

Macalister Demonstration Farm

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Macalister Demonstration Farm Update 361 (Fortnight ending September 13th, 2013)

The MDF is currently milking 159 cows with 145 in the vat. Calving got off to a slow start but numbers have been steadily increasing over the past two weeks. There are still 36 dry cows, and these are receiving around 0.2ha/day pasture (about 6kgDM) and 1/3 bale oaten hay. This is constantly being assessed to minimise wastage and overfeeding. There are 85 springers including 27 induced cows, and these are receiving a strip of grass, 3kg lead feed, 100g/cow/day MagC and ad lib oaten hay.

The daily allocation to milkers is 1.4ha/24 hours as they are grazing long pasture. Residuals are higher than desired at around 1700kg/ha but these will be dealt with next round to prevent them being a problem. The focus is on getting cows up to a strong peak and also to build pasture cover as early as possible, so 'ideal' residuals have not been chased. Cows have been grazing exceptional cover, with pre-grazing pasture cover at around 3000kgDM plus.

There has been 10ha fixed spray area irrigated and sub-surface drip and flood irrigation to be done on 13th September.

The cows are still being fed 6kg/cow/day as fed Classic Dairy pellets and grass. The pellets are changing now to a higher energy pellet (12.8MJ) for early lactation. Magnesium and Rumensin is included.

Milk production is at 24.8 litres and rising and solids are at 1.91 kg MS/cow/day. Milk components are at a 4.2% fat and 3.5% protein. BMCC is around 170,000 and fluctuating due to fresh cows coming in thick and fast.

Daily pasture consumption from the grazing area is at 2117 kg DM /day with the milkers consuming 11.8kg DM per cow per day and the dries 6kgDM/cow/day. This equates to a harvest of 1323kg/ha/24 hours and a total pasture demand of 29kg/ha/day (the total amount of pasture required to be harvested for milkers and dries) and is currently less than the pasture growth rate (around 30-40kg/ha/day) and so cover is building.

The milk price on the components is \$5.27/kg milk solids or 40.6c/litre.

Gross milk income per cow per day is \$10.07/cow/day. Supplementary feed cost \$2.13/cow/day (concentrates), leaving an Income Over Supplementary Feed Cost (IOSFC) of \$7.94/cow/day or 20 net litres/cow/day, or \$1151/day for the farm. Now that irrigation has started, I am including the daily cost of irrigated pasture in the calculation. This pasture cost for the MDF has been put at \$140/t (14c/kgDM) including the annual direct costs of pasture including water, PKS fertiliser and nitrogen and pasture maintenance and renovation costs. This will now be presented with fortnightly reporting to allow the net margin to be assessed. Therefore the daily net margin after supplements and pasture is \$6.29/cow or \$12.49/ha.

Soil tests have been taken on three key areas of the farm, and the results are pending. As a result, nitrogen is being applied as urea at 80kg/ha behind milkers delivering 37kgN/ha, and further applications of Pasture Booster will wait until after the soil test results.

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