



MURRAY DAIRY ACHIEVEMENT REPORT

2018–2019



INTRODUCTION

Murray Dairy has continued with a concerted effort on the delivery of innovative programs to help build critical thinking, knowledge and capability. We recognise and are responding to the change that continues to shape our region, including water policy reform, climate change, rising input costs, volatile seasonal conditions and challenging commodity markets.

Particularly important this year was the development and release of Future Focus – Dairy Industry Strategy Murray Region 2019, which has provided an in-depth analysis of dairy in the region. It identified the areas of Profit, Systems, Water, People, Planning and Promotion as areas requiring attention by all arms of industry, government, commercial and private organisations that underpin the approach needed to transition our dairy industry into the future.

Murray Dairy's projects continue to work towards supporting farmers as they operate within an incredibly diverse region with many complexities. At the close of the 2018–19 season, Murray Dairy had delivered over 160 events to well over 3,000 participants, including farm owners, managers, staff, students and service providers.

Regional projects have been delivered through collaborative partnerships and investments; some of which include:

- *Accelerating the Adoption of Farm Business Management* funded through the Dairy Industry Fund NSW
- *Defining future dairy industry services sector skills* funded through Regional Development Victoria's Regional Skills Fund

- *Dairy Businesses for Future Climates* funded through Dairy Australia
- *Accelerating Transitions for Stronger Dairy Communities* funded through the federal government's Building Better Region's Fund
- Optimising summer cropping management through improved data collection using soil moisture probes funded through Murray Local Land Services
- An eight-part water management video series funded through GMW and DELWP and;
- Continued focus on land-use mapping in the GMID funded through a regional alliance partnership providing evidence for policy and supporting dairy transition strategies.

There were a number of key events held throughout the year including:

- *Preventing Heat Stress* with US speaker Dr Geoff Dahl
- *Employer of Choice* with International speaker Dr Nollaig Heffernan
- The Murray Muster – Automation, Consumers and Climate and;
- Regional farm system and feedbase stakeholder tour

There were 41 Dairy Australia funded priority courses and workshops delivered including; Cups on Cups Off (CoCo), Nutrition Fundamentals, Feeding Pastures for Profit (FPFP), Farm Business Fundamentals, Farm Business Analysis, Employment Basics, Stepping Up/Stepping Back (farm succession), Cool Cows and farm safety sessions.

In addition, Murray Dairy continued to deliver a dry conditions seasonal response program as part of Dairy Australia's Feed Shortage campaign. These activities included:

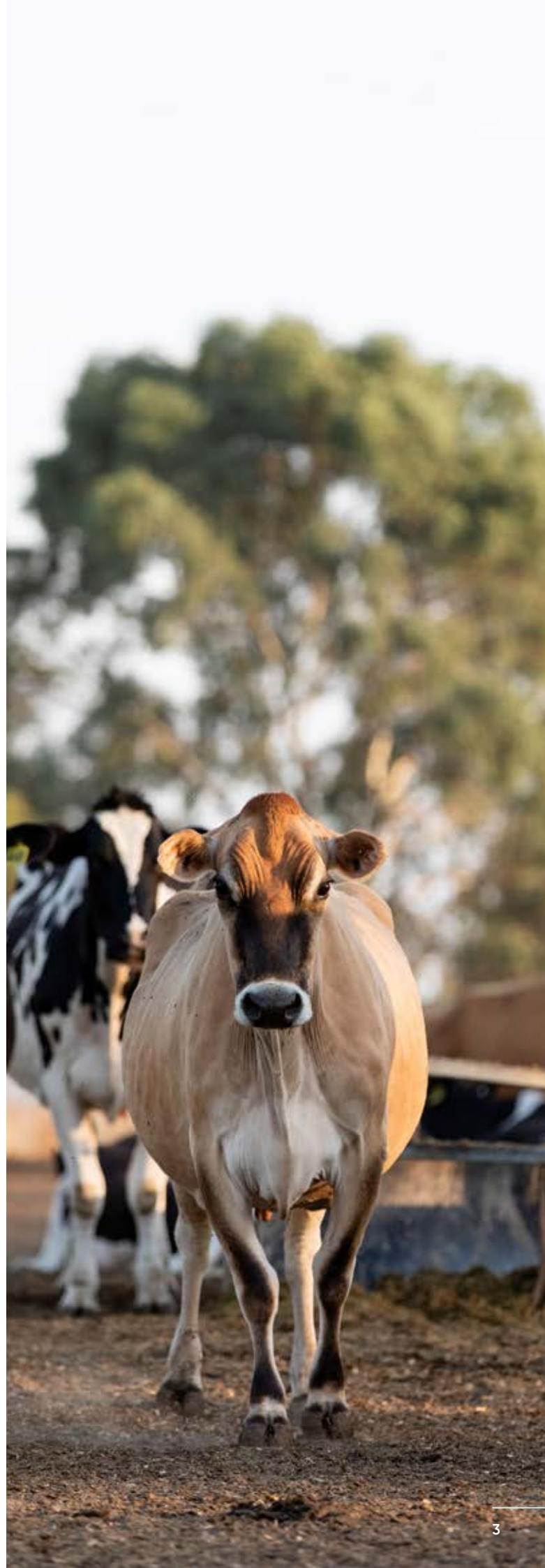
- Delivery of one-on-one Taking Stock sessions with 285 initial visits and a further 93 re visits throughout the year
- Technical workshops with 1086 participants across 70 events covering seasonal settings, summer cropping options, nutrition over summer, autumn planning and water management
- Over 1,190 phone calls have been made by the Dairy Liaison Officers – talking people through support available from government and industry, resulting in a large number of referrals into services and;

- Support for service providers including several Occasional Counsellor workshops and the production of a monthly situation report providing valuable information about current and outlooks for climate, farm inputs and service support.

Groups continue as an important mechanism to engage with the dairy community. In 2018–19, 22 groups were supported with Dairy Australia funding and co-contributions from industry engaging over 300 businesses. These include ten Discussion Groups, eight Dairy Business Networks (DBNs) and four Young Dairy Network groups.

Murray Dairy's partnerships continue to grow. Murray Dairy engages with over 40 different government and non-government agencies. It is through these important partnerships that dairy levy funds are leveraged by a further \$4 which brings additional resources and technical expertise to the region to support our dairy industry.

Outlined in this report in further detail are some of Murray Dairy's achievements for 2018–19 year.



CONTENTS

Regional Projects and Events	5	Courses, Events, Training and Workshops	13
Future Focus Dairy Industry Strategy Murray Region 2019	5	Animal Performance	13
Seasonal Response - Feed Shortage Campaign 18-19	6	Farm Business Management	14
Accelerating Adoption of Farm Business Management	6	Feedbase and Animal Nutrition	14
Dairy Businesses for Future Climates	7	Land, Water and Climate	15
Accelerating Transitions for Stronger Dairy Communities	7	People	15
Increasing soil testing on irrigated dairy farms	8	<hr/>	
Optimising summer cropping management using improved data collection	8	Network and Industry Partnerships	16
Water Toolkit Videos	9	Industry Partnerships	16
Understanding the future skill requirements for the dairy industry	9	Networks	17
Land Use Mapping (LUM) project	9	Regional Network Groups and Regional Extension and Education Committee	17
Water Guardians Project	10	Dairy Business Networks	17
Preventing Heat Stress – Dr Geoff Dahl USA	10	Agronomy Network	17
Employer of Choice – Dr Nollaig Heffernan	10	Young Dairy Network	17
Agriculture in Transition – Dan Sumner	10	<hr/>	
The Murray Muster 2019 – Automation, Consumers and Climate	10	Communications	20
Regional Farm System and Feedbase Stakeholder Tour	12		
International Dairy Week	12		
Industry Promotion – Careers Days	12		

REGIONAL PROJECTS AND EVENTS

There were a number of regionally specific projects, events, courses, reports and products developed and delivered throughout the year. Some were strategically important such as Future Focus – our regional dairy industry strategy, others such as the water videos and soil moisture monitoring projects were of high technical merit. Some activities were recognised for strengthening our regional partnerships and investment opportunities for the dairy industry in the region, such as the farm systems and feedbase stakeholder tour held in April 2019.

Our delivery is categorised across eight key themes of Murray Dairy's strategic plan:

- Feedbase and Animal Nutrition
- Animal Performance
- People
- Farm Business Management
- Land, Water and Carbon
- Industry Promotion
- Industry Protection
(Seasonal Response – Feed Shortage Campaign)
- Regional Networks and Partnerships.

Some of the highlights for the year are outlined below.

Future Focus Dairy Industry Strategy Murray Region 2019



The need for a dairy industry strategy specific for the Murray region cannot be underestimated, taking into consideration the enormous changes the industry has been tackling and continues to face in adapting to market, climate and policy driven volatility. The Future Focus – Dairy Industry Strategy Murray Region 2019 (Future Focus) brings together in a single plan an outline of what the industry must collectively focus on to achieve its goal. Future Focus is designed to directly contribute to and be aligned with the 2019 Australian Dairy Plan, as well as other state, industry and agency plans and strategies where agriculture and dairy features. Future Focus identified six key themes to co-ordinate effort, guide investment and ensure a long-term sustainable future. Since its release in February 2019, it has been a fundamental document for use in discussions with state and federal government, regional agencies and industry on positioning dairy in the region, as the industry works through its current challenges.

Seasonal Response - Feed Shortage Campaign 18-19



As the dry conditions continued across the state throughout 2018-19, Murray Dairy, working with industry partners and with funding support from Dairy Australia and Gardiner Foundation, provided a range of targeted support initiatives for farmers and service providers.

Taking Stock – Free, confidential one-on-one Taking Stock sessions were made available to all dairy farm businesses to work through key decisions and planning with a trained advisor. Sessions were well received, with nine out of ten farmers who have done it saying they understand their situation better, feel more confident to make decisions about their farm and would recommend it to other farmers. The Taking Stock 2018-19 program saw 285 Taking Stocks and 93 Taking Stock reviews delivered by several consultants across the region. Advice covered feed budgeting, business planning, water budgeting, succession planning and transitioning out of the industry.

A number of 'in-season' technical workshops were delivered aimed at providing information to support key decision needs as the year progressed. Workshops included:

- Avoiding decision paralysis – providing information on input settings and highlighting the need to put plans in place
- Summer feedbase options and nutrition over summer – covering summer cropping options and management, and maintaining a balanced diet in a water and feedbase constrained environment
- Advance your Autumn – covering autumn pasture and crop start up options in consideration of water availability and affordability
- Water in Focus – highlighting developments regarding the Murray Darling Basin Plan, water trading and allocation trends, seasonal outlooks and strategies for water portfolio management.

Overall across the Murray region there were 70 technical events delivered with 1,086 attendees.

Dairy Liaison Officers (DLOs) remained an integral part of Murray Dairy's seasonal response throughout the feed shortage campaign. DLOs were first employed by Murray Dairy in 2016 and are members of the dairying community employed to reach and connect with dairy farm businesses and their workers across the Murray region. Throughout 2018-19 over 1,191 dairy farm families and/or associated workers were contacted by the DLOs with information provided about government and industry services, training and events relevant to their needs. The DLOs play a significant role in referring dairy farm clients through to other services and have become one of the leading referral mechanisms into the services of the rural financial counselling service in this region. The DLOs were funded through the Building Better Regions Fund and Dairy Australia.

Accelerating Adoption of Farm Business Management



This project is funded through the Dairy Industry Fund NSW and aims to design and deliver Farm Business Management (FBM) projects to farmers and service providers based on guidance from market research into the barriers to adoption of industry standard FBM skills. The market research component has been completed by the University of Queensland and the project has entered the second phase with provision of training for service providers and developing and delivering pilot FBM programs. The market research found that there was adequate effort and resources being made available to dairy farmers in NSW, but there is a gap in the targeting, messaging and delivery mechanisms. The final stage of the project will look to provide training for 120 dairy farm businesses across NSW in farm business management by December 2021.

Dairy Businesses for Future Climates

Irrigated farm systems in the Murray Dairy region have been heavily impacted by changes in water availability and price, caused by declining rainfall and changes to water policy and increasing demand and competition for water from other industries. A variety of production systems are practiced but there are questions about what systems are best suited in the future. This project investigated climate change impacts on a dairy farm in northern Victoria and analysed the performance (biophysical and economic) of some potential adaptation options particularly related to changing the feedbase.

Through funding from Dairy Australia an economic and risk analysis was undertaken of farm development that considered the combination of cash, profit, wealth creation and risk perspectives. The report provides perspectives important to the long-term sustainability of farm businesses, variability and risk. It also provides insight into potential distributions, defined by key variables, such as milk price, irrigation water price/availability, grain price, hay price and pasture/crop consumption. Probability distributions have been based on a combination of historic data and input from a reference group.

Historical climate scenarios and future scenarios centred on 2040 were created and simulated for each of the selected farm development options, particularly impacts of variable irrigation water availability.

The project aims to increase industry's understanding about how different farm development options may impact on farm profit and potential implications with respect to infrastructure, management skills and risk exposure. The report highlighted that there is no one

system that is best suited to the region – all have their considered risks and opportunities and that careful consideration of the resources you have, your comfort levels relating to risk, your skills and capability and your life stage are of utmost importance.

Accelerating Transitions for Stronger Dairy Communities

This project focused on improving industry and dairy business capability by actively providing business mentoring on finance and farm transition and driving dairy farm engagement through Dairy Liaison Officers and community events. This was one-year project funded through the Australian Government's Building Better Regions Fund.

In conjunction with AgBiz Assist, this project has enabled an offering of personalised, one to one consultations to farm businesses undergoing transition, either for growth, succession, structural change or exit. This offering complements the series of succession workshops offered by Murray Dairy and Dairy Australia across the region providing information participants need to start planning their transition.

Over 170 dairy farm families were mentored in farm transition and/or financial management. 'Succession, expansion and transition consultations' – included workshops and one on one sessions with an agricultural consultant to help scope, plan, discuss and proceed with confidence in developing a succession, expansion or transition plan for their individual circumstances. Further, a number of service providers built capability in the topic of farm transition, financial mentoring and the use of supporting business management tools.





Increasing soil testing on irrigated dairy farms

A partnership with Goulburn Broken CMA and North East CMA saw the delivery of a series of on-farm workshops to 58 participants to help raise awareness of soil management techniques. The days were designed to provide opportunity to discuss options for soil management, to get the best from your pastures or crops, including remediation of potential soil issues. Soil scientist Christian Bannan used soil pits, in conjunction with soil tests, to see what goes on beneath the surface and provide the basis for discussion and management options.

Optimising summer cropping management using improved data collection

As dairy in the region experiences significant challenges relating to water availability and high-water prices, it is clear that farmers are keen to optimise efficiencies relating to water and associated feedbase production. Well-informed irrigation scheduling, understanding efficiencies of irrigation management across different soil types and impacts on production are key drivers of success and essential information for farmers to make decisions during the growing seasons.

To fully understand and appreciate the use of soil moisture technology to help drive on farm decisions, a collaborative project focusing on this technology, with Murray Local Land Services and Murray Dairy, is currently underway. Three soil moisture probes have been installed across three separate sites, each operating under different management regimes within the Riverina region.



Three C capacitance probes, alongside an irrometer, tensiometers and watermark sensors (electrical resistance granular matrix sensor), used to measure soil water tension and soil water status, have been installed. The idea being that this will help understand the advantages and disadvantages of using each technology and their ability to measure soil moisture increments (usually 10cm) down the soil profile to depth of 0.8 cm to 1.2cm, for local soil conditions.

Although many advantages exist with such technology, moisture monitoring should not replace the farmer's intuitive estimates of when to water, rather encourage verifying soil moisture data with field inspections to increase confidence in timing of water applications. The project has been extended into 2019–2020.

Water Toolkit Videos

Murray Dairy, in partnership with Goulburn Murray Water (GMW) and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) developed a series of videos aimed at improving farmers' understanding of the water market, trading and associated water management. Eight videos have been produced. Each video features a spokesperson explaining the various concepts underpinned by technical information and messaging provided by GMW and DELWP. The videos have been well supported and acknowledged, particularly in their ability to assist irrigators understand the complexities based around water allocation and trading rules.



Understanding the future skill requirements for the dairy industry

Through this project the industry has taken an industry led approach to identifying future dairy sector skill requirements and defining career pathways that will meet the rapidly changing environment that the dairy industry now operates within.

Working with the three Victorian RDPs GippsDairy, WestVic Dairy and Murray Dairy, with supporting funding from Dairy Australia Gardiner Foundation and Regional Development Victoria, a market analysis of dairy service sector in Victoria mapping current and future skill needs has been completed. A report was released in January 2019.

The outcomes from this project will support and guide the implementation of a second Regional Development Victoria funded project 'New generation skills for the dairy industry', starting in July 2019. The aim of this project is to attract people into the dairy industry by working closely with the education sector to better define pathways and describe opportunities for stronger engagement, careers and skill attainment.

Land Use Mapping (LUM) project

Murray Dairy, in partnership with the Goulburn Broken CMA, Agriculture Victoria, Goulburn Murray Water and Dairy Australia, have been involved in a regional land use mapping program monitoring land use change across the GMID. The project investigates land use trends in the GMID, in particular looking at changes in water entitlements (shares) and water use, milk production and the impacts of water reform and the Basin Plan. The information has been an important base to understanding how dairy in the region is adapting and underpins the regional response to water security, water management, irrigation practices and investment.

Water Guardians Project

The Gannawarra Water Guardians is a community-based investment project that is taking a partnership approach to supporting the local irrigation industry and local businesses.

The Gannawarra Water Guardians project is a platform that seeks investment from local businesses and community members in order to purchase High Security Water Rights (HSWR) which are then leased back to local irrigators. The platform will be designed to provide financial value, to both investors and end users of water purchased, as well as to support community resilience through the retention of economic activity in the local area.

Overseen by a Steering Committee and with funding support from Murray Dairy, the project has invested in the development of a business feasibility study and continues to explore opportunities for a community driven approach to securing regional assets.

Preventing Heat Stress – Dr Geoff Dahl USA



Heat stress impacts on the production, performance and health of cows which is of critical importance in our region. Murray Dairy, supported by Dairy Australia, hosted three events on managing heat stress on dairy farms with international expert, Geoff Dahl. Geoff is the Chair of the Department of Animal Sciences at the University of Florida and the President of the American Dairy Science Association. He conducts applied and basic research on animal production and health, focusing on managing photoperiods and reducing heat stress at various stages of the lactation cycle for better animal health outcomes for cows and their calves. Geoff presented on farm, offering practical advice for managing heat stress. Geoff covered some of his new research on heat stress and management of dry cows to increase milk production and in-calf rates and the impact of heat stress in dry cows on calf growth and development.

Employer of Choice – Dr Nollaig Heffernan

Through support from Dairy Australia 'Employer of Choice' sessions were delivered with over 60 farmers. The sessions provided attendees with an opportunity to hear from Dr Nollaig Heffernan, an expert in workplace psychology, including organisational restructuring, selection and retention of labour, stress management, business mentoring and psychometrics. Dr Heffernan discussed the challenges around attracting and retaining labour to work on farms and offered advice for businesses to address this through their business culture, career opportunities and management of staff.

Agriculture in Transition – Dan Sumner

Murray Dairy hosted international Economics Researcher and Policy Advisor, Dan Sumner, who shared his insights on climate, policy and regulatory challenges, cultural shifts and market forces impacting agricultural industries worldwide. A large audience engaged in an informative presentation with specific comparisons of the agricultural policy agenda in California and the Murray Dairy region.

The Murray Muster 2019 – Automation, Consumers and Climate

The inaugural Murray Muster replaced the Business Forum as the major regional industry event for 2019. The event saw Australian and international guest speakers bringing innovation and rigorous discussion on Automation, Consumers and Climate.

Day one saw 63 attendees at Dookie College Dairy. Topics covered included:

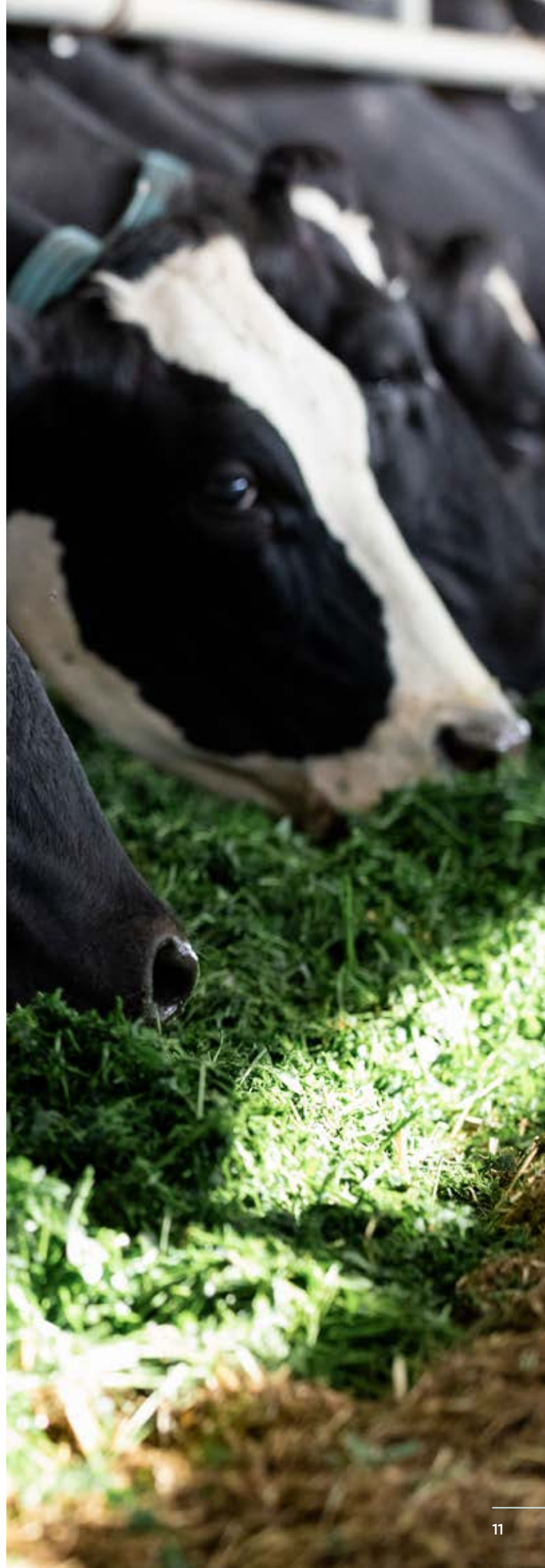
- Automated Milking Systems (AMS): Milking from the armchair – fact or fiction? Guest speakers, Nicholas Lyons of the Milking Edge project, and farmers Gary and Bev Carpenter, shared their experiences with AMS.
- Close encounters of the mammary kind. Guest speaker Russ Hovey discussed the importance of mammary gland development in successful high milk producing cows.
- Dairy Australia's leadership team including Chair, Jeff Odgers and Managing Director, David Nation provided an update on industry's current projects in the areas of research, extension, trade and strategy and the possibilities these present for dairy farmers and businesses in the Murray Region.



An industry dinner was held that night and attracted 78 people. Highlights from the evening were:

- Professor Hovey on the topic, 'Dairying in parallel', providing insights from the USA when it comes to our 'right to farm'. Professor Hovey discussed the parallels between the dairy industry in California and in the Murray region on topics such as water reform, changing farm systems, shifting perspectives on animal welfare and new consumer trends.
- Georgia Nicholls from Dairy Australia discussed social licence and the expectations that consumers have of our industry. Georgia's presentation highlighted the importance of industry best practice, positive communication about our industry and how changing consumer demands are driving changes in the way we think about our industry.

Day two, held in Kyabram, covered the topic of operating in a volatile water market and attracted a further 73 people. In a panel session, Jeff Odgers (Ardmona), Scott McKillop (Dederang), Rachelle Moon (Numurkah), Andrew Tyler (Tongala) and Erwin Van Den Berg (Katamatite), discussed their different approaches to managing the volatile water market, including their thoughts on sustainability, management strategies and investment needed for the future.



Regional Farm System and Feedbase Stakeholder Tour

Murray Dairy hosted a farm system and feedbase tour in April 2019 with attendees from industry, government and other agencies. The tour provided a regional overview, current industry status including seasonal conditions, changes occurring in farm business and farm systems, with some examples of transformations good and bad. Goulburn Murray Water and Agriculture Victoria provided a water overview and presented on water availability with respect to land use and water use data. Consultants provided insightful observations on the changing landscape and transition they are seeing within farm businesses across the region.

Three different farm systems were explored as part of the two-day field trip; a pasture-based system at Lancaster, a PMR system at Tongala and a TMR system at Blighty. Host farmers discussed specific technical areas including water security, decision making, feeding infrastructure and adaptation strategies in a more volatile regime of climate, water policy and market influences.

International Dairy Week

International Dairy Week (IDW) is one of Australia's premier dairy events. Over five days 1000+ head of first class Australian dairy cattle and 180 dairy breeders compete for prestigious awards. Over 100 dairy companies and businesses make up a large dairy focused trade exhibition displaying the latest in products and technologies. A series of seminars allow industry professionals to provide up-to-date information on the Australian and global dairy industry.

Murray Dairy have hosted a stand at the IDW in Tatura for a number of years, this year in collaboration with DataGene and GoTAFE. Murray Dairy supported a seminar featuring Sarah Chaplin from Agriculture Victoria on Biosecurity as part of the IDW seminar series and sponsored the 'Women in Dairy' event.

Industry Promotion - Careers Days

Murray Dairy extension staff have had significant presence at career days. Of those included, Dookie Open Day, GOTAFE Open Day and Shepparton Careers Days. Attendance at such events presents an opportunity to showcase the dairy industry and career pathways, including various roles on farm, post-farm gate roles and supporting roles across technology and IT.



COURSES, EVENTS, TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS



Animal Performance

The focus of investment in the area of Animal Performance is to ensure dairy farmers and industry stakeholders are implementing or advising on practices which improve cow productivity, reproduction, health and welfare.

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

- 6 Cups On Cups Off workshops
- 3 Euthanase Livestock workshops
- 1 Preventing Heat Stress event with International guest speaker - Geoff Dahl
- 1 Biosecurity workshop
- 1 Raising Healthy Calves workshop

Cups on Cups off (COCO) and Euthanase Livestock workshops were most popular in 2018-19



COCO workshop evaluation summary:

Knowledge before

6.2/10

Knowledge after

8.6/10

Quality of event

9.5/10

Value to business

9.3/10

Euthanase Livestock workshop evaluation summary:

Quality of event

9.3/10

Value to business

9.2/10



Farm Business Management

The focus of this investment in the area of Farm Business Management is to increase dairy farmers' and industry stakeholders' business capability and enable them to respond to the challenges and opportunities within their business.

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

- 3 Dairy Farm Business Analysis workshops
- 1 Farm Business Fundamentals workshop
- 1 Dairy Farm Monitor Project event
- 1 Situation and Outlook event
- 22 funded Discussion groups and DBNs
- 1 Meet the bank workshop
- 1 Governance and Investment course (Refresher)
- 8 Businesses participating in Plan2Dairy Our Farm Our Plan

Risk and strategic planning is an important supporting program for farmers who are looking to progress their farm businesses. Murray Dairy developed Plan2Dairy which has now transitioned into a Dairy Australia National Program called Our Farm Our Plan. Throughout the year eight farm businesses participated in Plan2Dairy, covering personal and business goal setting, managing staff, business change, risk in all its forms, taking opportunities, setting strategy and enacting a realistic plan in a working business.

Participants highly recommended the course.



Feedbase and Animal Nutrition

The focus of investment in Feedbase and Animal Nutrition is to provide knowledge and skills to improve the variety and quality of forages grown, managed and optimised through feed conversion to aid profitability and sustainability.

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

- 3 Feeding Pastures for Profit courses
- 1 Advanced Nutrition in Action program
- 3 Agronomy Network group meetings
- 2 Designing and Balancing your Ration workshops

Feeding Pastures for Profit continues to be a popular course and 3 courses were run throughout the year.



Participants' course value rating (on average)

9/10

Optimising pasture management, whether it be for grazing or ensiling, was cited as the key benefit of the course.



Land, Water and Climate

The focus of investment in the area of Land, Water and Climate is to increase dairy farmers' confidence to manage long term sustainability relating to impacts from climate change, water for productive use, soil and nutrient management.

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

1 Cool Cows event
with International speaker Geoff Dahl

3 Successful Soil Management workshops

5 Water in Focus events

The Water in Focus events and the Geoff Dahl events generated considerable interest.



180+ participants attended Water in Focus events

Content rating from participants at the Geoff Dahl event

8.9/10



People

The focus of investment in the area of People is to ensure dairy businesses are better equipped to manage, attract and retain staff and have access to training programs to improve their knowledge, skills and competence to contribute to the industry's wealth and sustainability.

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

1 Farm safety workshop

12 Stepping Back and Taking Steps workshops

6 Career pathways days

3 Employer of Choice events

Stepping Back and Taking Steps workshops are designed for people scoping the next steps in transition or family succession.



12 Stepping Back and Taking Steps workshops run across the region this year

Participants' value of the activity to their business rating (on average)

8.4/10



NETWORK AND INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

Industry Partnerships

Murray Dairy's collaborative approach benefits the industry by attracting additional resources, improving delivery, and providing access to additional programs and information to better meet the needs of dairy farmers in the region.

In the 2018–19 year, Murray Dairy has significantly leveraged investment and resources through its strong focus on partnerships. For every \$1 of levy funding, a further \$4.00 of additional funding was accessed, delivering in excess of \$2 million in programs to the dairy industry in the Murray region. Partnerships across several regional organisations and agencies including milk processors, Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs), government and private providers to the industry, have continued to grow over the 2018–19 year.

Examples of successful partnerships in 2018–19 year include:

- A program involving AgBiz Assist, Dairy Australia, Murray Dairy and regional consultants which has contributed to improved dairy business capability by actively providing one-on-one business mentoring on finance and farm transition.
- A collaborative effort between DPI NSW, Murray Dairy and Dairy NSW through the Dairy Industry Fund focussing on developing and delivering Farm Business Management projects to farmers and service providers, based on guidance from market research into barriers of adoption of industry standard FBM skills and processes in NSW.
- Through funding support from Gardiner Foundation the Young Dairy Network was supported in their Study Tour – Paddock to Plate – 'What consumer trends mean for the future of dairy' and to participate in a workshop on 'Fearless Leadership'.
- A partnership with Goulburn Broken CMA and North East CMA, saw the delivery of a series of on-farm workshops to help raise awareness of soil management techniques including opportunities to discuss options for soil management to get the best from your pastures or crops, including remediation of potential issues.
- Through supporting funding and partnership with Murray Local Land Services and Murray Dairy, soil moisture probes have been installed across three separate sites, each operating under different management regimes within the Riverina region. The project enables farmers to fully understand and appreciate the use of soil moisture technology to help drive on farm decisions.

Networks

Supporting networks is an important mechanism to engage with industry across the region to identify issues and opportunities and support the delivery of programs and services.

Regional Network Groups and Regional Extension and Education Committee

Murray Dairy, along with Dairy Australia and the State Government, utilises farmer participation in **Regional Network Groups (RNGs)** and the **Regional Extension and Education Committee (REEC)** to help identify and prioritise future dairy industry projects, courses and events.

Murray Dairy continues to host RNG meetings across the region 3–4 times a year, which are open to all farmers and service providers. Overarching the RNGs is the REEC which is a sub committee supported by Murray Dairy. The main role of the REEC is to work through the priorities identified by the RNGs and determine appropriate actions. The information provided to the REEC from the RNGs helps service providers build their businesses plans and align their funding and priorities.

In total 216 people participated in either a REEC or RNG meeting during the year. Of those, 164 participants were farmers. Meetings were held in locations across the Murray Dairy region including Kyabram, Gunbower, Finley, Cohuna, Gunbower, Numurkah, Echuca and Tatura.

Dairy Business Networks

Dairy Business Networks (DBN's) are closed discussion groups which focus on farm financials and business development, goals and strategies. Collectively during the 2018–19 year, 155 farmers, 18 service providers and 19 others attended a dairy business network group, which receive funding support through Dairy Australia.

Agronomy Network

The generation of a 75 member Agronomy Network demonstrates the importance of having a learning platform for agronomists and others working in the technical feedbase sector including dairy industry professionals and researchers. The Agronomy Network has been an extremely valuable vehicle for Murray Dairy to connect with agronomists working directly with farmers on the ground. Murray Dairy continues to host the Agronomy Network enabling agronomists to undertake peer to peer learning, hear about the latest research development and extension and gain access to professional development.

Young Dairy Network (YDN)



The Murray Dairy YDN is specifically designed to address the needs and interests of young farmers and service providers or newer entrants to the dairy industry. It provides opportunities for networking, personal and professional development, peer-to-peer learning and exposure to technical ideas and information.

The Murray Dairy YDN is guided by a Steering Committee of representatives from across the region including dairy farmers, processors, educational institutions and service providers. The committee has welcomed some new members this year. Rachele Moon has taken on the role of YDN Chair and Nick Minogis is Deputy Chair.

Murray Dairy also maintains a number of social media pages associated with the YDN, which have proved beneficial for engaging current audiences and successful in increasing new engagement with the network. New information is posted to the Murray Dairy YDN Facebook page several times a week and is cross-promoted through the network by individuals and organisations such as Agriculture Victoria and the UDV. Murray Dairy also administers closed Facebook groups for each of the YDN Discussion Groups, which can be used as a discussion platform and to provide information about upcoming events and technical topics.

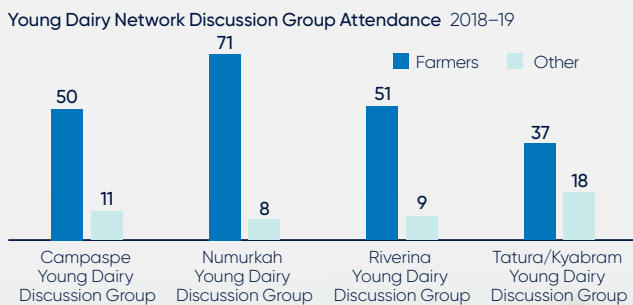
The Murray Dairy Young Dairy Network remains a strong network for young dairy farmers and industry service providers across northern Victoria and southern NSW.

Membership continues to grow, with a range of programs on offer that provide opportunities for social networking, skills building and information sharing.

Due to its success over the last 12–18 months, the Murray Dairy Young Dairy Network continues to run Young Dairy Discussion Groups as the key mechanism for engaging young farmers and service providers. Discussion Group membership has risen across four established groups: Campaspe (based around Bamawm, Lockington and Rochester); Tatura–Kyabram; Numurkah; and Riverina (based around Tocumwal, Finley and Blighty).

The YDN is connected through a range of communication channels including a bi-monthly newsletter and social media pages, which have proven beneficial not only for engaging current members but increasing engagement with the network. Closed Facebook groups keep Discussion Groups connected online and provides an opportunity for Murray Dairy to share additional information and resources to participants.

Figure 1: Young Dairy Network Participants 2018–19



These groups aim to meet monthly, providing a combination of social networking opportunities, information sharing and technical skills development for members. The benefit of this approach is that meetings are accessible and time-sensitive, which suits young farmers who find it challenging to get time away from the farm, studies and, often, young families. The regularity of these meetings helps to build stronger relationships between participants.

With the support of the YDN Coordinator, these groups develop their own schedule for guest speakers and workshops to address their interests. Dairy Australia and Murray Dairy resources are utilised to support these groups, as well external providers such as vets, agronomists, consultants and retailers. Some of the topics covered by the groups are outlined below:

Campaspe

- Alternative forages with Dan Hoch
- Lameness Prevention and Hoof Trimming with Dean Fry (Zinpro)
- Fertiliser Requirements and Nutrient Management with Brook Nichol (Nichol Trading)
- Calf Rearing and Disbudding with Ash Phipps (Rochester Vets)





Tatura/Kyabram

- Nuffield Scholarship experience and research on profit margins with Brendan Hehir
- Soil Management under maize, with a soil pit demonstration with Christian Bannan (SE Soil and Water)
- Seasonal strategies with Brian Crockart (CRC Agri)
- Feedbase alternatives with Dan Hoch
- Calf health and colostrum with Ian Gill (Tatura Vets)

Numurkah

- Milk Quality and Plant Maintenance with Hamish Hunt (Daviesway)
- Summer cropping with Chris Scott (Landmark)
- Silage Management with David Lewis (Lallemand Animal Nutrition)
- Emotional resilience and looking out for one another with 'The Unbreakable Farmer'
- Systems for animal health and welfare with Rob Bonnano

Riverina

- Transition Cow Management with Claire Flanagan (Finley Vets)
- Herd Decisions with Scott Rathbone (CRC Agri)
- Silage Management with David Lewis (Lallemand Animal Nutrition)
- Lameness Prevention and Hoof Trimming with Dean Fry (Zinpro)



Recognising that Discussion Groups aren't the preferred activity for everyone, the YDN runs additional events for a broader audience. These events include a 'Tech Talk' in the North-East, two Trivia Nights themed around Animal Health and Welfare, a series of Christmas dinners and a series of social nights under the 'Feed Shortage' campaign to encourage farmers to take a break.

The annual YDN 2019 Study Tour, themed 'From Paddock to Plate - what consumer trends mean for dairy', was held in May, which gave participants exposure to a range of businesses addressing challenges around animal health and welfare concerns, chemical use and a changing operating environment, as well as opportunities presented by new markets, consumer trends, and entrepreneurship.

The YDN is a stepping stone for young farmers and service providers who are interested in developing their leadership capabilities for other roles in the dairy industry. This year, the group was supported by the Gardiner Foundation to participate in a workshop on 'Fearless Leadership'. The workshop was also opened up to aspiring leaders across Discussion Groups, the UDV, Breed Societies and community groups. YDN continues to be a valuable network within our dairy industry with increasing engagement and opportunities to provide targeted information to key contributors of our industry.



COMMUNICATIONS

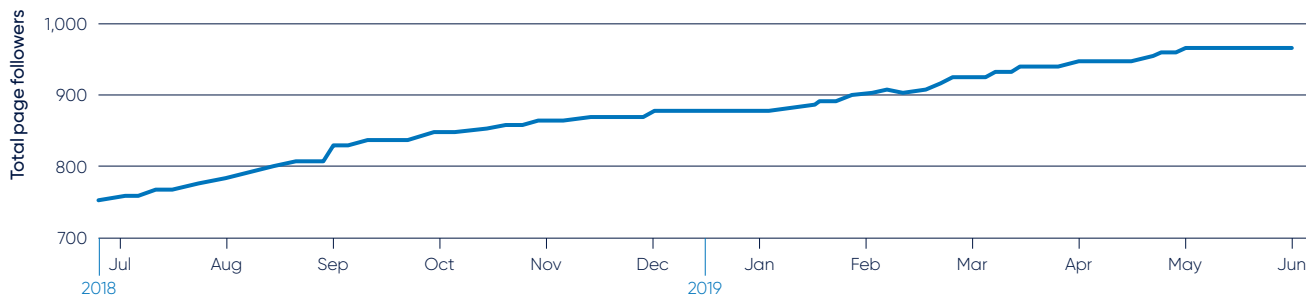
Murray Dairy uses multiple platforms to engage and communicate its services in the region and our communication effort is supported by the production team in Dairy Australia. Outlined below is a summary of some of the communication highlights throughout 2018–19 year.

- Widespread coverage of the launch of Murray Dairy's *Future Focus* regional dairy industry strategy and Stakeholder Tour, including on three major TV stations.
- Publication of a six-part Water Toolkit video series, developed in conjunction with Goulburn Murray Water, DELWP and Agriculture Victoria.
- Features on *The Murray Muster* in the Weekly Times, Country News and on ABC radio. The event was also the focus of Episode 7 of Dairy Australia's podcast.
- The filming of our 2019 national World Milk Day video 'Cheers to Milk' with community groups and businesses in Tatura.
- Murray Dairy has provided updates capturing the key messages from our seasonal events: 'Avoiding Decision Paralysis', 'Spring into Summer', 'Advance your Autumn' and 'Water in Focus'. These have been published to our website, in print media and through video.
- Murray Dairy has produced 10 monthly Situation Reports since September, providing detailed updates on conditions to better inform industry service providers and other key stakeholders.
- In December, information packages were sent directly to 1350 dairy households in the region covering support services available from industry and government.
- 350 USB sticks were loaded with tools and resources for dairy business planning were handed out to farmers at Murray Dairy events.

Murray Dairy works closely with the media to capture news about the dairy industry and community. In addition, Murray Dairy produces its own content, in the form of press releases and technical articles, for publication by media outlets. Twelve copies of the Murray Dairy monthly column were also published in the Country News, detailing Murray Dairy's upcoming events and opportunities. Twenty four editions of the eNews were produced in 2018–19, received fortnightly by over 2,000 recipients, with an average open rate of over 30%.

Facebook has seen a consistent increase in followers across both Facebook pages – Murray Dairy and Murray Dairy Young Dairy Network, resulting in a wider reach of information. There is an average of 2–3 posts published on each page weekly.

Figure 2 Total page followers: Murray Dairy, from 1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019*



*As of July 2019.

Murray Dairy has produced several high-quality videos this year that have been published to YouTube, Facebook and the Murray Dairy website

Title	Partners	Views to date
Six-part Water Toolkit series	GMW and DELWP	1.18k views
Advance your Autumn 2019 – what are my options? (Lisa Birrell and Luke Nagle, Advanced Ag)	Advanced Ag	325 views
Summer Cropping – things to think about this season (Lisa Birrell and Brad Caldwell, Landmark)	Landmark	315 views
Seven tips for better quality silage (David Lewis, Lallemand and Lachlan Marshall)	Dairy Australia	2.3k views
Seasonal updates 2018 'What can I be doing right now?' – Brian Crockart and Lisa Birrell 'Tips for summer cropping' – Brian Crockart and Lisa Birrell 'Feeding canola hay to dairy cows' – Kate Bourke 'Feed Budgeting Tools' – Lachlan Barnes	Dairy Australia	341 views
Promotional video on Taking Stock consultations	Published by Country News Online	12,501 impressions







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