

# Macalister Demonstration Farm

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## NEWSLETTER 65

Monday April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012



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

### THE INS AND OUTS OF THE MG DOMESTIC PAYMENT SYSTEM

#### Is it worth chasing 43%??

A workshop at the MDF with Frank Tyndall and Andrew Nevill

- How to make best use of Domestic.
- The MDF is on Traditional, but thinking how to get Domestic, without autumn calving.
- What are all the implications?

**Macalister Demonstration Farm, Boggy Creek Rd, Riverslea**

**Tuesday April 10<sup>th</sup> 2012 at 11am      BBQ Lunch provided**

Call Sandie Brown on 0428 175 366 for more information.

### Yellow Rag Bit

Jason McAinch, Dairy Advisor, DPI Maffra

### Keeping it Simple

The long time readers of this newsletter will know that the MDF in their productivity project use the **Feeding Pastures For Profit** (FPFP) principals to make feeding decisions. Does this mean that if you attend a FPFP program you will farm exactly like the MDF. The answer is no, as each farm has a unique set of resources, for example, each farm has a different area of land, tractors, home grown feed and number of cows. The FPFP program is about **making the most of your resources**. The principles of the program continue to be used by past participants on farms from 60 to 800 cows and by farms with high producing cows or low input.

What does the Feeding Pastures For Profit program aim to achieve?

One of the key ways to optimise profit on a dairy farm is to produce as much high quality milk as possible using the cheapest feed sources available. In order to achieve this, two of the most important decisions that need to be made each day on a dairy farm are:

1. How much pasture do I allocate to the herd today? (Where do I put the herd and how much pasture do I allocate to them?)
2. How much supplement should I be giving the herd today?

If you get the answers to these two questions right (therefore a consistent allocation of feeds) then you are well on the way to maximising profit from your farming system.

The FFPF program provides each farmer with tools and knowledge that takes the guesswork, gut feel and figure work out of the daily task of deciding 'where do I put the cows today/how much feed do I allocate'.

We will provide support to the group over a 12-month period with 5-6 group on-farm days and individual farm visits. The aim of the on-farm days is to challenge the way that we are currently managing our feeding, and look for opportunities to improve. How far you go is dependent on your own aims and needs.

Numbers in these programs are limited, so registration is essential.

FFPF program is about assisting participants into a simple way of thinking about the complex.

Program 1 – West Gippsland, Thursdays April 19 and 26

Program 2 – South Gippsland, Fridays April 20 and 27

Program 3 – Maffra DPI, Tuesdays, April 24 and May 1

Program 4 – Bairnsdale DPI/DSE, Thursdays May 3 and 10

To register:

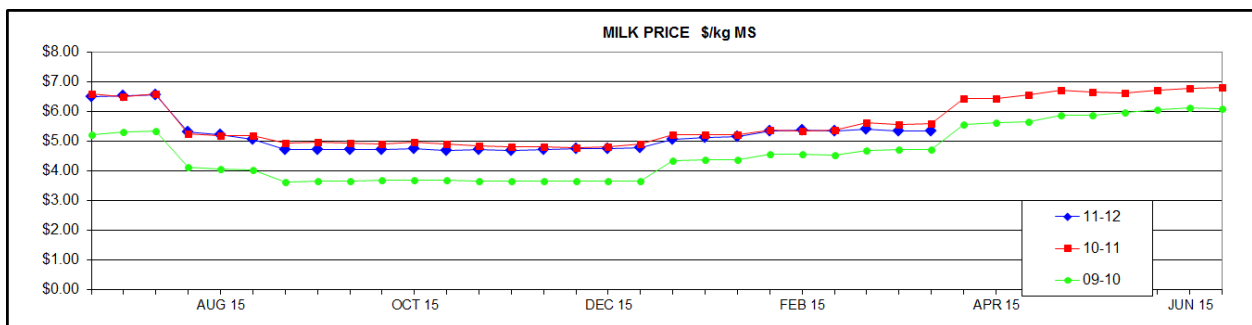
Jason McAinch on 5147 0839, 0428 482 040 or [Jason.mcainch@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:Jason.mcainch@dpi.vic.gov.au) OR

Frank Mickan on 5624 2259, 0427 317 471 or [frank.mickan@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:frank.mickan@dpi.vic.gov.au)

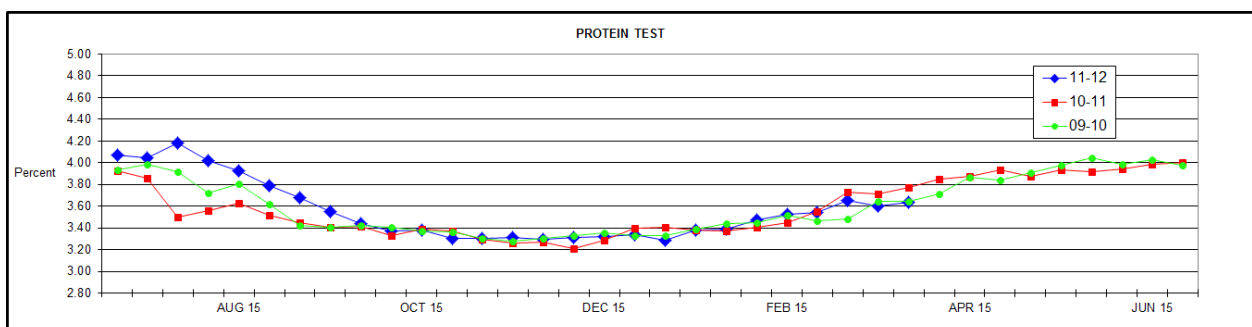
## Macalister Demonstration Farm Profitability Project

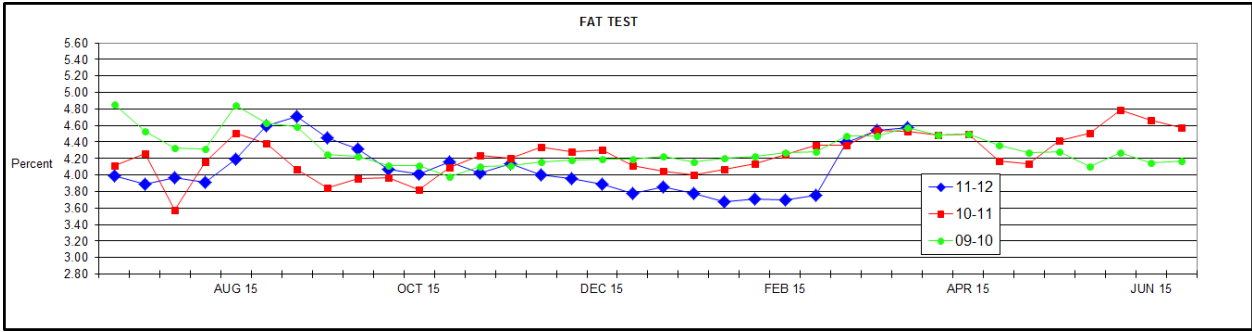
Newsletter 61 looked at the **physical** aspects of producing milk and feeding cows using the MDF's current performance graphs. Getting more milk is one thing, but making a margin from it is another. In this Newsletter we will look at the **financial** aspects of making money from feeding cows, by introducing the prices of milk and feed.

First the milk price:

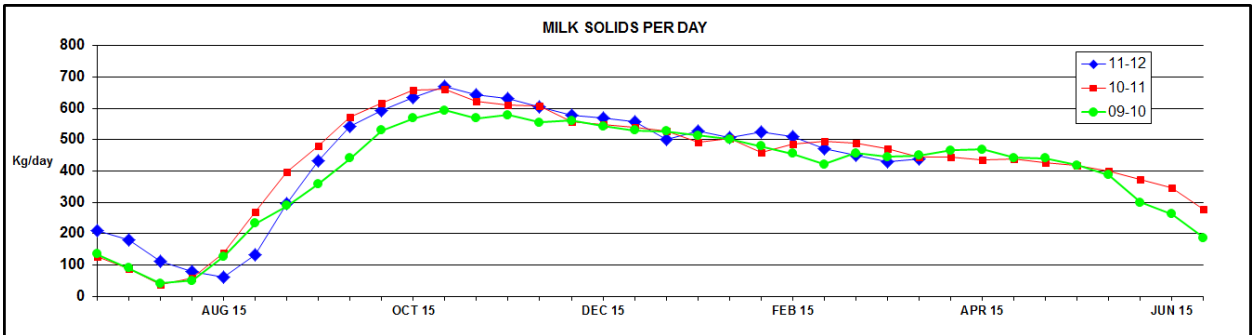
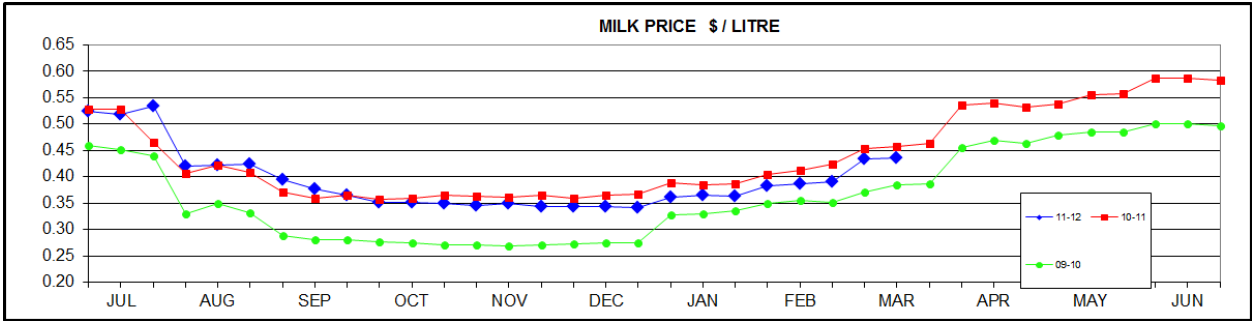


The anticipated milk price changes during the year. This year (the blue line) is expected to be a little below last year (the red line). The base price opened higher this year but step-ups are anticipated to be less. The July-August milk price is very close to last year but the March price has slipped. This is a milk composition affect. The fat and protein test graphs below show that protein was higher early in the season but has dipped now. For March the payment for fat is \$3.40 compared to \$8.52 for protein. Less protein in the milk means a lower milk price.

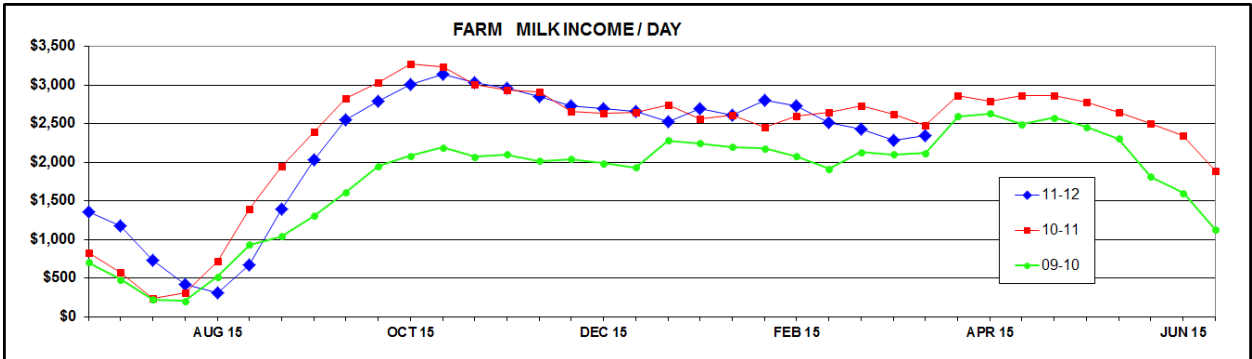




The milk price per litre is shown in the graph below.

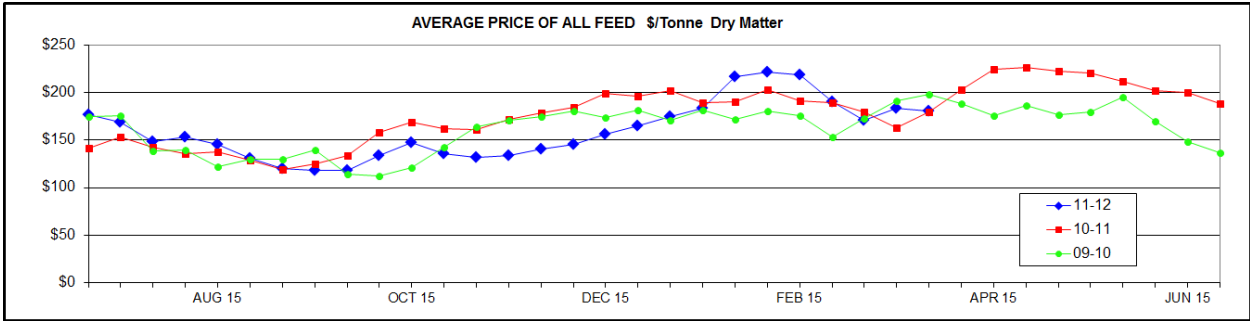


For the MDF total milk is not much different year to year. This year, the blue line, was ahead in July, and behind in August and September, because the calving date was 10 days later. Recently, due to wet weather, milk production has fallen behind, but now is about the same.

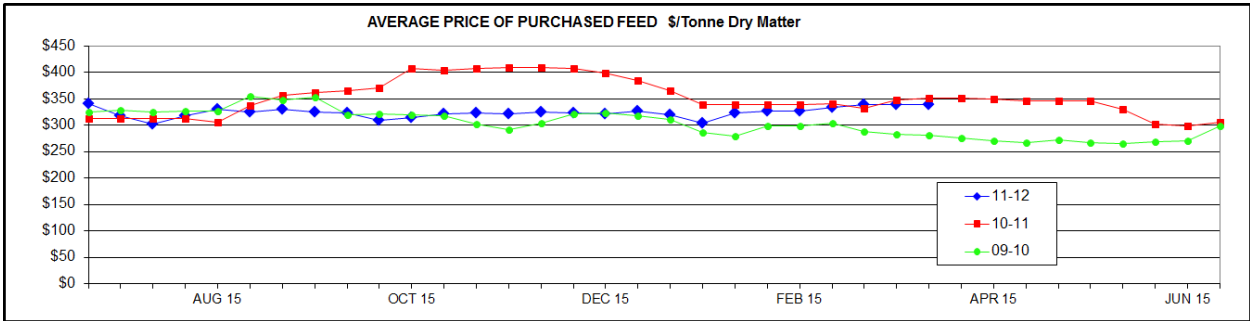


So only in July and in January/early February has the milk income been higher than last year.

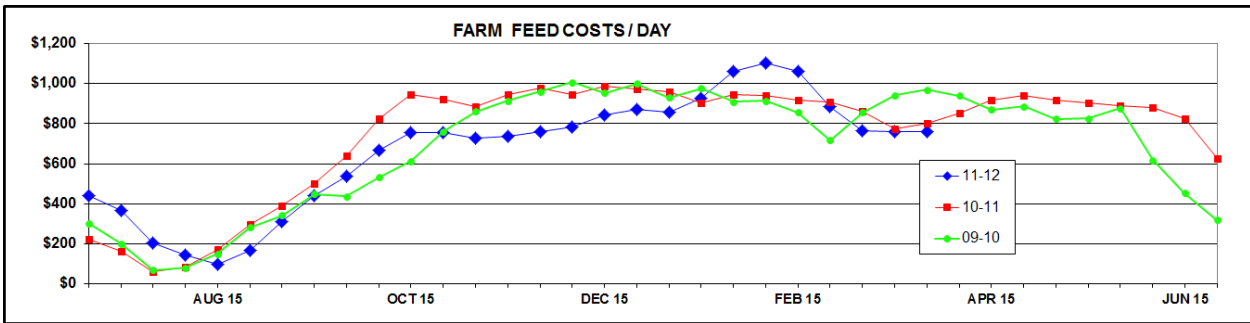
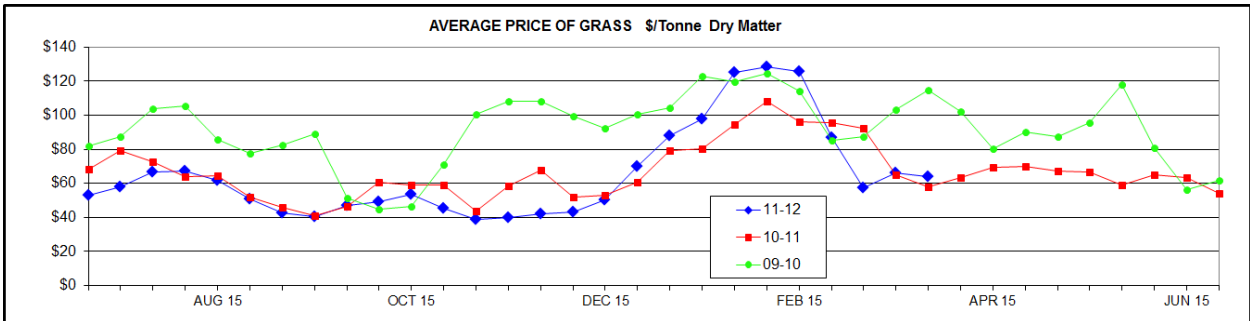
However, for much of this season the average price of feed has been relatively low.



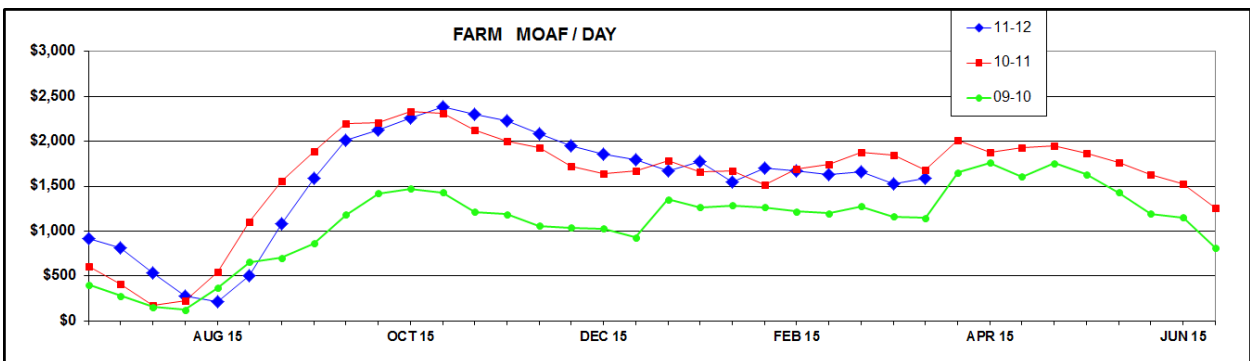
This is mostly because the price of purchased feed has been equal or lower.



The average price of grass this year has generally been similar to last year. When irrigation water is needed to keep the grass growing, particularly if the growth doesn't respond to that water, the price of grass lifts significantly.



And when the feed cost is taken from the milk income the Margin Over All Feed is the result. It is an up and down story compared to last year, but well ahead of two years ago.



What is to be made of all this? Hope for a high milk price and keep the price of feed down by growing a lot of grass. Grass is usually cheaper than purchased feed and more grass means less purchased feed is needed.

Frank Tyndall 0409 940 782

## Spotted at the MDF – Whistling Kite



### Facts and Figures

Scientific Name: Haliastur sphenurus

Calls: Loud descending whistle: 'tee-tee-ti-ti'.

Average size: 55cm

Breeding season: July to January in south; March to October in north.

Clutch Size: One to three, usually two.



The Whistling Kite is a medium-sized raptor (bird of prey) with a shaggy appearance. It has a light brown head and underparts, with pale streaks, and dark sandy-brown wings with paler undersides. The underwings have a characteristic pale 'M' shape when open. The head and body are relatively narrow and the tail is rounded. The wings are long and well-rounded, with a wingspan of 120 cm to 145 cm. The sexes are similar, but the females are larger. Young birds are slightly darker above, with paler streaking on head and underbody. They are often seen near water or around farms, soaring in a lazy circling flight pattern.

Several other raptors may be confused with the Whistling Kite, including the Little Eagle, *Hieraetus morphnoides*. These can only be separated by factors such as flight silhouette and style and the overall body shape.

The Whistling Kite is found in woodlands, open country and particularly wetlands. It is also common around farmland, vineyards and anywhere where carrion (dead animals) can be found (e.g. abattoirs, rubbish dumps and roadsides) and also feeds on small live animals such as mammals, birds, fish and insects.

The Whistling Kite appears to be monogamous, with some breeding pairs remaining in a territory throughout the year and pairs actively defend the area around a nest. They prefer tall trees for nesting where the bulky nest platform is built of sticks in a tall tree and may be reused, growing larger over time. Both sexes build the nest and incubate the eggs (the female does most of the incubation however) and may breed two or three times a year. The young stay with the parents after fledging for about six to eight weeks.

The Whistling Kite has been favoured by clearing to some extent as it does not enter dense forests, but it still needs remnant tall trees for nesting. Farmlands are useful hunting grounds and provide extra water sources. Road kill provides a good source of food. However, wetland destruction and drainage has affected populations in southern Australia.

The Whistling Kite is widespread over mainland Australia but uncommon in Tasmania, and is also found in New Guinea, the Solomons and New Caledonia.

Source: [www.birdsinbackyards.net](http://www.birdsinbackyards.net)

## Farewell Neil Baker .....Welcome Sandie Brown



Neil Baker has moved on into retirement and the beautiful sunny days and blue waters of Lakes Entrance. We thank Neil for his valuable contribution to MDF during the past 3½ years and welcome Sandie Brown as the new Co-operative Manager.

Sandie is a relative newcomer to Victoria, moving from the Monaro region in NSW to Hillside (near Bairnsdale) with her husband Peter where together they run a small grazing enterprise (sheep and cattle). Prior to joining the MDF, Sandie was employed by the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority as Regional Landcare Coordinator. Before moving to Victoria, Sandie and Peter owned property on the Snowy River in NSW. Sandie's previous work experience includes Landcare Coordinator with a Landcare Network in Bombala, Monaro Regional

Weeds Coordinator with three local shires on the Monaro and Project Officer with Murray-Darling Basin Commission (now Murray-Darling Basin Authority) working with riparian landholders along the River Murray.

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