

# Macalister Demonstration Farm

PO Box 87, MAFFRA, VIC 3860

Ph. (03) 5145 1650 Fax (03) 5145 1650

Email: [mdf@wideband.net.au](mailto:mdf@wideband.net.au) Web: <http://mdf.mistro.ag/>

## NEWSLETTER 15

Monday, March 2nd, 2009



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

### MDF Session

Tues 10th March 10.30am - 1.00pm

**SETTING THE BIG PICTURE: budget, feed, stocking rate.**

LUNCH PROVIDED RSVP: Neil Baker 0400 806 246

### Gippsland Farmer Forums

Friday 27th March 2009, 11am-1pm Macalister Demonstration Farm

GippsDairy and Department of Primary Industries, with support from the Gardiner Foundation and Dairy Australia

Topics of discussion:

- Feed Decisions
- Cost Cutting/Implications
- Grain Industry Update
- Practical Business Advice
- CentreLink – What services and assistance is available?
- Education and Learning Opportunities for 2009 – NCDEA
- Counselling services – What services and assistance is available?
- Exceptional Circumstances (EC) update
- Open Farmer Discussion

Supported by VFF/UDV Maffra & District Farmers' Forum

Stay and mingle over a light lunch.

Contact: GippsDairy Co-ordinator 03 5659 4373.

### Yellow Rag Bit

Jason McAinch Dairy Advisor DPI Maffra

#### Time to monitor for facial eczema.

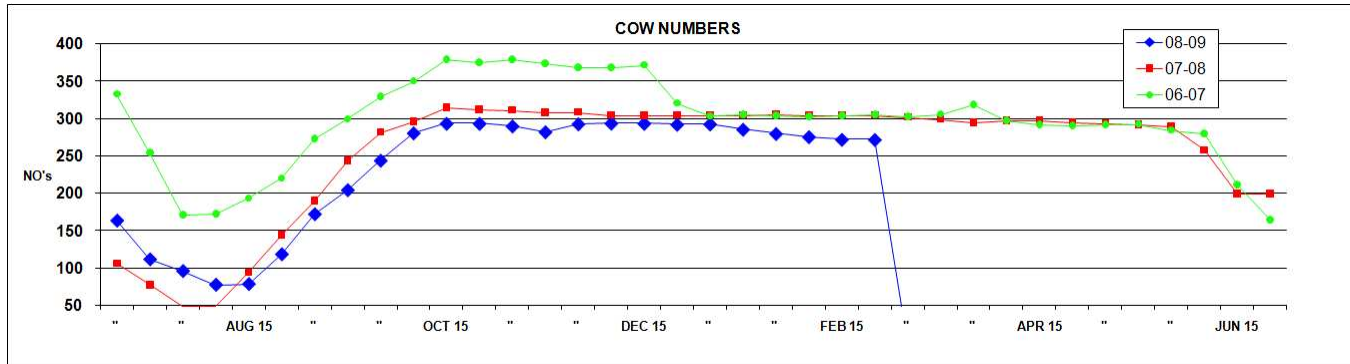
Effective monitoring and control of facial eczema on an individual farm can only be achieved if monitoring of spore numbers occurs on that farm. Spore counts vary dramatically from paddock to paddock and farm to farm, according to aspect, prevailing wind, pasture litter etc. The Department of Primary Industries at Maffra will operate a subsidised facial eczema monitoring service this autumn. Farmers can submit grass samples from paddocks on their farm before 1 pm on any week day. The cost of spore testing is \$11 per paddock sample, up to a maximum of five samples per farm per week. Results will be phoned through or posted on the day following submission of samples.

To collect grass samples from the paddock to be monitored, cut a handful of grass one centimetre above ground level using a sharp knife, repeat this procedure at more than 10 places in the paddock about 10 metres apart, place all the sub-samples from the paddock into a single bag and label it with your name and the paddock name.

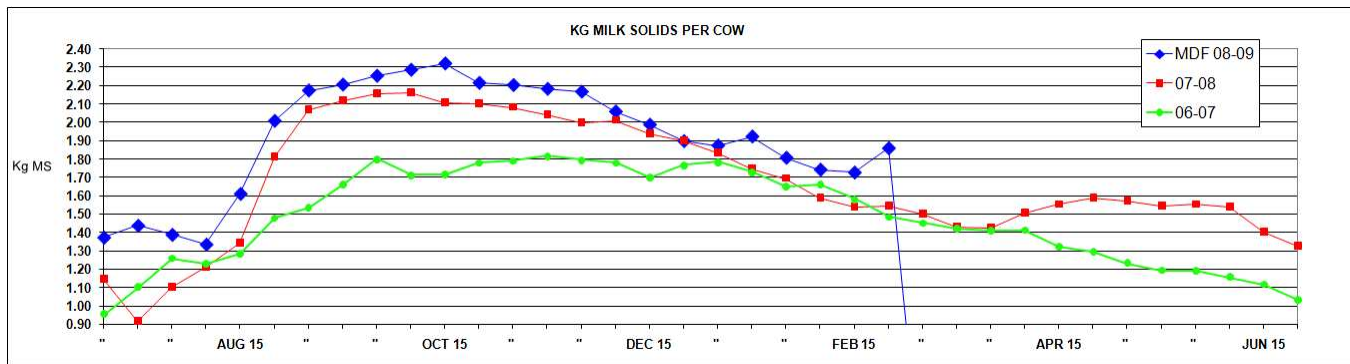
Preventative measures are only of value if applied before cattle graze "toxic" pasture. There is a lag time of between 10 to 20 days between eating "toxic" pasture and showing signs of the disease. By the time signs of facial eczema are apparent, it is too late to

implement effective control measures, unless spore numbers remain at dangerous levels. The chemicals used to control or prevent facial eczema can only legally be dispensed under veterinary prescription. Your veterinarian will be able to advise you.

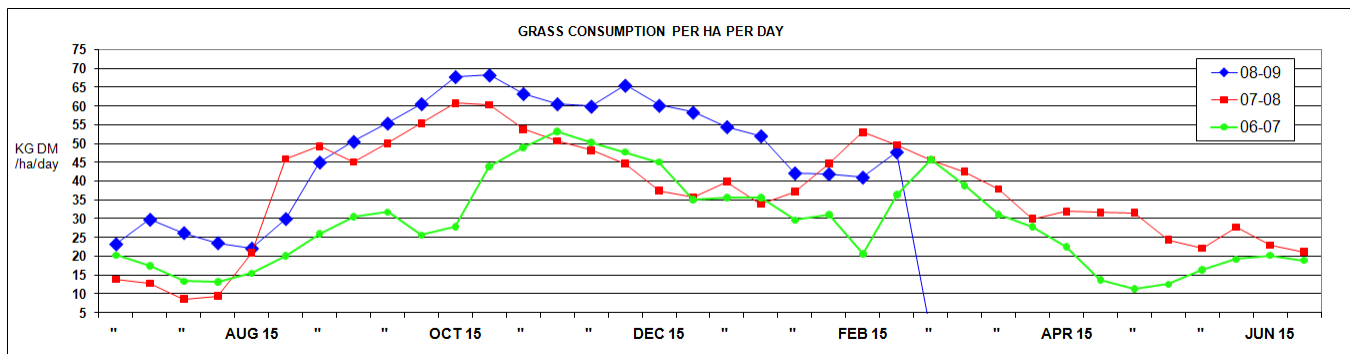
## Macalister Demonstration Farm Production and Profitability Graphs



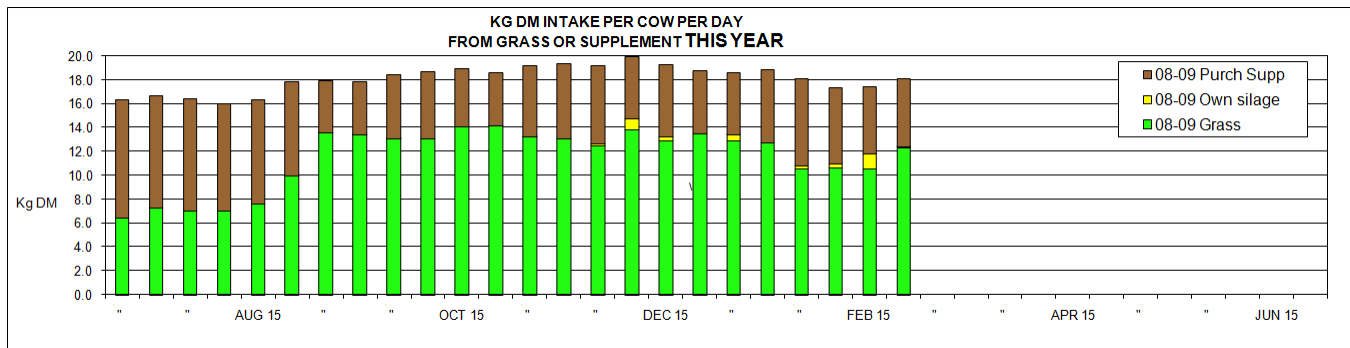
Currently milking 272, 35 less than last year.



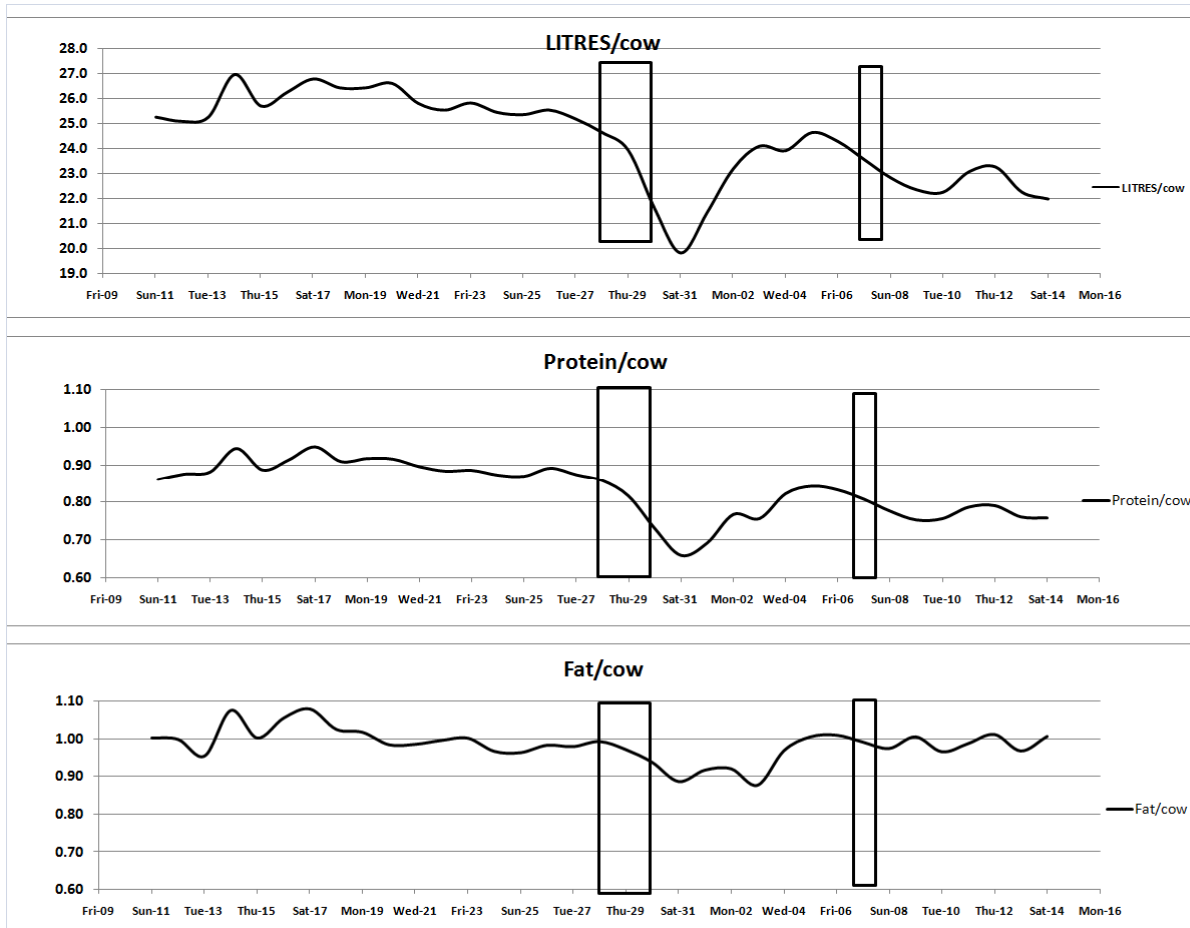
The heat had its affect on milk production per cow in a number of ways: they were overheated and could not function properly, they did not eat, and the grass did not grow as well (see graph below). They have bounced back well.



The heat had its affect on grass consumption: during the hottest days the cows did not eat it; and it was heat and moisture stressed so did not grow well. Having said that, in the patches of the sub-surface drip that are working properly, that is water supplied often but no water logging and scalding by water lying on the surface, the ryegrass continued to grow well.



The cows are currently eating 12.2 kg DM grass, and 6.1 kg DM of grain and PKE.



Above are three graphs showing the daily effect of the recent hot weather on milk production. The rectangles on the graphs mark the three hot days in late January and the hot Saturday in Feb. Over the first three days, litres and protein fell dramatically, litres from 25 to 20, and protein from 0.85 to 0.65 kg per cow. The fat production was more stable, still falling from 1.0 to 0.9 kg. The second heat period was hotter but only for one day, and production drop was not as severe. On the hot days the cows were sent to paddocks that have tall trees on both sides, running north-south. The base of the trees are fenced off but still provide a long narrow strip of shade morning and afternoon, enough for all cows. The cows were milked and fed earlier in the mornings and later in the afternoons, and sprinkled at the dairy. Even so, we need to plan for next year to minimise the effect of heat waves.

WEEKLY FEEDING PERFORMANCE	Three weeks	Last week	
To date:	<b>07-Feb-09</b>	<b>28-Feb-09</b>	
Milker graze area	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>	Hectare
Milker nos	<b>277</b>	<b>272</b>	Head
Grazing allocation 1/	<b>30</b>	<b>35</b>	th of graze area
Estm'd pasture consmp'n	<b>43</b>	<b>48</b>	kg DM/ha/dy
Pasture consum'd per cow	<b>10.8</b>	<b>12.2</b>	kg DM/cow/dy
Supplements fed/cow	<b>6.8</b>	<b>6.1</b>	kg DM/cow/dy
Litres/cow	<b>23.1</b>	<b>24.2</b>	l/cow/day
MS per cow	<b>1.71</b>	<b>1.86</b>	kg/cow/dy
Anticipated milk price	<b>\$3.20</b>	<b>\$3.21</b>	\$/kg MS
Income/cow	<b>\$5.47</b>	<b>\$5.97</b>	\$/cow/dy
All feed cost/cow	<b>\$4.10</b>	<b>\$3.89</b>	\$/cow/dy
Margin over all Feed/cow/day	<b>\$1.37</b>	<b>\$2.08</b>	\$/cow/dy
MOAF per month	<b>\$11,385</b>	<b>\$16,973</b>	\$/month

## Have Your Say ...

The Board of the Macalister Demonstration Farm are about to complete their strategic plans for the next three years. To assist in that process and to make sure that the demonstrations undertaken on the farm are relevant to you we want you to give us your best ideas. The projects can be large or small, based on something we have already done or brand new – let the sky be the limit as long as it can be useful to you on your farm.

The time frame is short so get your ideas to Neil Baker on email (preferably) at [neilbaker@aapt.net](mailto:neilbaker@aapt.net) or phone 51411 712 before Wednesday March 11<sup>th</sup>.

### Sub-surface Drip Irrigation Project Correction

In the last issue of the newsletter the pasture quality figures following a feed test for the area under sub-surface drip irrigation were incorrectly reversed. The report should have read:

*“The result is a banding effect with strong growth above the drip tapes (Feed test: 16.7% DM; energy 12.0 MJ/kg DM; Crude protein 28.2% DM and fibre 44.2% DM) and plants water stressed between (Feed test: 17.8% DM; energy 11.5 MJ/kg DM; Crude protein 25.3% DM and fibre 42.0% DM).”*

Sorry!

POSTAGE

PAID

AUSTRALIA

**SENDER:**

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PO Box 87 **MAFFRA** VIC 3860