



# dairynews

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## EDITORIAL



**Kerry Kempton**

As I write my first editorial for Dairy News, my first thought is what a turbulent and dramatic summer it has been. Nature has unleashed its fury with devastating consequences, through floods and cyclones, bushfires and heatwaves, earthquakes and tsunamis.

Thankfully most of our state of NSW, except for the North Coast and parts of the Riverina, has been spared the worst of the weather, but it is very distressing to watch as people have their farms, homes, livestock and all they have worked for inundated or destroyed.

These recent extreme events remind me of the challenge that is farming, and how much at the mercy of the weather and the changing climate farmers and rural communities really are.

The other storm being unleashed on our dairy industry is the "milk price war" currently being played out in the retail markets. It remains to be seen how severe the impact on the dairy industry and at the farm gate, but there is no doubt it has created a great deal of worry and concern, and highlights the volatile commercial environment that characterises agriculture nowadays.

Farmers ought to take some comfort though from the fact that you are producing an essential and valuable commodity. Milk is a staple food in many diets around the globe, and the world demand is very strong.

A recent edition of Dairy UK News states that China's consumption of dairy products has increased by 8.6% per year over the last five years. India's increasingly affluent consumers are pushing domestic demand for dairy products up by a rate of 6 million tonnes per annum currently.

So in these uncertain times it is important to focus on the positives and on the things you have some control over.

There are two farmer profiles in this edition which are good examples of this approach. They highlight the importance of understanding your business and planning ahead, and working on the things that will give a good return on investment.

I also spare a thought for those industry advocates and farmer representatives who are speaking out in the media, at Senate enquiries and in negotiations with companies and Government departments, to get a better deal for farmers. Without these people giving up their time, the industry would not be heard. Let's hope for some smoother sailing ahead.



Industry &  
Investment



## Q FEVER

**Dr Tony Merritt**

Public Health Physician, Hunter New England  
Population Health

Q Fever is a potentially serious bacterial infection that can be prevented by vaccination. It is an occupational hazard for people working with cattle, sheep and goats.

As all dairy farmers are potentially at risk, they should consider vaccination if not already immune.

A recent study in the Hunter New England region highlights the level of risk across many rural communities. For example, evidence of previous exposure to Q Fever was identified in blood samples from 10% of people living in Gloucester and in over 15% of those from Narrabri, Tenterfield, Gunnedah and Guyra.

To prevent Q Fever, farm managers should ensure that all farm employees are considered for Q Fever vaccination along with other measures taken to provide a safe workplace.

The vaccine can be given from the age of 15 years and should also be considered for older children assisting with farm work.

Vaccination is available in most rural centres and is provided by General Practitioners. Before receiving the vaccine it is important to test for any existing immunity as if this is detected, vaccination should not be given.

Once a person has received the Q Fever vaccine, no further booster doses are needed.

The cost of the vaccine can be claimed as a tax deduction by managers providing the vaccine to employees and by self employed farmers.

In addition to vaccination there are other practical measures that dairy farmers can take to reduce the risk of Q Fever infection.

These include thorough washing of hands and arms after handling animals or carcasses, carefully disposing of animal tissues including birthing products and cleaning animal body fluids from work areas and equipment.

Animals infected with Q Fever usually have no symptoms but release large numbers of the bacteria in faeces, urine, milk and birthing

products which can then survive in the local environment for many months.

People can be infected by direct contact with infected fluids or, more commonly, by breathing in contaminated dust.

Symptoms of acute Q Fever may include fever, sweats, headache, fatigue and painful muscles and can persist for weeks or occasionally years.

Some people may be infected and experience no symptoms.

Q Fever can have serious complications with damage to the heart valves (endocarditis), brain (encephalitis) and liver (hepatitis).

Contact your General Practitioner for more information about Q Fever and the vaccine.

Further advice is also available from your local Public Health Unit.

Contact details are included on the Q Fever factsheet available at:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/qfever.html>

### ***Lasting Effects from Q fever bout***

*Daryl is a farmer from Dungog who has had a recent experience with Q fever which he thinks he contracted assisting dairy cows to calve.*

*He became ill around July last year with flu like symptoms, hot and cold flushes and nausea and vomiting.*

*"The cold flushes were the worst, and that made me finally go and see the doctor. I couldn't keep anything down, food or water for over 10 days. I then ended up in hospital with kidneys not functioning, had to go on dialysis; blood pressure was **60/40!** I spent two days in hospital 'out of it' and had to go back for follow up treatments."*

*Daryl was off work for around a month and is now on heart medication for endocarditis, most probably for life.*

## MARQUETS MERGE FINANCE & FARMING

**Michael Porteus**

Agricultural Journalist\*

Hunter Valley farmers James and Gaylene Marquet, are using tight financial planning to manage their transition from share-farming to ownership of their 187ha farm at Wallarobba, 13 kms south of Dungog.

Their circumstances have changed dramatically over the last three years. They have bounced back strongly from the tough times when the aftermath of dairy deregulation met drought in 2006-07.

James says he could have given up farming when health concerns added to dry weather and dry economics. But he and Gaylene looked at the numbers, did the sums, and developed their business plan.

They bought the farm instead of leaving it, and are now upbeat about their transition from share farmers to owners. They are now milking 260 Holsteins and producing over two million litres a year.

Both James and Gaylene are fourth-generation dairy farmers, so can turn their hand to just about anything on their farm.

Gaylene trained and worked as an accountant for 10 years at a local accounting practice. She uses her 20 years experience with book-keeping and tax to ensure that the farm stays well ahead of its financial commitments.

James grew up on the farm at Wallarobba and has lived there all his life. His parents were share farmers first and he started working as a dairy apprentice for them in 1987.

In 1998 James and Gaylene started their dairy farming partnership, first as share farmers for the Alison family from Dungog, and then in 2007 an opportunity came up to buy the farm.

"It was difficult to get the finance but we were very determined not to let a good thing slip away. It had always been our dream to buy our own farm. But we couldn't have done it without our family support."

The past few seasons have been good, their milk is fetching more than 50 cents a litre and

they have made farm-management deposits to hedge against financial risk. There is plenty of laughter among the serious talk in the newly refurbished home on the Wallarobba farm.

The farm grows mainly annual pastures including autumn-planted rye grass, clover and oats. It has no irrigation, and the 1000mm average annual rainfall does not have a reliable pattern. Summer crops are grown when the season permits.

In dry years they have relied heavily on brought in feed, which presents a risk when feed prices escalate. So to minimise that risk the Marquets now grow silage and raise heifers on an extra 240ha located near the home farm, which they jointly lease with another farmer.

"It makes management a lot easier if you have access to a different source of fodder if you haven't got feed in the paddock," James says.

Like many NSW dairy farmers in the new era of tiered allocations, James has backed off a little from the push for more litres.

The Marquets now look at profit per cow, and use Department of Industry and Investment MilkBiz program to work this out.

The Marquets milk in a 16 aside double-up herring bone dairy. They have one full-time employee, and help from James' father.

A couple of years ago they installed sprinklers to cool their cows at the dairy, and James says. "The sprinklers were not expensive, and make a huge difference, with cow production staying up amid heat and humidity."

When a pump failure stopped the sprinklers one hot day this summer, milk output plummeted. They have also varied milking times, marrying the needs of staff and cows to optimise results.

They now milk at 4am and 2pm. The cows go on to their feed pad after milking and are fed a mixed ration, and then return to the sprinklers on hot afternoons.

According to I&I NSW Dairy Officer Kerry Kempton, one of the keys to the Marquet's success has been the strength of their partnership, and the way their skills complement each other. "They work so well together, because James has the farming skills and Gaylene has the financial skills. They communicate every day about various things but don't tread on each other's toes."



# BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

"We teach each other things so we are always learning something new. We look at our cash flows and budgets and I am always planning well in advance," Gaylene says. "I believe failing to plan is planning to fail".

Gaylene also keeps building her skills: "I did a farm management course in 2010 to improve my farm management skills. We've implemented better occupational health and safety systems and used mapping and other tools to better manage our farm.

"We did as many of the capital projects we could while the milk price was at record highs," she says. "Now it's time to focus on debt reduction. Interest rates are starting to bite."



*James & Gaylene Marquet*

"We took advantage of the investment allowance to improve the farm infrastructure. We brought things forward that were in the pipeline, which was a tax effective way of investing in the farm business."

After they looked at the numbers, the Marquets were able to modify their plan this year to renovate their home.

The accountant in Gaylene says spending on the house will "preserve that asset and add value to the farm". But she also laughs. "We've done everything we can to make the cows more

comfortable – we thought we could also do a bit for ourselves!"

"We've grown our business and in the last 10 years our farm turnover has tripled and cow numbers doubled. We've always tried to improve the business by getting costs down and improving our bottom line."

When they bought the farm, they also moved their milk supply contract from Dairy Farmers to NORCO, the first farm in the Hunter Valley to do so. "It was a bold step to change processors but we did the figures and on paper it was a better option. We have no regrets with our decision", said Gaylene.

Owning the farm also changes their view of the longer term.

They have a seven-year-old daughter Hannah and an 11-year-old son Cameron, who loves working on the farm. James thinks to succeed in today's dairy industry you need to be open minded, willing to try new things and move with the times. The industry has changed significantly to what their grandparents

were doing back in their day.

"For them, it was all about getting the cows milked," Gaylene says. "It was nowhere near as business-oriented as it is now. Today you need good skills and education to run a successful dairy farming operation and a safe workplace."

*\* Michael Porteus is a freelance journalist working with I&I NSW to bring farmer stories to Dairy News.*

## DAIRY GOES DIGITAL

Greg Mills

Livestock Officer , Moree



Most new mobile phones are now web enabled, allowing you to view and download internet material direct to your mobile phone.

Dairy farmers with this technology can now rapidly access audio information from the Industry & Investment NSW web site using Quick Reference Codes (QR) Codes.

QR Codes store information that can be scanned by mobile phones in a similar way that groceries are scanned at a supermarket.

As QR codes are two dimensional, rather than the one dimension bar codes on grocery items, more information can be stored in the code.

By installing a code reader on your mobile phone the phone camera can be used to scan the code and link you directly to websites.

Many mobile phones have a code scanner already installed, or you can download one to your phone.

One such reader can be downloaded by going to; [www.i-nigma.mobi](http://www.i-nigma.mobi) on your mobile phone's web browser.

I-nigma will automatically identify your handset type, download and install the I-nigma code reader on your mobile phone.

If you have an iPhone® you can download a reader from the apps Store.

Once the code reader is installed you can use your phone camera to scan QR Codes. The QR code contains a web link which will take you directly to one of our dairy podcasts.

Depending on your phone model you can then listen to the podcast or save it to your phone for use at a more convenient time.

QR Codes can be scanned from paper or from a computer screen. If you are reading this online, you can point your camera at the screen, scan the code, and the podcast will be downloaded to you mobile phone.

**Note** that download charges will apply from your phone company.

Here is an example of some QR Codes and watch out for more QR Codes in upcoming issues of Dairy News.

## APPLES AND ORANGES, WHEAT AND WHEAT

**Anthea Lisle**

Livestock Officer (Dairy), Scone

You make the phone call to your regular grain hauler – he rattles off a series of descriptions, each with a different price beside it – you close your eyes and choose the price in the middle – that’s better than the crook stuff, right? Well, not always!

In the world of grain purchasing, do you know what you are paying for? How do you make that decision, load by load? And what kind of information is available to you to help out?

Grain Standards have been set for the trading of Australian grain by Grain Trade Australia (GTA, previously NACMA). There is a good explanatory document available from GTA on their website, [www.graintrade.org.au](http://www.graintrade.org.au).

As a word of warning, standards are dynamic due to ongoing changes within the grains industry. Grain that may have come into one category last year may well be upgraded or downgraded this year, so it is a good idea to keep abreast of changes. The GTA website is a good place to start.

### Milling or feed grades?

Milling grades (of any type of grain) are generally higher priced due to their higher milling quality.

The milling industries generally require much more consistency in their product and may also have higher food safety requirements, so are looking to eliminate as much contamination as possible.

Feed grade grains are simply grains that were destined for milling but did not meet the specifications for one or more reasons. These days there are plenty of feed grains that are bred and grown specifically for that purpose, so the quality is much more consistent than it used to be.

### Common grades in use:

Most dairy farmers around NSW have been accepting either feed grade wheat (FED1), or a selection of ASW1 (Australian Standard White Varieties) or AGP1 (a variety of general purpose grains, NOT including feed grade). Barley grades include Feed 1 or Feed 2, which differ in their minimum test weights and their maximum allowable screenings (see the table below).

### So what do the specifications really mean?

There are far too many different grade specifications to go through here – but the most commonly reported are as follows:

**Moisture maximum:** 12.5% for all wheat and barley grades. Higher moisture affects processing quality and increases risk of fungal growth and sprouting.

**Protein minimum:** There is no specified minimum for any of the commonly used grain grades but be aware that a high protein (more than 15%) grain MAY indicate a poor quality, small or shrivelled grain with very little starch and therefore less energy. If you are offered a high protein grain ask to see a sample for yourself.

**Test weight minimum (kg/hL):** A measure of the density of the grain. The higher the test weight, the more grain will fit into a truck load.

Grade	Wheat				Barley	
	ASW1	AGP1	SFW1	FED1	FEED1	FEED2
Moisture maximum (%)	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5
Test weight minimum (kg/hL)	74	68	70	62	62.5	60
Screenings maximum (% <2mm screen)	5	10	10	15	15	25
Falling number minimum (seconds)	300	200	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a



# FEEDING

This is a good indicator of grain quality, as heavier, denser grain is generally higher in good quality starch and will go through your mill more consistently.

**Screenings maximum:** This is any material that passes through a 2mm screen – it can include small foreign seeds (weed seeds), broken grains and other unmillable pieces. Lower quality feed grade grains may have higher screenings and be less consistent when you are trying to mill them on farm.

**Falling number minimum:** This is an alternative measure to the visual assessment of sprouting and weather damage in grains. The lower the number the more weather damage has occurred. There is no minimum for feed grades grain so make sure you specify a threshold for shot or sprung grain with your grain trader.

There are also standards available for other cereal grains and for all the oilseeds and pulses – visit the Grain Trade Australia website: [www.graintrade.org.au/commodity\\_standards](http://www.graintrade.org.au/commodity_standards) for more information or phone 02 9247 6408.

**The moral of the story?** Grains ain't grains – get as much information from your grain trader as possible and choose a grain grade that suits your needs.

*(Information and image sourced from Grain Trade Australia and Grains2Milk program)*



## Watch out for weather damaged grain this year!

With so much rain in the Eastern grain belt over the 2010/2011 season, there is a large amount weather damaged grain being downgraded to feed grade. **If grain hygiene risks are managed dairy farmers may pick up some bargains, but it's only a bargain if the grain is not putting your herd in danger.**

### Risks:

- Lower energy due to breakdown of starch in sprouting grain
- High moisture grains can develop moulds which in turn produce mycotoxins – these can quickly kill animals or greatly affect production
- High moisture grains are also more likely to have insect infestation
- Moisture can cause clumping of grain, making handling very difficult
- Greater risk of acidosis due to the starch breaking down to simple sugars (these ferment very quickly in the rumen)
- Poor processing quality

### What you can do:

1. Visually assess the grain – from a representative sample (that is, collecting 6 buckets full from all over the truck and mixing them together), lay out 100 grains of barley or 300 grains of wheat and look for:
  - a. pin holes (indicating possible sprouting)
  - b. swelling due to moisture absorption
  - c. splits in the outer germ layer of the kernel
  - d. the presence of one or more roots, or even a shoot
  - e. any mould growth – also check for a musty smell or rotting grains
2. Check the test weight of the grain – you should be supplied with this, and you can easily check it by weighing a one litre container of grain and multiplying it by 100 to see a test weight in kg/hL. SO a barley sample weighing 0.56kg will have a test weight of 56kg/hL – which is below the Feed2 Standard (see previous table).
3. Send a sample away for a “Mould and Yeast” check– this can be done through the Feed Quality Service at Wagga Wagga. Contact them on 1800 675 623
4. Test for specific mycotoxins – however unless you know exactly which mycotoxin you are looking for, you could spend a lot of money searching.

**Remember**, if you have purchased grain on the terms of a specific standard and the grain does not meet these standards, you are well within your rights to reject the load.

For more information, read the Dairy Australia Grains2Milk Fact Sheet “Buying and Feeding Weather Damaged Grain” – go to [www.dairyaustralia.com.au](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au), or phone your Dairy Officer for a copy.

***This information has been made available from Dairy Australia's Grains2Milk Program.***

## BENIGN BOVINE THEILERIOSIS

**Dr Graham Bailey, Veterinary Research Officer, Orange**

Benign Theileriosis is a potentially serious disease with limited treatment options.

The incidence of disease is rising. Disease has commonly been seen soon after movement of cattle to the affected property.

When naive cattle are kept with carrier cattle the organism can spread to the naive cattle that may show signs of disease especially if late in pregnancy or early lactation.

The method of transmission is still being established; some tick species are known to be able to transmit Theileria but there may also be other mechanisms involved.

Disease is usually seen in one of three different situations, which are:

- adult cattle moved from free areas to areas where Benign Theileriosis is common eg coastal areas - disease is seen in the introduced cattle 5 to 8 weeks later.
- cattle carrying Theileria are moved to a property which was previously uninfected - disease is seen in home-bred cattle 2 to 6 months later
- calves born in coastal and foothills of the tablelands districts - disease is seen in calves 8 to 12 weeks old.

Many cattle when exposed do not develop disease and some develop a mild disease and recover. The organisms remain in their bloodstream - they become carriers.

Benign Bovine Theileriosis is NOT the same disease as East Coast Fever in Africa, and Mediterranean fever which are far more dangerous and caused by different tick-borne parasites.

### **Key messages for stockowners**

Prevention is the best approach.

You may be introducing disease or parasites into your herd – or you may be introducing naive cattle that can't cope with the conditions already in your herd and environment.

Ask yourself and check with your veterinarian – do the cattle I am considering to buy pose a risk to my herd?

Monitor cattle closely for up to 6 months after they are introduced to a herd or new area – and call your vet if any signs of Theileriosis or other diseases begin to occur. Management of cattle particularly good nutrition can limit the impact of disease if it occurs.

For more information, a Primefact will soon be available on the DPI website, so in the meantime contact your local district veterinarian.

## REV-UP HOSTS SAYS CALVES ARE MONEY

Michael Porteus

Comboyne calf rearer Debbie Borham says calves are money. "A lot of people say they are just calves, and they'll be right," says Debbie. "But they are your future herd, so they have got to be looked after."

Debbie says she has been on a steep learning curve since she took on calf rearing on the farm where she joined husband Phil four years ago.

The Borhams recently hosted an I&I NSW Rev-up Replacements (RUR) workshop, delivered by Ray Johnston, Dairy Officer Taree, with 30 farmers from the Hastings-Manning region attending.

Ray Johnston said "the workshop highlighted that most of the Borham's heifers weighed around 600kg at first calving and are meeting the RUR targets at all stages of growth."

"Farmers are finding the RUR resources very useful to help achieve satisfactory growth rates. By using the charts you can readily see whether heifers are underperforming" said Ray.

The Borhams calve year round and milk 180 Holsteins producing 1.6 million litres a year. They milk off 80ha of their 147ha farm.

They use a further 40ha nearby to grow-out heifers and get them in-calf with a Holstein bull.

Debbie thinks her calves come in above average because of individual attention and separated calf hutches, supplementing early milk with vitamins, minerals and probiotics, and monitoring each heifer's targets for weight and height. (Continued on page 11)



# HAY AND SILAGE FEED QUALITY COMPETITION

## 2001 NSW HAY & SILAGE AWARDS

### Neil Griffiths

District Agronomist, Tocal

The NSW Grassland Society and I&I NSW are again organising Hay and Silage Feed Quality Awards. The awards and use of feed quality analysis are especially important this year due to the wide variation in quality and amount of weather damaged hay and silage across NSW. Favourable growing conditions in 2010 have provided a great opportunity to store hay and silage however prolonged rain during harvest meant that it has not been easy to store top quality feed. All eligible farmers can use the awards entry form to obtain discounted hay and silage analysis from the NSW Feed Quality Service.

Winners of the 8 awards which will be presented at the NSW Grassland Society Conference in Bathurst at the end of July will share in \$5000 worth of prizes from commercial sponsors Integrated Packaging, New Holland and Pioneer. See entry form next page.

### Conditions of Entry

- The aim of these awards is to promote the benefits of high quality hay and silage to all farmers with emphasis on the importance of feed quality in animal production and how to achieve feed quality in conserved forages.
- Awards will be based on feed quality analysis results from the I&I NSW Feed Quality Service with emphasis on metabolisable energy and crude protein. Results will also be compared with guidelines provided in I&I NSW Silage Note 4 ([www.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au)) and TopFodder Successful Silage manual.
- Awards will compare hays and silages in each category ie. one award for each crop or pasture type, not separate awards for hay and silage.
- Samples must be representative and must come from commercial lot size intended for feeding to animals. Minimum lot size 5 tonnes of product.
- Samples must be of forage (hay or silage) conserved and/or fed in 2010/2011.
- Limit of 4 entries (samples) per farm or producer.
- Samples (approx. 500g) are best sent using a Post Paid Feed Quality Service sample kit available from I&I NSW. Silage should be frozen in plastic bag then wrapped in newspaper before posting early in the week. If you don't have a green FQS bag, samples can be posted early in the week to: Feed Quality Service, I&I NSW, Locked Bag 701, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650
- Awards will be presented at the NSW Grasslands Society Annual conference to be held in Bathurst July 27 and 28 2011.
- It is desirable for all entrants to keep photos and an example of entries until after awards are announced.
- Winners agree to co-operate with the organisers (I&I NSW and Grasslands Society of NSW) to conduct relevant field days, press and media following the awards.

### Closing date 8 July 2011

**Note:** Results of early submissions will be sent out at the end of each month. We thank sponsors of these awards:



- Pioneer Hi-Bred Australia
- NSW Feed Quality Service

***\$5,000 worth of prizes***



Further information phone (02) 6938 1957 (lab) or (02) 4939 8948

PTO for entry details

# HAY AND SILAGE FEED QUALITY COMPETITION

Name: ..... Business name: .....

Postal address: .....

Phone: ..... Fax: .....

Email: .....

Property address (if different): .....

Property Identification Code (PIC): .....

Sample details:  Hay (\$40.95)       Silage (\$68.40)      Bale or pit size: .....

Note: You must enclose a cheque made payable to Department of Industry & Investment NSW

Crop/pasture description (1 only)	Details/varieties
<input type="checkbox"/> Winter/temperate pasture	.....
<input type="checkbox"/> Summer/tropical pasture:	.....
<input type="checkbox"/> Winter crop:	.....
<input type="checkbox"/> Maize:	.....
<input type="checkbox"/> Other summer crop:	.....
<input type="checkbox"/> Lucerne:	.....
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	.....

Harvest: Date: ..... Growth stage/maturity: .....

Machinery used to mow/bale/harvest etc: .....

Storage method/facility: .....

Additives applied at harvest: .....

Quantity stored: .....

Time from mowing till harvest or storage: ..... days

**Payment Authorisation** (must be completed)

I hereby authorise Department of Industry & Investment NSW to test the sample I have identified according to the above details as an entry in the 2011 NSW Hay and Silage Feed Quality Awards. I have enclosed a cheque for \$\_\_\_\_\_

I accept that the judge's decision will be final and will not be challenged.

Name: ..... Signature: ..... Date: .....

Test results and findings may be provided to authorised staff and used for statistical, surveillance, extension, certification and regulatory purposes in accordance with Departmental policies. The information assists disease and residue control programs and underpins market access for agricultural products. The source of the information will remain confidential unless otherwise required by law or regulatory policies.

**LABORATORY USE ONLY**

Date received:	Accession number:	Accessioned by:
Samples checked:	Total number of samples:	Testing authorised:

**Closing date: 8 July 2011**



# REV-UP HOSTS - CALF REARING - continued

**Calf rearing** – continued from page 8

Main features of Borham's rearing system:

- Heifers are removed from their mothers within 12 hours. They spend a few days in the dairy pen where they are fed colostrum.
- The calves then move to individual hutches for six weeks and bottle-fed, with their health closely monitored. They are soon drinking milk from buckets, which also contain vitamins, minerals and probiotics.

"We find they do much better in the hutches, rather than in a calf shed," says Debbie.

- The twice-daily bucket feeds are stepped-up from two to three litres. Grain is introduced within a week, and increased over their six weeks in the hutches.

"We give them a handful of grain in a container in the hutch so they get the smell of it, and they eventually eat it themselves."

- At six weeks old the calves are taken in groups of six to small paddocks with electric fences. They have access to pasture and are fed milk, grain and silage.



*Debbie Borham with some of her calves*

Each feed of every calf is recorded. Debbie and farm hand Jodie Miller discuss their progress and will hold them back when they are not ready for the next stage.

- From the electric-fence pen they go into a large paddock with up to 13 others. They are still fed milk and grain and silage but they have more pasture to graze.
- At about four months they are weaned off milk and taken to another paddock. They are

still fed grain, silage and pasture until about eight months.

"You've got to keep a check on their health, body weight, eyes and navels, and make sure they are all feeding.

- The calves leave daily care at eight to nine months for larger paddocks where pasture varies with the season. Supplementary feed is supplied if needed.
- Between 15 and 17 months they are put with the bull. Most of them go in-calf pretty much straight away. The Borhams use registered Holstein bulls, which they change regularly.

Debbie does not underestimate the advantages of intensive care of young calves.

"All the one-on-one care is important while they are young. That's the most important time. It's a really high-maintenance thing and it's important to keep their hutches clean." She says separate hutches prevent diseases spreading through groups of calves.

Debbie says hand-reared calves are more robust, longer-lasting and quieter when they start milking.

"With their first lot of needling, we run them through a race.

"We have marks up on the poles of the race that show what height they should be for their age. It's easy to see where they are at."

Debbie says they have only lost two calves in the past year, many fewer than were lost before they started individual calf care.

Debbie says she has been to many workshops and calf-rearing programs and has read a lot. She and Jodie learn from each other.

"A lot of farmers can't give individual attention to their calves. Before I came here, Phil didn't have time. They got fed and that was it. There wasn't that extra care.

"I think women make a bit of a difference in the calf rearing, they have that nurturing nature."

Debbie does not come from a farm background and finds the 24/7 work on the farm demanding but rewarding.

"The calves that have come through have got better and better and better," she says.

## COMING EVENTS 2011

March 24	Tocal (Dairy)	Soil and Fertiliser Field Day	Contact: Neil Griffiths, Tocal 4939 8948
April 19	Tocal (Glendarra)	Poultry Litter Field Day	Contact: Neil Griffiths, Tocal 4939 8948
April 6	Denman	Future Dairy Open Day	Contact : Anthea Lisle, Scone 6544 4900
April 1	Wingham	Farm Succession Planning	} Contact: Michelle Blakeney Rural Financial Counsellor 0448 035 143
April 5	Dungog	Farm Succession Planning	
May 3	Singleton	Farm Succession Planning	
May 5	Kempsey	Farm Succession Planning	

## INDUSTRY & INVESTMENT NSW – PRIMARY INDUSTRIES – CONTACT DETAILS

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