

Macalister Demonstration Farm

PO Box 87, MAFFRA, VIC 3860

Ph. 0488 175 366

Email: mdf@wideband.net.au Web: <http://mdf.mistro.ag/>



NEWSLETTER 66

Monday April 23rd 2012



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



Grass Cultivar Trial Field Day

Cropmark in association with MDF will be holding a field day to discuss the results from the Grass Cultivar Trial held at MDF. The trial has now been completed: the aim of the trial was to assess pasture productivity and persistence of a number of rye grass species. All welcome to attend.

When: Tuesday 8th May 2012

Where: Macalister Demonstration Farm, 285 Boggy Creek Road, Riverslea (Maffra).

Time: 10.30am

What else: FREE BBQ lunch at approximately 12.30pm

Call Sandie Brown on 0488 175 366 for more information.

Yellow Rag Bit

Jason McAinch, Dairy Advisor, DPI Maffra

The wet late summer and now a period of time where rainfall has not met evaporation many farmers are unsure whether to irrigate or not. With a lot of dry years the decision to irrigate late in the season was a lot easier than this year. When you have questions, it is about trying to understand all the risks and separate: What you know and what you don't know?

So what are the things we know about our farm and irrigation systems?

- Free draining soils, low permeable soils and the mix across the farm?
- Spray irrigation, flood and the mix across the farm?
- Good irrigation drainage off areas
- Supply of irrigation water after 15th May (bore, river, etc)
- Pasture species in paddocks (summer species or not)

So what don't we know?

- Is it going to rain and make the farm wet or stay dry?

Now to some strategies to consider

1. Medium to Low permeable soils – consider spreading the risk.
 - a. Irrigate only parts of the farm. For a farm that is 100% flood irrigation and low permeable soils, you may consider irrigating only 25% of the farm and spread the risk. Irrigate some areas close to the dairy, irrigate some down the back.
 - b. For an outlet that usually take 36 hours to irrigate, only irrigate for 10 hours. Then some time later irrigate for another 10 hours a different area.
 - c. Think about irrigating bays short, especially where a paddock is fenced into one bay, a dry (drier) area at the bottom of the paddock for stock to sit
2. Where the farm areas can be irrigated from bores or river, you may hold off irrigate these areas until the channel irrigated areas have dried out.
3. For spray irrigation, it is relatively easy; apply enough water to maintain a good soil moisture profile. Irrigate in small amounts at a time.
4. For free draining soils, again relatively easy, irrigate when required. (in my mind, free draining soils are paddocks in which can be driven over by the fertiliser truck 24hr after an irrigation and does not leave tracks).
5. Paddocks that have strong presence of summer species such as, distichum and passy, these species are not going to be actively growing and therefore not actively using the soil moisture, these paddocks will stay wetter than ryegrass dominate paddocks (on the same soil type). Consider carefully a late irrigation on these paddocks.

For more information or advice on options for your business please contact your trusted veterinarian, nutritionist, consultant or a member of the Dairy Services Branch at DPI Maffra on 5147 0800.

Jason McAinch, Dairy Project Officer, DPI Maffra

Macalister Demonstration Farm Profitability Project

Bits and pieces from weekly reports in the Gippsland Times and on AusdairyL

Mar 9, 2012

After the rain period, the paddocks with clean spinner-cut drains feel much drier underfoot and are growing fast, whereas the wetter paddocks are soggy, the grass base is rotting, not growing very well, and not likely to offer the cows the type of feed they will graze well, down to the required residue.

Mar 16, 2012

There seems to be enough grass on offer, but more rain, some pretty damp paddocks, and many cows with sore feet, all mean the cows are struggling to eat enough grass. It is only half way through March, 105 mm of rain has fallen for the month, and more is predicted on Wednesday.

During the dry-ish patch in January, before the irrigation allocation was increased, the farm did a water budget and decided it would sell 100 ML of irrigation water, at \$60 per ML. This could have been a handy \$6,000 in the budget, and at the time, with a few farmers thinking they might need to buy water, give them some reliability. Trading water involves guesswork and some risk, but putting any surplus water on the market must help the district. If only we had acted more quickly! Presumably any potential buyer is thinking: "Thank goodness I acted slowly".

The BMCC average for the ten day period to 10/03/2012 was 145,000, which gave the farm a factory ranking of 20th out of 374 farms.

Mar 23, 2012

The MDF is a high input farm: reasonably high stocking rate, nitrogen input, and grain input. The milk production per cow has fallen significantly recently. 6 weeks ago the cow were milking very well, at 25 litres per cow. They fell to 19 litres, and now just returning to 20. All this was triggered by the wet weather. To minimise long term paddock damage, some nitrogen applications were missed. Grass intake per cow fell. Many of the cows had sore feet and some acidosis was evident. We backed off the grain but did not provide extra forage. Good forages are expensive, and can be quite wasteful and cause long term damage to grass when fed on wet paddocks. Feed costs fell but the margin fell too. The Tracker analysis of other farms in the district appears to show similar milk production falls, with some, not all, of the higher input farms. Higher input seems to make higher margins but they are more difficult to maintain in tough times. Margins on lower stocked, lower input farms do not move as much.

The BMCC average for the ten day period to 20/03/2012 was 129,000, which gave the farm a factory ranking of 19th out of 372 farms.

Mar 30, 2012

The MDF is on the MG Traditional payment system, but is thinking how to get the Domestic milk price, by holding to one calving period, not in autumn, but later in spring.

Apr 6, 2012

The BMCC average for the ten day period to 31/03/2012 was 142,000, which gave the farm a factory ranking of 19th out of 374 farms.

Apr 13, 2012

Paddock 34 was grazed 28 days ago and had 2.2 leaves regrown since grazing. This means the average leaf appearance rate over the 28 days was 12.7 days. It is getting cooler so leaf appearance right now would be longer than 13 days, and it will be getting even longer. On Friday the grazing allocation was set to one 40th of the farm, and it will not be long before one 45th will need to be set, if three leaves are to be regrown at the point of grazing. This reduction of daily grazing area is reducing the grass per cow now, but in the long run more grass will be grown compared to staying on say a one 30th allocation rate. All other factors (temperature, nutrient supply, soil moisture) being equal, third leaves can grow as much quantity as the first and second put together.

The BMCC average for the ten day period to 10/04/2012 was 171,000, which gave the farm a factory ranking of 51st out of 373 farms.

Apr 20, 2012

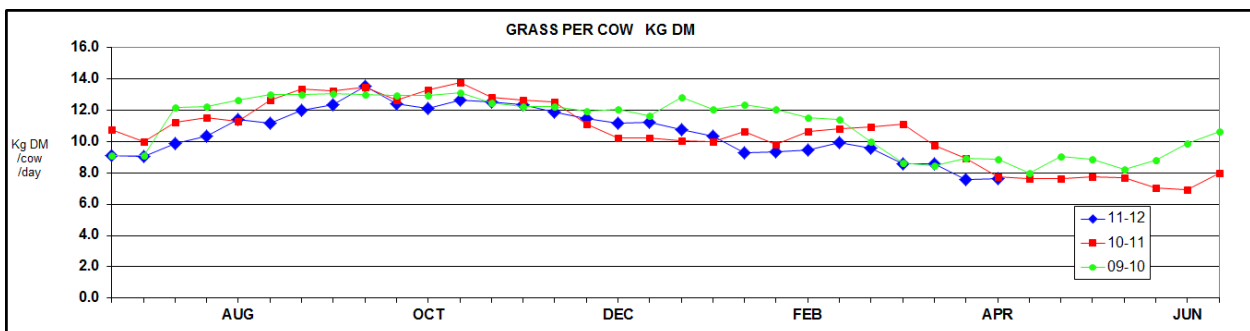
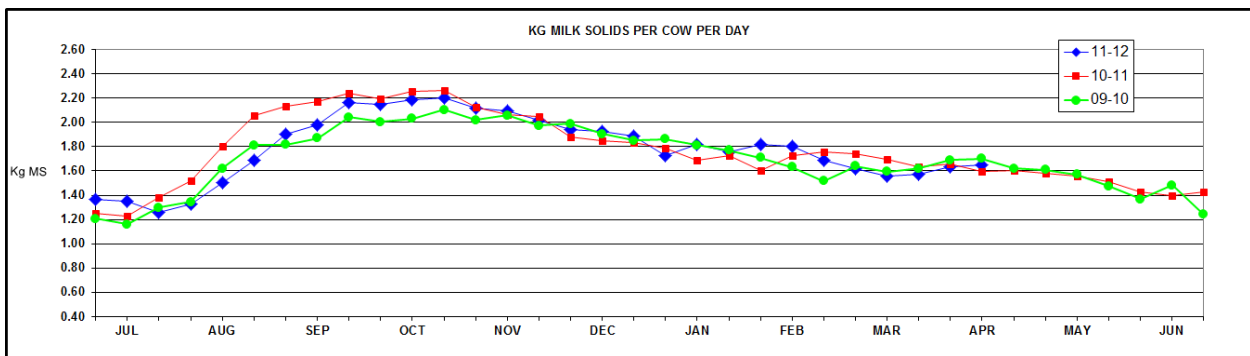
Irrigation has started again. 9 hectares have been sown with ryegrass, direct drilled after grazing with no spraying out of the existing grass.

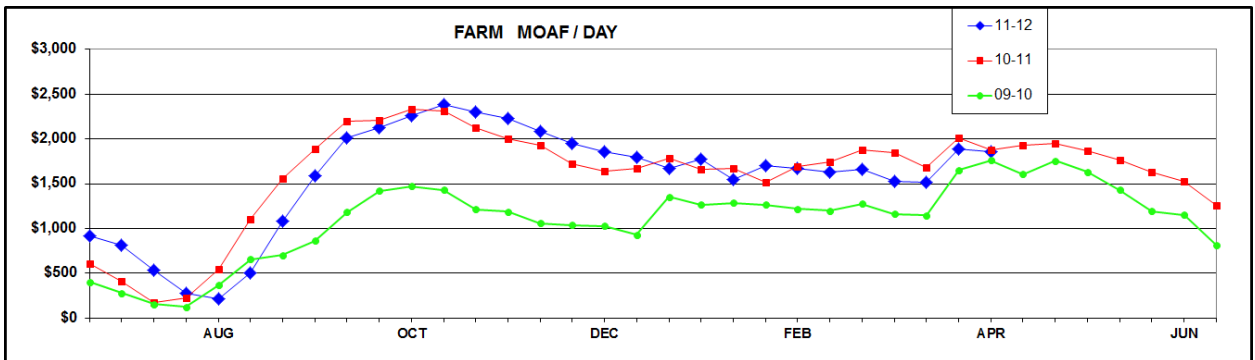
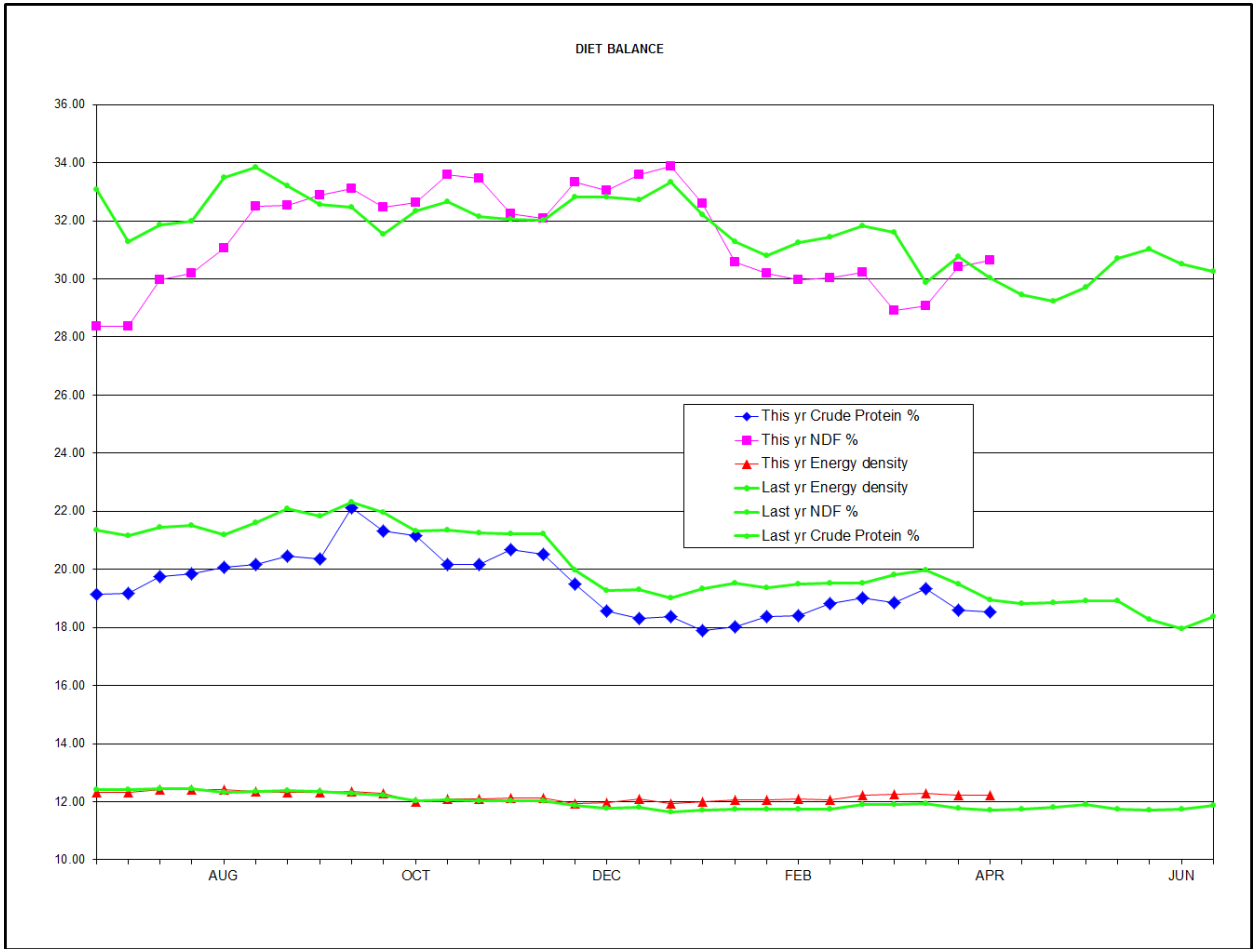
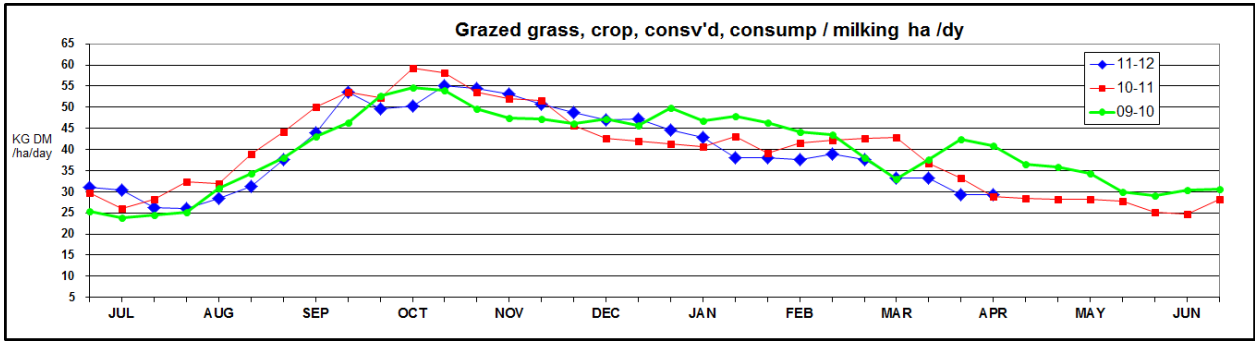
All through summer, and until now, most paddocks have been grazed at a 30 day grazing rest time. Just to see the effect, Paddock 1 was grazed always at 20 days. One cannot trust "one paddock" experiments, but this did not work well. Although grazed a third more often, Paddock 1 always had a lot less than two-thirds the grass quantity available at grazing, compared to other paddocks.

The Tracker project analyses the feeding profitability of twenty farms in the Macalister Irrigation District each ten days.

MACALISTER IRRIGATION DISTRICT TRACKER ANALYSIS						
		TEN DAY PERIOD TO:	PREV TEN DAY PERIOD TO:	TEN DAY PERIOD A MONTH AGO	TEN DAY PERIOD A YEAR AGO	
		10-Apr 12	31-Mar 12	10-Mar 12	10-Apr 11	Units
Pasture consumption/ milk ha/dy	Average	39	37	34	32	kg DM/ha/dy
	Max	53	58	46	45	kg DM/ha/dy
	Min	29	23	24	22	kg DM/ha/dy
DM Intake grass /cow/dy	Average	9.3	9.0	9.0	9.1	kg DM/cow/dy
	Max	11.5	11.1	11.1	13.5	kg DM/cow/dy
	Min	7.1	7.4	7.1	4.7	kg DM/cow/dy
Total DM Intake /cow/dy	Average	15.6	15.3	15.0	15.8	kg DM/cow/dy
	Max	18.1	17.3	17.0	18.1	kg DM/cow/dy
	Min	13.2	13.6	8.8	13.5	kg DM/cow/dy
Milk Solids /cow/dy	Average	1.58	1.55	1.53	1.56	kg/cow/dy
	Max	1.92	1.90	1.76	2.06	kg/cow/dy
	Min	1.19	1.26	1.17	1.22	kg/cow/dy
Margin over all Feed/cow/day	Average	\$7.18	\$5.85	\$5.77	\$7.23	\$/cow/dy
	Max	\$8.97	\$7.54	\$7.31	\$11.11	\$/cow/dy
	Min	\$5.89	\$4.91	\$4.31	\$5.08	\$/cow/dy
MOAF /ha /day	Average	\$29.88	\$23.39	\$21.90	\$25.45	\$/ha/day
	Max	\$38.42	\$31.61	\$28.73	\$34.15	\$/ha/day
	Min	\$21.42	\$15.30	\$16.54	\$17.20	\$/ha/day

MDF PRODUCTION GRAPHS





POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA

SENDER:



Macalister Demonstration Farm

PO Box 87 **MAFFRA** VIC 3860