

Macalister Demonstration Farm

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NEWSLETTER 12

Monday, DEC 8th, 2008



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

Yellow Rag Bit

Jason McAinch Dairy Advisor DPI Maffra

As we approach December 15th, Southern Rural Water will make an announcement regarding both High & Low reliability Water Shares. There are a number of reasons why this date in the unbundled world is important:

1. Up until Dec 15th only 90% of High reliability water shares (HRWS) will be announced.
2. There will be no announcement against Low reliability water share (LRWS) before this date.
3. Any spill events after this date, will not be included as spill allocation, these events will only increase HRWS and/or LRWS.

An important change from pre-unbundling is allocation announcement against LRWS. For example, a farm has 180ML of HRWS and 85ML of LRWS. If an announcement is made of 10% LRWS this will increase your allocated Bank account by 8.5 ML. (This is different to the announcement pre June 2007 of 10% Sales which equated to 18ML increase). It is an allocation against the amount of water shares held as Low Reliability.

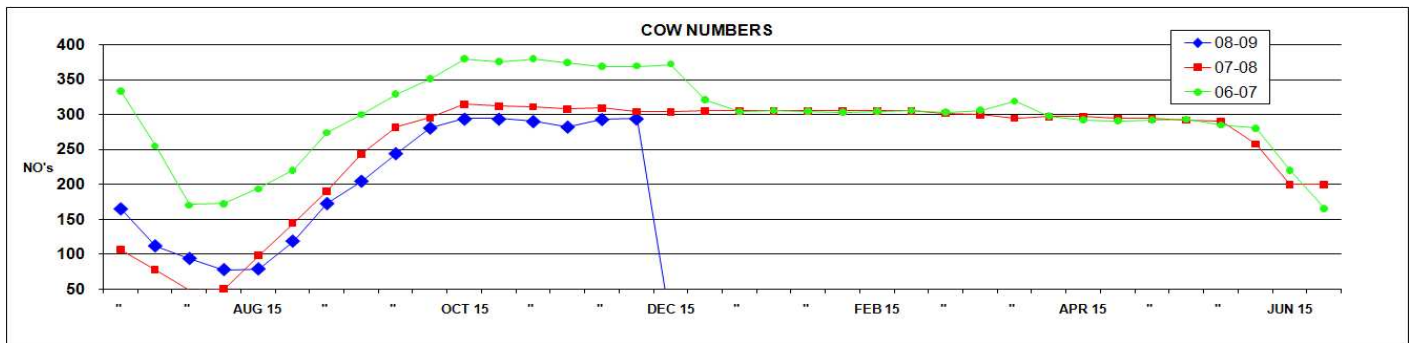
These subtle changes may have an impact on your business and you need to understand them. Attend the seminar at the MDF on Dec 17th at 10:30 to hear more about the announcements made by SRW on the Monday.

Sub-surface Drip Irrigation Project update

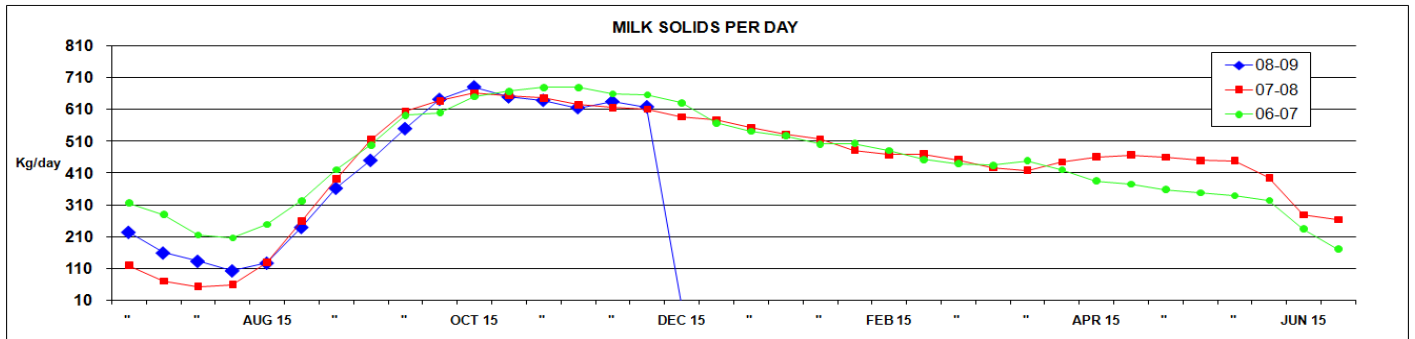
The Sub-surface Drip Irrigation Project is underway with the system now commissioned and operating ready for the first irrigation as it starts to dry off. The recent rain was very timely for the sowing of the paddock but it didn't give us a chance to see if we could strike a pasture using a sub-surface drip system – not sure that this is such an issue as we were hoping to sow back in early spring anyway. The first irrigation will be interesting with the grass only just coming through so we will be able to watch the moisture pattern as it moves through the soil – we plan to photograph this over an eight hour period (that will deliver 20mm of water to the site) as there is sure to be interest.

The Steering Group for the project is about to meet and has a space left for another dairy farmer with an interest. Give Neil Baker, Project Coordinator, a call on 51411 712 to find out more. The Steering Group will confirm the date of the project launch and your chance to have a first look at the system sometime in January.

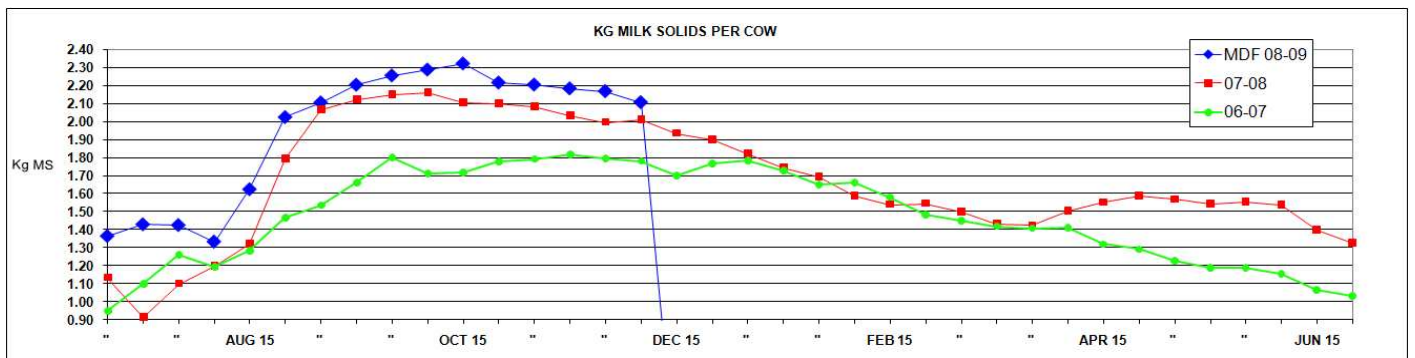
Macalister Demonstration Farm Production and Profitability



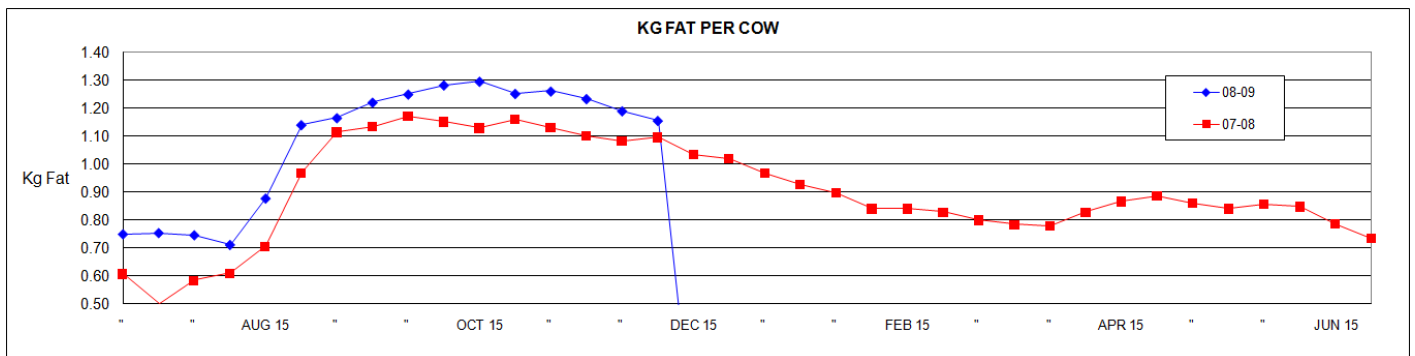
Milking 11 less cows than this time last year.



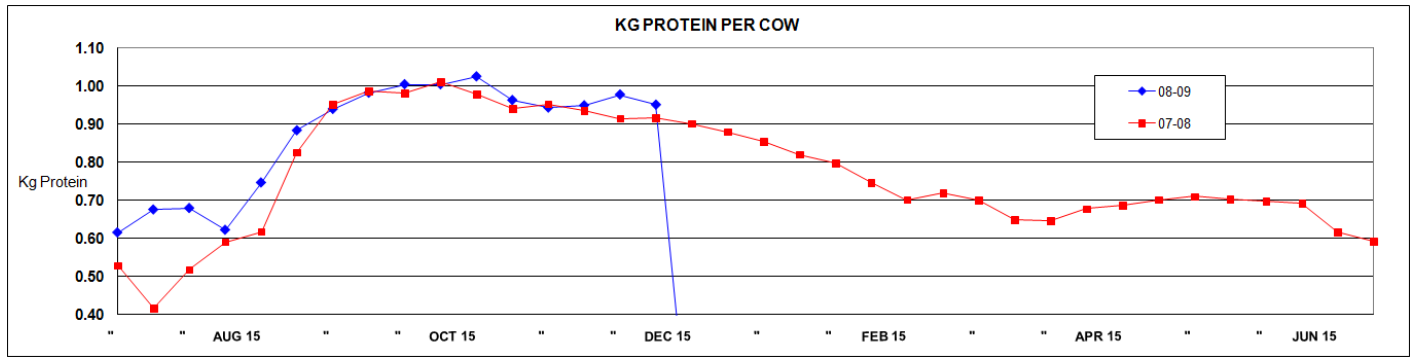
Total milk production each day is currently holding much the same as last year, cumulatively 1,500 kg MS ahead.



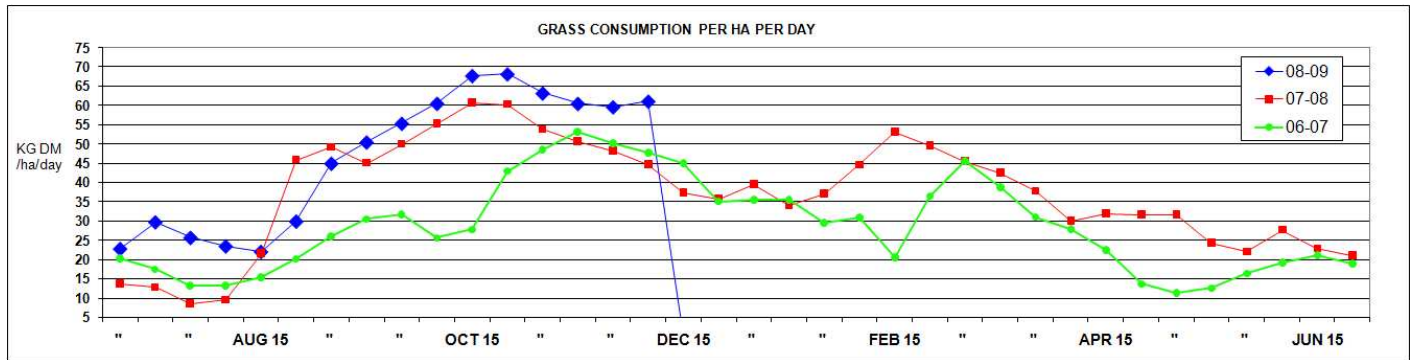
Milk production per cow has fallen more quickly recently. The feeding of the cows, particularly the diet balance, has not been very stable over the last fortnight. Not only has the grain changed from triticale to wheat, some silage has been fed to keep intake up on wet days, and, to avoid pugging, some paddocks have been grazed sooner than normal, meaning nitrates in the grass would be high.



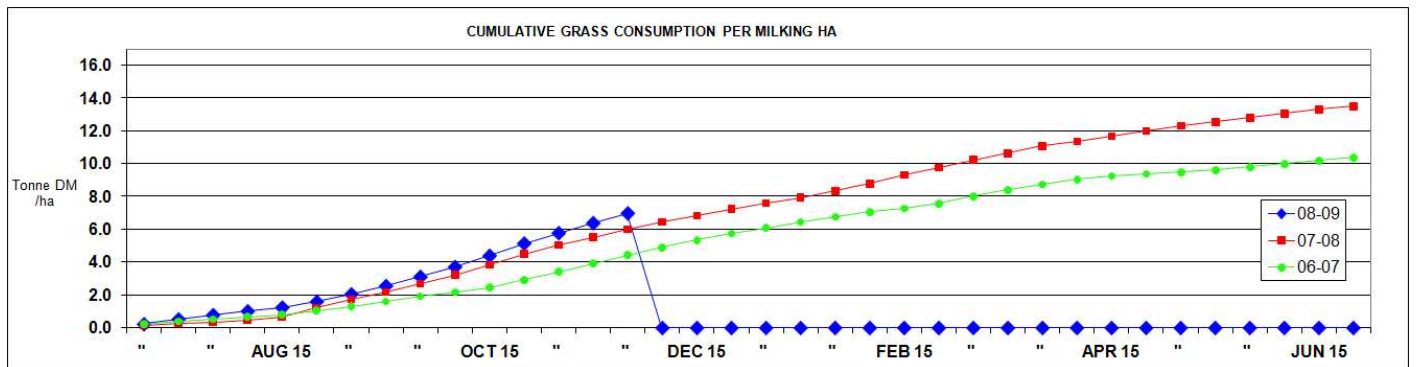
Comparing the graph above and below, most of the increase in milks solids per cow has come from fat, not protein. A possible explanation is that this season PKE has been continually fed.



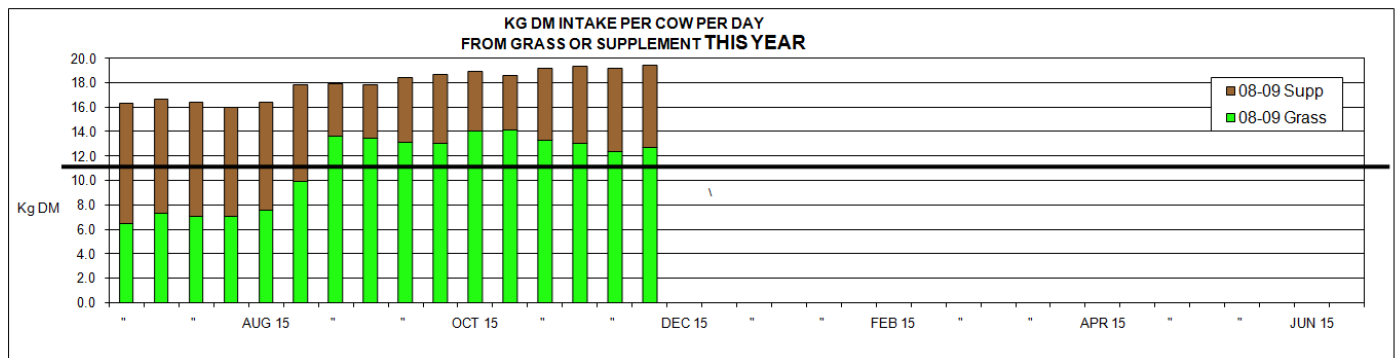
Protein per cow has recently lifted a bit above last year, probably due to feeding wheat rather than triticale.



Grass consumption per hectare fell away during the rain, not because growth slowed but because it was not consumed then. It is now being consumed, and with more silage just been harvested, consumption has lifted again.



Cumulative grass consumption per hectare (only the growing area counted) is now 1 tonne ahead of last year. There should be a couple of tonne extra if the “dip” of the “summer dip” in growth can be avoided (the red and green lines in previous graph). Grazing rotation length, grazing residue, nitrogen and mostly irrigation are the factors. The sub-surface drip area is struck, with plenty of soil moisture from the rain.



Cow intake is holding, with supplements. Staying above the 11 kg of grass target will be easier when the sub-surface drip grass is available. Frank Tyndall, 0409 940 782 ftyndall@ozemail.com.au

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