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# DAIRY NEWS

NEWS ABOUT HOW DAIRY FARMERS' LEVIES ARE INVESTED

A special *On The Land* supplement



# SIMPLE SOLUTION

## Test will identify parents of cows

AUSTRALIAN dairy farmers are now able to accurately identify the parents of any animal in their herd, putting an end to "mistaken identity" which is a surprisingly common problem on Australian dairy farms.

Holstein Australia has launched *parentage plus*<sup>TM</sup> a DNA testing service which identifies the parents of a dairy cow, calf or bull from a supplied hair sample.

Chief executive officer Dr Matt Shaffer said research conducted by the Dairy Futures CRC had found mistaken identity rates of about 8 per cent in herds with very good records; suggesting the rate would be even higher, possibly double that, in most herds.

"Identifying the parents of a new calf sounds fairly simple but don't forget that dairy calves are removed from their dams within 24 hours and are then hand-reared," Dr Shaffer said. "Calving is one of the busiest times of the year. In seasonal herds, where several calves may be born in a matter of hours, mis-mothering is common, creating confusion about the dam.

Mistaken identity can also occur due to lost ID

tags or inaccurate recording. Any error is then handed down with every new generation."

While parentage information is required to register dairy cattle, accurate parentage records are also important for all dairy farmers because it influences the basic decisions made at joining: which sire to put over which cow to improve genetic gain and avoid inbreeding.

"The service will also be useful for dairy farmers who export heifers, as the agents require a known pedigree for each animal," he said.

*parentage plus*<sup>TM</sup> removes the guesswork. Costing as little as \$18/head, it is likely to appeal to managers of large, seasonal calving herds who have not previously registered their cows due to the logistical challenges of supplying the required pedigree information.

"All that's required is a hair sample and a date of birth. There's no need to go through mating records to find the sire," he said.

### World first technology

Dr Shaffer said *parentage plus*<sup>TM</sup> was based on world-first technology developed collaboratively for the



Holstein Australia has launched a new DNA testing service to take the guesswork out of calf identification.

industry by the Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme, the Dairy Futures CRC and the Department of Primary Industries Victoria.

*parentage plus*<sup>TM</sup> creates a genetic map for each animal tested. This map is then cross-matched with all the dams and sires in Holstein Australia's data base to identify the animal's parents.

"The service is based on the technology developed to produce

genomic Australian Breeding Values. But this is the first time the technology has been adapted to draw on a smaller number of gene samples, or SNPs, to keep the costs down without compromising accuracy of the parentage information," Dr Shaffer said.

For more information contact Holstein Australia ph 1300 788 188 or 03 9835 7600, email enquiry@holstein.com.au or www.holstein.com.au



## Great South West Dairy Awards set to return

THE Great South West Dairy Awards will return on April 19, 2013 to reward the region's high performing farmers.

The awards are now in their eighth year and have become a highlight of the annual dairy calendar.

There were a record 80 nominations plus more than 60 farm photos submitted for the 2012 awards and more than 330 people attended the gala night at South West TAFE's

Glenormiston College hall. The awards aim to reward the region's farmers and staff for high performance; publicise those high standards and the benefits of achieving them; and improve the image of the dairy industry in south-west Victoria.

Project manager Barb Collins said the awards program had struck a chord with dairy farmers and the broader community.

"They have grown from strength to strength and have become a real talking point," Mrs Collins said.

"Farmers and service industry personnel are keen to see good operators being recognised for their efforts," she said.

Organisers are now distributing sponsorship packages seeking support for the program, with several sponsors already signed up.

Ambleside Wealth Advisors are continuing their support as the major sponsor in 2013.

"We appreciate the support of local businesses that have helped us to grow the dairy awards and we look forward to continuing to grow that supporter base this year," Mrs Collins said.

She said sponsorship packages could be tailored to meet the needs of any

business. Nominations will open on January 15 and close on February 17.

The award categories will again cover Employer of the Year, Employee of the Year, Share Farmer of the Year, National Resource and Sustainability Manager of the Year, Young Farm Leader of the Year, Farm Photo of the Year and the Western Victorian Dairy Industry Honour Board.

Forms will be available from the WestVic Dairy office in January and a copy will be distributed with the January edition of the WestVic Dairy news.

The awards will be presented at the Glenormiston College on April 19. People interested in sponsoring or supporting the awards can contact Mrs Collins on 55 922477 or email barb@westvicdairy.com.au

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# A valuable tool

## Robotic milking systems aiding farmers

DAIRY farmers with robotic — or automatic — milking systems (AMS) are finding that the computerised recording system provides a range of reports that transform the way they make decisions and manage the herd.

Dr Kendra Kerrisk, FutureDairy project leader, said most AMS farmers took some time to become familiar with the AMS reports but once they gained confidence, they found they managed their herd quite differently.

“AMS is a different way of farming and it takes some time to get used to that.

“One of the big differences is that you have instant access to detailed information and reports,” said Dr Kerrisk.

The robots sample and test milk from each individual quarter, providing very specific information after each milking.

“We find that the farmer's focus tends to move from monitoring trends at the herd level to monitoring individual cows, particularly in terms of mastitis indicators, milk production and



Automatic milking systems generate reports which can transform the way farmers manage their herd.

composition. “In effect you have every day access to information that was previously only available periodically through herd recording data.

“It's a very powerful management tool.”

As well as recording detailed information from the milking, the AMS software performs most of the same functions as other dairy management programs so all the

information is stored in a central place.

Most AMS have a set of standard reports which are generated automatically each day, alerting the manager to animals or issues that require attention.

At the robotic milking facility at Camden, the FutureDairy team reviewed these reports each morning to assess performance at the herd, cow

and robot levels. “At the herd level we were most interested in average milk production, milking frequency, concentrate consumption and success of milking attempts.

“Combined, these results gave us an indication of how well our farming system was supporting automatic milking and if we needed to make adjustments, especially to improve voluntary cow

movement around the farm,” she said.

The FutureDairy team used information supplied at the individual cow level, and even the quarter level as an indicator of health and well-being.

“For example, we set up the system to alert us to indicators of mastitis and oestrus. We also kept a close eye on concentrate consumption as a fall in that can be an early sign of a metabolic disorder or other animal health issue,” said Dr Kerrisk.

Reports at the robot level were used to monitor the efficiency of the automatic milking system and to identify any emerging issues that required attention. Reports included proportion of missed attachments and incomplete milkings, milk harvesting rates, attachment times and robot utilisation levels.

For more information, contact Dr Kendra Kerrisk, FutureDairy project leader ph 0428 101 372, email kendra.kerrisk@sydney.edu.au or www.futuredairy.com.au

# Educating youngsters about dairy career options

HOOFS and heifers, genetics, soil science, farm safety, growing grass — these were some of the things that Timboon and district farmers and dairy service providers illustrated to the pupils and parents of Timboon P-12 at the launch of the Timboon Agriculture Project on November 21.

To visiting parents and community members, the dairy industry displayed its interest in and capacity to engage students in agriculture and the school displayed some of the early curriculum outcomes and plans for the future of the project.

Engaging pupils in activities for learning from milking technology to live bacteria under the microscope, from baby chickens to the breeding of cows and the screening of pupil-prepared oral histories of the Heytesbury settlement, the launch showed the huge potential for this project to support education across the school curriculum at all levels.

The summer crop planted on the paddock set aside for the school's agriculture precinct was barely showing in time for the launch, but it served not only to introduce the pupils to different feed crops (and the vagaries of farming), it was well decorated with corrugated iron cow silhouettes made by Year 9 students and guarded by a wall of scarecrows made by the pupils from Prep to Grade 4.

After the official launch of the project by steering



ABOVE: Pupils explore farm safety issues with WorkSafe. TOP RIGHT: Students at the launch inspecting live bull semen under the microscope. BOTTOM RIGHT: Former Timboon P-12 school captain Michael Vogels spoke to pupils about careers in agriculture.



committee member John Vogels, of Scotts Creek, another Vogels — Michael, of Cooriemungle, summed up the imperative for the industry in supporting projects that engage students in Agriculture.

Michael, a former captain of Timboon P-12's SRC, is now in his first year at Marcus Oldham College, studying for a degree in agricultural business.

Michael acknowledged the critical shortage of young people coming into the industry and described the blank looks he faced when telling people

of his career choice. So how does he address them?

Like this: “Yes, it is farming. It's family farming, corporate farming, it's corporate family farming.

It's agronomy, plant and animal breeding; it's molecular biology and genetics. It's animal nutrition, animal husbandry and welfare. It's business management, it's economics, finance and consultancy. It's sales, it's marketing, it's processing. It's IT, it's engineering, it's statistics. It's natural resource management. It's people — it's local and it's global.”

The Timboon Agriculture Project is designed to bring all of those possibilities and the opportunities that spin off from them within and beyond agriculture, to the students of Timboon P-12.

In partnership with WestVic Dairy and with initial funding from the Gardiner Foundation, the project design and planning for the next three years is well under way.

If successful in securing ongoing funding to support the delivery of the project, the Timboon project could be a model for schools in other communities.



# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## Foot and mouth disease focus of trip



Jocelyn Bevin with Matt Mahony (left) and Neil Dickson.

# Farmers need to remain vigilant

WESTVIC Dairy Operations Manager Jocelyn Bevin travelled to Nepal in late November to gain first-hand knowledge about foot and mouth disease.

Ms Bevin was part of a 10-member delegation and hopes to raise awareness among local farmers in western Victoria about the risk of FMD.

Australia is free of FMD and the study tour is part of a campaign to keep it that way.

The five-day training program involved learning to identify FMD lesions in different species and included handling animals and taking samples on FMD affected farms in Nepal.

FMD is a highly contagious viral disease of cloven-hoofed animals, including cattle, sheep, pigs and goats. Key signs of the disease are fever, lameness and blisters in the mouth, feet and udders. Although not fatal in adult animals and not a threat to humans, FMD causes serious production losses and an outbreak would cause the closure of export markets for dairy products.

Ms Bevin said the tour aimed to promote responsible behaviour, prevent the potential spread of contagious diseases and build on Australia's knowledge of the disease.

"When I return I will be sharing my knowledge and experiences with as many local farmers as possible," she said. "It will



Jocelyn Bevin, who has travelled to Nepal as part of a 10-member delegation researching foot and mouth disease.

help to inform farmers about what foot and mouth looks like, how easily it can be transmitted and how disastrous it would be for our industry if we were to have an outbreak.

"Early detection is important and farmers are responsible for reporting any symptoms. First-hand

examples from a country where foot and mouth is endemic provides a strong message to our local farmers about the need to notify any suspect cases.

"It is a unique opportunity to share real experiences from a foot and mouth hot spot." Eventually 50

representatives from Australian agriculture will travel to overseas destinations to study FMD. FMD is widespread in many countries.

Australian Dairy Farmers and Dairy Australia nominated dairy industry representatives and dairy veterinarians for the five-day study visits organised by Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

The visits are part of an upgraded surveillance program for FMD.

Ms Bevin will go through rigorous bio-security measures both during and after her tour.

"I will have to suit up every day with gloves, boots and protective gear. I will dispose of my clothes every day to make sure I don't bring back any risks," she said. Upon her return Ms Bevin is not allowed to visit any farm with FMD susceptible animals for seven days.

The four participants will compile a report which will be available publicly and Ms Bevin will speak about her experiences at local WestVic Dairy events.

The industry and government are also contributing to updated comprehensive quarantine requirements and plans to respond to any outbreak.

FMD strategies are expected to be endorsed by the ministerial council before the end of the year.

## Consultation a top priority

WESTVIC Dairy's new executive officer Gavan Mathieson has returned to his roots, coming back to an area and industry that means a lot to him.

Gavan was raised on a farm at Naringal East before leaving at age 18 to pursue further study.

"I grew up right in the heart of dairy land," he said. "This job is like going full circle and coming back to the area where I grew up and now I have the opportunity to contribute to an industry that is so important to the region."

Gavan has fond memories of growing up on the land and has maintained his connection to the region with a 30 acre block he owns near Princetown.

However, his early years on the farm were not always easy.

After the death of his father when he was aged just six, the farm converted from a dairy to beef operation.

"It was a really tough time for the dairy industry in the late 1970s. One of my earliest and saddest memories is coming home on the school bus and seeing the pits where cows had to be put down because the dairy market had bottomed out," he said.

The Ash Wednesday bushfires of 1983 were the final nail in the coffin for the farm.

"We were burnt out and had no insurance for our stock or fencing," he recalled.

Gavan and his mother Jean got the farm up and running again after the fires but a year later decided it was time to move on and sell the property.

"We had converted to a beef Hereford stud but the property wasn't really big enough for what we needed."

Gavan moved to Ballarat where he studied natural resource management and applied science at the University of Ballarat. He later worked in diverse fields including national park management, Landcare, local government and emergency management before joining the Environmental Protection Authority five years ago.

Most recently he worked as a senior advisor for the EPA and was previously the south-west regional manager.

His role as an advisor involved informing EPA executive management of emerging issues and developing collaborations with industry and government partners to find effective solutions to any problems.

Although he has often worked with major players in the dairy industry, the WestVic Dairy role is Gavan's first direct position in dairy.

He says he is excited about the opportunity to work closely with dairy farmers.

"It is a real challenge for me and a very exciting opportunity to work with the dairy industry as it looks towards a positive future," he said.

"I had worked in three states in the government sector so this is an exciting prospect to step up into an industry-based CEO role to show what I can do."

One of Gavan's main priorities



Gavan Mathieson.

is to work with local farmers to identify how they want their levy money invested and to help farm enterprises to achieve sustainable profitability.

"The first thing I want to do is talk to local farmers to understand their concerns and wishes and to focus on structural adjustments to help them to be profitable and sustainable even through price fluctuations," he said.

"It is important for me to understand the pressures farmers are under and how we can help."

Gavan aims to strengthen WestVic Dairy's governance "and make sure we are the best in Australia at implementing what farmers want in their local area".

He will relocate from Geelong with his wife Georgia and two children. "We want to bring up our children in a country environment which adds to the appeal of this job," he said.

Gavan replaces Mike Weise, who resigned from the role earlier this year.

The appointment comes as part of the restructure of the business operation of WestVic Dairy that has also seen Acting Executive Officer (and former Executive Assistant) Jocelyn Bevin appointed as operations manager.

WestVic Dairy chairman John Dalton said he was delighted with Gavan's appointment which follows an extensive search and a review of the WestVic Dairy business.

"Gavan will bring a fresh perspective from outside the dairy industry. He has worked with the industry but has experience in a wide range of areas which will benefit our dairy region," Mr Dalton said.

"One of Gavan's main priorities will be to build relationships with farmers and industry stakeholders and one of his core strengths is his communication skill."

As part of the restructure Ms Bevin will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the WestVic Dairy business and the various projects.

Mr Dalton said Mr Weise's departure was an opportune time for WestVic Dairy to review its operations.

"We have taken the time to find an excellent person for the role of executive officer and to look at our structure and how we do things to heighten efficiencies and accountability," he said.

"We are confident that Gavan and the new structure will set a solid platform for supporting the local dairy industry."



# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## NATIONAL CENTRE FOR DAIRY EDUCATION NEWS

# Programs help further career



The In2Dairy program gave Cameron White a clearer career direction in what areas of farming he wanted to pursue.

## LeadIn and In2Dairy a good option

### LeadIn success

THE first Dairy Australia LeadIn course was a resounding success for 11 south-west community-minded participants.

The three-day course developed skills in meeting organisation, making presentations and developing teams.

Course participants had a fun and engaging time, developing networks and learning about themselves and others.

"It built my self-confidence and opened my eyes to where I could go" said one participant. "I can definitely see how I can apply these skills to develop teams and be a better leader" said another.

Dairy Australia in conjunction with WestVic Dairy and NCDEA will be running another LeadIn course in the near future.

Please contact Bec Huth [rhuth@ncdea.edu.au](mailto:rhuth@ncdea.edu.au) 55922437 or Liza Fahey [info@westvicdairy.com.au](mailto:info@westvicdairy.com.au) 55922477 for more information or to register your place.

### Skills recognition for dairy farmers

THE NCDEA will hold an information day and enrolment opportunity in February 2013 for anyone interested in learning more about our Skills Recognition Program.

In recent times, many successful local dairy farmers and their staff have taken the chance to gain recognition for their many skills and wealth of knowledge, gathered over years of



Dairy Australia LeadIn course participants concentrate on the work at hand.

experience. These achievements have been attained via various avenues, but they have never enrolled in formal classes to obtain a recognised qualification.

The Skills Recognition Program offers the opportunity for farmers and farm staff to present evidence of their competency at the appropriate level of their experience, and thereby gain a whole or partial qualification in agriculture. The Skills Recognition Program does not require candidates to attend classes.

To find out more or register your interest, please call Jean McGoldrick on 0400318646.

### In2Dairy —where are they now?

AN outdoor job was always

on the cards for Cameron White, but the In2Dairy program helped him identify what he really wanted to do in life, and that is dairy farming.

Cameron attended an In2Dairy program as a 17 year-old, in 2010. He had already milked cows, driven a tractor and done some fencing, so he had some idea of farming life.

The program gave him the opportunity to gain more experience, and he learned about the career pathway and qualifications he could strive for. It gave him more direction and he felt as though he was getting somewhere.

Over the 12 months following the In2Dairy program, Cameron completed his Certificate

II in Agriculture at the NCDEA. He is now working for Deans Marsh farmers Leighton and Karen Hart, and completing his Certificate III.

Cameron's plans for the future include building up his own herd of cows and perhaps completing his Certificate IV in Agriculture. He would recommend the In2Dairy program as a good career opportunity for anyone interested in dairying.

The 10-day In2Dairy program is held by WestVic Dairy, WestVic Staffing Solutions and the National Centre for Dairy Education on behalf of Dairy Australia. For further information contact Robyn Vale at WestVic Dairy, phone 55922477.

## Summer tips for ryegrass survival

By MICHELE RYAN  
DAIRY SERVICES, DPI  
WARRNAMBOOL



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 little rainfall, the plants go into dormancy and do not break dormancy until conditions are cooler and moist and so 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 to use 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 5cm 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 that the perennial ryegrass is not frequently grazed. Tillers emerge within days of summer rainfall, so using a rotation that ensures perennial ryegrass in most paddocks is not grazed soon after summer rainfall should assist perennial ryegrass survival 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, meaning a grazing rotation less than 30 days. The reason is that frequently grazed pastures have reduced vigour and growth potential compared to the pastures that have a longer grazing rotation.

By ensuring that pasture rotations are maintained at an appropriate length and a 5cm grazing residual is maintained, you are making sure that your perennial ryegrass pastures persist and then flourish in the following autumn.



Managing pastures well over summer will give long-term benefits.



# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

# Passion pays off

## Proactive farmer Basil Ryan makes an impact

IN 2012 Basil Ryan was inducted onto the Western Victorian Dairy Industry Honour board. In our ongoing series of articles profiling inductees, Basil looks back on his career in dairy.

Basil Ryan has always believed in farmers having their say.

"If we're not in there to represent the farm sector, we have to live with the decisions made on our behalf," he said.

For decades the Grassmere farmer has been doing his bit to stand up for the rights of farmers.

He has been a strong supporter and participant in the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria and in the Victorian Farmers Federation and has been a champion of farmers' rights to access water.

This led to his involvement as a member of the Groundwater and Rivers Consultative Committee for Southern Rural Water and the Water Council of the VFF, a representative on the Western Region Sustainable Water Committee, the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority and its predecessor the Catchment and Land Protection Board. He was also on the Ragwort Reference Group for 15 years, including five years as chairman.

This strong industry contribution led to Basil being nominated this year for the Western Victorian Dairy Industry Honour Board.

Basil said his industry involvement stemmed from a desire "to see how things function".

"If you believe and support something, you need to get in and do your bit" he said. "As dairy farmers we need to be represented in discussions."

Basil was born into dairying and never considered another career. His Grassmere farm, Numeralla, has been in the family since 1939.

"My parents had been farming at Hopkins Point but that was prior to myxomatosis and their place was overrun with rabbits. Considering it was the start of the war it was a brave decision to make."

That brave decision paid off and Basil continues to farm the 80-hectare property, now in partnership with son Liam who has a separate property nearby in Grassmere.

"We have established the dairy at Liam's farm and now

basically use this farm for raising calves and producing silage and maize," he said.

The decision to move the main operation to a new site was not an easy one and was influenced by the landlocked status of the home farm.

"We had an outpaddock and the land around that became available so we went for it," he said.

"It was a bit disappointing but we had to do it and start from scratch. We were hemmed in here so we couldn't expand but there were also restrictions on irrigation which meant we couldn't farm the way we wanted to.

"There is a trend to bigger farms and improved technology and designs of dairies have made it easier to milk more cows (Liam's farm now milks 540, Basil's property previously had a high stocking rate of 280).

Basil said he became involved in "farming politics" around 1982, which was about the same time he reduced his football club commitments and started to manage the family farm on his own after his brothers moved to their own farms.

Initially his industry input was with the UDV where he continues as chairman of the Wannan region branch.

He encourages all dairy farmers to become financial members of the UDV. "I'd love to see more involvement in the UDV," he said. "Not everyone is cut out to go to meetings and talk, but we need members to pay their subscriptions which will lead to better representation.

"We need to properly present our point of view to governments and agencies. We need to get better representation."

Basil points to his involvement in the Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy where he was the only farmer on the committee, even though the strategy covered four different farming regions.

He argued for more farmer representation but was hardly satisfied with the end result of one farmer from Donald being added to the mix.

His involvement with the VFF water council evolved from local issues surrounding irrigation.

"We can't progress if we haven't got water" he said.

"I was interested in how the resource was being shared. There is a big misconception



Farmer Basil Ryan was inducted onto the Western Victorian Dairy Industry Honour board.

in the community that farmers waste water which is not true. It is all very controlled and farmers are more and more responsible in the way they use it because they realise it is a valuable and finite resource."

Basil was involved with committees set up to manage groundwater in the Nullawarre and Yangery basins and stream flow plans for the Merri River.

"When I was first involved the regulatory system wasn't as well set up as it is now."

Basil also played a key role in addressing ragwort problems in the region.

"We were never going to win the battle in some regions

but we had some wonderful successes. It is pretty well controlled now but it's left up to people to do the right thing because other funding priorities came along and we lost our money," he said.

Basil said he was pleased to see closer links between CMAs and WestVic Dairy.

"Luckily most farmers realise that if we don't look after the environment we won't have much of a farm. Most have a good attitude but those that don't will have to realise they will be responsible for some draconian laws to regulate their behaviour."

Along with recommending dairy farmers do their bit to

contribute to the industry, Basil encourages young farmers to seek out advice.

"Pasture utilisation is a lot better than when I started. I was very grateful for DPI discussion groups when I was starting out and the Target 10 program was very helpful.

"These days farmers should get involved with Focus Farm groups and listen to other people. It is important to get knowledge."

While he realises farming can be difficult, he encourages young people to give it a go "and remember that while you're farming you're building equity".

"Just don't go overboard on machinery," he added.

### GLENELG HOPKINS CMA SNIPPETS

#### Two million trees

AS part of a Victorian Government initiative to plant 500,000 individual trees along waterways in regional Victoria (plus another 1.5 million in Melbourne metro area), it has been reported that Glenelg Hopkins CMA has contributed 201,000 to the overall total, the largest of any CMA.

#### Carp monitoring

THE South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) has been contracted by Glenelg Hopkins CMA to develop and implement a new Carp monitoring and research program in the Glenelg River.

As part of this project, CMA Waterway Health Planner, Stephen Ryan, participated in a workshop in Adelaide to assist in the design of the Judas Carp project.

The Judas Carp project will enable up to 75 Carp to be tracked in the Glenelg River at potentially 48 different sites; 30 in the freshwater and 18 in the estuarine reaches.

#### Public comment for Landcare strategy

COMMUNITY members are invited to provide comment and have the opportunity to have their views and opinions considered in the development of the Glenelg Hopkins Landcare Strategy.

The Strategy seeks to achieve organised and effective groups and networks that increase their reach and impact through collaboration and engagement with committees.

The strategy is available at [www.ghcma.vic.gov.au](http://www.ghcma.vic.gov.au), or a hard copy of the draft is available by contacting the CMA office on (03) 5571 2523.

#### Landcare gathering

THE inaugural regional Landcare Gathering was held on October 7. About 50 Landcare representatives attended the gathering.

#### Flagship species survey

GLENELG Hopkins CMA is conducting a survey to find out which wetland, river and estuary species in the catchment are most valued by the community.

The survey contains 15 organisms, ranging from a rare damselfly to the common Black Swan, and its purpose is to determine the region's Flagship Species. To complete the survey, follow the link at the Glenelg Hopkins CMA website [www.ghcma.vic.gov.au](http://www.ghcma.vic.gov.au)

#### Myrtle Rust fungal disease

GLENELG Hopkins CMA held an information session on Myrtle Rust on November 8, to assist with the future identification and management of this newly-detected fungal disease. Management of myrtle rust on both public and private land is the responsibility of the land manager.

# Managing ill and dead stock appropriately

TEMPORARY closure of a regional petfood manufacturer over Christmas will see farmers having to manage seriously ill and dead stock themselves.

Western Victorian dairy farmers are being reminded to handle sick stock with care. If necessary they must be euthanised humanely

and carcasses disposed of correctly.

Victorian Petfood Processors Pty Ltd has informed farmers in the region it will not be collecting dead stock at its Camperdown, Hamilton and Ballarat plants between November 16 and January 30, 2013. This is due to an upgrade and general

maintenance of the company's facilities.

Dairy Australia Animal Husbandry and Welfare program manager Bridget Peachey said "When farmers have to euthanise sick or injured calves and cows on their farms there is a moral and legal responsibility to do this humanely and

without delay". The disposal of carcasses must be done appropriately to ensure they are not left to rot or dumped in waterways.

Ms Peachey said burial was the most common option for farmers if removal services are unavailable.

"However, if burying stock, farmers need to ensure they

are buried deeply enough to prevent access by other livestock and scavengers and do not bury the carcasses too close to waterways," she said.

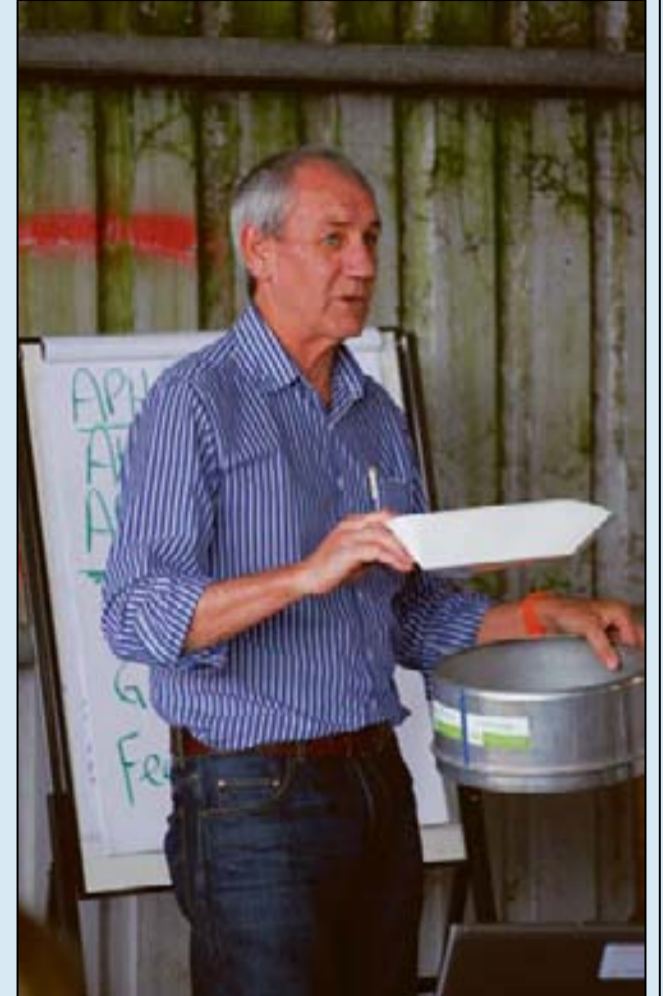
Dairy Australia has developed guidelines for the humane killing and disposal of stock and full details are available at [www.dairyaustralia.com.au](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au)

# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## Feeding decisions explored in field days for local farmers



Nadine Markham talks with farmers about improving profitability at Tactics for Tight Times field days.



Ron Storey during his presentation at the field day.

# Farming in tight times

A SERIES of Tactics for Tight Times field days have given local farmers insights into how they can make better feeding decisions to improve their profitability.

More than 130 dairy farmers and service providers attended the field days at Cooriemungle, Colac and Bookaar where market trends and outlooks for feed supplements, nutritional impacts of feeds and the consequences of feeding decisions were discussed.

The "Focus on Feeding" field days were part of the Tactics for Tight Times campaign hosted by WestVic Dairy and presented in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

Dairy Australia has developed the campaign as a levy-funded initiative to support dairy farmers through the milk price downturn.

The field days featured a series of guest speakers covering nutrition, profitable feeding decisions and market outlooks.

Farmers were advised that making good feeding decisions was an essential part of the business.

DPI dairy extension officer Nadine Markham highlighted why pasture utilisation was so important to profit.

"In a good year, the more you can grow the less expensive feed you have to bring in, which means more profit," she said.

"You should grow and consume or conserve as much high quality pasture as is profitable and use supplements profitably to fill feed gaps and balance the diet."

Ms Markham said not using enough supplements could lead to increased overgrazing and reduced pasture growth which would stop farmers from maximising profit.

She urged farmers to take a long view of stocking rates and to monitor their farm performance annually.

Ron Storey from Australian Crop Forecasters said farmers should plan, not predict what might happen in markets and buying feed.

"We're all punters but no one can accurately predict what will happen," he said.

Mr Storey said price should be the least important consideration when farmers were buying feed.

"You can control quantity and quality, delivery period and point and payment terms; price is the least controllable. You need to know what you want," he said.

"Quality is the biggest component and price is the least likely to impact on milk volume. There is more money in buying energy."

He said he encouraged farmers to get feed contracts in writing.

Mr Storey said the south-west looked set for a

good season. "I see hay and silage everywhere."

He predicted grain prices would remain firm and solid until mid 2013, prices may rise for fodder, while fodder quality was excellent.

Ruminant nutritionist for Feedworks Australia, Ian Sawyer, said farmers were enjoying a rare opportunity to get the benefits of using corn as part of their cow's diets.

"If you use it as part of your cow's diet there are benefits in how and where it digests," Mr Sawyer said.

He said that adding corn to the diet added energy and glucose and promoted a steady breakdown and better fibre digestion which takes pressure off

the rumen. This could lead to reproductive and milk production benefits.

Boorcan farmer Shawn Robbins said the session at Bookaar had been valuable in reinforcing his knowledge.

"I saw the flyer and thought it might be something that would interest me," Mr Robbins said.

"It's not so much about learning new things but reminding me of the right things to do."

"It's also good to have a day off the farm to enjoy talking to people."

The sessions followed a series of financial and business workshops for dairy farmers as part of the Tactics for Tight Times campaign.

## Online technology new way to educate and motivate

WESTVIC Dairy is launching a campaign to motivate farmers to boost their profitability by improving their feedbase management.

The Profitable Feeding Systems (PFS) project is considering innovative new ways to connect with farmers including podcasts, webinars and the possible development of Apps to guide daily feed and pasture management tools.

The campaign will also include a series of on-farm field days led by successful dairy farmers including workshops, building a database of resources and tools, and In Charge programs.

PFS aims to help farmers

to manage their feedbase to optimise milk production and maximise profitability.

Project manager Tim Huggins recently held feed-back meetings with local farmers and advisors.

He said the meetings aimed to make sure the campaign was relevant and motivating.

"The overall idea is to make farmers aware of the tools and resources that are available to help them make better decisions regarding pasture growth and consumption, ration balancing, minimisation of wastage, and ultimately improving feed conversion efficiency," Mr Huggins said.

The project does not involve

new research but will build a database of available tools and resources and a farmer education campaign.

"The key focus of this project is to improve on-farm practices to make a genuine difference to feedbase management to increase feed conversion efficiency, which should then be observed in overall profitability," Mr Huggins said. "We aim to motivate farmers with a simple message about feed utilisation and pasture management that is linked to profit."

Mr Huggins encouraged farmers and advisors to provide feedback on the ways they would like messages to be delivered.

"We want to sell the benefits of measuring your own on-farm performance and highlight the positive outcomes for farm business by participating in this program."

"It's about bridging the gap between what researchers are doing and what farmers want."

Mr Huggins said the campaign would demonstrate what successful farms are doing to maximise feed consumption and minimise wastage.

The PFS campaign will seek to highlight the journey taken by successful farmers who are well-known for high pasture utilisation and excellent

feed conversion efficiency that is measured annually. It will also develop four In Charge groups, which are intense five-day workshops designed to equip farmers with the skills to help show an improvement in feed conversion efficiency.

More details of the campaign, which will run over two years, will be announced shortly.

The project is funded by WestVic Dairy and Dairy Australia.

Contact Tim Huggins at WestVic Dairy on 0467677066 or email [info@westvicdairy.com.au](mailto:info@westvicdairy.com.au) to discuss the Profitable Feeding Systems project.



Project manager Tim Huggins.

# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## Feed versus milk production analysed



New research is exploring feeding supplements when pasture is limited.

# Feeding extra supplements

By GREG O'BRIEN  
DAIRY SERVICES, DPI  
ELLINBANK



PROFITABLE feeding decisions rely on an understanding of the milk response you are likely to achieve from an increase in the amount of supplement offered.

You will not always get the same amount of extra milk produced from an increase in feed intake. In fact, sometimes more supplements can result in less milk production. Research by Dr Bill Wales and Dr Martin Auld at DPI Ellinbank (supported by Dairy Australia) is providing the dairy industry with valuable information about the response to feeding extra supplements when pasture is limited.

The latest research with grazing cows compares feeding supplements in the form of mixed rations (where concentrates and forage supplements are mixed in a wagon then fed) against traditional

supplement feeding strategies (bail feeding of concentrates and paddock feeding of forage).

The focus has been on milk responses where pasture intake was limited to about 8 kilograms dry matter (DM) per cow per day and supplements were fed as 75 per cent concentrate and 25 per cent forage (silage or hay).

For many dairy farms, summer and autumn diets typically contain limited amounts of pasture and may contain high amounts of grain, so the research is particularly valuable for the months ahead.

Until the cereal concentrate level exceeded 7-8 kilograms DM of grain per cow per day (10 kilograms DM total supplement), changes to the way supplements were fed did not result in any extra milk solids production compared to feeding in the traditional manner.

However, when feeding above this level, milk response could be increased by changing the form of the concentrate in the supplement and/or changing the way the supplement is fed.

At supplement intakes of 10 kilograms DM or more, higher milk responses can be produced from the same amount of supplementary energy when some of the cereal grain in the "traditional" diet was replaced by maize grain, and the supplements were offered as a partial

mixed ration (PMR) on a feedpad.

Higher milk production was achieved in experiments when around one third of the barley grain was replaced with maize grain. In addition, it was possible to feed higher amounts of concentrates before milk production declined due to over-feeding of concentrates.

The main difference in milk production was that with the traditional diet, milk fat concentration declined in response to feeding increasing amounts of concentrate (protein test was not affected), but when the PMR was fed, milk fat concentration remained constant.

Feeding a modified concentrate mix as a PMR improves the rumen pH compared to feeding cereal concentrates in the bail and fodder in the paddock. This is believed to be part of the reason for more milk production on PMR diets, containing a mix of cereal and maize grain.

The research has also shown that cows offered PMR are also inclined to consume more pasture compared to cows on the traditional diet. The mechanism behind this is uncertain, but it is possibly related to improved fibre digestion.

For those not wishing to go down the partial mixed ration path, it is good to know that additional milk

can also be produced by feeding a formulated grain mix (maize, wheat and canola) in the bail.

The bail feeding milk response was about half that measured when feeding the PMR, with the higher responses occurring when the mix replaces cereal grain fed at the highest rates.

On-farm it is difficult to determine the upper limit of supplement feeding. However, it is clear that a significant crash in milk fat test is a sure sign that concentrate feeding is too high. Monitor daily fat tests on your milk pick-up slips to determine if you have gone too far.

Replacing about 25 per cent of the diet with cold-pressed canola is another consideration at higher concentrate feeding levels (above about 7 kilograms per cow per day). Canola is likely to be more expensive than cereal grain but could provide an additional milk response above the maize/cereal PMR ration.

It is important to emphasise this is based on a small number of experiments, and milk response varied between experiments, stage of lactation, et cetera. The exact formula for achieving similar milk responses in a range of commercial situations is still being investigated.

For more information please contact Greg O'Brien at DPI Ellinbank on (03) 5624 2222.

## Peachy-keen to manage welfare

BRIDGET Peachey's job is to support good animal husbandry by Australia's dairy farmers so that the industry can demonstrate it is managing the welfare of dairy animals.

With an industry keen to do the right thing by its animals, Bridget is confident farmers are on the right track.

As Dairy Australia's Animal Husbandry and Welfare program manager, Bridget said farmers were well aware of their responsibilities and generally did a good job of caring for their cows.

"Not only is this a good outcome for the animals, it's also good for the farm," she said.

"Happy and healthy cows are good for the farm's bottom line."

Ensuring top quality animal husbandry practices on farm also protects the image of the Australian dairy industry in our domestic and international markets.

Bridget's role involves managing on farm animal welfare programs and providing dairy farmers with the latest research and information on good animal husbandry practices.

"It's important for farmers to continue developing their skills and to be aware of best practice in caring for their herds" she said.

Bridget works closely with the likes of Australian Dairy Farmers, the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia and Regional Development Programs such as WestVic Dairy.

Some of the priority areas that she is involved in are rearing healthy calves; lameness assessment, prevention and treatment; treatment of downer cattle and managing heat stress.

Ensuring dairy calves are managed appropriately is a key priority for the dairy industry, Bridget said.

"Heifers are the foundation of the herd and a healthy cow is the result of a healthy, well grown heifer," she said.

"Making sure your sale calves are prepared well results in better welfare outcomes for those animals and also promotes the reputation of the industry as one that cares for the well-being of all its animals."

As well as developing and delivering information and workshops for farmers on calf management, Dairy Australia in partnership with the University of Melbourne and Gardiner Foundation, is also supporting Timboon vet Gemma Chuck to conduct research on pre-weaned dairy heifer calves.

This work will determine risk assessments and on-farm benchmarks for calf rearing, to help farmers identify and address problem areas during calf rearing, Bridget said.

Further priority areas that Dairy Australia is working on in the animal husbandry and welfare space includes reducing the occurrence and improving the management of downer cows and the appropriate disposal of dead stock.

Bridget said Dairy Australia was currently developing best practice guidelines for these issues for dairy farmers and vets.

Bridget grew up on a dairy farm in New Zealand and developed a love of the industry at an early age.

"I used to feed the calves before school and after school and I always had an interest in cows," she said.

"Dairy farmers are innovative and have their finger on the pulse in regards to where they want the industry to go. It's an exciting and rewarding industry to work in."

When it came to forging a career in the industry, Bridget decided to specialise in cattle production and achieved a Masters in Animal Science from Massey University.

She went on to work as a technical trade policy analyst for Meat and Wool New Zealand before crossing the Tasman to work for Dairy Australia.



Dairy Australia's Animal Husbandry and Welfare program manager Bridget Peachey.



# WESTERN VICTORIAN DAIRY NEWS

## WHAT'S ON

**December 21 - January 7**

**WestVic Dairy office will be closed**

**February 20 and 27**

**EVENT:** Cow Health and Fertility

**TIME:** 10am-3pm

**WHERE:** Camperdown, venue TBC

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

**February 21 and 28**

**EVENT:** Cow Health and Fertility

**TIME:** 10am-3pm

**WHERE:** Koroit, venue TBC

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

**March 6 and 27**

**EVENT:** Cow Health and Fertility

**TIME:** 10am-3pm

**WHERE:** Camperdown, venue TBC

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

**March 7 and 28**

**EVENT:** Cow Health and Fertility

**TIME:** 10am-3pm

**WHERE:** Koroit, venue TBC

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

**March 19**

**EVENT:** Field Day - precision monitoring of soil nutrients and soil acidity

**TIME:** 10am-3pm

**WHERE:** Andrew and Anna Wortley's Farm - Macarthur

**CONTACT:** Jeff Lawes, WestVic Dairy, (03) 5592 4277

**March 19**

**EVENT:** Managing Business Transitions - Share farming and Leasing

**TIME:** 11am-2pm

**WHERE:** Timboon, venue TBC

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

**March 20**

**EVENT:** Managing Business Transitions - Share farming and Leasing

**TIME:** 11am-2pm

**WHERE:** Camperdown, venue TBC

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

**March 20**

**EVENT:** Field Day - precision monitoring of soil nutrients and soil acidity

**TIME:** 10am-3pm

**WHERE:** Belinda, Des and Simon Roche's Farm - Purnim

**CONTACT:** Jeff Lawes, WestVic Dairy, (03) 5592 2477

**March 21**

**EVENT:** Managing Business Transitions - Share farming and Leasing

**TIME:** 11am-2pm

**WHERE:** Koroit, venue TBC

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

**April 3**

**EVENT:** Cow Health and Fertility

**TIME:** 10am-3pm

**WHERE:** Camperdown, venue TBC

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

**April 4**

**EVENT:** Cow Health and Fertility

**TIME:** 10am-3 pm

**WHERE:** Koroit, venue TBC

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

**April 19**

**EVENT:** Great South West Dairy Awards

**TIME:** 6 pm-11 pm

**WHERE:** Glenormiston College

**CONTACT:** Barb Collins, WestVic Dairy, (03) 5592 2477

# Cutting costs

## How to beat the rising cost of energy

By **CLAIRE SWANN**  
DAIRY SERVICES, DPI  
BENDIGO



DAIRY shed electricity costs have increased over the past five years on average by 22 per cent.

These shed costs accounted for approximately four per cent of variable costs in 2010-11. Electricity prices are expected to continue to rise in the future.

This has prompted a closer look at energy technologies used in the dairy shed. We assessed a range of energy technologies that may reduce energy consumption or costs in a report "Economic analysis of technologies to reduce dairy energy consumption".

In this article we look at the economics of using variable speed drives.

Vacuum pumps represent approximately 80 per cent of energy used in the milk harvesting area with milk pumps and feed pumps making up the balance.

Installing a variable speed drive on the vacuum pump will match the speed of the vacuum pump with the demand for air flow thereby lowering the energy consumption and energy emissions, as well as reducing noise levels in the dairy.

### Variable speed drive

A variable speed drive (VSD) will produce the minimum reserve requirement



There are many energy efficiency ideas for the dairy including solar panels and variable speed drives on vacuum pumps.

**Table 1: Comparison of Technologies**

	Oil Vane	Blower
Capital Investment	\$4,800	\$4,800
do nothing' option	\$2,535	\$2,535
Annual savings	\$1,268	\$1,901
Years to break even (Before interest and tax)	4	3
Energy		
Consumption saved annually (KWh)	13,650	13,650
Emissions saved annually (t CO <sub>2</sub> -e)	8.3	12.4

only when there is extra demand for air flow above what is required for operating the equipment. Energy savings will occur when there is no demand for the extra air flow.

Variable speed drives can be attached to new or existing vacuum pumps. The two most common designs of vacuum pumps are oil vane and blower types.

Oil vane pumps need to operate at higher revolutions to provide sufficient vacuum.

In some cases these pumps may not be suited to VSD. Blower pumps are more energy efficient than oil vane pumps, however they do have a higher capital cost, can be operated at lower revolutions, generally run

quieter and have a longer life and as such are more suited to VSD.

Factors that need to be considered when looking at this technology:

The size of the dairy relative to the cows milked — longer running times equate to greater savings;

Matching the vacuum pump to the size of the dairy shed;

Correct installation and servicing required to get full energy savings;

Type of power supply, single versus 3 phase will have an effect on savings; and

Lower motor speed must remain above minimum operating requirement of the motor to avoid unnecessary wear and early replacement.

### Cost benefits

The case study farm has a 7.5 kW oil vane pump and generates 7.5 kWh of energy per hour.

The pump operates for 2.5 hours per milking, with the first hour of weekdays on off-peak time. The pump uses 13,650 kWh and cost \$2,535 in the first year, this is the cost of "do-nothing".

The analysis in Table 1 compares the performance of an existing oil vane and blower vacuum pump with a VSD installed. The existing 7.5 kW blower vacuum pump will use the same energy as the oil vane pump.

The energy savings from a VSD will vary between farms. The case study farm assumes a correctly installed VSD on an oil vane pump would reduce energy consumption by 50 per cent and a VSD on a blower vacuum pump would reduce it by 75 per cent.

The analysis assumed electricity prices to increase annually by 10 per cent, and that the savings in energy consumption are based on the energy savings from investing in the technology compared to the "do nothing" option.

For further information see the full report at [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/dairy/energy-in-dairy](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/dairy/energy-in-dairy)

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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.

**ACTING EXECUTIVE OFFICER JOCELYN BEVIN:** [jocelyn@westvicdairy.com.au](mailto:jocelyn@westvicdairy.com.au)

PO Box 67, Terang, 3264; Ph 5592 2477; Fax 5592 1342 [www.westvicdairy.com.au](http://www.westvicdairy.com.au)

ABN 86 401 992 319

**EDITOR AMANDA HEARD:** [dairynews@westvicdairy.com.au](mailto:dairynews@westvicdairy.com.au)

## Prosperous relationship continues

DEMODAIRY has been boosted by a new sponsor with Bilyana Grazing joining in a two-year arrangement.

Bilyana Grazing is a weight gain-based grazing business growing stock from weaning through to point of calving.

Based at Brucknell and Cooriemungle, the business specialises in dairy heifers that arrive shortly after weaning at an average weight of 130kg and stay until point of calving; reaching average weights of 600kg.

The business is run by Simon and Katie Gleeson. Mr Gleeson said Bilyana Grazing was pleased to formalise connections with DemoDAIRY.

"We wanted to put



Louise Sheba (right) presents a certificate of appreciation to Simon and Katie Gleeson, of Bilyana Grazing.

something back into the dairy industry and thought DemoDAIRY was the best option," he said. "DemoDAIRY is the most relevant place for us to support because of the

studies, trials and information it provides for the dairy industry that benefit all of our customers.

"We hope our support can help DemoDAIRY to

continue that important work." DemoDAIRY business manager Louise Sheba said she was grateful for the sponsorship which would help DemoDAIRY to maintain its assets and services to benefit the dairy industry and the whole community.

Ms Sheba said DemoDAIRY had developed a good relationship with Bilyana Grazing in recent years.

"We are very grateful for the support of Bilyana Grazing and all our sponsors who help to maintain DemoDAIRY's role in servicing the dairy industry," she said.

For further media information please contact DemoDAIRY (03) 5592 2199.