

Macalister Demonstration Farm

Projects on the farm are funded by Dairy Australia, the Gardiner Foundation, Sustainability Victoria, DPI VIC, Department of Agriculture Food and Fisheries, with support provided by GippsDairy.

Macalister Demonstration Farm Update 352 (Week ending June 14th, 2013)

The Macalister Demonstration Farm (MDF) is currently milking 215 cows with a grazing area of 70 hectares, and an effective stocking rate of 3.1 cows per hectare. There are some higher and drier paddocks being earmarked for dry cow grazing and were out of the round, but with the wet spell, these will be included in the milker rotation, therefore the increase in milking area this week.

The daily allocation is one 40th of the grazing area or around 1.5ha/24 hours. The cows are still on a night sacrifice system with a daily grazing on grass but with the wet conditions this has been relaxed to avoid damage. The night feed involves feeding lucerne hay and now with a blend of PKE/DDG/Almond meal/Chocmalt. The strategy has allowed a slight pasture wedge to develop heading into winter, as available pasture a month ago was very tight.

Milk production per cow is holding, with cow numbers coming back. Production is now at 1.33 kg MS/cow/day or 14.6 litres/cow/day. Milk components are steady at a 5.14% and 4.0%.

Daily pasture consumption from the grazing area has reduced to around 570 kg DM/ha/day with the pasture consumption per cow at 3-4 kg DM per cow per day reflecting a tight pasture allocation. It would be good to have more grass in the diet, but the aim is to remain tight on cows and build cover, while the milk price in June is better, therefore justifying the level of inputs. The aim is to maintain a reasonable income over supplementary feed cost (IOSFC) with an eye on total daily margins, the cost of feeding dry cows and ensuring there is pasture in front of cows- a real balancing act!

The 35ha that was sprayed for broadleaf weeds has been a success and the remaining weedy areas will be done when the weather allows.

The oversowing with Crusader has been a success in the areas where existing ryegrass pasture was thin, and these will be grazed in around 10-14 days weather permitting. They were lightly grazed soon after seedling emergence but prior to cows being able to damage the seedlings. In the areas where there was heavy couch infestation, seedling growth has been slow, but there appears to be a reasonable strike now and these will be lightly grazed when weather permits to prevent any shading by existing pasture, then they will be boosted to get them firing.

Supplementary feed includes: 6kg/cow 12MJ pellets with Rumensin, at \$355/tonne, 2 kg of PKE blend at \$286 per tonne, 1.5 bales lucerne hay or 3.5kgDM/cow/day. The pellets have changed to a 12MJ pellet, and the PKE blend will increase to 4kg/cow to increase body condition on the milkers. This is currently sitting at CS 4.5, and is ¼ to ½ score lighter than desired heading into dry off. The lack of fodder and grass has meant that body condition has been affected. It is likely that the herd will be ¼ score less than desired condition at dry off. The bulk of the herd has around 4 weeks of lactation left, so the pressure is on to gain ¼ score or more!

The milk price is \$5.85/kg milk solids, or 53.2c/litre.

Gross milk income per cow per day is \$7.78/cow/day. Supplementary feed cost /cow/day (fodder and concentrates) is at \$4.11 per cow per day, leaving an Income Over Supplementary Feed Cost (IOSFC)/cow of \$3.67 or \$789/day for the farm.

The dry cow plan remains as: Almond Hulls (2.7kg DM), cereal hay (2.7kgDM), minimal grain (1.8kg DM) and a small allocation of pasture (0.5ha/24 hours), at an anticipated cost per day of \$1.89/cow/day plus grass cost. At present the small herd of 23 dries have been grazing spare areas

around the farm and cleaning up scraggy areas. This won't last much longer and these will then go onto the above feed regime.

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