We have just been through the process of compiling DairySA’s Annual Report for 2018/19 and one thing that clearly struck me was the sheer number of activities and engagements achieved by the DairySA team throughout the year. I thought it was worth relaying that information here, so you as a key player can see first-hand the broad range of resources, discussion groups, events, field days and workshops that you have the opportunity to attend throughout the year. The following is an excerpt from the DairySA Annual Report 2018/19 – full report is available online at http://bit.ly/DSA_AnnualReports

WHAT WE DO – A SNAP SHOT
FY 2019 saw DairySA drive over 85 research, development and extension activities engaging over 875 dairy farmers and industry members. This represents a 12% increase in engagement from 17/18, yet with 15 less events held than the previous year.

Over 35 Dairy Discussion Groups were held – engaging over 400 farmers – with groups including Barossa Mid-North, Flinders, Lakes, South-East, Meningie, River, Mt Jugged and Focus on Production. The strong membership of the People in Dairy DDG resulted in ten events in the South-East and Central region, with 90 farmer engagements. High numbers were also noted in the Barossa Mid-North group which saw 75 farmer engagements within four events.

Professional development courses driven by the DairySA team included ‘Occasional Counsellor’ and ‘Office Made Ready’ workshops, ‘Meet the Barrier’ business preparation, Business Fundamentals and Business Analysis courses.

The October Situation and Outlook report has just been released. Head along to an S&O update being held in SA regions in December to hear further detail from Industry Analysts. Key messages from the report include:

1. Australian dairy farmers have entered a season of record farmgate milk prices but are challenged by high input costs and an outlook for dry conditions for the rest of the year with those in northern Australia facing a second year with few feed options available
2. High input costs, variable conditions and a reduced herd size mean Australian milk production is expected to decline in 2019/20
3. Dairy commodity prices have been more buoyant than expected and global demand remains robust
4. Greater demand for higher value products in the domestic market are providing opportunities to drive growth in the supply chain
5. Farmers, particularly those in drought-affected areas, are urged to connect with Dairy Australia’s regional teams who offer a range of programs and resources to assist in the decision-making process

To access the report, visit dairyaustralia.com.au/SandOOct19
Managing your farm team in challenging times

The latest Situation & Outlook points to some seasonally difficult times ahead, and with the rising costs of feed on farm, it’s never been more important to take stock of the valuable and irreplaceable elements of your dairy business – yourself, your family, staff and your neighbours.

Prepare your Fire Safety Plan
South Australia dairying regions sit in some of the most fire-prone regions in the world. As we head into the fire season, Dairy Australia’s Dairy Farm Fire Plan is an excellent starting point to create your own fire preparation plan. Start planning now before the fire season hits in earnest, to best protect your family, staff, livestock, dairy and machinery from all types of fire threat.

Following the devastating Victorian fires in 2009, Gippsland’s dairy farmers shared the lessons they learned and produced the ‘Preparing your dairy farm for fire threat toolkit’, in collaboration with Dairy Australia and the CFA – it’s got some valuable lessons for South Australia.

The toolkit helps you to develop a fire preparation plan using the following three steps:

- Preparation: fuel breaks, power options and livestock, feed and machinery management
- Response: putting preparation into action
- Recovery: getting back to normal as soon as possible

Remember that fire preparedness is all part of working through your Emergency Response Plan which forms part of the People in Dairy website here http://bitty/PRD_FireSafety

If you would like to find out more, or any questions, please contact Dairy SA’s Kylie Boston on 0407 231 547 who is more than happy to help.

Staying Safe
During challenging situations, a number of things can happen on the farm that can end up causing a safety issue. It may be that people are undertaking tasks they are not familiar with or they are fatigued more than usual which can create increased risk. Read more about farm safety through our resources at thepeopleindairy.org.au/farmsafety.

Looking out for your team
Resilience is the willingness and capacity to accept that there will be good and bad times ahead, understanding our reactions to these experiences are normal, and putting strategies in place to manage these unforeseen events.

Being able to discuss issues openly and seeking advice can enable dairy farm businesses to work through these unforeseen events, with an accurate factual assessment of the situation. Learn more about the importance of resilience here bit.ly/dairyresilience.

Make time for an interest off-farm
In challenging times, it can be difficult to think of anything outside what is happening on your farm. Having time away (or off-farm) even for a few hours, can help clear your mind and allow you to make better decisions when back at work. This might be catching up with family and friends, sporting or community related activities, or being involved in a local group like the Young Dairy Network (YDN) or a discussion group.

If you employ people
The current situation may impact on their future employment within your farm business – it’s important to keep the lines of communication open so your staff feel informed and supported.

Before doing anything:

- Consider how you can roster staff to ensure you get some time to rest, knowing the farm is being operated in a safe manner
- Think about how you can maximise staff expertise and hours in your dairy business, as well as having adequate staff cover for leave etc.
- Consider the employment arrangements and systems you have in place, including employee entitlements.

Embrace the Festive season
The festive season and New Year period is fast approaching and everyone will be looking forward to a well-earned break if possible. The pre-Christmas period is a good time to set aside some time with staff, to pass on recognition / thanks over the last twelve months and maybe discuss directions into 2020.

Feedback and recognition is sometimes underrated by managers but can be strongly valued by employees. Take the opportunity at an end of year meeting or function to reward staff of their value, give thanks and show appreciation for their efforts over the past year. Not all rewards need to be tangible gifts, as it is often the less tangible but heartfelt thanks that have the greatest value.

Managers and owners also need to look after themselves and their families. Farm owners will often work and cover for paid staff over the Christmas break which can be a great gesture to employees, but it’s equally important that they also spend time away from the farm in Summer to rest and recalibrate for the year ahead. Catching up with other farmers can be great for friendship and support at this time of the year.

For more information or assistance on looking after people in your dairy business, head to the range of resources at thepeopleindairy.org.au.

People in Dairy Group puts workplace theory into practice

Dairy SA’s ‘People in Dairy’ Discussion Groups are some of the most engaged in the SA dairy community, ably led by Dairy SA’s Extension Officer Kylie Boston. Throughout the year, the group determines their key areas of interest in People Space, with Kylie’s mission to research, source and attract high calibre and relevant speakers.

Earlier in the year the South East arm of the People in Dairy space, please contact Kylie Boston on 0407 231 547, had 200 people join us for our meeting which was presented by Nollaig Heffernan.

Nollaig Heffernan specialises in Leadership and Organisational Psychology. Her dual-discipline background in Business and Psychology has been invaluable in helping companies and organisations to improve their performance through both their processes and their people.

Through Kylie’s leadership, the group recently revisited some of Nollaig’s approaches to the workplace, and in particular, on how to effectively plan work tasks using the theory, ‘Discounted time approach to effective planning’.

It goes something like this:

It’s common thinking on farms to work until the job is done.

This is a cumulative or adding-up approach to time which is often inefficient and stressful. It also leads to the long workdays which threaten the dairy sector’s image as a desirable place to work. A more productive mindset is to think about getting the work done in the time allowed. This mindset can be achieved by using a discounted time approach to planning, where you work backwards from a bigger picture.

- While most businesses have a five-year plan, you should at least be thinking a year out from where you are and using a yearly wall planner is ideal for this.
- Colour-coding the planner helps to visualise time on an annual basis.
- Time can then be broken down (yearly/planner → monthly/calendar → weekly/diary → daily/to-do list) to enable proactive intervention.
- Placing the colour-coded planner in a common area where it can be viewed, discussed and modified turns it into a powerful communication and time management tool for everyone, creating clear expectations and generating momentum.

At their most recent meetings, the two People in Dairy Discussion Groups enthusiastically embraced this approach to planning, and worked on their ‘Yearly Planners’. Thanks Nollaig, your theory has well and truly been put into practice!

For more information on this, or anything in the People in Dairy space, please contact Kylie Boston on 0407 231 547.
Mastitis and Colostrum management seminar highlights best practice

Nearly twenty farmers from throughout the South East gathered in Mt Gambier recently to hear research findings from University of Adelaide’s Dr Kiro Petrovski together with Felicity Wills from Coopers Animal Health, at the DairySA Mastitis and Colostrum management seminar.

Key points from Kiro Petrovski included:

- **Calf Management**
  - Use clean equipment when collecting colostrum, Kiro recommended stainless steel buckets.
  - The use of a Brix Refractometer to measure colostrum quality is preferred; a reading of more than 20-25 indicates adequate colostrum.
  - Label Colostrum clearly.

- **Mastitis Management**
  - Increase fibre percentage in early lactation.
  - “Know your Enemy with Mastitis” - take regular samples and follow the Countdown 2020 Protocols.
  - It is imperative that all staff are trained in Mastitis management.
  - Management of dry cows - and good transition cow management - can help manage risk.
  - Felicity Wills from Cooper Animal Health focussed on Rearing Healthy Calves - Colostrum Management.
  - She emphasised the three Q’s - Quickly, Quality and Quantity - to optimise the successful transfer of immunity through antibodies being absorbed by the calf, whilst highlighting the importance of passive transfer of antibodies in colostral milk for successful calf rearing.

Key messages included:

- **Quickly**: A calf fed at two hours absorbs 30% of antibodies. A calf fed at 12 hours only absorbs 5% of antibodies.
- **Quality**: “The better the quality, the less that needs to be given.”
  - Aim for 10mg/ml/lgG in the blood.
  - High quality colostrum > 50g/L.
  - There are many factors that may affect quality.
  - Animal.
  - Nutrition.
  - Vaccination.
  - Management.
  - Hygiene.

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**Quality needs to include antibodies**

Vaccination of dams at the right time prior to calving boosts antibodies in the milk to protect the calf in the first weeks of life.

**Quality of Collection**

Contaminated colostrum can cause disease in calves as the bacteria in colostrum reduces antibody absorption by calves increasing the risk of failure of passive transfer.

**Best practice storage**

Improper storage leads to bacterial overgrowth and can impact calf health.

- Disease spread.
- Antibody uptake.

**Defrosting and warming is very important**

- Should be placed in a water bath at 50 degrees. Felicity also emphasised the importance of high quality colostrum, explaining that it should be above 22% on the Brix refractometer.
- To summarise, Felicity’s “take homes” on the keys to colostrum management include:
  - Collect early.
  - Collect and store cleanly.
  - Test quality.
  - Feed early.
  - Feed enough.

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Keep cows cool this summer

As the days get longer and temperatures start to rise, you need to gear up so you are ready to respond effectively to excessive heat load events. In the hot season, one of the key roles a herd manager must play is that of the weather forecaster! If you can roughly predict when an excessive heat load event is likely to occur you can be prepared - forewarned is forearmed. The trick is to be constantly aware of the weather you have just experienced and what is likely to be coming.

**Look at the whole heat load story**

When we consider hot weather and cow comfort we tend to focus on daily maximum and minimum temperatures but these daily highs and lows only tell part of the heat load story. The length or severity of conditions is also important, as is humidity.

Relative humidity is the ‘hidden’ heat load factor and must always be taken into account when assessing cows’ heat load as relative humidity increases, the cow is less able to cool its body using evaporation – a cow’s primary mechanism for unloading heat.

A simple chart in the back of your paddock book might help you keep track, but get into the habit of using the Bureau of Meteorology website and the Cool Cows website to help monitor weather conditions – in the end relying on ‘gut feel’ may not be good enough to avoid problems.

- Probably the number one management issue for cows in hot weather is a adequate supply of cool drinking water. Remember cows will drink 150 litres per cow per day during hot weather (over 200 litres for high production cows), and it is particularly important to ensure good quality stockwater supply as cows exit the dairy shed.
  - There are a range of strategies that can help dairy cows cope with hot weather spells:
    - Running sprinklers on the dairy yard. Running sprinklers prior to cows entering the yard to help dissipate the heat held in the concrete. Once the herd is held in the yard, a guideline is to run the sprinklers ON for 3 minutes then OFF for 8 minutes.
    - Use sprinklers producing larger droplets rather than a fine mist.
    - Provide access to shade. Allocate the best quality pasture to cows on hot days.
    - If paddock feed is limited, allocate grazing to the herd at night. Cows will be cooler then, and night grazing will fit with higher diurnal concentrations of water-soluble carbohydrates in the grass.
  - There’s a host of information and strategies detailed on the Cool Cows website (pcoolcows.com.au), including a hot weather checklist covering Nutrition, Mating and Herd Management during the heat, what a heat load is and what it means for your cows. The Bureau of Meteorology website is also a valuable tool - head to bom.gov.au.

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Changes afoot for the DairySA Board

Meaghan Johnston has resigned from the DairySA Board, having been its milk processor representative for six years.

Meaghan brought an extensive knowledge of domestic and export pricing, which together with a strong focus on milk quality helped shaped the programs for dairy farmers. Serving on many dairy focussed committees – including the Australian Milk Quality Awards - and with a strong network of industry members built up over many years working in the industry, Meaghan contributed an outward looking perspective on dairy which had far-reaching benefits for SA dairyfarmers. We wish Meaghan well and would like to thank her for her valuable contribution to the DairySA Board.

**Fresh faces**

Hannah Browning, Boston Global Food Company, will take up the milk processor representative position on the DairySA Board.

Chief Operations Officer with Boston Global Food Company, has been welcomed as the new milk processing representative on the DairySA Board.

Hamish is passionate about the SA dairy industry and is keen to ‘make a material and greater contribution to the planning and execution of a successful and sustainable future’. Hamish brings a clear understanding of the full supply chain and how industry issues and opportunities translate to impacts at the farm gate.

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Mt Gambier dairyfarmer Don Stolp has joined the DairySA Board.

Mt Gambier based dairyfarmer Don Stolp has joined the DairySA Board as a farmer representative. Together with his wife Jen, Don is a shareholder of 600 cows based at Kongorong, and wanted to both give back to the industry, and to see the South East represented at a Board level.

“Having attended a Young Leadership course run by DairySA, I am also passionate about making pathways available for young people in the dairy industry, I’m looking forward to listening, learning and contributing to the Board where I can,” Don said.

Don saw it as an opportunity to ensure that dairyfarming is promoted as an attractive industry to be in, and that it continues to be recognised as an ag industry leader in technology and innovation.
Farewell David Kuchel

David Kuchel has been a stalwart member of the DairySA team for many years, and will leave a big hole when he leaves at the end of this year. David’s connection with DairySA runs deep, having been an inaugural board member in the early 1990’s and subsequently taking up the mantle of discussion group co-ordinator in the mid-2000’s. David’s passion for the dairy industry is clear — throughout the highs and lows, challenges and opportunities — he has always provided an ear, and the occasional bad joke to stir things up! We will miss you David!

How did your DairySA journey begin?
I started with DairySA in the early 1990’s. Back then, the industry structure included an organisation called QRDIC (Dairy Research and Development Corporation), and in SA we had a thing called READD (Research Extension Association for Dairying Development) — and I was a farmer member of this. When Dairy Australia was formed, the idea was to have a RDP (Regional Development Program) in each Dairy region, and to be an inaugural member of our SA RDP, and then nominated to be a farmer board member of DairySA - a position I held until mid-2001. When we sold our milking cows in 2001, I stepped away from the industry. DairySA asked me back as a team member in 2006 to deliver a Forage Skills program, and this then led to coordination of several discussion groups in our SA Central region.

Long standing contributor
My father encouraged me to be involved in the industry soon after I joined my parents in a partnership running our dairy business here at “Watergate”, Flaxley. So I remember being secretary of the Meadows branch of SADA for many years. We had a Meadows Discussion group back then as well, supported by Chris Thomas and Greg Mitchell. Wendy and I were fortunate enough to go to New Zealand on an ADFA study tour in 1992; and at this time the Flaxley Research Centre was being established, so this all enabled me to be involved in many dairy networks.

This Dairy Life
We had a freesian Stud here at Flaxley milking up to 140 cows calving all year round, in an irrigated grass based system. All our fodder requirements (except grain) were home grown. The early transition of the business to Wendy and I, a love of “watching grass grow”, and embracing the opportunities to be involved in numerous dairy community networks has well equipped me, I think, to have a broad overview of our industry and learn from other industry people. I have been very fortunate to have had some wonderful mentors (including my father), and also many solid friendships that I still value dearly.

The highs?
Meeting people, working with people, and trying to bring value to dairy farm businesses has been the highlight. There are so many good people in dairy. Building networks over the years has given me many opportunities for my self-development, and DA and DairySA have been a big part of that, for which I am very grateful. I sincerely thank them for this.

And the challenges...
It can be heart-breaking to see farming families and communities so hurt by things out of their control. The drought, $1 Litre milk, lack of Company loyalty and Feed Shortage have all impacted on how we (DairySA) engage and respond with dairy farmers. Sometimes it feels like listening and showing empathy is not enough.

‘Oops’ moments...
I fell into an irrigation drainage channel once, down on the Murray swamps, as some would remember. Not clever.

The last word
Thank you to everyone who has been part of my journey during the last 15 years. A special thanks to Verity Ingham, who has been my regional manager for most of that time, and all the team members I have worked with. You all deserve an award for putting up with my warped sense of humour! The dairy industry is a great industry for young and old to be involved in. It continues to offer great opportunities. It requires commitment and perseverance, and builds determination and resilience. I leave with a heavy heart, but I hope to be farming for a little while yet, and will always be available on the end of the phone for a chat!!

Dairy Australia has a large number of resources designed to take the hard work out of decision-making including reports on hay and grain prices, budgeting tips, production inputs and ryegrass management. Here we take a good look at Hay and Grain reports and how they can assist your purchase decisions.

Hay and grain reports essential for strong decision-making
The hay and grain reports are commissioned by Dairy Australia to provide an independent and timely assessment of hay and grain markets in each dairy region. The reports are updated 40 weeks per year and can be accessed by farmers to inform purchase decisions or audit past decisions.

Why are they created?
Farmers, government, industry advocacy and businesses across the supply chain require independently produced, unbiased data on the industry to inform strategic decisions and policy formation. Hay and grain reports provide an independent industry view, bringing together key data and insights across the supply chain and industry without any vested interest.

How are they created?
The hay and grain reports are created using data provided by the Australian Fodder Industry Association (AFIA) and Profarmer Consulting.

How are they useful to me?
Wheat prices are for the relevant stockfeed wheat available in a region (ASW, AGR, SFW1 or FED1) and F1 for barley. Hay prices are based on baled hay without weather damage, of good quality and colour. There is a wide variation in quality for hay, so prices are indicative for a mid-range product. Prices are estimates based on delivery to dairy farms with allowance for freight, storage, and marketing costs, but exclusive of GST. Actual prices may vary for quality or other reasons.

Where do I find them?
The reports are available online at dairyastralia.com.au/hayandgrain or alternatively if you’d like to receive them in your InBox, subscribe at dairyastralia.com.au/subscribe

New Feed Budgeting website takes stress out of feed management
Dairy Australia’s new Feed Budgeting website is a ‘one stop shop’ offering programs and strategies for Australian dairy farmers to manage feed planning across dairying regions, such as Taking Stock and feed budgeting strategies. Head to feed.dairyastralia.com.au

Contributors: Michael Connor (a message from the Chief), Dr Kiro Petroski (Mastitis and Colostrum-management seminar highlights best practices), David Kuchel (Farewell David Kuchel).