

Macalister Demonstration Farm

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

Macalister Demonstration Farm Update 396 (Week ending February 20th, 2015)

What's been going on at the MDF?

There are 274 cows in the herd with 271 in the vat. Grass cover is excellent, but we attempted to slow the round up slightly due to three paddocks having being sprayed out for resowing and the previous pasture allocation having the herd on about a 20-day round, deemed as being too quick. Having had a load of milled Almond Hulls delivered a few weeks ago, the plan was to slow round length and feed around 4kg as fed per cow per day Almond hulls to fill the gap. This system was implemented for around 4 days and production plummeted. To avoid a disaster, the decision has been made to put pasture allocation back to 3.25ha (20 day round on 65ha), 5.2kg as fed wheat and 1kg as fed concentrate pellet to try and recover production.

The transition to a wheat-based diet is now completed and the process has gone well. The pellet is delivering limestone, elevated Zinc for Facial Eczema, Rumensin and Eskalin, and other trace minerals in a barley base. There is no canola included, for reasons of cost. The total cost is \$541/t plus GST, so the diet cost has decreased slightly per cow per day.

	Litres	Solids
Production	18.1	1.49
Components %	4.7%, 3.55%	4.7%, 3.55%
Milk price on current test	48.1c	\$5.84
Gross milk income less levies	\$8.70	\$8.70
Minus 5.2kg grain (\$335/t) and 1kg pellets (\$541/t)	\$2.22	\$2.22
IOSFC (\$/cow/day)	\$6.48	\$6.48
Minus irrigated grass (\$140/tDM)	\$1.44	\$1.44
Net IOSFC (\$/cow/day)	\$5.04	\$5.04
\$/herd/day		
Net production	13.5	1.11
Supplement cost	4.6 litres	0.38kgMS

With good rain experienced over the week from 14th to 20th February (52mm), it is hoped that the next flood irrigation will not be required until around 26th February.

The cows are consuming around 10.5kgDM/cow/day pasture, or around 2900kgDM/day and so with 3.25ha pasture allocated, the average harvest is 890kgDM/ha. To maintain this pasture intake, with 65ha available with resows out, a pasture growth rate of over 45kgDM/ha/day is required. This is expected to continue.

There is a Focus Farm Open Day for all to attend on Thursday 26th February from 11am until 2.30pm, with lunch provided. It will be a chance to hear about how the farm is performing, the goals of the Focus Farm and how the farm is attempting to achieve a 7.5% return on assets, manage under 100% employed staff as well as meeting the budgets and targets for production, pasture consumption and cashflow. These are common operating conditions for a corporate entity, and the Support Group is helping the MDF meet these targets. There have been many debates over the first six months, and it will be a chance to hear what these discussions have been and what outcomes were decided.

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