even if only for short term benefit, and work through an effective mastitis control plan, with assistance from your local vet as needed. Both these issues could cost you in loss of production, treatment costs and long-term genetic gain with forced-culling decisions.

BUSINESS

Why not get someone out to do a Taking Stock analysis for your business? A clear picture of what happened on the farm last year may help you make decisions and plan your recovery into the coming season. Private consultants and milk factory field staff are trained to work through these with you.

With the opening milk price announcements now made, now is the time to create a financial and cash flow budget for the 2011-12 season. Keep in touch with your factory field officer to get an estimate of your cash-flow position in the coming months.

This is a busy time of the year so consider the other people in the business and make time to talk to them about other issues besides which cows are calving and what paddock are they to go in next!

Try and plan for a bit of a break off the farm to recharge your personal energy levels, even if it's just for a few hours. It is amazing how a change in perspective can lighten the load a bit on everyone's shoulders.

YOUNG STOCK

Ensure calves for slaughter are not treated with antibiotics or fed milk containing antibiotic residues. If it does happen, observe withholding periods.

Young calves should be housed in a clean, sheltered, well-ventilated area. They should have access to pellets, a fibre source for rumen development and function, and clean water.

Monitor autumn born calves and keep their vaccinations and drenches up to date.

How are the yearlings going? They may be still a couple of months off joining. A timely drench and a diet that meets their requirements will help to keep them growing.

SAFETY TIP

Severe injuries may occur if the ATV rolls over, and it is so easy for that to happen: you hit an object or go down an embankment that's too steep, you don't know how to shift your body weight, you're unfamiliar with the controls, you carry a passenger, the load you're carrying is too heavy or unevenly distributed and/or the brakes and suspension are poorly maintained.

Use personal protective equipment, including a helmet, and insist all people who work on your property do the same!

PASTURES

As days lengthen and temperatures begin to warm pasture growth will improve. Monitor pastures and implement a rotation that will maintain pasture quality coming into spring. That will mean moving from a longer rotation to closer to 30 days and less as our leaf appearance rate speeds up.

Red Legged Earth Mite: monitor your pastures closely and control these pests sooner rather than later.

Spring is the best time to use nitrogen to boost plant growth. It will provide economical growth responses in established crops and pastures with good density. On areas where soil nutrient levels of phosphorus, potassium or



Hungry 4 better feed performance?

A workshop for farmers, their staff and service providers
(Includes WestVic Dairy's AGM)

"Hungry 4 better feed performance" is a workshop that plans to provide Western Victorian dairy farmers with information that:

- Describes the features of different feeding systems
- Explains what farmers do to achieve high performance in each system
- Looks at the risks associated with each system; and
- Explores the practices that drive the best profitability

The free workshop will be held in Warrnambool - registrations are essential. Call WestVic Dairy on 5592 2477 to reserve your place.

The program includes four short presentations with plenty of time for questions and discussion. Speakers include three industry feed specialists: John Morton, Gordon Cleary and Steve Little. The program is free and will include a hot lunch. During this time the WestVic Dairy AGM will be held and new Board members introduced to the region's dairy industry.

This workshop has been planned as a "must attend" event for farmers, their staff and service providers, and any others interested in profitable feeding systems.

DATE: Friday 16 September, 2011
TIME: 10.45am – 2.30pm
VENUE: Wannan Rooms, Koroit Street, Warrnambool
COST: Free
RSVP: WestVic Dairy on 5592 2477 to register by Wednesday, 14 September, 2011

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WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

Mythbusters on four-legs educating youngsters

DO brown cows make chocolate milk?

Does milk come from the supermarket?

Did cows come with the First Fleet?

I don't need calcium until I'm old!

Primary school pupils from 96 primary schools located in Australia's dairying regions will soon be able to dispel these dairy myths. Some can already! Dairy Australia's Picasso Cows curriculum program has been kicking off across Australia's dairying regions throughout 2011.

The project has already been completed by 48 schools in the first half of the year and a further 48 schools will participate in the project between now and the end of November.

In western Victoria, the program is being delivered in the Horsham region this year: Horsham West, Laharum, Horsham, Minyip, Dimboola, and St Michael and St John's primary schools have received blank, life-size fibreglass cows and a curriculum guide which links back to

Dairy Australia's education website www.dairy.edu.au/discoverdairy and other supporting resources.

The pupils will decorate their cow in one of three themes — Fuel for Life, Unbeatable Bones and the new Farm-to-Plate theme. This new theme aims to bridge the gap in knowledge about where milk comes from.

The schools are being encouraged to take the pupils to visit a dairy farm or interview a dairy farmer to further enforce the connection from farm to plate, and in November will showcase their painted cow at a special presentation day.

The winning school will be awarded \$250.

Picasso Cows aims to educate primary school aged children about the value of the Australian dairy industry and the importance of dairy foods as part of a healthy balanced diet and a rich source of calcium.

It also seeks to address an issue highlighted in the 2007 Australian Children's Nutrition and Physical



"Panmoor", the Picasso Cow decorated by students at Panmure Primary School in 2009.

Activity Survey, which showed calcium was the nutrient children were

most likely to be deficient in. It began in 2008 with 10 NSW primary schools.

It has been delivered in different parts of western Victoria since 2009.

Picasso Cows is one of the many examples of the dairy service levy at work.

Staying on top of the calf world

New guide benefits farmers

AUSTRALIAN dairy farmers will continue to stay on top of the changing world of calf rearing thanks to a new guide developed by Dairy Australia and Australian Dairy Farmers.

Rearing Healthy Calves — How to Raise Calves that Thrive, covers all aspects of caring for calves from pre-calving right through to weaning. It will help farmers keep abreast of industry best practices and recent changes in livestock standards.

The guide is based on the experience of leading dairy farmers, animal scientists and vets from around Australia. It includes clear and concise explanations, together with practical examples to help farmers

WHAT'S IN IT

WHAT THE GUIDE COVERS

Pre-calving care: heifer target weights, preparing calving environment.

Clean and comfortable environment: ventilation, drainage, bedding.

Identification and traceability: identifying treated and sale calves, NLIS tags.

Colostrum management: absorption and immunity, assessing quality, timing, quantity.

Good nutrition: role of fibre, milk replacers, grain/concentrates.

Residue risk management: residue testing, contamination scenarios.

Health management: prevention, managing sick calves, vaccination, scours.

Weaning management: nutrition, managing disease, weaning age

Care before transport and sale: new national standards, care prior to pick up.

see the concepts in action. Calf rearing comprises nine essential components which the manual covers in detail. It complements the *Healthy Calves* farmer workshops, and plans are under way for other industry service providers to provide workshops for

farmers across Australia to ensure all farmers have access to the latest information about good calf management.

The guide is available at www.dairyaustralia.com.au or you can contact WestVic Dairy on (03) 5592 2247 for a copy.



Megan Walsh, of the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia, at the Colac Careers Expo.

Exposing career options

CAREERS expos are a fantastic opportunity for the industry to present the diversity of available career and educational pathways to high school students.

At this year's Colac Careers Expo, the industry was again very well-represented.

Bulla Foods and Fonterra each had a stall with a detailed display and friendly staff to explain opportunities to students interested (or

simply curious) to know what opportunities lie behind the bland factory walls.

The farming and farm services sector was presented through an interactive display presented by the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia and WestVic Dairy.

Students were invited to learn about traineeships, certificate courses and university pathways to a range

of dairying and agricultural careers while conducting simple soil tests, peering through a microscope at live bull semen and guessing various mystery objects from a dairy farm.

Five-hundred and fifty students from schools across Colac-Otway Shire attended the expo, and a large percentage of them engaged directly with the dairy industry exhibits.

The carbon tax! What effect will it have on you?

IF there is one issue that has dominated the news more than any other this year it is the federal government's proposed carbon tax.

With divisions running deep across the country, it is a topic on the tip of many

conversations from both sides of the political spectrum.

But what will the proposed carbon tax mean for dairy farmers and other primary producers?

The Glenelg branch of the YDDP is planning to unearth

some answers to that question when it holds a carbon tax event on September 22 at the Heathmere Hall.

Glenelg branch chairman Brian Antony said the tax was a big talking point with a lot of questions for all farmers.

"We know agriculture is exempt for now but what might happen in the future," he said.

And although agriculture won't be hit by the tax, other service industries will be and there could be implications

for farmers. "It is going to have implications for us in that we might have to pay more for certain things," Mr Antony said.

The event will be open to all primary producers. Murray Goulburn has joined

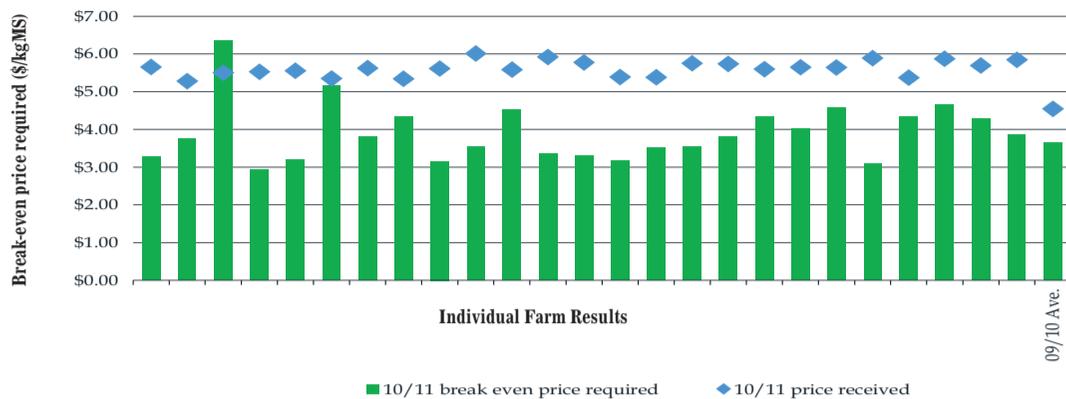
as sponsor for a barbecue lunch.

Speakers are yet to be confirmed and more details will be available closer to the event. To register please contact WestVic Dairy on (03) 5592 2477.

WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

Shining star South-west industry going great guns

Break even milk price required per kilogram of milk solids sold



FARM PHYSICAL DATA – STATE OVERVIEW

| Farm physical parameters | Statewide | North | South West | Gippsland |
|--|-----------|--------|------------|-----------|
| Number of farms in sample | 74 | 24 | 25 | 25 |
| Herd size (max no. milker for at least 3 months) | 305 | 261 | 369 | 285 |
| Annual rainfall 2010-11 | 1,021 | 916 | 1,095 | 1,047 |
| Water used (irrigation + rainfall) (mm/ha) | 1,104 | 1,089 | 1,099 | 1,123 |
| Total useable area (hectares) | 236 | 196 | 322 | 190 |
| Stocking rate (milking cows per useable hectares) | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 1.6 |
| Milk sold (kg MS /cow) | 493 | 495 | 491 | 494 |
| Milk sold (kg MS /ha) | 719 | 762 | 585 | 811 |
| Milk price received (\$/kg MS) | \$5.64 | \$5.69 | \$5.62 | \$5.59 |
| People productivity (milking cows / FTE ¹) | 92 | 89 | 89 | 97 |
| People productivity (kg MS / FTE ¹) | 45,504 | 43,717 | 44,587 | 48,138 |

¹. FTE – Full Time Equivalent, 2400 hours per year

By DANIEL GILMOUR
DAIRY SERVICES, DPI
BENDIGO



THE latest survey of dairy farm profitability, commissioned by the Victorian government and Dairy Australia, has revealed a stunning return to form for the state's dairy producers after a sustained period of low milk prices and more than a decade of drought.

The 2010-11 Dairy Industry Farm Monitor Project has found that last financial year was the best for dairy farmers since 2007-08.

As part of the Dairy Industry Farm Monitor Project, the Dairy Services Branch surveyed 74 farms across the state's three key dairy regions of northern Victoria, south-west Victoria and Gippsland.

The results reflect a widespread and dramatic improvement in the profitability

of dairy operations in each of the three regions, helped by rising milk prices and better seasonal conditions.

The survey found that earnings before interest and tax (EBIT) across the three regions had surged from 65 cents per kilogram of milk solids or \$507 a hectare in 2009-10, to \$1.73 per kilogram of milk solids or \$1260 a hectare in 2010-11.

This is a phenomenal improvement in the financial performance of our dairy farmers who have battled long and hard against more than a decade of drought and a period of low milk prices.

Over the five year history of the project, farms in south-west Victoria have consistently reported strong returns.

EBIT is shown in the graph above as the distance between the price received and the break even price required. The graph shows that in 2010-11 all farms except one recorded a positive EBIT and compared to 2009-10 this EBIT was much higher.

Return on assets (excluding capital appreciation) in the south-west also grew from 3.0 per cent on average to 5.5 per cent.

The higher EBIT was driven predominantly by the higher milk price received, which grew from \$4.55/kg MS

to \$5.62/kg MS year on year.

This was more than enough to offset the \$0.33/kg MS rise in costs which also occurred over the period.

Similarly to previous years, farms in the south-west were larger and ran more cows, albeit at a lower stocking rate than those in other regions.

The south-west also recorded similar variable costs per kilogram of milk solids to farms in Gippsland, while those in the north were higher.

Overhead costs were the highest of any region, mainly due to high repairs and maintenance and imputed labour costs.

While the 2010-11 survey shows great results for the dairy industry in Victoria, it is important to remember that it follows a number of tough years in which many dairy farmers made a loss; as many as half of the producers surveyed across the state in 2009-10 posted negative returns.

What the better results in 2010-11 will do is enable many farmers to consolidate their businesses, reduce debt and attend to essential farm maintenance and improvement works they have had to defer because of the tough operating conditions over recent years.

The top 25 per cent of

producers highlighted the strength of well run dairy businesses, recording profitability levels well above the average. In the south-west these farms on average recorded an EBIT of \$2.50 per kilogram of milk solids, \$1,363/ha and a return on assets of 9.3 per cent.

Confidence in the industry is also very strong with the majority of farms indicating they are likely to increase production during the 2011-12 season. Many are also confident that the milk price will remain stable, or increase.

Similar to the 2009-10 results, milk price, climate and water availability continue to be the biggest issues facing farmers in the next 12 months. Over the longer term, milk price and input costs are the biggest issue facing farmers, while policy decisions around both water and carbon are a major concern to be addressed.

Electronic copies of the 2010-11 Dairy Industry Farm Monitor Project annual report are available by emailing: Farm.Monitor.Project@dpi.vic.gov.au

For more information on the project, including requesting a hard copy of the report, please contact Daniel Gilmour or Claire Swann at DPI Bendigo, telephone (03) 5430 4444.

Time's running out to get benefit from Plasback advocate

IN April 2011 DemoDAIRY projects officer Marni Barber was appointed Plasback advocate for south-west Victoria for six months.

The Plasback program coordinates with suppliers, councils and industry groups to give farmers an environmentally-friendly way of disposing of plastic rather than burying or burning the waste.

Over the past five months Marni has been highlighting the benefits of the Plasback system to farmers at field days, discussion groups, Landcare and focus farmer meetings and undertaking local research of agricultural plastic use.

With less than one month to go to spread the Plasback word, time is running out to include a Plasback presentation by Marni at your next meeting.

It is estimated between 150,000 and 200,000 tons of plastics go onto farms in Australia every year but less than 3 per cent is recycled.

The Plasback program currently has a focus on silage wrap, silage pit covers and baling twine and is hoping that in the near future it will be able to collect woven plastic seed and fertiliser bags and net wrap.

Ms Barber said the system had benefits for farmers, councils and the environment.

"Plasback will provide a long-term, low-cost solution for farmers and councils for the disposal of this waste," she said.

"It will minimise plastic waste to landfill, minimise environmental damage, ensure these valuable products are recycled and make

their use sustainable into the future."

Plasback is a program initiated by Tapex, Australia's leading supplier of crop protection plastics to the agricultural sector.

Under the system farmers bag unwanted plastics into Plasback liners and drop them at council transfer stations.

Plasback liners, which are coloured for a specific plastic waste stream, can be purchased through Murray Goulburn and other leading rural outlets for \$79.95 for a box of 25 which will recycle the wrap off more than 400 round bales of silage.

Environmental manager for Tapex Pty Ltd Ed George said the system was changing existing unsustainable disposal practises by giving farmers a cost effective, viable alternative for recycling. Plasback is working with 27 regional councils in Victoria.

Ms Barber said a Plasback permanent recycling display had been established at DemoDAIRY at Terang for anyone wanting to see the Plasback program in action.

The six-month-long advocacy project was funded by a grant from the Sustainability Covenant partnership between the Plastics and Chemicals Industries Association (PACIA) and EPA Victoria. Although the advocacy project is winding up near the end of September, the Plasback recycling system is now up and running and will continue indefinitely. Contact Marni for further Plasback information or to book her to speak at your next meeting at DemoDAIRY on (03) 5592 2199.



Marni Barber with former Member for Wannon David Hawker at Sheepvention, Hamilton.

Popular demand keeps rapid feed test service going

DUE to popular demand, the dairy RAPID Feed Analysis service will continue to be available to dairy farmers across Victoria and Tasmania.

Dairy Australia's Grains2Milk program leader Dr Steve Little said the dairy feed testing service was now being

offered by George Weston Technologies after a successful 18-month trial. The trial in northern and western Victoria proved it to be commercially viable.

"Feed test results mean you know what the cows are really getting in their diet or exactly what a potential feed supplier is

offering," Dr Little said. The service provides an analysis of the most important nutrients including dry matter, metabolisable energy, crude protein, fat and ash for a range of feeds including pasture, silage, hay, straw, grains, meals and pellets.

"The RAPID Feed

Analysis kits are simple and easy to use," Dr Little said.

"The information on the package is self explanatory and the samples get picked up by the tanker driver from the dairy."

"Most results are available within two days from George Weston

Technologies and are sent via fax and email. The quick turnaround time means you can make decisions quickly."

Dr Little said farmers could also get help interpreting test results by using the My Feed Report tool on the Dairy Australia website.

Grains2Milk is one of the many examples of the dairy service levy at work. Farmers receive a benefit of \$3 for every \$1 invested by Dairy Australia on their behalf.

For more information on this and other levy investments visit www.dairyaustralia.com.au

WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

No Place to stay

Farming brothers concerned about future



The six Place brothers are looking at succession planning with none of their grandchildren likely to take up farming.

WITH more than 20 grandchildren spread across four dairy farms owned by the Place brothers around Camperdown, you would think there would be a few aspiring farmers ready to take over the reins.

Apparently not. The offspring have other careers in mind, leaving the brothers to ponder what will happen to their farms when it's time to move on.

Terry Place, along with his brothers Ray, Glen, Chris, Stephen and Peter, raised the issue of succession planning when they took part in WestVic Dairy's "kitchen forum" program at Tesbury.

Between them the six brothers own four dairy farms in the area, continuing a family tradition that reaches back to their grandfather who was a soldier settler in the area.

WestVic Dairy's new investment plan for 2011-12 has taken up the succession planning issue, with a "managing

transitions" program set to be rolled out using farmer levy funds early in 2012.

Managing transitions is an extension and research project to assist farm businesses to plan and move from one business phase to another, such as from self operation to "employing" a share farmer, from leasing to farm ownership or transferring between generations.

Terry Place said he was pleased that the ageing population of farmers and the need for transition planning was being addressed.

"Everyone is in the same boat when it comes to planning for the future," he said.

"It's getting harder and harder for a young bloke to get started in farming. The costs are becoming prohibitive and they can't get the backing. It's not just the cost of the land; it's also the infrastructure and the cattle and the price of labour to give you a hand.

"It's a matter of trying to build up some capital and then finding a way to ease your way into the industry, maybe through share farming or similar programs."

"The average age of farmers around here is over 50 so it's something we need to think about."

The Place brothers fit into this category.

"Between the Place family we have 34 grandchildren but at this stage not one of them wants to go on the farm."

Terry himself has four children — two are nurses, one an electrician and one a builder.

He milks 380 cows on his Pomborneit farm. Between them the brothers milk more than 1500 cows within 10 kilometres of each other.

"No one wants to milk cows anymore," he lamented. "People look back and see how hard the previous generation worked. It's not like that today but they want to go off to uni or into trades."

"It's difficult for a lot of farmers to find people."

Terry also supports another WestVic Dairy initiative In2Dairy, which aims to attract more trained staff into the industry.

"Anything that helps grow a bit of interest and get more people with some training has got to be good."

Terry plays his part in trying to advance the dairy industry as a participant in the Cows Create Careers project. "I have been involved with taking calves into local schools for the past four years. It's a good start to get them interested in dairying."

"I think that any project which introduces young people to the industry should be encouraged."

And Terry says farming is a good career.

"It hasn't been a bad life for me. Like most farmers, I love being my own boss and in charge of my own destiny."

Technology takes headache out of farming

WALK-OVER weighing, in-line milk volume and fat and protein sensors may be the answer to some of the most frustrating problems in dairying.

The Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI) will hold an on-site field day at two Western District dairies on October 11 to discuss technologies to help deal with some of these issues.

DPI livestock industry development officer Sam Ellis said key veterinarian staff and software specialists were working together with local dairy farmers to assist them into the future.

"Dr Becky Dickinson from Warrnambool Veterinary Clinic is working with Troy Stuart from Framlingham to identify the impacts of weight change and production level on reproductive performance by analysing daily weight and milk production data," Mr Ellis said.

Mr Stuart said he hoped that these technologies would enable early detection and intervention for sick/poor doing animals, therefore helping to improve his conception rates, decrease mastitis and increase milk production.

"Animals are identified at milking through a Jantec ID system, which allows individual cow production and weight data to be collected automatically," Mr Ellis said.

"This data will also enable individual feeding based on animal performance.

"Troy is trialling ideas such as reducing feed for animals producing large volumes of milk around drying off, and he hopes that this, in combination with products such as



Dr Becky Dickinson from Warrnambool Veterinary Clinic.

Teatseal, will help decrease herd mastitis." Mr Ellis said Mepunga dairy farmers Barry and Andrea Smith have taken a slightly different strategy and have invested in yield and cell count in-line sensors.

"Barry could see an opportunity to use the technology to address a cell count issue," he explained.

"Herd test days are over for Barry and his herd's cell count is down. Since the introduction of the sensors at Christmas he hasn't received any downgrades for high SCC on his milk."

The field day will be held on October 11 at both the Stuart and Smith properties.

Guest speakers will include: Dr Becky Dickinson from the Warrnambool Veterinary Clinic, John Van Bergen from Jantec Systems, Dr Bill Morgan from The Vet Group, and dairy farmers Troy Stuart and Barry Smith.

To find out more or to register for this event contact Sam Ellis at DPI by October 7 on 0408 922 712 or email sam.ellis@dpi.vic.gov.au

The trial at the Stuart's farm is being supported by farmers' levies through WestVic Dairy's small grants program.

Planning for the future of your dairy business

By RACHAEL CAMPBELL
DAIRY SERVICES, DPI
COLAC



MANY things can start a family's discussion around farm succession planning.

These can range from a health scare or death in the family to the entry or exit of a key person from the farm business.

It would be great to think every farm had a succession plan, but experience has shown this is not always the case.

Sometimes life-changing events happen and people comment it would have been great if we had a plan in place!

Members from the Port Campbell and South Ecklin discussion groups gathered in June to hear from expert speakers on the critical and

sometimes little discussed topic of farm succession planning.

It brought together both long standing and new members and was a great way of starting to think about this topic in a neutral environment. Participants began thinking about the importance of farm succession planning and the potential consequences of leaving things to chance.

Firstly, the group heard from lawyer Richard Dwyer about the legal side of farm succession planning.

Richard has been working extensively in the area of farm succession planning for 18 years and has a wealth of knowledge in the area. His presentation included important information on farm succession planning, estate planning, family trusts and superannuation.

Throughout the presentation Richard recalled real life stories to reinforce the importance of farm succession planning and the personal and financial costs that can be involved if things aren't planned correctly.

Richard said there were four important As and three important Ds to remember when talking about succession planning.

The important As are:



Consultant Dr Chris Hibbert talking about completing individual succession plans.

Assessment: make sure you have open and frank assessment of all parts of the farm;

Aims: take into account the aims of each individual;

Advice: get advice and don't always go with the first person you talk to; and

Action: start acting on your succession plan.

The three Ds become extremely important when parents are considering transferring a significant part of the farming land to their farming successor.

The three Ds for which protection must be put in place are: Death; Departure from the farm; and; Divorce.

Hopefully, none of these Ds happens to your family, but a good succession plan will protect the farm from the disasters that can follow any of those events.

South-west representative for The People in Dairy program Chris Hibbert continued the conversation about succession planning in dairy farm businesses. He explained a succession plan was just as

important as having a plan for the day-to-day running of the farm.

He said The People in Dairy Program was a Dairy Australia-funded program to help dairy farmers build the people part of their business and succession planning was an important component of this. Chris then focused his discussion on the importance of everyone working in the dairy farm business to have individual plans, which include elements such as roles and responsibilities, career development, reward and also

work/life balance. Ultimately, these individual plans need to be compatible with the farm business plan and not everyone, be they family or employees, will necessarily find their opportunities where they currently work. This is why planning for the future is integral to personal and business success.

Participants were invited to look at the new module on "Planning for the Future", which will shortly be on the The People in Dairy website (www.thepeopleindairy.org.au).

This module will help farmers start the succession planning process.

The NCDEA is also offering training opportunities in this important area. In particular there will be a short course on "Manage Estate Planning" starting October 18 that will explore common dairy business structures, transition planning and communication techniques that can help address issues with the people involved in the business. Contact Jean McGoldrick on (03) 5592 2493 for more information.

If you would like more information or would like to join a dairy discussion group in the south-west, please contact Helen Chenoweth at DPI Warrnambool on (03) 5561 9912.

WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

WHAT'S ON

SEPTEMBER 8

EVENT: Macarthur Focus Farm Group Meeting

WHERE: Macarthur

CONTACT: Jeff Lawes 0418 717 552

SEPTEMBER 15

EVENT: Soil Health Workshop, Koroit

CONTACT: Jeff Lawes 0418 717 552

SEPTEMBER 16

EVENT: Profitable Feeding Systems Workshops and WestVic Dairy AGM

WHERE: Wannon Rooms, Warrnambool

TIME: 10.45am

CONTACT: WestVic Dairy (03) 5592 2477

SEPTEMBER 12

EVENT: Nullawarre Focus Farm Group Meeting

WHERE: Nullawarre North Hall

CONTACT: Jeff Lawes 0418 717 552

SEPTEMBER 20

EVENT: Naringal Focus Farm Group Meeting

WHERE: Naringal

CONTACT: Jeff Lawes 0418 717 552

SEPTEMBER 22

EVENT: Carbon Tax: How will it affect farmers

WHERE: Heathmere Hall

CONTACT: Liza Fahey 03 5592 2477

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Hungry for better feed performance on-farm? Here's some food for thought.

The answers are in the panel below.

True or False?

1. Farms that feed high levels of concentrates per cow per year achieve poorer pasture utilisation (tonnes/hectare/year).
2. Feed conversion efficiency (FCE) is generally better on farms where higher levels of concentrates per cow are fed.
3. The best measure of farm profitability to use when comparing farms with different land and herd resources is "Milk EBITD per hectare".
4. There is no "best" concentrate feeding level or production/feeding system.
5. With feed being the greatest operating input cost on any dairy farm, low feed costs per cow are essential to achieve high farm profitability.
6. In high milk price years, most dairy farms actively pursue higher profit by implementing major management changes.
7. The most profitable dairy farms are consistently profitable year after year.
8. Farmers with a wide range of management styles and sets of attitudes and beliefs run successful dairy farm businesses.

For more information and answers to lots more questions on Profitable Feeding Systems, register for the Hungry 4 Better Feed Performance Workshop, on September 16 (see advertisement on page 10).

ANSWERS: 1. False 2. True 3. True 4. True 5. False 6. False 7. False 8. True

Funded by
Dairy Australia
and your
dairy service
levy



WESTVIC DAIRY INC. (WVD) is the dairy industry development body for Western Victoria and aims to help advance the dairy industry in the region.

WVD regularly collects the priorities of the region's dairy farmers and allocates part of their service levy (collected by Dairy Australia) to those research and development priorities. When the service levy is invested WVD creates partnerships with other agencies and attracts other funds to make these priorities happen faster. When the work is completed WestVic Dairy makes sure the findings are communicated to all dairy farmers to increase the profitability and sustainability of the region's dairy industry.

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Put safety first

DemoDAIRY quad-bike safety toolbox

IN the pursuit of continuous improvement of OH&S at DemoDAIRY, and inspired by a recent Worksafe visit and the CGU Farm Risk Radar program, DemoDAIRY has begun safety-toolbox talks once a month for all farm staff.

The idea behind the toolbox talk is to keep safety front of mind and to remind staff of the Safety Operating Procedures (SOP's) for the machinery and equipment they use on a daily basis and to be involved in updating the risk assessments. Each month focuses on a different farm related topic.

The August toolbox talk focussed on quad-bike safety and was attended by Jeff Dennis, of Richardson and Dennis, to offer his support for the safety talks and give some input into how farm safety reduces insurance premiums.

Hugh McLaren, an industry trainer with the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia, was invited to speak to staff and run them through some of the important issues that need to be discussed in relation to quad bike safety.

Hugh began the talk with a short quiz to check the level of knowledge already held by staff which sparked some friendly competition and debate about quad-bike safety.

He then pointed out that 12 people had died as a result of quad bike accidents in Australia up to June 30 this year and extreme care needed to be taken when riding a quad bike.

The staff then watched a short video outlining the safety requirements of operating a quad bike and showing how easily accidents with quad bikes can happen.

Discussions were then held on how quad bikes handle in different conditions, different surfaces and with different loads, that helmets must always be worn when operating a quad bike and that correct tyre pressure is vital.

The Safety Operating Procedure for the Honda Quad bike at DemoDAIRY was handed out and examined, an operating and maintenance checklist was read through and all staff took part in developing a new risk assessment for operating a quad bike at DemoDAIRY.

Hugh McLaren said: "Many quad bike operators had accidents through poor maintenance of the bike and through neglecting simple safety procedures when operating the quad bike."

CGU, proud sponsor of the toolbox talks, offers all farms insured with them the

opportunity to utilise their Farm Risk Radar program for free.

Farm Risk Radar is a fast and easy-to-use online tool that helps farmers identify and manage safety, environmental and business risks.

It's designed to help with compliance and also educate and equip employees to manage risks effectively and provides a personalised assessment of risk and action plans to help reduce it.

The National Centre for Dairy Education Australia also offers accredited courses in the safe use of quad bikes at their campuses across Victoria. These courses cater for both inexperienced and experienced users of quad bikes, and help employers in Workplace Health and Safety compliance.

For further information on the courses available call NCDEA on 1300 062 332.

Milking robots and effluent management – getting it right



Yard washing in an AMS is easier with a water-blaster/Gerni and easily cleanable surfaces.

All milking systems, whether they be automatic (AMS) or conventional involve managing the effluent that collects on concrete areas at the dairy. Because an AMS involves voluntary movement of cows, there are some small differences in the way effluent collects at the dairy. FutureDairy's AMS research leader, **Dr KENDRA KERRISK**, outlines some of the issues to consider.

IN an AMS, cows bring themselves to the dairy for milking and take themselves back to the paddock," Dr Kerrisk said.

An AMS operates almost 24-hours-a-day with small numbers of cows being milked at most times of the day and night.

This is quite different to a conventional dairy where the entire herd comes to the dairy twice a day for milking.

Yard washing

WITH AMS there are almost always cows at the dairy which results in the yard being soiled most of the time.

"You will need to develop a system that works under these conditions. Yard washing at most automatic milking systems is done twice a day," Dr Kerrisk said.

"A water-blaster/gerni will become your best friend. But the job will be easier if

you install easily cleanable surfaces. Also consider, tipper drums or automatic flood washing to keep the manure wet and from building up during periods between yard washing."

Effluent load

EFFLUENT management at any dairy depends on effluent load.

"To date there is no evidence that AMS dairies collect any more or less solid effluent," said Dr Kerrisk.

With an AMS the amount of solid effluent captured on concrete areas of the dairy and surrounds depends on the average time each cow spends in that area each day. This is affected by milking frequency, average waiting time and whether there is a feeding area at the dairy.

Milking frequency refers to the number of times a day the "herd" is milked. In an AMS some managers plan

for cows to be milked more than twice a day (especially for cows in early lactation) to encourage higher levels of milk production.

"If the milking frequency is more than twice a day, then the cows will spend more time at the dairy yard so we'd expect an associated increase in effluent load."

The average waiting time depends on the ratio of cows to robots, cows' motivation level to move through the dairy and the distribution of cow traffic throughout a 24-hour period.

"The effluent load is likely to be higher when there are more cows waiting for longer at the yard."

If large groups of cows move to the dairy at the same time, then the average waiting time will be much more than in a management system that results in a more steady stream of cows to the dairy across the day and night. If

there is a post-milking area with individual cow feeding stations and/or a feedpad then the amount of time the cows spend at the feeding area will affect the effluent load. The rate of feeding will affect the time spent at the feeding area, and this is likely to change throughout the year.

Regulations

RESPONSIBLE effluent management is required for compliance with local council and state (EPA) regulations. For information on State regulations regarding effluent management, visit www.dairyingfortomorrow.com.au/index.php?id=48

FOR more information, contact Kendra Kerrisk, FutureDairy AMS Research Leader, ph 0428 101 372 email: kendra.kerrisk@sydney.edu.au or www.futuredairy.com.au