How Now Gippy Cow

GippsDairy

Dairy Australia

A GIPPSDAIRY PUBLICATION - ISSUE 295 - AUGUST 2023

OUR FARM OUR PLAN

Succession Planning for Your Farm

By: Kim Price, GippsDairy

Succession planning is one of the most important aspects of running a family farm. With more than 90% of Australian dairy farms being family owned and operated the challenge is right on our doorstep.

The sooner you can start planning, the sooner you can ensure the most suitable business structure is in place for your farm to thrive for future generations.

In 2020, Dairy Australia conducted a survey and asked 75 Gippsland farmers:

'Do you have an agreed plan in place for succession/transition of your farm?'

The results found that less than 20% of Gippsland farmers had a documented and agreed upon succession plan; 37% of farmers knew what they would do but had not formalised their plan, while 17% needed some advice to explore their options and would reach out to accountants, solicitors, and consultants as their trusted advisors.

CONTINUED OVER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Succession Planning for Your Farm

Almost one third of the farmers haven't thought about succession planning for their farm. This equates to more than 850 farming businesses in Gippsland without a clearly documented succession plan.

These figures are typical across the Agricultural sector even when taking into consideration that some farms may not require a succession plan at all, with the owners opting to sell when the time is right. If there is no intention for the farm business to continue than there is no need for a succession plan.

But this still leaves a large number of farmers who are not currently planning for the long-term future of their business.

What is succession planning?

Succession planning is the development of a solid plan outlining the future direction of the farm, allowing for a smooth transition of the business and any assets with minimal disruption to the business or family relationships.

It is important to have a well communicated succession plan in place to ensure your meeting your personal/retirement goals and operating the business through the most effective structure that gives the flexibility to pass your farm onto other family members in the future.

Barriers to planning for the future

The barriers are different for everyone, but here are the most commonly heard:

- Lack of clarity – "I don't know where to start" and "I don't even know what I want and I'm 78."
- Distractions and procrastination – "I have more important things to do, like fix those fences."
- Emotional – "Fear of losing control or no longer being the main player in the business," or "It's just all too hard."
- Loss of identity – "I have been on this farm all my life, I don't want to play lawn bowls."
- Conflict – "The dreaded daughter or son in-law."
- Misconception – "Our will is done, so all sorted."
- Denial – "All is fine here."
- Ignorance – "If we ignore it, it might just go away."
- Navigating farming vs non-farming siblings.

Why should you do it?

Every single farming business is unique and so are the people in it. Succession planning gives the opportunity to shape the future of the farm and leave a legacy long after retirement. If these thoughts and ideas are not communicated clearly, it makes it more difficult to move forward for the remaining family members. We have seen surviving partners dealing with the sudden death of a family member and at the same time the family is falling apart as wishes were never documented and plans were not communicated.

Even though the concept of succession planning might not seem as fun as shopping for a new tractor, the rewards of going through the process give you the peace of mind that everyone's ideas and values have been considered, and that the plan demonstrates what is best for the farm and the family relationships. With sound advice from your trusted advisors, you can be satisfied that your assets are being transferred fairly.

Many conversations are often left unsaid, and this process may just prompt to help make those awkward situations easier. Afterall, a lifetime of hard work can help to shape the future of the farm and leave a legacy long after retirement.

Steps to develop a succession plan

1. **Do you have a plan?**
   - Do you know what you want the next 5, 10 and 20 years to look like? Plan a weekend off the farm to enjoy each other's company and think about what you want this to look like.
   - Enrol in Dairy Australia's Our Farm Our Plan to help provide clarity for our future. Since the very beginning of the Our Farm Our Plan Campaign, we have helped almost 1,000 farmers but their plans down on paper, creating clarity for their future goals and vision.
   - How much money do you need to live off?
   - Be as clear and as open with your communication as possible.
2. **Appoint the driver.**
   - Appoint someone in your own family/business to be the driver, to maintain accountability and keep the plan progressing, if you don't have someone, pay someone to do it.
   - Clear, concise communication is critical.
3. **Build the Trusted Team**
   - Do you have an accountant, solicitor, farm consultant you can trust?
   - Be ready for the long haul, this most likely won't happen overnight.
   - Is this even possible?? Wants vs Needs.
   - Fair vs Equal- is it fair for farming and non-farming children?
4. **Tax and Legal Information**
   - Do we have the most effective business structure to suit our goals?
   - Tax planning- capital gains and stamp duty.
5. **Execute the plan.**
   - Have clear roles and responsibilities for all involved.
   - Deed of arrangement?
   - Ensure 4 D's have been addressed – Divorce, Death, Disability and Disagreement.

The benefits to developing and communicating a well thought out succession plan can be very rewarding - it may give the opportunity for the next generation to step up and be well supported by their parents who are wanting to slow down and spend more time off farm, travelling, being more involved with the community, or catching up with friends. A gradual succession plan is usually very successful, as it gives the incoming family members more time to grow and develop. Clear pathways create opportunities for business and personal growth.

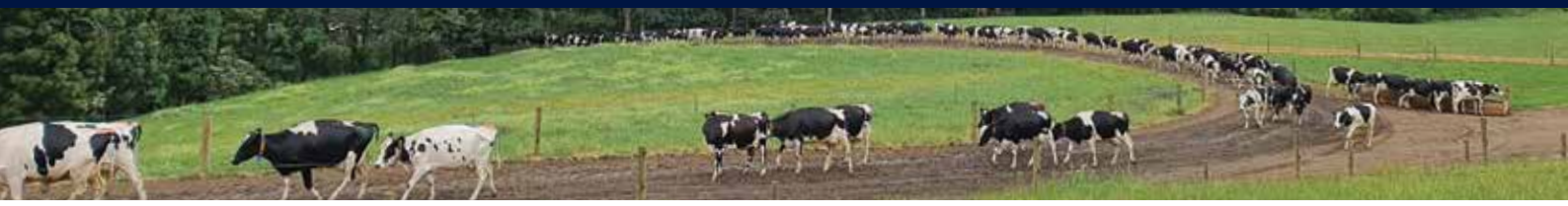
MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to know more about succession planning, GippsDairy will be holding a workshop in February 2024 in South Gippsland from 10am- 2.30pm with Matt Harms, Onfarm Consulting and Colin Wright, Phillipsons Accounting.

To register your interest for the event, text the word SUCCESSION and your contact details to **Kim Price** on **0456 657 162**, or email **kimberley@gippsdairy.com.au** for more information.

GIPPSDAIRY

GippsDairy 2022-23 Annual Report



By: Karen McLennan, GippsDairy

As we turn the pages into a new financial year, it is always important to look back and reflect before launching into the work for the new year or the new season. In my conversations with farmers, many ask about what is being worked on and what farmers are valuing.

Here are some highlights of what has been achieved during the 2022-23 financial year:

Events delivered with over 100 attendees:

- Calf Frontiers workshop, Nina von Keyserlingk, Leongatha, Feb 2023 (116 attendees)
- Ladies lunch, Traralgon, Dec 2022, (145 attendees)
- GippsDairy Muster, Yarram, June 2023 (169 attendees)

Our Farm Our Plan (OFOP)

70 Gippsland participants developed a 5 year farm business plan.

Gippsland remains the region in Australia with the largest number of farmers completing OFOP.

Most popular programs and extension:

- Emergency Animal Disease & Biosecurity
- Cups on Cups off
- Feeding Pastures for Profit
- Don Campbell Memorial Tour

114 events delivered with 2,122 attendances.

Direct engagement with just over 1,900 Gippsland school students and job seekers to promote dairy careers.

We appreciate the efforts of our dedicated GippsDairy staff, industry partners, and farmers who have hosted events and supported the delivery of activities. We accept that there are always areas where we can improve; making sure all Gippsland dairy farmers understand what is available and can access programs at locations near to them. We will continue to improve on how we are communicating and using different ways to reach farmers.

New activities in 2022-23

- 25-year anniversary reunion of the Don Campbell Memorial Tour was a fitting tribute to Don's legacy and well attended by current and past participants.
- A new GippsDairy discussion group commenced in June 2023, focused on Regenerative Agriculture.
- The pros and cons of alternative milking times were discussed in Denison in December 2022.
- Reviews of the Gippsland Young Dairy Network and GippsDairy Discussion Groups were completed with farmer input. This input has helped us refocus these programs for a better service to dairy farmers for 2023-24.
- Our consultation has increased to help us provide programs and services that farmers value.
- The Our Farm Our Plan program has been adapted in Gippsland to help young dairy farmers develop a 5-year career plan.
- A focus on dairy careers promotion - Dairy Matters website.
- We secured funding through the Victorian Government Secondary Schools Agricultural Fund to expose more secondary school students to the varied careers dairy offers.
- One GippsDairy Grant awarded to Maffra and District Landcare group to continue a multi-year trial project understanding the performance of multi-species pastures versus conventional pastures in a flood irrigated environment.

The focus on facial eczema prevention remains.

Extension events raise awareness, and spore count analysis helps to predict periods of high risk and enable farms to take preventative measures.

The GippsDairy Board

The GippsDairy board and its subcommittees (Corporate Governance and Major Events) are committed to strong governance, quality improvement and completing regular reviews. An independent external consultant reviewed Board governance and operations in August 2022 and gave the board a strongly positive review. The Board remains focussed on providing a range of high quality services to meet the varied needs of Gippsland dairy farmers.

On behalf of the GippsDairy Board and staff, thank you to everyone who has contributed to our year, in whatever role they have played.

GIPPSDAIRY 2023-24 GRANTS ROUND

Monday 16 October 2023 will be the closing date for the second round of the GippsDairy Grants. Regional Extension Officer, Richard Ockerse is available to support farmers who have ideas for project funding that will benefit Gippsland dairy farmers.

GRANTS OF UP TO $20,000 ARE AVAILABLE.

More information on the grants can be accessed in the news section of the GippsDairy website or **call Richard on 0417 552 399**.

Managing milk fat depression during spring

By: Dr Josie Garner, Dairy Australia

Low milk fat syndrome or milk fat depression (MFD) is a phenomenon that causes a drop in milk fat percentage. Milk fat depression is indicated by a decrease in milk fat by more than 0.2%. and is associated with changes in the cow's rumen function.

Dairy cow diets can greatly influence the bacterial population and metabolism of the cow's rumen, which are the main determining factors of milk fat content.

The nutritional conditions that cause MFD are diets with:

- a high proportion of concentrates (low forage to concentrate ratio),
- low neutral detergent fibre (NDF) or low effective fibre levels (eNDF)
- levels of polyunsaturated fatty acids higher than 5% in the total diet

These nutritional conditions can cause a decrease of milk fat percentage and a change to the ratio of milk fat to milk protein. It is biologically normal for milk fat concentration to be more than milk protein percentage, when milk fat drops below milk protein content, this is biologically abnormal. Milk fat percentage can decline by up to 50% during milk fat depression syndrome with little to no change in lactose or protein content. Milk fat percentage and fat-to-protein ratio can be used as indicators of MFD. This phenomenon can occur in both housed systems and grazing systems.

In pasture-based systems, it is possible to observe MFD at certain critical times of the year when pasture conditions change in response to the season. MFD in pasture-based systems can occur without the influence of high concentrate diets or supplementary fatty acids, the response can purely be driven by the pasture characteristics. These conditions in grazing systems relate to the pasture nutritive characteristics; high quality pastures in active vegetative growth stage generally have low fibre content, and high sugar and water contents. Immature spring pastures have high concentrations of rapidly rumen fermentable starch, sugars and soluble fibre that can affect the rumen environment by lowering ruminal pH.

During spring, the cow's grazing behaviour can exacerbate the issue due to selection within the pasture, as cows will seek out the leaves over the stems, which reduces their total NDF intake. This issue can also occur whilst grazing wet pastures as sometimes farmers will allow cows to select pasture by not grazing the paddocks as hard to prevent pugging. Another issue with spring pasture is the fast passage rate and dilution rate of fluids due to the high water content of young pastures. This reduces the time in the rumen for fermentation and creates large volumes of loose manure. In addition to low fibre, spring pasture can also contain a moderate to high concentration of lipids (fats). The concentration of lipids in spring pasture can be between 3-6%. Fatty acid intake from pastures can reach significant levels at certain times of the year, especially when cows eat exclusively pasture. Early spring is a critical stage regarding risk for MFD (sometimes autumn as well) when the forage supply is abundant, and the pasture contains high nutritional value.

For spring calving herds, MFD can be a significant risk as there is the stage of lactation factor that interacts with the high-risk period of spring pasture growth. In seasonal calving systems when peak lactation coincides with pasture of the lowest fibre content, these herds are at greater risk of developing MFD. In early lactation, cows can be more susceptible to MFD due to their increased risk of low rumen pH (clinical and subclinical ruminal acidosis). Rumen pH, chewing activity and fibre digestibility are the key factors influencing the incidence of MFD during early lactation. The chewing activity of a cow is directly related to their intake of physically effective fibre (peNDF).

Physically effective fibre is a measure of the forage chemical characteristics including, particle size and capacity to stimulate salvia secretion and rumen buffering capacity (increasing ruminal pH). The target peNDF of the diet to prevent MFD and maintain rumen pH within normal range is a minimum of 30-32%.

Preventative measures for milk fat depression

There are fewer options to mitigate MFD in pasture-based systems compared to partial mixed ration or total mixed ration systems where there is more control of the diet. One strategy that can be implemented to reduce the risk of MFD developing in your herd is to effectively manage pastures during the spring to minimise the fatty acid content. To reduce the risk of MFD, ensure that grazing does not occur prior to the 2-3 leaf stage. Pastures at the 1 leaf stage have 25% higher fatty acids than pastures at the 3 leaf stage. The additional intake of fat during the spring is something that you want to keep to a minimum.

If seasonal conditions create the perfect storm in terms of increased risk factors for MFD from pasture, a simple but effective strategy is to feed a supplementary forage source prior to grazing pasture. This can be done using a feed pad, or a hay ring in the lane way to the paddock (or sacrifice paddock) that cows are held back on briefly after milking and prior to being allowed access to pasture. The forage on offer still needs to be high quality, feeding straw is not going to maintain milk production. Look for high quality cereal hay with decent water-soluble carbohydrates (WSC) of approximately 8-9% and NDF of approximately 55-65%. The hay must also not be too heavily chopped, the fibre length should be a minimum of 5 cm to promote effective rumination, but a good rule of thumb is to aim for at least the width of the cow's muzzle for fibre length.

This strategy works by increasing the buffering capacity of the rumen prior to grazing the highly digestible, low fibre pasture. As one of the risk factors for developing MFD is low rumen pH (acidosis), the addition of rumen buffers to the diet can assist with improving rumen function and digestion. However, the use of supplementary rumen buffers is only part of the solution. The NDF in the cereal hay will provide the essential effective fibre that stimulates saliva production and rumination, which are critical components of healthy rumen function and digestion. Bovine saliva contains large quantities of buffering compounds that contribute to maintaining rumen pH within a normal health range. Young spring pasture does not contain sufficient effective fibre to stimulate the required volume of saliva. Cows produce 97% more saliva when consuming hay compared to lush pasture. By providing the supplementary forage source high in NDF, you are priming the rumen to slow down the rate of passage though the digestive tract to allow for improved digestion, a more stable pH and a ruminal environment that promotes microbial fermentation.

For herds feeding moderate to high amounts of supplement concentrates through the spring, the starch sources in the grain mix needs to be carefully considered to reduce the risk of MFD. The starch sources need to be slowly fermentable in the rumen to reduce the risk of low rumen pH. For example, maize grain provides a more slowly degradable source of starch, which promotes post-ruminal digestion, compared to wheat grain which is more rapidly fermentable. The addition of canola meal in the grain mix can also lessen the disruption to rumen fermentation by acting as a buffer against low ruminal pH. These are strategies that can be discussed with your nutritionist or feed representative to make changes to your concentrate mix.

Key messages:

- Cows need adequate effective fibre during periods of MFD risk (rapid spring or autumn pasture growth) to maintain rumen function and prevent MFD.
- A supplementary roughage of cereal hay can be an effective MFD preventative strategy.
- Include slower fermentable starch sources in the concentrate ration (corn or barley in place of wheat).
- Spring calving herds can be at greater risk of MFD.

The economics behind any decision should always be considered, especially in a pasture-based systems. In most cases, pasture is the cheapest source of feed and moving away from a majority pasture diet to avoid declines in milk fat may not always be profitable.

FEEDBASE & ANIMAL NUTRITION

Byproducts wrap up - June/July 2023 market commentary

By: Isabel Dando, Dairy Australia

Supplementary feed is an important input for dairy farm operations and can be one of the largest production costs a farm can incur.

Many farmers across dairying regions are increasingly looking to incorporate other feed types to meet nutrient deficits, one of which being feed byproducts. Dairy Australia's byproducts report captures the feed byproducts market across various regions in Victoria and southern New South Wales, providing monthly indicative prices and insights to farmers.

Prices for most feed byproducts remain steady or have been under some downward pressure over June and into July. This is similar to domestic hay and grain markets, as some regions still have green feed available, and many farmers are covered by on-farm fodder stocks for at least the short-term. Additionally, some demand for supplementary feed is being met by the significant amount of lower quality fodder moving through the market, keeping somewhat of a cap on demand for and prices of fibre-based byproducts. This has placed some downward pressure against the generally higher prices seen for the energy-based byproducts that are benchmarked off the value of wheat, barley, and soy protein - all of which have jumped since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Over the last few months, feed byproduct availability has remained generally strong due to increased output from both harvests and the return of food processing closer to normal levels. However, in recent weeks, there have been reports of increasingly tight supply for some feed byproducts, as pre-committed contracts are tightly held and represent the bulk of sales. This is especially the case for almond hulls and canola meal, which are reportedly heavily subscribed on anticipated yields, with buyers now needing to pay premiums for more immediate purchases. As a result, prices have jumped substantially for almond hulls in the last month, on top of the significant amounts paid by farmers to source them. Road freight accounts for around 75% of the cost of this product moving east from northern Victoria and the Riverina.

Looking ahead, there are hopes for some supply reprieve for the more scarce byproducts. With heavy canola plantings and favourable growing conditions so far this season, there are expectations that there will be adequate seed available for further processing. This will likely help with canola meal availability later this year. Additionally, there are now reports of palm kernel meal availability out of Melbourne for the first time in years. Recently, demand for supplementary feed and byproducts has picked up as excessively wet conditions take hold across Victoria and other southern dairying regions, and farmers look to replenish supplies. This could start to push prices up for some feed byproducts.

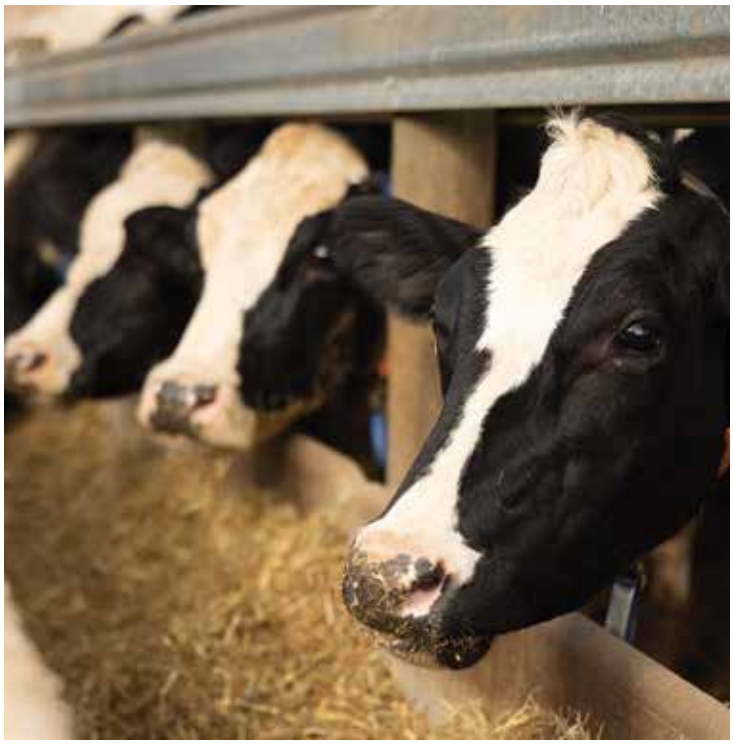
July byproduct prices compared to last month and the year prior

Indicative prices in $/tonne ex site

Feed byproduct	July-23	June-23	July-22
Almond hulls (Northern Victoria)	$170	↑466%	N/A
Citrus pulp (Northern Victoria)	$75	Steady	↓24%
Palm kernel extract (Melbourne port)	$430	↓18%	↓18%
Potato waste (Gippsland)	$80	Steady	↓18%

MORE INFORMATION

Byproducts need to be carefully considered before purchase and inclusion if they are not already part of the system. You can subscribe to monthly feed byproducts updates and access the report via the Dairy Australia website: **https://tinyurl.com/3wuuwcxn**



INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

European Dairy News

Aficionados of European farmer protest footage have had plenty to devour lately, with rising tensions leading to more tractors on the streets.

In particular, dairy farmers in the Netherlands and Ireland have clashed with governments over increasingly stringent regulations, and proposed reductions in farm and cow numbers. Incensed farmers argue their financial viability, livelihoods and communities are under threat. Ironically, only a decade ago, many of these same farmers were encouraged to grow their businesses and produce more as European Union milk quotas were abolished.

Cow health in wet conditions

By: Debbie Twiss, WestVic Dairy

Mastitis and lameness can be exacerbated by prolonged wet conditions which increase cow exposure to bacteria in mud and dung which can cause infection in the foot and udder.

Each case of mastitis or lameness is estimated to cost in the order of $200-$500. The impact of cost being greatest when disease occurs early in lactation reducing a cow's peak milk curve and increasing her first service to conception interval and risk of being not in calf at the end of mating period.

A lameness scoring scale has been created by Dairy Australia to help farmers measure the severity of lameness within their herd. The lameness score system describes the severity of lameness, where zero is equivalent to no lameness and 3 is equivalent to severe, non-weight bearing lameness. The more severe the lameness the greater the reduction in feed intake (dry matter intake DMI in table 1).

Table 1 Impact of lameness on milk production and dry matter intake over lactation compared with cows that do not experience lameness

LAMENESS SCORE	APPEARANCE OF COW WALKING	REDUCTION IN DMI %	REDUCTION IN MILK YEILD %	ACTION REQUIRED
0	Walks evenly			No action required
1	Walks unevenly	3	5	Observe
2	Lame, shortened stride, slight head bob, back arched when standing	7	17	Cow is lame and should be examined in the next 24 hours
3	Very lame, shortened un-even stride, not bearing weight on lame leg; back arched when walking and standing	16	36	Cow is very lame and needs urgent attention

PH Robinson, and ST Juarez University of California, Davis CA
www.txanc.org/docs/LocomotionScoringofDairyCattle.pdf
Any animal with a score of 2 or 3, should be recorded and drafted out for treatment as soon as possible.

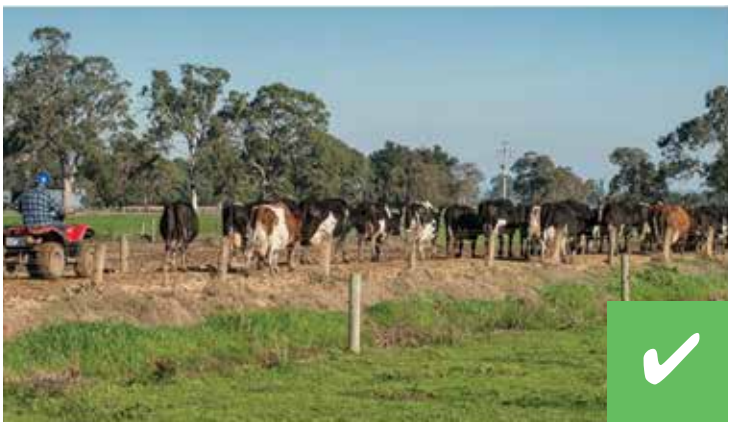
When

- more than 10 cows out of every 100 cows go lame during lactation or
- more than 5 cows in every 100 have clinical mastitis infection in the first month after calving or
- more than 2 cows in every 100 have clinical mastitis in each month after the first month of lactation

there is likely to be an economic return to effectively addressing factors contributing to disease. The key is being able to identify which factors are causing the problem to occur.

60% of the difference in lameness between herds with high incidence of lameness compared to herds with low incidence is attributable to factors affecting cow flow onto and through the milking shed. Herds with increased incidence of lameness are likely to be under pressure when moved from paddock to dairy. Wet conditions erode track walking surface exposing sharp stones from base layer which can penetrate softened hoof, resulting in sole abscess or separation of the hoof sole from hoof wall, causing the cow to be lame.

Prevention of lameness and mastitis in wet conditions require strategies to reduce risk of damage to foot and udder. Allowing cows to flow on tracks with their heads down so they can see where to carefully place their front feet to avoid stones will assist prevention of lameness. Cows will place their back feet in the exact same position as their front feet when they are not under pressure. Cows under pressure will lift their heads, fail to place their feet carefully on the track and risk standing on stones resulting in traumatic injury to the hooves.



Cows spread out on laneway

If cows are spread out and able to drift at their own pace, stress and mud and manure splash in minimised.

Cows bunched up on laneway

This is caused by herding pressure from behind. Bunching often happens at congestion points on the laneway. The result is stress on the cows, poorer let down, higher risk of mud and manure splay on the udder, more mastitis as well as other health conditions such as lameness.

Cows bunched, heads up

Heads up suggests that the whole herd is too tightly packed. This will result in stress, reduced milk let down, more manure and urine during milking and higher risk conditions such as lameness.

In wet conditions management of teat condition and good milking machine function is critical to prevention of clinical mastitis. Extra time taken to wash **and dry** muddy teats will reduce bacterial infection, skin damage and risk of cup crawl. On days that are wet or muddy you must change your milking routine. You may need an extra person in the shed.

CONTINUED OVER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Cow health in wet conditions

Washing and drying teats

Teats contaminated with mud or manure increase the risk of environmental mastitis and high levels of bacteria in milk (e.g. elevated TPC or bactoscan). Follow the steps below to wash and dry teats if they are contaminated with mud or manure.

Step 1 Wash teats

Step 2 Disinfect teats

Step 3 Wait 30 seconds

Step 4 Dry teats

If your elevated BMCC or clinical cases persist, assess whether you have an underlying problem with teat condition, machine function, or other opportunities for bacteria to spread. Seek professional advice, cultures will be required to determine the bacteria involved.

IN WET OR MUDDY PERIODS THERE ARE FOUR KEY STEPS

1. Wash and dry all teats before cups go on. On wet or muddy days, every teat must be washed and dried with one paper towel per cow.
2. Strip cows every day to detect, treat and isolate clinical cases.
3. Cover all surfaces of all four teats with teat disinfectant.
4. Keep teats clean for an hour after the cows leave the shed. Set up feeding and other routines so cows don't lie down soon after milking

TIP

Never apply cups to wet teats. Always dry teats with a single use paper towel (one per cow) or clean reusable cloth (one per cow) after washing and/or applying teat disinfectant pre-milking.

Always ensure teat disinfectant used pre-milking is registered for that purpose. Many milk processors do not allow the use of pre-milking teat disinfectant.

MORE INFORMATION

Scan the QR code to access a range of factsheets on managing wet conditions.

Reminder about the importance of colostrum management

Researchers from the University of Adelaide have conducted an extensive review of the scientific literature to re-evaluate the prevalence of failure of passive transfer of immunity (FPTI) in dairy calves from pasture based dairy systems.

Passive transfer of immunity is the successful transfer of antibodies from the cow's colostrum to the calf via ingestion of large amounts of high-quality colostrum within the first 24 hours of life. This sets up their immune system and determines their productive potential for life. The researchers analysed data from 13,430 dairy calves and found that the prevalence of FPTI in Australia is 33%. The farms in these studies that had the lowest prevalence of FPTI (6%) had very good colostrum management.

These farms collected newborn calves from the calving area twice per day, and the calves were fed 3 litres of high-quality colostrum (greater than 22% Brix) within 12 hours of arriving in the shed. This study is a great reminder about the importance of a simple but effective colostrum management system which can be the difference between only a handful of calves having FPTI or a third of your calves being compromised.

MORE INFORMATION

Scan the QR code to read the full article.

MANAGEMENT REMINDERS

August

Pastures/Forages

Ryegrass leaf appearance rate	11 - 15 days per leaf
Area of farm to graze today	1/33rd to 1/45th of the area in rotation or more if pastures have reached canopy closure
Average daily pasture growth rate	August pasture growth averages 25 kg DM/ha/day across Gippsland, although commonly ranges from 15-40kg DM/ha/day, depending on the conditions
Recommended pre-grazing decisions for all stock	Pasture growth is likely to still be insufficient for fresh cows. In order to manage residuals at 4-6cm, ensure you have the correct quality and quantity of supplement feed on hand
Seasonal management tasks	Consider aiming for quality over quantity when conserving homegrown feed. Match fodder quality to class of stock. Milkers will require highest quality, but do not ignore the importance of growing out young stock

Pasture Management

- The application of nitrogen fertiliser is likely to be economically viable provided the additional feed grown is needed and can be utilised. At this time of the year response rates to applied nitrogen are typically 5-15Kg of dry matter/Kg of N applied. Urea purchased for $800/t applied to a pasture with a response rate of 10Kg of DM/Kg of N and a utilisation of 80% has a calculated cost of $209/tDM based on the cost of the Nitrogen fertiliser alone.
- When considering the application of fertiliser, particularly to boost silage/hay paddocks, ensure enough time (approx. 6 weeks) is allowed for pasture to fully utilise applied nutrients.
- It may still be cold enough to get profitable responses to Gibberellic acid. If so, and you need the feed, consider using it to grow additional pasture quickly.
- Begin to plan paddocks to crop due to wet conditions this autumn/winter. Consider crop type, soil nutrients, weed burden, and timing and method of sowing.
- Rotation length should be beginning to shorten as days get longer and temperature begins to increase. Ryegrass leaf appearnace rate is dependant on day lenght and temperature so as leaves appear more quickly rotation length needs to be shortened also once a pasture is at canpoy closure it should be grazed. Canopy closure often occurs before a pasture reaches the 3 leaf stage.

Feeding

- Ensure feed that is being bought or fed out is of highest quality available. Supplement poor quality feeds with higher quality concentrates.
- Aim for a Neutral Detergent Fibre (NDF) content of 30-35% in the diet with approximately half of this being physically effective NDF (peNDF).
- peNDF refers to the ability of a feed to stimulate chewing activity and the production of saliva. Aim for at least 22% of total diet DM as peNDF.
- In order for cows to meet production potential and cycle for next mating, they must be fed adequately with the aim to lose no more than 0.6 of a Body Score Condition (BSC) between calving and mating as an average over the herd.

Cows

- Look to balance calving cows Dietary Cation-Anion Difference (DCAD) in diet by lead feeding. A negative DCAD diet prior to calving will stimulate a cow to produce her own calcium, enabling her to meet increased calcium demand post calving and reduce the risk of milk fever.
- Early lactation acidosis is an issue that may arise. Keep an eye on heifers as they are likely to be the first to show signs of acidosis. If fibre content of diet is low or transition was poor, buffers or high quality hay that offers effective fibre may be required in the diet to reduce the risk of acidosis impacting herd health and milk production.
- Assess the results of the previous calving when planning spring joining.

  If you are trying to shorten calving, look to evaluate heat detection method, fertility, genetics, body condition score (BCS) at mating, and heifer weights.

Calves/heifers

- Jersey calves should be at least 75 kg liveweight and Friesian calves 100 kg at weaning. Calves should be eating at least 1 kg of concentrates, hay and drinking fresh water prior to weaning off milk. The energy in the concentrate, fibre in the hay and water helps in the early development of calves' rumens, thus allowing for early weaning.
- Ensure calves get high quality colostrum within 6 hours of being born to ensure adequate immunity transfer, which might require bringing calves in a few times a day. Ideally 2 litres of colostrum in the first 2 hours of life is needed.
- Heifer weights at joining are is an effective management tool for determining if a heifer is likely to get in calf. Heifers that are joined at appropriate weights often get back in calf in the same calving pattern and become cows with increased lifespan and as a result produce an improved return on the investment made in them.
- Utilise the available genetics to select for desirable traits such as ease of calving when selecting semen for heifers.

Business

- Many dairy farm business are cash flow negative at this time of the year, keep a track of your overdraft balance and talk to your bank if it needs to be reassessed.
- Heading into the busy season, consider the hours you and your staff are working. Ensure overtime is being paid correctly, and you are not reaching a level of fatigue where safety is compromised.

Upcoming events

To view and register for any of our upcoming events, visit the GippsDairy events calendar: **https://bit.ly/GippsDairyEventsCalendar or scan the QR Code.**

Dairy Life

Send us a photo of a day in your life as a dairy farmer, along with a brief description. Photos will be featured in our social media.

Send to: **info@gippsdairy.com.au** or call **03 5624 3900.**

Contact us GippsDairy

General enquiries:
info@gippsdairy.com.au
P: (03) 5624 3900

Stay informed
on dairy industry news at:
www.gippsdairy.com.au

What's on?
Visit the GippsDairy events calendar for more information
www.dairyaustralia.com.au/events-calendar?Rdp=GippsDairy