

ISSUE 19, SUMMER 2011

MEET DAISY THE WONDER COW!

Julie Dart

Livestock Officer, Dairy - Coffs Harbour

Daisy is the latest addition to the Ussher dairy herd. She's the brainchild of Margaret & Allan Ussher of Bowraville.

Although she's modelled on a prime Jersey specimen from a breeder's catalogue, she's actually of the "Picasso Cows" pedigree.

Allan and Margaret introduced Daisy to the herd to try and promote the dairy industry in the valley. She has pride of place on the dairy roof and was one of the star attractions at the recent Cool Cows field day. Margaret got in touch with the Picasso Cows team at Dairy Australia and a new star was born!

The Picasso Cows initiative from Dairy Australia targets primary



schools in Australia's dairying regions that are also feeder schools into the secondary schools program, Cows Create Careers. It leverages interest by teachers in food processing to promote the dairy story and the potential career path through active engagement, to help younger children learn about the dairy industry, human nutrition and environmental management.

The Ussher family have recently hosted a dairy excursion of primary school students from the nearby Steiner school, as part of their desire to help the younger kids understand where their food comes from.

Hopefully Daisy will attract enough attention to slow the traffic around milking time, helping her herd mates safely cross the road to the dairy.

Allan says that she's probably the most expensive cow he has ever bought, with freight from Melbourne and the help of a local airbrush artist to bring her to life.

"I reckon that she's worth every cent!"







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EDITORIAL



Kerry Kempton

Technical Specialist Dairy - Tocal, Paterson

As we draw towards the end of 2011, I reflect on what has been a turbulent year for the NSW dairy industry and those whose livelihoods depend on it. Seasonal conditions continue to be wetter than usual in most regions. Water flowing in the river systems is a great sight to behold, and a huge blessing for the Murray-Darling system in particular. But water flowing over the river banks and onto farmland is a huge burden for those of you who have experienced flooding again this year.

Market conditions which have led to downwards pressure on pricing and supply by way of tightening allocations, has meant again it is the farmers who are squeezed on their profit margin, with no one else to pass the losses on to.

However, on the positive side, the wetter conditions have certainly promoted fantastic pasture growth in most regions. This has meant with less need to turn on the irrigation pumps, plenty of fodder being conserved, and relatively low grain prices, which all have the effect of lowering feed costs for many. And not just for this season, as feed on hand this year

will be turned into income next year, at no extra cost.

This edition of Dairy News includes messages from the leaders of Dairy NSW, NSW Farmers Dairy Committee and Dairy Industry Conference. It is a reminder that this publication is the only dairy specific newsletter remaining in NSW, and we have taken on the responsibility of enabling good communication to farmers from the peak bodies that represent you.

I would also like to reflect on the projects and activities that NSW DPI dairy extension team has delivered to farmers during 2011, which include: Rev Up Replacements, Climate Risk Management, managing heat stress, soils and fertiliser management, pasture and crop options, lameness workshops, mastitis days, herd health days, People GPS course, AI schools, RYAG camp, centre pivot irrigation course, Dairy Greenhouse Gas audits, and transition cow management, just to name a few! There has also been a significant involvement of DPI staff with the Future Dairy CFS in the Hunter, and Automatic Milking Systems. We have supported the Cows Create Careers across the state, and of course have been on hand to help farmers deal with the floods and their aftermath. A big thanks both to the farmers and our funding partner Dairy Australia for their support throughout the year.

These programs are targeted at helping farmers deal with the complexity of running a dairy business, and the constant challenges that arise. We have also delivered on the request by industry for a one stop shop for events, with the Dairy Connect website. This can only mean better coordination and improved organisation in the industry, which is good for everyone. Six months in and Dairy Connect is building up some momentum, with some 90 events listed so far and more than 110 members registered, and receiving fortnightly updates on coming events. If you haven't yet registered, I recommend you do, see the back page for details. We have included a Dairy Connect 2012 calendar to go on the frig.

So I would like to wish all our readers best wishes for the Christmas and New Year period, and I hope you enjoy a break and some happy times with family and friends.

FUTURE DAIRY HUNTER PROJECT FINISHES

Kerry Kempton

Technical Specialist Dairy - Tocal, Paterson

The FutureDairy Hunter Project has now finished, and has been hailed as a great example of how to take research findings out to farmers in a way that helps them implement these concepts into their own farm business.

Six dairy farmers in the Hunter Valley teamed up with Extension Officers from NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) and researchers from the University of Sydney's FutureDairy project to apply the principles of Complementary Forage Systems (CFS). The CFS is an option for farms already achieving high pasture utilisation, and who have reached their limit of productivity gains from their land or water. It involves allocating a portion of the farm to double or triple cropping, usually with a bulk maize crop for silage followed by brassicas, legumes, ryegrass or winter cereals.

The aim of the Hunter project was to guide the farmers through the planning and implementation of CFS and then monitor and review what happened. Asking the question: would applying the CFS principles increase their milk produced from home grown feed in a profitable and sustainable way?

The answer was a definite yes!

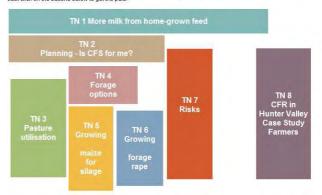
Five farms implemented the CFS principles in ways that fitted with their existing farm management goals, and one pasture focussed farm was monitored as a control comparison. All six farms increased their home-grown feed utilisation throughout the two years of monitoring, which meant less reliance for purchased feed and lower feed costs. The farms achieved the results without significant capital expenditure or increased infrastructure.

The other key outcome from the project was that all six farms reported increased confidence in making feed based decisions, and reckoned that using the CFS principles had placed their businesses in a lower risk position due to the



TECHNICAL NOTES

The FutureDairy 2 Feedbase Complementary Forage Systems Tech Notes series is now available for download! Just click on the buttons below to get the pdfs.



planning and monitoring processes inherently involved.

The FutureDairy team have produced a series of eight technotes about Complementary Forage Systems. The complete series is available to download at www.futuredairy.com.au. For more information email Associate Professor Yani Garcia: sergio.garcia@sydney.edu.au or phone (02) 9351-1621.

The series also includes a set of case studies from the six Hunter farms in the Hunter Valley, so you can read about their experiences over the two years of the project. These technotes are a great reference for anyone considering CFS on their farm.

The technote topics are:

TN1	More n	nilk from	home	grown	feed	
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TN2	Planning – i	is CFS	for me?
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TN3 Pasture Utilisation

TN4 Forage Options

TN5 Growing Maize for Silage

TN6 Growing Forage Rape

TN7 Risks

TN8 The Hunter Valley Case Studies

Feedbase Survey

Following on from the Hunter Valley
Complementary Forages project and the previous
Managing Pastures for Profit project, the DPI team
are planning a new project around profitably
feeding cows.

We are currently doing a needs analysis in the feedbase area, including pasture and crop management, cow nutrition and balancing rations, and economic assessment of feeding systems. This is where the most dollars are spent and the key decisions made on most dairy farms, and where we think DPI extension programs can add the most value to the industry.

We are keen to hear from farmers and service providers about what are the biggest issues and challenges facing you now, and what they might be in 3-5 year's time.

What type of dairy system are you operating, and how has that changed over recent years, eg have you grown your herd, become more intensive, rely more on partial or total mixed rations, or gone less intensive and more pasture based?

Have these changes meant you have had to learn new skills, or are lacking some key information to make the most of your resources?

We would like to know what type of information, advice or support you would like from DPI NSW, and how you would like to receive information.

We will be conducting a phone survey during January to seek farmer feedback. If you would like to be part of the survey or just give us your general thoughts, please contact your nearest dairy officer, or directly to Anthea Lisle, on 65444905, or email anthea.lisle@industry.nsw.gov.au

BUILDING TRUST WITH CONSUMERS

Kerry Kempton

To operate a farm business these days requires more than just the physical and human resources and a registration from the NSW Food Authority, it requires a "social license" whereby the wider community approves of your farming practices. And the key part is to gain TRUST from the community.

This was the message delivered to a range of farming leaders and extension deliverers recently by Charlie Arnot, hosted by NSW DPI and the Australia Pacific Extension Network (APEN). Charlie Arnot is the CEO of the Centre for Food Integrity in the USA, which is dedicated to building consumer trust and confidence in today's food systems. He believes that agriculture has traditionally focussed on presenting facts and figures about farming and why farmers operate the way to do, to defend farming industries in the face of animal rights groups and other activist groups.

But Charlie's experience is that consumers want to know about values and ethics, and not the science! They want to know that farmers have the same values as they do, that they are honest, they care about their animals and land, they want their children to grow up in a safe environment and eat healthy food. It's about winning over the hearts and minds of the public first, and then they will listen to the facts.

When asked what drives their food choices, consumers generally have as their top 3 priorities: food that is **safe**, **affordable** and **nutritious**. The lowest priorities for choice are usually whether the farmer is productive or making a profit; and animal welfare and environmental concerns are mostly ranked in the middle somewhere.

This hit home to me when I think about the dairy industry's response to the supermarket price wars — much of the comment was that this move would mean lower incomes for farmers and less profit, threatening livelihoods. Perhaps a better approach would be to highlight the positives of dairy farming and how much farmers care about their animals and farms, and how they don't want to have to compromise on the high standard of care they provide.

You can watch Charlie Arnot in action by going to Youtube and searching his name – it's definitely worth a look.



TRAINEES COME IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES

James Hooke

Education Officer - Tocal

Just like their farms, trainees come in all shapes and sizes, backgrounds and ages. The Tocal Traineeship recognises this and uses it to its best advantage.

Case study: The Kiwi, timber harvester

Employer:

Peter Brown's delayed return to the dairy industry didn't dampen his enthusiasm for it. After a variety of jobs he returned to his family's Wingham farm in 1992. Both he and his family worked hard to develop its potential, increasing annual milk production from 330,000 litres to a peak of 2 million litres in 2003. Current production has stabilised below that level now, but with a lower cost base, and Peter prefers this balance of profitability with sustainability. Peter has also worked hard to help develop the dairy industry, having significant roles in the Mid Coast Dairy Advancement Group and Dairy NSW.

Peter has always valued relevant industry training. Even before he returned home he completed the external, Tocal Farm Management course. Once back on the farm he followed this up with the 3 year Tocal Apprenticeship Program as a mature age student. He valued these courses so much that when he realised the farm needed to employ more labour to continue growing he had "no hesitation" in offering his new employee a Tocal Traineeship.

Trainee:

Zac Fiddymont's traineeship with Peter has been unusual but Peter says arrangements should be flexible when a worker is worth the investment. Zac originally moved from NZ to seasonally harvest timber with his father in Victoria. Fate eventually found him working for Peter in the "off season". Quickly recognising his potential, Peter offered him a Tocal Traineeship and Zac was keen to accept. "I had done a Certificate II qualification at school and the value of adding to it appealed to me". However one problem remained; Zac was also committed to helping his father the next winter. The solution: Peter, Tocal and Australian Apprenticeship Centre representative, Gabby Barlow, developed a program which allowed Zac to do both! Gabby helps Peter administer the traineeship and assists with access to incentives. For example, Gabby alerted Peter that employers of apprentices are eligible for workers compensation rebates.

Zac now has nationally recognised qualifications in Rural Production as well as competencies in Timber harvesting. Just as importantly, Zac's skills remained in the dairy industry for longer and Peter has been able to concentrate on areas where before he was spreading himself thin. As an example Peter says, "I felt the farm's breeding program was suffering because I couldn't give enough attention to detail. Now that Zac is helping with AI and heat detection our reproductive performance is back on target".

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Above: Peter Brown and Zac Fiddymont on the farm at Wingham.

Getting the best value out of a Traineeship.

Zac says "the Tocal Traineeship has been absolutely rewarding. It is great to get new ideas and to also learn from other farmers. Like every farm, ours has strengths and weaknesses but the course helps to show where we can maybe improve". Peter agrees, "I found my apprenticeship very worthwhile and that is why I suggested it to Zac. I think it's great that a wide variety of farmers can get together and discuss things. It's also great that Zac returns home and challenges the farm with new ideas. Not all of them will work but it makes us have a close look at them all".

Peter has since offered Zac a share farming arrangement; "I know he ultimately wants to work for himself and thought this might be a good incentive. We are still in the early stages of working it out and might look at the People in Dairy site for help. There is no real hurry as Zac had already committed to working away for another stint before I made the proposal". Even though Zac says the lure of returning to a share farming arrangement is attractive, Peter is philosophical, "If Zac does come back it will be on his own terms and that will ultimately be good for everyone".

If you would like more information on the Tocal Traineeship Program, please do not hesitate to call James Hooke on 02 4939 8960.

PREPARING FOR FLOODS AND STORMS

Julie Dart

Livestock Officer, Dairy - Coffs Harbour

Summer is upon us and the forecasts are predicting more rain in the Northern coastal areas, during our normal rainy period. Now is the time to think about getting prepared for storms and floods.



Famers are urged to do the following now:

- Have a written farm emergency plan in place that is easy to follow by workers and family.
- Know what the river height action triggers are for your farm and any other leased blocks. If you are new to the area, seek advice from neighbours or your local SES.
- Consider being part of a "phone tree" with neighbours to get additional information on flood heights and river behaviour.
- Be prepared to act early when moving stock. Have routes planned for moving stock off farm to higher ground if needed, and have a back up plan in case of road closure. River height trigger points for transport routes may be lower than those for the farm if low level bridges are part of the route.

- Have contact details of workers, processors, your vet and other service providers easily accessible.
- ➤ Have at least a month's extra supply of stored feed to give stock when they can't access paddocks. Ideally this feed should be easily transportable, and not too different from normal feeds to minimise rumen disruption. It's a good idea to get a feed test done, to better balance grain and concentrates with stored forages when access to pasture is limited.
- Keep a close eye on body condition and herd health. Adjust rations as necessary.
- Buy in only good quality feed. Make purchasing decisions based on dollars per unit dry matter, energy, fibre and protein. Bale format needs to be considered for efficient transport of forages. Maximise the amount of dry matter on the truck!

SOME USEFUL WEB PAGE LINKS:

Dairy Australia have developed a general checklist for Emergencies, see their webpage and then search for Emergency Checklist

http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/

Feeding & Nutrition:

http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Animals -feed-and-environment/Feeding-and-nutrition/Nutrition-management.aspx

Buying in feed:

http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/199160/Drought-buying-feed-at-the-right-price.pdf

FIREWEED SURVEY

Professor Brain Sindel, University of New England

Researchers from the University of New England and CSIRO will soon be conducting a survey of rural landholders as part of a two-year project exploring control and management options for fireweed.

Fireweed is a native of South Africa and is a poisonous plant that may lead to a decrease in condition and eventually death in cattle or horses. It is capable of germinating and flowering throughout much of the year, making management difficult.

Fireweed has yellow daisy-like flowers which have 13 petals. It can grow up to 60 centimetres in height and spreads rapidly.

The survey will examine the conditions under which fireweed grows best, what kinds of pasture grasses compete most effectively with fireweed, what methods landholders use to control the weed, and the impact it has had on farm management.

As fireweed is primarily a weed of coastal grazing pastures, the survey will be aimed specifically at graziers and dairy farmers in coastal NSW and south-east Queensland, where it is currently spreading rapidly.

UNE's Professor Brian Sindel, the leader of the project and a world authority on fireweed, conducted a similar survey during the 1980s, and so the 2011 survey will provide important information on how the impact and management of fireweed have changed over the intervening period.

"We hope that landholders who receive a copy of the survey will return it promptly with all questions answered," he added. "We also hope that landholders who do not receive the survey in the mail will consider completing it online. The experience of those who complete the survey will help Australian landholders to improve their ability to control fireweed."

A link to the online version of the fireweed impact survey, as well as more information on the research, is available on the project's Web site, hosted on www.ruralfutures.une.edu.au.

People who would like to receive a paper copy of the fireweed impact survey, or who are interested in finding out more about the project, can contact Professor Brian Sindel in UNE's School of Environmental and Rural Science by

an e-mail to bsindel@une.edu.au, or by phoning (02) 6773 3747.



Fireweed in flower

(Senecio madagascariensis).







Dairy NSW News

Dairy NSW has continued to bring benefit to the NSW dairy industry despite an increasingly competitive funding environment and slightly depressed farmer sentiment in the past year. Seasonal conditions have on average improved in our region, however milk price and security of supply arrangements still remain the most significant challenges facing our farmers.

Farmer confidence has been varied across our region and is linked to the type of manufactured end products as well as domestic and export markets. Those supplying the domestic liquid milk market are feeling the pinch with only 46% of farmers having a positive view about the future of the industry. Farmers located in the Far South Coast region have bucked the trend and are amongst the most positive in the country.

One of Dairy NSW's roles is to invest in industry initiatives and activities that are relevant to the dairy farmers in our region. In determining this investment the Dairy NSW Board takes its direction from the Regional Dairy Groups (RDGs), who represent the RD&E interests and needs of the local dairy farmers. I would like to thank the support networks of the RDGs, particularly their regional co-ordinators and executive teams for without their combined commitment to their industry much of the activity in the region would not occur and dairy farmers would not see benefit from their levies and other leveraged funds.

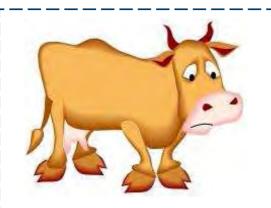
During the last year Dairy NSW has reacted to farmer needs from the regions. Dairy NSW partnered with RDGs and other organisations to deliver 24 regionally relevant small projects. In addition, external funding secured in 2009/10 and 2010/11 from organisations such as the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and Environmental Trust enabled Dairy NSW to deliver even more on behalf and for the benefit of industry.

As always I would encourage all dairy farmers and industry stakeholders to provide comment and feedback on their specific regional needs. Please make contact with your local RDG or directly through our Executive Officer should you wish to discuss an issue or initiative you would like to see addressed or implemented in your region. The Board welcomes your input and believes that the programs developed and delivered regionally will only be successful if dairy farmers are involved in their conception, development and planning.

In closing I'd like to thank Jess Jennings, the NSW NRM Co-ordinator for his efforts to secure additional funding for our region and Kate McGilvray our Executive Officer for her support and management of this organisation as well as me in my role as Chairman.

To the Dairy NSW Board members, thank you. Without your input, individual expertise and passion it would not be possible for us to remain focused and relevant to dairy farmers. These days it takes a committed person to be an active member in an industry organisation and on behalf of the dairy industry we appreciate your involvement and commitment.

JOE CHITTICK
DAIRY NSW CHAIRMAN



"THE COW'S LAMENT"

Though I've just given birth to a heifer,
And of milk & of pride I am full,
I am sad to relate
That my lactational state
Was not brought about by a bull!

I have never been naughty, I swear it,
In spite of the calf that I've borne,
Like Farmer Brown's tractor
I'm Virgo Intactor
'Cause I've never had a bull by the
horn.

How dreary the paddocks & laneways,
The cow yards are gloomy & grey,
And the one bit of fun
In the year's long run
Has by science been taken away!

I know that the farm is a business,
In which we must all pull our weight,
But I'd pull & I'd pull
For a strongly built bull
For this phony arrangement I hate!

You must not think that I'm jealous -There are many things a cow should not say,

But these veterinary tarts
Who handle our parts,
Still get theirs the old-fashioned way!
Author unknown.

DAIRY INDUSTRY CONFERENCE (DICON) CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Janet Moxev

I took on the position of Chair of DICON after the last Annual General Meeting, having been appointed by the Minister of the previous Government, Steve Whan. It has certainly been an interesting, busy and challenging year.

Most challenging for all sectors has been the price war instigated by Coles in January 2011. Not sure if we can quantify what impact we have had but I am sure that by keeping up media presence and maintaining the rage we have let the supermarkets know that we take their actions seriously and we will continue to present an image that families need farmers.

During the year we engaged a consultant to write two submissions for Senate Enquiries relating to the milk pricing issue and its effects on Industry. He was able to reflect that due to pressure on pricing there has been a flow-on to price to farmers if not directly certainly indirectly with tightening of contracts and adherence to same.

Early in the Supermarket price war, Australian Dairy Farmers, Milk Marketing, NSW Farmers Association and NSW Dairy Industry Conference hosted a visit from Mr Jim Begg from Dairy UK to speak to a number of audiences regarding how the UK industry dealt with this issue. An outcome was to form a couple of working groups to develop a milk pricing strategy and a promotional campaign for the industry. These have been ongoing throughout the year and are continuing.

Milk Marketing also brought other speakers to NSW throughout the year and Dairy Industry Conference members thank Milk Marketing for including us in these events.

In March NSW saw a change of Government and NSW Dairy Industry Conference has embraced the opportunity of working with Minister Hodgkinson, and she has been supportive of Conference.

Challenges bring opportunities and from the current challenge there has come a consensus that whole of industry need to work together and we are currently engaged in looking at a more

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unified body that will better facilitate the needs of the NSW Dairy Industry.

During October a delegation funded by NSW Dairy Industry Conference and Milk Marketing attended meetings in the UK to further this work before heading to the IDF Summit in Parma, Italy.

The Carbon Bill and Coal Seam Gas exploration

are two emerging issues that will now impact the industry as a whole. The dairy industry has never been without its challenges and while we have people with passion engaged and engaging with decision makers we can only hope to continue achieving positive results for our industry.

NSW FARMERS' ASSOCIATION DAIRY UPDATE

- Committee, travelled to Melbourne on 6
 October to update the Senate Committee
 looking into the impacts of supermarket
 price decisions on the dairy industry. Terry
 presented the concerns of the dairy
 members of NSW together with the details
 of the NSW Farmers survey on milk price,
 which showed the milk price war, which
 began on Australia Day, has left the industry
 in NSW more than \$15 million out of
 pocket. Three recommendations were
 made to the hearing to combat the market
 power of supermarkets:
 - 1. ABARE to investigate the effect of enforcing the reduction in the size of each individual contract offered by supermarkets to processors on competition and efficiency within the market place.
 - 2. ABARE to investigate the effect of enforcing long term (5year or greater) contracts between retailers and processors.
 - 3. Review the 10 recommendations provided by Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) to the inquiry.

The Senate Inquiry on supermarket milk price decisions released its recommendations on 3 November. The report and NSW Farmers response can be viewed at www.nswfarmers.org.au.

 The NSW Farmers have made a submission to the Coal Seam Gas senate inquiry, which can be viewed at the NSW Farmers link above.

- The proposed restructure of Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) is progressing and the Committee is providing input.
- A steering committee made up from Dairy NSW, DICON, DPI and Dairy Australia to develop a strategy to deliver research, development, extension and education services in NSW, has appointed Dr Tom Cowan to conduct a review of current services, and to develop a plan for future servicing of the industry.
- The last in a series of contract negotiation workshops was held at Tocal in the Hunter region in November. These workshops provided farmers with skills in contract law and negotiation to assist in contract negotiations with milk processors.

NSW Farmers Highlights

- Occupational Health and Safety laws are changing in January and members need to prepare now. NSW Farmers have completed FREE workshops around the state.
- Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, announced a full scale review of the Livestock Health and Pest Authority model. The NSW Farmers submission and briefing note can be found on our website.
- University and vocational students are encouraged to apply for one of eight scholarships being offered by NSW Farmers, as part of the annual Tertiary Scholarship Program

For a full list of coming events across the NSW dairy industry, visit the Dairy Connect website and register to receive fortnightly updates.

Or call the Coordinator to arrange to have the coming events faxed to you.

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Amanda Britton – District Agronomist	0427 102 793	Peter Beale – District Agronomist	0427 007 468
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Dairy News is a newsletter for dairy farmers throughout NSW.

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ISSN 1834-948X (Print) Email: kerry.kempton@industry.nsw.gov.au ISSN 1843-9498 (Online)

http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/resources/peri

odicals/newsletters/dairy-news

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (June 2011). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of NSW Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.





