

Macalister Demonstration Farm

Projects on the farm are funded by GippsDairy, HICO and Genetics Australia

Macalister Demonstration Farm Update 395 (Week ending February 6th, 2015)

What's been going on at the MDF?

There are 274 cows in the vat, receiving plenty of grass (2,800kgDM/24 hours) on an allocation of 3-3.5ha/24 hours or a 22 day round. Quality has been an issue on the farm and in the area, with pasture rust a major problem. Typically longer round lengths (>30 days) can see rust development on ryegrass plants, but the humid and mild conditions of January and early February has seen rust development at around 20 days post-grazing. The best management techniques seem to be grazing hard, topping any residuals and then nitrogen. Being careful to balance the need to keep round length out as much as possible without losing quality is a challenge for many at the moment.

The transition across to a wheat-based diet is continuing, with the diet now 2.4kg pellets and 4kg crushed wheat. This is progressing well and has lowered the concentrate cost per day slightly.

	Litres	Solids
Production	21.1	1.66
Components %	4.3%, 3.55%	4.3%, 3.55%
Milk price on current test	46.4c	\$5.91
Gross milk income less levies	\$9.80	\$9.80
Minus grain and pellets	\$2.26	\$2.26
IOSFC (\$/cow/day)	\$7.54	\$7.54
Minus irrigated grass (\$140/tDM)	\$1.44	\$1.44
Net IOSFC (\$/cow/day)	\$6.10	\$6.10
\$/herd/day		
Net production	16.3 net litres	1.28 kgMS
Supplement cost	4.9litres	0.38 kgMS

Resowing plans:

The resowing program is about to commence, and will be a two (or three) stage process. With pasture cover reasonable, the opportunity has been seized to spray out the first three resow paddocks this week. Dock infestation is high, so spraying will involve dock control measures as well.

The program will be:

Spray out with kill rate of glyphosate at 2litres/ha, with 560ml/ha Kamba 500 and 500ml/ha LI700. The rainfastness is 6 hours on this; withhold 7 days for grazing and plant back 21 days. After 21 days, if there is significant regrowth of weeds/poor grasses, a second spray with 1.5-2l/ha glyphosate and wetter will take place.

These paddocks will then be grazed hard once out of withhold, and powerharrowed. They will either be sown on the first pass of the powerharrow or second pass depending on the seed bed. Rolling will take place after sowing.

Any paddocks without dock infestation will receive spray with 1.5-2 litre/ha glyphosate with wetter. After 7 days they will be grazed hard and then cultivated.

At this stage, the paddocks will be sown to a single variety of perennial ryegrass, with the preferred options being One50 or Bealey, at a sow rate of 30kg/ha. My preference is not to mix varieties in the same paddock, due to differing heading dates and therefore slightly different management, especially if short term and perennial varieties are combined. If a variety performs poorly, deal with it, rather than having a paddock of two or more different varieties performing differently. Mixing of cultivars and even species is a practice I do not advocate, yet we do see it happen a lot. Failure of a resowing is far more likely due to poor preparation than the seed or the variety chosen, so why complicate it by throwing more variables into the mix.

Sowing will take place with 100kg DAP to aid establishment, but a top dressing of NPKS fertiliser will take place soon after germination to boost growth.

Why powerharrowing versus a direct drill? In my opinion it creates a better seed bed for the seeds to germinate in, and leaves less 'free area' for poor species and weeds to grow between the drill rows. For an additional \$75/ha to \$225/ha (if two passes required) for powerharrowing, over say a five year life of a perennial pasture (even up to 10 years for some), the additional \$15-\$45/ha/year is worth the result. That's my opinion anyway.

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