



# Macalister Demonstration Farm

PO Box 87, MAFFRA, VIC 3860

Ph. 0488 175 366

Email: [mdf@wideband.net.au](mailto:mdf@wideband.net.au) Web: [www.macalisterdemonstrationfarm.com](http://www.macalisterdemonstrationfarm.com)

## NEWSLETTER 101

September 2015



Your Levy at Work



*Macalister Demonstration Farm is supported  
by Genetics Australia, HICO and GippsDairy.*



Do you own a SMART PHONE?? Use the QR code on the right hand side to provide you with instant access to our website. Simply scan the QR Code with your phone and the link to the MDF website will automatically be fed into the browser of your SMART PHONE. An easy way to stay in touch with Macalister Demonstration Farm.

### IN THE NEWSLETTER THIS MONTH

Notice of Meeting – Macalister Demonstration Farm Annual General Meeting

Call for nominations – RF (Bob) Pittman Award

Yellow Rag Bit – What to do when you run out of lead feed

What's been going on at MDF?

Focus Farm support group meeting

### ***NOTICE OF MEETING***

#### ***Macalister Demonstration Farm – Annual General Meeting***

Macalister Demonstration Farm will be holding its Annual General Meeting on  
Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2015.

Venue and Time to be advised.

Shareholders are strongly encouraged to attend this meeting. The future direction of the Macalister Demonstration Farm will be a crucial item open for discussion at the meeting.

Keynote speaker for this event will a member of the Commonwealth Bank Agri Business team to talk about futures in dairying.

Please RSVP your attendance to the Secretary, by phone 0488 175 366 or by email  
[macalisterdemonstrationfarm@gmail.com](mailto:macalisterdemonstrationfarm@gmail.com)

## ***Call for Nominations – RF (Bob) Pitman Award***

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The Directors at the Macalister Demonstration Farm are seeking nominations for the RF (Bob) Pitman Award. This award was established in honour of Bob Pitman to recognise others within our farming community that make an outstanding contribution to the many facets of our industry. In creating this legacy we are seeking nominations from the community of people who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to strive to better the lot for the broader farming community.

The recipient of this award should have one if not all of the following attributes:

- ❖ Commitment to the betterment of the dairy industry in the Macalister Irrigation District via one/all of the following : Production, Technology, Extension, Environmental awareness or mentorship
- ❖ Served on Boards or committees which support the dairy industry
- ❖ Served with integrity, humility and altruism.

The award is open to public nomination but ultimately decided by the present day board.

Further information may be obtained from the Secretary by phone 0488 175 366. Nominations can be mailed to: The Secretary, Macalister Demonstration Farm, PO Box 87, Maffra 3860 and will close on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2015. The winner shall be announced at our AGM on the 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2015.

## ***IMPORTANT – DID YOU RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER BY POST?***

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If you answered YES! to the above question, please be advised that this is the **LAST EDITION** of the newsletter to be sent through the mail.

The newsletter is, however, still available for viewing through electronic mediums. You can receive the newsletter directly to your electronic mail inbox via email, or view the website on line at the Macalister Demonstration Farm website simply by following either of the two links below:

<http://www.macalisterdemonstrationfarm.com/publications2/newsletters/>

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Macalister-Demonstration-Farm/279815632191427?ref=hl>

If you would like to receive the newsletter directly via email, please forward your details to the following email address:

[macalisterdemonstrationfarm@gmail.com](mailto:macalisterdemonstrationfarm@gmail.com)

# Yellow Rag Bit

## What to do when you run out of lead feed

Maria Rose, Dairy Extension Officer, DEDTJR, Maffra  
Trystan Keylock, Veterinarian, Maffra Vet Centre, Maffra

The number of dairy farmers in the MID who lead feed has progressively increased over recent years. It is a practice used to minimise and reduce the stress around calving time given tight and or seasonal calving practices generally practiced in this district. As more and more MID dairy farmers take on this approach we learn about the importance of fine tuning our individual systems to avoid potential risk factors. A particular key one relates to “What do you do if you run out of lead feed?” the focus of this article.

**The most critical answer to this question is**

**Do not use milker ration concentrates immediately in its place.**

Looking at the physiology of why not to do this;

Lead feeding consists of specifically formulated salts that gradually turn the blood acidic, generally lowering the pH. So at calving time, the receptors for absorbing calcium from the bone and food work a whole lot better, thus greatly minimising the occurrence of milk fever.

Milker formulated concentrates usually contain bi carb as a buffer against acidosis, making the blood more alkaline and thus does the total opposite to lead feed. So at calving the receptors for absorbing calcium are far less effective and the occurrence of milk fever is greatly heightened.

Be wary if your lead feed is getting low – plan to have at least three to four days ahead of your herd to cover a delayed delivery date of a new batch or a weekend when there are no deliveries happening at the critical time.

If you run out of lead feed and substitute it immediately for milker feed what could likely happen (as it has happened for real very recently in the MID), is that an average herd size of around 350 cows for example which may have eight milk fever cases over the whole calving season could dramatically escalate immediately - within a couple of days, to 12 cases per day. Think of the stress load that this will cause not only to you and your family and workers but also on the cows. It is well known and documented scientifically that for every one cow that has clinical milk fever, that there are eight more cows in your herd that have a subclinical form of it. This can lead to a number of other problems including mastitis (due to teat sphincters not closing properly and immune system dysfunction) and higher numbers of retained foetal membranes, twisted stomachs, ketosis etc. Milk fever is a gateway disease leading to many other diseases taking hold.

In case you get caught out and actually run out of lead feed, be prepared with alternative approaches to feeding to ensure that onset of milk fever is minimised. Consider approaches as part of a planned transition feeding program, designed with the assistance of an advisor; including;

- Start adding magnesium chloride to water troughs
- Add causmag to hay
- Feed alternative grains that don't contain bicarbs
- Shandy what lead feed concentrates you have left with grains not containing bicarbs

**What is vital is that when you run out of lead feed concentrates, don't immediately substitute them with milker concentrates. Instead implement your alternative feeding strategy.**

For further information and advice, contact your trusted local veterinarian or nutritionist. Also visit the Dairy Australia web site [www.dairyaustralia.com.au](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au) as it has lots of useful material on transition feeding.

### *What's been going on at the MDF?*

The current numbers as at 18th September are as follows;

Cows: 267 in herd and 249 in the vat, producing 22.9 litres at 4.3% fat and 3.5% protein or 1.79kg milk solids per cow. They are being fed 3.5 kg wheat @ \$350/t and no pellets or additive.

Dries/springers (52) are getting 0.2ha plus ½ bale oaten hay (3.5kgDM) and 3kg lead feed. Second herd (14) getting 3.5kg wheat plus grass

The current production level is not high enough, and the aim will be to get the production up as much as possible off grass. At the recent Focus Farm Support Group meeting there was a good discussion about where the herd was, in terms of production, grazing, training them to eat harder and all the issues dealt with over the past 12 months. The feeling of most in the group was that an excellent job had been done in terms of training the cows to eat harder, getting the residuals lower, and eating grass rather than relying on grain and other inputs, but at this point, it was costing some milk production. But no one was in favour of letting the good work go!

So, the feeling was it was time to allocate a reasonable amount more pasture (up to 1ha/24 hours more!) and keep an eye on the residuals. If they were too long, then put the cows back in the paddock to get them down. If too low, then give them more allocation. Grain would not be increased right at this point, but the situation would be monitored over the next week or two and grain may lift slightly to 4kg-4.5kg wheat if at all.

	Litres	Solids
Production	22.9	1.79
Components %	4.3%,3.5%	4.3%, 3.5%
Milk price on current test Sept	39.5	\$5.05
Gross milk income less levies	\$9.05	\$9.05
Minus grain @3.5 kg	\$1.22	\$1.22
IOSFC (\$/cow/day)	\$7.83	\$7.83

	Litres	Solids
Net IOSFC \$/herd/day	\$1950	\$1950
Net production	19.8 litres	1.55kgMS
Supplement cost	3 litres	0.24 kgMS

As there was a healthy surplus of pasture building, it was decided that grass above around 3000kgDM-3200kgDM would be cut for silage, and these 'skipped' paddocks would allow only the best quality pasture to be grazed with the milkers. In addition, the allocation would increase to around 2.5ha/24 hours giving a stocking density of 100 cows/ha/24 hours and a round length of 29 days. This round could quicken slightly if needed through further silage being done, and could be slowed slightly (only if needed) through additional grain, that remained up our sleeve as an option.

There were signs of some nutrient deficiency on some areas of the farm, and so an application of P,K,S fertiliser would take place in the next week or so with the truck and staff would continue to apply 1kgN/ha/day behind the cows (70-80kg/ha urea).

The strong growth at present will allow some topping up of thin paddocks with drilling ryegrass in where required, with these paddocks being grazed first, then drilled, then grazed lightly on seedling emergence to open the paddock up and allow for strong seedling growth. This practice has been done several times here and works well, without 'losing' the paddock from the round. Perennial ryegrass pastures will be perennial ryegrass sown, and annuals will have Italians drilled in.

Matt Harms, ONFARM Consulting, 0408 311 118 or [matt@onfarmconsulting.com.au](mailto:matt@onfarmconsulting.com.au)

### ***Focus Farm support group meeting***

Scenes from the last focus farm support group meeting. To see more, check out the story on Macalister Demonstration Farm's facebook page.



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Macalister Demonstration Farm  
PO Box 87  
MAFFRA VIC 3860