2018 DairySA Central Conference delves into Change

Over 120 SA dairy farmers, service providers and trade were immersed in a range of exciting and timely information around recruitment, people management, communication, herd feeding and management – and the opportunities for technology in the dairy industry – at the recent DairySA Central Conference held in Hahndorf.

With ‘Change: Explore the Potential’ as its touchstone message, guest speakers included two key Technology Leaders who detailed current and future technology available including ‘real time’ laser milk testing and its impact on dairying in the future. Consulting nutritionist Laura Tweddle outlined the pitfalls and benefits of TMR and PMR, and both Mandy Johnson and Judy Wilkinson – specialists in the ‘people’ side of businesses – offered key messages for effective recruiting and initiating successful change in dairy farm businesses respectively.

DairySA’s Chairperson Michael Connor gave delegates an overview of the role of DairySA and its current programs, and highlighted the different dairy industry groups and their roles. Dairy Australia’s Managing Director Ian Halliday presented a detailed overview of the challenges and opportunities facing the Australian dairy industry from a national and international perspective.

With social networking opportunities in the session breaks and throughout the Conference Dinner, delegates had the opportunity to connect with like-minded people in the dairy industry and to feel part of a greater whole in the SA dairy landscape.

DairySA Innovation Day on the horizon

The DairySA Innovation Day will be held at The Barn, Mt Gambier on Thursday 7 June at 9.30am. It promises to be an inspiring, thought provoking day with quality presenters who are experts in their field willing to share their experience and insights. The day is also an ideal opportunity to network with like-minded dairy industry members and service providers, with lunch and a Conference dinner providing ample time to mingle and catch up. With the recent success of the DairySA Central Conference, this one is sure to be a highlighted event on every dairy farmers calendar.

More information will be available over the coming weeks.

For further information please contact Conference Coordinator Bec Walmsley on 0418 951 324.

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What are the three secret weapons for recruitment success?

It’s critical that employers are equipped with adaptive skills in order to keep up with the unprecedented wave of change across all industries, according to best-selling business author and workplace consultant Mandy Johnson. Mandy was a founder and ex-director of Flight Centre UK and now advises on innovative ‘people’ strategies designed to transform individual and organisational results.

Effective recruitment practices also play a major part in hiring success. It’s important to be timely when considering applicants for the job, as it is often the best candidates who will be coveted for other jobs. “Make good decisions and don’t drag out the hiring process,” Mandy explained. “And it’s also important to recruit for attitude, not just work skills.”

In summary, Mandy’s three secret weapons for great recruiting includes:

1. **Sales** – compete for and keep great employees by looking at what they want rather than what YOU need/want.

2. **Speed** – leads to hiring success. Make good decisions and don’t drag out the process. The difference between bad fast hiring is doing your homework and having a strategy.

3. **Attitude** – it’s important to recruit for attitude as well as work skills. Look for a positive work ethic, past performance and demonstrated perseverance are all positive traits.


**Communication vital for successful change**

Effective communication is essential for instigating change in business, according to Farm Family Facilitator Judy Wilkinson.

Judy, a consultant specialising in Sustaining Families in Business, has over fifteen years of experience working with Agriculture groups and businesses in communication, succession planning and family business meetings and shared some valuable messages at the recent DairySA Central Conference in Hahndorf.

Judy believes family businesses have a key role to play in the future of Australian farming and has seen the success that healthy relationships can have on management and succession.

“Communication has a major impact in our lives – with family, business and community – and there are many elements required to create effective conversations,” Judy said.

*These include being clear and honest about what you think and feel, being patient and trying not to get angry, avoiding broad negative statements, and understanding that others opinions and feelings are valuable,* she added.

Delegates were challenged to identify the breakdown of communication, with many surprised that it comprises 7% verbal, 38% vocal and 55% visual.

With a theme of ‘Taking the Scary out of Change’, Judy’s presentation centred around facilitating family business meetings and encouraged delegates to recognise that:

- change activates emotions
- effective change often requires help with people’s expectations bringing clarity to the table, and using appropriate communication or language style
- listening is a key component of negotiation and mediation
- it’s important to value all participants
- there’s a communication hierarchy which builds increasing trust
- all participants should be encouraged to share their feelings.

Judy highlighted that:

- a. Conflict is normal
- b. Resolution is a skill
- c. Disconnection needs to be managed
- d. Strategic meetings are crucial to outcomes
- e. It is important to “Get it Right”.

“*It’s important to set clear boundaries between business and family which may include simple approaches such as not discussing farm matters at the dinner table, allocating time ‘off-farm’ and recognising the difference between business and family decisions – as they can all impact on our connectedness and happiness,*” Judy said.

**Further resources**

‘A Guide to Succession: Sustaining families and farms’ can be found on the People in Dairy website, by searching for ‘Succession planning’

Judy Wilkinson’s full presentation is available on the DairySA website link under ‘Library / Conferences’, or follow the link here:


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Guest presenter Mandy Johnson speaking about the secret weapons of recruitment.
And that’s a wrap... Conference attendees share their thoughts

“Thank you … for putting together a first-rate show in Hahndorf. It had all of the ingredients of an event that you should be proud of – engaged audience, great program, slick logistics and clearly a lot of love for the event.”
– Michelle Asford, Genetic Evaluation Manager, DataGene Limited
Guest presenter at the DairySA Central Conference 2018

“In a word, ‘relevance’. The Speakers were top level and all the presentations were highly relevant to the dairy industry today. I was surprised there weren’t more dairy farmers attending such a professional event and highly recommend it to all dairy farmers to take the time to work ‘on your business’ by attending a DairySA Conference.”
– Michael Krichauf, Dairyfarmer (Delaire)
DairySA Board member

“I thought the venue was perfect and well organised … I was very happy with our position.
The position we had our machine meant we did get the opportunity to talk to customers in a comfortable situation for them, no pressure.”
– Graeme Leigh, General Manager Machinery Division, New Zealand Power Farming NZ

“I was very happy with the day, it was one of the best conferences I have been to. Your topics were very relevant and the format was great. As far as an exhibitor we could not have asked for better exposure.
PS. I did inform a few dairy farmers I deal with that they missed a great day”
– Matthew Keast, Sales Manager, G & J East

Just remember the three simple rules...

Delegates at the recent DairySA Central Conference in Hahndorf were given three simple rules to remember when looking at TMR and PMR options, during an in-depth presentation by Laura Tweddle, Consulting Nutritionist from Debenham Australia.

The rules are:
1. Cows can’t read
2. Cows don’t lie
3. Cows love boring.

Explaining that cows would be happy to eat the same thing five days a week and wouldn’t know the difference and that sometimes we can overcomplicate the situation.

In essence, Laura stated that if the cows are not producing how we want them to, then it’s likely they are not eating what we want them to eat. If you are in any doubt, go back to the three simple rules.

In her presentation titled ‘Unpacking Total Mixed Ration and Partial Mixed Ration – the Real Story’, Laura examined the benefits and pitfalls of each of the systems and provided important reminders to help maximise productivity and health through rumen fill management, examining both the advantages and disadvantages of each dairy system.

Laura explained that there are several considerations to take into account including:
• Feed Quality & Feed Intake
• Rumen Fill & Feed Intake
• Feed Variation & Feed Intake
• Ration Formulation & Budgeting
• Understanding which group of cows to formulate the ration for.

The gains in a PMR System included:
• An attitude towards feed planning and feeding consistency, to maintain production
• An ability to feed with greater efficiency and less wastage
• An opportunity to maximise production for the lift in system intensity.

Likewise, Laura detailed the gains in a TMR System, which included:
• Increased input level
• Increased target production level to match
• Reduction of wastage through feeding system
• Importance of Cow Comfort.

With a Bachelor of Agricultural Science from the University of Melbourne and a Masters of Agriculture from the University of New England, specialising in animal health and nutrition, Laura now has over 17 years in the dairy nutrition industry.


Taking Stock – one on one review for your business

DairySA is offering the ‘Taking Stock’ free dairy business assessment and review service. It provides free support over the kitchen table or in the farm office with a trusted, skilled and trained advisor to assess your current business situation and help identify further assistance when or if required.

Taking Stock helps you assess your farm’s current financial and physical position including:
• understanding and managing your budget
• identifying cost saving options
• calculating pasture consumption
• managing debt and your balance sheet
• understanding additional support services that can be accessed, including counselling and health services
• creating an action plan.

To register or for more information, contact DairySA on 8766 0127 or email info@dairysa.com.au or download the flyer: http://www.dairysa.com.au/t.ashx/EventFlyers/Taking-Stock-flyer.pdf

Laser detection and milk analysis set to be a game-changer

Dairy farmers are set to benefit from cutting edge technology that is designed to track and trace milk from the minute it exits the cow, according to Australian technology company Availer.

Australian and New York based tech company Availer has twenty years experience licensing technologies out of research institutes to solve industry pain points.

The inability to track and trace products – namely, milk – has been identified as an industry risk by Dairy Australia. With support from the Fleurieu Milk Company and the SA Dairy Industry Fund, Availer is currently devising a real-time measuring device for milk, analysing fat, protein, cell count and volume which will change the landscape of dairying once it is commercialised over the next twelve months.

Titled the ‘Dairy Explorer Project’, the aim of the project is to enable farmers to increase quality and profitability of their businesses by solving the current problem of a lack of continuous assessment of milk, a process explained by Availer’s Technology Leader Jacob Thomas at the DairySA Central Conference held in March.

The project aims to be in real-time, provide objective quality and to trace the product from its infancy. Using simple in-line hardware that can be retrofitted, software that is easily accessible and by working in conjunction with existing decision making tools such as DataGene, the

Availer’s Jacob Thomas with DairySA’s Rick Hinge discuss the potential of the ‘Dairy Explorer Project for dairyfarmers.

Long term goal of the project is to link it in with a farm data platform that will assist farmers with valuable decision making for their herd and business.

Together, Dairy Australia and DairySA aim to build a sustainable and internationally competitive dairy industry for the benefit of farmers. We strive to deliver the best possible dairy research, development, extension and industry services across the entire supply chain. DairySA is just one of many examples of Your levy at Work.

For information on your local levy investments, visit www.dairysa.com.au or www.dairyaustralia.com.au
How do I select the right Variable Rate Irrigation system?

Studies undertaken at four sites across the project have shown that sites with a high level of variability in topography, soil, and crop and pasture combinations have the most to gain from a VRI system. But results also showed that the level of variability of a particular site can be difficult to identify. To get the best return for investment in a VRI system, it’s important to undertake a specific evaluation for the site prior to making purchasing and installation decisions.

1. Understand variability
An EM38 survey can assist you in understanding the topographic and soil variability across the site. The EM38 survey needs to be ground truthed with soil cores to confirm soil types and reasons for different electrical conductivity readings. When commissioning the EM38 survey consider who will produce a prescription map for the pivot if it is purchased. Some survey providers can – at an additional cost – provide the prescription map. Smarter Irrigation in Tasmania has shown that the prescription map may also need to change at least once throughout the irrigation season as waterlogging from winter reduces. Find a service provider who can monitor and adapt your control map through the season. Dairyfarmer, Vic Rodwell, who is working with WA’s Smarter Irrigation, revises his control map after each season. Dairy Farmers using VRI as part of Smarter Irrigation in Tasmania have also noted its value in enabling them to switch off areas to be cut for silage or other management while still continuing to water the rest of the pivot.

2. Undertake a RAW (Readily Available Water) assessment
It’s also essential to understand the varying requirements of different soils across the site. An assessment of the Readily Available Water (RAW) will provide a better understanding of these requirements. Soil RAWs can vary considerably. For example, it was found that the trial sites had RAW’s ranging from 6mm to almost 60mm. The prescription map will need to consider the soil RAWs in order to minimise over and under watering.

3. Consider non-watering areas
When considering how much water could be saved by VRI, it’s also important to think about how much of the pivot area would not be watered by the system, such as tracks and water troughs. This will also have an impact on saving water. VRI has the potential to increase pasture production in areas where waterlogging impedes pasture growth, by delaying the application of water to these areas while continuing to water other areas under the pivot.

4. Meeting different needs
At the start of the season – and without VRI capability – important choices must be made between allowing wetter low lying areas to dry out at the same time that other, higher soils need irrigating. Missing the correct start-up time for a pivot can also lead to pasture production losses for the season of approximately 105kg DM/ha for every day that irrigation start-up is delayed beyond the point where the soil moisture level drops below the refill point. (TIA). Matching the plants requirements throughout the season can also improve pasture quality. There are also significant economic and environmental benefits through improved utilisation of fertiliser and reduced drainage.

5. What is the potential payback
Tasmanian dairy farmer Nigel Brock believes that his investment in VRI on his 47ha pivot has paid for itself through reduced laneeway maintenance costs. Investigations by DairySA and TIA have demonstrated that based on potential water savings alone, payback for VRI on a 50ha pivot was longer than seven years, however if both water savings and additional dry matter production could be achieved the payback time dropped to less than two years.

Checklist before choosing a VRI system

1. An EM38 survey can assist you in understanding the topographic and soil variability across the site.
2. Undertake a RAW assessment to add to your understanding
3. Consider the areas that won’t require water at all, or at certain times, during the irrigation season (laneways, hay, silage paddocks)
4. Identify different water requirements across site to avoid water logging and dry areas
5. Use correct start up time
6. Match plant requirement throughout the season.

At the recent Smarter Irrigation Field Day held in the South East a panel of dairyfarmers discussed the outcomes of the three year Project. Their summaries are available on http://www.dairyingfortomorrow.com.au/tackling-specific-issues/water/smart-irrigation-for-profit/

For more information contact Monique White on 0400 972 206 or monique@dairysa.com.au

The Smarter Irrigation for Profit project is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources as part of its Rural Research and Development for Profit Programme, and Dairy Australia.

Next Gen Challenge participants.
Bottom (L-R): Haydn Pocock, Ebony King, Casey Treloar, DairySAs Bec Walmsley, Adrian Dauk.
Top (L-R): Ben Wilhelm, Reece Donhardt, Sam Martin, Josh Cavill, Craig Hamilton.

We’re linking the SA dairy community with up-to-date practical information, innovative programs and the latest research. Taking dairy into the future. Find out more at www.dairysa.com.au and www.dairyaustralia.com.au

Your Levy at Work