

# Macalister Demonstration Farm

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## NEWSLETTER 75

14 February 2013



*Extension projects at the MDF are funded by Dairy Australia, Sustainability Victoria and Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, with support from GippsDairy.*

### Soil Biology and Soil pH Interaction Trial Field Day

This trial aims to compare pasture productivity and profitability between paddocks managed using conventional fertiliser after the addition of lime to lift pH from 5.5 to 6.4. This is to see if a rise in pH can result in lower nitrogen fertiliser inputs while maintaining pasture production by enhancing soil biological driven nutrient cycling. A field day has been scheduled so interested people can come along to inspect and discuss this trial. All welcome.

**When: Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

**Where: Macalister Demonstration Farm  
285 Boggy Creek Road  
Riverslea (Maffra).**

**Time: 10.30am (followed by BBQ lunch at approximately 12.30pm)**

RSVP Sandie Brown on 0488 175 366 for more information and to assist with catering.

## Yellow Rag Bit

Maria Rose Dairy Advisor, DPI Maffra

### COPING IN THE CURRENT DRY SEASON

In response to the current dry conditions in the MID, two discussion sessions have been held so far this year to discuss and share information around coping strategies to deal with the tightening water situation. The first session was held at the Macalister Demonstration Farm late January.

A second session held earlier this week explored further options in a farmer panel session\* format, which included interactive discussion with a large audience. To start things off, the three farmers on the panel

shared information on how they were coping to an audience of around 45 farmers and 10 service providers at the farm of one of the panel members. The issues addressed by all three included - production targets, young stock management, feed on farm and bought in feed, irrigation water position, calving and fertiliser strategies, labour situation, improvements schedule and domestic incentive implications.

Key aspects that emerged from the interactive discussion amongst those present, that are worth consideration in your future planning include;

- Most have two to three irrigations left until the end of the season if there is no substantial rain locally or inflows into Lake Glenmaggie; some have bore water as an alternative and some don't,
- The current cost-price squeeze caused by lower milk price and increasing supplementary feed price which is being exacerbated by lack of water, is pushing farmers to find cheaper alternatives of adequate ME value (e.g. palm blend),
- Farm development planned for completion this financial year has mostly been put on hold,
- Culling programs have been stepped up - early pregnancy testing to determine 'not in calf' cows and cows with high BMCC (750,000 for example) are being targeted,
- 'Young stock' is a high risk group in dry times and should receive special treatment feeding wise despite the cost,
- Stretching out of irrigations to two or three weeks and watering bays short are prevailing in irrigation practice,
- Water trading of allocation for this season has increased greatly compared to the last two seasons, and
- At this year's SRW Auction to be held on Wed 27<sup>th</sup> February High Reliability Water Share will be sold with allocation share; purchased auction water therefore can be ordered for irrigation immediately upon full payment.

\* The three farmer panel members were Brad White from Riverslea, Matt Croppley from Nambrok and Matt Warren from Denison (where the most recent session was held)

If no significant rain falls locally and or Lake Glenmaggie inflows do not substantially increase by mid March, challenges to cope with the dry season will be even greater; another on-farm discussion session is therefore planned for early March. Like the session held earlier this week, it will be jointly organised by DPI and YDDP with assistance from SRW and the East Gippsland Rural Counselling Service (EGRCS).

For more information regarding dealing with the current dry season, contact the following people;

*Discussion group sessions:* Maria Rose DPI on 0438 282 205 or [maria.rose@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:maria.rose@dpi.vic.gov.au),

*Irrigation practice:* Gavan Lamb DPI on 0428 387 869 or [gavan.lamb@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:gavan.lamb@dpi.vic.gov.au),

*SRW water auction and water delivery:* Gavin Prior SRW on 0427 393 148 or [gavinp@srw.com.au](mailto:gavinp@srw.com.au)

*Rural counselling services:* Ross Neilson EGRCS on 0427 618 520 or [rneilsonrfc@bigpond.com](mailto:rneilsonrfc@bigpond.com)



Your Levy at Work



**Australian Government**  
Department of Climate Change  
and Energy Efficiency

## **Want to lessen your dairy electricity bills? Sign up for an energy assessment**

Dairy Australia has secured funds from the Federal Energy Efficiency Grants program to conduct 195 dairy shed energy assessments across Gippsland.

A trained assessor will carry out on site assessments and provide those farms with recommendations to optimise the use of energy in their current system as well as providing information about alternative energy savings.

The project will bring energy savings to the dairy industry, reducing both costs to the farmer and carbon dioxide production to the environment.

The assessments will take around 3 hours of your time. To register your interest in a dairy shed energy assessment, please contact GippsDairy's project manager, Jenny O'Sullivan on 5663 2386 or email [osulliva@dcsi.net.au](mailto:osulliva@dcsi.net.au) with your contact details.

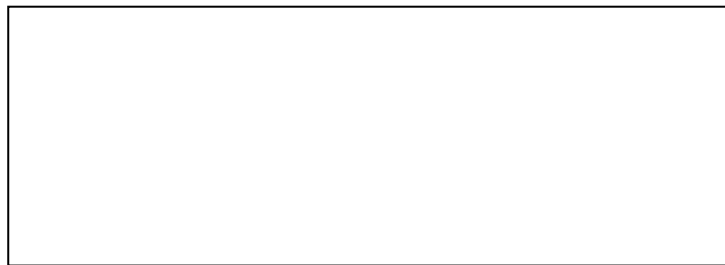
### **Dairy Effluent Management Field Day**

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If you didn't make it to the Dairy Effluent Management field day held at the MDF on 23 January 2013, you can view a video of the key messages delivered on the day on our website:

<http://www.macalisterdemonstrationfarm.com/?p=1904>

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