

Macalister Demonstration Farm

Macalister Demonstration Farm Update 467 (Week ending February 23rd, 2018)

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.	Last fortnight	23/2/18	
<u>Production</u>			
Cow numbers (herd and vat)	314 cows in herd and 312 vat	311 cows in herd and vat	
Cow production/day	20.2	19.90	litres
Fat %	4.55	4.18	%
Protein %	3.43	3.58	%
Kg milk solids/cow /day	1.61	1.54	kgMS
BMCC	220,000	129,000	
<u>Grazing and Feeding</u>			
Concentrates	6.3	6.3	kgDM/day
Cost of concentrate (wheat)	\$0.308	\$0.308	c/kg DM
Additive (Performer ME-125 with virginiamycin momensin plus Calciprill and high Zinc)	0.32	0.32	c/cow
Cost of hay	0	0	c/kgDM
Silage	0	0	kgDM/day
Cost of silage	17	17	c/kgDM
Pasture demand (milkers)	9.4	9.4	kg DM/cow/day
Pasture demand (kgDM/ha/day) (all stock on farm)	43	43	kg DM/ha/day
Area in rotation (ha)	68	68	ha
Rotation length (days)	30	30	days
Grazing Area (ha per 24 hours)	2.25	2.25	ha
<u>Daily Income over Supplementary Feed Costs (IOSFC)</u>			
Milk Price (on current tests)	\$5.29	\$5.41	\$/kg milk solids
Milk Price	42.2	42	c/litre
**Income/cow	\$8.51	\$8.33	\$/cow/day
Supplementary Feed Cost/cow	\$2.28	\$2.28	\$/cow/day
IOSFC/cow	\$6.23	\$6.05	\$/cow/day
IOSFC/milking ha	\$28.40	\$25.78	\$/ha/day
Net litres/cow	14.8	14.4	Litres/day
Irrigated pasture cost	\$1.13	\$1.13	\$/cow/day
Irrigated pasture cost per kg	\$0.12	\$0.12	c/kg DM
Net margin after supplements and irrigated pasture	\$5.10	\$4.92	\$/cow/day

The millet paddocks (32 and 35) received three grazings but it is important to resist the temptation to keep grazing these even though they were still showing strong growth. Their role was to provide mid-summer feed but more importantly are part of a pasture renovation program, and as part of that program, good kills of summer grasses and an early renovation back to ryegrass is essential. We have found that a mid to late February spray out, leave 2-3 weeks then drill to ryegrass in early March results in good early growth of new pasture before days shorten and soil temperature falls. These two paddocks will be sown with Biannual (Aston or Crusader) at 25kg/ha.

Paddock 34 (along Boggy Creek Rd) is a poor performing paddock with summer grasses, and to start the resow cycle, it was sprayed last week and will be sown 10-14 days later to Winter Star 2 or its replacement Ascend. This will be sown to millet in late spring and follow the program above.

We have concluded that direct drilling gives a far more reliable result compared to power harrowing, especially where paddocks are smooth and require little 'levelling'. We have found power harrowing sees a prolific strike of Winter Grass (*Poa annua*) and requires far gentler grazing management in the first couple of grazings or even into winter, than does direct drilling...and you pay more for the privilege!

Some of the red soil paddocks under the fixed sprays are thinning, and top-up resowing in early spring has proved successful in bulking these paddocks up. Aston was used last year with very pleasing results. Some more area in this zone will be tackled this year (possibly in the next few weeks or after calving).

Whilst we see this as being quite an expensive exercise on a regular basis, there will be a considerable financial benefit from improving the pasture base on this farm, as much of it is now over 10 years old. We need every one of the 73ha performing strongly. For every paddock unable to grow and allow consumption of 13tDM/ha, means another paddock needs to perform above this level. We see the annual \$7,000-\$10,000 expenditure as being worthwhile, and if the farm financials are strong, my preference would be to increase this further. This will allow cow numbers to remain at around 320 head for longer in the season.

There was 15mm rain on 19th February, allowing a small stretch in irrigation interval. There is plenty of water on hand to allow strong pasture growth into autumn. As our fodder levels on hand were well down on the last few years, and cow numbers considerably higher, we have decided to purchase some quality ryegrass silage, based on feedtest results. This will be finalised in the next few weeks, as well as around 42t of oaten hay purchase for springers. This will be finalised on receipt of a DCAD test.

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