

Macalister Demonstration Farm

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NEWSLETTER 11

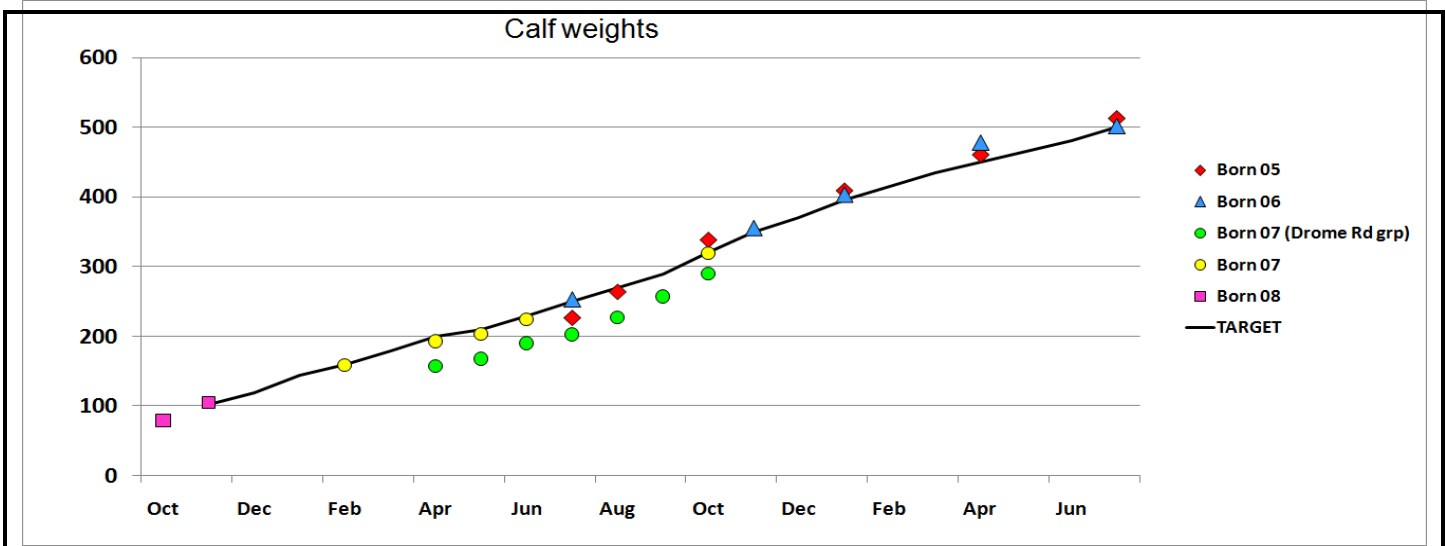
Monday, NOV 17th, 2008



Funded by Dairy Australia and your Regional Development Program



Extension projects at the MDF are funded by Dairy Australia and the Gardiner Foundation with support from GippsDairy.

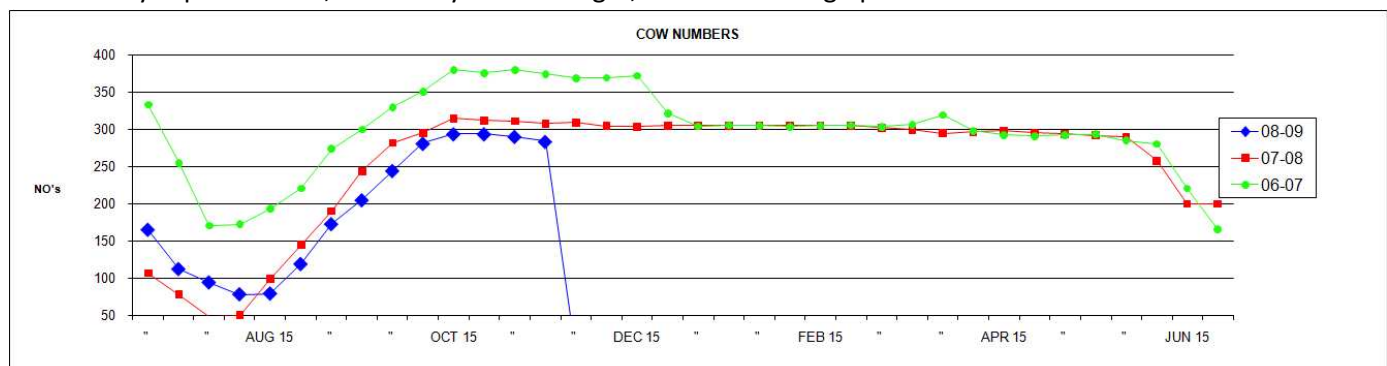


The graph above shows four years of MDF calf growth rates. Each dot represents a weighing point. The black line shows a possible target growth line. This line aims for them to calve, as 2 year olds, at 510 kilograms liveweight. There could be some discussion about this target being too low. At the recent herd test, the current 2 year olds in the herd had an average Production Index of 95, when it really should be well over 100.

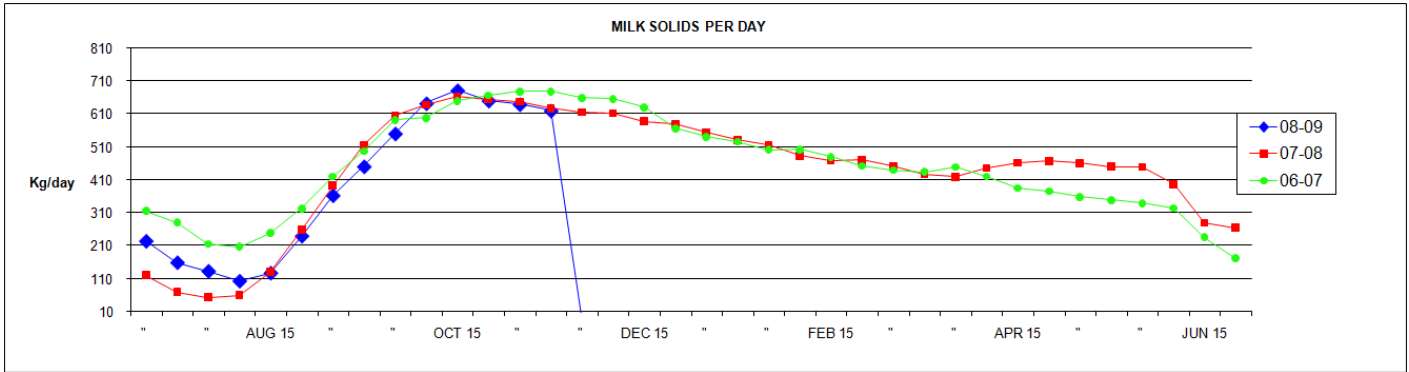
The purple squares (bottom left) are the recently born spring calves.

The blue triangles and the red diamonds are the calves born in 2005 and 2006, both groups now milking.

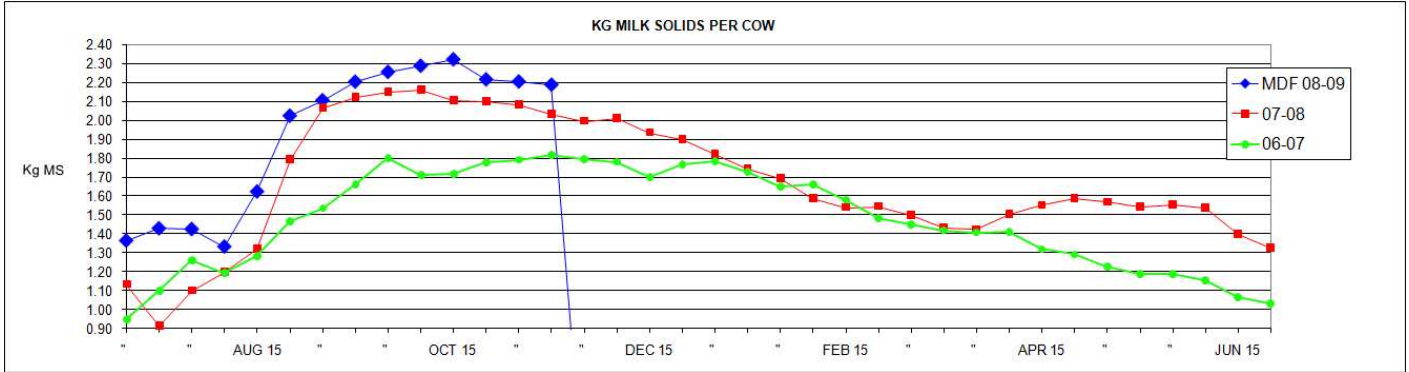
The yellow and green circles represent calves born spring 2007. They spent some time at Longford where some suffered from Vitamin B deficiency. They have just been mated. The yellow circles are the main 07 group. The green circles are 17 of the smallest of the 07 group, at the TAFE College farm at Drome Rd. These small ones were deliberately separated out, are clearly behind target, but are catching up to the main mob.



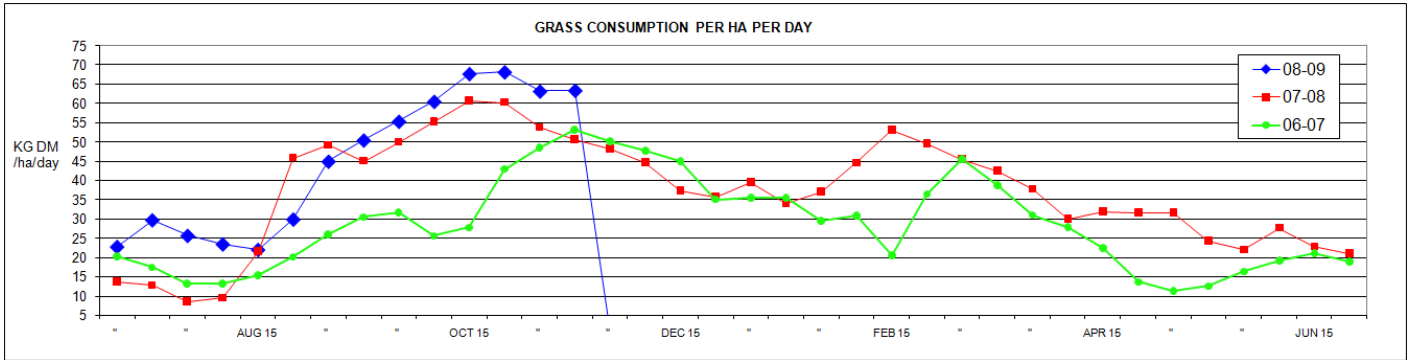
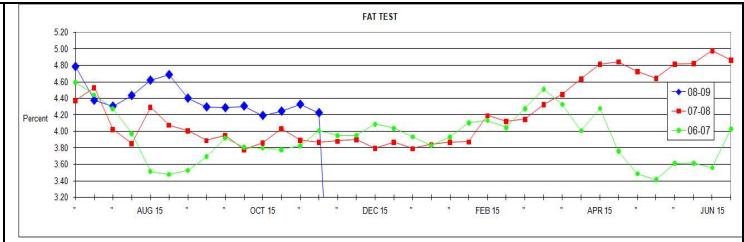
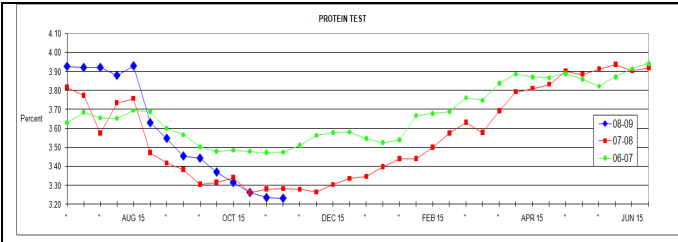
Milking 24 less cows than this time last year. A few cows are out the herd being treated for mastitis.



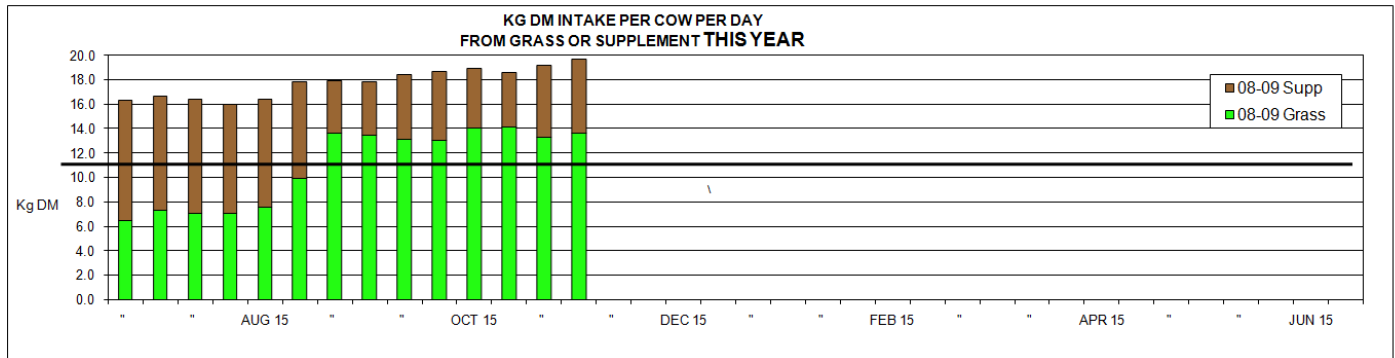
Total milk production each day is currently holding the same as last year, cumulatively 1,200 kg ahead.



Milk production per cow has steadied after a fall in late October. We have fed more grain (see graph below) to try to hold them after this production drop. Mating started on November 1st. PG has been used on any cycling cow, and CIDR's on any non-cyclers. By November 10th 214 of the total 295 had been mated. There are 25 carry-over empty cows in the herd that are getting very fat but are milking reasonably well.



Grass consumption per hectare is still going well; the dots include any silage harvested. The 7 hectare sub-surface drip area is still unsown. If it were performing as well as the rest of the farm we would have another 1.6 kg of grass per cow each day, avoiding that amount of supplement. This is now affecting our targets for the year.



Although milk per cow has fallen the cows are eating more food, about 19 kg DM, because they are now putting on weight and that requires food. Grass intake per cow is down a little, most of the extra intake coming from supplements.

Frank Tyndall, MDF Project Manager 0409 940 782 ftyndall@ozemail.com.au

Yellow Rag Bit Bree Walshe Dairy Advisor DPI Maffra

As the temperature heats up and most of you are finishing your 4th or 5th irrigation, you need to start thinking about the options for your water this season.

The 3 main questions to ask are:

- “How much water have I got?”
- “How much water have I used?”
- “How much water have I got left?”

Once you have answered these you're on your way to do a simple water budget.

The next step is to work out how many irrigations you are going to need this season to keep pasture growth ticking along. This value will vary between farms, but will likely to be around 12 till the end of the season. Now you need to determine how much water each irrigation uses. At this point you will potentially discover that you do not have enough water to get through.

Options:

- Dry part of your farm off that is the least efficient to irrigate, this area may increase as the season goes on depending on water availability or
- Dry a larger part of the farm off now & save some water to irrigate the whole farm at the end of the season (Autumn break for next season) or
- Buy some water, if you can source it!

Note: when purchasing water make sure you buy ABA (allocation bank account) water, as this is physical water.

When purchasing or transferring water make sure you do not exceed your annual use limit (AUL) – please note AUL only refers to unbundled water – channel, Macalister, Thomson & Rainbow Creek.

If you are unsure of water budgeting for your farm call Maffra DPI on 5147 0800, your milk supply officer or your consultant.

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