

Macalister Demonstration Farm

Macalister Demonstration Farm Update 454 (Week ending July 28th, 2017)

What's been going on at the MDF?

MACALISTER DEMONSTRATION FARM	Farm Location: Maffra		
Description: The MDF is located at Maffra in Gippsland Victoria in the Macalister Irrigation District. The farm has a milking area of 73 ha and is fully irrigated.	Two weeks ago	28/07/2017	
<u>Production</u>			
Cow numbers (herd and vat)	122 herd and 120 vat	65 milkers with 31 of these fresh	
Cow production/day	15.8	15.4	litres
Fat %	3.52	3.83	%
Protein %	4.23	4.09	%
Kg milk solids/cow /day	1.23	1.22	kgMS
BMCC	173,000	220,000	
<u>Grazing and Feeding</u>			
Concentrates	5.85	2.9	kgDM/day
Cost of concentrate (wheat)	\$0.27	\$0.32	c/kg DM
Additive (mineral)	0.25c	0.18c	c/cow
Cost of hay	0	0	c/kgDM
Silage	0	0	kgDM/day
Cost of silage	0	0	c/kgDM
Pasture demand (milkers)	7.3	11.4	kg DM/cow/day
Pasture demand (kgDM/ha/day) (total of all stock on the farm)	15.4	22.6	kg DM/ha/day
Area in rotation (ha)	58	58	ha
Rotation length milkers (days)	83	73	days
Grazing Area (ha per 24 hours)	0.7	0.8	ha
<u>Daily Income over Supplementary Feed Costs (IOSFC)</u>			
Milk Price (on current tests)	\$5.58	\$5.40	\$/kg milk solids
Milk Price	43.2	42.2	c/litre
**Income/cow	\$6.86	\$6.59	\$/cow/day
Supplementary Feed Cost/cow	\$1.83	\$1.11	\$/cow/day
IOSFC/cow	\$5.03	\$5.48	\$/cow/day
IOSFC/milking ha	\$10.41	\$4.88	\$/ha/day
Net litres/cow	11.6	13	Litres/day
Irrigated pasture cost	0	0	\$/cow/day
Irrigated pasture cost	\$0.14	\$0.14	c/kg DM
Net margin after supplements and irrigated pasture	\$5.03	\$4.88	\$/cow/day

All stock are now on the farm, with 140 dry cows returning from agistment on 26th July, therefore pasture demand has risen to 22.6kgDM/ha/day. Growth rates are extremely slow, due to very low soil temperatures and dry conditions. There has been a little bit of irrigation being done out of the re-use, and this has seen growth increase on these areas. Pasture cover on the farm is at

1850kgDM/ha, (same month last year was 1880kg however growth from now was booming) with most of this cover from growth achieved in May and early June when moisture was adequate and soil temps not too low. Growth post grazing over the past few weeks has been down to 6kgDM/ha/day on many areas, with few paddocks showing good growth. There are quite a number of paddocks with good cover, albeit yellowish and of lower quality from slow round length, nitrogen running out and frost damage. When these are eaten, they will be hit with 90kg urea/ha and watered at the commencement of the irrigation season.

Some thin pastures will be topped up with Biannuals once the immediate frost risk is over (hopefully soon, but aiming for a late August resow), mostly those that have been used for springers. One paddock has been sown to Blade Italian ryegrass with very good results, and so at least another paddock or two will be sown to it. The aim will be to have pastures in as good condition as possible for spring to maximise water-use efficiency and to grow as much pasture as possible in case water availability is as low as it appears at the moment- grow as much as possible while there is moisture!

Cow condition is very good, with milkers at CS 5, dries at CS 5 and first-calf heifers at CS 5+. They returned from agistment in excellent condition this year. Calving commenced early, with the first heifers starting mid-July, and 31 fresh cows in already, despite a start of calving of 3rd August.

Dry cows are receiving around 8kgDM dry cow hay plus around 2kgDM grass. If grass growth remains slow and there is pressure on the grazing round, later dry cows may go on to a diet of grain through the shed and hay, to preserve as much grass as possible for milkers.

The last report sparked extensive debate around the inverted fat and protein test (fat lower than protein). The cause of this has been hotly debated with many concerns shared about acidosis, inadequate fibre intake, imbalanced diets etc. The cows are not acidotic, and in my opinion and those who observed the cows with me on 27th July, were extremely healthy and in excellent condition. The possible cause is from relatively high grain intakes, with high intakes of annual and biannual ryegrass pastures (that contain high fat %). We see this on many farms in late autumn and winter, especially when grazing such pastures, not just the MDF. Is it worth correcting? In my opinion no. Adding quality hay to lift fat % and possibly lower over solids yield, and paying for the privilege, does not make sense. If the inverted test is a result of acidosis, that is a very different issue, and needs attention. The issue is self-correcting as older and ranker pastures are coming in to the diet.

Stay tuned over the next few reports for the full year 16/17 financial and physical results, and an update on our plan for the season as the late winter/early spring develops (hopefully with more entitlement!).

Matt Harms

ONFARM Consulting

0408 311 118