

Funded by  
Dairy Australia  
and your  
dairy service  
levy



# DAIRY NEWS

NEWS ABOUT HOW DAIRY FARMERS' LEVIES ARE INVESTED

A special *On The Land* supplement



## MESSAGE A PRIORITY



WestVic Dairy board member Lisa Dwyer.

SHOWING the rest of the world that dairying is a professional business is a high priority for WestVic Dairy board member Lisa Dwyer.

Lisa, who has been on the WestVic board for 18 months, has seen a gradual improvement in understanding the industry.

But she says there is a long way to go before the broader community fully appreciates the role played by dairy in feeding the world and driving the economy.

"I think people in western Victoria now have a much greater realisation of the value of dairy but there is still more we can do locally and on a national scale," she said. "In general agriculture and particularly dairy are undervalued and not well understood. Agriculture often gets overlooked in our ever-changing world and we need to address that from the top down."

Helping to better inform the community is one of WestVic Dairy's priorities. Lisa hopes

### Education is board member's mission

to break down stereotypes and misconceptions about dairy farmers.

"In the broader population there is still a stereotype about farmers and we need to show people that we are professional businesses with million dollar turnovers where technology and innovation are integral and that we care for our environment and our animals."

She sees the ability to be innovative as a key ingredient to future success for the dairy industry. "We need to continue being innovative in our products, how we manage our farm land and how we demonstrate our care of animals and quality

of product," she said. "There are enormous opportunities for our industry with world population growth, particularly with markets in south-east Asia, the Middle East and northern Africa."

Lisa sees an ongoing role for WestVic Dairy in driving innovation and enhancing the reputation of the industry.

"Essentially we aim to deliver what farmers need. We try to identify how they want their levy to be invested and then deliver on those needs."

"An important part of our role is to get around the district and find out what farmers want to address and then act on those priorities

and demonstrate that the levy is being wisely invested."

Lisa hopes to encourage greater input from all farmers.

"One of our challenges is to engage farmers who don't have as much connection with the industry. We want everyone to have a say."

Lisa came to dairy in 2004 from a background in private enterprise where she had a senior role as region services manager for Racing Victoria covering 19 clubs from Geelong to the South Australian border.

She and husband Eddie purchased a 382-acre farm between Hawkesdale and Macarthur in 2004 and they now milk 260 cows.

Since moving to work full-time on the farm, Lisa has become involved with the VFF Market Security Committee, the Macarthur UDV, the Broadwater CFA, the Animal Welfare Science Centre Advisory Committee and WestVic Dairy where she is now vice-chairman.

## Farm water resources now available to all users

THE Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Farm Water Solutions project has produced a number of resources relating to farm water for use by both service providers and farmers.

The Farm Water Solutions project, which originated from the long dry spell, focuses on graziers and dairy farmers reliant on streams, groundwater and rainfall into dams for stock, domestic, dairy shed and other non-irrigation purposes.

Understanding the current farm water situation and planning improvements in infrastructure and management are an integral part of a farm business, through dry times and wet.

These resources — which include a farm water balance calculator, Agriculture Notes, farmer stories, key contacts and technical booklets — can be applicable to any farm situation at any time.

The best place to find the resources is on the Farm Water Solutions page of the DPI web [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/farmwatersolutions](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/farmwatersolutions)

The publications are

suitable for both farmers and service providers. All are printable from the web and some are noted as also being available in hard copy from the DPI/DSE Customer Service Centre.

The newest publication to be released, *Trading Water Licences for Groundwater and Unregulated Surface Water*, has been developed in conjunction with Southern Rural Water.

In addition, there is a Farm Water Planning Presenters' Resource Kit, which suits those working with farmers and who anticipate presenting information on farm water, or those who wish to build their skills and knowledge in this topic area.

The kit is a combination of printed booklet and printable CD. It is designed as an awareness-level farm water planning training session plan, and is modelled on sessions now run in Victoria.

For more information about the kit, please contact Benita Kelsall at DPI Ellinbank on phone (03) 5624 2218.



DPI has developed a range of resources to help farmers manage water on their properties.

## INSIDE THIS MONTH'S WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

**TIPS FOR CALF GROWTH**

PAGE 8



**DAIRY BOSS RESIGNS**

PAGE 11



**SKILLS TRAINING COURSE**

PAGE 12





# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## INSIDE

### PAGE 7

- Message a priority
- Farm water resources now available to all

### PAGE 8

- Timing is the key
- Tips for optimising feed, calf growth and budget

### PAGE 9

- Loving life on the land
- Dairy Australia sponsors award

### PAGE 10

- A chance to develop dairy
- Resources, branding and facilities highlighted

### PAGE 11

- Bank confirms sponsorship
- Appreciation for executive officer's achievements

### PAGE 12

- Head start to farm careers
- Lime's lasting benefits

### PAGE 13

- Farm walk's feed focus
- Mites on the move in pasture

### PAGE 14

- Visit to Tasmania
- Get effluent management right



# Timing is the key

## Seminar on calving patterns stimulates discussion

By **NADINE MARKHAM**  
DPI DAIRY SERVICES  
COLAC



THE Department of Primary Industries (DPI) recently held seminars for dairy farmers in Colac and Warrnambool focusing on the best time to calve.

Guest speaker Frank Tyndall, a dairy farm consultant from Gippsland, used a computer model to analyse the impact of calving late, looking at one aspect — namely the margin over feed cost while holding other costs such as labour or other overheads steady.

This approach was used to open up discussion on identifying the range of other variables which needed to be explored as well as this first measure, in order to answer the question for each unique farm situation.

The issue of seasonal versus split calving was also explored, and Frank's model showed that the greater number of cows calving early, the more profitable that farm could be.

The following is a summary of some of the key areas discussed at the seminars.

The answer involves both financial and non-financial aspects

Determining the most appropriate calving pattern for each farm needs to take into account a range of factors including economics, risk management, labour management and farm physical factors such as soil type, rainfall and shed infrastructure.

To explore this topic further, farmers need to discuss the many options with a range of people such as farm consultants, financial advisors, factory field officers, pasture agronomists and other farmers so that an informed decision can be confidently made for their unique situation.

### Using Extended Lactation as a management tool

RESULTS from the Extended Lactation (EL) project demonstrated that extended lactations and split calving patterns could be a more profitable option than traditional seasonal calving under a range of seasonal conditions, feed prices and milk prices experienced in Victoria.

A number of farmers using EL have high-genetic-merit cows producing close to their genetic potential in milk volume. One advantage is a reduction in strain on the cow, particularly at drying off.

However, research showed all cows can complete extended lactations, despite their genetic merit or the level of feeding throughout a lactation.

The modern dairy cow needs a longer period between calving and joining to achieve peak reproductive performance.

This often results in some cows in a herd having lactation lengths of greater than 300 days, with calving intervals typically around 18 months (to suit a split calving pattern).

Some of the issues raised during the seminars around split calving patterns seemed to focus on the ideal

proportions of cows in each calving group.

Farmers expressed caution about the need to maintain consistent numbers in each split herd, because there was a danger this management could get out of control.

Each year the relative proportion of heifers calving in either the autumn or spring herds can have a dramatic effect on herd sizes.

One possible option would be to calve all heifers in the one group, and accepting the range of heifer ages (eg. heifer ages ranging from 30 to 24 months).

Alternatively, calving pattern can easily be altered by use of extended lactation on the proportion of the herd that is calving at the "wrong time" to move them to the desired time of calving.

All farmers were in agreement that two six-week calving spreads were ideal in a split calving situation.

They also identified that their ability to maintain focus was seriously compromised if calving patterns were allowed to drift. Typical farmer comments in relation to extensive calving patterns were:

"It's impossible to maintain focus if you are calving cows, detecting heats, joining cows,

pulling calves every day of the year, plus rearing calves over many months. You can't do anything properly, you lose control of your management and lifestyle goes out the window."

### Pasture consumption still important

DATA from many dairy farm profit analyses over time has consistently demonstrated the importance of pasture consumption on farm profitability, regardless of when you calve.

To achieve high pasture consumption, appropriate grazing rotations and residuals need to be maintained throughout the year.

If farms are very wet and winter grazing rotations of between 40 to 60 days rotation lengths are challenging to achieve, then other options will need to be considered such as construction of a feedpad or, in the long-term, reducing cow numbers in the autumn calving herd until target pasture rotation lengths can be consistently achieved.

For more information, please contact Nadine Markham at DPI, Colac on (03) 5233 5525 or email nadine.markham@dpi.vic.gov.au

## Tips for optimising feed, calf growth and budget

By **HELEN CHENOWETH**  
DPI DAIRY SERVICES  
WARRNAMBOOL



### Grazing management

IT is still important to aim for an appropriate rotation length now, even if you have been going around a bit too quickly chasing feed. Building up a grass wedge is much better than putting cows into paddocks with very little pasture.

As the days get shorter and colder, ryegrass plants will require a longer period to grow each new leaf. As a result grazing rotations will need to be extended to optimise the pasture performance. With a ryegrass appearance rate of around 14-20 days, a rotation of 40-60 days will allow the greatest growth from pastures. This time period will also allow the best growth response from any applied nitrogen. As the grazing

rotation is lengthened and less area offered cows every day at this time, maintain the cows' total feed intake by strategically feeding more supplements in the short-term.

Ensure cows leave 4 to 6 cm of residual pasture between the clumps (this will ensure a stronger ryegrass regrowth in the winter, less soil erosion and less space for weed germination and growth) and spray broadleaf weeds that have emerged in the new pastures. These are easier to control when they are less than five centimetres in diameter. Also watch for pasture pests and treat accordingly.

### Calving

GREATEST calf immunity occurs where colostrum is fed in the first six hours after birth. If possible, all calves should be topped up with two litres of top quality colostrum by teat or oesophageal feeder when removed from the calving pad or paddock. If calves have not sucked, they should be fed four litres of top quality colostrum.

### Cows

UNDERFEEDING cows in early lactation will have lasting consequences throughout the entire season such as lower conception rates, reduced rumen capacity and lower production potential. Cows in this position will also try to overgraze pastures. As a result both cows and pastures will perform below their potential for the rest of the season.

Watch for signs of acidosis in fresh cows, particularly if you are feeding high levels of grain to compensate for limited pasture.

Autumn calvers will be coming up to joining. This is a critical time to provide a consistent diet which has cows in a positive energy balance. Make sure you have organised the necessary bull power!

### Financial issues

CASH flow is tight at the moment due in part to higher fodder and concentrate costs associated with the dry early autumn conditions. Update your annual budget now so that you have a good understanding of your current cash flow position and have some strategies in place to manage any issues that may arise over the next few months; and

Any issue is better identified early so that all strategies can be explored. For example, if repayment of debt is an issue in the short-term, arrangements should be made well in advance to discuss options with your bank or finance provider. If trade debt is mounting, contact the businesses involved and arrange a payment schedule that will suit both parties, rather than hope it all magically sorts itself out.

If you would like to discuss your feed options contact a DPI Dairy Extension Officer at Warrnambool on (03) 5561 9946 or Colac on (03) 5233 5504.



Underfeeding cows during early lactation will have lasting consequences.



# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## Dairy service levy vote – what happens now?

By **JOHN DALTON**  
CHAIRMAN WESTVIC DAIRY

AS the dust settles after the recent dairy service levy vote, it is worth reflecting on the outcome and the lessons learned during the voting process.

The result was, I believe, a good one for the future of the dairy industry.

A total of 54.05 per cent of farmers who voted supported a 10 per cent increase in the levy, 6.08 per cent voted for a 15 per cent increase, while 39.87 per cent voted for the no levy option.

As a result, the levy will increase by 10 per cent.

This will ensure programs that protect and enhance our industry will continue to be rolled out.

The overall voter turnout of 50.86 per cent of eligible farmers was encouraging and I was heartened to see the number of local farmers seeking out information about the levy from WestVic Dairy, Dairy Australia and at poll roadshows held in the district.

Although the final vote was quite strongly in support of the levy, there was some negativity about the process and the levy itself. I might not necessarily agree with these points of view, but I admire all those who had a say. It is important we hear from everybody who has an opinion and that we listen to those views.

In some cases there was strong sentiment for maintaining the status quo, which was not presented as one of the options for the levy.

We need to learn from this feedback and consider



WestVic Dairy chairman John Dalton says the voter turnout for the dairy levy poll was encouraging.

all options when the levy vote is next considered. We also need to ensure that a broad cross-section of farmers are consulted when the voting method is being designed. Now that the vote has been counted, we need to set about ensuring our farmers' levy is wisely invested and farmers are better informed of this process.

At WestVic Dairy we have adopted an annual operating plan which will guide this investment. The plan is developed from consultation with local farmers and has a focus on pre-farm gate activities which are designed to have direct and practical benefits for farmers.

However, we also maintain a broader strategic outlook and place strong emphasis on communication.

One of our high priorities is to continue to improve our engagement with farmers to ensure all views are considered and that farmers have a better understanding of what we do and why we do it.

Every farmer pays the levy so it makes sense to become involved and contribute ideas on how it is spent. If you have a chance to hold a kitchen forum or if you simply want to call the WestVic office and make a suggestion or offer an opinion, I encourage you to do so.

# Loving life on the land

## Peter watches industry grow

In recognition of his induction on the Western Victorian Dairy Industry Honour Board, we talk to Peter Haynes about his life in the dairy industry.

GROWING up in suburban Melbourne isn't the traditional launching pad for a career in dairying.

But for Peter Haynes a childhood in the city was no impediment to carving out a dairy career that has lasted for nearly 40 years and is still going strong.

A childhood friendship and visits to a country pub were the catalysts for his move into the industry.

"My first experience on a dairy farm was at my best mate's brother's farm at Werribee South. We'd go there on weekends early in my secondary school years and I'd help out a bit."

A relative ran a hotel in the Yarra Valley and regular visits helped to cement Peter's love of country life.

"Because I loved the country I decided to pursue a career in agriculture. I did my ag science degree at Melbourne University and through a cadetship with the Department of Ag."

"I could see dairy had a lot of opportunities so I chose that route for my career."

Peter became involved with the dairy husbandry branch of the department which was providing extension services to the industry.

"From the very early stages I wanted to be involved in dairy advisory work and have now been in the field for nearly 40 years."

Peter was initially involved in research based at Ellinbank. Although he now concedes research was not his main priority, he did play a leading role in investigating effluent management and in 1975 wrote the book *Disposal of Dairy Shed Effluent*.

"It was around the time of the gazettement of the EPA so there was more focus on the environment. We looked at all aspects of dairy effluent, run-off, disposal and re-use," he said.

"It got me out on the farm which I enjoyed, but it confirmed for me that research was not the area of work I was interested in."

Peter was later assigned to the dairy husbandry team at Warragul before being relocated to Warrnambool in 1976.

"They told me working with the team in Warrnambool would give me a good grounding in dairy extension work which proved to be true."

It was his links with farmers that really helped to establish his credibility in the industry. "I owe everything to the farmers I have worked with. I came out of university and thought I knew everything but in reality they taught me everything."



Dairy industry veteran Peter Haynes.

"Farmers are the most innovative people. They have an amazing ability to handle the unpredictability of conditions and environments and keep motoring on."

After the move, Peter settled in the area, married Ingrid and raised three children. He took on leadership roles for the Dairy Extension Team in Warrnambool and the South West Dairy Extension Group, was a key player in developing the Target 10 program for Victoria, was a board member of the Western Victorian Dairy Industry Committee, helped to develop a demonstration farm at Grassmere and was involved in development of the current DemoDAIRY farm at Terang.

He represented the Department of Agriculture on a number of statewide projects.

Peter also tried his hand at dairy farming in a partnership that continues to this day.

"I got involved in an equity partnership at Ballangeich and 22 years later it's still going," he said. "We started with 150 cows, now we have 1300 on three properties."

"I think all dairy extension officers are frustrated farmers... it's not uncommon to try your hand at it."

Peter had moved into a statewide industry officers' development role with the Department of Agriculture, but the travel commitments were taking their toll.

"It was interesting but it separated me from the farming community and it involved a lot of travel."

In 1992 an opportunity came up to join Murray Goulburn at Koroit as a field officer.

"There was a move at the time to get field officers with a tertiary qualification rather than coming out of the factory," he said. "It suited me because I could again work more directly with farmers and stay closer to home."

As he approaches his 20th

anniversary with Murray Goulburn at Koroit, he now fills the role of field services manager. "There is still a small component of extension work which I enjoy and which helps to keep me grounded. It is important to have interaction with farmers to understand the things that impact on their business."

Peter has seen substantial growth over his time in the industry.

"When I started at Koroit we had one drier and now we have four, and we're the biggest milk processing plant in Australia."

"I love that Murray Goulburn is a farmer-owned co-operative and we work for our farmer owners. The success of this co-operative is crucial for a prosperous Australian dairy industry into the future."

He has also seen and appreciated the growth in support for farmers.

"The dairy industry is a very well-supported industry. We have the DPI, each of the factories has field staff, the industry develops programs, often supported by WestVic Dairy, that aim to appeal to everyone and DemoDAIRY is there to trial new innovations."

"There is a lot of help out there which is good, though some farmers use it more than others. Some prefer to manage their businesses with little help."

"One thing I have learned is that you have to deal with different people in different ways. At Murray Goulburn we have recently looked at better understanding our supply base and making sure we communicate properly with all our farmers."

Peter sees the market becoming more volatile for those in dairying. "The big challenge is riding through market volatility and climate variability. We are told there are great opportunities for the most efficient food producers to help feed the world, but we seem to be waiting for that to happen. The opportunities will exist and we need to be there to take them."

He sees bright prospects for farmers.

"Dairy farming continues to be one of the jobs where someone can arrive without any qualifications and work hard and become wealthy over a period of time," he said.

"I don't necessarily agree that it is harder to start in the industry today than it was when I started my career. It has always been difficult to a degree and you need some sort of support, but if you have the passion and are prepared to work hard you can build a very solid business."

## Dairy Australia sponsors Farmer of the Year Award

DAIRY Australia has joined forces with Kondinin Group and ABC Rural in the search for the best and brightest in the dairy industry.

The 2012 Australian Farmer of the Year Awards promotes Australian agriculture and Dairy Australia is delighted to be the official sponsor of the Dairy Farmer of the Year category in celebration of the huge contribution our dairy farmers make to local communities, the Australian economy and the environment.

The Dairy Farmer of the Year Award recognises farmers who apply a highly professional, innovative and sustainable approach to their dairy enterprise including animal health and nutrition practices, breeding, milking and engaging with the industry beyond the farm gate.

Australian dairy farmers are some of the best, most efficient in the world.

Dairy Australia managing director Ian Halliday said the nation's farmers led the way in innovation and technology and had become masters of many trades.

"Finding inspirational and innovative people from within the dairy industry isn't difficult," Mr Halliday said.

"Our dairying tradition has been forged by people with vision and a determination to succeed, and is brimming with inspirational stories of resilience, passion and energy."

"Australian dairy farmers are media-savvy, strategic-thinking specialists who understand climate and vegetation, land and water management, animal health and welfare, and national

and global food security. 2012 is also the Australian Year of the Farmer and this represents another great opportunity to tell those stories and spread the word of the importance of the dairy industry and the value our dairy farmers create."

The Dairy Farmer of the Year Award is one of 11 award categories. The winner of each category is automatically entered into the overall *Australian Farmer of the Year Award*.

Nominations for the Dairy Farmer of the Year Award are now open.

Visit [www.kondinigroup.com.au](http://www.kondinigroup.com.au) to download a nomination form or nominate online.

For more information, contact Kondinin Group on 1800 677 761. Nominations close 3 August, 2012.



# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## Action plans to develop dairy



One of the participants in the Checking the Wheel review contributes to the feedback session.

## Farmers support down the track plan

LOCAL dairy farmers have backed the Driving Down the Track program as a key way to develop the local industry.

Several local farmers joined business, government and industry leaders for a review of the Driving Down the Track action plan for growing the local dairy industry.

One of the participating farmers, Adam Jenkins from South Purrumbete, said it was important for the industry to have a strategic plan.

"Driving Down the Track

provides strategic direction, not only for the dairy industry but the whole region," he said.

"It helps to identify key priorities that we can work on as a whole region."

Mr Jenkins said farmers would benefit from having a good strategic plan in place.

"We need to work on how we can get the industry to be the most profitable it can be for farmers," he said.

"Once we get the key points in place the whole of the community will

follow." Mr Jenkins said he was pleased that the importance of the dairy industry to the region's economy was being recognised.

"If I'm making a dollar as a dairy farmer and the industry is doing well, that flows on to the rest of the economy."

Pomborneit dairy farmer Ben Bennett said he was pleased to see effluent management and protecting access to water and other natural resources recognised as high priorities for farmers.

"We need to be on the front foot and engaging with the people who make decisions about these critical issues," Mr Bennett said. "Managing effluent is the number one issue facing farmers and we have to confront it, and water is simply a prerequisite for us existing. These are major concerns and don't need to be handled lightly."

Mr Bennett said he hoped actions would eventuate from the review program to help farmers deal with these issues.

## Resources, branding, facilities highlighted

THE creation of a brand to promote the south-west dairy industry, effluent management, access to water, developing better data and establishing local facilities for research and development have been highlighted as key priorities for advancing the south-west Victorian dairy industry.

The priorities emerged from a WestVic Dairy Checking the Wheel forum at Glenormiston College on May 12 which reviewed the progress of the industry's strategic plan, Driving Down the Track.

This plan was formulated in 2009 with priorities covering natural resources, people, infrastructure, capital, markets, production and knowledge.

About 80 dairy farmers, service industry personnel and representatives of processors, local government and state government authorities took part in the review.

Twenty-one priorities identified at the workshop will now be considered and ratified for action by the Driving Down the Track (DDTT) management committee.

The DDTT project team will then work to attract resources to carry out the top 10 in 2012-13 and the WestVic Dairy board will consider some actions for levy investment.

The new priorities are intended to complement existing actions already under way to drive the south-west dairy industry towards DDTT's goal of the region producing three billion litres of milk by 2020.

Project co-ordinator Karen Wales said the priorities were part of a vision for the future of the dairy industry.

"There are obviously benefits in having a plan which can feed the dairy industry's priorities into local and state government and position dairying at the centre of the region's economy," she said.

Farmers at the forum highlighted the need for natural resource protection, including access to water, better effluent management and ensuring farmers have access to natural resources

for their operations. The proposed development of a south-west interactive dairy centre and milk harvesting facility (at DemoDAIRY) were supported at the forum, as was the identification of knowledge needs.

A regional reference group for animal welfare, reproductive management plans for farms and increasing participation in herd testing were identified as options for boosting production.

Integrating strategic planning into farm business, promoting investment in the region and developing a brand and marketing the dairy industry were identified as keys for future growth.

It was also suggested that improved leadership programs to attract more adults to dairying and improved data would identify the industry's needs.

There were also calls for more awareness about energy generation on-farm and ensuring farms are ready for the national broadband network.

WestVic Dairy executive officer Mike Weise said the review process had exceeded expectations in bringing together key regional players and highlighting measures that will improve outcomes for farmers and drive expansion of the industry.

"The various government and industry officials in attendance have gone away with a better understanding of the needs of the dairy industry," he said.

Mr Weise said good progress had been made on the original group of top 10 actions and it was timely to review other priorities to ensure the plan remained relevant to farmers and the industry.

Achievements from the first group of priorities set in February 2010 have included establishing a regional transport committee, development of dairy employee training programs, leadership programs, improved links with local councils and the Great South Coast plan and financial literacy programs for women farmers.

## Priorities identified

HAVING accurate data will help the south-west Victorian dairy industry address key issues and have greater influence on policy and funding decisions.

WestVic Dairy's Checking the Wheel forum, which reviewed the industry's strategic plan Driving Down the Track, highlighted the need for improved locally-relevant data.

Identifying what gaps exist in local data and then supplying and distributing that information was discussed as one of the top new priorities at the forum.

The new action priorities will build on existing programs that have started from the Driving Down the Track process which will lead the industry towards its goal of producing three billion litres of milk by 2020.

Improved data will be used to identify the needs of the industry, particularly in workforce recruitment, to push for example more government support and funding and to influence policy decisions.

WestVic Dairy executive officer Mike Weise said improved local data would better position the industry to grow.

"We don't have a powerful set of locally-relevant data to support the industry. We know we have an issue with finding and retaining suitable staff for our farms, but we have no ridgy-didge figures to back this up and to build a case for more support in this area," he said.

"We need to know the needs of the local industry."

Data can also be used to promote the industry to policy makers.



Industry members hear from WestVic Dairy chairman John Dalton.



# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## Appreciation for leadership and achievements

WESTVIC Dairy chairman John Dalton announced at the beginning of May that executive officer Mike Weise had decided to resign.

Mr Weise will stay with the dairy development agency until the end of the financial year — June 30, 2012.

Mr Dalton said: "The WestVic Dairy Board understands Mike's decision and thanks him for helping the board to move in a new direction over the past 18 months.

"We wish Mike well and thank him for his leadership and dedication to the region's farmers over the past six-and-a-half years."

Mr Dalton said local farmers were benefitting from the many programs WestVic Dairy had invested their levy in under Mr Weise's leadership.

"Mike has helped design, deliver and lead many of these high value projects including In Charge Financial Literacy, Focus Farms, the Great South West Awards, careers co-ordination and Down the Track."

"Our industry's standing has increased markedly under his leadership and dairy is now front and centre of any discussion about regional development in western Victoria."

Mr Dalton said this improved recognition had brought in thousands of dollars worth of farmer projects that would not have happened without the levy and WestVic Dairy.

Mr Weise said his decision to move on to new challenges was a tough one.

"This is a significant personal decision and one that is a mix of sadness



Mike Weise, executive officer of Westvic Dairy.

but excitement about the future," he said. Over the last weeks at WestVic Dairy, Mr Weise has helped staff and the board prepare for a new executive officer.

After June he will take a break, including a trip to the Olympics in July, and

return in mid-August when he will start the next phase of his career. Mr Weise said he was confident that WestVic Dairy would build on its unique position in the region's economy.

"The past six-and-a-half years has been a period

of significant growth for WestVic Dairy and I leave it in safe hands with an exceptional set of staff, very supportive stakeholders, an operational plan targeting work pre-farm gate and prudent reserves."

Mr Dalton said that

WestVic Dairy has begun to search for the best possible person to replace Mr Weise.

"This means a robust process is being put in place to consider candidates. The process will be overseen by the Board and led by me as chairman."

# Bank confirms sponsorship

THE Commonwealth Bank has reconfirmed its major sponsorship of DemoDAIRY, continuing a partnership that stretches back to the launch of the Terang research and demonstration farm.

The bank financed the original purchase of the farm and has since remained on board as a major sponsor.

The head of dairy for south-west Victoria, Rhonda Henry, said the sponsorship reflected the bank's passion for the dairy industry.

"DemoDAIRY is the hub of the best dairy district in Australia and plays a very important role in advancing the industry," Mrs Henry said.

The Commonwealth Bank also benefits from its involvement with DemoDAIRY.

"We use the facilities and programs to up-skill ourselves," Mrs Henry said.

"It is important that we are not only visible to



DemoDAIRY board member Mike Waite (third from left) presents a certificate of appreciation to Barry Clarke, regional executive manager, Commonwealth Bank, at DemoDAIRY.

the industry but we have a proper understanding of it. We attend training sessions

at DemoDAIRY and are also involved with sponsoring discussion groups. We have

been with DemoDAIRY since day one and look forward to continuing our

association with the dairy industry."

DemoDAIRY Board

members Mike Waite and David Shute, and project manager Louise Sheba presented certificates of appreciation to bank officials for their support. Ms Sheba said sponsorship from the bank helped DemoDAIRY provide its facilities and services to the region's dairy industry.

"The support of sponsors such as the Commonwealth Bank is essential for DemoDAIRY and aids our ability to advance the dairy industry through the provision of services and facilities for industry activities," she said. "The Commonwealth's long-term support has helped us to become what we are today."

The partnership also provides DemoDAIRY with access to business and financial-related advice which has become quite specialised given the unique business DemoDAIRY operates.

## NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR DAIRY EDUCATION AUSTRALIA

### Register now for lameness webinar:

If you missed the enormously successful NCDEA/Dairy Australia lameness webinar in May, a second opportunity has been scheduled for June 14.

The webinar in May was oversubscribed, with more than 100 registrations for the 60 places available. Interest in the webinar is not surprising given the world-class panel of speakers, including renowned hoof trimmer Karl Burgi, from the US; vet and highly respected lameness expert

Neil Chesterton, from NZ; and our very own lameness gurus, vet Jakob Malmo, from Maffra Vet Clinic, and hoof trimmer Peter Best, of Innovative Farm Imports. To register for the webinar on June 14, send an email to Jillian Goudie at jgoudie@gotafe.vic.edu.au But do it now or you may miss out again!

### On-farm applications important:

ON-FARM assessments are in full swing at the NCDEA, and with more than 30 students — from Deans Marsh to Yambuk — course co-ordinator Heidi Knowles is

clocking up the kilometres visiting them all.

On-farm application of knowledge is an essential component of training at the NCDEA.

Each unit taught at Certificate 3 (farmhand) level includes on-farm assessment where students demonstrate their ability to apply the industry best practices trained in the classroom.

This includes skills such as identification of perennial ryegrass and its leaf stage for the unit Establish Pastures and Crops for Livestock Production, or inspection of the

calf shed to discuss the facilities and conditions required for calf rearing for the Rear Newborn and Young Livestock unit. For further information about our dairy industry training programs, contact NCDEA Terang on 0407 552 011.

### Follow us on Facebook:

NCDEA now has a Facebook page.

Here you will find information about short courses and news of coming activities at the NCDEA as well as photos, including a few from the recent graduation ceremony

held as part of the Great South West Dairy Awards.

To join us on Facebook, go to our website [www.ncdea.edu.au](http://www.ncdea.edu.au) and click on "Follow us on Facebook".

### Have your skills recognised:

UNTIL June 30, participation in the NCDEA's Skills Recognition Program is offered free of charge, so don't delay and enrol now.

Many local dairy farmers have been successful in attaining a full or part qualification through a process of recognition of the skills and knowledge they have

acquired through life and work experience, and formal and informal learning.

Skills recognition is available to dairy industry personnel in all categories of employment on-farm, from assistant farmhand through to senior farmhand, farm production manager, farm business manager and self-employed share farmers.

For more information about the skills recognition process, call Jean McGoldrick at NCDEA Terang, phone (03) 5592 2493 or mobile 0400 318 646, or email [jmcgoldric@gotafe.vic.edu.au](mailto:jmcgoldric@gotafe.vic.edu.au)



# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS



**ABOVE:** Skills training delivered in the In2Dairy pre-employment training course included OHS and operating quad bikes.

**INSET:** In2Dairy participants were introduced to a range of different farming systems through the farm visits that formed the basis of the pre-employment training.

## In2Dairy training resumes Head start to farm careers

THE In2Dairy Assistant Farmhand project resumed last month with 18 participants keen to explore the options for a traineeship and a career in dairying.

A recruitment campaign targeting recent school leavers and adult career changers, as well as unemployed job-seekers, resulted in a class that ranged in age from 15 to 48. Dairy experience ranged from none to four years on-farm.

The memory of year 10 work experience and other school-industry placements inspired three of the participants to seek a traineeship. A few enrolled out of curiosity to see whether it was an attractive option for employment while others were passionately seeking a dairy job and recognised In2Dairy as a useful vehicle.

The project attracted potential trainees from across the region and from Sydney and Geelong. The NCDEA delivered 10 days of introductory training and industry familiarisation.

The pre-employment course (which was completed by 17 of the 18 who enrolled)

was built around visits to 11 different farms.

Participants gained a good understanding of the range of skills they would develop through a traineeship on-farm, and were given a head start in the areas of: Caring for livestock; Milking livestock; Nutrition; OHS and quad bikes; Communication; and Livestock handling.

An introduction to the People in Dairy website, and visits to other industry sites such as mills and saleyards, in addition to the 11 farms, ensured participants ended the In2Dairy pre-employment training course with a good understanding of the industry and its requirements.

A small number of participants had decided by the end of the course that the farm pathway was not for them, and they have happily moved on to other options.

Some have commenced employment on farms, and others are working with the third project partner, Westvic Staffing Solutions, to identify suitable on-farm employment opportunities for them.

Farmers looking for staff, and willing to engage a trainee should contact either Robyn at WestVic Dairy on (03) 5592 2477, or Wayne at Westvic Staffing Solutions on (03) 5591 6000. Eligible employers of trainees under the Australian Apprenticeship system are entitled to cash payments to support the provision of training.

Farmers employing a trainee through the In2Dairy project are also entitled to access free training (the People in Dairy's People GPS course) or four hours of professional consultancy support to help them prepare for and manage the employment of a trainee.

The In2Dairy Assistant Farmhand project was successfully piloted in 2010/11 with the support of state government funds, and additional assistance from the Helen McPherson Smith Trust. In the absence of that government support and in recognition of the value of the project to the industry, Dairy Australia has invested farmer levy funds to ensure delivery of the second stage.

## Lime's lasting benefits

A series of Clearing the Fog soil health workshops has heard that an application of lime can have benefits for a decade or more.

Consultant Cam Nicholson, from Nicon Rural Services, told the workshops at Terang, Heathmere and Ballarat that soils in the region were continuing to acidify.

However, trials in the Woody Yaloak Catchment, south-west of Ballarat, show that where lime was applied the soil pH in 2011 was the same or above the 1999 levels.

"This suggests the lime has lasted at least 10 years," Mr

Nicholson said. Soil acidification is recognised as a threat to crop and pasture production in high rainfall zones.

Applying lime was one of the major methods to counteract acidification. He said advice that lime needed to be ploughed into the soil did not really apply in south-west Victoria. "In northern Victoria lime is much harder but in the south-west it is softer and will more easily dissolve and move into the soil," he said.

Tests carried out in the Werneth area showed there was a continuing acidification of soil. If no lime was added,

pH levels dropped from about 4.7 to 4.5.

Mr Nicholson said four non-limed strips in the tests provided evidence of the lasting effects of lime in the soil. The results also indicated that increased rates of lime reduced acidity more than lower rates and reached deeper into the soil.

Mr Nicholson said there was not a lot of difference in the results achieved by most local limes. "As long as it has good neutralising value I think the cheapest product you can get landed will do the best job for you," he said.

## Clearing the fog through soil health workshops

LONG-TERM trials of alternative fertilisers and biological products have found there is a still a role to play for traditional fertilisers.

The trials in the Woody Yaloak Catchment south-west of Ballarat have found that traditional fertilisers continue to produce good yields, in many cases surpassing new alternatives and biological products.

Eight replicated trials were conducted on pasture, lucerne and winter crops from 2009-2011. The Woody Yaloak Catchment Group is continuing trials on three of the sites.

The trials were established to see if claims made by the makers of alternative fertilisers and biological products turn into reality in local soils.

Catchment Group project manager and consultant Cam Nicholson, from Nicon Rural Services, recently outlined the findings to dairy farmers and industry representatives at Clearing the Fog soil workshops at Terang, Heathmere and Ballarat.

More than 70 people

attended the workshops. Mr Nicholson said farmers should not necessarily dismiss local anecdotal evidence about different products, but it also helped to see the results of tests in local conditions.

"There are a lot of products and farmers need to know if they do what the theory claims they should," he said.

The trials found traditional fertiliser "generally works", particularly on pastures more so than lucerne sites.

Pig and poultry manure also had significant positive impacts on yields but other products did little to boost production compared to the control site which had no applications.

The trials found no consistent link between soil biology and production at this stage. Evidence to support claims that traditional fertiliser is bad for soil biology is inconclusive from these results, where there were some favourable outcomes, some negative.

Mr Nicholson said microbial activity and diversity was influenced by external factors such as species, climate and

management. Some of the soils tested already had good levels of fungi, bacteria and soil carbon, while soil carbon increased at pasture sites after applications.

The workshops were held to address concerns raised by farmers during the WestVic Dairy Focus Farm programs.

WestVic Dairy Focus Farm facilitator Peter Wearne, who organised the workshops, said they would help farmers to make better fertiliser and soil health decisions.

"Farmers in our Focus Farm groups wanted to find out more about the various alternative fertilisers that are on the market and get independent analysis so they don't have to rely solely on what manufacturers claim," Mr Wearne said.

Clearing the Fog — Soil Health and Making Better Fertiliser Product Decisions workshops are supported by Glenelg Hopkins CMA and Bega, through funding from the Australian government's Caring for our Country, WestVic Dairy, YDDP and DemoDAIRY.



At the Clearing the Fog workshop were (from left) Linda Roache, Cam Nicholson (guest speaker) Josh Parsons and David Croft.




**WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS**

# Farm walk's feed focus

## Tips on growing and consuming more pasture

By **JANET SLOAN**  
DPI DAIRY SERVICES,  
WARRNAMBOOL



GROWING and consuming extra pasture was the focus of the Port Campbell discussion group's farm walk at the Kordupel family farm last month.

An increase of 1.3 tonnes DM/ha/yr pasture consumed was recognised as a big achievement in light of the poor summer and wet winter conditions experienced over the past financial year compared to the previous one.

"Rainfall over summer here has been a lot less than usual and we have only received half our rainfall so far this year," Adam Kordupel said.

Achieving such a significant amount of extra pasture growth under such

challenging conditions was even more impressive. Adam identified the following major changes that had contributed to their success so far this season as:

A clearer focus on managing pasture and getting a long rotation out early in the autumn so that cows graze at three leaf or canopy closure and leave a residual of 4-6cm;

Actively filling feed gaps with good quality silage/hay and concentrates;

Using the DPI Feeding Pastures for Profit's rotation right tool to assist in setting appropriate rotation lengths;

Strategically using nitrogen over the growing season to boost pasture production.

The Kordupels milk 320 cows on 180 hectares near Princetown. Table 1 shows the benefits of improved pasture management on the Kordupel's farm's physical performance. The use of better grazing management techniques has aided their farm productivity with little change in inputs to the farm. These techniques have also resulted in pastures having deeper, more robust root systems and greater sugar reserves.

Adam said it was a challenge setting up last year when they started using the



Adam and Drew Kordupel inspecting the pasture on their property at Port Campbell.

Feeding Pastures for Profit approach.

"We had to get our rotation length out and we did not have much of a fodder reserve. But we bit the bullet and did it and now we are in a much better position.

"We still have silage left, even with this really long, dry summer and we've been more profitable. I am now confident

in our ability to grow grass. I know we will always have feed ahead of us."

If you are interested in knowing more about the Feeding Pastures for Profit Program or want to join a discussion group in the south west, contact Janet Sloan, Dairy Services Branch, DPI, Warrnambool, on 0428 520 350.

**TABLE 1: Farm data for Kordupel's business**

1 April-March 30	2010-2011	2011-2012
Pasture consumed DM/ha	5.9	7.2
Tonnes concentrate Feed per head	1.8	1.8
Cow numbers	300	320
Milk solids/cow	373	486

# Mites on the move in pasture

By **HELEN CHENOWETH**  
DPI DAIRY SERVICES,  
WARRNAMBOOL



OUR old friend the red legged earth mite (RLEM) is starting to cause damage to local pastures across the region as our pastures finally get away this autumn.

Typical mite damage appears as "silvering" or "whitening" of the attacked foliage. RLEM is most damaging to newly establishing pastures and emerging crops, greatly reducing seedling survival and development.

In severe cases, entire paddocks may need re-sowing following RLEM attack. Note also that slug damage is also being seen as bare patches in newly sown pastures.

Earth mites are usually active in the cool, wet part of the year, between April and November, and may

pass through three generations, with each generation surviving six to eight weeks. RLEM eggs hatch in autumn following exposure to cooler temperatures and adequate rainfall.

It takes about two weeks of exposure to favourable conditions for over-summering eggs to hatch. This releases swarms of mites, which attack delicate crop seedlings and emerging pasture plants.

RLEM hosts include pasture legumes, subterranean and other clovers, medics and lucerne. They are particularly damaging to seedlings of all legumes, oilseeds and lupins when in high numbers. They also feed on ryegrass and young cereal crops, especially oats.

RLEM also feed on a range of weed species including Paterson's curse, skeleton weed, variegated thistle, ox-tongue, smooth cats' ear and capeweed. RLEM feeding reduces the productivity of established plants and has been found to be directly responsible for reduction in pasture palatability to livestock.

Carefully inspect susceptible pastures and crops from autumn to spring for the presence of mites and evidence of damage. It is especially important to inspect crops regularly in the first three to five weeks after sowing. Mites are best detected feeding on



Typical damage by red legged earth mites.

the leaves in the morning or on overcast days.

In the warmer part of the day RLEM tend to gather at the base of plants, sheltering in leaf sheaths and under debris.

They will crawl into cracks in the ground to avoid heat and cold. When disturbed during feeding they will drop to the ground and seek shelter. Chemicals are the most commonly used control option against earth mites. While a number of chemicals are registered for control of active RLEM in pastures and crops, there are currently no registered pesticides that

are effective against RLEM eggs.

Controlling first generation mites before they have a chance to lay eggs is the only effective way to avoid the need for a second spray. Hence, pesticides used at or after sowing should be applied within three weeks of the first appearance of mites, before adults begin to lay eggs. Timing of chemical application is critical.

For more information on strategies to reduce RLEM damage or to treat slug infestations on your farm, discuss your situation with your local agronomist.

# How to qualify for the conservation tillage refundable tax offset?

By **GARRY SMITH**  
and **COFFEY HUNT**

The Refundable Tax Offset (RTO) for new conservation tillage equipment will provide funding of up to \$44 million to encourage primary producers to adopt conservation tillage practices.

Primary producers will be able to claim a 15 per cent refundable tax offset for new eligible conservation equipment installed and ready for use between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2015 and will be claimable in the 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 income years.

A taxpayer will be entitled to an RTO of 15 per cent of the cost of an eligible asset that:

They held during the income year;

They started to use or had installed ready for use during the income year in the course of carrying on a primary production business;

Had not previously been used or installed ready for use by the taxpayer or any other taxpayer (must be new); and

The RTO will be available for assets which the taxpayer starts to use or has installed ready for use between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2015.

Only the following assets will be eligible for the RTO:

Tine machines fitted with minimum tillage points to achieve minimum soil disturbance and less than full cut-out, including narrow points, knife points or inverted 'T' points; Disc openers (single, double or triple arrangements); and disc/tine and disc/blade hybrid machines.

### Research Participation Certificate:

A taxpayer will not be entitled to claim the RTO unless they hold a Research Participation Certificate evidencing that they have participated in research into the carbon sequestration properties of soil. Taxpayers will meet this participation requirement by filling out a survey at [www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au](http://www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au)

The tax information provided above is for general guidance only. Please contact your accountant for definitive advice.





# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## WHAT'S ON

### June 12 and 19

**EVENT:** First Aid – Level 2

**TIME:** 9am-4pm

**WHERE:** NCDEA Terang

**CONTACT:** Hugh McLaren, NCDEA, 0407 552 011

### June 13, 20, 27 and July 4

**EVENT:** People GPS – Managing people on dairy farms

**TIME:** 10am-3pm

**WHERE:** NCDEA Terang

**CONTACT:** Rebecca Huth, NCDEA, (03) 5592 2437

### June 14

**EVENT:** Lameness webinar

**TIME:** Midday

**WHERE:** Your own home

**CONTACT:** Jillian Goudie

[jgoudie@gotafe.vic.edu.au](mailto:jgoudie@gotafe.vic.edu.au)

### June 14, 21 and 28

**EVENT:** Supervise animal health programs

**TIME:** 9am-4pm

**WHERE:** NCDEA Terang

**CONTACT:** Stephen Bateman, NCDEA, 0407 552 011

### June 20

**EVENT:** Where am I going? (bull night)

**TIME:** 7pm-10pm

**WHERE:** Terang Footy Club Rooms

**CONTACT:** Liza Fahey, Westvic Dairy, (03) 5592 2477

### June 20, 27 and 28

**EVENT:** Artificial Insemination

**TIME:** 9am-4pm

**WHERE:** Day 1 NCDEA Terang;

Day 2 & 3 Sunbury

**CONTACT:** Rebecca Huth, NCDEA, (03) 5592 2437

### June 26

**EVENT:** Milk price revealed

**TIME:** 7.15pm-9.30pm

**WHERE:** Warrnambool Flying Horse

**CONTACT:** Liza Fahey, Westvic Dairy, (03) 5592 2477

### July 2

**EVENT:** Port Campbell Discussion Group

**TIME:** 11am-2pm

**WHERE:** TBC

**CONTACT:** Janet Sloan, DPI

(03) 5561 9906

### July 17 and 24

**EVENT:** Cups On Cups Off

**TIME:** 10am-3pm

**WHERE:** Kirkstall

**CONTACT:** Stephen Bateman, NCDEA, 0407 552 011



## Anzac discussion group's 2012 professional development tour

# Visit to Tassie

RECENTLY the Anzac discussion group from western Victoria visited Tasmania on a professional development tour.

The tour was run with funding from a WestVic Dairy Small Grant and a grant from the Future Ready Dairy Systems Board.

Fourteen participants flew to Launceston and from there they travelled to the north-west of the state visiting dairies along the way such as the Ashgrove Cheese Factory, Deloraine.

The staff at Ashgrove provided a rundown on how their business grew from a conventional dairy farming business originally supplying Fonterra, into a value-adding business with the addition of a cheese plant and eventually expanding into a fresh milk production plant that was completed recently.

It was interesting to gain an insight into how they market their cheese on both the domestic and export markets.

The business runs as a family enterprise with milk

from the farm being sold to the factory, although the factory is situated on the same property, they are run as separate businesses by different family members.

The farm will this year peak at 1350 cows.

Because of the Tasmanian climate and its ability to support a phenomenal amount of pasture growth, they are able to feed less concentrates and support an almost fully pasture-based system.

Tasmania is also experiencing a great season with high summer rainfall which is further aiding pasture growth.

The group then travelled on further west and visited Hatfield Dairies, Smithton.

Brad Watson is the owner of 11 dairy farms in the Smithton region, all of which employ sharefarmers.

Brad has been able to attract exceptional sharefarmers to his farms with his easygoing manner and "can-do" attitude.

While travelling around with Brad for the day, the

group visited the site of the new Tasmanian Dairy Products factory, and heard how positive it is for the Tasmanian farmers to have their own co-operative.

They visited three of Brad's farms in the area, while dodging the rainstorms that have frequented the north-west in the summer months, leading to a lot of envy from the group at the green grass.

It was especially interesting to see the development of "humps and hollows" in every paddock to help combat the extreme wet conditions experienced in Tasmania.

On the way back to the airport and the mainland the group stopped off at the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research station, Elliott.

Leslie Irvine introduced the farm manager, Duncan, who supplied some facts about the commercial operation of the dairy farm.

The farm is moving to milk 340 cows this year with the introduction of a new centre pivot.

He provided a rundown on the climate change modelling work that is being carried out at the station.

This work is also being done at Terang, and shows the south-west will become more highly variable in regards to weather.

At Terang this study showed a detrimental outcome, with predicted temperatures rising and rainfall totals falling, but not so in Tasmania where an increase in daily temperature would better suit their ryegrass pasture systems!

Overall, the trip to Tasmania was very informative with participants interested in the farms that they visited.

This included some new and innovative enterprises and although the system is very different to the experiences of those who went on the trip, they believe they gained a good understanding of the vibrant Tasmanian industry.

If you would like information on the Small Grants program please contact the WestVic Dairy office on (03) 5592 2477.

## Get effluent risk management right

DAIRY farmers in south-west Victoria will need to come up with other options if they haven't already used the effluent from their effluent ponds in preparation for the wet season.

Wet weather means farmers need to make sure their dairy effluent ponds have appropriate spare capacity so they do not overflow or discharge to the environment.

Dairy farmers are required by legislation to manage their effluent and ensure it does not leave their properties or pollute surface or groundwater.

Ideally farmers should start planning this process and engaging contractors during summer as the use of effluent should be carried out during the drier months. If they haven't already done this they should now consider contingency plans as a matter of urgency.

There are a range of online resources available on the Dairying for Tomorrow website [www.dairyingfortomorrow.com.au](http://www.dairyingfortomorrow.com.au) under "Effluent and Nutrients".

The EPA has also developed dairy effluent guidelines which have been endorsed by the dairy industry.

EPA Victoria has indicated it will step up the monitoring of local farms over the next few months to ensure compliance.

Farmers found to have effluent leaving their property or polluting waterways will be issued a remedial notice to give them time to implement effluent management practices which are in line with EPA requirements.

If an EPA representative visits a farm, farmers can ask them to make an appointment



Farmers need strategies to get rid of dairy pond effluent before the winter rains.

and come back at a time that suits both parties.

However, EPA representatives can inspect without a landholder present if they are acting on a complaint. Under these circumstances farmers must show them the system at the time they arrive. Apart from the benefits of using the effluent, farmers also have legal obligations to follow.

Time has just about run out to deal with effluent ponds, and in very wet conditions farmers need to ensure that effluent does not run over and enter waterways.

An additional storage area may be utilised in wet conditions to pump and store water, and rainwater diversion devices may be put in place to divert fresh water off dairy yards and feed pads. This could mitigate the risk, reducing water volume into ponds.

It is recommended that ponds are not emptied completely, but that 500

millimetres of effluent be maintained to protect the bottom of the pond from cracking.

South West Dairy NRM Reference Group chairman Mike Waite said farmers needed to start treating effluent as an asset, not a liability.

"If they haven't already started the process, farmers need to plan early to clean their ponds and have the capacity over winter and to store effluent until the drier months. The application of effluent at the right levels is a great opportunity to utilise nutrients to build up feed," Mr Waite said.

"With new high-tech machinery and longer pumping systems, farmers now have more options to get to better areas to get full value from their nutrients," he said.

While effluent guidelines are designed to protect the environment, they also encourage farmers to see the potential re-use of effluent as

a valuable nutrient source. Effluent is increasingly being recognised and used as a nutrient-rich addition to fertiliser programs.

Studies carried out by the DPI at Terang's DemoDAIRY have shown the benefits of applying second pond effluent to established pasture. The effluent can be summer applied at rates of up to 100 kg N/ha.

The moderate 200 kg N/ha was found to run increased risks. The high 400 kg N/ha rate has unacceptable effects on the environment.

The results also indicate that due to build up over time, effluent should not be repeatedly applied to the same area of land every year.

Further information is also available from DPI website: <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/dairy/managing-waste> or the EPA guidelines can be found by visiting the EPA homepage: [www.epa.vic.gov.au](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au)

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.

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER MIKE WEISE:** [mike@westvicdairy.com.au](mailto:mike@westvicdairy.com.au) PO Box 67, Terang, 3264; Ph 5592 2477; Fax 5592 1342; [www.westvicdairy.com.au](http://www.westvicdairy.com.au) ABN 86 401 992 319  
**EDITOR LISA CHESSHIRE:** [dairynews@westvicdairy.com.au](mailto:dairynews@westvicdairy.com.au)