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PREVENTING MILK FEVER

Kerry Kempton

Technical Specialist Dairy - Tocal, Paterson

Cows going down with milk fever – is that getting you down too?

Dr Barry Zimmermann who manages Dairy Australia's InCalf program said every dairy farmer's dream is to eliminate milk fever from the herd.

"Milk fever is a nutritional disease so it can be prevented, but the trick is in the timing. It's too late once the cows have calved. The key to preventing milk fever is suitable nutrition in the three weeks leading up to calving," Dr Zimmermann said.



During this time cows need to receive a diet with the right amount of energy, protein, fibre, calcium, -magnesium, phosphorus and trace elements; and the correct DCAD* level. -

"It's quite a fine balance. To achieve the correct balance you need to have all components of the precalving diet tested for calcium, magnesium, phosphorus and DCAD levels. Even if you use a commercially prepared transition ration, you'll need to consider the impact of other components of the springer diet such as pasture and hay," he said. -

Feeds which carry a high risk for milk fever include pasture treated with effluent, high potassium - molasses, legume pastures and concentrates or grain with added sodium bicarbonate. -

"The benefits of preventing milk fever are far reaching so it may be worth working with a nutritionist to - achieve the correct balance in the springer diet." -

continued Page 3.....







CONTENTS

PREVENTING MILK FEVER	1
NEW PERENNIAL RYEGRASS ENDOPHYTES	4
2012 NSW HAY AND SILAGE AWARDS	5
COWS CREATE CAREERS NATIONAL TITLE WINNERS	6
INSPIRING LIFE STORIES ADD CREAM TO DAIRY AWARDS	, 8
PRIDE OF WORKMANSHIP AWARD	8
SAVING TIME AND CATCHING UP ON DAIRY TOPICES	9
THE PASSION OF DORRIGO	9
HERD FERTILITY - WHO'S IN CONTROL?	10
DAIRY NSW NEWS 1	01

EDITORIAL



Kerry Kempton

Technical Specialist Dairy – Tocal, Paterson

It was Albert Einstein who said "Work is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration". I'm sure that is true for most people working in the dairy industry, especially those of you cleaning up after the recent floods. Many of the articles and stories that appear in this newsletter each quarter contain technical information and practical tips to help you manage your farms.

But I also strive to include some segments that will provide some inspiration. These small 1% things that can change thoughts and deeds can actually make a big difference to farm management, and enriching our lives, or just to picking you up after a tough day. And this edition is full of them!

For Brian Parker, coming along to a workshop on Transition Cow Management provided him with the inspiration to reassess his lead feeding program, make some changes and achieve a big reduction in milk fever cases.

For Dylan Bailey, the inspiration came from conversations with his Dairy Officer and vet, to try a new approach to the way he manages herd fertility. This has now translated into significant extra profit over a short space of time.

Dairy Australia has celebrated inspirational people who are out there producing fantastic dairy products for Australian and international consumers. At the Grand Dairy Awards held recently in Melbourne, one of the Inspiring Stories showcased was the Polley family from the Taree region. You can read their story and watch a video about them and the other inspiring people on the DA website.

Then there is the team of students from Cessnock High and their inspirational teacher Greg Matthews, who have won a national competition to promote milk. They have been involved in the Cows Create Careers project, and the school highly values this project as a key part of their curriculum.

I have also included a poem by Andrew Hull, a musician, poet, writer and artist from Bourke. I heard Andrew speak at a conference last year (he gave his talk in rhyming verse), and found him totally inspiring. He uses creativity to work with rural communities on a range of projects. He wrote this poem about Dorrigo after spending some time there and being amazed by the passion of the people he met. The message of poem is a simple one: Are you doing what you love, and loving what you do?

You'll also find a small piece on my colleague Ray Johnston, who is an inspiration to most people who work with him, and was recently given an accolade from his community for his dedication to the dairy industry.

There have been some other changes to our DPI dairy team since the last edition. Anthea Lisle has left us and moved into a new career as a teacher. She will be greatly missed and has made a significant contribution to the team and the dairy industry in her 12 years with the DPI based at Scone. Sheena Carter is working part time at the moment from the Scone office. And Vicki Smart has now become Vicki Timbs, after her marriage to Paul last year.

I hope you enjoy this edition, and find some inspiration both as you read, and then when you listen to the CD enclosed with a selection of our Dairy podcasts.



.....continued from Page 1

The most obvious benefit is not having the stress and cost of dealing with downer cows. But the less visible benefits affect the bottom line and animal welfare.

"For every clinical case of milk fever you see, up to eight other cows may be affected in some way. Preventing milk fever also improves milk production, herd fertility, herd health and animal welfare," Dr Zimmermann said.

Denman dairy farmers Brian and Debbie Parker thought they had milk fever beaten in their herd of 220 Illawarra and Jersey cows. Brian had been lead feeding his springers for over 15 years with no major problems, until last year. Following the wet summer of 2010/11 around 30% of his cows came down with milk fever as they calved in February and March.

So when he saw a workshop on Transition Cow Management advertised in his region last December, he jumped at the chance to attend. It was run by NSW DPI dairy team and the Dairy Australia InCalf program, in conjunction with Stewart Scott from the Barn Veterinary Services in Muswellbrook.

Brain was very impressed with the day, and identified two areas to work on with his transition cow program. He felt he probably wasn't bringing his springers in early enough to start them on the lead feed. Brian said, "I was probably only putting them on the ration for 15 days, where it really should be 21 days."

"I also learnt the importance of feed testing and now understand what a DCAD is!" Brian said. "This year we tested four different feeds, ryegrass hay, ryegrass silage and two different lots of triticale silage. From this we have chosen the feed with the lowest DCAD level which turned out to be the triticale/oat silage. It had a DCAD of 239."

Having spoken with his feed company rep he has now changed to a pellet with a much lower DCAD (-800mEq/ kg DM). The springer ration now consists of 4kg pellets and about 10kg DM silage.

As a result of the changes, calving this season (under very similar weather conditions to last

year) has been significantly better than last years. He calves the herd in two batches, in February/March and July/August. Their herd average is around 7200 litres per cow.

"Older cows that I thought would definitely get milk fever this year haven't and we even have a cow that had twins and she has had no problems, so our feeding seems to be working."

Brian has an ideal set up for managing his springers. They are rotated around three small paddocks (0.6 Ha each) located a short distance from the house. This allows for easy observation of the cows. They are fed triticale silage in a hay ring and pellets in a trough.

At this stage the Parkers don't run their heifers with the transition cows, however it is something they plan on doing in the future. This will enable them to get the extra minerals needed as well as helping their rumen adapt and help them socialise with the older cows.

On the Transition Cow Workshop Brian said, "It was the best workshop I have ever been to. Everyone should go. It was very informative and I think everyone who attended learnt something."

DPI and Dairy Australia will be rolling out similar workshops throughout NSW between now and June, so check the Dairy Connect website for details.

http://www.dairyconnect.com.au

To find out more about transition feeding, visit http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/incalf or attend an InCalf transition feeding workshop, coming to your area soon.

InCalf is an example of your levy at work. For more information on this and other examples of your levy at work visit http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au">www.dairyaustralia.com.au

* DCAD refers to the <u>Difference</u> between <u>Cations</u> (sodium and potassium) and <u>Anions</u> (chloride and sulphur) in the <u>Diet</u>. In the industry it is always referred to as DCAD.

NEW PERENNIAL RYEGRASS ENDOPHYTES

Neil Griffiths

Agronomist/Technical Specialist Pastures Central - Tocal, Paterson

Endophytes are a special fungus which can grow within perennial ryegrass (not annual or biennial types of ryegrass) and can produce alkaloids to give protection from insect attack. Unfortunately some endophytes can also cause animal health problems.

James Sewell from PGGWrightson Seeds spoke at a NSW Grassland Society "Pasture Update" organised with NSW DPI Tocal back in September to outline recent developments with "novel" endophytes which can help perennial ryegrass establishment and persistence without causing animal health problems.

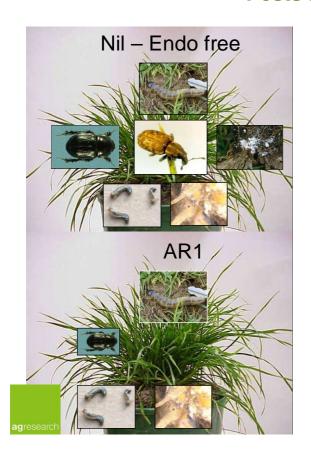
James said the original or wild type endophytes occurred naturally in many perennial ryegrass pastures improving insect tolerance and production.

They also produced alkaloids called Lolitrem B and Ergovaline which could cause ryegrass staggers, heat stress and other animal health problems resulting in reduced milk production and liveweight gains.

AR1 was the first "safe" endophyte to be widely sold. It remains the safest option from an animal health perspective and persists well where there is not major insect pressure.

Newer endophytes Endo5 and AR37 are providing better insect protection and are more productive and persistent than AR1 and wild-type. Ergovaline levels in Endo 5 and epoxy-janthritrems in AR37 may cause some animal health problems but these are less severe than those caused by wild-type.

Pests not controlled







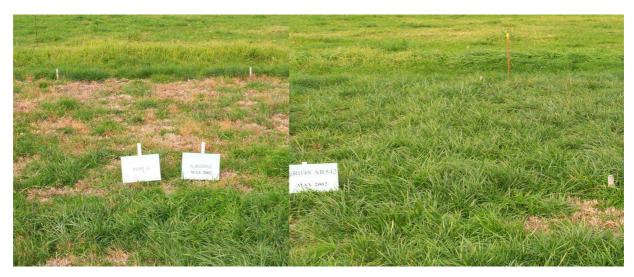
If you have a major black beetle problem and are interested in Tall Fescue then the Tall Fescue MaxP endophyte was found to be most effective against African Black Beetle in trials conducted at Bega (photo below).

Different endophytes produce different chemistry (alkaloids)

	Grazing Animal toxins Metabolites (alka		loids)		
Endophyte strain	Lolitrem B	Ergovaline	Peramine	Epoxy- janthitrems	Lolines
Standard (Wild-type / High)	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-
AR1	-	-	Yes	-	-
Endo5	-	1/2	Yes	-	-
AR37	-	-	-	Yes	-
NEA2	1/4	1/4	1/4	-	-
Tall Fescue					
MaxP	-	-	Yes	-	Yes

All are designed to protect the plant against predators

Some affect animals & some are 'safe' – its all about risk: benefit



Above: Bega Tall Fescue endophyte trial: nil on left, Max P on right

2012 NSW HAY AND SILAGE AWARDS TO RECOGNISE TOP QUALITY

Neil Griffiths

District Agronomist, Tocal, Paterson

The NSW Grassland Society and NSW DPI are organising Hay and Silage Feed Quality Awards in 2012 to recognise producers who are making the best quality hay and silage in NSW.

While it has been a difficult season in some areas there have been reports of excellent quality silage and hay being made across NSW. These awards aim to focus attention on feed quality and encourage all producers to better understand the importance of quality when they make and feed hay or silage.

Entries will open in April when producers can start sending samples to the NSW Feed Quality Service in Wagga Wagga. The awards will be presented at the NSW Grassland Association annual conference which is to be held in Wagga Wagga 24 to 26 July 2012.

Organisers hope all producers will take advantage of the discounts being offered by the Feed Quality Service to analyse hay and silage samples submitted as part of the awards program. To add further interest major sponsors Integrated Packaging, New Holland and Pioneer will provide \$5000 worth of prizes for winners to be announced at the Grassland conference.

Entry forms will be available from the beginning of April from NSW DPI and NSW Grassland Society websites and officers, sponsors and from the NSW Feed Quality Service Wagga Wagga.



COWS CREATE CAREERS NATIONAL TITLE WINNERS – NSW!

Sheena Carter

Cows Create Careers Hunter Valley Regional Project Manager



Would you believe the Cows Create Careers program is now in its 5th year in NSW?

Without the continued time, dedication and support of farmers and industry advocates, the program would not exist.

Cows Create Careers (CCC) is designed to increase the profile of the Dairy Industry in schools throughout Australia – hopefully leading to some students choosing a career in the industry. It runs due to continued sponsorship of the NSW Department of Primary Industries, Tocal College, Dairy NSW, NSW Dairy Industry Conference and IMB Community Foundation - all with a keen and vested interest in having new people enter the industry.

The program is a Dairy Australia and Regional Development Program project which is run across 22 regions of Australia. As with a lot of these programs there is a continued need for funding to keep them running each year.

Essentially it involves a generous farmer donating two calves to a high school class for three weeks. The students learn about animal husbandry and are rostered on to feed and monitor the calf over this period. Someone who works in the dairy industry, such as an agronomist, veterinarian, consultant, dairy officer, milk processor field officer or agribusiness person visits the school and explains to the students what their job entails and how it is related to the dairy industry.



There are 12 schools involved across the Hunter Valley this year, now linked to 12 enthusiastic dairy farmers. Most have been part of the program since 2008, and really enjoy getting involved each year. Some are more recent donors as new schools have joined the program and it is wonderful to have them on board.

Bradley Richardson (pictured) is a young local farmer from the Lower Hunter, and spoke at the Cows Create Careers Presentation day held at Tocal last June. Over 240 students attended. He was very enthusiastic about his role in the family dairy farm and gave the students a good overview of some of different areas and skills required in the management of a farm from pasture establishment through to herd management.

Bradley told the students, "I have always wanted to work on the family dairy and it is a career I really enjoy."

Bradley completed his traineeship and Certificate IV in Agricultural at Tocal College a few years ago.

One of the most exciting outcomes for CCC

2011 was Cessnock High School representing NSW at the Australian Dairy Conference on the 22nd February 2012. One school was chosen from each state and had to prepare a 2 minute video clip on "How to convince consumers to want to pay \$3.00 per litre for their milk".

Farmers and industry representatives on the judging panel chose Cessnock High as the NATIONAL WINNERS! Huge congratulations to their team.

These days it seems particularly difficult to encourage people into dairying and agriculture.

With the enthusiasm of school teachers, farmers and advocates hopefully young people can continue to be exposed to the dairy industry whilst at school and be encouraged to pursue a career within dairying or some other facet of agriculture.

No doubt Cessnock High school is full of enthusiasm and who knows, we may see some of these students in dairying down the track....

So, to all those farmers, industry advocates, schools and sponsors, a big thank you. Your enthusiasm is appreciated and is one of the factors that will encourage students into the industry.

If this program interests you and you would like to be involved in some way, please contact the Hunter Valley Regional Project Manager, Sheena Carter on 0427 434 412 or email: stoneycreek@activ8.net.au

Pictured below are the Cessnock High School team of Ag teacher, Greg Matthews and students Maddie King, Natalie Lasky, Jenna-May Ryan, Courtney Scott and Lauren McGowan.



INSPIRING LIFE STORIES ADD CREAM TO DAIRY AWARDS

Dairy Australia's annual Australian Grand Dairy Awards were held recently in Melbourne to celebrate and award the finest cheese and dairy products from around the country.

The awards also reward the pioneering people who create those products and in recognition of the 2012 Australian Year of the Farmer, Dairy Australia's 13th Australian Grand Dairy Awards paid tribute to inspiring people and motivational stories from within the dairy industry.

"The dairy industry has had its fair share of trials, tribulations and triumphs along the way and has a strong history of innovation and inspiration," Dairy Australia's Managing Director Ian Halliday said.

"Our dairying tradition has been forged by people with vision and a determination to succeed and is literally brimming with inspirational stories of resilience, passion and energy."

Late last year, Dairy Australia called for nominations of inspiring people from within the industry so their stories could be shared at the 2012 Australian Grand Dairy Awards. Five individual and inspirational stories were showcased before a crowd of more than 250 dairy industry representatives and guests in Melbourne.

One of these awards went to Narelle, John, Beau and Adam Polley from Kimbriki on the mid north coast of New South Wales, who are an inspirational dairy family. Overseen by their parents Narelle and John, 21 year old Down Syndrome twins Beau and Adam Polley continue to amaze everyone by running the family dairy, milking 69 cows twice a day.

For more information, including a video of all five inspiring stories, visit the Dairy Australia website: www.dairyaustralia.com.au/2012agda



Pictured at the Grand Dairy Awards ceremony are John, Narelle, Beau and Adam Polley, with Ray Johnston from NSW DPI.

PRIDE OF WORKMANSHIP AWARD

Tim Burfitt

Manager Intensive Livestock Industry Development

It is not everyday that a member of our NSW DPI dairy industry group



get a "gong" however 2012 will be a year to remember for Ray Johnston, Livestock Officer Dairy – Taree who was awarded the "Pride of Workmanship Award" at the Wingham Australia Day Ceremony for his services to the mid north coast dairy industry.

Ray is the most senior member of the NSW DPI dairy industry group with 27 years of service to DPI and the NSW dairy industry with service in the Bega, Gloucester and Taree dairying districts of NSW.

The DPI group were especially gratified to see the commitment, passion and dedication that have been displayed by Ray over his many years of service to the State of NSW recognised by his local community

Ray is also recognised nationally as a leader in addressing natural resource management issues on dairy farms and he has been a key



contributor to the Dairy Australia "Dairying for Tomorrow" program. Ray's skills in group work, especially in his revolutionary "Farmer Targets for Change" project, has provided significant environmental outcomes for all dairying areas of NSW and his methods have been copied by others working with groups.

The Rotary Youth in Agriculture camps mentioned in Ray's citation have been

instrumental in promoting the importance of dairying to mid north coast youth while building their capacity in dairy technology and life skills.

It is gratifying to see the commitment, passion and dedication that have been displayed by Mr Johnston over many years of service to the State of NSW recognised by his local community.

Save time and catch up on dairy topics.



Dairy News readers, you will find inserted in this March 2012 edition a CD that will feature a series of conversations on a broad range of topics with a range of dairy industry speakers. Simply pop it into a CD player anytime, anywhere, maybe on your next time in the ute or the car.

Our aim is to whet your appetite for hearing or reading through transcriptions on an ever growing series of dairy topics that we believe will aid you in your everyday activities on farm.

The interviews on the CD are called *podcasts*; they are simply a convenient way of capturing a conversation and then listening to it when it suits you. The great advantage to agencies such as NSW DPI, who are in the business of creating and communicating information, is that it is a lot easier to get someone to talk to you than it is to get them to write an article on the same topic. Once we have the conversation we have it typed up anyway, then it is located next to the podcasts on our dpi website.

So please take up the opportunity and have a listen, you may be pleasantly surprised. One thing we would really like is to hear back on how the conversations worked for you.

http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/da iry-cattle/dairy-podcasts/podcast/dairy

Tim Burfitt, Manager Intensive Livestock industry Development

The Passion of Dorrigo

©2009AndrewHull

Where the hills have formed a contract, neither mountain, neither plain

And the plateau stretches loosely to accommodate the rain
There is no room for excuses on this country in between
For the ranges roar behind you with the valleys low and green
And the truth is just as centred, not below and not above
Here you love the thing you, do and you do the thing you love

We have learned to hide our passion, we who walk the easy road
For it helps to go un-noticed and it lightens up the load
We can all converse on subjects mostly dull and mainly broad
So we don't get too excited and we don't get very bored
And our time goes on regardless, so it sort of gets us through
Not doing what we love and not loving what we do

But when the cloud descends and you draw the shutters tight
And there's only you to measure whether it was wrong or right
Will you find a deeper passion, will you tend a warmer fire?
Are you filled with inspiration, are there others you inspire?
Have you really made a difference when push has come to shove
Did you love the thing you do, did you do the thing you love?

I don't care if its wine and food, I don't care if its rhyme
I don't care if its motorbikes or engines lost in time
I don't care if its gardening, or scratching at the seam
Or painting or collecting, do not fear to dream the dream
Do not waste your precious hours for our hours here are few
We must do the thing we love, we must love the thing we do

And if at times that passion means you swim against the flow And you feel like you're alone with things no-one else can know Then you come down from the mountain or rise up from the plain

To the place that sits between where the plateau calls the rain

And you'll fit in with the others like a hand fits with a glove

Where they love the things they do,

and they do the things they love.

_www.bullyjae_cam _ _ _

Herd Fertility – Who's in Control

Vicki Timbs

Livestock Officer, Dairy - Berry



Dylan applies tail paint every week.

This is the question that Dylan and Melissa Bailey from Gerringong asked themselves a couple of years ago when they were considering how to lift their income and increase their herd size. Like many farmers who calve year round, they only started to focus on an individual cow about 60 days after she had calved, and then inseminate her when they observed her next heat. They realised that in order to achieve their goals they had to make some big changes to the way they managed this process of getting cows in calf.

By focussing on getting cows in calf quicker, and not letting any cows slip through the net with un-noticed oestrus periods, in eighteen months they have turned the herd around from being pretty stale to predominantly fresh. And they are now starting to reap the benefits. According to Dylan, "Milk production is up 3 or 4 litres per cow on this time last year and we are on track for a \$100,000 bonus in milk income as a result."

So how have they turned things around?

By developing a routine and sticking to it! Dylan explains the key elements of his system:

- allocate regular time each week to focus on reproduction.
- As cows calve they receive colour tail tape which identifies calving month and the corresponding start mating 50 days later.

- Every Monday is a Repro Action Day, when we apply heat detection aids to cows ready to mate (Patch & Paint), and any hormone injections for non cycling cows and building a monitoring system with our vet, monthly, to keep us on track".
- Once a month vet visits, with regular performance reviews; including the use of a herd management software "Easy Dairy" to keep track of the herd.

"Getting the vets involved keeps me accountable and keeps fertility as a priority. I tried it on my own but there was always something else to do".

"Working together we have developed a system that works and we have been able to significantly increase our pregnancy rate and reduce our Days in Milk from average of 220 to 180 days. This is what is giving us the extra milk and income," said Dylan.

Dr Matt Izzo from the Livestock Veterinary Services, University of Sydney adds, "Establishing a strict routine is one of the keys to improving reproductive performance in all sized dairy herds. By scheduling set days to perform common tasks such as hormonal treatments, heat detection application and pregnancy diagnosis, there is no ambiguity between staff members and it is more likely that the job will get done. "

"Goal setting and monitoring of performance is also essential for reproductive success. If we don't measure we don't know, and if we don't know, we can't improve."

"There are a few simple calculations which can be used to assess the reproductive fitness of your herd including:

- average days in milk;
- percentage of lactation cows pregnant
- percentage of cows over 150 days in milk that are not pregnant.

By regularly reviewing these figures, you can assess whether the reproductive status of the herd is improving or declining."



Average Days in Milk (DIM)

DIM is a measure commonly used to assess year round calving performance of the herd and individual cows. Those farmers who herd record can check average DIM for the herd every. It is a quick and easy indicator of herd fertility and shows how quickly a herd gets back in calf.

In year round calving herds aiming for a 12-13 month intercalving interval, the average DIM will range between 150-180 days over the year. Over time as herds have got bigger, farms have expanded and fertility generally has declined. Herd recording statistics from Dairy Express indicate that average DIM figures for NSW herds is more like 210-230 days.

The financial implications of prolonged days in milk are significant. Cows in early to mid lactation have better feed conversion efficiency than later lactation cows, so produce more milk. An increase in average days in milk from 160 to 200 days can mean a loss of between 1-2 litres per cow per day over the lactation.

Geoff Potts from Dairy Express has developed a new and easy way for farmers to access their herd information. He recommends the "Scatter Plot" report from MISDI web site that shows where the herd sits with DIM and milk volume.

"No cows can hide on this graph, so you can see at a glance which are the poor performers or the ones hard to get in calf" says Geoff.

Farmers can contact Dairy Express to access the MISDI site, to easily view these indicators of herd performance.

NSW DPI has recently recorded a podcast with Geoff on how to use these innovative reports. Check out the cd that came with this newsletter.

So in summary, by focusing on fertility and having a routine management system in place, you can regain control of herd reproductive performance and get cows in calf sooner.

NSW DPI Dairy extension team will be running workshops later this year to look at herds like the Bailey family on ways of reducing DIM and improving herd fertility and production.



DAIRY NSW NEWS

Together with your relevant Regional Dairy Group, Dairy NSW is continuing to fund delivery of practical information on regionally relevant programs to help you improve your business. You may have heard about some of these or maybe even participated. Some like the Topfodder One Day Update Workshops will be delivered over the 12 months.

Regional initiatives funded since July 2012 include:

- Regional Co-ordinators to assist Regional Dairy Groups. People appointed to these roles are done so by your groups & are:
 IEDN Forbes & Wagga – Ken Sanderson Mid Coast DAGs – Anne Royan Hunter DDG – Diane Klasen South Coast & Highlands DIG – Kerry Allan
- Mid Coast DAGs 2011 RYAG (Rotary Youth in Agriculture) Dairy Camp
- South Coast & Highlands DIG Dairy BJD communication & assurance declaration forms
- Far South Coast DDG Australian Dairy Conference farmer & young farmer tour
- Mid Coast DAGs farmer attendance at the 2012 Australian Dairy Conference in Gippsland
- Hunter DDG chicory & brassica pasture trials
- South Coast & Highlands DIG farmer attendance
 2012 Australian Dairy Conference
- Mid Coast DAGs Dairy Doings newsletter

Dairy NSW has also provided funding for statewide programs & research for the benefit of the dairy industry such as:

- Cows Create Careers & Mooin Transfer
- Dairy Connect web calendar
- Laminitis & acidosis assessment in dairy cattle
- Probiotic activity of seaweeds & their extracts
- Professorship in Dairy Science
- Topfodder 1 day update workshops
- Impact of colostrum quality & feeding management on calf immune status & health

Close to \$120,000 of levy & additionally secured funds have been allocated for these projects with a leverage rate and benefit to industry of \$1: \$4.67.

Any suggestions or comments on regionally relevant activities would be welcomed. Contact Dairy NSW 6373 1435 or info@dairynsw.com.au. Alternatively, ask your Regional Dairy Group to contact us on your behalf.

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.

Gaylene Marquet | Dairy Connect Coordinator |
Primary Industries NSW | Tocal Agricultural Centre | Paterson NSW 2421
T: 02 4939 8992 | F: 02 4939 8950 | E: gaylene.marquet@industry.nsw.gov.au
W: www.dairyconnect.com.au | www.dpi.nsw.gov.au |



NSW DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES - CONTACT DETAILS

BEGA	Ph: (02) 6492 1733	KYOGLE	
Hayden Kingston — District Agronomist	0427 401 532	Vacant	
BERRY	Ph: (02) 4464 6000	TAREE	Ph: (02) 6552 7299
Vicki Timbs – Livestock Officer Dairy	0427 107 058	Ray Johnston – Livestock Officer Dairy	0411 119 613
Amanda Britton – District Agronomist	0427 102 793	Peter Beale – District Agronomist	0427 007 468
CASINO	Ph: (02) 6662 2288	SCONE	Ph: (02) 6544 4900
Bede Clarke – District Agronomist	0427 102 314	Sheena Carter – Livestock Officer Dairy	0427 102 798
COFFS HARBOUR	Ph (02) 66503111	TOCAL	Ph: (02) 4939 8940
Julie Dart – Livestock Officer – Dairy	0427 007501	Kerry Kempton – Technical Specialist Dairy	0427 114 602
DENILIQUIN	Ph (03) 58819922	Neil Griffiths – District Agronomist	0427 007 425
Brett Davidson – Livestock Officer Dairy	0418815490	ORANGE	Ph: (02) 6391 3729
KEMPSEY	Ph: (02) 6562 6244	Tim Burfitt – Manager Intensive Livestock I	ndustry Development 0427 401 552
Carol Rose – District Agronomist	0427 001 903		

Dairy News is a newsletter for dairy farmers throughout NSW.

Editor: Kerry Kempton Phone 02 4939 8945
Technical Specialist - Dairy Fax 02 4939 8950

Tocal College, Paterson NSW 2421 Email: kerry.kempton@dpi.nsw.gov.au

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