

Kiama to host dairy symposium



THE Dairy Research Foundation's annual symposium will be held at Kiama, on July 4 and 5, following the Dairy NSW industry meetings on July 3.

With this year's theme of Taking Control, speakers will focus on the things dairy farmers can do to manage under the current conditions.

Dr John House, from the University of Sydney's veterinary faculty and Nowra dairy farmer Col Thompson will speak about how to get the most out of transition feeding.

Nowra dairy farmer Con Watts and consultant Neil Moss will provide tips and practical ways to deal with the 13c/L milk tier 2 milk price.

Organising committee chair Associate Professor Kendra Kerrisk said Kiama would provide a fresh venue for the symposium, which is usually held at Camden.

"We will follow the popular format of a seminar series on day one at the Kiama Pavilion and farm tours in the second day, including a visit to John and Andrea Henry's robotic dairy at Nowra and the Strong family's CloverHill Dairies at Jamberoo," she said.

For more information, contact Esther Price Promotions, esther@estherprice.com.au or 1800 177 636.

This year's Dairy Research Foundation symposium will be held at Kiama, with the theme Taking Control.

GOOD NEWS

Communication strategy spreads word on industry success



Dairy Australia's Isabel MacNeill.

AUSTRALIA'S dairy industry is successful and innovative and Isabel MacNeill wants everyone to know about it.

As Dairy Australia's Group Manager — Industry Promotion and Product Innovation, Isabel is responsible for spreading the word about the industry's success and is involved in a new plan to better communicate its contribution to all Australians.

"We want to tell a well-connected story from the farm level through processing to the final product so consumers understand where their food comes from," she said.

"We need a strong and clear story that is available to promote the industry itself, not just the products."

Isabel says the industry realises it needs to better promote itself and Dairy Australia is doing something to address the problem.

"We are taking a hard look at how the industry is perceived and how we manage its reputation. Overall dairy has a good reputation as a food producer but it is not necessarily perceived as an exciting and dynamic industry. We have a bit of work to do to better tell that fantastic story.

"Overall I think the industry is undervalued and we need to change that."

The new communication campaign will be rolled out later this year and will include specific emphasis on regional areas.

"We want to tell a regional story and find opportunities to ensure dairy is properly valued by local councils and other organisations," Isabel said.

"Sometimes we are our own hardest judges so we need to connect with our farming community."

Isabel's role also covers product innovation beyond

the farm gate and there is a lot of good news to spread in that field.

Dairy Innovation Australia was established in 2006 from dairy farmer levy money and in collaboration with processors. It is now investing \$9 million a year in research and development to ensure a competitive processing sector.

Over recent years it has had great success in a variety of areas, such as supplying cultures for cheese production and finding efficiencies in drying dairy products.

"We have made several advances that save money

and make the industry more efficient," Isabel said.

"We are working in collaboration and sharing ideas and innovations to make sure the processing industry is as competitive as it can be."

Isabel has been undertaking her joint role with Dairy Australia since 2006 after moving from New Zealand. She previously worked as a dietitian and nutritionist with the New Zealand health department before moving into marketing, innovation and research and development roles with the NZ dairy board and Fonterra.

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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.

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Acclaim for country's best dairy breeders



an Raleigh, of Timboon, receives the award for the Number 1 Australian Red Breed herd for Australian Profit Ranking.

Top prize for Jan

AUSTRALIA'S top dairy breeders were recognised at an awards night held last month at Bendigo to celebrate the 30 year anniversary of the first publication of Australian Breeding Values (ABVs).

The Australian Dairy Herd Improvement Scheme (ADHIS) presented awards in two categories: the top herds for different dairy breeds, based on their Australian Profit Ranking, and bull breeding excellence awards. In presenting the awards, Michelle Axford, from ADHIS paid tribute to these dairy farmers for their careful breeding choices over a long period.

"Genetic improvement takes time and focus. The farmers receiving these awards have made outstanding genetic progress in their herds. Those who received bull breeding excellence awards have had a significant influence on the genetics of Australian dairy herds. It is important that we recognise these achievements which have involved sustained

attention over many years," Ms Axford said.

The work of several western Victorian dairy farmers was recognised in the awards.

The award for the Number 1 Australian Red Breed herd for Australian Profit Ranking went to Jan Raleigh, of Timboon. In 2012, Ms Raleigh's herd, Blackwood Park ranked Number 1 Australian Red Breed herd for Australian Profit Ranking 2012. Considered by many to be the "queen of Aussie Reds", she has been a passionate enthusiast and driver for this breed's accelerated development in recent years. The first young sire bred by Ms Raleigh entered progeny testing this year.

Jim and Glenda Carson, of Irrewillipe, have the Number 1 Illawarra herd for Australian Profit Ranking 2012. The couple has a passion for genetic development of the breed, and also own a top Jersey herd.

Bryan and Jo Dickson, of Terang, have bred 23 bulls which

entered progeny test programs and were among the earliest Australian dairy farmers to use genomics for selecting heifers to enter their flushing program. Their herd, Emu Bank Holsteins, ranked number three in Australian Holstein herds for Australian Profit Ranking in 2012.

Con Glennen, of Terang, received an ABV Excellence Award for his Jersey herd, White Star, which was the number two ranked Jersey herd in Australia for Australian Profit Ranking in 2012. This herd is one of Australia's largest Jersey herds and among the most successful herds in the Western District. The extended Glennen family bred the top 10 APR bull HARLAND and the number 2 Jersey genomic sire GREGSTAR.

Jack and Joanne Lambalk of Topspeed Holsteins, Port Campbell, received an Australian bull breeding excellence award for their influence

on the genetics of Australian Holstein herds from the 2000s. They were among the very first to import top Dutch genetics through their TOPSPEED syndicate and enjoyed great success with the graduate bulls including GOLDSMITH.

Daryl and Sue Bryce, of Nullawarre, accepted an award for their herd, Green Pines Jerseys, which received an Australian bull breeding excellence award for its influence on the genetics of Australian Jerseys from the 1980s. Jersey breeders who recall the 1980s and 1990s will remember a bull called GANT, who came from Green Pines Jerseys and topped the ABV Jersey rankings. ADHIS is an initiative of Australian Dairy Farmers' that receives the majority of its funding from Dairy Australia through the Dairy Services Levy.

For more information contact Michelle Axford at ADHIS on (03) 8621 4240 or email maxford@adhis.com.au

Networking opportunity for farmers

INTERESTED farmers are invited to join NCDEA students on a tour of South Australian dairy farms from Monday, May 6 to Friday May 10.

We will visit a diverse range of dairy businesses in the Mount Gambier region.

The focus is on innovative and sustainable practices including the use of genomics, genetics, robotics, manufacturing and research.

Dynamic guest speakers will encourage the tour group to stretch their minds and consider where their dairy businesses are going and what is possible in the future.

The tour presents a wonderful opportunity for networking with like-minded farmers.

The cost of the tour will be about \$200 after a \$125 Dairy Australia subsidy, which includes travel, accommodation

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR DAIRY EDUCATION AUSTRALIA NEWS

and breakfasts. For more information, contact Rebecca Huth on (03) 5592 2437 or David Ford on (03) 5592 2493 at NCDEA Terang.

Quad bike training

QUAD bike related accidents continue to be a leading cause of death on farms, with 18 people killed during 2012.

These accidents are not confined to young people, with middle aged and elderly farmers also represented amongst the victims.

All farm workers who are required to use quad bikes will benefit from this one day program.

Quad bikes are a valuable, time saving tool on-farm, but in untrained hands they can be lethal. The NCDEA conducts a one-day program for dairy farm

workers who use quad bikes in their daily work. The program covers legislative requirements and enterprise guidelines; the process of maintaining and operating quad bikes and defines the standard requirements to perform routine pre-operational checks and maintenance.

Also covered are matching, attaching and operating equipment; recognising and controlling hazards and risks; safely operating quad bikes in a range of weather and terrain conditions and monitoring and maintaining vehicle records.

The next program will be held at NCDEA Terang on Thursday, May 2. For further information contact Hugh McLaren at NCDEA Terang on (03) 5592 2240 or email hmclaren@ncdeagotafe.edu.au

NCDEA working with local schools

The National Centre for Dairy Education Australia is working with local schools and other industry bodies to encourage young people to take up careers in dairying.

Programs are currently running in Colac and Timboon.

The NCDEA is contributing to the Timboon Agriculture Project.

This project is a partnership between WestVic Dairy and Timboon P-12 School and involves local farmers, rural businesses and the wider community.

There are many rewarding career possibilities in the dairy industry and these programs ensure students are aware of their options.

For more information on these and other programs contact NCDEA on (03) 5592 2482.

A good time to invest

Long-term prospects for dairy farms looking brighter

A NEW south-west Victorian agricultural consultant believes it is a good time to invest in dairy farms.

Janet Sloan, who recently started her new Agri Business Consulting Services after leaving a long-term role with the Department of Primary Industries, said softer land and cattle prices mixed with solid long-term prospects should encourage new investment in the industry.

"The situation is not all rosy at the moment for the dairy industry due to the low price for milk, but long-term indicators point to a positive future and a strong world market," Ms Sloan said.

"If you want to get into dairy, it is a good time.

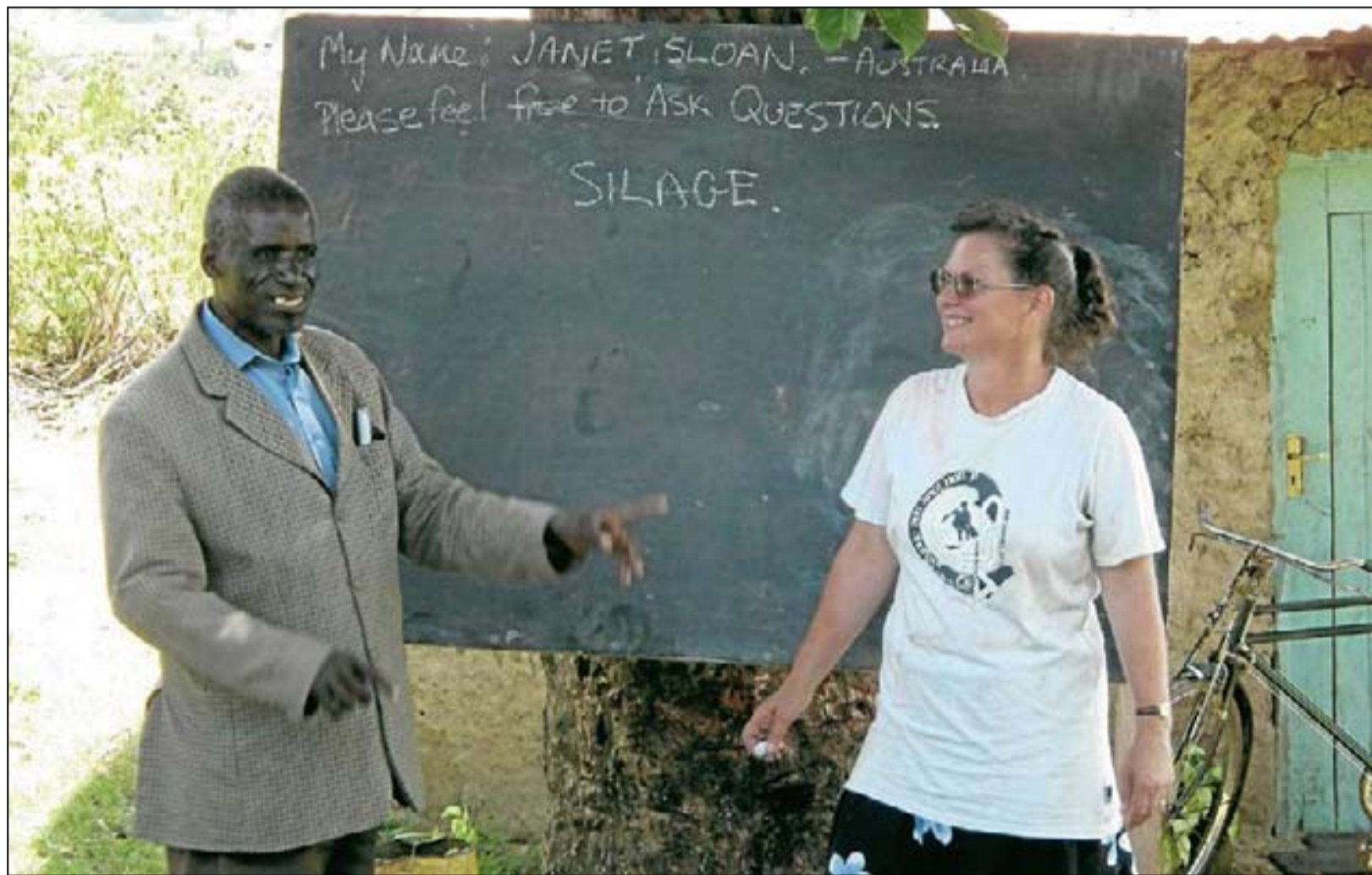
"People moving into dairy farming will need robust systems to be able to live with variable milk prices," she added.

"You need to have the basics right and have the building blocks to kick start a business."

Agri Business Consulting Services hopes to help young people move into dairy and other agricultural industries and also help those looking to change their structures or move out of the industry.

Ms Sloan was previously a Dairy Extension Officer for the DPI and was based in Warrnambool, where she was involved in programs such as Feeding Pasture for Profit, the discussion group network, Taking Stock and the Dairy Farm Monitor Program.

Prior to that Ms Sloan was a field officer at Warrnambool Cheese and



Janet Sloane, right, pictured with the former mayor of Bungoama, Kenya, where she helped set up a dairy farm.

Butter and a lecturer at Glenormiston College in dairy farm management, animal health and nutrition and pasture grazing management. She was born and raised on a dairy farm at Nullawarre.

Ms Sloan was inspired to move into the business coaching field after helping an orphanage in Kenya to set up a dairy farm while taking six months

unpaid leave from the DPI.

"After doing volunteer work in Kenya I felt I needed to do more to help people be proactive with their planning and take control of their future," Ms Sloan said.

"So I decided to leave the DPI and set up a business coaching enterprise focused on helping people move in and out of agricultural industries."

Agri Business Consulting Services will help to establish pathways for people to change direction on their farms.

Ms Sloan said that could include being the go-between in setting up share farming agreements or helping farmers to scale down their active involvement in farming or with succession planning.

"It's about making sure

processes are in place to make changes work smoothly.

"I have seen many farm businesses go through unnecessary pain because of lack of clear agreements with staff and sharefarmers or clear plans for their future.

"With well thought out plans and strategies these issues can be avoided. Some people

have agreements in place that are like a boundary fence without wire, and wonder why things get out of control.

"The dairy industry has been a life-long passion for me and helping others to enter the industry or change direction within it will be very rewarding. I still see a huge future for the dairy industry in our region."

Improve your herd's performance

NOW is a good time to investigate how successful the mating program was on your farm. It is useful to compare your results to that of the InCalf project, which suggests that a six-week in-calf rate for a herd above 60 per cent is a good result.

In most cases this six-week in-calf rate covers the period when most would use artificial insemination (AI) over the herd. Many then run clean-up bulls to pick up those not in calf for up to 10 more weeks, giving a total mating period of 16 weeks.

A pregnancy test should be performed on those cows not seen coming back on heat six to seven weeks after they were believed to have conceived by AI. A second pregnancy test should also be carried out six to seven weeks after removing the clean-up bulls from the herd. The total number of cows not in calf should ideally be below 10 per cent for a 16 week mating

By EE CHENG OOI

Dairy Services, DPI
Warrnambool



length, but may be higher for shorter mating periods. When combined, the results of the two pregnancy testing periods should help determine:

1. Number of late calving cows.
2. Number of empty cows and whether you will need to cull

or use extended lactation strategies.

3. Number of cows in calf to AI, with resulting conception rates and three-week submission rates, as well as the expected number of AI progeny.

4. Number of cows in calf to the mop-up bulls, with their resulting conception rates. This helps determine whether the bulls did their job or had issues.

5. The calving pattern and the likely drying off strategy required to provide a minimum six weeks dry period. Also if there is likely to be early dry off of any cows identified as empty and likely to be culled.

6. How you could "tighten" the calving spread for next year. As many dairy farmers would know, pregnancy testing is just one tool that is available to assist in gaining a better understanding of how well your mating program went last year and

the likely implications of the results on your potential milker numbers in the next lactation. Many who have autumn calved herds will now be realising just how successful they were in getting a large proportion of the herd in calf.

If you are not happy with the number or percentage of cows in the herd calving, there are several areas where changes can be made.

A series of awareness seminars will look at Improving Reproductive Performance. Specialist Jock MacMillan will discuss ways to improve "not in calf" rates and to "tighten" or reduce calving spread.

Seminars will take place at the Timboon Bowling Club on Tuesday, April 30 and the Colac Bowling Club on Wednesday, May 1. For details contact Ee Cheng Ooi, DPI Warrnambool on (03) 5561 9912 or email ee.cheng.ooi@dpi.vic.gov.au

What's up with the weather?

AFTER a long dry summer, many dairy farmers have been looking to the skies and wondering what will happen next.

There are several indicators that can help inform what the weather may have in store for us to assist with management decisions.

If you would like to keep up-to-date with the latest seasonal and climate risk information for the dairy industry, sign up for the Milking the Weather electronic newsletter.

Milking the Weather is a seasonal newsletter that delivers the latest seasonal climate risk information for dairy farmers, service providers and other interested subscribers. It will help you understand more about the weather you experience and will

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guide you to current information about climate risk. To subscribe email zita.ritchie@dpi.vic.gov.au



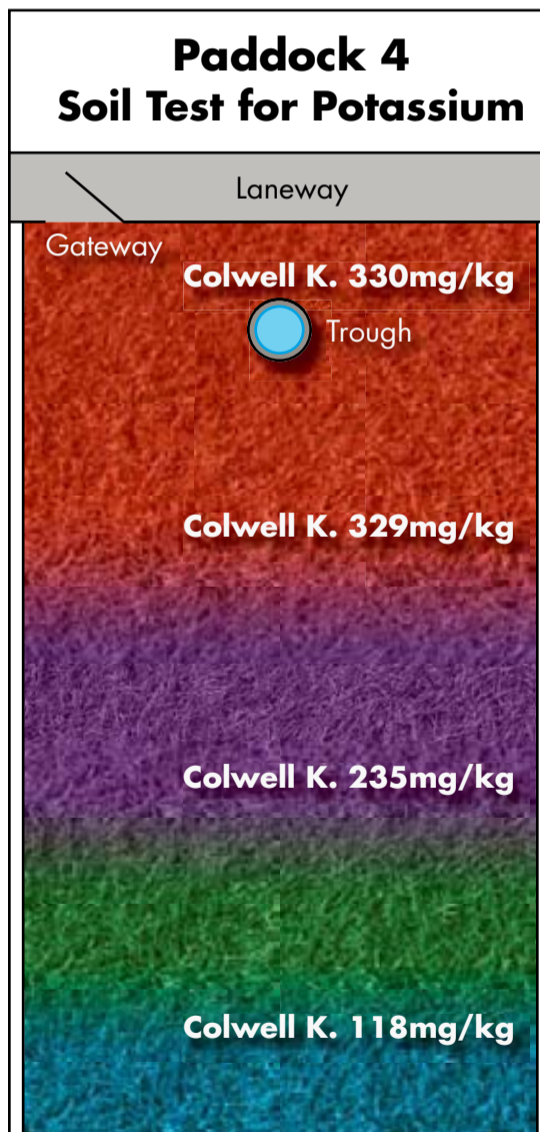
Andrew Speirs, from Mike Stephens & Associates, in Casterton.



Des, Belinda and Simon Roche.

Dairy farmers should do soil testing at the front and back of their paddocks and avoid a blanket approach to applying nutrients, WestVic Dairy field days have been advised.

Call for farmers to rethink soil tests



ATTENDEES at the Reducing Soil Acidification through Nutrient Management project field days at Grassmere and Macarthur during March were told farmers should consider changing the way they look at testing their soil nutrient levels to ensure they are getting best value from their inputs and to maximise productivity.

The field days were hosted by WestVic Dairy at Andrew and Anna Wortley's farm at Macarthur and Des, Belinda and Simon Roche's farm at Grassmere. Both farms have been involved in the Reducing Soil Acidification through Nutrient Management project funded by the Australian Government's Caring for our Country and managed by Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority and WestVic Dairy.

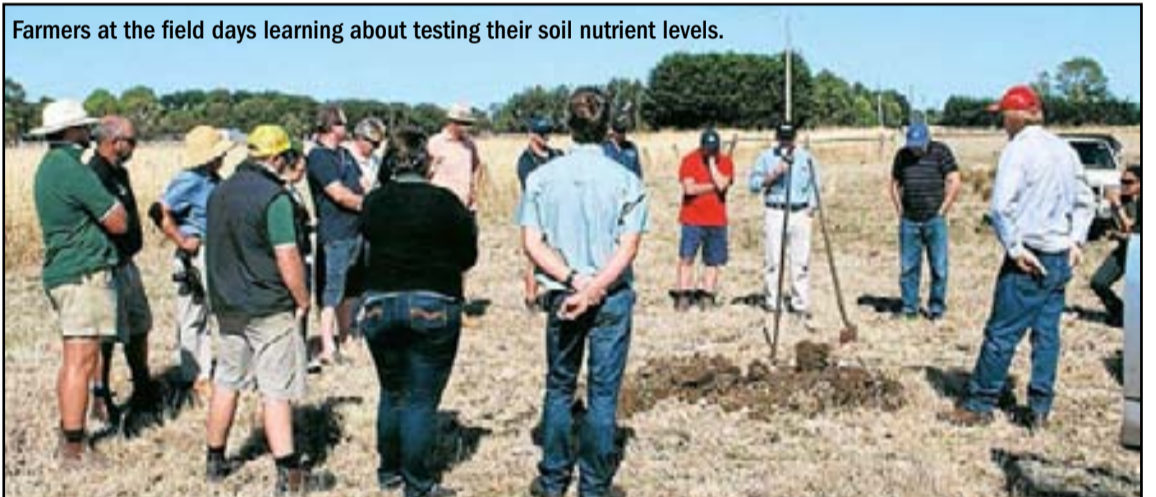
Andrew Speirs from Mike Stephens & Associates in Casterton told the field days there could be huge variations in nutrient levels from the front to the back of paddocks on dairy farms.

Tests at four trial dairy farms across south-west Victoria revealed the level of variation on some paddocks.

A paddock which was split soil sampled at 0-10cm depth found phosphorus levels of 51mg/kg (Olsen P) at the front of the paddock and 41mg/kg at the back, potassium levels were 311 mg/kg (Colwell K) at the front and 89 mg/kg at the back, sulphur levels were 21.7 mg/kg (KCL40 test) at the front and 10.4 mg/kg at the back.

Sampling at 10-20cm continued to reveal variations.

Farmers at the field days learning about testing their soil nutrient levels.



Mr Speirs said as a solution, the back two-thirds of the paddock received potassium and sulphur in regular small amounts, while the front received nitrogen only in a strategy aiming to get a more even distribution of nutrients across the paddock.

"The end result was we grew at least four tonnes more pasture per hectare on the back part and the pasture persisted much better."

Mr Speirs said the position of troughs and gateways, the shape of paddocks and changes in soil type could influence nutrient variation, as could the habits of cows and how and where silage and hay was fed across a paddock.

In one test the soil pH varied from 4.9 to 5.6 depending on the location of the gate and trough.

Mr Speirs said a blanket approach to fertiliser did not work.

A monitor paddock which was multiple soil tested from Andrew and Anna Wortley's farm showed a similar trend with potassium levels with Colwell K levels at the back of the paddock being as low as 118mg/kg,

the middle of the paddock 235mg/kg and the front of the paddock up to 330mg/kg.

This highlighted the nutrient transfer from the back of the paddock to the front and the need to do something other than a blanket approach for nutrient management. Refer to Paddock 4 Soil Test.

"Regularly monitoring appropriate paddocks on transects allows the correct fertiliser decisions to be made on an area basis, not on a blanket basis."

He said it was easy to set up farms in zones and farmers should target nutrient applications to achieve optimum production and profitability, maintain adequate nutrient levels and minimise any side effects.

He also urged farmers to take preventative action if aluminium cation levels started to rise and to apply lime as soon as aluminium was noticed in the system.

"Getting lime is cheap and easy in this region because it is available on your doorstep — you should be making use of it. If you get out of the habit of liming, it can get

away from you."

In a dairy pasture system, early intervention to prevent soil pH falling below 5.0 in CaCl₂ is a good approach. Maintaining a pH greater than five ensures there is little or no available aluminium to restrict pasture growth.

Liming highly productive dairy pastures when the pH falls between 4.8 and five in CaCl₂ also ensures that the 10-20cm zone also does not start to become acidic as getting lime into the subsoil is quite difficult.

He said liming was essential if pH levels were less than 4.4 in CaCl₂ as it was starting to do damage to the clay lattice in the soil.

"The more active root system you have, the better off you will be."

At the field days, Brendan Torpy of Precision Agriculture from Ballarat demonstrated the Veris soil pH mapping unit which is mounted to a CanAm quad bike and equipped with a highly accurate GPS.

The soil pH probe inserts into the soil, generating pH results within five seconds. While

not quite as accurate as lab tests for pH, the pH change trends across paddocks are easily mapped by this equipment and do correlate well with laboratory pH tests.

Farmers using this equipment and service have indicated substantial savings in lime application and costs as a result of the more prescriptive approach to pH monitoring.

Event organiser and project manager for WestVic Dairy, Jeff Lawes, said the key message from the field days was that farmers need to re-think how and where they monitor nutrient levels.

"Farmers are encouraged to become more precision oriented with nutrient and pH monitoring and question how accurate the soil test results are from taking 25-30 soil core samples in a single transect running from the front of a paddock to the back," Mr Lawes said.

About 180 dairy farmers are involved in the Reducing Soil Acidification through Nutrient Management project in the Glenelg Hopkins and Corangamite CMA regions.

Assessors welcomed

New DemoDAIRY staff enthusiastic about energy savings

THE capacity to undertake dairy shed energy assessments has had a lift with two new assessors now trained and ready to head out to regional farms.

Ann McDowell grew up on a dairy farm at Ecklin, completed her Bachelor of Agriculture at Dookie and has worked in various roles in the dairy industry, most recently with the Department of Primary Industries in research and extension.

Ann is employed by DemoDAIRY to manage various projects including assisting with energy assessments.

Ann has relished the assessments she has undertaken in her training with Marni Teal, the lead assessor.

"I really enjoy helping people identify and overcome issues so their business benefits," she said.

"So I was keen to take on a role as an assessor."

Stephen Hill comes from



DemoDAIRY assessors (from left) Stephen Hill, Marni Teal, and Ann McDowell.

a long line of dairy farmers at Chocodyn but eventually decided to become an electrician.

During his six year stint with a local electrical company, Stephen gained further qualifications in solar and energy efficiency.

"When this job as an energy assessor became available, I knew it would capitalise on my experience and interests," Stephen said.

"Just this week I helped explain how switching lighting would reduce a

farmer's lighting costs by 70 per cent and I got a real buzz out of that."

With this increased capacity to get energy assessments done, WestVic Dairy's Smarter Energy Use on Australian Dairy Farms project manager,

Karen Wales, wants to remind the farmers registered for the program to return their forms.

"Please fill out what information you know off the top of your head about your property and shed as the rest will be checked

during the assessment" Karen said.

"Most importantly we need full copies of the 12 months of consecutive power bills before the assessor comes out."

WestVic Dairy region has been allocated 195 assessments to be undertaken by May 2014. One-hundred-and-sixty farms have registered so far.

"So there are still a few places left but I suggest you register your interest soonest and then return the forms and bills quickly," Karen said.

"For people who have registered but lost the forms don't hesitate to call WestVic Dairy and we will send you out more."

Dairy Australia received \$1 million funding from the Australian government department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency as part of the Energy Efficiency Information Grants Program to deliver the project nationally.

Managing soil acidity on Corangamite farms



Rod (from left) and Libby Swain and Chris Hallyburton with workshop presenter Helen Chenoweth inspect lime samples from several local lime pits.

TWENTY-FOUR dairy farmers in the Corangamite region are focusing on fertiliser decisions and managing soil acidity on their farms.

The farmers are participating in the Reducing Soil Acidification through Nutrient Management project, managed by Corangamite CMA and WestVic Dairy. They recently attended workshops in Colac and Camperdown.

Department of Primary Industries dairy extension officer Alex Goudy, who is one of the presenters for the workshops, said the project assisted farmers to make more informed decisions on soil management. These included setting appropriate nutrient targets, managing the threat of soil acidification and the importance of soil tests.

As part of the program, eligible farmers receive a \$1100 incentive grant towards developing nutrient maps and

a nutrient management action plan.

Mr Goudy said the incentive grant would assist farmers in taking a significant number of soil tests across the various farm management zones on each farm and help make best practice nutrient and fertiliser decisions.

"The program stresses the importance of regularly soil testing and monitoring fertiliser use and recognises that different areas of the farm have different requirements for nutrients," he said.

It will also help farmers to identify trigger points for liming decisions.

Mr Goudy said the information gained by farmers in the program could lead to substantial on-farm savings.

The program is supported by the government's Caring for our Country, and managed by Corangamite CMA and WestVic Dairy.

WANTED

Dairy farmers who want to become more energy efficient

REGISTER NOW!

30 BOOKINGS LEFT

Want to reduce your power bills but not sure where to start?

WestVic Dairy has received funding to provide 195 dairy farms in western Victoria with a free energy assessment as part of the Smarter Energy Use on Australian Dairy Farms program.

The assessment will supply farmers with real practical solutions to change management practices, optimise current

equipment or identify necessary structural alterations. The assessment will determine how many kilowatts of energy are spent producing 1000 litres of milk, look at the types of tariffs used on each farm, review pumps and other equipment, and identify periods of peak energy use.

Register now to receive further information in preparation for your assessment.

For more information or to register your interest contact WestVic Dairy on (03) 5592 2477 or e-mail info@westvicdairy.com.au

This is a Dairy Australia and Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency initiative

Growing it O'Brien style

WHEN it comes to growing and eating pasture, the O'Brien family of Yeo, near Colac, have it pretty well figured out. With outstanding pasture consumption figures of 11.4t dry matter utilised per hectare (through the Pasture Consumption and Feed Conversion Efficiency Calculator), pasture management on this farm is hard to beat.

There is no doubt the passion for dairy farming started with Les, but has continued with his son Gavin who has added "attention-to-detail" to the mix. Gavin openly admits that he is "obsessed with growing grass" to the point where he will move a fence in the middle of the night if heavy rain comes through in winter to avoid pugging damage.

Avoiding pugging is a major priority to ensure pasture density remains and the pastures keep performing to their potential.

Pastures are grazed at 2.5-3 leaf stage year-round (skills refined at a Feeding Pastures for Profit course) and pasture silage and grain are used to protect pasture residuals and improve milk solid production per cow.



Before (left) and after grazing the pasture. Gavin O'Brien admits he is "obsessed with growing grass".

Overall the cows produce about 590kg milk solids per cow from 1.4t dry matter grain and around 0.3t dry matter of silage and hay. While there are years that the O'Brien family has to purchase hay, they prefer to do as much as possible on homegrown feed.

Gavin works with Andrew Alsop, from Notman Pasture Seeds, to score each paddock at the start of the year. This helps to highlight the paddocks that need renovation

ensuring money allocated for re-seeding is well-spent.

From there, a plan is put together including timing of sowing, variety selection, sowing rates, fertiliser strategy (particularly with nitrogen), and grazing management (when to graze the first time).

This ensures he can make the most of the pasture growing season by being prepared.

Gavin also takes regular farm walks and adjusts the

paddock allocation through strip-fencing to ensure there is minimal wastage and that his cows remain well-fed. It is important to make adjustments regularly to keep everything on track.

Nitrogen is applied roughly every four weeks (including through winter) following the cows, for a total of around 200 kg N per hectare applied annually. Gavin ensures that a pasture wedge has been established through the autumn to stand him in good

stead for the winter. Gavin is keen to keep up with the research on pasture varieties, ensuring he can maximise the potential production from every hectare with plants that have performed well in trials. He has a focus on maintaining perennial pastures with most paddocks renovated within a 5-10 year period.

Gavin also uses summer crops in the renovation program and prefers to keep the use of annual varieties to a minimum. If he needs quick

feed he prefers the use of Italian varieties that continue through to the end of the year if moisture is permitting. While this might cost more in seed, the return is there in the additional pasture that can be grazed. If you want a chance to check out the O'Brien family's pastures for yourself, come along to find out how the plan has come together at the next field day at their farm in May. The details will be advertised closer to the event.

WANTED

Dairy farmers (and/or their staff) who want to:

- Manage their feed base to optimise milk production and maximise profitability

WestVic Dairy is investing in **Profitable Feeding Systems** programs in Western Victoria in 2013. An excellent line-up of farmer and advisor speakers will challenge even the most efficient and profitable dairy farmers.

The five day program (run over 2 months) will cover relevant feed-related topics to ensure that farm goals and profitability targets can be met.

- Making quality silage
- Understanding grazing residuals
- Maximising winter pasture production
- Making the most of limited fertiliser dollars
- Developing a feeding plan
- Annual forage planning
- Minimising feed wastage
- How to use irrigation – fresh or effluent water

Group 1 – Colac fortnightly from Tuesday 23 April, 2013 at Greg and Scott Wilson's farm 10 am to 2:30 pm

Group 2 – Camperdown fortnightly from Wednesday 24 April, 2013 at the Camperdown Golf Club 10 am to 2:30 pm

For more information and to register your interest to take part in these programs, please call Tim at WestVic Dairy on (03) 5592 2477 or info@westvicdairy.com.au

InCharge is supported by Dairy Australia and the Dairy Services Levy

Expo to emphasise maths and science

AN interactive expo in Colac on May 28 will highlight the role maths and science play in dairy industry jobs and encourage more students to consider working in the field.

The expo at COPAC will feature more than 20 presentations for year 7 students from Colac Secondary College, Timboon P-12 and Camperdown College illustrating how maths and science are applied in a range of dairy industry occupations.

The expo is part of Maths & Science @ Work — a new initiative developed in partnership between the dairy industry, the three schools and South West Local Learning and Employment Network.

WestVic Dairy has secured funds from Schools Connect Australia to deliver the program which will feature three expos over the next three years. Further expos will be held in Timboon and Camperdown in 2014 and 2015. Year 7 students from all three schools will attend each expo.

There will be a formal launch of Maths & Science @ Work in Colac on May 3.

The project is the first of its type in Australia and could be used as a prototype for similar events using agriculture to promote maths and science.

Project coordinator Libby Swayn said the project was designed to make maths and science relevant and exciting for year 7 students, ultimately encouraging selection of science and mathematics in senior secondary school levels and

to increase student awareness of agricultural and food processing careers in the region.

"By building stronger links between the education sector and the dairy industry, we will increase student interest in agricultural careers and increase their interest in undertaking maths and science subjects at VCE level," Ms Swayn said.

The expo will highlight the diversity of jobs in the dairy industry and show how maths and science is used in the workplace.

Colac Secondary College principal Simon Dewar said the college was excited about the opportunity to build an effective partnership with local industry and other schools in the region to enhance the learning outcomes for students.

"A focus on maths and science will help prepare our students for lifelong learning and promote pathways that have a link to the dairy industry," he said.

Presenters will include feed company representatives, vets, dairy builders, spraying contractors, processors, herd improvement operators, research scientists, farmers, financial advisors and cattle breeders.

"A lot of students might not associate the dairy industry with such a diverse range of careers," Ms Swayn said.

While engaging the students in practical activities, the presenters will outline their career pathways and explain how maths and science helped them achieve their goals.

Taking control of finance

More dairy women are now 'in charge'

MORE than 100 dairy farming women have improved their skills and become more confident financial managers thanks to the In Charge: Financial Literacy program this year.

Delivered most recently in Cobden, the program has been delivered nine times across the three Victorian dairy regions this year. Four men joined the 103 women participants and were a welcome addition.

The program consists of five one day workshops delivered over five weeks. Participants learn about the links between everyday farm decisions and their financial statements, how financial statements are developed, management reporting, cash flow analysis, budgeting and the use of key performance indicators.

They also gain increased "financial literacy" to talk more confidently with their accountant and financial adviser. The program aims to give new skills to farmers so they better understand and manage their farm finances.

Project coordinator Barbara Collins, from WestVic Dairy, said the

financial literacy programs, which are facilitated by WHK Accounting & Financial Services, had been a huge success with participants.

"It has been great to see the improved self-confidence and financial confidence gained by the women," she said. "The program has given them more control of their farm's finances and more confidence when visiting their banks and accountants."

The program will be delivered another three times in western Victoria this year.

Participants were keen to see the development of an advanced program to include subjects such as:

- specific budgeting and using Excel;
- a refresher training day;
- advanced information on loans and insurance segments;
- farm business management tools;
- self-funded superannuation;
- off-farm investments;
- succession planning; and
- making sense of your milk statement.



Participants at one of the In Charge: Financial Literacy programs.

Planning for the advanced program is drawing from these and other ideas that participants thought would be beneficial to their farm business.

So watch this space.

Those interested in participating in an advanced program can contact Barb Collins at WestVic Dairy (03) 5592 2477 or barb@westvicdairy.com.au to register their interest.

Details of future deliveries of In

Charge: Financial Literacy will be advertised through *Dairy News*.

This program has been funded by the Gardiner Foundation and dairy service levy funds and is being managed by WestVic Dairy.

New outlook for DPI Warrnambool recruit



Ee Cheng Ooi has joined the DPI Dairy Services team at Warrnambool.

By ALEX GOUDY

Dairy Services, DPI Warrnambool

Department of Primary Industries



UNTIL four years ago, new Department of Primary Industries (DPI) dairy graduate recruit Ee Cheng Ooi had never been to south west Victoria.

Now she is working for DPI Dairy Services,

as a project officer for dairy reproduction management, based in Warrnambool.

Dr Ooi is a veterinary graduate from the University of Melbourne. The knowledge and experience gained during this degree has placed her in a strong position for the role.

Dr Ooi will be focusing on extension programs to assist farmers with improved dairy reproductive performance.

The position is co-funded by DPI and Dairy Australia and is a high priority area for the industry.

"I was born in Malaysia, raised in south-east Melbourne and from the time I set foot on my first farm I knew this was

what I wanted to do," said Dr Ooi.

"After practical experience during my training as a vet, I decided to move from the city and join the two-year Science Graduate Program offered by DPI.

"The program will allow me to travel around regional Victoria and work with dairy farmers in multiple regions.

"I will be based in Warrnambool for eight months, then spend time in Gippsland and Melbourne before returning to the south west," she said.

She believes young people are the future of agriculture, and the best source of innovative thinking and fresh ideas.



LeadIn

Are you involved in leadership, a committee or interest group?

These roles can sometimes be challenging as we learn the whole leadership thing and working in a team can be interesting for those who, in their daily life, work alone or in partnerships only.

This LeadIn program could be made for you!

It starts in April and has been developed by the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia in close association with WestVic Dairy. Your sponsor will be Dairy Australia and WestVic Dairy which means your commitment will only be in time and energy.

The focus is on introductory leadership skills and covers topics such as:

- developing effective teams
- developing good working relationships
- organising agendas and meetings
- making presentations
- managing conflict
- effective communication skills

LeadIn is supported by funding from Dairy Australia and the Dairy Service Levy

Venue: Allansford Hotel

Cost: FREE

Date: Friday 26th April
Friday 3rd May
Friday 10th May

Time: 10am - 3pm

For further information contact:

Liza Fahey (03) 5592 2477
info@westvicdairy.com.au

Rebecca Huth (03) 5592 2437
rhuth@gotafe.vic.edu.au

WHAT'S ON

April 9

EVENT: Managing Business Transitions – exiting strategies
TIME: 11am–2.30pm
WHERE: Timboon Recreation Reserve
CONTACT: Liza Fahey, WestVic Dairy, (03) 5592 2477

April 9 and 16

EVENT: Farm chemical users course
TIME: 9 am–4pm
WHERE: Carlisle River
CONTACT: Hugh McLaren, NCDEA, (03) 5592 2240

April 10

EVENT: Managing Business Transitions – exiting strategies
TIME: 11am–2.30pm
WHERE: Camperdown Golf Club
CONTACT: Liza Fahey, WestVic Dairy, (03) 5592 2477

April 11

EVENT: Managing Business Transitions – exiting strategies
TIME: 11am–2pm
WHERE: Koroit, Blackwood Centre
CONTACT: Liza Fahey, WestVic Dairy, (03) 5592 2477

April 15

EVENT: Your Dairy Business-improving cash-flow and profitability
TIME: 7pm–9.30pm
WHERE: Camperdown
CONTACT: Barb Collins, WestVic Dairy, (03) 5592 2477

April 16, 17, and 18 (day 1)

EVENT: Feeding Pastures for Profit
WHERE: TBC (3 locations)
TIME: 10.30am – 2.30pm
CONTACT: Michele Ryan, DPI, (03) 5561 9914

April 18

EVENT: First Aid (Level 2)
TIME: 9am–4pm
WHERE: Terang
CONTACT: Hugh McLaren, NCDEA, (03) 5592 2240

April 18

EVENT: Glenelg YDDP day on preparing cows for calving
TIME: 11am

WHERE: Heathmere Hall
CONTACT: Liza Fahey, WestVic Dairy, (03) 5592 2477

April 19

EVENT: Great South West Dairy Awards
TIME: 6pm

WHERE: Glenormiston College, Glenormiston
CONTACT: Barb Collins, WestVic Dairy, (03) 5592 2477

April 22

EVENT: Your Dairy Business-financing your business
TIME: 7pm–9.30 pm

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

April 22, 23, and 24 (day 2)

EVENT: Feeding Pastures for Profit
WHERE: TBC (3 Locations)
TIME: 10.30am – 2.30pm
CONTACT: Michele Ryan, DPI, (03) 5561 9914

April 23

EVENT: Profitable Feeding Systems
TIME: 10am – 2.30pm
WHERE: Greg & Scott Wilson's farm - Colac
CONTACT: Tim Huggins, WestVic Dairy, 0467 677 066

April 24

EVENT: Profitable Feeding Systems
TIME: 10am – 2.30pm
WHERE: Camperdown Golf Club
CONTACT: Tim Huggins, WestVic Dairy, 0467 677 066

April 30

EVENT: Corangamite YDDP - Up the duff the first time
TIME: 7pm meals 7.30pm
Speakers
WHERE: Cobden Golf Club
CONTACT: Liza Fahey, WestVic Dairy, (03) 5592 2477

April 23 and 30

EVENT: Manage farm safety – implementing OHS on farm
TIME: 10am–3pm
WHERE: Terang
CONTACT: Hugh McLaren, NCDEA, (03) 5592 2240

April 26, May 3 and 10

EVENT: LeadIn
TIME: 10am–3pm
WHERE: Allansford Hotel
CONTACT: Liza Fahey, WestVic Dairy, (03) 5592 2477

April 24,

May 1, 15, and 22
EVENT: Managing Staff – The People GPS
TIME: 10am–3pm

WHERE: Terang
CONTACT: Rebecca Huth, NCDEA, (03) 5592 2437

May 2

EVENT: Quad bike operations
TIME: 9am–4pm
WHERE: Terang
CONTACT: Hugh McLaren, NCDEA, (03) 5592 2240

April 29

EVENT: Your Dairy Business-what the bankers want!
TIME: 7pm–9.30pm
WHERE: Camperdown
CONTACT: Barb Collins, WestVic Dairy, (03) 5592 2477

May 6 and 10

EVENT: South Australia dairy innovations study tour
WHERE: Visiting various farms in South Australia
CONTACT: David Ford, NCDEA, (03) 5592 2493

May 7 and 14

EVENT: Farm chemical users course
TIME: 9am–4pm
WHERE: Colac
CONTACT: Hugh McLaren, NCDEA, (03) 5592 2240

Preparing herd for the next lactation

Feeding dry cows

By MICHELE RYAN
Dairy Services, DPI
Warrnambool



THE dry period is much more than holiday time for the cows. Good management of the dry cows minimises problems at calving and sets them up for their next lactation.

So how do we make sure the cows are ready for the season ahead?

The early dry period

THE cows should be dried off in a condition score between 4.5 and 5.5, and the aim is to maintain them in this condition for calving. They will need a diet with the appropriate balance of energy and protein in order to achieve this.

Dry cows will eat about 2 per cent of their body weight in feed dry matter (DM), and for an average 500kg cow this is about 10kg DM per day.

A 500kg cow requires about 61 megajoules (MJ) of energy to maintain herself, and in the seventh month of pregnancy she needs an additional 9MJ to grow the calf. Her total daily energy requirement is therefore 70MJ. This increases to 78MJ at eight months pregnant and 94MJ at nine months as the calf rapidly develops.

Mature dry cows also need between 12 and 14 per cent crude protein in their diet. First calvers need more protein as they are still growing, and a level of 16 per cent is more appropriate.

The traditional dry cow diet of rough hay may well not be supplying these requirements for energy and protein.

FeedTest results for average pasture hay give us figures of 8.5MJ per kg DM, and 8 per cent crude protein. The average 500kg cow at seven months pregnant would need 8.2kg DM of this hay each day to satisfy her 70MJ energy requirement, however, she will not meet her protein requirement if fed this hay alone. The problem is even more acute for first calvers with their higher protein needs.

At nine months our 500kg cow would have a daily requirement of 11kg DM of this average quality hay, and her protein requirement would not be met.

FeedTest results for average pasture silage are 9.6MJ per kg DM and 14.7 per cent crude protein. Our 500kg, seven month pregnant cow would need 7.3kg DM of this silage to provide



Prepare now to manage cows well for next lactation.

her with 70MJ energy. If she is a mature animal her protein requirement is also well met, but first calvers will still be looking for some extra protein.

It is important that you know both the quantity and quality of the feed the cows are receiving, so that you can be sure you are providing them with a diet that is balanced and adequate. If you do not meet these requirements the cows will lose condition.

Close-up cows

“CLOSE-UP” or “transition” cows are those within three weeks of calving. They are “close-up” to calving, or making the “transition” from dry to lactating.

These cows need extra attention and it is during this period that pre-season conditioning really comes to the fore. If she is well prepared she is far more likely to calve without incident, enter the milking team with her full production potential intact and get back in calf early.

During the transition period the aims are to reduce the impact of diseases which often occur around calving and to prepare the rumen for any change in diet likely to occur once the cow enters the herd.

Disease prevention

A COW that goes down with milk fever at calving is like a footballer who pulls a hamstring in the first game of the year. You may get her back on her feet with some TLC, but her contribution to the team effort is reduced for the season.

In Victoria, milk fever alone has been estimated to cost \$7 million annually in lost production and in the US it has been estimated that 80 per cent of veterinary costs can be traced back to inappropriate feeding during the dry period.

Much of this cost can be prevented by adequate preparation. As already indicated, the demand for energy increases as pregnancy proceeds, and to meet the cow's needs she must

be fed more. If she is underfed, at best she will lose condition and at worst she runs the risk of pregnancy toxemia.

The most common disease at calving is milk fever, caused by insufficient calcium in the bloodstream of the cow. Calcium is necessary for muscles to function properly, and it has been suggested that low blood calcium at calving may also contribute to the occurrence of displaced abomasums, retained foetal membranes and mastitis.

Calcium is lost from the cow in large quantities in milk so her requirement for calcium increases enormously once she calves. Calcium is stored in the bones and the key to managing milk fever is to encourage the cow's system to increase the amount of calcium drawn from this source. Anionic salts are used for this purpose.

Anionic salts may help to slightly acidify the blood of the cow which results in calcium being released from the bones and into the bloodstream. It is necessary to feed the salts for about two weeks prior to calving to achieve this effect.

Unfortunately the effect of anionic salts is much reduced if the cow is being fed a diet which contains a lot of potassium or sodium (known as cations). Pastures, hay and silage from paddocks with high potassium levels are suspect and should be avoided. Also avoid molasses, which can have a high potassium level, and bicarb, which is high in sodium. Fodder can be tested for cation and anion levels and this is recommended if you are feeding anionic salts.

Magnesium is required for calcium absorption so a magnesium supplement (magnesium chloride, magnesium sulphate or magnesium oxide) should be offered to the close-up cows and this should be continued throughout the lactation.

There is debate about whether

calcium should be fed during the dry period and traditionally the recommendation has been to avoid calcium supplements at this time. Once they have calved, however, it is strongly recommended that all cows should receive a calcium supplement (e.g. limestone) to help them keep up with the huge loss of calcium in milk.

Adapting the rumen

IT takes two to three weeks for the rumen to adapt to the introduction of new feeds such as grains or pellets. If the cow is to enter the milking herd eating well and adapted to a new ration some preparation is required and this is referred to as “lead feeding”.

Concentrates must be gradually introduced and pulling the cow straight from the paddock after calving and putting her onto several kilos of grain is inviting acidosis to occur.

While you can introduce the grain component of the milker ration to the dry cows, do not feed bicarb in the ration. If a buffer is required before calving use an alternative such as Causmag (magnesium oxide) or the rumen modifier Eskalin. Once the cows have calved bicarb may be introduced.

Lead feed pellets containing anionic salts and relevant minerals are available from most feed manufacturers and these may be a convenient option.

In summary

TO get the cows fit for the season:

1. Dry them off in the condition in which they are to calve.
2. Maintain condition by meeting their needs for energy and protein.
3. Prevent metabolic diseases, especially milk fever.
4. Gradually adapt the rumen to concentrates.

For further information contact Michele Ryan at Warrnambool DPI on (03) 5561 9914.