

Macalister Demonstration Farm

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NEWSLETTER 31

Monday March 1st 2010



Extension projects at the MDF are funded by Dairy Australia, Sustainability Victoria and Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, with support from GippsDairy.

Reducing Carbon Emissions – What are the options?

With all of the changes made to Government and Opposition schemes to reduce carbon emissions, here is your chance to make sense of it all. The day will include an update of the latest positions and expectations as well as look at the options available to reduce emissions and their potential impact on production and finances. The project has also identified priorities for action.

Lunch provided.

**Field day for March 2nd postponed
 Note new date**

Macalister Demonstration Farm

Tuesday March 23rd 10.30-12.30pm

RSVP to Neil Baker 51411 712 or neilbaker@aapt.net.au

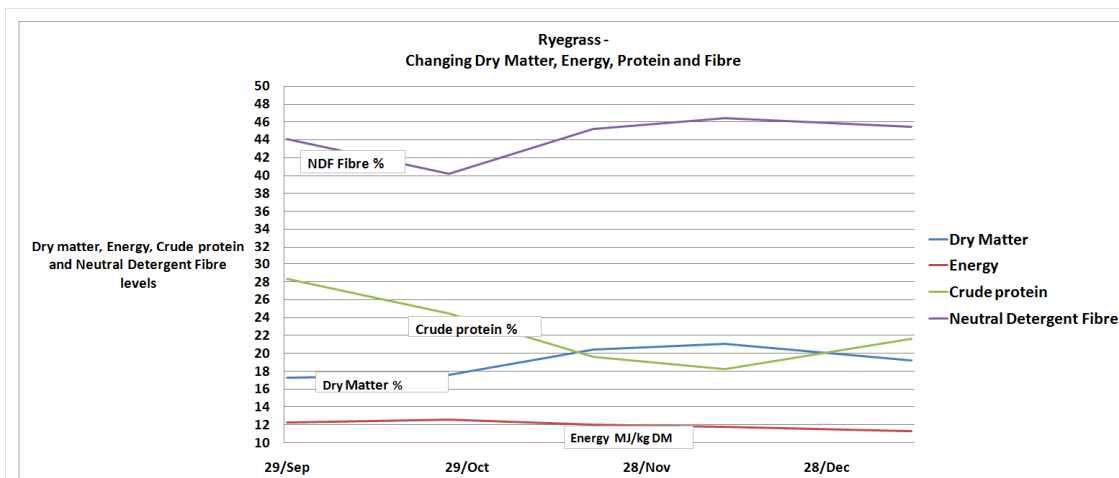
Macalister Demonstration Farm Profitability Project

Changing Ryegrass feed value from spring to summer

During the recent nitrogen and ProGibb trial that Incitec Pivot conducted at the MDF, 12 ryegrass plots were sampled and tested for dry matter, energy, protein, and fibre, five times in a period from late September to mid January. The 60 feed tests provide a reliable picture of changing feed value of ryegrass.

Below is a table and a graph of the average feed values of the 12 plots at the different times.

| Date | 29/Sep | 26/Oct | 19/Nov | 11/Dec | 11/Jan | Units |
|-------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|
| Dry Matter | 17.3 | 17.6 | 20.5 | 21.1 | 19.2 | % |
| Energy | 12.3 | 12.6 | 12.0 | 11.8 | 11.3 | MJ /kg DM |
| Crude protein | 28.3 | 24.5 | 19.6 | 18.3 | 21.7 | % of DM |
| Neutral Detergent Fibre | 44.1 | 40.2 | 45.2 | 46.4 | 45.5 | % of DM |

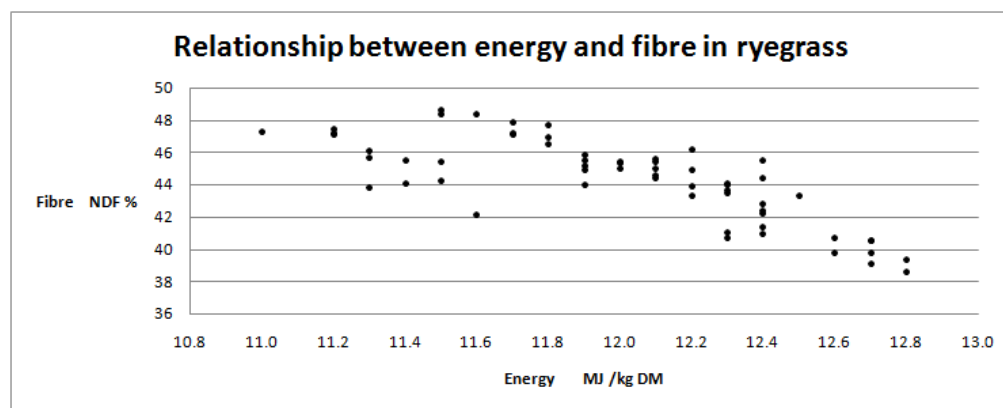


In spring the samples were cut at 28 days after the previous cut, and in summer, 29 days. Generally, moving from spring to summer:

- Although dry matter would be affected by soil moisture, that is, how recently the paddock was irrigated, dry matter increases from spring into summer, moving from 17% to 20%.
- Energy levels decrease from spring to summer, from mid 12's megajoules to mid 11's MJ.
- Crude protein falls from mid twenty percent to low twenty percent.
- The fibre level increases from 40% to 46%.

Because these plots were ryegrass only, and because of the intervals between the cuts, these changes in feed quality are occurring mostly due to the changing season and tougher growing conditions, that is, higher temperatures and drier (and at times waterlogged) soil moisture. Changing grass species, for example more paspalum, grazing rotation length, and seed heading are not causing much of these changes.

A graph below shows the energy levels plotted against the fibre level for all 60 samples.



The point of this graph is that as fibre levels goes up, energy levels goes down; pretty obvious I suppose. These two changes have a serious double negative effect on the energy intake, and therefore milk production per cow.

The higher fibre and lower energy means

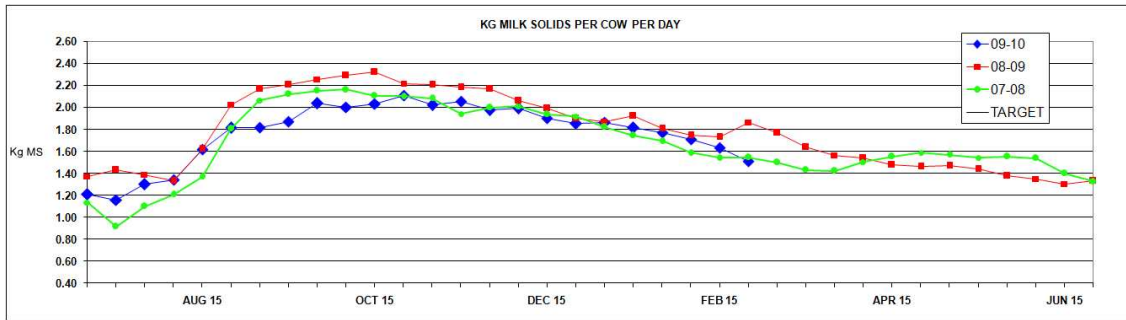
1. The cows cannot eat as many kilograms of dry matter, because there is a limit to how much fibre a cow can cope with; and
2. In each kg of dry matter there is less useable energy.

So, if milk production per cow, one of the important drivers of feeding profitability, is to be maintained in summer, some of this slightly poorer quality grass needs to be replaced with a higher quality feed, say grain. Then of course, if the price of the grain is high, and the price for milk low, there may be no financial margin. However, often, there would be a margin.

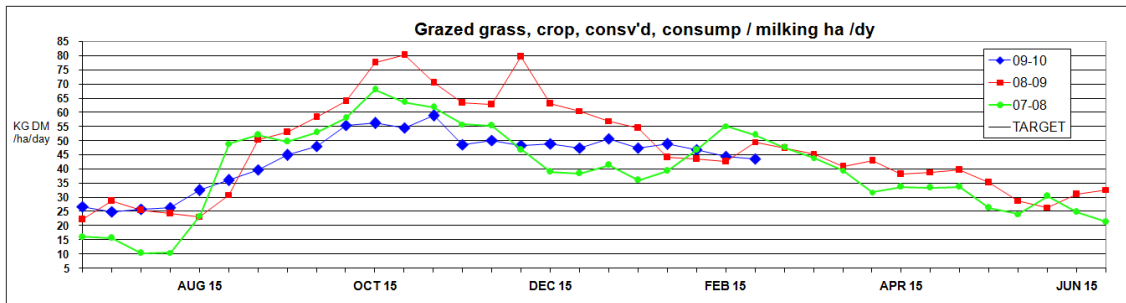
If the cows can eat only say 12 kg of summer grass, and you are growing 48 kg per hectare per day, the stocking rate needs to 4 per hectare to get it all eaten. A stocking rate of 3.5 would see grass left in the paddock.

A few options:

- Increase stocking rate over summer and feed more grain.
- Use less N to grow less , and cheaper, grass.
- Think like spring, skip paddocks that you can see will not be utilised effectively, and make them into silage; silaging increases feed price, but it will probably be used profitably later.
- Shorten the grazing rotation to grow less grass.



Since early December milk production per cow at the MDF has declined at a similar rate as other years, and even more quickly recently.



Grass consumption per hectare has held steady since November, declining slowly recently.

Yellow Rag Bit

Bree Walshe, Dairy Advisor DPI Maffra

Milking the Weather Seminar Series

Seasonal and climate risk information for the dairy industry

The Dairy Extension Centre (DEC) as part of the DPI has launched a brand new newsletter targeted at the dairy industry to improve our climate and seasonal risk knowledge. These days are brought to you by the DEC and GippsDairy.

Come along to one of the following seminars to discuss:

Climate drivers

What influences Gippsland's rainfall?

Weather data specific to your local area

Zita Ritchie, DPI

Forecasting

The reliability and limitations of forecasting

Making the most of the BOM website

David Morrison, BOM

Seasonal risk

How can we use climate drivers and forecasting to help prepare for this season

Bree Walshe, DPI

Thursday 18th March

POOWONG - Public Hall, 11am—1pm, Lunch provided

FISH CREEK - Fishy Pub, Oberon Room, Old Waratah Rd, 7.30pm—9.30pm, Supper provided

Monday 22nd March

YARRAM - DPI Yarram Office, 310 Commercial Rd, 11am—1pm, Lunch provided

MAFFRA - DPI Maffra Office, 1 Stratford Rd, 7.30pm—9.30pm, Supper provided

RSVP is Essential for catering purposes or for **further information** call **Bree Walshe** at **DPI Maffra** on **5147 0834** or bree.walshe@dpi.vic.gov.au

National Dairy Conference – Wollongong February 24-25th 2010

Just a few quick points picked up at the National Dairy Conference last week:

- Mastitis control – When testing milking equipment make sure it is tested under load so you will really know if it is really working properly during milking. Many machines tested without load come up as fine when, in fact, they are not. (Dr. Andy Johnson – www.theudderdoctor.com)
- Lameness – Far more cows in the herd are lame than you might think and this has a big impact on production – identify and treat even low level injury and you will see the difference in the vat. (Karl Burgi - www.comforthoofcare.com)
- Cows need time to rest to maintain productivity, typically 12-14hrs in a day. If they are not getting this much rest you could see an increase of 1.5 litres of milk for every extra hour of rest. (Karl Burgi - www.comforthoofcare.com)
- Dairy farmers are not good at looking after themselves – “If you can’t look after your own physical, social and mental health what chance will you have of looking after your family. Make a plan to get a better balance in your life.” Psychologist Dennis Hoiberg.

Neil Baker

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