

Macalister Demonstration Farm

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NEWSLETTER 3

Monday, May 27, 2008



The Macalister Demonstration Farm is a community resource, managed to make a profit. This newsletter shows how it is travelling towards that goal, and hopes to contribute to the discussion.

You can visit the farm if you like. Book in for the one hour farm walk, Monday mornings, 11am; ring Frank Tyndall 0409 940 782. Your contributions and comments are welcome. Visit the website at <http://mdf.mistro.ag/>



Extension projects at the MDF are funded by Dairy Australia and the Gardiner Foundation with support from GippsDairy. If you prefer the newsletter emailed, please contact the MDF Board Secretary, Andrea Killeen, at the above email address.

There will be positions available on the Macalister Demonstration Farm Board in a few months time. Contact the Board Secretary if you are interested in becoming a director.

“Healthy, Wealthy Wise” day at MDF: “NO SUCH THING AS A FREE LUNCH & FREE GIFTS?? THINK AGAIN!!”

The Macalister Demonstration Farm, in conjunction with the Heyfield Lions Club, is holding a day for farmers where you will receive a free lunch, a free “goodies” bag(to the first 120 people) , free health checks including blood pressure, skin spots, hearing, massages, and information on Diabetes.

Guest speakers include JOHN MULVANY with a panel of farmers discussing the balance of work and time off, JAKOB MALMO on the health risks on farm and JOHN CURTIS to talk about the “5”s – people over 55 and under 5 and the associated risks – and safety on farm for yourself and your staff. There will be a display of motorbikes with bookings taken for free ATV training. Lyco will have their new post hole digger/auger with its new safety features.

Door prizes include a signed Carlton football jumper, cattle drench, first aid kits, 4 sets of earmuffs, dairy & fruit gift baskets & much more. Bring your old “non” sunsmart hat and exchange it for a brand new sunsmart hat. The “goodies” bags are loaded with fantastic gifts and all of this is for FREE!!

WEDNESDAY 11TH JUNE, 2008 10.00AM TO 2.00 PM CONTACT: 51451650

A new program, a **“People in Dairy” focus group**, developed by Dairy Australia, will be conducted at the MDF, starting soon. It involves five meetings that will examine people productivity and the process of attracting, keeping and developing the people on dairy farms. If you would like to join this group ring Frank Tyndall, 0409 940 782.

MDF Fertility 2007/2008 Mark Humphris, Maffra vet centre, sorts out our fertility issues and has made these comments for us to think about:

After a 5 week AI period and 7 weeks with the bulls, the MDF herd was left with a 30% Not-in-Calf Rate. The main reasons for such a high not in calf rate were very poor conception rates, 35% (target above 53%), an average submission rate in the first 3 weeks, 75% (target above 86%) and a lower performance by the bulls. Given the AI conceptions, we could still have expected a not in calf rate of 16%, not 30%. The reason for the low AI conception

rate is unknown, but the second flood and the significant rain event we had in early November could have increased stress on the cow and impacted on conception rates. On other farms this more impacted on cows just not coming in season, not so much on conception rates. Other possible reasons for low conception rates are poor AI practices (i.e. too many straws being thawed at once, guns being in the sun, or being contaminated), poor semen quality or inadequate liquid nitrogen in the tank, and poor AI technique (inappropriate temp of thawing semen, rough technique causing bleeding, inappropriate placing of the AI gun in the uterus). There are other factors that could be involved and I think we have all seen conception rates fall over the years that may well be partly attributable to the influence of Holsteins in our herds.

Possible reasons for poor bull performance include insufficient bull power – an assessment needs to be made on how many bulls are required after AI and then use 1 bull per 30. If you use a 6 week in-calf rate of 50%, which is average for the area, and you AI 300 cows for 6 weeks, you still have 150 cows to get in calf. Therefore you need 10 bulls, 5 of them in the herd at any one time and they need to be changed every 4 days. Other reasons include lameness not being picked up and treated appropriately, using bulls with questionable history of performance or disease (i.e. BVD or Vibrio).

Jack Winterbottom, DPI, gave us a run down on our Johne’s disease testing:

The Macalister Demonstration Farm is an infected Johne’s disease herd. The level of infection detected by the annual blood test places the herd in the category of “Tested Low Prevalence” (TLP – less than 1.5% blood test positive). This gives the herd a base score of 4 points in the National Dairy BJD Assurance Score (Dairy Score). Animals raised under the Johne’s disease Calf Accreditation Program (JDCAP) since 2003 have an extra 3 points because of their method of rearing and are 7 point animals. The herd had two reactor cattle last year. The annual test of animals aged 4 years and older will happen soon and we are hoping for no reactors this year.

GRAPHS AND COMMENTS

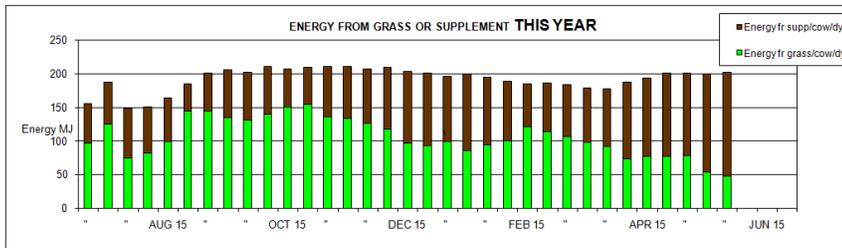
Each dot in the following graphs represents a ten day period, blue this year, red last year.

	<p>Milk production Current cow numbers are 290, about the same as last year.</p> <p>Milk solids are holding at 451 kg MS per day.</p>
	<p>Milk production per cow Milk production per cow is 18.2 litres or 1.57 kg MS per cow.</p>
	<p>Grass consumption As we have moved to a 55 day rotation, grass consumption has fallen to 20 kg DM/ha per day. The graphs work on 10 day periods with only 3 days in this last marker. The grass figure in the table below is different because it works on a full week period.</p>

Grass, supplements and total intake

This graph sums up the feeding profitability story. The green bar is grazed grass, the brown bar is supplement.

Land and cows are major investments. They both cost a lot of money to buy, and a lot of money is spent on them each year. Each hectare of land needs to produce a lot of grass, to keep feed price lower. Each cow needs to produce a lot of milk to swamp the 2 tonne of feed she eats annually for maintenance, and all her running costs. We aim to keep the top of the bar as high as possible, with as much green (grass) as possible. Right now the MDF could feed more profitably if we had a lower stocking rate. Any cow we plan not to milk next season will soon go.



THE NUMBERS

	3 weeks ago	Last week	
To date:	10-May-08	24-May-08	
Milker graze area	61	61	ha
Milker nos	294	290	head
Stocking rate	4.8	4.8	cows/ha
Grazing allocation 1/	45	55	th of graze area
Average graze rest time	42	46	days
Estm'd pasture consmp'n	29	15	kg DM/ha/dy
Pasture consum'd per cow	6.0	3.2	kg DM/cow/dy
Estm'd pasture price	\$128	\$146	\$/T DM

Grazing

We have moved the grazing allocation to one 55th of the farm. This has reduced the amount of pasture per cow significantly.

Pasture feed

The average daily pasture consumption is showing 15 kg dry matter per hectare. This figure is a calculated consumption rate not the actual growth rate. The growth rate in a few of our better paddocks is 30 kg per day.

Estm'd body cond'n change	0.40	0.50	kg LWT/cow/dy
Litres/cow	18.1	18.2	l/cow/day
Fat test	4.73%	4.72%	%
Protein test	3.90%	3.90%	%
MS per cow	1.57	1.57	kg/cow/dy

Cow body condition

The cows are estimated to be gaining body condition a bit faster, now at 0.5 kg per day.

Milk production per cow

And milk solids per cow last week has remained the same as three weeks ago.

Anticipated milk price	\$7.64	\$7.64	\$/kg MS
Anticpt'd milk price	\$0.659	\$0.658	per litre
Milk income/cow	\$11.96	\$12.00	\$/cow/dy
All feed cost/cow	\$6.67	\$7.64	\$/cow/dy
Margin over all Feed/cow/day	\$5.29	\$4.36	\$/cow/dy
MOAF /ha /day	\$25.51	\$20.74	\$/ha/day
Farm MOAF per DAY	\$1,556	\$1,265	\$/day
MOAF per month	\$46,692	\$37,945	\$/month

Feeding profitability

The feeding profitability indicators have fallen significantly as the amount of supplements have risen and grass has fallen.

There has been some comment and discussion about the graphs and the calculations. The Monday morning farm walk (see details at top) shows and explains them. Frank Tyndall, MDF Project Manager 0409 940 782 ftyndall@ozemail.com.au

SENDER:

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