The 2018 DairySA Central Conference showcases change

Register today!
It’s on Thursday 8 March, 2018, Adelaide Hills Convention Centre Hahndorf

It takes professional, switched on and adaptable people to manage and thrive in the world of dairy farming in today’s complex and challenging business environment.

This year’s DairySA Central Conference ‘Change: Explore the Potential’ will deliver delegates the tools, ideas, resources and connections to help manage this change, while adding value to dairy farm businesses. Guest presenters will dive into the details around recruitment and people management in your business, the changing technology that allows milk samples to be analysed in new ways – a potential game-changer for cow management – and show you how to navigate the path to changes in your dairy business – taking the ‘scary’ out of what can sometimes be an emotionally fraught experience, particularly when managing family succession.

The Conference is also the ideal opportunity to connect with like-minded people in the dairy industry and to feel part of a greater whole in the SA dairy landscape. Meet up with new people, share ideas and insights with colleagues and other industry people and enjoy some social interaction over the post-conference catch-up in the Top Paddock and at the evening’s Closing dinner.


Head to the Registration flyer here for all the details.

For further information on the Conference, please contact Beck Burgess on 0438 262 966 or email beckburgess@dairysa.com.au
Reflections on the recent Australian Dairy Conference

DairySA’s Beck Burgess recounts her highlights

As I arrived at the Australian Dairy Conference (ADC) in Melbourne there was a buzz in the air. The fact that there were nearly 400 delegates in the room showed to me that there’s a high level of confidence in the future of our industry – and wow did it open with a punch!

 Presenters discussed the impending ‘wave of change’, warning us to buckle up as it is going to be some ride. Technology will play a huge part in how we create our products, market them (think online sales yards) and meet consumer demand (77% of pizza giant Domino’s sales are now via online sources such as Apps and through the internet). We now collect data at a faster pace, and we receive better value data for cheaper costs. As Anna Speer, Chief Executive of ‘AuctionsPlus’ suggested, we are also becoming more trusting with technology, and building rapport in an instant – think Uber and Tinder.

 As scary as it is, technology will be embraced and should be viewed as an opportunity. It is up to us as an industry to support farmers to ensure change can be made as efficiently and cost effectively as possible. The dairy industry is resilient which has been proven time and time again. Jason Clarke founder of ‘Minds at Work’ questioned the rules of tradition and habits. He suggested being brave and to look at things in another way, and to perhaps be OK to fail - after all, this is a continual process of learning and teaching resilience.

 Since taking my role with DairySA I have had many conversations with farmers about the challenges that come with how to get dairying on their own. I was intrigued by five ‘30–40 somethings’ who were willing to share their experiences of this journey. From equity partnerships, share-farming, family succession and employment there are many avenues to consider – but help is everywhere and you just need to ask. Well known dairy farming consultant John Mulvany pulled and prodded to exhume the detail of what made these farmers successful in such a short – yet what has been such a volatile – time.

 In summary, the key points from these farmers were:

 1. If it is not making you money, why have it?
 2. Mentoring – all farmers had someone to ‘chew the fat’ and talk over ideas and learn from.
 3. It is a business foremost – where are your dollars going and what are they doing?
 4. Work hard but ask lots of questions.
 5. Be brave and take calculated risks.

 And perhaps the strongest message to resonate with me was the discussion around volatility. Volatility affects all business, regardless of industry. Volatility for big business is not too dissimilar for small business and we could take a lot from the discussions had during this session. Key large industry leaders Mike McIntyre, Director, Head of Derivatives with First NZ Capital, John Harney Dominos Pizza and John Olden Mondelez Australia (think Cadbury) all had similarities in their message and it was quite simple “cost, cost, cost and then price”. Control the things you can, create certainty within your business and you take back a certain amount of control. Know where every dollar is and how it is performing in your business.

 I look forward to exploring some of these take homes further with DSA farmers over the coming months.

Join us at ‘Race about Dairy’ – Lucindale Field Days

March 16–17, ‘Elad Shed’, Lucindale Field Days, 11.45am daily

DairySA is inviting young students in Years 7–11 to join them at the Lucindale Field Days for a ‘Race about Dairy’, a fun way to learn more about the dairy industry.

Part of Dairy Australia’s successful Cows Create Careers program, ‘Race about Dairy’ will include a series of team games - such as a blindfolded ‘Taste of Dairy’ test, ‘A Milk Off’ and ‘The Butter Game’, designed for students to be engaged and actively learning about dairy and its components.

With over 38,000 Australians directly employed in dairy – and many more working in it indirectly – our industry creates jobs for generations and careers for life, so it’s important we start getting this message out early.

You’ll find us in the Elad Shed – we look forward to seeing you and the young people in your life!
Michele Golder is helping to make dairy farms a safer place

A Legendairy farmer from Jervois on the Murray River near Tailem Bend, she has been part of a committee guiding a new Dairy Australia farm safety starter kit which is being rolled out across Australian farming communities.

Michele says the new kit will contribute to a safer dairy industry and is being embraced by farmers.

“It looks at different aspects of farm safety; such as use of quad bikes and working in confined spaces, and gives information and help we need as farmers to establish safety programs and procedures,” she said.

“It will help farmers to become more aware of their health and safety obligations.”

Michele says the initiative is an important part of changing safety culture on farms and the perception of farming.

The starter kit will help to change people’s perception about farming.

“A farm is a business and workplace, not an adventure playground. People from the city see the big open spaces and think you’re there to have fun and hoon around on your quad bike; we’ve got to change that perception.”

Michele grew up on a sheep and cropping farm and worked as a nanny before marrying into dairy. “I had nothing to do with dairy until I married my husband Lawrie 40 years ago,” she said. “I remember saying as a 12-year-old that I was going to marry a farmer; I hadn’t intended a dairy farmer but that’s what happened.”

It was a steep learning curve but Michele grew to love dairying, particularly the cows. Michele and Lawrie and their six staff milk about 240 Friesians and have 100 beef cattle. They produce all their own hay and grain.

“It’s rewarding working with animals,” she said. “I like to rear the calves and see their genetics improving, while Lawrie prefers the cropping side of things.”

“The cows all have their own personalities. People laugh when you say that but when you’re with them all the time you get to know their mannerisms and what they like. It’s going to be tough to say goodbye to them when we get to the point of retiring.”

Lawrie, 65, and Michele, 59, like being farmers but are starting to look for more leisure time.

In 2009 in the midst of a bad drought they had considered relocating, retiring or restructuring, eventually opting for the latter after winning trips to Canada and USA through milk quality awards.

“We learnt a lot about feed-lots and introduced a partial mixed ration with a feed wagon. It worked well and we were amazed at how much production improved.”

The Golders have a good farm safety track record but Michele says all farmers can benefit from the new kit and adapt its information to suit their business.

“I find it difficult to create a policy from scratch so templates were important for me,” she said.

“The rollout is a proud moment for me. I was apprehensive about being involved but realise now my opinion is just as valuable as everyone else and it’s good to contribute to a safer dairy industry.”

For more information on Dairy Australia’s Farm Safety Stater Kit visit www.dairyaustralia.com.au/farm/people/farm-safety
LPA program recognises dairy assurance programs

Compliance with the new Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program requirements is as simple as registering your dairy licence number.

LPA is the red meat industry’s on-farm assurance program, which safeguards Australia’s enviable status as a world leader in red meat safety, integrity and traceability. As dairy cattle are part of the red meat value chain, dairy farmers are being encouraged by the MLA to maintain LPA accreditation.

Under the changes, which came into effect on 1 October 2017, LPA has been expanded to include biosecurity and animal welfare requirements, and livestock producers must renew their accreditation every three years.

However, dairy farmers are exempt from the LPA Learning modules and the LPA re-accreditation fee as dairy industry quality assurance programs and licensing arrangements currently address food safety, traceability, biosecurity and animal welfare requirements.

“It’s not a complicated process for dairy farmers,” says Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) President Terry Richardson. “We’re in a fortunate position in that the dairy sector already has strong assurance protocols and programs in place that mean on-farm QA programs already meet stringent food safety, traceability, biosecurity and animal welfare requirements.”

Mr Richardson advised all dairy farmers to renew their accreditation as soon as possible by logging on to the LPA Service Centre and in doing so remove themselves from the LPA random audit pool.

“As dairy cattle are part of the red meat value chain, it’s our responsibility to fulfill our responsibilities under LPA. Renewing accreditation will do this.”

Licensed dairy farmers can complete the LPA reaccreditation by:
1. Logging in to the LPA Service Centre (lpa.nlis.com.au/dairy)
2. Input your Dairy Licence Number and select whether you are also running beef cattle
3. If required update relevant LPA contact details
4. Complete the short LPA assessment
5. Complete your LPA declaration (including confirmation that you will notify LPA of any changes to the licence status of the dairy)
6. Record whether any other species or enterprise types are being run on your property.

As dairy enterprises are exempt from the LPA random audit program, they do not have to pay the $60 (plus GST) accreditation fee that other red meat producers pay every three years. Should dairy farmers choose not to renew accreditation immediately, they will remain in the LPA random audit pool. They will be contacted approximately two months before their three-yearly accreditation renewal is due.

For further information head to the following resources:
Helpline: 1800 683 111
Email: lpa@mla.com.au

NZ dairyfarm offers insight into successful systems

At the recent Australian Dairy Conference held in Melbourne, NZ dairy farmer Colin Armer detailed his experience in dairy farming over the past forty years, explaining that whilst now he may work with some big numbers, his business model is simple and, most importantly, profitable.

In 1978, Colin with his wife Dale identified the growing demand for food and took a leap into dairying commencing with share-farming 140 cows. Today, their holdings comprise 13,000 cows over 15 freehold farms (500–1200 cows on each farm) with 2000 Ha of support land.

Beginning with zero capital, the Armers focussed on profit over production, and only later invested capital into leased land. Today, their main driver is profitability, not cow productivity, and their way of achieving that is low input with no frills but sharp attention to pasture and grazing management, and productivity.

Colin Armer explained that forty years on, their company is sustainable, profitable and competitive on the world market. They have a Corporate structure, employing contract milkers on each farm and their whole system is Spring calving. With a strong focus on grazing management, the Armer Group has adopted and adapted to suit multiple large farms. Some of Colin’s key take home messages for Australian dairy farmers included:

- avoid complicated farm management systems so operators can enjoy a work/life balance and consistent profits
- ‘if you’re good, and profit focussed, the opportunity to progress into share farming is great’
- managing volatility in dairy is challenging but rewarding

Colin’s final message was that there are plenty of opportunities in dairy, challenging the delegates by asking ‘what are you going to do about them?’

For more information on the Armer Group and their activities, head to www.armergroup.co.nz/

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