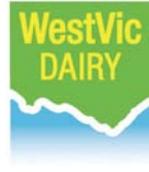


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MEDIA RELEASE

Primary school children from Nullawarre will adopt a cow and follow its progress over the next two years as part of a new program giving them an early insight into the dairy industry.

The new kids@demoDAIRY program has been developed from a desire of parents to introduce their children at an early age to the varied and rewarding careers in dairying.

The year five and six Nullawarre pupils will visit DemoDAIRY eight times over the next two years as part of the WestVic Dairy careers project where they will learn about different jobs in the industry and follow the progress of the herd and research being undertaken on the farm.

The program started on November 17 with pupils learning about the roles of veterinarians and farm managers and choosing their favourite cows which they will follow through the calving process.

WestVic Dairy careers co-ordinator Robyn Vale said the traditional focus of careers activities was on secondary students but many careers advice professionals believed the key period for engaging students was in the late primary/early secondary years.

Ms Vale said the program would be linked in to the students' classroom work, and would be the basis of an ongoing relationship between the industry and the school community.

"We will end up with a group of students starting secondary school with a good understanding of career opportunities in dairying," she said.

The project would also give pupils from a dairy community better knowledge about the scientific research projects at DemoDAIRY that support the industry.

On each of the eight visits to the DemoDAIRY farm at Terang pupils will focus on a different aspect of farming, hear from a different service provider, and follow the progress of various research sites and their chosen cow. Ms Vale will be approaching farm service businesses to support the project by sponsoring single visits.

Ms Vale said about 70-80 per cent of pupils at Nullawarre Primary School came from dairy farms. "We had a request from dairy farming parents about how they could start educating their children on the different industry career options," she said.

"They understand that when their children head off to Warrnambool for secondary school, they will begin to learn about the range of education and career options open to them off the farm, and beyond the dairy industry. The project will ensure that this learning is underpinned by an understanding of the diversity of opportunities available within the industry.

"We hope that some students will aspire to a career in dairying which will help address the industry's difficulties in attracting and retaining staff."

Ms Vale said kids@demoDAIRY differed from other farm visitation projects in that it was ongoing and sustained, not an isolated, one-off event.

She said she hoped a model would be developed that could be available for farmers in other regions.

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