

**MACALISTER DEMONSTRATION FARM
COMMUNICATION AND EXTENSION PLAN
2013 – 2015**



(endorsed by the MDF Board 22 May 2013)

Summary

The Macalister Demonstration Farm (MDF) is in the Macalister Irrigation District (MID) which is home to 27% of the Gippsland dairy industry. Dairying is the largest agricultural contributor to Gippsland. Over 50 years, the MDF has conducted numerous research and demonstration projects dealing mostly with issues relating to the management and operation of dairy farms in Victoria, but particularly to those dairy farms in the Macalister Irrigation District.

The MDF is recognised by funders and dairy industry groups as a credible and reliable organisation that has a strong history of demonstration to its local farmers through delivery of projects of relevancy which meet the expectations of project partners and stakeholders.

The Board of MDF recognise that there are new and innovative means to extend demonstration and extension, and with the guidance of this communication and extension plan will set in train activities which will embrace all areas of extension, including via electronic media to advance the skills of MID dairy farmers.

Background

MDF Mission Statement:

“To enable shareholders to improve the profitability of their farms and their lifestyles, through the demonstration of superior and sustainable management systems, and the provision of education programmes necessary for their adoption.”

The mission statement for the farm confirms that one of the keys to the success of the farm is the delivery of education programmes with an emphasis on the adoption of superior and sustainable management systems – that is, the farm, along with other sources of information and advice, as a facilitator of changed practice.

As a recipient of Gardiner Foundation Funding, the Macalister Demonstration Farm undertook to update the MDF communication and extension plan with an emphasis on extension activities to encourage change to on-farm practice.

Purpose

The purpose of the plan is to provide a blueprint for extension activities at Macalister Demonstration Farm for the period 2013 - 2015. This plan is not an immutable document nor is it perpetual. The plan will be subject to review throughout its life as extension (and any associated documentation) by its nature needs to be adaptive and flexible to meet the changing needs and capacity of its target audience.

Goals

The goals of implementation of this communication and extension plan are to:

1. To increase MDF's extension into the dairying community through the use of electronic and social media such as video blogs and twitter
2. Provide a key message that is relevant, current and in a form that is easily accessible to farmers both in the immediate and longer term.
3. Build a series of resources around the key messages that can be used into the future.
4. Create quality activities that are free and regarded as 'must go' across the district.
5. Build better farmers.
6. Assert Macalister Demonstration Farm's role as a credible and reliable demonstration farm in the MID
7. Create enduring linkages with like organisations in Australia and New Zealand

Target Audience

Target	Vehicle	Frequency
Dairy Farmers	Email AusDairyL Newsletter Field days - general Field days – projects Web Videos Discussion group Website Media Social media / twitter	As required – reactive & proactive As required – reactive & proactive Monthly Quarterly with key note speakers As required to complement project Fortnightly management issues videos Monthly Update videos (web) Monthly in conjunction with MEG All of above + newsworthy items News items, articles in papers etc Ad hoc
Sponsors & project partners	Email AusDairyL Newsletter Field days - general Field days – projects Web Videos Website Media Social media / twitter	As required – reactive & proactive As required – reactive & proactive Monthly Quarterly with key note speakers As required to complement project Fortnightly management issues videos Monthly Update videos (web) All of above + newsworthy items News items, articles in papers etc Ad hoc
GippsDairy	Email AusDairyL Newsletter Field days - general Field days – projects Web Videos Discussion group Website Media Social media / twitter	As required – reactive & proactive As required – reactive & proactive Monthly Quarterly with key note speakers As required to complement project Fortnightly management issues videos Monthly Update videos (web) Monthly in conjunction with MEG All of above + newsworthy items News items, articles in papers etc Ad hoc
Dairy Australia	Email AusDairyL Newsletter Field days - general Field days – projects Web Videos Website Media	As required – reactive & proactive As required – reactive & proactive Monthly Quarterly with key note speakers As required to complement project Fortnightly management issues videos Monthly Update videos (web) All of above + newsworthy items News items, articles in papers etc

Target	Vehicle	Frequency
	Social media / twitter	Ad hoc
Murray Goulburn Cooperative	Email AusDairyL Newsletter Field days - general Field days – projects Web Videos Website Media Social media / twitter	As required – reactive & proactive As required – reactive & proactive Monthly Quarterly with key note speakers As required to complement project Fortnightly management issues videos Monthly Update videos (web) All of above + newsworthy items News items, articles in papers etc Ad hoc
Department of Primary Industries	Email AusDairyL Newsletter Field days - general Field days – projects Web Videos Website Media Social media / twitter	As required – reactive & proactive As required – reactive & proactive Monthly Quarterly with key note speakers As required to complement project Fortnightly management issues videos Monthly Update videos (web) All of above + newsworthy items News items, articles in papers etc Ad hoc
Demo farms eg DemoDairy, Lincoln University Demonstration Farm	Email AusDairyL Newsletter Field days - general Field days – projects Web Videos Website Media Social media / twitter	As required – reactive & proactive As required – reactive & proactive Monthly Quarterly with key note speakers As required to complement project Fortnightly management issues videos Monthly Update videos (web) All of above + newsworthy items News items, articles in papers etc Ad hoc

Tactics to Extension and Engagement

Method of Extension:

- Face to face (field day / guest speakers)
- Satellite farms / focus farm
- Media
- Newsletter
- Email Updates
- Website, videos
- Social media including twitter and facebook
- Biennial travel of Macalister Demonstration staff (Board Member / Secretary / Manager) to Lincoln University Demonstration Farm (New Zealand) and DemoDairy (Terang)

Content of Extension:

- Encourage sensible and timely adoption of change
- Information sharing
- Relevant practical demonstration
- On-farm consultation to promote engagement
- Relevancy at commercial scale
- Engage to engender strong support
- Mottos can capture audiences

Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement

Ongoing monitoring, evaluation and improvement throughout the life of the plan will consist of:

- Regular monitoring of regional perceptions taken at MEG meetings
- Vox pop video surveys taken at quarterly field days
- Face-to-face surveys taken at all field days
- Paper surveys undertaken with every 2nd delivery of the newsletter
- Utilisation of survey monkeys to gauge demonstration effectiveness
- Recognition that two way communication with stakeholders is ongoing and evolving

This monitoring will be based on a series of focus questions:

1. Did you learn from today's demonstration?
2. Will today's demonstration encourage you to implement / consider change management?
3. Did you enjoy today's field day / news letter / video?
4. What was good? What was not? What could be done better?
5. What issues would you like to see covered by the Demonstration Farm?
6. Do you subscribe to Twitter, Facebook etc? Would you use these forms of media if the Demonstration Farm provided information via them?

Information received via the monitoring and evaluation will be assessed quarterly by the Board and amendments to the Communication and Extension plan will be implemented as required.

Appendix – scheduling for videos to be loaded to the website

Jan	-
Feb	- Fertiliser
Mar	-
Apr	-
May	- Body Condition Scoring
Jun	- Dry off
Jul	- Transition - Planning
Aug	- Colostrum
	- Fresh Cow Mastitis - Housing Calves - Calving
Sep	- Irrigation
	- Body Condition Scoring
Oct	- Seed heads - Silage
Nov	- Mating
Dec	- Bull Management
Anytime	- Mastitis - Pasture
Other	- Become a resource for showcasing events from other field days / discussion groups (ie go to a field day and video / vox pop)
On-farm field days	- ?quarterly field days with key note speakers – videos similar to “other” type of videos