

Macalister Demonstration Farm

**Projects on the farm are funded by Genetics Australia with support provided by GippsDairy
Macalister Demonstration Farm Update 382 (Week ending August 8th, 2014)**

What's been going on at the MDF?

The farm is all set to commence calving, with the Rising 2 year old heifers just started and a few AI heifer calves in the shed already. The pasture cover is just over 1800kgDM/ha as of late July, and whilst this is around 100-200kgDM/ha less than ideal, I am reasonably comfortable that conditions should see a lift through the first part of August before the cows start calving around the end of the second week. Growth rates have averaged 20-30kgDM/ha with the higher rates on the red soil country (also had Gibberellic Acid applied) and the lower rates on the heavy wetter country. This growth rate has been around 15kgDM/ha/day higher than eat rate over the past two weeks, therefore the lift in average cover.

The dries are receiving around 3-4kgDM pasture and 5kgDM dry cow hay; the springers will be transition fed for around three weeks, and will be receiving 4kg as fed Lead up pellets, 6kg as fed oaten hay and a target 2kgDM pasture. The herd is highly prone to milk fever with a considerable rate last season, so everything is being done to lower the risk, and the Dairy Australia web tool for transition diets has been the basis for the ration design. The small number of remaining milkers (late calvers and empties) will be receiving grass and pellets only, with a small allocation that will increase rapidly as fresh cows enter the herd.

The 2014/15 budget has been completed in draft form and a summary of the key points is listed below.

In summary, the key points for the 14/15 season are as follows:

Target production for the season of 136,900kgMS, or 527kgMS/cow, on 260 cows.

Milk price (expected closing): \$5.95/kgMS under the Murray Goulburn Traditional payment system.

Farm Working Expenses (herd, shed, feed, overheads and paid labour) of \$4.85/kgMS, and \$3.68/kg MS when labour costs are removed. This is meeting our aim to reduce significantly the "cost of making milk" at the MDF. The key aspects are an increase in pasture grown to 12.6tDM/ha consumed (minimum), reduced costs of purchased concentrates, dramatically reduced purchased hay, lower AI and breeding costs and much lower repairs and maintenance.

Pasture consumed target of 12.6tDM/ha minimum or 3.6tDM/cow minimum.

Cash surplus: aimed to be \$108,000 given the above. There is a need to claw back the deficit from the past season with a large chunk of this, but the remainder is available to reduce debt and for capital upgrade, possibly to the irrigation infrastructure or some track upgrades.

The overall aim is to generate a return on assets employed of 8.43%, given the milk price predicted and a "typical" season.

The MDF will be operating as a GippsDairy Focus Farm, commencing in late August, on a monthly basis. If you are interested in being a part of the support group, please email me on the contact below.

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