

Macalister Demonstration Farm

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NEWSLETTER 81

28 August 2013

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Program



Extension projects at the MDF are funded by Dairy Australia, DEPI, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Genetics Australia with support from 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 be automatically fed into the browser of your SMART PHONE. An easy way to stay in touch with Macalister Demonstration Farm.

MACALISTER DEMONSTRATION FARM

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Macalister Demonstration Farm is planning to hold it's Annual General Meeting during the week commencing 21 October 2013. For this year, the Annual General Meeting will be held during the day at the farm. Heyfield Lions Club will provide catering. The winner of the RF (Bob) Pitman award will be announced, a key note speaker will be in attendance as well as MDF Learning and Travel Scholarship awardee, Jon Ryan will present an outline of his scholarship project and where he hopes the journey will take him.

A nomination form for the RF (Bob) Pitman award is included in this newsletter.

Confirmation of the actual date will be announced in the next newsletter and advertised in the local newspaper, radio and industry websites.

At this stage, details are:

WHEN: Week commencing 21 October 2013

WHERE: Macalister Demonstration Farm

TIME: 10.30 am to 2.00 pm

FREE LUNCH CATERED BY HEYFIELD LIONS CLUB

FURTHER INFORMATION: Contact Sandie on 0488 175 366

Macalister Demonstration Farm report as at August 28th, 2013

What a difference a fortnight can make on a dairy farm! With growth ramping up and dare I say it things drying out (when this report was written), grass cover is building, albeit at highly variable rates across the MDF. Due to unpredicted circumstances, there has been a management change (again) on the farm, and we welcome Becky Horsham to the role. Many of you in the district will know Becky from the previous roles she has held. We welcome Becky to the role under challenging circumstances- thanks Becky!

The MDF is currently milking 84 cows with a total grazing area of 73 hectares and with now 145 dry cows and 52 springers, total milker numbers will be lower than desired and predicted. This slightly lower stocking rate may allow for a slightly lower level of bought in supplement this season. I have summarised the key farm “physicals” and “financials” in the table below.

Key MDF 2013/14 Physicals:

Milk price predicted (\$/kgMS)	\$5.70
Cow numbers	293
Milk solids per cow	522
Stocking rate	4 cows/ha
Milk solids per ha	2094
Grain per cow (t as fed)	1.8
Fodder per cow imported (as fed)	350kg
Pasture consumed (t DM per cow)	3.4
Pasture consumed (tDM/ha)	13.7

Key MDF 2013/14 Financials:

Farm Working Expenses FWE (herd, shed, feed, overheads) ex paid labour	\$4.83/kg MS
FWE including paid labour	\$3.89/kg MS
Operating surplus farm	\$189,632
Operating surplus per cow	\$647
Predicted EBIT farm	\$237,232
Per cow	\$809
Predicted ROA	11.8%
Paid labour per cow	\$587
Paid labour per kgMS	\$1.12

Yellow Rag Bit

Maria Rose Dairy Advisor, DEPI Maffra

Managing cows in poor condition and downer cows

Given that this winter in the MID started with generally lower supplies of supplementary feed on hand, cow body condition has generally been a little poorer. Not surprisingly reports of “downer cows” (particularly heifers) that are in late pregnancy or recently calved have been higher than usual.

Around calving time, a downer cow that remains lying down on her chest or side and cannot get up after a number of hours (6 to 12 hours or more) may be in that condition as a result of one or more of the following - grass tetany, milk fever, pregnancy toxemia and acute acidosis due to calving paralysis or toxic mastitis. So a suspected cow needs urgent veterinary attention as a key element of its management back to health. Whatever the cause, consideration of all of the following principles related to managing a downer cow (as recommended by Dairy Australia) is advised;

- check the cow’s environment
- determine the cause by getting an immediate diagnosis
- treat the problem as soon as the cause is known – early treatment promotes early recovery
- if possible, get her back on her feet quickly to avoid secondary damage
- if recovery chances are low, arrange for the cow to be humanely destroyed on site without delay

For maximum chances of a recovery of a downer cow, the following nursing rules will assist;

- provide clean, dry and soft bedding, that will provide a non-slip surface when the cow tries to stand
- provide a continuous supply of clean water and good feed
- move the cow from side to side every 3 hours to ensure her weight is not always to one side and flex and extend the hind limbs each time the cow is moved
- regularly hand strip milk from the udder
- regularly encourage the cow to rise
- use lifting devices to get her to her feet only, never leave cows hanging in lifting devices
- regularly re-assess her progress and diagnosis

Obviously being proactive through adopting relevant management practices to reduce the risk of Downer Cows in the current and future calving seasons, will reduce the stress on you. The following is a list of elements worth considering;

- Mate heifers at minimum recommended age/weight for the breed using easy calving, smaller breed bulls or their semen.
- Maintain ample herd records for best practice decisions to be made to minimise risk to calving cows.
- Make daily, preferably twice daily, herd checks, especially at calving.
- Move springers near the dairy/yards/homestead for closer observation.
- Feed the ‘springing’ cows to help avoid milk fever. For dairy cattle, “lead” feeding with a low calcium diet is useful and supplementing with magnesium helps in suspect years, eg during a cold, wet autumn/spring. The latter can be achieved with a supplement of Causmag on hay at peak lactation (i.e. 6 weeks post calving).
- Record notable calving difficulties to assist with selection of future breeders
- Manage calves born to downer cows to ensure best chance of survival
- As a last resort, due to ethical implications and a higher risk of less viable calves, calving induction may be used in consultation with the veterinarian as a salvage operation for young heifers that have been mated too early.

For further information:

Contact your trusted local veterinarian

Visit the Dairy Australia Website: <http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au>

Contact Maria Rose on 5147 0843 or maria.rose@depi.vic.gov.au

Surf the Internet in your favourite search engine with the terms "downer cows management treatment"

Down to Business 2013

The 2012/13 year has provided many challenges to the dairy industry. This workshop will provide the latest information on the financial and production performance of dairy farms in Gippsland and across Victoria.

Session details

Speakers

Claire Waterman, DEPI will present the results of the recently released 2012/13 Dairy Industry Farm Monitor Project.

Daniel Gilmour, DEPI will explore the impact of business and financial risk and its contribution to total risk when investigating alternate development options for a dairy farm business.

Whole farm consultant Matt Harms will discuss the drivers of farm business returns and focussing on making sound business decisions this season.

Where: Laurels Function Room, Sale Turf Club, 1227 Maffra Road, Sale

When: Thursday 19th September 2013

Time: 2.45pm for afternoon tea, 3.00pm start – 5.30pm finish

Afternoon tea provided

RSVP by 12th September to Melanie at GippsDairy
executiveassistant@gippsdairy.com.au or call 03 5624 3000



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**RF (BOB) PITMAN AWARD
CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**

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 who 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.

Nominations can be mailed to: **The Secretary, Macalister Demonstration Farm, Reply Paid 87, Maffra VIC 3860 (No postage stamp required)** and will close on Friday 4th October, 2013. The winner will be announced at the AGM which will be held later in October.

**RF (BOB) PITMAN AWARD
NOMINATION FORM**

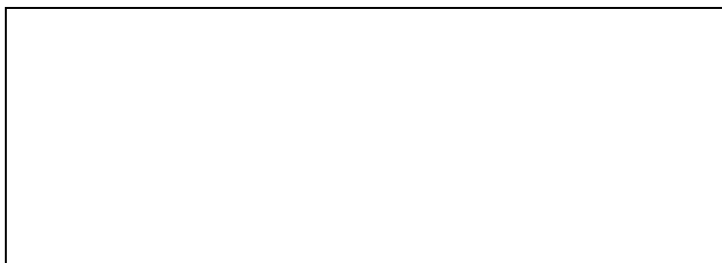
NOMINEE: _____ CONTACT: _____

NOMINATED BY: _____ CONTACT: _____

Please describe the Nominee's contribution in the following categories:

1. 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

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