

Funded by  
Dairy Australia  
and your  
dairy service  
levy



NEWS ABOUT HOW DAIRY FARMERS' LEVIES ARE INVESTED

A special *On The Land* supplement

# DAIRY NEWS



# HUGE INVESTMENT

## Dairy Australia's \$51 million-plus

MORE than \$51 million was invested into Australia's dairy industry by Dairy Australia throughout 2010/11.

In a year of contrasting fortunes across the nation's dairy regions, the national research and service body spent \$33.8 million on RD&E projects and \$17.2 million on industry services. The Dairy Services Levy provided \$33.1 million of income, with \$18.8 million of matching Australian Federal Government funds.

Figures are not too dissimilar to when Dairy Australia was formed in 2003, where the expenditure was \$52 million, as Dairy Australia chairman Max Roberts highlighted at Dairy Australia's annual general meeting held in November 2011.

"Then, industry contributed 60 per cent to Dairy Australia's operating funds — now it is 55 per cent of funds," Mr Roberts said.

"While the dollar figures may be the same, the programs we invest in have come a long way. Our projects are more targeted, resulting in research and extension which has helped drive profitability and delivered

value back to farmers and their businesses — whether it be through feed conversion efficiency, natural resource management, ensuring dairy has a voice in the health and nutrition debate, protecting industry reputation or keeping the door open to key international markets."

Dairy Australia managing director Ian Halliday said under the organisation's new strategic plan for 2012-16, 45 per cent of funds would continue to go towards improving farm margins and growth opportunities, while 25 per cent would be poured into proactively promoting and protecting dairy's value and integrity, and close to 20 per cent would be dedicated to growing skills and capability.

"Looking ahead to the next five years, and with the difficulties of recent events in mind, our plan aims to accommodate the regional diversity of our industry and acknowledges the need to accelerate adoption of research to sustain profitable farm and manufacturing businesses into the future," Mr Halliday said.

Addressing the annual



Feeding the Industry: Dairy Australia invested more than \$51 million in research and development in the past financial year.

meeting, Mr Halliday acknowledged the extreme climatic challenges of floods, cyclone and drought that a number of dairying regions around the nation faced throughout the past 12 months.

"However, many parts of south-east Australia experienced the most favourable conditions in a decade coupled with strong export demand and competition. Thus the medium term outlook for dairy is very positive for these dairy regions based on population and income growth and changes in diet of emerging economies in Asia and the Middle East and continued consumption

growth per capita in Asia," Mr Halliday said.

"And future predictions also indicate that national dairy consumption will increase at approximately 2 per cent per annum."

Mr Halliday noted a number of highlights for 2010/11, including:

- Implementing the Dairy Moving Forward pre-farm gate investment in research, development and extension, which covers animals, feed base management, natural resource management, people and farm management;

- Developing a dairy and sports performance project in partnership with the Australian Institute of

Sport which aims to increase awareness of milk's unique role in exercise and sport performance;

- Launching the new automatic milking rotary with key investors at Camden in NSW, which has led to the first commercial AMR being installed in Tasmania; and
- Establishing the dairy industry People Development Council, which will further help address the challenge of attracting, retaining and developing people.

"To remain competitive the industry must continue to work on improving margins, leverage growth opportunities and proactively promote and protect dairy,"

Mr Halliday said. "This all needs to be underpinned by ensuring the industry's skills and capability base."

Three of the nine board directors were re-elected — Dr Wendy Craik, Peter Nankervis and Geoff Akers.

Farmers receive a benefit of \$3 for every \$1 invested by Dairy Australia on their behalf. For information visit [www.dairyaustralia.com.au](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au)

*Dairy Australia is the national services body for the Australian dairy industry. The company acts as the collective investment arm of the industry, investing in essential research, development, extension and industry services.*

## Great South West Dairy Awards bigger and better

THE Great South West Dairy Awards will return this year with an upgraded Natural Resource Management award.

The NRM award, which has been a regular feature of the awards program, will be expanded to focus on a broader range of environmentally sustainable farming practices.

The awards, now in their seventh year, will be presented at Glenormiston

College on April 26. Project manager Barb Collins said the NRM award had been expanded to better recognise the importance of dairy farms working for an environmentally sustainable future.

"The award will now cover more areas of on-farm practices that promote environmental sustainability," Mrs Collins said.

"It will recognise farmers who are planning for the future and ensuring sustainable

practices will protect their land for future generations," she said.

Farms nominated for the award will be judged on improved sustainable practices, development and approaches implemented over the past 24 months.

Criteria for the award includes farmer management of soils, fertiliser, effluent, irrigation, greenhouse gas emissions, native vegetation and waterways, energy and

water in the dairy, pests and weeds, chemicals and farm waste.

Mrs Collins said the industry placed great importance on the environment.

"Dairy farmers realise they have to be responsible custodians of the land and this award will be an extra incentive for them to continue to improve their farming practices."

Nominations open on January 15 and close on

February 17. Other categories include Employer of the Year, Employee of the Year, Share Farmer of the Year, Young Farm Leader of the Year and Farm Photo of the Year.

Nominations are also being sought for the Dairy Industry Honour Board.

The first inductees on the honour board, who were announced in 2011, will be formally inducted at the Awards Gala Night. They are 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.

"The 2011 awards were our most successful with record nominations, record sponsorship and record attendance at our gala night, so we hope to match or exceed those targets in 2012," Mrs Collins said.

## INSIDE THIS MONTH'S WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

**TIPS FOR BUYING HAY**

PAGE 7



**MANAGE FORAGE RISK**

PAGE 11



**SUMMER RYE GRASS**

PAGE 12





# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## INSIDE

### PAGE 5

- ❑ DA's \$51million investment
- ❑ Great South West Dairy Awards preview

### PAGE 6

- ❑ DPI discussion groups
- ❑ Is dairy farming for dummies?

### PAGE 7

- ❑ Tips for hay supply
- ❑ Emerging dairy NRM issues
- ❑ Prepare for slow season

### PAGE 8 & 9

- ❑ Great South West Dairy Awards nominations

### PAGE 10

- ❑ Heat stress reminders
- ❑ An eye on the weather
- ❑ Mapping the dairy industry

### PAGE 11

- ❑ Managing forage risks
- ❑ YDDP update
- ❑ Future Dairy funding extended

### PAGE 12

- ❑ What's on calendar
- ❑ Managing ryegrass
- ❑ Bull-selection information



# A new perspective

## Discussion groups don't always explore just farms

By HELEN CHENOWETH

Dairy Services, DPI Warrnambool



At a recent discussion group meeting, members of the South Ecklin Discussion Group met for a social gathering at Tim and Bronwyn Lenehan's farm and enjoyed a meal together plus an intriguing guest speaker.

The 30-strong group enjoyed hearing from former Victorian policeman Simon Illingworth about his experiences and the challenges associated with exposing corruption

in the Victorian Police Force. He shared some of the stories that are now included in his book *Filthy Rat* detailing his fight against police corruption.

Group co-ordinator Tim Lenehan explained that the group met on a regular basis to discuss farming topics of interest but also liked to have one night a year as a purely social event with an alternate focus.

Simon's stories of the risks that he faced on a regular basis made all who listened realise that their usual day-to-day farming challenges really weren't that bad! This change in perspective made all feel a bit more able to cope with the busy silage/hay season that was about to hit, and even helped people reflect that the wet winter they had endured was perhaps not as bad as it seemed at the time.

The group met again in December to plan their 2012 program. It includes a diverse range of topics from cow genetics and transition cow nutrition to pasture renovation tips and labour management.

If you would like to know more about local discussion groups in your area, contact Helen Chenoweth on (03) 5561 9912.



Bega's Roger Went and farmers Phil Bond, Tim Lenehan and Glen Croft enjoyed the group social.



Farmers Julian Cavarsan, Shaun Kissick, Paul Moloney, Dennis Rosolin, Duncan Morris, Ben McKenzie and Brett Sweetnam catching up after the guest speaker.

## Wanted

Seventy two women who want to:

- Improve their farm financial management skills
- Improve their farm business profits and build wealth; and
- Help the farm team build effective business plans

WestVic Dairy will be offering free financial literacy programs to six groups of 12 women across Western Victoria in 2012. The 25 hour program "In Charge Financial Literacy" will be delivered over five sessions with the first programs to commence in February 2012 (child care funding will be available if required). The program was piloted in early 2011 and proved a big success with women farmers in Terang, Simpson and Macarthur.

We encourage dairy women to apply for the program and get a group of neighbours together in a district and send in an expression of interest to Jocelyn or Barb at WestVic Dairy (03) 5592 2477 [barb@westvicdairy.com.au](mailto:barb@westvicdairy.com.au)

The program will be delivered by a female accountant from a dairy farming background. The workshops are designed specifically for women who carry out some of the farm business book keeping, who want to jump up a level in their financial literacy and build their networks. For more information or to register call us today.

**Act now "first in best dressed"**

In Charge is funded by Gardiner Foundation and the Dairy Service Levy

# Dairy farming for dummies?

The knowledge base of dairy farmers is huge but, as CATH JENKINS writes, information is not always available when you need it most.

WHEN we first moved to our dairy farm we had land, cows, tractors and finance from the bank. But we were missing one essential ingredient — experience.

We had never milked cows.

Sharefarming for six months gave us some experience but when we bought the farm we were on our own. There was just so much to learn. What we needed was a manual; something that would tell us what to do.

So we started looking in libraries and on the internet.

We were trying to find a book with a blurb that read:

"A fantastic read: this book covers everything you need to successfully run your very own dairy farm. A must-have for every aspiring dairy farmer."

What we needed was *Dairy Farming for Dummies*. But it didn't exist and, to my knowledge, it still doesn't.

Nevertheless we did find plenty of information.

There were pasture and veterinary books, a calf-rearing manual, brochures, newsletters and scientific articles. We even found some great short courses, diplomas and hundreds of handouts, not to mention all the web pages dedicated to the various aspects of dairy farming. It was all very useful and helped us on our way.

Now, seven years down the track, I have realised that the absence of *Dairy Farming for Dummies* is a credit to dairy farmers. After all *dummies* can't be dairy farmers. Running a successful dairy farm requires many skills, great ability and years of experience. But just because you have all that, doesn't mean that you'll get it all right.

As I see it, there are several major reasons why no one has published *Dairy Farming for Dummies*:

1. It would be so big that it would dwarf the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. How could one publication hope to cover all the different aspects of running a dairy farm?

2. Who would buy it? Many dairy farmers would have no use for it; they are already experts. Perhaps it would be purchased by new farmers with no experience. Or maybe they would do as we did and access the information from other sources.

3. And finally, there would need to be a new edition each year because each season is so different to the last.

So without a manual, we, as dairy farmers, will keep on getting better at what we do. We'll continue to share our knowledge and ideas with our neighbours, our children and fellow dairy farmers, and maybe someday, someone will write *Dairy Farming for Dummies*.



# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## Plan your purchases early and consider quality Tips to ensure sufficient hay

THE 2011 hay season has shown signs that supply may be tight by autumn and winter, according to Dairy Australia's latest Grain and Hay report.

Given the seasonal outlook, dairy farmers are being advised to plan their hay purchase early and to consider quality when making purchase decisions.

Dairy Australia's Grains2Milk program leader, Dr Steve Little, said wet weather in Western Australia during their harvest had reduced the supply of export quality hay.

"In a normal season, about 40 per cent of Australia's export hay comes from WA. To compensate, good quality cereal hay is being actively sought by export plants in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. That will have an effect on the amount available for the domestic market," Dr Little said.

In addition, areas sown for cereal and pasture hay in many regions of eastern Australia appeared to be well down last year, with many hay contractors reporting that their amount of work was down by more than half.

"For dairy farmers who are regular buyers of hay, it may be worth considering buying some of your annual requirements in the paddock at harvest. Or at the very least, keep a close eye on developments by watching Dairy Australia's Hay and Grain reports," he said.

"Good quality milking hay may be difficult to source and expensive during the peak demand periods next autumn and winter, especially if the autumn break arrives late."

### Quality

When buying hay, Dr Little recommends making decisions on the basis of "nutritional value for money" rather than on price alone.

"If you have feed test results you can decide if the asking price represents value, given the hay's nutritional quality," Dr Little said.

"And if you are harvesting your own hay, feed test results will enable you to work out the best way to fit the hay into the herd's diet. Once you know its nutritional quality you can create a balanced ration combining hay with other available feeds."

Feed lab testing will provide the information you need about the nutritional value of hay.

"The key is to collect a sample that is a true reflection of the hay. If you've got hay bales, you'll need a corer. A grab sample isn't good enough," he said.

Following are some tips for collecting feed samples.

### Small square hay bales

Sample 10 to 20 bales, selected at random, using a probe or corer (grab samples are not good enough). Take one core from each bale, near



Feed lab test results tell you the nutritional quality of hay. The key is to take a representative sample.

the centre of the 'butt' end, at right angles to the surface. Ensure that the corer doesn't get too hot.

### Large round or square bales

Sample 10 bales, selected at random, using a probe or corer (grab samples are not good enough). Take one core from the middle of the curved surface of each round bale taken through the middle of the bale. Take one core from each side of each square bale, at right angles to the surface and at different heights.

### Hay cubes or pellets

Select a handful of cubes or pellets from at least six locations or bags.

"Don't forget to label all feed samples clearly with a description and sample date. And make sure your samples arrive at the lab quickly, with minimal deterioration," Dr Little said.

Dairy Australia's Hay and Grain report is available from [www.dairyaustralia.com.au](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au) and follow the quicklink on the home page.

Dairy farmers in Victoria and Tasmania can use Dairy Australia's Rapid Feed Analysis service. For more information, talk to your factory field officer or nutrition advisor or contact Steve Little 0400 004 841 email [slittle@dairyaustralia.com.au](mailto:slittle@dairyaustralia.com.au)

Grains2Milk is one of many examples of the dairy services levy at work. For more information on this project and other levy investments visit the Dairy Australia website [www.dairyaustralia.com](http://www.dairyaustralia.com)

## Preparing for slow season

DAIRY farmers who have been around for a while realise the wetter winter will be a big benefit for spring and summer. While a wet winter reduces growth in winter it is really good for summer crops and extending pasture growth.

Some farmers have been caught out with reduced track and drainage maintenance over the past few drier years. These farmers have been impacted more severely than others and will need to spend significant money next autumn to prevent future problems.

Last year dairy factories gave a number of step-ups which really helped farmers get through the autumn, but we cannot rely on these occurring each year.

Now would be a good time to look at budgets and compare actual with predicted, or do budgets if none have been done. This will show up any financial deficits in the autumn, allowing time to plan around any issues that are likely to arise.

A few farmers are really struggling at the moment, as there are only a couple of peak cheques to come. Now is the time to plan how to cope with the lower production and income that most dairy farmers experience through the winter. A meeting with a rural financial counsellor may help you assess your financial situation.

A rural counsellor can help:

- farmers assess and understand their financial position;
- assist in identifying options and developing a plan of action;
- assist families to access other government and private assistance packages; and
- provide a free, confidential and independent service for as long as necessary.

A rural financial counsellor can meet you on your property, in the office or some other place. The service is free and independent.

To discuss your financial situation with a counsellor or to get help in preparing a budget and cash flow call Vince Thorne on 0429 406 761 or the head office at Hamilton 5572 4540 for an appointment.

## Emerging dairy NRM issues DNRMRG November meeting report

THE Dairy Natural Resource Management Reference Group (DNRMRG) was established to inform the industry of emerging NRM issues and provide updates to industry stakeholders on NRM activities in the region relevant to dairy farmers.

The group consists of farmers, representatives of processing companies, Landcare, CMAs and DPI, and is facilitated by South-West Dairying for Tomorrow regional coordinator Louise Sheba.

At the November 2011 meeting new members and sponsors were welcomed, and details of local NRM projects were discussed.

Meeting topics include:

### New members welcomed

WESTVIC Dairy Focus Farm Facilitator Peter Wearne, Corangamite CMA Regional Landcare Facilitator Bret Ryan and Melissa Balas from Bega Cheese have joined the Dairy NRM Reference Group. Their inclusion has added to the breadth of knowledge and experience of the group.

### More sponsors

WARRNAMBOOL Cheese and Butter has confirmed its sponsorship of the reference group. This sponsorship will assist with funding guest speakers and meeting facilitation.

### Support for local weather stations

THE Dairy NRM Reference Group is supporting further investigation into the development of an automatic weather station network in south-west Victoria.

The meeting heard from Rob Palamountain, Senior Project Officer with the South East Natural Resources Management Board, who explained about the website, <http://se-aws.nrmspace.com.au>.

The site displays data collected from the south east South Australian automatic weather station network to provide more locally relevant climatic data to the region's farmers, industry organisations and general community.

Available data includes air and soil temperature, humidity, wind speed and direction, solar radiation and rainfall and it is updated every hour for 17 local areas. More data options can be made available to suit the needs of specific regions.

The weather site is part of nrmSPACE — a collection of online tools to assist local practitioners of Natural Resource Management in the south-east region of South Australia.

The Dairy NRM Reference Group believes the concept has

a lot of merit and would work well in south-west Victoria.

The data would help farmers in getting their timing right for harvesting, applying fertilisers and other activities.

Reference group members support the concept of more weather stations in the region and backed a further investigation into seeking funding for adopting the concept in this region. The Glenelg Hopkins and Corangamite CMAs agreed to take a lead role in the investigations.

Since the network was established in 2009, the South Australian website has averaged around 50,000 hits per quarter. It was funded by the South East Natural Resources Management Board and the Australian Government and is available free to farmers.

### Talking effluent

THE Effluent and Manure Management Database for the Australian Dairy Industry is currently being updated. Dairying for Tomorrow south-west co-ordinator Louise Sheba said the site was useful for farmers and service providers and their feedback about how to improve the resource was welcome.

"It is being reviewed and if people want anything added

they should let us know," Louise said.

The database can be found under tools and guidelines on the [www.dairyingfortomorrow.com](http://www.dairyingfortomorrow.com) website. If you would like to make a contribution please email [louise@demodairy.org.au](mailto:louise@demodairy.org.au)

The Dairy NRM Reference Group will consider its input into the review at its next meeting early in 2012. Chairman Mike Waite said it was important that farmers understood it was economically and environmentally viable to reuse their farm effluent.

### What's on — keeping up-to-date

MEMBERS were shown how to access the DPI What's On web page. This page is used to promote upcoming events all over Australia in the dairy regions. New events can be easily uploaded which helps to ensure that event dates don't clash. To get there follow these instructions: Go to DPI home page (Google DPD), click on agriculture (one of the top tabs running across the page), click on dairy (one of tabs running down left hand side of page), click on What's On Events Calendar underneath the dairy tab and select region on the map and go from there.



# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## Mapping dairy industry's future

IF you ask a city kid "where does milk come from?" you could expect some odd answers.

But if you ask the same question within the dairy industry in south-west Victoria you will get a clearer picture of how the industry is spread out across the region and what options might exist for its expansion.

WestVic Dairy and Deakin University are joining forces to produce a milk map which will identify the type of land and conditions that best suit the production of milk.

Dr Vincent Versace from Deakin's School of Information Systems in Warrnambool is undertaking the research and hopes to develop a clearer picture of prime dairy land.

The study has evolved from WestVic Dairy's Driving Down the Track project which aims to increase the region's milk production from 2.1 billion litres to 3 billion litres by 2020 and improve the people, natural resources, infrastructure, capital, knowledge and market

capabilities of the dairy industry. The study is an example of the dairy industry service levy at work.

Dr Versace said that producing a map showing where milk is produced would help the industry to better understand the conditions conducive to dairying.

"If the industry wants to maintain and expand its footprint it needs to know about the conditions that favour milk production and identify other areas that have similar traits," he said.

"We hope to create a full picture of where each dairy farm is and how much milk they are producing so we can build a model that identifies the type of soil, climate and other conditions that works for dairying.

"Then the industry can look at other areas that currently don't have dairying but could be suitable locations for future expansion."

Dr Versace hopes to work with local milk processing companies to develop the data.

Dairying is south-west Victoria's most significant industry.

The annual output from dairy products is \$1.03 billion and from dairy cattle \$835 million.

The south-west is responsible for nearly a quarter of Australia's milk.

WestVic Dairy Executive Officer Mike Weise said it was important to have accurate data about the industry.

"It is difficult to build proposals to governments for funding unless you have good data in your submission," Mr Weise said.

"This information will help us to identify realistic opportunities for the growth to meet our targets in the Driving Down the Track strategy."

Mr Weise and Dr Versace are both members of the steering group for the Warrnambool-Corangamite Land Suitability Decision Making Framework project which aims to improve strategic planning in south-west Victoria.



Climatedogs can be seen on the DPI's website.

## Keep a close eye on the weather

By **RACHEL CAMPBELL** and **BREE WALSH**  
Dairy Services, DPI Colac Dairy Services, DPI Maffra



Many farmers regularly check weather forecasts, three-monthly outlooks, listen to interviews and updates on the radio and hear the odd climate prediction. You may also be interested in checking out some sources that also provide useful information with a farm flavour to assist your decision-making processes.

**1. DPI Dairy Services compiles a quarterly climate newsletter — *Milking the Weather*.**

This electronic newsletter enables you to stay up-to-date with credible seasonal and climate risk information for the dairy industry and how this affects you and your fellow dairy farmers around the state. A key component of this newsletter is the seasonal update and outlook (based on seasonal model forecasts), and then relating this to seasonal and risk management decisions. To subscribe to this timely four-to-six page newsletter please contact the sub-editor Rachael Campbell DPI Colac on (03) 5233 5507 or rachael.campbell@dpi.vic.gov.au

**2. DPI also has two other timely electronic climate newsletters that the Grains branch distributes — *The Break* and *The Fast Break*.**

These newsletters are aimed at grain growers, but are a great complement to *Milking the Weather*.

Dairy farmers can use all three publications to make informed decisions around climatic risks at a farm level and for a range of inputs. *The Break* newsletter describes seasonal outlooks, generates potential crop yields from decision support computer tools, provides links and highlights topical climate risk information. Whereas *The Fast Break* is a short and snappy update on the climatic models, sea surface temperatures and ENSO drivers which combine to provide updated and detailed seasonal outlooks for the more climate and weather-interested subscribers. To subscribe to

*The Break* and *The Fast Break* newsletters please contact Chris Souness DPI Horsham at chris.souness@dpi.vic.gov.au

**3. Useful websites to visit for climate data and forecasts.**

DPI's website enables you to access and subscribe to the industry newsletters. You can also access the *Climatedogs*, a series of short animated clips that provide an overview of the four major drivers of Victoria's weather and how they work together. Other useful information can be found in the Quick links section — for definitions, updates, deciles and other useful websites. Go to the Department of Primary Industries website: [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/climate/risk](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/climate/risk)

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) website has two key areas of interest for the dairy industry. The first being "water and the land": [www.bom.gov.au/watl/index.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/watl/index.shtml)

This section provides forecasts for rainfall, wind and frosts, radar, evapotranspiration data and a forecast explorer.

The second key area is the seasonal outlook ([www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/](http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/)), for fortnightly updates on the southern oscillation index, sea surface temperatures, trade winds and the Indian Ocean dipole. Accessing these newsletters and websites will give you additional useful and timely information to help you make better informed decisions throughout the year. For more information in south west Victoria contact Rachael Campbell at DPI Colac on (03) 5233 5507 or rachael.campbell@dpi.vic.gov.au

## Dairy reminders for the summer

By **HELEN CHENOWETH**  
Dairy Services, DPI Warrnambool



### Cows

**TAKE** action to reduce heat stress: give the cows access to shade where possible, use sprinklers in the dairy to help cool cows and make sure plenty of clean drinking water is available.

The Cool Cows website provided by Dairy Australia ([www.coolcows.com.au](http://www.coolcows.com.au)) also provides practical suggestions to keep cows cool and reduce the effects of heat stress including the following easy-to-implement solutions to reduce heat stress in your herd:

- Plant trees on the western side of the dairy yard;
- Set up a sprinkler system at the dairy yard;
- Install a large water trough on the exit side of the dairy;
- Delay afternoon milking until 5 pm during the hot season;
- On very hot days, if possible wet the dairy yard for an hour before cows arrive;
- Sprinkle cows for 30-60 minutes while standing in the dairy yard waiting for afternoon milking on hot days or when cows breathing rate exceeds 60 breaths per minute, or the temperature humidity index is above 78; and
- In hot weather, provide cows with the highest quality



Be sure to check stock water quality and quantity over the summer period.

pasture available to graze overnight when they are cooler.

To get an idea of the cost of heat stress to your business, click on the Cost of Hot Cows tab. The information and the cost benefit calculator will demonstrate how much heat stress can cost your herd and your hip pocket. Just in relation to feed intake alone, a cow can require 20-30 per cent more maintenance energy to compensate for her efforts to keep cool, but her rumination and cud chewing decreases.

### Water issues

Continue to check dams for signs of blue green algae. If present, avoid using the water, prevent stock access and get the algae identified.

Assess your current water storage quantities and water needs to determine if you have sufficient to get through to next winter.

Continue to plan for your water needs over the next few months and develop ongoing options for alternative water supplies if needed.

### Fertilisers

Study last year's soil test results, consult your

fertiliser representative and make an informed decision on this year's fertiliser application.

Order and spread PKS fertiliser while the soil is dry and the likelihood of water runoff and nutrient loss for the next four to five days is low.

Save money and time by not spreading fertiliser unnecessarily on high nutrient sites such as cattle camps, around water troughs and gateways. These areas are likely to already have adequate soil nutrients for pasture growth. Ensure eight weeks between fertiliser applications and soil testing.

If you have already applied dairy effluent to your paddocks, then soil test these paddocks so you can tailor fertiliser applications specifically to these areas.

### Tracks/plant

As the tracks have dried out, now is the time to develop plans to address damage from last winter. Identify those areas that need minor repairs and those that need a major effort to address long-term drainage or high wear

concerns. These areas will need more to be done and that will cost more per metre, but will also return many more dollars in reduced problems next winter.

Check if your milking machine liners need replacing. Countdown DownUnder (at [www.dairyaustralia.com.au](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au)) recommends they should be replaced after 2,500 cow milkings.

### Business

If updating budgets for the second half of the season, it may pay to ask for an updated income estimate from your milk company. Factories may have updated their estimates for the final price for this season. Knowing the outlook for your income can help you plan for the coming months.

Budget for autumn pasture renovation and fertiliser costs. You may be able to pre-purchase some of these if cash flow allows. This is particularly relevant for farms with extensive areas damaged last winter and in need of ongoing renovation as well as autumn calving herds with increasing animal health costs through this period.



# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## James set for study tour to New Zealand

YDDP member James Maxwell will embark on a study tour to New Zealand early in 2012.

James was selected for the tour by the UDV after filling in an application at the Milk It 4 More Expo.

The study tour is sponsored by the Gardiner Foundation and will take James to New Zealand's North Island to see the Dairy Knowledge Park, an organic farm, and on various farm and herd walks.

James came to the south-west 18 months ago from northern Victoria and noticed a big difference in how the industry operates. Now he hopes to learn from the different ways milk is produced in New Zealand.

"They have different resources and production targets in New Zealand. Historically they have a stronger focus on controlling costs and utilising pasture to

### YDDP UPDATE

drive their business, so hopefully we can learn from that to increase our efficiencies."

James is also looking forward to the networking benefits that come with such a tour.

He leaves on January 28.

### TALKIN' ABOUT THE NEXT GENERATION

YDDP south-west co-ordinator Liza Fahey and members James Maxwell, David O'Connell and Susan Rea have recently taken part in the Next Generation Forum in Melbourne.

The forum brought together YDDP and young dairy farmer members from across Australia to swap ideas and describe what they have been doing over the past

year and share about their plans for 2012.

It was a great opportunity to learn from each other and discuss the possibility of improving networks on a national basis.

The south-west members also took the opportunity to promote the success of the Milk It 4 More Expo. Liza explained that YDDP co-ordinators from around Australia along with leaders of the Young Farmers organisation were keen to hear about the day.

"We explained what we did, why and what worked and what didn't," Liza said.

Some of the other groups are considering their own versions of the Expo.

While on the three-day tour of Melbourne the members also

attended the ADIC and Fonterra breakfasts and visited the UDV head offices. They also took part in talks about bringing all young dairy networks under the Dairy Australia banner to improve co-ordination and streamline administration.

### HELP IS AVAILABLE

BEING a dairy farmer can be a tough job. While we love it most of the time there are also times when the stresses of the weather, bank mortgages and non-stop work get on top of us.

It is important to recognise the warning signs when the stress is getting too much, and to seek help if you need it.

South West Healthcare (5563 1666) and St John of God Hospital Warrnambool (5564 0600) both have mental health services available, and of course there is always Lifeline to turn to if you are feeling

really down. There is no shame in seeking help and reaching out for a bit of professional advice.

It could be a life saver in the long run!

### FINANCIAL MATTERS

THE Corangamite branch will help young farmers to learn more about their financial management systems with a workshop early next year.

The MYOB accounting software workshop will be held at DemoDAIRY, Terang, on January 19, and is limited to 15 participants.

This will be a great opportunity to get more information on how to use the financial management programs.

Numbers are limited to ensure participants get the most out of the event.

For more information or to enrol please contact Liza Fahey on 5592 2477.

## Farmers' opinions needed

PARTICIPATING in a research project?

Deakin University research fellow Dr Quentin Farmar-Bowers wants to interview farmers as part of a project on how landholders are adapting to a changing environment.

The interviews are confidential, take about an hour and will be conducted by phone. Quentin says the interviews are more of a chat than a question and answer session. Quentin wants to hear about farmers' long-term objectives and the strategies they use to achieve their objectives. He wants to know what farmers see as important changes in farm practice and in the industry, and what they think will turn out to be good opportunities and what may be less favourable for farming families.

Please contact Quentin by phone on 0409 134 607 or email [quentin.farmarbowers@deakin.edu.au](mailto:quentin.farmarbowers@deakin.edu.au) to arrange a convenient date and time if you are interested in being interviewed or if you want further information about the project.

The project is called Policies and Governance for Integrated Landscape Management in a Changing Environment and is funded by the Victorian Centre for Climate Change Adaptation Research.

## Dairy Poll info goes online

EVERYTHING you need to know about Dairy Poll 2012 is at your fingertips at [www.dairypoll.com.au](http://www.dairypoll.com.au)

The website, specifically set up for the Dairy Poll, has all the information you need, including the regulatory requirements, the three voting options for farmers and voting instructions.

You can also watch Chris Griffin, president of Australian Dairy Farmers, and Max Roberts, chairman of Dairy Australia, discussing the 2012 Dairy Poll and the national Roadshow, which will begin in mid-January.

There are also sections on Dairy Australia's funding sources, details on the various investments and programs, and a regional rundown on local programs. Roadshow locations and venues will be added to the site as they become available.

# Forage risks can be managed

FUTUREDAIRY'S feedbase science leader, Associate Professor Yani Garcia, said that complementary forage systems (CFS) offered a way to dramatically increase home-grown feed from limited land or water.

A CFS involves growing two or more forage crops from the same area of land in a given year. Typically they include a bulk crop such as maize for silage, or sorghum and a legume or other crop to provide feed during the autumn or winter.

"Growing forages, or a CFS in particular, involves changes at different levels of the farming system. Most of the associated risks can be managed, once they are understood," Associate Professor Garcia said.

The risks with growing forage crops fall into five areas: climate risk, price risk, human (or management) risk, financial risk and environmental risk.

### Climate risk

Variable seasonal conditions can affect crop yields, quality and wastage.

"There are three things you can do to manage climate risk. Firstly select crops that are suited to your specific climate and soils. Having the wrong cultivars or hybrids increases climate risk," he said.

"Secondly, maintain a flexible approach to feed base management. Monitor the seasonal outlook and adjust your plans if needed.

"And thirdly, ensure you have access to enough irrigation (if available).

"A CFS relies on having enough irrigation water to achieve the target yield of your bulk crop.

"Make sure your irrigation allocation is enough to cover crop requirements, even in a low rainfall season. If the water available is not enough, lower your yield expectations and use irrigation to supplement natural winter rainfall, for example to germinate early-sown brassica or annual ryegrass," he said.



Growing forages carries some risks. But rather than avoiding the risks, dairy farmers are encouraged to understand and manage the risk.

### Price risk

Uncertainty or variability in milk price and the price of key inputs such as grain can affect the performance of a CFS.

"While we don't have any control over the price of milk or inputs, we can make our system less exposed to them," Associate Professor Garcia said.

A CFS is a way to increase milk production per hectare without increasing the amount of purchased feed.

"If you rely less on purchased feed such as supplements or hay, you are less affected by price fluctuations," he said.

Price risk can also be managed with careful planning before starting a CFS.

"Prepare an accurate budget in advance. Allow for new costs associated with capital investment such as a mixer wagon or feedpad. And aim for an operating profit with a safety margin so that an unexpected milk price decrease will not result in a loss."

### Human risk

Management skills and decision-making ability affect the performance of a CFS. A CFS does involve higher costs so profitability relies on achieving high yields.

"Make sure you have the systems in place and the skills needed to achieve target yields, of both the crops and pastures. And don't forget that a CFS is still a pasture-based system."

A common mistake is to spend more time and money in the cropping area than the pastures. The result is poor pasture utilisation which will defeat the purpose of the CFS.

### Financial risk

Uncertainty due to the level of financial exposure can affect the success of a CFS. Financial risk is affected by the level of equity and the capacity of the business to service debt.

The key to managing financial risk is to maintain a reasonable level of equity.

"Prepare a cash flow budget

to plan the year ahead and how the spread of cash expenses will be covered by cash income," he said.

### Environmental risk

Environmental risk refers to uncertainty about the potential impact of a CFS on the environment.

If managed properly, an intensified system such as the CFS does not necessarily have a greater environmental impact than a pasture-only system. Nutrient budgeting is a useful tool for managing environmental risk.

"At the end of the day everyone has their own level of risk that they are comfortable with.

"Remember, most risk types cannot be avoided, but they can be managed.

"And the way you manage them can make a big difference to the end result," Associate Professor Garcia said.

For more information email Associate Professor Yani Garcia, [sergio.garcia@sydney.edu.au](mailto:sergio.garcia@sydney.edu.au) or phone (02) 9351 1621.





# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## WHAT'S ON

### January 12

**EVENT:** Corangamite YDDP meeting

**TIME:** 7.30pm – 9.30pm

**WHERE:** Cobden Hotel

**CONTACT:** Liza Fahey, WestVic Dairy, 0408 141 820

### January 19

**EVENT:** MYOB Workshop

**TIME:** 7.30pm – 9.30pm

**WHERE:** DemoDAIRY.

**CONTACT:** Liza Fahey, WestVic Dairy, 0408 141 820

### January 31

**EVENT:** Feedpad and Laneways Field Day

**TIME:** 10.30pm – 1.30pm

**WHERE:** TBA

**CONTACT:** Michell Ryan, DPI Warrnambool (03) 5561 9914

### February 6

**EVENT:** Feedpad and Laneways Field Day

**TIME:** 10.30pm – 1.30pm

**WHERE:** TBA

**CONTACT:** Michell Ryan, DPI Warrnambool (03) 5561 9914

### February 7

**EVENT:** Feedpad and Laneways Field Day

**TIME:** 10.30pm – 1.30pm

**WHERE:** TBA

**CONTACT:** Michell Ryan, DPI Warrnambool (03) 5561 9914

### February 7

**EVENT:** Milkplus-Nutrition Basics Workshop

**TIME:** 11.00pm – 2.00pm

**WHERE:** Allansford

**CONTACT:** Ann McDowell, DPI, (03) 5557 5805

### February 8

**EVENT:** Milkplus Nutrition Basics Workshop

**TIME:** 11.00am – 2.00pm

**WHERE:** Cobden

**CONTACT:** Ann McDowell, DPI, (03) 5557 5805

### February 9

**EVENT:** Saving Water in the Dairy

**TIME:** 12.00pm – 2.30pm

**WHERE:** Grassmere (TBA)

**CONTACT:** Louise Sheba, 0409 505 686

### February 15-17

**EVENT:** Sungold Field Days, Yellow Brick Road  
DPI Display and Speakers

**WHERE:** Sungold Field Days, Allansford

**CONTACT:** Liza Fahey, WestVic Dairy, 0408 141 820

### February 22

**EVENT:** Calving Pattern Seminar

**TIME:** 10.30 am – 2.30 pm

**WHERE:** Colac

**CONTACT:** Nadine Markham, DPI, Colac, 0428 582 728

### February 23

**EVENT:** Calving Pattern Seminar

**TIME:** 10.30 am – 2.30 pm

**WHERE:** Warrnambool

**CONTACT:** Nadine Markham, DPI, Colac, (03) 5233 5525

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

# Summer management of perennial ryegrass

By MICHELE RYAN

Dairy Services, DPI,  
Warrnambool



Manage pastures carefully over summer with a rotation of 45 days plus.

SUMMER rainfall distribution is probably more important for perennial ryegrass survival than the absolute amount of rainfall.

When rainfall is sufficient to ensure plants have access to water most of the summer, the plants survive. When there is so little rainfall that the plants go into dormancy and do not break dormancy until conditions are cooler and moist, plant survival is high.

However, if summer rainfall is followed by a dry period, tiller buds break dormancy, grow, and die in the hot dry conditions. Sporadic summer rainfall is a common occurrence in south-eastern Australia; and if summer rain is followed by dry periods of more than about 30 days, some plants are likely to die.

Here are some pasture management tactics that will help perennial ryegrass to survive summer:

**Don't overgraze perennial ryegrass in summer.**

Even though perennial ryegrass is dormant over summer, it is still very susceptible to overgrazing. Overgrazing can damage the growing point, which is located at ground level; and this just kills the plant. Maintaining a 5-cm grazing residual and some herbage cover over summer protects green

tillers by reducing the temperature at ground level. Consider using sacrifice paddocks to minimise overgrazing across the farm.

**Consider the plant and the animal needs after cutting hay.**

All that green aftermath may be good feed, but also think of the survival of perennial ryegrass plants. This is a time when the plant is stressed. When perennial ryegrass seed heads are cut off, the plant begins to grow new tillers that would not have emerged if the seed heads had been left intact. This means the plant is growing in hot, dry conditions and using up its energy at a much faster rate than usual. The added stress of grazing may kill perennial ryegrass tillers and whole plants.

**Strategic grazing of new tillers after summer rainfall.**

New tillers that grow after summer rainfall become stressed by the return of hot, dry conditions; and heavy grazing compounds this stress. If the plants are severely grazed in summer when they also face the pressure of unfavourable climatic conditions, their survival is likely to be jeopardised. A long rotation over summer ensures the perennial ryegrass is not frequently grazed. Tillers emerge within days of summer rainfall, so by

using a rotation that ensures perennial ryegrass in most paddocks is not grazed soon after summer rainfall, perennial ryegrass survival should improve in those paddocks.

**Sow persistent perennial ryegrass cultivars for your area.**

There can be big differences in persistence of different perennial ryegrass cultivars. Check with local agronomists and neighbours as to which perennial ryegrass cultivars are persisting well under local conditions.

Local research has shown that by maintaining a long grazing rotation (45 days or longer) in summer, a pasture is one grazing rotation ahead of pasture that has been grazed more frequently; that is a grazing rotation that is less than 30 days.

Frequently grazed pastures have reduced vigour and growth potential compared to pastures that have a longer grazing rotation.

By ensuring that pasture rotations are maintained at an appropriate length and a 5-cm grazing residual is maintained, you are making sure that your perennial ryegrass pastures persist and then flourish in the following autumn. If you would like to discuss your situation, contact Michele Ryan on (03) 5561 9914.

By ANN McDOWELL

Dairy Services, DPI,  
Camperdown



BULL selection is a job that comes around once or twice a year.

The bulls you select will have a lasting effect on your herd — both the good ones and the bad.

It is important to choose bulls that meet your breeding goals.

It is not always easy to compare bulls on offer from different companies based on the material supplied by the companies themselves. However independent information is available, which

## Bull selection: independent information at your fingertips

allows you to compare bulls on the same scale.

The Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme (ADHIS) is the keeper of the Australian Breeding Values (ABVs) for the Australian dairy industry and the measure of genetic merit under Australian conditions. Included in their database are bulls with Australian proofs (ABV), bulls with genomic information (ABVg) and bulls with overseas proofs that have been converted by Interbull to reflect likely performance under Australian conditions (ABVi).

For any bull of interest you have a number of alternatives to examine their suitability for your situation.

**The Good Bulls Guide**

*The Good Bulls Guide* is updated and released twice a year — in both hard copy and on the ADHIS website (www.adhis.com.au — funded by farmers' service levy) and provides a simple way to

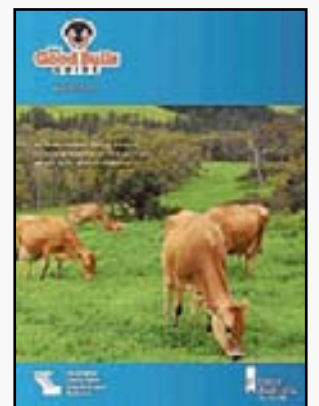
compare bulls on some of the major traits of interest. A number of lists are provided with the top bulls for key traits such as production or mastitis resistance.

**DISPLAYABULL**

DISPLAYABULL is available on the ADHIS web site, www.adhis.com.au, and is a tool that allows you to search for any bull of interest and display the full ABV and pedigree information of any bull with an Australian proof, genomic data or Interbull information.

**SELECTABULL**

SELECTABULL is available on the ADHIS web site, www.adhis.com.au, and is a tool that helps you find bulls that meet your particular needs. You enter your own personalised breeding objective and SELECTABULL supplies you with a list of bulls that meet those requirements. You can then examine the full ABV listing before deciding which bulls should be part of your bull team. All these



*The Good Bulls Guide* will help farmers choose bulls that match their breeding plans.

tools are free to use, although you will need to register for SELECTABULL. DPI and ADHIS offer free workshops to help you make the most of these tools.

For more information or to register your interest in a workshop, contact Ann McDowell, at DPI Camperdown, on (03) 5557 5805.