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MEDIA RELEASE

WINNERS ANNOUNCED FOR GREAT SOUTH WEST DAIRY AWARDS APRIL 26, 2012

Attention to detail and appreciation of the needs of staff have earned Heywood farmers Stephen and Tania Luckin the title of Employer of the Year at the 2012 Great South West Dairy Awards.

Judges praised the Luckins' documentation and detailed employee management practices

"The l's were dotted and the t's were crossed on this property," the judges said.

The major award winners are:

- **Ambleside Wealth Advisers Employer of the Year: Stephen and Tania Luckin, Heywood**
- **Dairy Australia Employee of the Year: Aaron Masters, Cobden**
- **Warrnambool Cheese and Butter Share Farmer of the Year: Leighton and Karen Hart, Dean's Marsh**
- **Moyne Shire Young Farm Leader: Tom Newton, Port Fairy**
- **Glenelg Hopkins and Corangamite CMA Natural Resource and Sustainability Manager: Liam Ryan, Grassmere; and**
- **Gardiner Foundation Best Dairy Farm Photo: Teena Lawrance, Koroit.**

The winners were announced tonight at a Gala Awards Night at Glenormiston College before a capacity audience of 330.

Stephen and Tania Luckin are both undertaking diploma courses through the NCDEA and they encourage their staff to have ongoing involvement in deciding how things are done on the property.

Safety is a strong focus on their farm and policies, documentation and resource material are available to staff. Runners up for the Employer of the Year category were Isaac and Michelle Johnstone from Grassmere.

Aaron Masters' ongoing commitment to improvement and his ability to make on-farm improvements led to his success in the employee category.

Aaron oversees and undertakes all farm activities, has made improvements to reduce stress on cows and increase efficiency, shares his experience with other workers and continues to seek ways to improve his knowledge and capability.

David Cranwell, of Winslow, was named runner up.

Leighton and Karen Hart, from Deans Marsh, won the share farmer award and Ben and Anna Kenna from Terang were named runners up.

The judges said the Harts have a remarkable working relationship with the farm owner and are in regular communication with the owners to ensure they are doing the best for the business.

“Leighton and Karen have a very thorough understanding of the industry and the impact that changes in the industry can have on both their position and the farm owners. They are dedicated to improving their position whilst also ensuring the farm owners are getting the most out of the agreement as possible,” the judges said.

Grassmere farmer Liam Ryan was named by judges of the Natural Resource and Sustainability Management award as an outstanding winner.

They said Mr Ryan demonstrated high level strategic business management skills, impressive adoption of technology, innovation and commitment to sustainability.

His achievements included a 20 per cent reduction in use of fertilisers, 85 per cent reduction in energy use in the dairy and 40 per cent reduction in grain feeds.

Andrew, Anna and Yvonne Wortley, from Macarthur, were named as runners up.

Young Farm Leader Tom Newton was described by judges as a team player dedicated to his work and respected and trusted by others.

“Tom has had to build his confidence and knowledge of the dairy industry. He has jumped in right from the start and learnt from others, attended courses and generally grown his knowledge and become very involved with dairy community groups,” the judges said.

David O’Connell, from Kirkstall, was runner up.

The winning photo was described by judges as a well composed action shot that illustrates life on a dairy farm.

“It has nice healthy cows, plenty of feed being sent out to them and it is taken from an interesting,” the judge said.

The second placed photo was submitted by Brendan Eccles and third by Melissa Meade.

Twenty five finalists had been shortlisted for the five major awards after organisers received a record 80 nominations.

There were a further 60 entries in the Best Dairy Farm Photo competition.

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