

Macalister Demonstration Farm

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Macalister Demonstration Farm Update 380 (Week ending July 4th, 2014)

What's been going on at the MDF?

The dry cows are on agistment to the East of the MID and the remaining dries from the next few weeks of dry-off will remain on farm cleaning up roadside area, residuals from milkers and will receive minimal milker pasture plus dry cow hay as the last resort.

The rising two year olds returned to the farm in the last week in good condition with one or two a little smaller than ideal. These heifers are being broken in to the shed and will be teat-sealed to minimise risk of mastitis.

The rising one year olds have received a pre-joining visual vet check, with all except one on target for joining in spring (this one may be sold).

A chunk of the milking area under the lateral sprays has been sprayed with Progibb/Gala and a broadleaf spray. This area contains a lot of Prairie grass and so it was decided that this could also form the basis of dry cow/heifer area for late July, being higher and drier and capable of strong regrowth. Whilst the use of Progibb/Gala (Gibberellic Acid) is widespread and an accepted tool for enhancing growth, anecdotal evidence has shown results to be inconsistent, and with large parts of the farm under newer varieties of perennial ryegrass, it was decided that areas where the strongest results would be obtained would have it applied. Nitrogen and P,K,S is also not limiting.

The costing is \$45/ha over 13ha to apply 1.2 litres/ha amine and the required Gibb Acid. If alternative feed as hay is costing \$245/tDM as dry cow feed (arguably the pasture is far better quality but that adds a further complication) then $\$45/\$245 = 180\text{kgDM/ha}$ additional feed is required just to recover the cost, assuming the Amine spray benefits are a bonus. So over three weeks between application and grazing, there needs to be **at least** an additional 9kgDM/ha/day grown to recover the cost. There are issues of wastage of dry cow hay, and equally pasture eaten. If wastage of hay is included (10%), then the required minimum additional growth is only 165kgDM/ha. Let's see what happens!

The opening prices have been announced and the MDF on last season's production has an opening price of \$5.81/kgMS if all the milk sent is in Premium 1, still \$0.20/kgMS below the 'weighted average'. Whilst this has an FMI of 42%, the expected higher spring production from a tighter calving pattern and the farm in better shape, means that the amount of 'off peak milk' is expected to be lower (40.4%) and so Traditional is still the lowest risk option for the farm. The budget for the season is being completed and will be published over the next few weeks.

Production issues:

The numbers are dropping down now, with 62 cows of 107 going on to "drying off feed" at the start of next week, but as it stood at the end of the week, there were 107 cows doing 15.4 litres per cow, with fat 4.85% and protein 3.95% or 1.35kgMS/cow/day.

The allocation is at 1ha/24hours and Rising 2 year old heifers are getting 0.5ha and so total allocation is 1.5ha/24 hours or a 50 day round.

The heifers are being run through the shed to break them in, and are getting 2kg pellets/day, with ½ bale dry cow hay and the ½ ha pasture. They are being teat-sealed next week.

Urea is being applied behind cows at 80kg/ha.

Milkers are receiving slightly more pellets in order to empty a silo for lead feed to be delivered.

And a look at production, inputs and margins:

<u>Production</u>			
Cow numbers			107 in herd and 104 vat
Litres and solids/cow/day			15.4/1.35kgMS
Fat & Protein %			4.85%/3.95%
BMCC			220,000
<u>Grazing and Feeding (kg dry matter per cow)</u>			
Concentrates (Pellets/Grain/Additive) kg DM @	42.1	c/kg DM	5.4
Oaten hay kgDM@	28.2	c/kgDM	NIL
Silage kgDM@	15	c/kgDM	2.3
Pasture (kg DM) /cow/day			6
Pasture demand (kgDM/ha/day)			8
Area in rotation (ha)			73
Rotation length milkers (days)			70 but 48 when heifers arrive
Grazing Area (ha per 24 hours)			1
<u>Daily Income over Supplementary Feed Costs (IOSFC)</u>			
Milk Price (\$/kg milk solids) and (cents/litre)			\$6.18/54.1c/litre
**Income/cow			\$8.34
Supplementary Feed Cost/cow			\$2.58
IOSFC/cow			\$5.76
IOSFC/milking ha			\$8.21
Net litres/cow			15
Irrigated pasture cost \$/cow/day	14	c/kg DM	No irrigation
Net margin after supplements and irrigated pasture \$/cow/day			\$5.76

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