

Projects on the farm are funded by Sustainability Victoria, DEPI VIC, Department of Agriculture Food and Fisheries and Genetics Australia with support provided by GippsDairy.

Macalister Demonstration Farm Update 354 (Week ending July 5th , 2013)

The Macalister Demonstration Farm (MDF) is currently milking 188 cows with a total grazing area of 73 hectares, and an effective stocking rate of 2.6 cows per hectare. There are 12 cows out of the vat with mastitis. The dries and R2 heifers are being run on the milking area and are taking up some 13ha, although this will increase as dry cow numbers lift over the next few weeks.

The daily allocation is one 40th of the grazing area or around 1.5ha/24 hours but this will decrease as milker numbers reduce, with the aim of having this back to around 1ha/24 hours in the next week or two. The cows are still on a night sacrifice system with a daily grazing on grass but this was relaxed over the wet spell. Damage was minimised during the wet, but the increase in allocation over this time has meant pasture cover has dropped as a result.

The PKE blend was increased by 2kg as fed to 4kg/cow/day to aim to increase body condition on the milkers, and this appears to have been successful with body condition appearing to have increased over the last three weeks by around ¼ condition score to 4.75. This is still lighter than desired levels.

Milk production per cow is still holding quite well despite the conditions and the end of lactation approaching. Production is still at 1.33 kg MS/cow/day or 17.5 litres/cow/day. Milk components are a bit intriguing at a 3.52% fat and 4.06% protein (this was 3.78% and 4.08% for the last 10-day period). The fat % continues to decline and could be a result of the diminishing grass in the diet and the increase in body condition. There does not appear to be any sign of acidosis in the herd, (there is adequate fibre) with manure good but the inverted components indicate that something may be out of balance.

BMCC has reduced after a spike following the wet weather and is now at 150-200,000.

Daily pasture consumption from the grazing area is around 313 kg DM/ ha/day with the pasture consumption per cow at 2-3 kg DM per cow per day. The oversown paddocks were grazed this past week and they contained excellent cover. The drilling strategy boosted available cover at reasonable cost per ha, and the paddocks were not out of the grazing rotation.

Supplementary feed includes: 6kg/cow 12MJ pellets with Rumensin, at \$355/ tonne, 4 kg of PKE blend at \$286 per tonne, 1.5 bales lucerne hay or 3.5kgDM/cow/day. The lucerne will reduce to one bale per 24 hours with the lower cow numbers. A load of oaten hay for the springers has been secured but has not yet arrived.

The milk price is \$6.10/kg milk solids. The new announced milk price for the farm at opening price plus the pre-paid stepup and the second stepup equates to \$5.45/kg MS for the year. The full year 2012/13 price for the farm was \$4.66/kg MS.

Gross milk income per cow per day is \$7.96/cow/day. Supplementary feed cost /cow/day (fodder and concentrates) is at \$4.70 per cow per day, leaving an Income Over Supplementary Feed Cost (IOSFC)/cow of \$3.26 or 6.6 net litres per cow or \$613/day for the farm.

The rising 2 year olds (30 of them) have returned from agistment and are running with the dry cows. The dry cow plan is as follows: Almond Hulls (3.6kg DM), minimal grain (2.7kg DM) and a small allocation of pasture (0.5ha/24 hours) although this may be a block every few days to avoid damage. The MDF may seek some dry cow fibre or straw to 'bulk' up the diet for dry cows and try and hold pasture cover.

Matt Harms, ONFARM Consulting, 0408 311 118 or mattharms7@bigpond.com