

The Northern Dairyfarmer

FEBRUARY-MARCH 2012

Draft Basin Plan a risk for Qld dairy industry

KEY POINTS

- Murray Darling Basin impact in Qld in Condamine and Border Rivers
- Stock and domestic water needs must be protected
- Groundwater reductions forecast

By Ross McInnes
QDO vice-president



Stock and domestic water supply is crucial for the viability of Queensland's dairy farms.

DAIRYFARMERS have had a few weeks to digest the draft Basin Plan for water use in the Murray-Darling, and the initial verdict is that it will have a negative impact on the industry across four states.

Most notably, the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) has recognised that the dairy industry in northern Victoria will be among the hardest hit, with production dropping to drought-like levels of 1.6 billion litres, if the sustainable diversion limits being proposed are enacted.

However, the impact in Queensland is substantial as well. About 30% of Queensland dairy farms operate in the

Condamine and Border Rivers catchments, and that percentage is likely to increase given the trend of the industry consolidation in this part of the state.

There are about 170 dairy farms in the Queensland regions of the Basin, operating on about 51,000 hectares. This is split between 72 farms on the northern Darling Downs and 97 on the southern Downs.

There are three different farming systems: grazing, partial mixed ration and total mixed ration.

All of these farms to one degree or another rely on the Basin's water resources as a vital input to maintain operations. Many use surface and ground

water allocations for irrigation purposes for forage crops and pastures.

Even the less irrigation oriented farms rely on the Basin water for stock and domestic purposes, or indirectly via the feed they purchase for their dairies.

Dairies also have stock and domestic water use needs, which are essential to their dairy herd's welfare and dairy hygiene and must be considered in the context of water planning in the Basin.

It is worth remembering just how much dairy cows need to drink. Victorian research has found that cows drink between

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Consider election carefully

HAPPY New Year and welcome to 2012, a year that could be many things, but one thing we know is that here in Queensland, 2012 will be an election year. In the lead-up to and over the Christmas/New Year break I talked to a number of people in different places who were pondering a couple of basic political questions.

Firstly, some farmers in a number of regional areas questioned why it seemed that the centre left of Australian politics took little interest in chasing votes in farming and regional areas and driving their issues. Secondly, some I spoke to in Brisbane wondered why many farmers and people in a number of regional areas seemed so willing to vote for independents or what they considered to be more ideologically extreme smaller parties.

These two questions are, of course, closely linked and they reflect the often-lamented lack of political power in the bush. There has always been the old chicken-and-egg question when rural people say "Why should we vote for a centre left party if they do not have policies that reflect our concerns?" and politicians in this political sector say "Why should we put your rural concerns high in our policy-making when at the end of the day you won't vote for us anyway?"

This lack of a contest for the rural vote is the real reason for the lack of political power in the bush, much more than the lower population in the regions. My father often told me this problem was just as bad 50 years ago when the city/country population ratio in Australia was much better than it is now.

This lack of a board-spectrum political interest in the rural vote is not exactly the same worldwide, though. The Democratic Party in the United States has a considerable rural lobby and constituency that exerts influence and is pursued in policy-making by the party's congressmen and senators.

Clearly the problem of getting candidates from across the political spectrum in Australia to take more interest in rural issues and chase the rural vote will not be solved quickly or easily.

The problem is that when it comes to issues such as mining and gas extraction it can be hard to see who in the political spectrum is taking the farmers' concerns and interests seriously. This is even more the case when you look at what is known as the 'supermarket duopoly'. In both these issues farmers often have been left with only the independents and the smaller parties offering any real assistance.

For their part, the voter in the bush needs to question the candidates well and search for practical plans and clear commitments on the issues and concerns of the rural and regional areas. They need to make sure that if the only response they get from a candidate is the old lines such as how good an issue is for a different sector of the economy or how they do not want prevent someone dropping prices

or "if you don't vote for us then you will just get the other guys in government", then they, the rural voter, must find someone else for whom to vote.



Brian Tessmann
President
Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation

Strengthening industry

BY THE time you are reading this, our executive officer and I, as well as other Subtropical board members, will have completed the 12 Dairy Poll 2012 roadshow events from Malanda in the north to Macksville in the south. The events have included speakers from Australian Dairy Farmers, Dairy Australia, the relevant State dairyfarmer organisations, farmers and ourselves outlining the value and relevance of the expenditure of Dairy Australia funds within the Subtropical region for the benefit of you, the levy payers.

In early February, levy payers will be sent voting forms for the ballot on the level of the dairy levy for the next five years. The recommended vote is for a 10% increase to ensure that the services you receive will continue into the future. Dairy Australia funds are invested for specific industry projects with QDO, DEEDI, NSW Ag and Subtropical Dairy to deliver essential information, workshops, field days and farm walks across our entire region to provide you with the most appropriate and relevant tools in your dairy business. In the past 12 months, Subtropical was able to raise an additional \$7 for every \$1 of Dairy Australia funds provided to our region, in collaboration with our partners Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation and Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation as well as other funders and sponsors.



Ross McInnes
Chair
Subtropical Dairy

We wish all the best to the 45 travellers undertaking the Young Dairy Network tour to Tasmania in early February and look forward to their feedback on the learnings gained, which can be applied to our region. We look forward to working with you, through our regional teams, in the coming 12 months as we build a resilient and sustainable dairy industry into the future.



The Northern

Dairyfarmer

The Northern Dairyfarmer magazine is a joint industry owned and operated publication targeted at delivering the latest research and development information and industry news to dairyfarmers and industry stakeholders of the northern dairy industry. The Northern Dairyfarmer is published on about the 13th of every second month in February, April, June, August, October and December.

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120 and 150 litres of water per day when producing 20 litres of milk, but this could increase as much as 80% on hot days.

The Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO) continues to remind government that stock and domestic water is a different use of water than that of irrigation, and it must continue to be treated as such.

The water consumption needs of a cow are largely static – they can't be gleaned for efficiencies as are possible from modern irrigation systems.

Therefore, the biggest concern for dairyfarmers in the Queensland catchments is around groundwater allocations (given that most of the surface water cuts appear to be targeted at the Balonne catchment, downstream of dairying regions).

The draft Basin Plan indicates that groundwater in the Upper Condamine will have to be cut by about 50%. A reduction of this magnitude is a large risk for what is one of the most important milk-producing regions for the state, and especially for the long-term ability to produce milk for the growing population of Queensland consumers.

Queensland farmers already contend with higher-cost production systems than other states and have been at the punishing end of the supermarket milk price war. Milk production last year has been less than demand – and even in average production years it can't be taken for granted.

Therefore, farmers are looking for detailed environmental watering plans to show that water acquired for the environment is being used efficiently.

They also want reassurance that groundwater acquired via this process will be bought from willing sellers, as is the case with surface water.

They also want to see stock and domestic permanently exempt from these cuts.

The dairy industry is a major industry and employer in the region. Therefore, it is vital that this reform is enacted in a way that ensures the industry has a long-term future.

Levy safeguards dairy future

KEY POINTS

- 10% levy increase recommended
- Allows current level of research to continue
- No increase since 1997

THE dairy industry's peak bodies have endorsed the recommended 10% increase in the dairy service levy in this year's Dairy Poll.

The Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC), Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) and the Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF) were all represented on the Dairy Poll Advisory Committee, led by ADIC chairman and ADF president Chris Griffin, which conducted a review of industry needs and the levy spend by Dairy Australia as outlined in its five-year strategic plan.

Mr Griffin said it was essential to continue this scale of investment to ensure the level of services and research, development and extension (RD&E) provided by Dairy Australia continued into the future.

The 24-member committee consisted of representatives from all dairying regions and sectors from across the entire national dairy industry.

"Over the past six months we considered a range of voting options, based on the level of funding needed to deliver programs and services in the industry agreed strategic plan, and we determined that an increase in the levy was required to execute the plan," Mr Griffin said.

The committee recommended two options: a 15% increase, which would allow Dairy Australia to execute the plan and provide significant scope to fund new activities and meet unfore-

seen challenges, and a 10% increase, which would allow the company to execute the plan, which is essentially a continuation of the current level of services and RD&E, but limits its ability to take on new activities. The third option for zero levy is required by legislation.

"Since 1997 there has not been a levy increase," Mr Griffin said. "In that time the Consumer Price Index has risen by 36%, therefore a 10% in the levy is well below the corresponding CPI increase.

"Keeping the levy at the current rate would not be in the industry's best interests for the future and the committee determined that an increase in the levy was the responsible way forward."

Dairy Poll 2012 voting will open in early February, when farmers will receive their voting pack containing a ballot paper. It closes on March 16.

Soil science panel will ensure robust Strategic Cropping Land

THE Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) has welcomed the State Government's announcement of members of the Strategic Cropping Land (SCL) soil science committee.

The four-person committee consists of four professional soil scientists: two nominated by the Australian Society of Soil Science (Professor Clive Bell and Simon Buchanan), one by QFF (David Hamilton) and one by the Queensland Resources Council (Terry Short).

QFF chief executive officer Dan Galligan said the panel would play an important role in

seeing the legislation enacted in the spirit of the policy intent – which is to preserve and protect finite agricultural soil resources and ensure sustainable coexistence between the mining and agricultural sectors.

"Getting the science right is just as important as getting the legislation right," Mr Galligan said. "In our view this committee should go about its work unencumbered from industry or government intervention, and we put faith in Minister Nolan's comments that this is what will happen.

"The committee and its work will give all stakeholders confi-

dence that SCL is based on science and can stand up to the most rigorous independent scrutiny."

Mr Galligan said support had already been given for a two-year review of Strategic Cropping Land.

"The advice that this committee will bring to the table regarding the effectiveness of SCL, and the job it will do identifying the correct land as SCL, will be paramount to that review," he said.

"This is an important part of the process of finding pragmatic ways of protecting agricultural soils for the long term and ensuring sustainable development takes place."

Managing export slaughter intervals

THE recent discovery of an antibiotic residue in Russia threatens trade to Australia's fourth largest meat export partner.

The meat industry response through the Safemeat Partnership has been to introduce a provisional 90-day Export

Slaughter Interval (ESI) on a range of antibiotic products, and to require farmers selling cattle to explicitly write the words "Russian Eligible" on National Vendor Declaration (NVD) forms in order for products from the slaughtered cattle to be eligible for export to Russia.

Products with an ESI are listed on the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicine Authority (APVMA) website <www.apvma.gov.au>, including most products containing oxytetracycline and chlortetracycline, which is a commonly used antibiotic on dairy farms.

Planning ahead delivers in FNQ

KEY POINTS

- Plan ahead and prepare for disasters
- On-farm generator invaluable after cyclone
- Farm and family life could continue

By Brad Pfeffer

EVERY business has its critical needs and functions that it requires to continue operating. A natural disaster can put those critical systems in jeopardy.

For farmers it is worth considering in advance:

- the must-haves for their business;
- those things that they cannot live without; and
- the things that are absolutely critical for the business to continue.

Millaa Millaa, Queensland, dairyfarmer, Colin Daley, knows that an auxiliary power system is crucial for keeping his dairy operating and being able to keep milk cold for the processing tanker.

In 2000, he installed the back-up power supply and it has proven extremely useful not just

during Cyclone Larry and Cyclone Yasi, but also during countless other storms and black-outs.

The generator is frequently serviced and given test runs every two months, so it's ready when required.

Mr Daley keeps the track to it mowed so that the tractor can access it and drive the power supply, and also ensures that the diesel tank is topped up when the summer approaches so there is sufficient fuel for the tractor.

Not having this in place can mean the difference between sending milk to the factory for processing or being forced to dispose of it.

Straight after Cyclone Yasi last year, while there was significant damage and ongoing cow health management issues, the Daley family was able to continue supplying milk as soon as downed trees were cleared from the roads.

Mr Daley said it was important to have the power connected to the house. "If you can't live life normally that certainly becomes an extra hassle," he said. "You need to be able to cook a meal and have a wash. And after a cyclone when you haven't got power, there has been



Atherton Tableland farmer Colin Daley says an on-farm generator has been a worthwhile investment.

He said it is wise to tackle herd health issues at the outset, and try to prevent problems as much as possible.

"If we are going to be in a position to be profitable when the season changes we need to keep those cows well looked after

and as free of mastitis as possible," he said.

"The important thing is to know your farm and know the way you want to farm and to have a strategy in place. Don't try and manage it on the run. You need to be planning for it, because if you don't plan for it, then I guess you have got to plan to fail."

• Colin Daley will be featured in a DVD on Cyclone Yasi recovery being distributed to farmers later this year. For more information visit website <www.qff.org.au> or phone (07) 3837 4747.

a situation when we have had lots of people using our place as somewhere where they can have a shower or dry some clothes or just a few of the comforts of home."

Mr Daley also has plans in place for other parts of the business, and is always thinking ahead about the welfare of his cows.

He keeps a large supply of feed in store. After Yasi, when roads were cut from places such as Emerald, this also proved a lifeline and valuable forward planning.

Disaster relief extension welcomed

THE Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) has welcomed the extended deadline for farmers seeking disaster assistance from last summer's floods and cyclones.

The Queensland Government announced in December that it was extending the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) assistance measures, which includes grants and concessional loans, to June 30. The cut-off had previously been January 31.

QFF chief executive officer Dan Galligan said the sheer scale of the destruction wrought by Cyclone Yasi and the floods meant that the recovery was long and ongoing for many farmers.

"This deadline extension will

ensure the NDRRA grants and loans are rolled out to their full extent across Queensland and that they are accessed by all eligible primary producers and small businesses," Mr Galligan said.

"This assistance consequently supports regional communities, the economy and employment. Agriculture is the backbone of many Queensland communities, and these measures are important for ensuring that remains the case.

"We urge farmers to act quickly on getting access to this assistance if they haven't already done so. It's not something to be left to the last minute.

"In Far North Queensland (FNQ) areas affected by Yasi,

farmers can contact industry recovery officers (IRO) for assistance. In flooded areas, farmers can contact their industry organisation for guidance."

To date, the agency handling the NDRRA, QRAA, has approved more than \$263 million in funding to more than 14,800 primary producers, businesses and non-profit organisations directly affected by the Queensland floods (November 2010-January 2011) and Tropical Cyclone Yasi.

NDRRA assistance includes:

- Special Disaster Assistance grants up to \$25,000;
- Natural Disaster Assistance loans up to \$250,000 (primary producers and small business) and loan/grant packages up to

\$105,000 (non-profit organisations); and

- Exceptional Disaster Assistance loan/grant packages up to \$650,000.

The loans offer an initial low interest rate of 4% and no fees and charges for the life of the loan.

MORE INFO

QRAA

Website:

<www.qraa.qld.gov.au>

Phone: 1800 623 946

FNQ IRO

Lyn O'Connor

Phone: (07) 4096 7213

Flood assistance

QDO

Phone: (07) 3236 2955

Milk war anniversary nothing to celebrate

KEY POINTS

- Coles discounting impacts farm-gate milk price
- Follows Tesco example to gain market share
- Federal Govt must act

By Brian Tessmann
QDO president

WHILE Queenslanders remember the devastating impacts of natural disasters of last summer, the dairy industry has the dread of remembering the impacts of man-made disasters that hit the industry on Australia Day, 2011.

Unlike the impacts of the floods and Cyclone Yasi, the disastrous effects to the state's dairy industry of the Coles-led milk price war are growing by the day.

To use the ANZAC Day quote "lest we forget", it is time to look back at last January 26 and what was said at the time and in the period since that terrible day regarding this assault on the domestic dairy industry.

At the time Coles stated in its promotional campaign: "Coles is not reducing the price it pays to its milk processors either so this move will not impact them or the dairyfarmers who supply them ... Coles is fully absorbing the price cut, bringing great value to customers whilst supporting Australian dairyfarmers."

With this great fanfare Coles

announced price cuts of up to 33% to Coles brand milk.

Despite the assurances from Coles, every dairyfarmer in Queensland knew that this would affect farm-gate price either immediately or in the near future as contracts came due for renegotiation.

Professor Stephen King from Monash University was then rolled out to tell us that oceans of extra milk would be consumed because of the discounting, despite repeated industry assertions of milk's largely inelastic nature.

Since then we have seen milk consumption per head increase by about 1.5% – with the increase in sales coming from population growth that would have occurred, milk war or not.

So apparently the ocean of milk sales we were promised was at a permanent low tide.

Then when the Senate Inquiry was initiated, and the sensitivities of the situation had surfaced, Coles was at pains to explain the price cuts were actually only 4% and questioned how could this small reduction cause any problem.

Coles successfully downplayed their influence on the marketplace to a majority of Senators, who either didn't understand the milk pricing system or simply didn't want to acknowledge the problem, while consumers were getting cheap milk and Coles was helping the Government with the crusade



Coles has hurt dairyfarmers in liquid milk market states such as Queensland with its house brand milk price discounting.

war and as such the downward pressure on prices down the supply chain is there regardless of which supermarket brand name is on the bottle.

against inflation in a sensitive political poll environment.

Coles's strategy has had an extremely familiar look to the Tesco model that has been in place in Britain where they discounted product, built up market share of their own supermarket brands, discounted again, built up market share again and then increased their margin, with consumers being left with no and little choice on the shelf – follow the pattern?

While Woolworths and other retailers have publicly acknowledged milk at \$1 per litre is unsustainable and Woolworths has stated that it would not have undertaken such a strategy, all supermarkets have entered the

gate the past year has seen milk prices drop further in real terms across the board with some dairyfarmers who are renewing contracts for 2012 receiving prices considerably down on last year.

This, of course, raises one fundamental question that needs to be asked of our politicians, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), and Coles itself: if the discounting of milk has not caused the drop in farm-gate price we have seen and are continuing to see, then what has?

Retailers, vendors, processors and dairyfarmers all have an important role to play in the whole milk supply chain and

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when one sector takes a short-term decision in its own interest alone, the long-term negative outcomes for other supply chain stakeholders can be devastating.

Relationships within the supply chain have always had their challenges but this latest price war has moved the whole value chain into a whole new ball park that is simply not sustainable in the medium to long-term.

It often seems other sectors of

the value chain have been, during the year, reluctant to publicly criticise their powerful customer on whom they rely for such a large chunks of their business in offering their products to Australian consumers.

Unfortunately it seems most people will take the maximum advantage of a situation if they are able to, without caring for the consequences of their actions on others and the nation as a whole.

Unfortunately it seems that many consumers do not understand the consequences of their daily purchase choices on their future, others' futures and our nation's future. However the major supermarkets understand this all too well.

That is why we have a government to make laws for the greater good of the nation and the whole community but at this stage most of the politicians in two major parties have shirked

their responsibility in this regard. As a result, all Australians including the small retailers, milk processors, dairyfarmers and particularly the consumers that the ACCC ironically says it is concerned about, will pay the price for the lack of government action and the larger supermarket profits and growing dominance that follows.

The question now for the Federal Government is: will it act?

New milk contracts to cost Scenic Rim farmers millions

By Gary Corbett

SCENIC Rim district dairyfarmers – like others in south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales – were hit with a Christmas present they could do without: new milk supply contracts that will cost them millions of dollars in the next three years.

With no end in sight to the ongoing retail war between Coles and Woolworths, milk and dairy products supplier Parmalat, the manufacturer of Pauls Milk, moved to renegotiate the contracts it had with all of its dairyfarmers in south-east Queensland and northern NSW.

All contracts between Parmalat and its suppliers were due to expire at the end of 2012. However, the company contacted farmers late last year to inform them it wanted to bring forward renegotiation talks by one year.

The end result was that farmers were given two choices: they could continue with their current contract conditions at the

same price per litre until the end of 2012 but have no guarantee that another contract would be offered, or they could sign a new three-year contract by December 20, effective from January 1, that would see them receive three cents per litre less than the current rate.

The collective result for just three farmers – Tim Deeran, Bromelton, Qld; Ivan Teese, Gleneagle, Qld, and Greg Teese, Veresdale Scrub, Qld – will be a loss of about \$212,000 per year or nearly \$650,000 for the term of the new contracts.

While all three are bitterly disappointed with the Parmalat offer, they did not blame the company for the dire financial situation in which they suddenly found themselves.

Instead they said it was Coles and Woolworths that were threatening the future of the entire dairy industry in Queensland.

"We are not angry with Parmalat; they are caught in the system the same as we are," Ivan Teese said. "It is the supermarkets that are screwing the

system. They are sending everyone to the wall."

All three farmers agreed they virtually had no choice but than to sign the new contract.

"We will survive but there won't be anything left over for infrastructure improvements. It will be a bare-bones operation," Ivan Teese said.

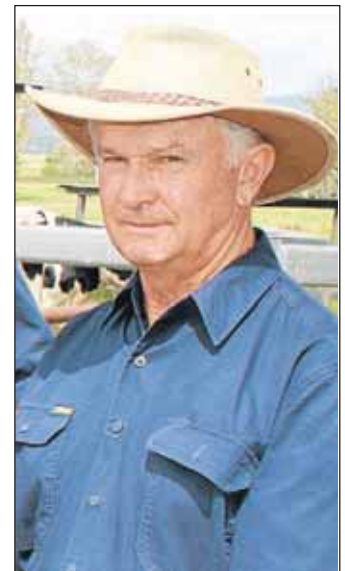
"The businesses in town will cop it immediately. From the contractor who cuts our crops to the dealer who sells us machinery, everyone will be affected."

Parmalat supply chain general manager Vince Houlihan said the new contracts offered to dairyfarmers provided continued certainty of price and volume until 2014.

He said 2011 prices were set in 2007 during the drought and had been held firm for the past four years.

"The new contracts are about three cents per litre lower on average, reflecting improved farm conditions (no longer in drought)," he said.

"The new contracts were negotiated with Premium Milk (the farmers' collective autho-



Ivan Teese: price cuts will force operation back to bare bones.

ried by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission), which acknowledged that the terms offered were both viable and sustainable for current conditions."

– Article courtesy of The Beaudesert Times.

Taking farmers for granted could come back to bite

By Brian Tessmann
QDO president

WHILE various governments in Australia continue to indulge in their love affair with the mining industry, the words 'food security' keep bobbing up to put a

dampener on the party. Food security is the responsibility of a nation that lies beyond the mining party hangover.

As reported in the press in Queensland recently, peanut growers in this state are looking at high prices for the crop

being planted, as peanuts are in short supply on the world market, while Australia will produce only a small percentage of its expected domestic demand.

The problem as conveyed to me by some peanut processors

is that peanut growers and peanut farms have, after a number of tough years, become few and far between. Competition for the land and the labour force from industries such as mining have meant not only fewer farmers but a much high-▶

er average age of the remaining farmers.

What this may mean is that there may be a great market opportunity in peanuts that Queensland will struggle to gain any advantage from and this may impact consumers down the track.

This situation reminded me to a large extent of the position the Queensland dairy industry finds itself in, and while much of the peanut issue may be a result to some extent of the vagaries of the world market, the dairy issue is one totally of Australia's own making.

Much of the domestic dairy

industry has lost a big chunk of its supply base, particularly from Australia's regional areas, and in doing so has been losing the best and the cheapest source of milk for those regions and their consumers in those regions.

Unlike other industries that rely on exports, this domestic milk price issue has been totally within Australia's control and this country has the ability, not to mention the duty, to ensure a fair and functioning milk market.

With the recently announced further reductions in farm-gate milk prices for

domestic milk suppliers, it should be clear to everyone including the politicians and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) that impacts from the Coles-led milk price war are continuing to flow through to the farm gate.

If the government continues to close its eyes to the uneven power and lack of a supply and demand function in the domestic milk market then it will be clear to everyone who is to blame for the higher retail prices and the lack of choice and access for consumers that will follow.

The experience in the United Kingdom is clear – in the long-term, consumers have lost choice and are now paying more for dairy products to the benefit of the major retailers.

The New Zealand comparison shows the true value of fresh milk to New Zealand consumers with the average retail price of about \$1.88/litre and supermarket brands at about \$1.38/litre, which is far higher than the current price in Australia.

New Zealand exports the majority of its dairy production into the world market so the price of dairy products to New Zealand consumers is a true reflection of international prices.

The Australian Government needs to think how Australia will not only feed itself but how will it take advantage of the growing world need for food including dairy products.

Therefore, it is in the best interest of the government to act now to protect consumers and the supply of fresh milk from all the disastrous scenarios that were described during the recent Senate Inquiry.

That's why Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO), along with other industry groups, is continuing to lobby politicians in Canberra to bring back fairness to the retail milk industry and supply chain.

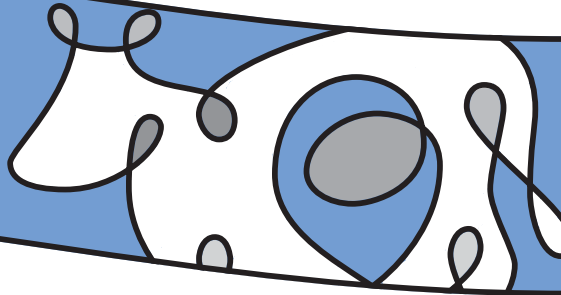
All that will be achieved by the current policy is that a large proportion of the milk that is now exported will need to be diverted to supply Australia's domestic need for milk in northern and western states.

At the same time, milk transporters will be burning up large amounts of fossil fuel transporting the milk to these regional areas and consumers will be burning up even more fuel travelling to the reduced number of outlets that will stock this precious dietary staple of our society: fresh milk.

It is exactly the type of perverse situation that governments should be acting to avoid – but is a real possibility if farmers, and the dairy industry, are simply taken for granted.

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NDF1140716

Kick starting successful succession

KEY POINTS

- Succession planning about conversations in families
- New project to develop kit to help young farmers
- Staged process

FARM family succession is often sold as too hard, challenging and messy. And it's this perception that often dissuades families from engaging in the process until well past the ideal time.

The Young Dairy Network is hoping to dispel this myth with its Mooving Forward Succession Starter Kit, which is being developed through funding from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's NextGen program.

The purpose of the starter kit is to support the younger generation in getting the succession process on the table and talked about.

Jo Eady of Rural Scope is developing the succession starter kit package.

"Succession is very similar to

any other planning that is done within a farming business," Ms Eady said.

It was about having conversations, and the package being developed assisted by putting structure around these conversations, she said.

"Succession is about a range of things, not just asset transfer," Ms Eady said. "A majority of the time the process comes unstuck long before a family is ready to talk at this level, normally at the labour/roles and responsibilities and remuneration stage."

The model being developed through this program has three stages to support successful farm business succession. Not all families need to address all stages at once; however, it is important to know what each stage is and to address it in order.

The three stages are:

- labour management;
- decision making and farm management; and
- finally asset transfer.

Having a staged process means that succession planning can be broken down into bite-size chunks with everybody preparing for and contributing to



Jo Eady of Rural Scope is developing a succession starter kit to assist young dairy producers kick-start succession in their farm family.

whole-of-family conversations.

"The fact remains that decisions around these three areas are not recognised as being easy," Ms Eady said. "However, the sooner these areas can be talked about the more options there will be for all members of the family and the greater the chance of long-term family unity and harmony."

The package has two components to it. The first component is a series of information sheets that will provide knowledge and support to the younger generation about what succession looks

like and empower them to start the conversations within the family.

For those families who are ready for the 'rubber to hit the road', the program has developed a series of family meetings to work through the model with the assistance of a facilitator.

The package will be launched during this year's Young Dairy Network Tour, which is being run from February 12 to 17. The tour is also supported by the NextGen program and will visit a number of farms in Tasmania looking at intergenerational business transfer, including the option of share-farming.

The Young Dairy Network is keen to hear from farmers who would like to receive the information sheets when they are launched in February.

MORE INFO
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Efficient farming costs time, money and energy

By Joanne Grainger
 QFF president

HEADING toward this year's state election, the Queensland Government and Opposition have been vocal about electricity prices in the context of household budgets and cost-of-living for families.

But more concerning for farmers is what increasing electricity costs, year-on-year, mean for the ongoing viability of their operations, and also those of many major agricultural-processing facilities in Queensland.

Recent years have seen electricity prices soar well above the Consumer Price Index. This year the Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) recommended an increase in the Benchmark Retail Cost Index (BRCI) of 6%.

The 2009 recommendation was for 14%.

The simple fact is that electricity is a major component of costs for many Queensland farms and farmers cannot continue to absorb these costs indefinitely, and nor can they achieve endless efficiencies without impediments to their productivity.

Our members have estimated that an average cane grower would spend \$5000 per year on electricity, while for irrigated growers the cost would be about \$10,000 and for some as high as \$20,000.

Fruit and vegetable growers face similar costs, and for dairies the average yearly electricity bill is about \$9000.

For poultry producers, the costs are upwards of \$50,000 and for prawn farms the costs are

\$10,000/hectare or about 9% of annual production costs.

The government must also remember that some of our most efficient and environmentally friendly production systems – such as modern irrigation infrastructure – are also the most energy intensive.

Likewise, commodity prices are not increasing at anywhere near the rate required to match the myriad increasing costs to farm margins.

Electricity costs are also a high proportion of costs for processing facilities such as packing sheds, cotton gins, and milk factories.

Against this backdrop, the government is removing the BRCI methodology for electricity prices and is introducing a new method of establishing regu-

lated retail electricity prices.

QFF provided a submission to this Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) review, and has outlined the concerns facing the farm sector. We are concerned at the potential loss of tariff options for farmers. There has been significant choice in tariff options, which allowed farmers to choose the tariff that best suited their individual need.

To restrict this choice is not desirable especially since most of our farmers are outside south-east Queensland and thus unable to take advantage of electricity competition.

Many farmers have also set up their farms to take advantage of off-peak tariffs.

• **Footnote: QCA is expected to release draft tariffs at the end of March.**

Dairyfarmers biggest carbon tax losers

AUSTRALIA'S commodity forecaster says the average dairy farm will lose \$4200 in the first year of the carbon tax.

The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences has studied the short-term impact of the carbon-pricing scheme on six major agricultural sectors. It has calculated that dairying will be hardest hit due to the high electricity cost of processing milk.

Australian Farm Institute director Mick Keogh said unlike Australia's major dairy competitor, New Zealand, which had hydro power, Australia was heavily reliant on coal-fired power.

"No doubt the dairy processors will try to implement efficiency gains through their plants but ultimately the bit they can't get more efficient about will be passed back to dairyfarmers in lower milk prices," Mr Keogh said.

Read the label

RECENT changes in pricing of teat disinfectants have seen some dairyfarmers considering moving away from the traditional iodine-based products. Dairy Australia's Countdown project leader, Dr John Penry, explained that the key issue was not which product was used but ensuring the teat spray was made up according to the label instructions.

"Due to some follow-on effects of the Japanese tsunami in early 2011, there has been a reduction in the supply of iodine-based test disinfectants with a resultant effect on price," Dr Penry said. There are alternatives

to iodine-based teat disinfectants.

A number of products are registered for use in Australia with different active ingredients. Active ingredients in registered products include chlorhexidine, acid anionic compounds (such as alkyl benzenes sulphonic acid) and iodine.

"Always use a registered teat disinfectant," Dr Penry said. "The registration process gives us confidence it is an effective product."

"Once you've chosen a registered product, it is critical to follow the label directions meticulously. Teat disinfection is one of the most effective ways to control cell count and mastitis but it only works to its full potential if it's done correctly."

Milk wars message gets through to the public

THE Coles-led \$1-a-litre home-brand milk war has been revealed in a recent survey as the most significant food industry media story in 2011. *Food Forward 2012* revealed the sentiment about Australian food culture of more than 1000 consumers and leading taste-makers from around the country, including food editors, chefs, food bloggers and nutritionists.

Survey participants were asked to share their insights and predictions about the food culture of Australia. As part of the survey, Australians were asked to choose the most significant food story of 2011, and nominated the impact of the milk wars between Woolworths and Coles as number one.

It is testament to the work of

the collective dairy industry lobbying on this issue during the recent Senate Inquiry and in the media that the issue has generated such a high level of concern among metropolitan shoppers.

Clearly, there is a strong case for action to protect not only farmers but also consumers, who have legitimate and serious concerns about the dominance of the supermarket duopoly.

Dietary guidelines call for increased dairy consumption

THE National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) has released its guidelines for healthy diets for Australians. Among its many recommendations is for Australians to lift their game in terms of eating healthy foods.

It recommended that people increase milk consumption (particularly reduced-fat products).

The dairy industry will welcome this news, and it is a reminder for all parts of government of the important role the industry plays in producing fresh milk and delivering significant health outcomes for the country.

Eating dairy could save Australia billions

AT LEAST \$2 billion could be slashed from the annual healthcare budget if Australians increased their dairy intake, according to a new study. Researchers from the Health Economics and Social Policy group at the University of South Australia reviewed the health benefits of dairy consumption

and calculated the healthcare expenditure in Australia due to low dairy consumption.

Co-author Professor Leonie Segal said the potential healthcare savings associated with consuming the recommended amount of dairy were significant – a sum comparable with the entire public health budget. "The largest healthcare savings were associated with the maintenance of a healthy body weight," Prof Segal said. "Other calculated healthcare savings came from dairy's beneficial effects on type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, hypertension and osteoporosis."

Independent panel to review land access laws

AN INDEPENDENT panel has been appointed to review Queensland's land access laws. The review panel will consult with key industry and community stakeholders to assess the day-to-day workings and effectiveness of the land-access framework.

The panel will also consult with nominated landholders and resource companies that have been directly affected by the framework and have gone through the conduct and compensation agreement process.

The five-person panel will provide a final report, including any recommendations to the government, in February. It will be chaired by Dr David Watson, a Queensland Competition Authority board member and former parliamentary leader of the Queensland Liberal Party in 1998-2001. He will be joined by Gary Sansom, John Cotter, Alice Clark, and Geoff Dickie.

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Badger Bluff Fanny Freddie	Holstein-Friesian	\$50.00	\$25.00
Charlesdale Superstition Et	Holstein-Friesian	\$50.00	\$30.00
Va Early Dawn Sudan Cri Et	Holstein-Friesian	\$50.00	\$39.00
Roumare	Holstein-Friesian	\$50.00	\$35.00
Jenny-Lou Mrshl Toystory-Et	Holstein-Friesian	\$40.00	\$28.00
Ralma Oman Cf Cricket	Holstein-Friesian	\$35.00	\$24.50
Morningview Armstrong Et	Holstein-Friesian	\$30.00	\$16.00
Delta Morazan	Holstein-Friesian	\$28.00	\$24.00
Aloiso	Holstein-Friesian	\$28.00	\$24.00
Aalshorst Pleasure	Holstein-Friesian	\$28.00	\$22.00
Bomaz Shtl Kampman Et	Holstein-Friesian	\$25.00	\$15.00
Co-Op Toystory Cole Et	Holstein-Friesian	\$25.00	\$15.00
Brandt View Hefty Et	Holstein-Friesian	\$25.00	\$15.00
England-Schill Deann 58A Et	Holstein-Friesian	\$25.00	\$16.00
Pine Tree Martha Shampoo	Holstein-Friesian	\$24.00	\$16.00
Big Montana	Holstein-Friesian	\$24.00	\$16.00
Uhland	Holstein-Friesian	\$22.00	\$16.00
Coop Garter Business	Holstein-Friesian	\$16.00	\$11.00
Sunset Canyon Dominican Et	Jersey	\$20.00	\$16.00
Dj Zuma	Jersey	\$25.00	\$16.00
Oomsdale Jace Gratitude Gannon	Jersey	\$20.00	\$14.00

SEXED SEMEN PRICE TABLE	BREED	RRP	MATES RATES
Kian	Red Holstein	\$65.00	\$55.00
Delta Fidelity	Red Holstein	\$65.00	\$55.00
Beekmanshoeve Bertil	Holstein-Friesian	\$55.00	\$50.00
Penn England Liesl	Holstein-Friesian	\$55.00	\$40.00
Wadel Sebastian	Holstein-Friesian	\$55.00	\$40.00
Pine Tree Martha Shampoo	Holstein-Friesian	\$55.00	\$40.00
Wa-Del Rice Holman	Holstein-Friesian	\$50.00	\$40.00
Ladys Manor Marcellus	Holstein-Friesian	\$45.00	\$35.00
Morningview Armstrong Et	Holstein-Friesian	\$40.00	\$32.00
Sunset Canyon Allstar	Jersey	\$50.00	\$40.00
Okura Lika Murmur	Jersey	\$45.00	\$40.00
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Big returns from cooling cows

KEY POINTS

- Hot cows costly to farms
- Effective adaption strategies, sprinklers, shade, fans can cool cows

DAIRYFARMERS were challenged to answer the question would they spend \$400 to make an extra \$1200 at Cool Cows workshops in November.

The question was put to farmers by Jarrod Lees from the University of Queensland (UQ). Mr Lees is investigating the effects of heat load on dairy cows in the subtropical region as part of his PhD studies.

Farmers in the regions of Gatton, Beaudesert, Kilcoy and Eungella attended workshops in November on the effects of heat loading on dairy herds.

Mr Lees used the workshops to explain his current research at Gatton and also highlighted the impacts, both physical and financial, that heat stress and heat loading has on a dairy herd.

Mr Lees summarised some key messages from his research:

• Day two and three effects after high Temperature Humidity Index (THI) days.

The effect of hot weather is not seen in the vat on the same day. Recent research at UQ found that the effect on milk production shows a strong relationship with the average daily THI from two and three days prior. This means that farmers need to take an active approach to heat-stress management. Once the cow is hot, the farm is losing milk.

• **Conception rates.** Conception rates will also be adversely affected by heat load. Oocyte (egg) maturation in the uterus is compromised, and blood hormone levels change; which leads to a failure of the oocyte to implant. Blood flow to the uterus is also decreased as it is redirected to the skin surface for cooling.

• **Herd Health/immune system.** Herd health is also affected when cows are under heat load. The

reason for this is that the cows are already under the stress of milk production. If that is coupled with heat stress, they then have two stressors to cope with and as such become run down. They are like finely tuned athletes. Once a stress is imposed they come unstuck. High production cows (more than 27 kilograms/day) are more adversely affected under extreme conditions.

• **Adaption strategies.** Farmers can take measures to reduce the effect of heat load include milking earlier in the morning and later in the afternoon, so cows are being moved in the cooler part of the day. Cows should be fed higher quality pastures at night time when they are more likely to eat.

• **Sprinklers.** Sprinkler systems in the dairy are one of the more effective ways to cool cows and are cheap. Cows must be wet through to the skin so a large droplet is required, much the same as that produced by a regular garden sprinkler. By incorporating air flow as well, heat loss is increased three-fold. Wetting the concrete before bringing the cows up will also help to reduce further heat load as concrete holds a large amount of heat. But if there is limited or no airflow within the holding yard, sprinklers can cause a yard to become humid, which will only exacerbate the problem.

• **Shade.** Shade over the milking parlour and holding yard, as well as a structure or trees in a loafing area is another effective way to reduce the effect of heat load. If the effect of direct solar radiation is removed, a large source of heat for the cows is removed.

• **Fans.** Fans allow for forced air movement over the cows. This helps to remove the hot air from around the cow and replaces it with cooler air from the surrounding environment.

• **Water points.** Increasing the number of water points is a key feature that will help to maintain milk production. Having clean and cool drinking water available at the dairy for cows, especially



Kilcoy farmers discuss shade with Neil Harrison.



Craig Teese explaining the 'Veresdale Doctor'.

as they leave after milking is extremely important.

Kym and Neil Harrison farm at Mt Kilcoy, Queensland, and have had a sprinkler system in place over their covered yard for the past few seasons.

"It cost about \$300 to install and, along with the natural breeze that flows across the yard, it works well at cooling the cows," Mr Harrison said.

"Our shed has a low roof and with two rows of cows in being milked, it can get very humid and unpleasant. I think after what Jarrod Lees has explained today, we will be installing extractor fans above the pit to remove this humidity and aid extra air flow over the cows."

Veresdale, Qld, dairyfarmer

Craig Teese, who hosted one of the workshops, said his farm was aided in mid-afternoon by the 'Veresdale Doctor' a gentle breeze that comes through the valley, giving the cows a natural cooling aid.

"I also want to erect a solid shade structure at the back of the yard to achieve further benefit for the cows being out of the direct heat of the sun while waiting to be milked," Mr Teese said.

Farmers were shown the Cool Cows website and farm data from participating farmers was entered into a cost:benefit calculator to see the potential income loss from heat stress on their herd.

Adaption strategies were added to this, and the payback



time for each given strategy highlighted the great benefit to the farm.

Many farmers agreed that their return on investment was well worth further investigation.

“Farmers should apply their figures and situation to the calculator and work out what is the best situation for their business as an aid to improve cow comfort, increase production and maintain herd health during the summer months,” Mr Lees said.

Grains2Milk program leader for Dairy Australia, Steve Little, said that the latest message from the Cool Cows program was that the dairy holding yard could be an effective cooling centre on farm if well set up with shade, sprinklers and fans. However, without these aids, the holding yard could also add considerably to cows’ heat load (direct solar radiation, reflected radiation from concrete, and body heat from other cows), undoing the good work done elsewhere on the farm with shade and evaporative cooling to manage cows’ heat load.

Many cows in Australia stand in a dairy holding yard before milking for three to four hours a day or even longer. The aim should be to get cows through the holding yard in less than 60 minutes per milking.

Dr Little said Cool Cows was encouraging farmers to think about grouping their cows to shorten time in the holding yard. Cows should also have access to drinking water immediately after they exit the dairy parlour.

This project is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry under FarmReady, part of Australia’s Farming Future.

MORE INFO

Cool Cows Website
<www.coolcows.com.au>

Dairy Australia website
<<http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Animals-feed-and-environment/Animal-health/Heat-stress.aspx>>

Reef Rescue grants aid wet season management

WITH the wet season here again, the memories of elevated cell counts and boggy conditions are once again fresh in the minds of Queensland dairyfarmers.

Cruising around his farm on his quad-bike, North Queensland dairyfarmer Bryan Anderson breathes a sigh of relief. This year promises to be different, thanks to a Reef Rescue Water Quality Grant that enabled the installation of a concrete creek crossing on his main laneway.

Running through the middle of his farm is Butcher’s Creek – a watercourse that his cattle must traverse almost daily to access pasture paddocks.

“Before the installation of the concrete crossing, the herd could cross at various points on the creek, which made mustering more labour- and time-intensive – not to mention the havoc it was playing on their feet and incidence levels of mastitis,” Mr Anderson said.

It wasn’t a surprise to Mr Anderson when DairySAT, a self-assessment tool used to improve productivity and on-farm management practices, identified this as an area for improvement.

The Reef Rescue Water Quality Grants provided him with an excellent opportunity to minimise water quality risk and improve cow comfort levels.

“I have no control over the weather but I can make management and infrastructure decisions that reduce my cell count and improve my environmental management,” he said.

Mr Anderson decided to upgrade an existing crossing point by reinforcing it with large rocks and concrete.

He then fenced off the creek to confine the cattle to the crossing and installed off-stream watering troughs to facilitate the supply of stock water away from the creek.

“Although there is bound to

still be a few headaches this wet season, thanks to the Reef Rescue Grant, boggy conditions will be significantly reduced,” he said. “I expect to see better cow movement and improved herd health as a result.”

Reef Rescue Water Quality Grants in the Tablelands Region has provided financial assistance to 26 Wet Tropics dairyfarmers.

These projects aim to improve water quality in the catchments entering the Great Barrier Reef Lagoon. Year five of the Water Quality Grants program will be opening in late January and closing on March 16. Information is available on the Queensland Dairyfarmers’ Organisation website <www.dairypage.com.au>.

The project is supported by the Dairying Better ‘n Better program and Terrain NRM, through funding from the Australian Government’s Caring for Our Country initiative.

From Dung to Dirt: chance to get involved

FOUR new Dairying Better ‘n Better (DBnB) groups will be formed this year in the South Burnett and Northern Darling Downs regions.

Farmers from Wondai, Crows Nest, Maclagan and Oakey will have the opportunity to join these groups and be involved in the From Dung to Dirt program, which is funded through the Caring for our Country Program, run by the Australian Government.

The From Dung to Dirt project is designed to improve the soil health and carbon of these dairying areas while also allowing farmers to assess their management practices and improve them for the betterment of the environment and farm profitability.

DBnB group members will undertake assessment of current practices using the DairySAT tool and from this each group will identify farming practices that are considered high priorities.

A number of farmers who are in this group will receive support from industry specialists to development farm-specific Soil and Nutrient Management Plans (SNMPs).

The SNMP gives a comprehensive management plan that includes farm mapping, risk assessment, nutrient analysis, soil carbon levels and practical recommendations for farmers to improve soil health, nutrient management and highlighting potential nutrient losses across the farm.

Soil and Nutrient management workshops hosted by member farmers will deliver the skills and knowledge to understand topics such as soil relationships, physical characteristics, soil biology, soil nutrients and management options available to improve soil health, through an interactive workshop and paddock walk.

These workshops will be

delivered by soil experts and are a great learning tool to help develop best practice with soil and nutrient management.

Each DBnB group will also have funds available to help contribute to on-farm trial work in cutting-edge technology that will improve soil health and carbon levels. Groups, with technical advice, will identify the regions needs and select practices that have the greatest potential to improve these needs.

Farmers in these areas who are interested in joining the new DBnB groups should contact the Queensland Dairy Natural Resource Management (NRM) team, phone (07) 3236 2955.

The Dairying Better ‘n Better Program is a partnership between the Queensland Dairyfarmers’ Organisation (QDO) and Subtropical Dairy and supported by Dairy Australia.

Nutrient use efficiency research underway

KEY POINTS

- Project to look at fertiliser use on farm
- Will track nitrogen through to various points

AN ON-FARM nutrient use efficiency research project is now under way with sites established on Thefs' Gympie dairy farm and the Ravenshoe State High School dairy farm.

The Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO) has partnered with the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and James Cook University (JCU) to assess the efficiency of nitrogen and phosphorus fertilisers using state-of-the-art technology to measure losses from leaching, run-off and gaseous emissions.

This research will answer some critical questions about the movement of nutrients used on dairy pastures, particularly nitrogen fertiliser. It is well known that nitrogen efficiency in agriculture (the percentage of nitrogen brought onto farms that ends up in saleable products – for example, milk, hay, grain and cattle) is generally low.

The Accounting for Nutrients on Australian Dairy Farms project found the median efficiency for nitrogen and phosphorus on 41 Australian dairy farms was 26% and 35% respectively. This is in line with results in other countries, but small changes in efficiency have the potential to vastly improve sustainability and profitability for dairyfarmers.

This research will quantify the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen lost through the various pathways (run-off, leaching and gaseous emissions) under intensive irrigated dairyfarming systems.

Research leaders, Professor Peter Grace (QUT) and Dr Paul Nelson (JCU), will use urea containing a harmless naturally



LEFT: Dave Rowlings, Queensland University of Technology, conducts a soil survey at the nutrient-use efficiency research site on Thefs' dairy farm, Gympie, Qld.

BELOW: David Rowlings, Queensland University of Technology; Jeff Titmarsh, Ninderry Associates, Toowoomba; and Lee Waller, Queensland University of Technology, install run-off flumes at the nutrient-use efficiency research site on Thefs' dairy farm, Gympie, Qld.

occurring isotope of nitrogen (N15) to trace exactly where the nitrogen applied goes.

Automated equipment will capture gaseous emissions, run-off and water leaching through the soil profile. The uptake of N15 in the pastures will also be measured.

By combining this information with comprehensive soil profile nutrient analysis and data from soil solution samplers, the research will help to solve the mystery of where the nitrogen and phosphorus ends up after it has been broadcast onto the paddock.

The research will also determine whether a slow-release form of urea treated with a nitrification inhibitor can improve production and reduce nitrogen losses, and a cost-benefit analysis on the practice will show if the treatment has potential to help dairyfarmers to become



more profitable and sustainable in the future.

Farmers will have the opportunity to visit the research sites and to find out more about the project directly from the researchers at the field days to be held in May this year.

The research is part of the Dairying Better 'n Better program, which is a partnership

between QDO and Subtropical Dairy. It is funded by the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country Reef Rescue Program and Incitec Pivot Fertilisers Limited.

MORE INFO

QDO
Phone (07) 3236 2955

Q2 project a success for the dairy industry

KEY POINTS

- Program improves land-use management on coastal dairy farms
- Improved management practices on farm
- Better quality water entering Great Barrier Reef

THE Q2 Coasts & Country program, which focused on assisting dairyfarmers operating in Great Barrier Reef catchments, concluded at the end of 2011.

The project saw farmers involved in the Dairying Better 'n Better for Tomorrow (DBnB) groups improve on-farm management practices. They did this through skills and knowledge development, which had the outcome of improving water quality entering the Great Barrier Reef catchments.

Dairyfarmers from the Burnett Mary, Fitzroy Basin, Burdekin Dry Tropics and the Wet Tropics regions were involved in the project.

Funding through the project went toward delivering:

- water quality grants for projects that address high water quality risk practices;
- Soil and Nutrient Management Plans (SNMP);
- Soil and nutrient workshops; and
- property mapping.

Nine water quality grants were approved to farmers, which resulted in better management practices being applied to 788 hectares of dairying land.

Projects included permanent creek crossings, nutrient reuse, minimising nutrient loss through erosion and run off and minimum tillage practices.

A total of \$104,500 was spent by farmers to complete their projects, of which \$37,400 came from funding.

Ben Fredrickson, who milks 145 cows at Eungella, Queensland, was one of those



Kev Shaw, Landline Consulting, explains the mapping of soil nutrient loss to the Malanda DBnB group during the soil and nutrient management day in November.



The construction of a creek crossing at Mitch Humphries farm at Millaa Millaa, Qld, was aided by funding from the Q2 Coast and Country water quality grants.

successful in his project work.

Mr Fredrickson upgraded his sump and distribution area for effluent for the 145-hectare dairy unit.

The project also saw a weeping wall installed that will help remove any debris interference in the application process.

"My aim was to minimise the effluent run off by increasing the area I applied the liquid to," Mr Frederickson said. "I now have better utilisation of my effluent as a fertiliser and this will reduce the amount of purchased fertiliser."

"With the current situation, the project would not have been able to happen without the funding I received, so I am very grateful of that."

Another major part of the project was to develop total farm Soil and Nutrient Management Plans (SNMP).

A total of 31 farmers received these plans which covered 2213ha of dairying land. Each farm-specific plan identified soil and nutrient issues on farm and then a management plan was produced to increase nutrient use efficiency to deal with any associated risks.

Tom Prandolini from Millaa Millaa who milks 120 cows on his 88ha farm received an SNMP.

"It is a very well-written document and was put together by an independent service provider," Mr Prandolini said. "I liked the way the soil samples were taken in each management zone, and by the large number of core samples being taken you get a superior soil analysis result."

Mr Prandolini is a dryland farmer and thinks that soil pH is critical for his future production after liming was something the region neglected in the past 15

years in favour for a quick result from urea.

A great enhancement following the development of SNMPS for farmers was the delivery of soil and nutrient management workshops facilitated by the DBnB team. In the past four months, 55 farmers and service providers attended these workshops, which were delivered by industry specialists David Hall, Pursehouse Rural, in Wide Bay Burnett and Central Queensland regions and Kev Shaw, Landline Consulting, in Far North Queensland.

The workshops took farmers through topics that would aid them in understanding total soil health.

This knowledge would aid them when making key decisions related to production of their crops and pastures.

Areas that were covered included soil/plant/animal ecosystem relationships, soil structures, soil characteristics, soil biology, soil nutrients and chemistry and improving soil health.

Steve Stenhouse, who hosted the Central Queensland workshop at his farm at Rossmoya, Queensland, said the day was "fantastic and even my agronomist has learnt some new information".

"The day was excellent and it has made me look at soil health and my approach differently," he said. "We have now implemented changes to our practices and I hope our DBnB group can have a follow-up session with David soon."

The Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation, on behalf of the industry, thanks the Queensland Government, through the Department of Environment and Resource Management, and the NRM bodies for their support in the industry farm management system, Dairying Better 'n Better, which continues to accelerate the adoption of improved land management practices on dairy farms throughout Queensland.

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A blower was never considered by Steve because it uses 40% more power, needs a bigger motor, can't be repaired on the farm & cost's twice as much when compared to an equivalent vane pump!! Blowers are not a cost effective solution!



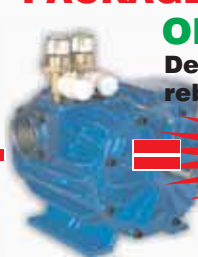
Steve Shipton of Cobargo

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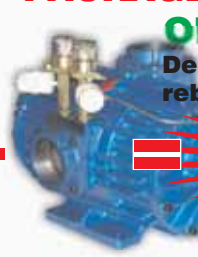
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Starting out as a dairy employer

KEY POINTS

- Starting out as employer can be daunting
- People in Dairy website has resources to help
- Answers questions about pay rates, time off, health and safety etc

WITH the trend towards increasing herd size, more dairyfarmers are finding themselves in the role of employer. Starting out as a dairy employer can be daunting but The People in Dairy website has a section, People Basics, designed specially for those starting out.

Dr Pauline Brightling, who manages Dairy Australia's The People in Dairy program, said people issues were important to dairy business success, whether it involved an owner-operator, a single person manager or a large corporate business.

"People often ask 'where do we start and what do we do?' People Basics quickly directs you to the 'must have' online



People issues are important to dairy business success, whether it involves an owner-operator, a single person manager or a large corporate business.



resources and templates on The People in Dairy website," Dr Brightling said.

People Basics guides the user through the issues that usually come up when an employer starts looking at people management.

For example, what does the law require the employer to do in terms of pay rates, time off, safety, etc? How do they get staff to perform well all the time?

"Most dairy employers want to do the right thing by their staff," she said. "But it has not always been easy to know what 'the right thing' involves, especially when hiring for the first time.

"People Basics is the place to start. Once farmers start working through these issues, they become interested in related topics, or want to look at a particu-

lar issue in more detail. And from People Basics it is usually just a click or two to get to the relevant information."

Dairy employers also want to attract and keep good people. To do this they must be competitive with other industries.

"Although remuneration plays a part, there are other factors that make a business attractive to work in," Dr Brightling said.

People are more likely to stay with a dairy business that runs smoothly, is productive and that offers a fair reward and recognition for effort. It needs to be a friendly place that respects people and strives for a balance between work and life.

The People in Dairy Program is an example of the dairy industry levy at work. For more information on this and other examples of the levy at work visit Dairy Australia's website <www.dairyaustralia.com.au>.

MORE INFO
People in Dairy Website:
www.thepeopleindairy.org.au
Phone: (03) 9620 7283

Working on the business, not just in it

ALL dairy managers can benefit from taking time out to work on the business, rather than in it. This is the message from Dr Pauline Brightling who manages The People in Dairy program for Dairy Australia.

"It doesn't matter how large or small a dairy operation is, there's value in taking ourselves away from the distractions of the daily farming activities and thinking about it from a different perspective," said Dr Brightling.

"As a dairy business grows and employs more people it becomes increasingly important to do this."

The concept may start with the introduction of regular staff meetings where the people involved in the farm can discuss plans for the coming weeks and



issues that may need special attention.

It may also include taking the time to document the farm's procedures and policies.

"It sounds simple but the process of documenting these things helps the business owner or manager think through practices that have been communicated informally in the past," Dr Brightling said. "It is the first step for formalising farm sys-



No matter how large or small a dairy operation is, there's value in taking time away from the distractions of the daily farming activities and thinking about the business from a different perspective.

tems and it helps managers and employees to have a clear understanding of what's expected."

Another step is to write job descriptions for staff.

"Job descriptions are often prepared when a position becomes vacant on the farm," she said. "It's a good opportunity to

think about the tasks involved and the skills required."

The process of writing a job description helps the owner or manager clarify in their own mind what they need from the position and the type of person who will fit the role.

And having a written job ▶

◀ description helps the new staff member know exactly what is expected of them.

“Job descriptions, procedures, policies, staff meetings – you can’t do any of these on the run, while you are busy with the day-to-day activities on the farm. They are best done by taking time out, away from the farm, to concentrate on the business rather than the daily chores.”

Many of these tasks can be made easier by using the templates and tools available on The People in Dairy website.

“Dairyfarming can be a hectic occupation,” Dr Brightling said. “But when you take time away to look at things differently you’ll often come up with ideas that save time and stress every day.

“Having these key documents – job descriptions, farm policies, procedures – also help present the operation as a professional business. And in the long run that will help address the on-going issue of attracting, developing and retaining people in the dairy industry.”

For more information visit website <www.thepeopleindairy.org.au> or phone (03) 9620 7283.

People make it happen

WHETHER or not a mastitis management program works well in practice comes down to the people involved.

Team work and communication can help get the right people doing the right things at the right time.

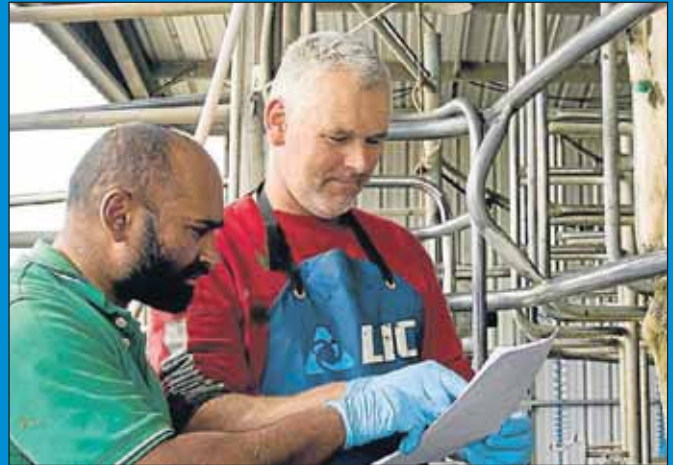
Dairy Australia’s Countdown Downunder project leader, Dr John Penry, has some tips for building a team approach to mastitis management.

Firstly, everyone involved needs to understand mastitis: where the various risks occur on the farm and what to do to manage those risks. That usually involves some training.

Ideally, have all managers and staff do the course together. It’s a good step towards building a team culture.

The second step is for everyone to take personal responsibility for the practices involved in managing mastitis risk on farm. Countdown Downunder has clear guidelines for on-farm practices to manage mastitis.

“If you want staff to take personal responsibility for putting those guidelines into prac-



Involving staff in developing mastitis protocols helps come up with workable and valued solutions.

...tice, it’s worth getting them involved in working out the day-to-day procedures,” Dr Penry said. “Working together builds the team spirit and creates shared ownership of the final decisions.

“If you ask the team to work out the farm’s processes, they’ll talk about the logistics that make the difference between a good intention and good practice. The process they come up with will be workable and valued.”

Involving staff in making the decisions means the mastitis management practices become part of the team culture rather than policies imposed from above.

“Taking the time and effort to involve your team in working out the farm’s mastitis management protocols pays for itself many times over – in reduced treatment costs, avoided production losses, and less stress in the dairy,” Dr Penry said.

Get staff involved in broad aspects of the farm

INVOLVING staff in developing dairy farm policies and protocols can boost morale and improve performance, even in tough times.

For a business to run smoothly, everyone needs to understand the farm policies and their roles in the business, according to Dairy Australia’s Dr Pauline Brightling who manages The People in Dairy program.

“Policies, procedures and systems provide an invisible ‘structure’ to the business that helps everyone understand how and why things should be done,” she said.

“When you employ staff it becomes increasingly important to have documented systems for the smooth running of the farm. You can’t personally over-



see everything and there is an increasing requirement to demonstrate safe and ethical business management through formal documentation.

“Integration of all operations, policies and procedures into a farm business manual provides

an all-in-one document that guides the business.

“Everyone on the farm should be involved in developing this document so they ‘own’ it and are willing to use it.

“Staff have a very clear understanding about what is

Involving staff in developing dairy farm policies and farm protocols can boost morale and improve performance.

involved with different procedures and appreciate being consulted and having their role in the business formally recognised.”

Dr Brightling said The People in Dairy website had a number of resources and templates to help develop farm policies and a procedure manual, making the task easier and simple. A good place to start is the People Basics section on The People in Dairy website.

People Basics is designed to help dairy employers take a first step into addressing people issues, without being overwhelmed by the details.

Safety checklists cut risks

A SIMPLE safety checklist can help maintain a safe farm working environment by identifying potential risks and taking steps to prevent accidents.

Dr Pauline Brightling, who manages Dairy Australia's The People in Dairy program, said farms differed from most other workplaces because people lived and worked at the same location. Older and younger family members, as well as workers, were at risk from hazards on the farm.

"The prevention of personal injury and ill health associated with working and living on the farm is a priority for everyone in the dairy industry," Dr Brightling said.

"All farm businesses have an obligation under law to provide a safe and healthy workplace for their



employees, contractors, family, visitors and members of the public. Farm businesses who don't act to fulfil health and safety responsibilities face significant fines and penalties."

The People in Dairy website has a safety checklist to help identify potential risks and hazards and identify ways they can be eliminated or controlled.

It covers traffic, power and electrical, environment, manual handling, dairy hazards, confined spaces, farm chemicals, emergency response, workplace



Dairy businesses have a legal obligation to make sure the people working on the farm understand the OH&S risks involved with dairyfarming and follow the farm's occupational health and safety policies.

policies and machinery and equipment risks.

Dr Brightling said further help was available for those who needed it.

A number of dairy companies are introducing programs to support improved farm safety,

which include an independent farm safety audit.

"An independent person can often help identify hazards, which may go unnoticed by people who work on the farm," she said.



Getting on top of hoof health

Caring for your herd's hooves and legs is part of the daily health check. Keeping an eye on feet not only saves a cow from pain, it makes financial sense.

Dairy Australia calculates estimates each lame cow can cost up to \$600 to \$700/year through lost milk production, lower fertility, an increased risk of culling and actual treatment costs.

About 80%-90% of lameness occurs in the feet; most commonly in hind feet.

You can restrain a cow in a crush or rotary bail or even on the platform in a herringbone dairy.

If you suspect lameness, examine the hoof using an examination kit comprising:

- a soft rope for tying the leg;
- hoof testers;
- a sharp hoof knife (double-sided) protected with a pouch;
- sharp hoof trimmers; and
- sharpening tools.

Examine the foot, looking for:

- sole injuries;
- white line disease;
- foot rot, or
- interdigital cracks.

The more stable and comfortable a cow feels, the quieter she will stand. Having a non-slip surface and/or straps to support the weight of the cow will assist.

Talk to your vet about treatments like trimming and paring, blocks, antibiotics, anti-inflammatories/painkillers and rest. If more than 7% of the herd is affected by lameness, problems will be identifiable which should be worked on with advice from your vet.

Visit www.dairyaustralia.com.au for suggestions on ways to help restore hoof health in your herd.

This is one of the many examples of the dairy service levy at work locally. Farmers receive a benefit of \$3 for every \$1 invested by Dairy Australia on their behalf. For more information on this and other levy investments visit www.dairyaustralia.com.au

Qld scientists give cattle tick the flick

KEY POINTS

- Qld researchers close to developing tick vaccine
- Would save dairy and beef industries millions
- Ticks developing resistance to pesticides

QUEENSLAND scientists are a step closer to finding a cattle tick vaccine that could save the national beef and dairy industries about \$175 million per annum and reduce the need for pesticides.

Using a novel science that has not been carried out anywhere else in the world, researchers have pinpointed tick vaccine antigens that will enable cattle to resist tick infestations.

The vaccine antigens produce a bovine immune response that interferes with tick attachment and feeding, reducing tick numbers by up to 60% and decreases the ability of surviving ticks to lay eggs.

The project, which is being led by the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation (QAAFI), a research Institute at the University of Queensland, recently recorded 50-87% protection from ticks in early-phase cattle immunisation trials.

The research received a \$1.4 million Queensland Government Smart State grant and project partners include the Department of Employment Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI), the Co-operative Research Centre (CRC) for Beef Genetic Technologies, Meat & Livestock Australia and Murdoch University in Perth.

QAAFI scientist, Dr Ala Lew-Tabor, said in recent years tick infestation was reported as the 'number one' cattle health problem in Australia.

"Traditional means of controlling ticks, using tick pesticides called acaricides, is slowly declining due to ticks developing resistance," Dr Lew-Tabor said.



Ticks cost the dairy and beef industries millions of dollars in lost production.



Queensland researchers are working on a tick vaccine.

"During our five-year research program, we've developed new tick research tools, generated 10 times more tick genomic data and established a specific bioinformatics capacity through Murdoch University's Centre for Comparative Genomics."

This research enabled the QAAFI team to identify potential genes most likely to produce positive immune responses.

Dr Ala Lew-Tabor and her DEEDI technical team fed adult ticks antibodies targeting these genes and recorded strong results

in the laboratory, which have been supported by the early-phase cattle immunisation trials.

Chief executive officer of the Beef Genetic Technologies CRC, Dr Heather Burrow, said that reduced productivity in the beef and dairy industries due to tick infestation was currently one of the most costly and difficult management issues and had high impacts on cattle welfare.

"This work is novel science that has not been carried out anywhere else in the world," Dr Burrow said. "Together with our US and Brazilian partners,

Australia stands to lead the way in safe and effective tick management."

The project has strong international partnerships with the US Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Research Services, and the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA) and attracted international experts in the field to move to Queensland and join this leading research.

In 2007, Dr Manuel Rodriguez Valle, who was instrumental in the development of the Cuban anti-cattle tick vaccine GAVAC, immigrated to Australia specifically to join the QAAFI research team and work on this project.

The promising early-phase trial results have clear potential for the beef and dairy industry worldwide and have caught the attention of several large animal health companies.

Dr Lew-Tabor said that while the project team had made excellent progress through the discovery and testing of these potential tick vaccine candidates, a commercial product was still several years away.

"Once potential vaccine candidates are licensed to a company to develop into a commercial vaccine, it takes approximately five to eight years to complete registration requirements for use in Australia and overseas," she said.

QAAFI draws together 100 research teams specialising in plant, animal and food sciences from 12 UQ and DEEDI sites across Queensland.

It was established in 2010 as a collaborative arrangement with funding and personnel from DEEDI to strengthen the research base underpinning Queensland's food and agriculture industries.

The QAAFI vision is to be a world leader in tropical and sub-tropical agricultural and food research and development, and support sustainable food production through the application of cutting-edge science and science education.

Exciting program planned for 2012

Dairy In Action calendar

Date	Topic	Location	Contact
February 14	Dry cow/springer nutrition workshop	Oakey RSL	Dave Barber, phone 0427 603 243
February 15	Dry cow/springer nutrition workshop	Allora community hall	Dave Barber, phone 0427 603 243
February 16	Feed additives and mineral nutrition workshop	Wondai Diggers Club	Dave Barber, phone 0427 603 243
February 28	Winter pasture management field day	Gympie	Ross Warren, phone (07) 5480 4418
March 2	Alternative dry land summer forage options – On-farm Demonstration	Westbrook	Jo Gorman, phone 0427 761 376
March 20-21	Basic nutrition course workshop	Malanda	Dave Barber, phone 0427 603 243
March 27-28	Basic nutrition course workshop	Monto	Dave Barber, phone 0427 603 243
March 29	Winter pasture management field day	Burnett	Ross Warren, phone (07) 5480 4418

THE Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) Dairy in Action and C4Milk projects have an exciting 2012 planned.

This will include hosting various activities looking at 2011 forage research results, alternative summer forage options with on-farm demonstration sites, as well as a road show to share the highlights of the Cow Comfort Tour DEEDI staff and farmers went on to the US.

The second half of C4Milk's feed conversion efficiency (FCE) project has already started, revisiting the 70 farms surveyed in 2011, and later in the year will run a number of days sharing the northern dairy industry's regional results.

The DEEDI team will also continue to deliver workshops, field days and hold discussion groups that were nominated by farmers in the 2011 regional needs analysis survey. These events have been tailored specifically to regional needs, with further information to be published on website <www.dairyinfo.biz>, in the bimonthly *The Northern Dairyfarmer* magazine, in the Queensland Dairyfarmer's Organisation's weekly e-newsletter or by contacting Jo Gorman, mobile 0427 761 376 or phone (07) 5460 1192.

The DEEDI team look forward to seeing farmers at their next local activity.

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Wednesday 22nd	Conference Day 1 and Elanco BBQ at Lardner Park
Thursday 23rd	Conference Day 2 at Lardner Park and Rabobank Conference dinner at Kernot Hall, Morwell
Friday 24th	Ellinbank Research Centre visit and post conference tour

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Batch joining offers a way around hot months

KEY POINTS

- Year-round herds calve in three batches
- Avoid joining in hottest months of year
- Also provides for more focused management



Batch calving can achieve year-round milk supply while avoiding joining over the hot, humid months when pregnancy rates are lower.

INCREASING numbers of dairyfarmers in hot regions are using batch joining as a way to achieve year-round milk supply while avoiding joining over the hot, humid months when pregnancy rates are lower.

In summer, dairy cows can be at risk of heat stress, caused by either high temperatures or a combination of heat and humidity. Heat stress complicates reproductive management:

- cows in the first three weeks of pregnancy may abort; and
- cows are more likely to have silent heats, shortened heats or reduced in-calf rates.

Dr Barry Zimmermann, who manages Dairy Australia's InCalf project, said that while batch joining had good benefits for the farming system, the lifestyle benefits were also attractive.

"Farmers can achieve year-round milk supply by joining the herd to calve in one, two or more batches," Dr Zimmermann said. "Regardless of the number of batches, the key is to avoid joining over the hot humid months, particularly in January and February."

In terms of labour and lifestyle, the batch joining system with a break during the summer makes January a fairly easy

month as there's no calving, calf rearing or joining.

"You can arrange your system so that January is a family-friendly month to match the school holidays while still achieving year-round milk supply, and winter price incentives."

There are also benefits for the herd. Better in-calf rates are achieved by avoiding joining in the hot/humid months, and calf health and welfare are improved by having them weaned before they are at risk of heat stress.

Batch joining also allows for more focused management and streamlined labour demands.

"With a true year-round calving herd, managers juggle a wide range of tasks on any given day – heat detection, calving, calf rearing, transition feeding, joining on top of the daily routine of milking and feeding the herd," he said.

Daily activities are more focused with a batch system: a block of heat detection and joining, followed by a break; and this translates to blocks of calving and calf rearing later in the year.

Regardless of the herd's calving pattern, be sure to use the Cool Cows resources to find

ways to reduce the impact of heat stress on herd fertility, available at <www.coolcows.com.au>.

MORE INFO

Dairy Australia

Website:

<<http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Animals-feed-and-environment/Fertility>>

Email:

<enquiries@incalf.com.au>

Phone: (03) 9620 7283

QDO Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation

NEW PROGRAM!!!

Dairy & Fodder Water for Profit

Queensland Producers ONLY
March 2010 - December 2012

Farm Walks, Field Days & Workshops

A range of farm walks, field days & workshops will be held over the program, to allow producers to access information & learn more about new technologies & ways to improve water use efficiency & productivity on farm.

On Farm System Assessment (OFSA) Service

Carried out by independent service providers, to provide you with advice to improve your irrigation or water reuse system. The assessment includes an evaluation of current system & recommendations to improve system.

Irrigation Scheduling Equipment Scheme

New grant, provides a 12 month loan of scheduling equipment to eligible producers to increase performance on their low pressure system. The scheme also provides producers with a demonstration on how to use the equipment. The equipment will assist producers to irrigate pastures & crops effectively.

Financial Assistance Scheme

The scheme is available to eligible dairy farms & commercial fodder producers* & includes two grants:

- i. System Improvement Implementation Grant
- ii. Efficiency Achievement Grant

To be eligible to apply for a grant under the Scheme, an eligible producer must either attend a DFWP Workshop & / or have an OFSA carried out on their system.

If you are interested in becoming involved please complete the enclosed Expression of Interest (EOI) & return to QDO.

*conditions apply

Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation
PO Box 13061, George St Post Office Q 4003 / Phone: 07 3236 2955



Irrigation Water Reuse



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2012 Dairy Show 2012

Thursday 29th - Saturday 31st March 2012

In excess of \$16,000 in Trophies and Prize Money



Feature Breed Holstein Friesian

Thursday 29th March 2012:

Full Youth Spectacular
International Speaker
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Junior Judges
Dairy BBQ from 7:00pm

Friday 30th March 2012:

Interbreed Judging:- from 9am
Breeds represented: Ayrshire;
Brown Swiss; Guernsey;
Holstein Friesian; Illawarra; Jersey

Saturday 31st March 2012:- Supreme Judging

Entries Close:
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Catalogues available from
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For further information Entries or Sponsorship contact:
Dairy Committee Chairman;
Mr Wayne Bradshaw:- wbradshaw@jefo.com or
RASQ Office: rasqadmin@rasq.com.au
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Forage risks can be managed

KEY POINTS

- Forage crops involve increased risks
- Take steps to minimise risks
- Take account of risks in planning

GROWING forage crops for dairy feed provides high yields but carries some risk. Rather than avoiding risk, farmers are encouraged to understand and manage it.

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

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

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

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

Climate risk

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

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

Secondly, maintain a flexible approach to feedbase management. Monitor the seasonal outlook and adjust plans if needed.

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

"A CFS relies on having enough irrigation water to achieve



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



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

Price risk

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

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

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

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

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

"Prepare an accurate budget in advance," he said. "Allow for new costs associated with capital investment such as a mixer

wagon or feedpad. And aim for an operating profit with a safety margin so that an unexpected milk price decrease will not result in a loss."

Human risk

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

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

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

Financial risk

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

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

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

Environmental risk

Environmental risk refers to uncertainty about the potential

impact of a CFS on the environment.

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

"At the end of the day, everyone has their own level of risk that they are comfortable with," Assoc Prof Garcia said. "Remember, most risk types cannot be avoided, but they can be managed. And the way you manage them can make a big difference to the end result."

This article is based on Tech Note 6: Risk, one of in a series of eight technical notes about Complementary Forage Systems, published by FutureDairy in September 2011. The series is available at website <www.futuredairy.com.au>. It also includes a set of case studies from six commercial farms in the Hunter Valley who implemented a CFS.

MORE INFO

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Workshops dish dirt on fertilisers

KEY POINTS

- Organic fertilisers focus of new Darling Downs project
- Trials to be conducted
- Regular workshops to provide updated information

DARLING Downs producers on the lookout for ways to increase their productivity as well as profitability should keep their eyes on a new project digging deeper into organic fertiliser options.

The collaborative Exploring Organic Fertilisers project kicked off in the middle of last year with a series of informal workshops co-hosted by Condamine Alliance and Pathway Ag, a division of Pursehouse Rural.

Led by research and development manager for Pathway Ag, David Hall, the long-term project aims to help farmers and consultants better understand the use of organic fertilisers to benefit not only production but also their bottom lines.

Workshops were held at Toowoomba, Pittsworth, Dalby, Clifton and Chinchilla and attracted a broad audience, including farmers, agronomists, researchers and educators – varying from those who had background knowledge to those starting out.

“The workshops were a great



Tim Neale, Bill Callaghan and Jillian Condell wanted to know more about organic fertilisers.

way to make connections with local people from across the Downs to help inform the development of the project,” Mr Hall said. “We were able to talk about information that is currently available as well as how the project and its trials will progress. It also gave people the opportunity to update, clarify or find out how current their knowledge is.”

For Landmark agronomist Paul McIntosh, attending the Toowoomba workshop was a chance to link in with the project and reaffirm his understanding of the topic. “You don’t often get a chance to hear from other companies on their work,” he said. “This was a great opportunity to catch up and listen to David’s presentation as well as to make sure I’m up-to-date on information.”

The workshop also provided some straight-forward information in this area. Specialising in fertilisers with Incitec Pivot, Bede O’Mara said: “In my experience there seems to be a lot of confusion around the topic;



Phil McCullough, Bede O’Mara, Paul McIntosh and David Hall at the workshop.

David presented in a simple way which helped clear up some points and was very informative.”

With sustainable agriculture highlighted for inclusion in his school’s curriculum, the Australian Agricultural College Corporation’s Bill Callaghan said he was looking forward to outcomes from the project. “It’s good to hear about the project and that we are starting to get some science into trials looking at organic options,” Mr Callaghan said. “I think organics is next-generation in sustainable agriculture as we start to see interest from outside the sector for this type of action.”

Condamine Alliance chief executive officer Phil McCullough said the group was pleased to support this project, which would benefit the catchment’s agricultural industry. “Condamine Alliance is committed to agriculture and recognises the importance of this catchment in terms of Australia’s food production,” he said.

“Condamine Alliance will continue to be involved throughout this project in a role that will support activities like this so that key information and outcomes are shared with the wider agricultural community.”

The project has strong industry support and involvement from key stakeholders, including Arkwood, Condamine Alliance, Conservation Farmers Inc, Environorganics, Incitec Pivot, McLean Farms, Meat and Livestock Australia, Organic Nutrients, Pathway Ag, the Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, and the University of Queensland (Gatton Campus).

This initiative is supported by Condamine Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Program with funding from the Australian Government’s Caring for Our Country and the Queensland Government’s Q2 Coasts and Country.

Contact: David Hall, email <d.hall@prural.com.au>

Survey to inform new fireweed management guide

RESEARCHERS from the University of New England and CSIRO will soon be conducting a survey of rural landholders as part of a two-year project exploring control and management options for fireweed.

The project is being funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).

Fireweed, a native of South Africa, is a poisonous plant that, when eaten by cattle or horses, may lead to a decrease in condi-

tion and, eventually, death. It is capable of germinating and flowering throughout much of the year, making year-long management difficult.

The survey will examine the ecological conditions under which fireweed grows best, what kinds of pasture grasses compete most effectively with fireweed, what methods landholders use to control the weed, and the impact it has had on farm management.

As fireweed is primarily a weed of coastal grazing pastures, the survey will be aimed specifi-

cally at graziers and dairyfarmers in coastal NSW and south-east Queensland, where it is currently spreading rapidly.

UNE’s Professor Brian Sindel, the leader of the project and a world authority on fireweed, conducted a similar survey during the 1980s, and so the 2011 survey will provide important information on how the impact and management of fireweed have changed over the intervening period.

A link to the online version of the fireweed impact survey, as



Fireweed is spreading rapidly in coastal areas in northern NSW and south-east Queensland.

well as more information on the research, is available on the project’s Web site, hosted on <www.ruralfutures.une.edu.au>.

Contact: Professor Brian Sindel, email <bsindel@une.edu.au>, phone (02) 6773 3747.

February 9:	Soil and Nutrient Management Workshop Wondai/Murgon Contact: Jade Hauser Phone: (07) 3236 2955	March 2:	Energy Workshop Easleas' Farm, Dayboro Contact: Jade Hauser Phone: (07) 3236 2955
February 10:	Soil and Nutrient Management Workshop Gin Gin Contact: Jade Hauser Phone: (07) 3236 2955	March 3:	Feed Budgeting Workshop Nanango RSL Contact: Dave Barber Phone: 0427 603 243
February 14:	Dry Cow/Springer Nutrition Oakey RSL Contact: Dave Barber Phone: 0427 603 243	March 5:	Soil and Nutrient Management Workshop Crows Nest Contact: Jade Hauser Phone: (07) 3236 2955
February 15:	Dry Cow/Springer Nutrition Allora Community Hall Contact: Dave Barber Phone: 0427 603 243	March 6:	Soil and Nutrient Management Workshop MacLagan Contact: Jade Hauser Phone: (07) 3236 2955
February 12-16:	Young Dairy Network Tour Tasmania Contact: Viv McCollum Phone: 0428 718 620	March 7:	Soil and Nutrient Management Workshop Oakey Contact: Jade Hauser Phone: (07) 3236 2955
February 16:	Feed additives and Mineral Nutrition Field Day Wondai Diggers Club Contact: Dave Barber Phone: 0427 603 243	March 8:	Soil and Nutrient Management Workshop Pittsworth Contact: Jade Hauser Phone: (07) 3236 2955
February 21-24:	10th Anniversary Australian Dairy Conference Lardner Park, Gippsland, Victoria Contact: < www.australiandairyconference.com.au >	March 9:	Soil and Nutrient Management Workshop Allora Contact: Jade Hauser Phone: (07) 3236 2955
February 27:	Energy Workshop Garrats Farm Southbrook Contact: Jade Hauser Phone: (07) 3236 2955	March 15:	Soil and Nutrient Management Workshop Woodford Contact: Jade Hauser Phone: (07) 3236 2955
February 28:	Winter Pasture Management and Options workshop, Gympie Contact: Ross Warren Phone: (07) 5480 4418	March 20-21:	Basic nutrition course workshop Malanda Contact: Dave Barber Phone: 0427 603 243
February 28:	Energy Workshop Brassingtons Farm, Maroon Contact: Jade Hauser Phone: (07) 3236 2955	March 27-28:	Basic nutrition course workshop Monto Contact: Dave Barber Phone: 0427 603 243
February 29:	Winter Pasture Management and Options Workshop , Burnett Contact: Ross Warren Phone: (07) 5480 4418	March 29-31	Toowoomba Royal Show and Dairy Youth Spectacular, Toowoomba Showgrounds Phone: Phone: (07) 4634 7400 Fax: (07) 4633 2495 Mobile: Wayne Bradshaw, 0429 301 500
March 1:	Energy Workshop Duncans Farm, Glenore Grove Contact: Jade Hauser Phone: (07) 3236 2955		
March 1:	Alternate Summer Forage Options Westbrook Contact: Jo Gorman Phone: 0402 515 564		

DIARY DATES

To have an event included in the diary dates, send information to Carlene and Alastair Dowie
 Phone/fax: (03) 5464 1542
 Email: <alastair.dowie@ruralpress.com> or
 submit to website <www.dairyinfo.biz>



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