

Macalister Demonstration Farm

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

Macalister Demonstration Farm Update 412 (Week ending October 16th , 2015)

What's been going on at the MDF?

The current numbers as at 16th October are as follows;

Cows: 306 in herd and 294 in the vat, producing 24.3 litres at 4.2% fat and 3.5% protein or 1.87kg milk solids per cow. They are being fed 4.5 kg wheat @ \$330/t and no pellets or additive. A mineral dispenser has now been installed to allow the cows to be fed an additive pellet for minerals (particularly Calcium given the strong history of milk fever on the farm), vitamins and buffers as required. Production is disappointing, but a decision was made to make milk cheaper this year, with more pasture harvested. This is costing some production at this stage, but the net production is only very slightly lower than the same time last year at a lower milk price.

There are only 8 late calvers remaining and these are just cleaning up spare areas.

65 bales of top quality silage were harvested in late September and a further 12ha harvested last week. The aim is to get 120 rolls of top quality fodder for later in lactation. With water possibly short for this season given the conditions at this stage, a strategy will be developed in late November and reviewed in late January for water and feeding and this will all be based around cow numbers, with a likely reduction in herd numbers early in 2016 if water and therefore pasture production reduces. The strategy adopted by the Focus Farm Support Group this season has been around maintaining a high stocking rate for the first half of the season to maintain pasture quality and make milk when it is cheap to do so, and then reduce stocking rate when pasture production becomes limiting, without impacting on the next season's herd size (in other words cull early rather than later).

Pasture quality is beginning to change slightly due to heading of particularly lower quality species such as Prairie Grass and dog's tail, but with ryegrass heading date just commencing, topping will begin in earnest to maintain pasture quality across the farm.

	Litres	Solids
Production	24.3	1.87
Components %	4.3%, 3.47%	4.3%, 3.47%
Milk price on current test October	40.0c	
Gross milk income less levies	\$9.72	\$5.20
Minus grain @4.5 kg	\$1.49	\$1.49
IOSFC (\$/cow/day)	\$8.23	\$8.23
Net IOSFC \$/herd/day	\$2420	\$2420
Net production	20.6 litres	1.58kg
Supplement cost	3.7 litres	0.29kg

By back calculation, the cows are consuming 13.7kgDM pasture per cow per day (assuming no weight gain or loss and pasture at 11.5MJ/kgDM), or 4000kgDM/24 hours. With an allocation of 3.2-3.5ha/24 hours (22 day round), the harvest is around 1200kgDM/ha. Cows are leaving around 1400-1500 residuals, and so pre-grazing cover is around 2600-2700kg/ha. The required growth rate to keep up with eat rate is 55kgDM/ha/day.

Irrigation interval on the flood is at 8-10 days, and the fixed sprays are delivering 17.5mm every second day.

When the price of irrigated pasture is calculated at 14c/kgDM (\$140/tDM), the net margin per cow becomes \$1.92/cow/day less at \$6.31/cow/day.

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