

DAIRY NEWS

NEWS ABOUT HOW DAIRY FARMERS' LEVIES ARE INVESTED

A special *On The Land* supplement



TOP EFFORT

Dairy award winners announced

A POSITIVE work culture and excellent communication with staff have helped Camperdown farmers Adam and Natalie Roberts earn the title of Employer of the Year at the 2011 Great South West Dairy Awards.

The award winners were announced before an audience of more than 320 people on April 7, at Glenormiston College.

Other major award winners were:

Employee of the Year: Barry Williams, Warrnambool.

Share Farmer of the Year: Jason and Jackie Elliott, Kolora.

Young Farm Leader: Kerri Ross, Bald Hills.

Natural Resource Management: Neil and Kay Widdicombe, Barongarook West.

Best Dairy Farm Photo: Clancy Burn, Kirkstall.

In awarding the Ambleside Financial Planning Employer of the Year title, judges said Adam and Natalie Roberts had positive human resources and occupational health and safety compliance, were very supportive of employee development, conducted regular performance reviews, encouraged training and offered a flexible work environment with a strong work-life balance.

Judges described Adam and Natalie as

"excellent ambassadors for the industry".

Employer of the Year runner-up was Mike Hayes, of Kirkstall.

Judges said the Dairy Australia Employee of the Year, Barry Williams, was reliable, an excellent communicator, had a high regard for safety, was capable of undertaking all tasks on the farm and would go out of his way to fix problems or help others.

"Barry is not only a valued and exceptionally skilled employee, he is infectious with his enthusiasm for the industry and takes great pride in contributing to the success of the business he works for,"

judges said. Employee of the Year runner-up was Matt James, of Allansford.

Runners-up in the Warrnambool Cheese and Butter Share Farmer of the Year award were James and Jacinta Loveday, of Timboon. The CMA Natural Resource Management Award runners-up were Donald and Viv MacKinnon, of Boorcan.

Runner-up for the Moyne Shire Young Farm Leader Award was David O'Connell, of Kirkstall.

Clancy Burn was also named runner-up in the Gardiner Foundation Best Dairy Farm Photo competition, ahead of third placegetter Jenni Parkinson, of Warrnambool.



Kerri Ross.



Barry Williams.



Jackie and Jason Elliott.



Neil and Kay Widdicombe.



From left, Mike Hayes, Paul Ford, and Clancy Burn.

Double success for Clancy

KIRKSTALL dairy farmer and aspiring photographer Clancy Burn has scored double success in the 2011 Great South West Dairy Awards Best Farm Photo competition.

Two of Clancy's photos have been named first and second prizewinners.

Her top winner, *Miss Pygmy*, captured an irresistible image of a calf at her farm.

The judges described the photo as bright and sharp with an unusual angle, which attracted attention towards the calf.

Second place was won by

Canine Friends, also photographed by Clancy.

"It is a well-composed image that tells a story," the judges said. Third place *ET Lives* by Jenni Parkinson, of Warrnambool, captured a unique image of a cow looking like an alien.

"What can you say about the freaky look on the cow?" the judges asked.

"The title says it perfectly." There were more than 75 entries in the competition.

The winners were announced at the 2011 Great South West Dairy Awards

Names added to industry honour roll

FIVE dedicated contributors to the dairy industry in south-west Victoria have been named as the inaugural inductees on the South West Dairy Industry Honour Roll.

Noorat farmer Niel Black, Murray Goulburn field services manager Peter Haynes, former Warrnambool Cheese and Butter managing director John McLean, Bessie Belle farmer John Pye, and farmer and organiser of the Sungold Field Days Tony Rea are the first names to feature on the roll.

The inductees were announced at the Great South West Dairy Awards at Glenormiston on April 7.

Niel Black has been involved with the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria for more than 50 years and remains an active and valued member at district council level.

He is recognised as a founding member of artificial insemination in western Victoria and as a strong supporter of co-operative manufacture of dairy produce.

Mr Black was a member of the committee that established DemoDAIRY, a board member of the predecessor of WestVic Dairy, Noorat Show committee president and Victorian Dairyfarmers Association branch president.

His contribution to dairy was acknowledged at a special function last year attended by all sectors of the industry and people from around the state.

Mr Haynes has been involved in the dairy industry for 35 years, including leadership roles for the Dairy Extension Team in Warrnambool and the South West Dairy Extension Group. He has contributed to many publications and in 1975 wrote the book *Disposal of Dairy Shed Effluent*.

He was one of the developers of the Target 10 program for Victoria, on the board of the Western Victorian Dairy Industry Committee and was integral in the selection of the current board of the DemoDAIRY farm.

About 17 years ago he joined Murray Goulburn as field services manager and has continued to be a strong voice for farmers.

Mr McLean is well known for his work over more than five decades with Warrnambool Cheese and Butter where he was managing director for more than 30 years. He has also worked at the higher levels of influence in the industry, particularly in the manufacturing area.

His roles have included Australian Dairy Industry Council executive director, Australian Dairy Products Federation executive member, Dairy Technical Services chairman, Market Milk Federation of Australia member, Milk Processors' Association Victoria Inc executive member and Victorian Dairy Producers of Australia president.

His contribution to the industry was recognised with a Rabobank Agribusiness

Leader of the Year award in 2004. Mr Pye has played vital roles in the Victorian dairy industry over many years, including the Target 10 committee during the early 1990s and an active role in the strategy committee of the Dairy Extension Committee. He has been involved in a large range of industry groups from the local dairy discussion group, to state-wide and local UDV committees, the VFF Central Council, Powercor Customer Consultative Committee, Southern Rural Water and Murray Goulburn as part of an unwavering commitment to the industry for more than 40 years.

Tony Rea's involvement in the establishment of the Acme Field Days was a major boost for the recognition of dairy in the wider community.

Mr Rea was active as a board member of Warrnambool Cheese and Butter for 27 years and continues as chairman of what are now known as the Sungold Field Days.

Dairy Awards project manager Barbara Collins said each of the inductees had made outstanding contributions to the dairy industry.

The honour board, which will be erected at the WestVic Dairy offices at Terang, will provide permanent recognition for people who have contributed to their communities, supported young people in the dairy industry, offered leadership, followed exemplary farming practices, and made a significant contribution to

INSIDE THIS MONTH'S WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

CLIMATE CHANGE FORUM

PAGE 9



CONTROL ACIDIC SOILS

PAGE 12



PLASTIC WASTE PROJECT

PAGE 14





WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

INSIDE

PAGE 7

Dairy Award winners
Honour Roll inductees
Clancy's winning photos

PAGE 8

Dairying's future leaders

PAGE 9

DemoDAIRY greenhouse forum
Colac young farmers star
Farm Monitor Project

PAGE 10

New WestVic board member
Dairy reminders for May
Preparing for wet conditions

PAGE 11

Planning ahead on the farm
Modern soil management

PAGE 12

Dicksons' top-10 ambitions
Neutralising acidic soil
New water web tool
Understanding the weather

PAGE 13

Progeny test for dairy bulls
Nitrogen efficiency

PAGE 14

Farmers' forum re-convenes
Plastics recycling system
Alternative energy field day



Opportunities await

Here come our leaders and dairy farmers of the future

Tahnee King, Rowan Ault and Sophie Hester.



WESTERN Victorian field officer Rowan Ault says much of what he has learned so far in the new Developing Dairy Leaders Program can be applied to everyday life in some way.

"I will be able to use a mixture of industry and life skills," he said.

"Industry information is readily applicable in my role as a field officer with Warrnambool Cheese and Butter."

The pilot program, developed by Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) and Dairy Australia, aims to build on the leadership skills of people aged 18 to 30 who are committed to the dairy industry.

Rowan is one of three from western Victoria to take part in the program.

He is joined by Colac's Sophie Hester and Tahnee

King, from Warrnambool. There are 17 young dairy industry people from across Australia participating — 10 men and seven women.

Recently, the group completed the first stage, which involved a four-day residential skills development program in Melbourne where participants interacted with industry leaders from various state and national organisations.

Rowan grew up on a dairy farm at Rochester in northern Victoria and said the program, delivered by the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA) was a great opportunity to meet key industry leaders.

"It gave me a greater awareness of how the industry operates and I had the opportunity to learn how key leaders have reached the positions they are in," he said.

"I think the course could be of great value to the industry. Pathways need to be developed to keep people involved.

"It's a good way of introducing people to broader aspects of the industry and opening up a lot of opportunities that might not have been available."

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

The next phase of the program will involve a regionally-based project with the support of an industry-leading mentor.

It will conclude with a two-day residential policy and media development program in Canberra in May, with the end result a formal accreditation.

The program has been developed in response to the Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) Dairy Leadership — an Industry Blueprint 2010-15, which identified 200 leadership roles required across the industry — 40 new people each year.

ADF vice president Adrian Drury said the program was a key activity in supporting the development of the dairy industry's state level leaders.

"I have met the participants of the Developing Dairy Leaders Program and believe them to be a group of young people who are more than

capable of responding to any challenge thrown at them, leading our industry and staying true to themselves," Mr Drury said.

Dairy Australia managing director Ian Halliday said the course had attracted a group of enthusiastic and passionate young people from the industry.

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

"While the course has just started, participants have taken hold of the opportunity to learn from current leaders with gusto, and are already taking the necessary steps to become the next wave of dairy industry representatives as managers, presidents, directors and board members."

The Developing Dairy Leaders Program is one of the many examples of the dairy service levy at work.

Farmers receive a benefit of three dollars for every dollar invested by Dairy Australia on their behalf.

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

MILK FROM MOISTURE

A WEATHER WORKSHOP FOR FARMERS
Friday 6 May 2011: 10.30am – 2.30pm
Cobden Golf Club, Cobden (lunch provided)

An informative session covering:

1. Short term weather forecasting
2. Climate drivers
3. Forecasts for south west Victoria; and
4. Seasonal variation and risk

Hear from Jane Bunn (WIN News - right)
Rod Eldridge (DPI) and local dairy farmers

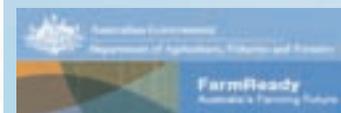
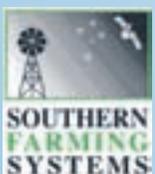


WIN NEWS

Climate change - Seasonal variation - Drought - Fire - Flood

*There's more to the weather than what's in the rain gauge,
so come along and put the weather on your radar!*

For more info and to RSVP contact Cath Jenkins
Phone 0414 551 264 or
jenkins@tca-online.net.au



WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS



Associate professor Richard Eckard will detail the latest on farm-based management to reduce emissions.

Greenhouse forum at DemoDAIRY

By ZITA RITCHIE
DAIRY SERVICES, DPI
WARRNAMBOOL



FARMERS have the chance to hear the latest on greenhouse gases and working with climate variability during a forum at DemoDAIRY on May 12, from 11am until 2pm.

"More than Just Hot Air" features three of Australia's leading researchers in the area of

greenhouse gas mitigation and adapting to a variable climate.

Speakers include Associate Professor Richard Eckard from the University of Melbourne, who will present the latest in greenhouse research and policy directions related to agriculture.

Dr Eckard is a world leader in his field and is a fantastic communicator.

He will also discuss greenhouse gas emission reduction options being evaluated for the dairy industry and being tested in current research.

Fellow University of Melbourne scientist Dr Brendan Cullen will talk about some of the likely changes in pasture production in an evolving south-west climate.

DPI principal dairy scientist Dr Joe Jacobs



will provide some "food for thought", as he discusses alternative forage options and how to adapt the dairy feedbase in a variable climate.

DPI senior research

scientist Graeme Ward said after the morning presentations and free lunch, participants will head out to the paddocks to inspect some of the greenhouse gas mitigation research being conducted at DemoDAIRY.

"The south-west is a hot spot for some of the leading greenhouse gas research and this is a great opportunity to hear directly from some of the scientists. The variable climate provides plenty of challenges and this day provides a unique opportunity to hear about the latest research in this area," he said.

The free "More than Hot Air" forum is on May 12 at DemoDAIRY, Terang.

For further details or to book (for catering purposes) call DPI Warrnambool (03) 5561 9920.

Dairy industry farm monitor project gears up for 2011

By DANIEL GILMOUR
DAIRY SERVICES, DPI
BENDIGO



THE Dairy Industry Farm Monitor Project for the 2010-11 financial year will begin soon, with data collection starting with participating farms in late May.

The report will be publicly available online on July 31 and available in hard copy on August 31.

Over the past four years the project has analysed and discussed the performance of dairy businesses across northern Victoria, Gippsland and the south-west dairy regions. In 2009-10 the project surveyed 71 farms and identified trends in productivity and profitability.

In 2010-11 the project will analyse 75 dairy farm businesses.

The 2009-10 annual report highlighted a tough year for the industry, with lower milk prices limiting farm income.

But it also found that more than 80 per cent of the surveyed farms still made positive earnings before interest and tax (EBIT, which is a measure of farm profit), the same proportion as recorded in the 2008-09 report.

The average EBIT across all the surveyed farms was \$0.65 per kilogram of milk solids sold, or \$507 per hectare.

While still positive, this was

a reduction of 37 per cent and 36 per cent respectively on profitability levels recorded in 2008-09.

The average return on assets (not including capital gains) across the state declined from 3.8 per cent in 2008-09 to 2.2 per cent this year, with a range of -7.6 per cent to 8.8 per cent.

The top 25 per cent of producers highlighted the strength of well-run dairy businesses, recording profitability levels well above the average.

These farms on average recorded an EBIT of \$1.61 per kilogram of milk solids, \$1,320 per hectare and a return on asset of 5.6 per cent.

In July 2010, confidence in the dairy industry for the coming season was very strong, with farmers almost universally expecting an increase in farm business returns thanks to rising milk prices and stable input costs.

With milk prices expected to close for the season in the range of \$5.30-\$5.50/kg MS and favourable seasonal conditions, it is hoped that many producers will have been able to capitalise on these conditions and post a healthy profit.

The Dairy Industry Farm Monitor Project is an initiative of the Department of Primary Industries Victoria and Dairy Australia. It is run to provide industry and government with current economic, social and environmental data that will enable Victoria's dairy industry to monitor changes in productivity and profitability over time.

To view previous editions of the report including business and production performance of farms in the project go to www.dpi.vic.gov.au/dairyfarmmonitor.

For further information contact Daniel Gilmour on 5430 4395.

Colac YDPP members win Sydney challenge

Young Dairy Development Program 'develops dairy communities'

FOUR young dairy farmers from the Colac area have shown off their farming skills to win a major national title.

Troy Errington, Brenton Bishop, Clynton Theodore and Tim Gallert, all members of the Colac Young Dairy Development Program (YDDP) branch, blitzed the field to win the Young Farmer Challenge at the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

The quartet charged through a series of challenges ranging from driving utes and hooking up trailers to building chicken coops and laying irrigation pipes.

They also had to unload and drench sheep, saddle and ride a horse, and place the animals in a yard they built.

To challenge their stamina, the farmers had to carry and stack hay bales and their OH&S skills were tested when

car crashes and fires were added to the competition.

While the Colac farmers were able to win quite comfortably from their nearest rival, Sydney's wet weekend made it tough going. "At the end we were running through mud with the hay bales," Troy said. "We were doing some slipping and sliding but we got there."

The Young Farmer Challenge was developed to

promote excellence in farming and showcase the involvement of youth in agriculture.

Emphasis was placed on completing each challenge within the best time, but more importantly with the correct technique and safe work methods.

Troy said the team, named the Colac Cow Tipplers, was formed to promote the YDDP name and for the members to test their skills against other

farmers. "We were always ahead of everyone else. We do these things all the time on the farm so we knew what we were doing," he said.

Apart from the mud, the quartet also had to deal with some nerves.

"We were a bit nervous in the final," Troy admitted. "When you're on the main arena and you've got a few hundred people looking at you, you want to make sure

you don't mess up. But once we were going it was all right and everyone was cheering at the end."

The Colac Cow Tipplers had travelled the longest distance of all the teams of four competing in the challenge. Each member won a championship ribbon, \$500 and other prizes.

"We've been invited back next year to defend our title," Troy said.

WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

New board member

WESTVIC Dairy's new associate board member Clancy Burn wants to do her bit to develop the dairy industry and help its people.

At 32, Clancy is a rising star in dairying and has big plans to spread good messages about the industry.

Admitting she is not interested in the politics of dairying, Clancy says she is, however, committed to helping the industry to grow.

"Politics is not my thing. Development of the industry and the training of people is what I'm into," she said.

Although her role as an associate board member is a non-voting position, Clancy hopes to learn from her experience and aspires to become a fully-fledged board member next time the opportunity arises.

She also has plans to develop a magazine and blog to help promote the virtues of dairy.

WestVic welcomes Clancy to the fold

Clancy has undertaken study in business management and leadership and hopes to promote the need for more support and training for industry people.

Having grown up on a dairy farm in Tasmania, Clancy manages a 1000-cow property at Kirkstall with her husband, Mike Hayes, as part of an equity management partnership.

"Mike and I each have our roles on the farm. I do a lot of the AI and calving, not a lot of milking anymore, but between us we keep pretty busy."

Clancy completed her dairy traineeship on King Island and farmed in Gippsland and Mount Gambier before moving to the south-west. She has completed her Advanced Diploma of Farm Business Management and the

Australian Rural Leadership Program and is a strong advocate of the need to develop the industry and its people.

"You can only go so far without training. I did a finance course run by WestVic Dairy and really enjoyed it. There is a lot of focus on operational practices, which is great, but the business aspects of running a farm are also important," Clancy said.

"I am very passionate about helping new entrants in the industry, attracting and retaining staff and training employers to be better bosses.

"Everything has improved but there is always more that we can do."

Clancy said she was impressed by the work being done by WestVic Dairy.

"I can see the good that it does for the industry," she said.

Clancy has dedicated her working life to dairy and hopes to extend on that involvement soon.

"It is 15 years since I left school and I went straight into working on a dairy farm," Clancy said.

Now she has plans to broaden her horizons. Part of that is happening through her new role as an associate member of the WestVic Dairy Board.

"It is a good experience for me," she said.

"It is interesting to see how such a wide range of people contribute — not only dairy farmers but also vets, accountants and others. The dairy farmers themselves all

have different points of view as well which adds up to a good discussion."

Clancy said she would most likely nominate next time a vacancy arose for a full board position.

"I'll have to go through the same application process as everyone else but having this role is helping me to better understand the industry and appreciate what being a member of the board involves."

Although it is only early days, Clancy said she would encourage others in the industry to consider standing for an associate board position when the opportunity arose.

"Already I feel more confident about what a board member does, despite being a little nervous before my first

meeting as I wondered if I would have anything to contribute. I'm looking forward to learning a lot from the other board members and the whole experience."

Board chairman John Dalton also started his involvement with WestVic Dairy as an associate member.

An amateur photographer who won first and second prizes in this year's Great South West Dairy Awards Best Farm Photo competition and a budding writer, Clancy is involved with the Young Dairy Development Program and the Udderly Fantastic website and hopes to launch her own blog about daily life on the farm.

"I am also looking at developing a magazine for young dairy people which would have positive stories about people in the industry," she said.

"When people google dairy I'd like them to find some positive stories about the industry."



Good grazing management means more productive pastures over winter.

Get ready for wet conditions

By MICHELE RYAN
DAIRY SERVICES, DPI
WARRNAMBOOL



AS we move into winter, it is important to avoid the temptation of letting our pasture rotations get too short.

If conditions become wet and your rotation too quick, pasture production will be reduced just at the time it is needed most!

Paddocks can then easily become severely pugged causing other headaches such as reduced pasture quality and poor long-term pasture persistence.

It is critical to get the rotation length out sooner rather than later, because if it is too fast it is very difficult to slow down.

The key to keeping rotation on track is to take notice of the leaf appearance rate of the dominant species in the pasture,

which in the south west is generally perennial ryegrass. During the middle of winter it is important to remember it can take anywhere from 20 to 35 days for one ryegrass leaf to appear and the ideal time to graze perennial ryegrass is at the three-leaf stage.

So you might be thinking that if the leaf appearance rate is 30 days per leaf, you would need to have a rotation of 90 days to get the ideal grazing point of three leaves.

Before you pronounce that it can't be done, it is important to keep in mind that three leaves rarely need more than 45 to 50 days to regrow because only one of them requires 30 days. While growing in the depth of winter, the other two will appear quicker, growing either before or after the very coldest period.

There are two ways to lengthen a grazing rotation.

The first is to simply suffer the lower total feed intake of the cow and reduced milk production for the longer-term benefit of the better pasture growth, once the longer rotation is established.

The second and

preferred option is to maintain the cow's total feed intake by supplying more supplements while lengthening the rotation.

Although using supplementary feed increases costs, milk production will be maintained at a higher level both during lengthening the rotation and when the longer rotation is established. It also ensures the pasture is not grazed below five centimetres, thus maintaining pasture production and persistence.

If you suffer from waterlogging on your farm it is very important to remove cows from these paddocks after four hours of grazing and move them to a stand-off area.

About 80 percent of the feed in the paddock will be eaten, the rotation length will be maintained and the longer grass will help reduce the amount of pugging damage.

Trying to avoid pugging damage by allocating a larger area to spread the cows out does not reduce damage, it simply makes it less concentrated, less visible and speeds up the rotation.

For more information, contact Michele Ryan on 5561 9914.

Dairy reminders for May

By HELEN CHENOWETH
DAIRY SERVICES,
DPI WARRNAMBOOL



ESTABLISHING AND MANAGING NEW PASTURES

MAY/JUNE sown pasture mixes will be slow to establish prior to the onset of winter. Weed control will be important.

Spray broadleaf weeds in new pastures once the weeds are about three to five centimetres in diameter (six to eight weeks after germination).

Now is the time to control any capeweed/broadleaf weeds in new sown or permanent pastures before they get too big.

Lighter rates of herbicides can be used effectively to control the weeds and allow the pasture to spread into the gaps left behind. Use recommended herbicides according to the label directions.

Capeweed pastures may contain high nitrate levels, so do not apply nitrogen to capeweed-dominant pastures, and watch for nitrate poisoning if capeweed is present in pastures.

Inspect emerging pastures for damage from red-legged earthmites, crickets or lucerne fleas and take action before, rather than after, the emerging pastures are eaten.

GRAZING MANAGEMENT

GET the pasture rotation out to 40-60 days (for ryegrass-based pastures) going into winter (see article at left). If conditions become wet and your rotation too quick, pasture production will be reduced when it is needed most! Paddocks can then easily become severely pugged

causing other headaches such as reduced pasture quality and poor long-term pasture persistence.

COWS

CHECK the condition of your cows because thin cows will struggle during winter. Also, it is more efficient to put condition on when milking rather than when dry.

Drying off presents a good opportunity to administer the cows' annual 7 in 1 booster. Be sure to accurately record all veterinary treatments administered at this time as many have extended withholding periods.

Check young stock are growing well and getting enough feed through the coming winter.

Last year's wet conditions led to many cows with increased levels of cracked and sore teats or mastitis infections, and fewer cows getting back into calf. While the weather is more favourable now, explore how to reduce these problems this winter on your farm.

MILKING MANAGEMENT

ARRANGE a milking machine service. The dry period is a good time to do machinery maintenance.

TRACKS, FEEDPADS AND DRAINAGE

WITH the tight cash flow of late, wet season management has probably not been a priority. Review the need for track, paddock and feedpad maintenance or capital works and get going on them before it gets too wet.

Some low-cost maintenance can be done this month such as cleaning out track culverts

and other drainage lines, and topping up track areas with appropriate materials before the calving-down jobs take over.

WATER ISSUES

MAKE sure your effluent ponds are cleaned out to create maximum storage capacity for the coming season's rainfall. Avoid application during wet weather or on waterlogged pastures because of an increased likelihood of runoff problems.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

GET an early start for the end of the financial year next month. Organise your records of expenditure and income to prepare a cash flow budget for the next financial year as the next season's milk price becomes clearer. Some of the above reminders may need to be prioritised for expenditure depending on your cash flow budget.

Often a chat to your accountant this month can be helpful to get an estimate of the business tax position and will allow time to implement any strategies before June 30.

Plan for managing through any wet conditions by implementing the preventative strategies detailed above, rather than just responding once the whole farm is affected. This will benefit cow health and the level of profit derived from the business, and will reduce stress levels on the people involved.

PLANNING FOR JUNE

TASKS for June include calf rearing and final end-of-year financial planning.



A feedpad is useful to feed stock off pastures in wet conditions.

WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS



Preparation is the key to making the most of your "people power".

Plan ahead for changes

Feeding cows: people power

ON dairy farms, the change of seasons often involves changes to the feeding system, such as supplying different forages, setting up transition feeding for springers or possibly moving towards a partial mixed ration as part of the farm's long-term business development.

This involves adjustments to the daily routine. Dr Pauline Brightling, who manages The People in Dairy program for Dairy Australia, has some tips for getting the best out of your feeding system.

"Changes to the feeding system introduce new tasks, different work routines and potential safety hazards," she said.

"As well as managing the finances and the cows, you also need to prepare your team for the changes needed for an effective system."

The people who do the day-to-day work have a powerful influence over the effectiveness of a feeding system.

Preparation is the key to making the most of your "people power".

Dr Brightling suggests preparation should cover four key areas: reviewing work schedules, monitoring the feeding system, training for new skills and prioritising safety.

WORK SCHEDULES

WITH a pasture-based system the workload is

focussed on activities such as fencing, fertilising and moving cows and irrigation on some farms. With a partial or total mixed ration (PMR or TMR) less time is spent on these activities with the focus moving to feed preparation and delivery to cows.

In reviewing the work routine, you may also need to re-think roles and responsibilities.

"Discuss changes to the work schedule with the team," Dr Brightling said. "Their input will be important if they are to see the changes as a different way of doing things, rather than more work."

"Think about ways to fit tasks in with the milking routine so there is little extra work to be done."

"For example, it may be possible to organise a roster that avoids too much feed delivery on weekends or at night," she said.

MONITORING THE SYSTEM

WHEN changes are made to the feeding system, regular monitoring is important to ensure the system is effective and efficient, and to keep track of feed availability.

With a TMR or PMR, monitoring wastage is a priority.

With pastures, it's important to monitor grazing residues.

"It is important to have effective ways for different members of the team to keep track of what's

happening and make adjustments when needed.

"Whiteboards, log books and other written records work well on many farms."

NEW SKILLS

BEFORE making changes to the feeding system, think about the different skills involved and the training needed for team members.

This is also a good time to prepare written standard operating procedures and to take the time to ensure that team members understand each task.

PRIORITISE SAFETY OCCUPATIONAL health and safety must be a top priority on a dairy farm.

Before changing the feeding system, check the equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose.

Check your staff can identify the hazards and minimise the risks associated with different machinery and know what to do if something goes wrong.

Dr Brightling suggests following the "keep it simple" principle.

"There is often a worthwhile compromise between what is technically the best system and what you can implement simply," she said.

"The choices you make can make the difference between you being able to get off the farm readily for a break or being tied to the farm because you are the only one who can do the job right." For more information contact The People in Dairy: www.thepeopleindairy.org.au or 9620 7283.

For more information on this and other examples of your levy at work visit www.dairyaustralia.com.au

Need for soil improvement

DAIRY farmers attending a Future Ready Dairy Systems project field day near Cobden were told traditional methods of caring for the soil may no longer be enough to cope with increasing demand.

The field day heard about soil biology, effluent and fertiliser management, pivot irrigation systems and composting.

Participants also had the opportunity to see progressive changes in action when they toured Geoff and Laurel and Craig and Tania Davis's dairy farm at Bostocks Creek on March 24.

DPI productive soils specialist Declan McDonald told 70 farmers and service providers at the field day that production pressure on the land was growing but soil quality was decreasing.

"We are seeing declining trends in soil condition globally," he said.

"Our track record in how we look after soil is not too good. We need to manage our soils better than we have in the past."

"The pressure put on farmers for more food from the same area means we have to work the land hard, but our management systems must improve so that our soils can cope with that increasing demand."

Mr McDonald said farmers needed to be supported in the challenge to improve the capacity of soil to meet future demands.

"Appropriate management of the physical, chemical and biological elements of soil is central to the development of soil health."

The Davis farm, which has



Field day participants learn about modern soil management.

been in the family for four generations, was chosen for the field day to demonstrate how producers were adapting their properties to mitigate climate variability.

Craig "Reggie" Davis said he was in the third year of a five-year program in which he has replaced conventional fertiliser, mainly nitrogen, with home-made compost.

Prompted by courses and discussion groups on sustainable agriculture, the changes have paid off, with fewer pests, better root depth and a strong return of clover.

Mr Davis said about 80 to 90 per cent of the compost was made up of ingredients from his farm, mostly solids from his first effluent pond. He also buys in about 30 tonnes from the Camperdown Compost Company.

Mr Davis said the system had resulted in better pastures and reduced fertiliser and operating costs.

The farm's effluent system was upgraded three years ago into a two-pond system and a centre pivot irrigation system was installed to help with the effluent application.

The field day also heard from DPI dairy extension officers Michele Ryan and Rachael Campbell about how to use fertiliser and effluent better, from Camperdown Compost Company's Tony Evans and Greg Potter from Windmill and Irrigation.

Glenelg Hopkins CMA hosted a microscope session allowing people to see the biology of soil up close and Karl Stokes, from Abron, presented a visual soil assessment display.

The field day was co-ordinated by Future Ready Dairy Systems projects and also funded by Dairy Australia, Glenelg Hopkins CMA and the Australian government's Climate Change Research Program.

WANTED

Forty-five rural women who want to:

- Develop their business management and leadership skills
- Develop and build networks
- Improve their time management and negotiation skills
- Improve their meeting skills in groups and rural committees; and
- Help build success in their partnerships/teams in on-farm, workplace and community environments

WestVic Dairy has been successful in obtaining funding from the Department of Planning and Community Development to offer a free program to three groups of 15 women across Western Victoria. The program will be offered over three 5 hour sessions (funding available for child care).

It is designed specifically for women of all ages from across the dairy supply chain - from farmers to processors to service providers - who want to increase their leadership and management capacity either on-farm, within a community organisation, or in their business environment.

We encourage women to apply for the program or get a group of neighbours or colleagues together in a district and send an expression of interest to Jocelyn Bevin at WestVic Dairy 5592 2477.

Act now "first in best dressed"



There are many things to consider before changing practices.

WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

Profit driven

WVD Terang farmers have top-10 ambitions

MOST farmers would be happy with having a herd ranked in the top 20 in Australia, but not Bryan and Joanne Dickson.

Their herd is 18th on the Australian Survival Index (Australian Profit Ranking) but the Terang farmers have their sights firmly set on making the top 10, and are making constant adjustments to their farming practices to make sure they continue to climb up the ranks.

They have made big inroads during the past two years, rising from the 80s to 37 and then to the top 20.

"We would love to make the top 10. That's our target," Bryan said, adding that he didn't expect the final ascent to be easy.

The ASI (APR) is the main breeding index for Australian dairy sires. The APR reflects genetic traits that influence net farm profitability, including milk, fat and protein yields and non-production traits such as longevity, fertility, mastitis resistance, live weight, temperament and milking speed. While the Dicksons have a strong emphasis on quality, they are also building up quantity. In 2011-12 they aim to run 1050 cows, with 725 from their home farm and 325 from a recently bought property at Glenfyne.

The Dickson family has farmed the Ayrford Road property since 1989 when Graeme and Shirley Dickson moved from near Bacchus Marsh with their three sons, Bryan, Neil and Chris.

At the time it was a 202-hectare farm, running 240 cows in a 32-unit internal rotary dairy.

The herd steadily increased to 420 cows during the late 90s and leases and other farms were bought, with Bryan managing the home farm in a family partnership.

In 2002 a new 60-unit outside rotary dairy was built and the following year Bryan and Joanne bought the neighbouring 121-hectare farm and began leasing the home farm from Graeme and Shirley.

Bryan's ambition to crack the top 10 in herd ranking kicked in at the same time, and he adopted a "breeding, feeding and weeding" philosophy.

"Breeding with good bulls is at the top of my list," he said. "We keep using top bulls and then we look at maintaining good soils for good feeding and getting rid of the poor-performing cows."

The farm's successful soil maintenance program was highlighted at a Reducing Soil Acidity through Liming and Nutrient Best Practice field day on April 5.

A one-metre pit was dug to show the different composition of the soil at different depths.

The main farm had soil

issues dating back to the 1990s with soil tests showing Olsen P levels as low as 4.

In 2000 the whole farm was soil tested with Olsen P levels as high as 68.

The intensive soil testing program continues, with 10 to 12 sample paddocks tested each year.

"We're probably still using about the same amount of fertiliser as we did 10 years ago, but we're more strategic in where we use it and only put it where it's needed," Bryan said. Urea is used strategically across the whole farm with no PKS applied on the higher-testing paddocks.

A rotation system has been adopted for spreading lime at 2.5 tonnes per hectare over about a third on the farm each year. With their fertiliser use following an environmentally-friendly course, the Dicksons are also doing their bit to improve their surroundings with regular and continuing planting of native shelterbelts and creek fencing.

The Dicksons take care to protect the nutrients in their soil to promote a healthy growing environment.

"We try not to overgraze over summer," Bryan said. "In autumn and early winter we have a 45-day rotation. We try to graze as close as possible to the three-leaf, because 50% of the ryegrass growth is between two and three-leaf stage."

"We use effluent extensively over summer which helps us cut down on fertiliser."

Bryan added that he was closely watching the outcome of the use of compost on other farms before deciding if he would venture into that area.

Pastures have been renovated and the farm had developed a feedpad which has helped protect the paddocks.

"It cost a bit to set up but it pays off," Bryan said. "It helps us to avoid pugging."

The farm hasn't been doing summer crops for years.

"We don't do crops. I don't think they are cost effective for us," Bryan said. "I think it's better to leave them alone and let the carbon and organic matter build up in the soil. We've been getting good results with our system."

Those results include total milk production of 6.25 million litres on the home farm in the last financial year at an average of 9330 litres per cow, butterfat: 234,369 kg with an average 350kg per cow, and protein 210,196 kg for an average 314kg per cow. While Bryan says his milk production is likely to stay around the same level, he is hoping his herd ranking continues its upward movement.

"Everyone tells me it's quite hard to move from where we are but we're going to be trying."



Department of Primary Industries soil health project officer Tim Johnston.

Neutralising soil acidity

DAIRY farmers have been advised to use lime to neutralise soil acidity caused by the removal of milk and other products from the farm or face a major impact on their production.

A farm producing six million litres of milk per year will have to replace the equivalent of 24 tonnes of lime (calcium carbonate) that is exported off the farm in milk.

Most agricultural products are slightly alkaline so their removal from a paddock or farm leaves the soil slightly more acidic.

The carbonate component in lime neutralises acidity.

A Reducing Soil Acidity Through Liming and Nutrient Best Practice field day at Bryan and Jo Dickson's farm, near Terang, on April 5, was told the replacement process was integral to maintaining healthy soils and maintaining good pastures.

Department of Primary Industries soil health project officer from Geelong, Tim Johnston, said farmers needed to regularly test and monitor to protect against the dangers of acidic soils, and should apply lime at suitable levels to ensure best possible growth.

He said that for every 1000 litres of milk that left the property, the equivalent of about four kilograms of lime (100% calcium carbonate) was also removed.

He said the Dickson farm, with an annual production of just more than six million

litres, would lose about 24 tonnes of calcium or lime equivalents every year.

"To maintain the correct balance a farm of this size would need to consider applying about two and a half tonnes of lime per hectare every 10 years, depending on the quality of the lime," he said.

A one-metre deep soil pit was excavated for the field day to show almost 50 farmers, students and service providers the different colour and composition of soil at various depths.

DPI officers explained the soil testing process and the ribbon technique to identify soil texture.

Mr Johnston said nitrate leaching was the main cause of acidification but this could be reduced by matching fertiliser to plant demand and split lower rate nitrogen fertiliser applications instead of heavy applications.

The use of perennial pastures instead of annuals, and more efficient irrigation management to reduce water lost past the root zone would also reduce the risk of nitrate leaching.

He recommended regular testing and monitoring of soils, maintaining a soil pH (in CaCl₂) of at least 5.0, adopting a nutrient budget and increasing pH levels as needed through the application of lime.

He said farmers needed to be aware of the negative impacts of acid soils, including

decreasing the availability of nutrients and plant production and increasing the impact of toxic elements.

"Applying lime to the optimum level will raise soil pH by neutralising the acidity in the soil, decreases toxic levels of aluminium and increases availability of molybdenum," he said.

Mr Johnston said farmers should take immediate action if their pH levels (in CaCl₂) fell below five.

He warned, however, that too much lime could cause nutrient deficiencies "on the other side of the scale".

"Regular soil testing will help you to know how much to apply to get the best results."

He added that the Dickson farm had a "fantastic" soil profile.

DPI soil health project officer Shari McConachy said that farmers should do soil tests at different depths if considering planting lucerne or other deep-rooted crops.

Ms McConachy said that while soil tests were taken at 10 centimetres, it was also beneficial for farmers to check the lower sub-soil.

She recommended at least 30 soil cores be taken from individual paddocks to make up a suitable sample to send away for a soil test.

The field day was sponsored by Caring for Our Country and project managed by Glenelg Hopkins CMA and WestVic Dairy.

Water web tool does the numbers for farmers

ARMED with a computer, a bucket and a stopwatch, farmers can now assess the security of water for their livestock using a new, simple calculator.

The web-based tool was developed by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and is supported by Dairy Australia through the DPI Dairy Services.

It helps dry land farmers calculate their annual water balance by determining how much water is used and how much can be stored on their property.

It is on the DPI website at <http://new.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farming-management/soil-water/solutions/calculator>

Use the bucket and stopwatch to measure flow rates, tap a few details into an online table and the website will calculate a farm's need for stock drinking water, dairy shed wash down, household and garden needs as well as spraying, cleaning equipment, cleaning feed pads and fighting fires.

It also calculates dam volumes, water available from catchment runoff and the amount that can be harvested from rooftops.

"That is a total that tends to surprise people," DPI Ellinbank dairy extension officer Benita Kelsall said.

"The collection capacity of a roof can be considerable.

"The amount of water that the animals drink is another surprise," she added.

The calculator was tested by a group of 12 diploma students from the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia in Gippsland.

Benita took the students through a webinar-based tutorial.

"The responses were very positive. It's very easy to use," she said

The Farm Water Solutions project was prompted by the series of droughts and the predictions for more variable and drier weather patterns.

Releasing the calculator in one of the wettest summer/autumn seasons on record has its advantages, Benita added.

"Because there is lots of rain around, it's a good time to make the most of those resources. I think it's a good starting point to get people to think about water security on their farm and to get them looking at recycling water or putting in tanks."

The project is led by Julie Williams, also at DPI Ellinbank, and includes DPI staff across Victoria.

The Farm Water Calculator 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

Making milk from moisture

METEOROLOGIST and television weather presenter Jane Bunn will visit Cobden next month to help dairy farmers develop a better understanding of their weather conditions.

Ms Bunn, who is the weather presenter for WIN Television across regional Victoria, will speak at a Milk from Moisture weather workshop for farmers on May 6.

The workshop, at the Cobden Golf Club, will give farmers a guide to weather prediction and seasonal risk in south-west Victoria.

Ms Bunn completed a Bachelor of Science at Monash University in 2005, majoring in mathematics and atmospheric science.

She also studied at Pennsylvania State University, one of the leading Meteorology schools in the United States.

After graduating, Ms Bunn was one of nine students from around Australia accepted into the

Graduate Diploma of Meteorology at the Bureau of Meteorology Melbourne training facility and was later posted to New South Wales as a weather forecaster.

In 2008 she joined The Weather Channel as their morning meteorologist before taking up her position with WIN News.

Workshop project manager Cath Jenkins said Ms Bunn would give dairy farmers tips on how to better read their weather conditions.

"Jane will give advice on what to look for when they are out in their fields, for example, with wind direction and cloud movement," Ms Jenkins said.

Department of Primary Industries dairy extension climate risk officer Rod Eldridge will also speak at the workshop to outline climate drivers, seasonal variation and risk and long-term forecasts for south-west Victoria.

Ms Jenkins said the weather

advice was designed to help farmers make better decisions.

"We hope to give them more confidence to make judgements on basic environmental indicators," she said.

"Farmers always have to deal with variable weather conditions so being better prepared will be a big advantage."

The workshop will be the second in a series planned in south-west Victoria and follows a successful pilot program at Colac last year.

The project is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry under the Farm Ready program and supported by Southern Farming Systems, WestVic Dairy and Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority.

The workshop will run from 10.30am-2.30pm People interested in attending should contact Cath Jenkins on 0414 551 264 for more information.

WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

Genomic testing

New group of dairy bulls available

AUSTRALIAN dairy farmers now have access to a new category of bulls, with the inclusion of genomically-tested bulls in the April release of Australian Breeding Values (ABVs) by the Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme (ADHIS).

Until now, dairy farmers using artificial insemination (AI) have had the choice of using progeny test or proven bulls or both.

Progeny test bulls are young bulls whose straws are marketed by breeding companies at lower prices to dairy farmers who herd record.

Production and other performance data is collected from the daughters of these joinings.

When enough data is available to calculate a reliable ABV, the bull is considered proven.

Progeny test bulls represent newer genetics so should have higher genetic potential. But without daughter data, they are "unknown" and daughter performance is unpredictable.

While proven bulls are more reliable they are also older, as it takes a number of years to collect the performance data needed to



Hedge your bets when using semen from unproven bulls.

calculate an ABV, which is a prediction of its commercial performance.

Genomics is the use of DNA data, (or gene markers) to help in the calculation of breeding values.

Genomic testing — or genotyping — can be done on an animal at any age, allowing breeding values to be estimated for young bulls long before they have daughters in production.

In Australia it is expressed as an ABV(g).

Genomics will fast track genetic gain by allowing dairy farmers to use young bulls with greater confidence.

When purchasing bulls to use over their herd, Australian dairy farmers can now include progeny test, genomically tested and proven bulls in their bull team. Daniel Abernethy, from the ADHIS, said the April release of ABVs included the first ABV(g)s for young bulls that had been genomically-tested.

"This is a very exciting development. Dairy farmers now have more choice, in terms of genetic potential and reliability when selecting bulls to use over their herd."

ABV(g)s are directly

comparable to ABVs, enabling farmers to easily compare bulls, whether they are proven or genomically tested.

"When using genomically-tested bulls, we recommend using a team of several bulls to spread risk. Remember, bulls with an ABV(g) are not yet proven so their reliability is less than proven bulls," Mr Abernethy said.

For every proven bull that is replaced, make sure you use at least two bulls with an ABV(g) and make sure at least half the doses are from proven bulls from the Good Bulls Guide."

Mr Abernethy said ABV(g)s were the best estimate of a young bull's performance in Australia because the evaluation draws on performance data from the Australian herd.

"The calculation is based upon results from genomic testing and pedigree data and linked to a strong reference population of animals whose performance is well known in Australia." The ADHIS uses world's best practice and has no commercial association. For more information contact Mr Abernethy on 8621 4240 or email dabernethy@adhis.com.au

Nitrogen earns its keep

KNOWING the moisture status of your soil during the growing period of your summer crops could cut your fertiliser use as well as your supplementary feed bills for no extra cost, according to newly published Australian dairy research.

Soil moisture and active plant growth indicate the effectiveness of nitrogen applied to summer crops.

Results from the Dairy Australia-backed study suggest nitrogen uptake by brassicas, subtropical species and herbs could overcome the need for expensive protein supplements for the herd during the summer period.

The study, by two experts from the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, compared a range of summer forage crops at DemoDAIRY, a research and development farm near Terang.

Joe Jacobs and Graeme Ward studied the performance of summer crops such as turnips and other brassicas, plantain, chicory, sorghum and millet to urea applied at different levels from nil to 200 kilograms of nitrogen per hectare.

Their results were published recently in the scientific journal *Animal Production Science*.

"The effect of applying nitrogen fertiliser to summer forages is limited by available moisture and subsequent active growth of the forage," the scientists reported.

"Where there is adequate moisture, nitrogen application can improve dry matter yield and also the crude protein content of most summer forages.

"Regrowth from summer

crops, especially brassicas, offers farmers greater flexibility in feed management," Dr Jacobs said.

"This was the first scientific study into applying nitrogen onto regrowth summer crops.

"The crude protein content of species increased with nitrogen levels, with the highest response being 0.14 per cent per kilogram of nitrogen applied.

"This could be a cost-effective management tool to meet the dietary requirements of lactating animals without the requirement of additional protein supplements."

Additionally, some summer crops fertilised with nitrogen could offer animal health benefits, the researchers suggested.

Winfred and Hunter brassicas, plantain and a millet mix recorded negative DCAD values — which could benefit pre-calving cows by lowering the risk of milk fever.

"Our research suggests that by monitoring soil moisture of your summer crop paddocks, by keeping an eye on the weather forecasts and by timely irrigation, you could optimise your nitrogen applications and deliver nutrition and health benefits to the herd," Dr Jacobs said.

The research was supported by the Victorian Government, University of Melbourne, Dairy Australia and its regional development programs; WestVic Dairy, GippsDairy, Murray Dairy and DairySA.

This research is one of the many examples of the dairy service levy at work. For more information on this and other levy investments visit www.dairyaustralia.com.au

THE WESTVIC DAIRY TRAIN TRIP IS BACK FOR 2011

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR DAIRY FARMERS TO ENJOY A FUN, AFFORDABLE AND FUSS-FREE DAY WITH THEIR FAMILIES

MONDAY 13TH JUNE 2011

Train Tickets/Timetable

Station	Warrnambool	Terang	Camperdown	Colac	Southern Cross
Departs	6.35 am	7.08 am	7.25 am	7.52 am	9.53am Arrives
Arrives	10.19 pm	9.45 pm	9.30 pm	9.01 pm	7.00pm Departs
Adult Fare	\$26.70 Return	\$22.90 Return	\$19.20 Return	\$15.20 Return	

(Adult classified as aged 17 and over, 16 years and under are free)

SPEND YOUR DAY IN WHATEVER WAY YOU WANT

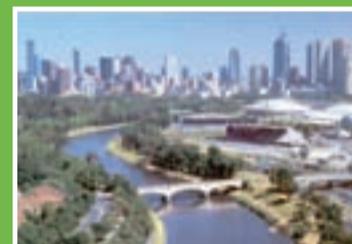
Consider some of these great ideas:

MCG (Melbourne vs Collingwood) – limited tickets available
Melbourne Aquarium
Melbourne Zoo
Science Works
Melbourne Museum
Luna Park

Booking for a seat on the train is essential

Cheques / Money Order to be made payable to 'WestVic Dairy' EFTPOS is available (payment is required before tickets can be issued).

WestVic Dairy, PO BOX 67, Terang Vic 3264
Phone (03) 5592 2477 or Fax (03) 5592 1342



Sponsored by



WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

WHAT'S ON

MAY 6

EVENT: Milk From Moisture
WHERE: Cobden Golf Club
CONTACT: Cath Jenkins, 0414 551 264

MAY 11

EVENT: NCDEA Diploma of Agriculture (4th unit – Develop and Review a Business Plan)
TIME: 10am-3pm
WHERE: NCDEA Terang
CONTACT: 1300 062 332

MAY 12

EVENT: Greenhouse and Emissions Research
WHERE: DemoDAIRY
CONTACT: Zita Ritchie, 5561 9926

EVENT: More Than Just Hot Air

WHERE: DemoDAIRY Terang
CONTACT: DPI Warrambol, 5561 9920

MAY 18

EVENT: Adaptive Forages to Manage a Variable Climate
TIME: 10.45am-2pm
WHERE: Irrewarra Football Club Rooms
CONTACT: Rachael Campell, DPI, 5233 5507

MAY 19

EVENT: NCDEA Advanced Diploma of Agriculture (3rd unit – Manage the Production System)
WHERE: NCDEA Terang
CONTACT: 1300 062 332

EVENT: Calving Cows Workshop

WHERE: Kirkstall
CONTACT: Liza Fahey, 0408 141 820

JUNE 13

EVENT: WestVic Dairy train trip
WHERE: Melbourne
CONTACT: Matt – WestVic Dairy, 5592 2477

Rewarding talks

Ballarat discussion group re-forms

By **RACHAEL CAMPBELL**
DAIRY SERVICES, DPI COLAC



A GROUP of dedicated Ballarat and district farmers have helped get the Ballarat discussion group up and running again.

The re-formed group had a great day in March at Lance and Lynette Greenwood's farm at Learmonth.

It was the group's third highly successful meeting with approximately 35 people in attendance.

The group is co-ordinated and supported by Warrnambool Cheese & Butter and the Department of Primary Industries.

Highly respected Holstein Australia senior classifier Richard Anderson asked the Greenwoods to pick a range of cows from their herd of 550 for the group to look at.

The morning was spent discussing why particular conformation traits were important and sought after.

Group members were able to mingle over a barbeque lunch provided by Warrnambool Cheese & Butter.

The formal part of the day concluded with the drawing of the lucky door prizes.

Thanks goes to the five artificial insemination companies present on the day – Genetics Australia, ABS Australia, Alta Genetics, Semex Australia and Nationwide Artificial Breeders – for supplying the prizes.

Group members then had the opportunity to discuss their herd requirements with the five artificial insemination companies present.

Many of the farmers took up this opportunity and thought having representatives from several companies in the same place at the same time was very worthwhile.

The group looks forward to further success with ongoing support from Ballarat and district farmers.

If you would like to find out more about Dairy Discussion groups in the region, contact Janet Sloan on 5561 9906.

Farmers urged to use recycling system

FARMERS in south-west Victoria are being encouraged to adopt a new system for the sustainable disposal of farm plastic waste.

A new south-west advocate has been appointed for the Plasback program which co-ordinates with suppliers, councils and industry groups to give farmers an environmentally friendly way of disposing of plastic rather than burying or burning it.

DemoDAIRY projects officer Marni Barber is the newly appointed Plasback advocate for south-west Victoria.

She will highlight the benefits of the system to farmers at field days, discussion groups and focus farmer meetings over the next six months and undertake local research as part of her new role.

She said it was estimated between 150,000 and 200,000 tonnes of plastics went onto farms in Australia every year but less than three per cent was being recycled.

The Plasback program focuses on silage wrap, silage pit covers and baling twine.

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



DemoDAIRY projects officer Marni Barber and Cath Jenkins.

"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 drop 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 at Murray Goulburn Trading for \$79.95 for a box of 25, which will recycle the wrap off more than 400 round bales of silage.

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

Ms Barber said a Plasback recycling display had been established at DemoDAIRY at Terang and that she would survey local farmers about their use of plastic during the next few months.

"I will be collecting sample data on the scale and current methods of disposal of farm plastic waste and hope to encourage the farming community to introduce the Plasback system to improve their on-farm environmental performance," she said.

The advocacy project was funded by a grant from the Sustainability Covenant partnership between the Plastics and Chemicals Industries Association (PACIA) and EPA Victoria.

To find out how and where to recycle plastic go to www.plasback.com.au or contact Ms Barber on 0438 314 619.

Tapex is also sponsoring a new sustainability award with the Australian Fodder Industry Association (AFIA) in 2011.

The annual Plasback Sustainable Farming Award will provide a \$5000 prize, in cash and product, to the most outstanding example of sustainable practice on farm.

For entry details, go to www.plasback.com.au

The annual award will be decided by an independent panel of judges and awarded at the AFIA conference.

Field day highlights energy saving alternatives

SOLAR power, green clean systems, heat recovery systems, wind energy, effluent energy and tips for "simple things" to cut costs and power use in the dairy have been outlined at a demonstration day at Wangoom.

The Future Ready Dairy Systems (FRDS) project hosted the function on April 20 at A.H. Adams & A.C. Beckel's Pine Hill Dairy and featured a series of guest speakers including Department of Primary Industries scientists and representatives of renewable energy companies.

FRDS project manager Louise Sheba said farmers and service providers had benefitted from hearing and seeing how new technology and innovations could be put to good use on local farms.

Although farmer numbers were down from previous field days it was good for service providers to see the newest technology for saving energy in the dairy. The program covered



Richard Johnston from The Wind Turbine Company.

a variety of new and emerging technologies and those attending inspected some of the recent additions at the Wangoom farm.

Pine Hill Dairy has put in place a green cleaning system and its installation, operation, energy savings and long-term cost benefits were explained to 50 people in attendance.

An energy audit and Dairy Gas Abatement Strategy (DGAS) calculation were also carried out on the farm.

Attendees were encouraged

to use the DGAS system to gain a better understanding of their greenhouse gas emissions.

Murray Goulburn FarmCare project officer Sam Dalziel said overseas markets were demanding more information on the environmental footprint left by food producers.

"Using the DGAS system will help you to understand what gases your farm produces and starts you thinking about abatement strategies," he said.

DPI Ellinbank research and extension scientist Darold Klindworth explained how "simple things" could be done at no cost in the dairy to reduce energy waste and costs, particularly in cooling milk and heating water.

Gippsland DPI Land Management and Sustainability Services project manager Barrie Bradshaw explained how effluent could be used for renewable energy for both small and medium-sized dairies.

Richard Johnston, from The Wind Turbine Company,

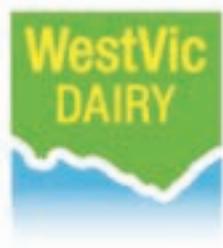
in Melbourne, spoke about small-scale wind energy options for farmers. Solar hot water advantages and benefits were highlighted by Adrian Mills, from Solahart, and Paul Hemming provided an outline on how a heat transfer system could save money.

"This was a jam-packed day with very interesting speakers from as far away as Gippsland," Ms Sheba said.

"We had seven topics covered plus two extra speakers who also provided quick updates on solar hot water and the new Plasback farm twine and silage bale wrap system," she added.

"If there are any farmers who would like an information pack from the day please contact 5592 2199 and leave your name and address." The function was funded by Dairy Australia, Glenelg Hopkins CMA and the federal government's Climate Change Research Program and Caring for Our Country Program.

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 PO Box 67, Terang, 3264; Ph 5592 2477; Fax 5592 1342; www.westvicdairy.com.au ABN 86 401 992 319
EDITOR LISA CHESSHIRE: dairynews@westvicdairy.com.au