

Dairy  
Australia  
Your Levy  
at Work



## In Brief

- *DairySAT now on line*
- *Shelter belts under pivots in SA*
- *Tasmania struggles after wet winter*
- *The Reef: common sense outcome for dairy*
- *Coffs Harbour dairy forum a success*
- *Landcare award for dairy supplier group*
- *Focus Farms for Gippsland*
- *Cool Cows at Nanango*
- *Dairying for Tomorrow staff changes*
- *Upcoming events*

## About the newsletter

*This newsletter is distributed bimonthly, and circulated electronically via email. We aim to include exciting and inspiring works that are being done nationally in the dairy on-farm NRM area. A copy of the newsletter can also be found on the Dairying for Tomorrow website*

<http://www.dairyingfortomorrow.com.au>

*We hope you enjoy it, and feel free to circulate to any interested parties. Future contributions are most welcome and can be emailed to us - contact details at end of the newsletter.*

## DairySAT on line



DairySAT is now available on line and can be accessed from the Dairying for Tomorrow web site. Farmers can go on line in their own time and complete the self assessment process.

Already, The Murray Goulburn Cooperative's FarmC@re program is taking advantage of this with many farmers accessing this valuable industry resource.

## UPDATE: Agriculture & the CPRS

The Australian Government have made a verbal commitment to exclude agriculture from the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS). They are yet to provide any further details and have made no comments about whether agriculture will be expected to contribute to emissions reductions under alternative policy options such as regulations, BMPs or levy's other than to say "we won't be asking farmers to do anything more than we are asking any other Australian to do". One possible scenario is the approach being adopted by Europe where the agriculture sector has been asked to reduce agricultural emissions by 10% between 2005-2020.

The Australian Government have also indicated that farmers will be able to generate and sell tradable offsets but again there is no public detail about what this means at a practical level. It is likely that until there are changes in the international accounting rules, the Kyoto guidelines will apply. This requires any offsets generated to be 'additional, measurable and permanent'.

*Contributed by Cathy Phelps, Dairy Australia*

## First for SA – shelter belts under pivots on dairy farms

The use of shelter belts under centre pivots has been a real benefit for two South Australian dairy farmers. The South East Dairying for Tomorrow program showcased the two sites at a field day held in late November and talked about the new revegetation concept, the first in South Australia. Establishment techniques, tree and shrub varieties and tree sites were discussed and visited; this allowed participants to see the farm and

environmental benefits of using well placed shelter belts on farms.



Currently the Dairying for Tomorrow team are managing two shelter belts under pivot trials, the two farmers involved with the project are Jed Boshier of Port Mac Dairies, Eight Mile Creek and Sean Durcan of Shandale Dairy, Mt Schank. The benefits that Jed and Sean aim to achieve are; reduced evaporation in their pasture during summer, improved pasture growth rates from a mild micro-climate, protection for their stock in windy or hot weather and a general improvement of the appeal of their farms.



*Above: Sean Durcan is pleased with the results of the trials to date.*

The trial has used short shrubby, water logging tolerant shrubs. These have been planted along the existing fence lines of the pivots to create a shelter

belt. Species include Swamp paperbark and Swamp bottle brush. One pivot has drop tube sprinklers with 2 metres clearance, the other pivot has overhead sprinklers with 3 metres clearance. The shelter belt is two rows wide by the length of the pivot. Importantly, weed control was started 3 months prior to planting. Both sites were ripped to allow for good root development and a residual chemical was used. Snail bait was also applied after planting. In late spring both sites were sprayed with a grass herbicide this will allow the seedlings to 'get away'.

Jed and Sean are pleased with the results to date and would like to incorporate more shelter belts under pivots across their farms for wind protection.

*More information? Contact Janice Perry 0400 278 498.*

*This project is funded by the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry: Caring for our Country program and supported by DairySA.*

## Dairy Forum a Huge Success!

"The best one yet!" declared several delegates at this year's New Generation Dairy Farmers Forum in Coffs Harbour, NSW. The NGDFF is the only Dairy specific Forum of this size north of Sydney, and for the sixth time in as many years, attracted more than 120 farmers and 25 service providers.

Dr Richard Eckard from DPI Ellinbank in Victoria tackled the Emissions Trading Scheme and the impact on Australian Agriculture, including Dairy.

Joel Mergler from Select Sires Inc, in Ohio USA, enthralled the audience with his skit depicting the ovulation cycle of a dairy cow.

One of the highlights of the two day Forum was the fabulous presentations from the Farmer Speakers. Neville and Ruth Kydd from Finley, NSW; Jamie and Michelle Drury from Tamworth, NSW; Mark and Michelle Perry from Raleigh NSW; Allan Ussher and Peter Townley from Bowraville, NSW and Michele Bake from Crossmaglen in NSW who all hung up their Dairy Farmers hats for a short while and stepped up to the lectern. Telling of their real life

experiences proved to be a crowd pleaser with many delegates stating that the Farmer Speakers alone, were worth them getting off farm and coming to the Forum.

Feedpad design, the effective management of it and how to maximise pasture through the use of a PMR were very popular topics amongst the delegates. Dr Bruce Hamilton, one of Australia's leading Dairy Nutritionists and Tony Dowman (formerly of DPI Kempsey), were charged with the task of explaining all of this in one afternoon.

Karen Baum, who leads the People in Dairy project for Dairy Australia, explained how people management is the key to sustaining the Dairy Industry.

During the BBQ Dinner, a Dairy Trivia game was hosted by Mrs Carlene Dowie from ADF Magazine. Subtropical Dairy was the proud sponsor of the other dinner.

Delegates enjoyed a wealth of knowledge from other Specialist Speakers including Michelle Axford from ADHIS, Peter Thurn from Genetics Australia, Tim Hunt from Rabobank and Michael Cashen from DPI.

The Committee are already planning for Forum 2010!

*Contributed by Traci Gordon, Forum Coordinator.*

## A winter to forget in Tasmania

Tasmanian dairy farmers have just gone through one of the more severe winters on record with the main dairy region of Circular Head (which has nearly 50% of the state's dairy farms) suffering particularly badly. It rained most days from mid July until the end of September in the far northwest making pastures sodden and water logged in dairy regions such as Togari, Duck River, Brittons Swamp and Woolnorth.

Farmers could not access many paddocks and when they did the stock just turned them into a bog. Many farmers were not equipped with sufficient high ground or stand-off areas to manage their herds during calving. The main implications have been:

- Damaged pastures affecting grass growth and feed supply in winter
- Severely pugged paddocks meaning extra time and expense in renovating and reseeded
- Higher cow and calf losses from severe winter, mastitis and milk fever
- The need to feed more grain to keep the cows going when milk price meant this was not affordable.
- Losses of silage and hay making and impacts on quality



In addition to physical damage to the pasture, there have been cow losses, a decline in milk production and reduced cow condition all compromising future production. It is expected that peak season production may be 10% down on last year.

The conditions have taken a heavy toll on many farmers who are coping through a season already badly affected by the low milk price. The seasonal conditions have created additional costs and reduced milk production when farmers can least afford it.

The Tasmanian Government has responded with a targeted dairy assistance package which includes the following:

- **Farming Family Relief Program** grants of up to \$2000 per dairy farm family to assist with household bills and other family household expenses

- **Social and Community Events grants** up to \$3000 available to community groups to support social and community events in dairy areas.
- **Dairy Support Grants** up to \$5000 per dairy business to assist with the costs of pasture improvement or access to fodder, agistment or transport of fodder/livestock.
- **Taking Stock Program** Additional places available for dairy farmers to undertake the Taking Stock program.
- **Review of the Drought Recovery Assistance Loans Program** Review with a view to adjusting eligibility criteria to allow access by dairy farmers.
- **Expansion of dairy extension services** including discussion groups and field days delivered by Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR) Dairy Centre.
- **Animal Welfare Helpline** Support and advice by TIAR.
- **Professional veterinary advice subsidy** 50% subsidy on eligible veterinary expenses



*Above: Dairy farm land in Togari (Courtesy of John Oldaker and Alison Finlayson)*

It has reminded us that we still get wet winters and farmers need to plan around this eventuality after having been blessed with a period of dryer and warmer winter conditions for some time.

*Contributed by Mark Smith, DairyTas.*

## Common Sense Reef Outcome for

The Queensland Government recently passed amendments in Parliament to their Great Barrier Reef Amendment legislation, which provides a common sense outcome for the dairy industry, according to the Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO).

President Brian Tessmann said dairy farmers will now not be unnecessarily impacted by the legalisation and regulations. "We welcome the Queensland Government's decision to amend the legislation and the unanimous support in Parliament, so that dairy farms in the Wet and Burdekin Dry Tropics regions are not unnecessarily impacted," Mr Tessmann said.

"We also appreciate that Minister Kate Jones has made a real effort to engage with industry to understand our issues and to work with science and facts, instead of politicised green group hype." Mr Tessmann explained that in June, the Queensland Government introduced legislation into the Parliament, without any consultation with the dairy industry which targeted the dairy industry and other agricultural sectors, as being a high risk to water quality flowing to the Great Barrier Reef. QDO had to then 'down tools' and focus efforts on getting the situation rectified.

Mr Tessmann explained that scientific evidence and water quality results assessed by a panel of 13 eminent Reef scientists set up by the Australian Government under the Reef Rescue program, came to a clear consensus that dairy farms generally maintain very high year round ground cover, largely precluding run-off of sediments and nutrients, and already manage and reuse effluent efficiently as a valuable source of nutrients.

"There is no evidence to suggest dairying activities increase pollutant loads compared to areas of undeveloped native vegetation. In fact water quality testing data presented that native

rainforest in a number of areas contributed higher impacts on water quality than dairying areas."

"The dairy industry has worked hard over many years to improve its environmental performance and sustainability. The dairy industry introduced an Environmental Code of Practice a decade ago. Since then, the industry has developed a leading edge natural resource management program, Dairying Better 'n' Better. This has been adopted by dairy farmers across all dairying regions and was recently adapted to focus on the targeted outcomes of the Reef Rescue program.

"We are pleased that the science and facts have resulted in a common sense outcome and that the Government has recognised that dairy farmers are good managers of natural resources and are a low risk to water quality flowing to the Great Barrier Reef. Dairy farmers and the dairy industry value the Great Barrier Reef just as much as other Australians and international visitors and we take pride in the way we run our farms and we continue to seek ways to improve our sustainability performance," Mr Tessmann said.

Further information? Adrian Peake, CEO, Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation, 07 3236 2955

## Dairy Supplier Group Wins Landcare Award

The Mid Coast Dairy Advancement Group (DAGs), has taken top honours in the Environment and Landcare Section of the NSW/ACT Regional Achievement and Community Awards.

The Taree-based group was announced as the winner of the Environment and Landcare Award, which comes with a Commonwealth Bank savings account of \$5,000, at a ceremony in Bathurst on October 31.

DAGs brings together a diverse range of stakeholders all interested in the same thing – to ensure the sustainability of dairy farming on the Mid North Coast. Stakeholders include National Foods, Department of Industry and Investment NSW, the

Hunter-Central Rivers CMA and of course our local dairy farmers.

Integral to their success has been the Farmers Targets for Change (FTC) workshop series.

Over 118 Mid North Coast farmers have attended FTC workshops with the majority going on to implement on-ground works such as upgrading effluent systems, fencing off riparian areas and installing off-stream watering systems.

The workshops are based around farmer discussions on their existing experiences and ideas, with technical assistance from consultants Nick Bullock, DPI Dairy Officer Ray Johnston and National Foods Technical Services Officer Michelle Blakeney.

The program involves two on-farm visits to each participating farm and three group workshops where farmers can come together and discuss various solutions, whilst learning from the experience and ideas of others in the group.

National Foods Taree Farm Services office has been active in the program providing technical support, meeting venues and assistance to farmers submitting applications for funding for environmental related on-ground works over the last three years.

Total project value would exceed \$ 5 million with farmers own contributions. "It has been the willingness of farmers to participate in developing and implementing projects with a lot of their own time and money that has made the FTC process such as success." Enthused Michelle.

## Focus Farms for Gippsland

The GippsDairy Board has initiated a new focus farm project for the Gippsland region of Victoria. Six farms will participate in this round which continues on from positive projects in the past. Each farm will host a monthly meeting with a small group of support farmers. Attention will be focused on financial management, production,

family & staff issues and natural resource management.

Each farm will have the opportunity to undertake the Dairy Self Assessment Process (DairySAT) and all farms will participate in a greenhouse gas audit.

A feature of the focus farm projects is the openness of the data provided and the opportunity for all involved to deal with issues facing the farm businesses.

The six farms are spread across the varying regions within Gippsland. With a wide diversity of climatic conditions, soil types and farm management practices it will make for an interesting two year project.

Throughout the life of the project, open days will be held and information will be shared.

Funding from Dairy Australia, The Gardiner Foundation, GippsDairy & Woolworths has made this valuable project possible.

*More information? John Gallienne 0407863493.*

## Cool Cows at Nanango

"Cool Cows" was a hot topic for over twenty South Burnett dairy farmers who braved souring temperatures to attend a field day at the Scott family dairy farm near Nanango on the 4<sup>th</sup> November.

Tom Davison, who presented at the field day, travelled from Canberra to share his extensive experience and knowledge on design principles for buildings, structures and equipment to manage heat stress on dairy farms.

Tom began by explaining how temperature and humidity combine to contribute to the heat stress in dairy cattle, and how this occurs much sooner than we expect. The temperature humidity index was used to show that heat stress in dairy cows begins with temperatures above 25 degrees Celsius when combined with a relative humidity of 60.

Tom pointed out that heat stress could be costing Nanango dairy farmers up to \$33,000 per year in lost production when cows have no access to shade or sprinklers, and this is mainly due to the cows losing their appetite. Shade from trees alone can more than

halve this loss, and a combination of trees, constructed shade and sprinklers can minimise the loss from heat stress to around \$1600 per year.

Tom showed many examples of structures and equipment that can be used on dairy farms before taking the group out into the field to see firsthand the shaded feed pad and the sprinkler system on Scott's dairy farm.

The respiration rate of the cows under the doubled shade cloth over the feed pad was compared with those away from the shade, demonstrating the higher levels of heat stress experienced by the cows in full sun. It was also obvious there were far fewer cows eating from the feed troughs in full sun.

Participants were impressed with the Scott's simple but highly effective overhead sprinkler system over the dairy holding yard. The sprinklers are turned on before the cows enter to wet and cool the concrete, and when the cows are brought in enough water is used to thoroughly wet and cool their skin.



ABOVE: Farmers discuss feed pad design at the field day.

The field day wrapped up with a discussion about what farmers found useful on the day and what could be applied at home. Farmers left drained from the heat, but quite enthusiastic about a number of projects they had in mind, including feed pad shade, upgrades to water troughs, and sprinkler systems. To help with these projects, farmers also took home a comprehensive information booklet that covered all the information discussed at the field day, and more.

The Nanango Cool Cows field day was the first in a series of eight to be held around Queensland this

summer. The field days are supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry under its Australia's Farming Future Initiative. For more information about upcoming field days contact the Queensland Dairy NRM team, phone (07) 32362955.

## DfT Staff Changes

Farewell to Jennifer Rowbottom who is leaving the Dairying for Tomorrow position in Western Australia. Jennifer contributed to many positive NRM projects in the west and leaves this position to return to teaching. All the best Jenny.

Louise Sheba has begun work in South West Victoria as the new DfT Regional Coordinator. She is looking forward to assisting NRM managers and facilitators across the dairy sector become more aware of Dairy Australia's NRM tools.

Louise has worked as a Community Landcare Facilitator with Glenelg Hopkins CMA and has been managing a variety of projects at DemoDAIRY for the past four and a half years. Louise has a Bachelor of Environmental Science (Integrated Catchment Management), Diploma of Human Resources and has just completed a Diploma of Management.

Louise's contact details are: Ph: (03) 55 922199, Mobile: 0409505686, Fax: (03) 55 922206 or email: [louise@demodairy.org.au](mailto:louise@demodairy.org.au)

## Upcoming Events

### QUEENSLAND - Your Farm & Climate Change

- What does climate change mean for my farm and the surrounding areas?
- What is the likely impact a changing climate will have on my farm?
- How can you adapt your system?

These questions and more will be covered in the upcoming *Your Farm & Climate Change* workshops being held in November.

24th November 10am - 2pm Gympie RSL

25th November 10am - 2pm Monto Hall

26th November 10am - 2pm Oakey RSL

More information? QLD Dairy NRM Team on Ph 07 3236 2955

RSVP essential by Monday 23rd November to Jade Hauser on Ph 07 3236 2955 or Fax RSVP form on Fax 07 3236 2956.

*This project is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry under its Australia's Farming Future initiative.*

### **SOUTH WEST VICTORIA - DemoDAIRY**

DemoDAIRY presentation by DPI of a 'Virtual DemoDAIRY' - part of the Victorian Climate change Adaptation Program.

At DemoDAIRY 8<sup>th</sup> December 11.00am

Complex scientific information will be presented through visualization products and will illustrate future climate change scenarios both in south west Victoria and at DemoDAIRY. The day will involve the DPI presentation, an update on the new look DairySAT and a tour of the greenhouse gas and carbon footprint reduction projects at DemoDAIRY.

*More information? Louise Sheba Ph: (03) 55 922199, Mobile: 0409505686, Fax: (03) 55 922206 or email: [louise@demodairy.org.au](mailto:louise@demodairy.org.au)*

### **STH AUSTRALIA – Farm Revegetation Field Day**

24<sup>th</sup> November from 10:00am-1:30pm, Bones Road, Mt Schank, south of Mt Gambier.

Local revegetation projects including one of the first trees under pivot projects for South Australia. Choosing suitable species, the benefits of planting trees on farm and a comparison of different planting techniques will be addressed.

Farm forestry will be the focus on Peter Feast's property. Peter was the 2004 National Tree Farmer of the year. PIRSA Forestry will cover the key environmental and farm benefits of increasing on farm biodiversity.

*More information? Janice Perry 0400 278 498.*

*This project is funded by the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry: Caring for our Country program and supported by DairySA*



### **Dairying for Tomorrow**

**Cathy Phelps** [cphelps@dairyaustralia.com.au](mailto:cphelps@dairyaustralia.com.au)

### **Newsletter editor**

**Gillian Hayman** [ghayman@dcsi.net.au](mailto:ghayman@dcsi.net.au)

Level 5 IBM Tower  
60 City Road  
Southbank, Victoria 3006  
Ph: +61 3 9694 3777  
Fax: +61 3 9694 3733  
[www.dairyaustralia.com.au](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au)