Greetings from DairySA

To get you through the summer this month’s newsletter covers a range of hot topics on the DairySA radar: detailing programs such as the Young Dairy Network SA ‘Next Gen Challenge’ and the results of the latest Dairy Farm Monitor Project as well as looking at the fundamentals of managing your business, from looking after your people through to managing cows in hot weather.

With the stress of looking after land and animals in these times, it’s particularly important to look after yourself. We hope you have the opportunity to take a break away from the farm if possible, spend time with family and friends and make use of the contacts provided in this newsletter.

We wish all SA dairy folk the best for Christmas and the holiday season and, looking ahead, for what we hope will be an enjoyable and rewarding 2018.

The DairySA Board and Team

Remember to like us on Facebook (Dairy SA and Young Dairy Network SA) and follow us on Twitter to keep in touch and give us your feedback.
2016–17 Dairy Farm Monitor Project results now available

The Dairy Farm Monitor Project (DFMP) provides profitability and productivity data for a range of farms across South Australia. It allows farmers to compare their performance against other farms, and identify areas for improvement.

Now in its fifth year, the results of the 2016–17 DFMP have highlighted that despite the lower average milk price received, it was offset by above average seasonal conditions and reduced feed prices, resulting in higher profit performance compared to 2015–16.

For a more detailed analyses on the results, head to the Report located on the Dairy Australia website.


Festive season offers time for reflection and thanks

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 and thanks over the last twelve months and maybe discuss directions into 2018.

Feedback and recognition is sometimes under-rated by managers but can be strongly valued by employees. Take the opportunity at an end of year meeting or function to remind 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 Xmas break which can be a great gesture to employees, but it’s equally important that they also spend time away for 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.

DairySA’s Wellbeing Coordinator Rick Hinge supports dairy farmers across the state as part of the Tactics for Tight Times program, supported in South Australia by SA Dairy Industry Fund and PIRSA. Rick has a strong commitment to listening to people and connecting them with the most needed resources.

Rick is available to have a confidential chat at anytime over the coming months and can be contacted on 0429 225 144.

What’s new on YouTube?

DairySA has recently uploaded three fresh video clips onto the DairySA channel, including an update on the Young Dairy Network, information about the DairyFeed Tool and details on the GoodBulls App and how it can help your business.

They’re designed to give a snapshot of information for busy people on the go – short and to the point.

Jump on YouTube and search DairySA and let us know what you think!

FPFP Program aims to achieve profitable balance

DairySA is keen to hear from people who would be interested in undertaking a new Feeding Pastures For Profit program commencing for Hills & Fleurieu dairy farmers in late February 2018 at no cost.

The program aims to provide farmers with skills and tools to achieve the profitable balance between home grown feed harvest and supplement use, and to increase farmers’ skills and confidence in making decisions around pasture allocation and supplement feeding.

To find out more about this program or to register your interest, please contact Beck Burgess on 0438 262 966 or email beckburgess@dairysa.com.au
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 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 adequate supply of cool drinking water. Remember cows will drink 150 litres per cows 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.

A host of information and strategies are detailed on the Cool Cows website (www.coolcows.com.au), and includes 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 so head to [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au)

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**Are you up for a Challenge?**

☐ Are you passionate about dairy farming?
☐ Do you have a great idea or plan for your business or the dairy industry that you’d like to get started?
☐ Would you like more confidence in getting your message across to other people?
☐ Do you want some help with ‘that next step’?

If you ticked one or more of these boxes, then join the DairySA ‘Next Gen Challenge’!

The DairySA ‘Next Gen Challenge’ is for young people in the dairy industry who are ready to step up and make an impact in their business, community or the industry. It’s designed to help you develop your skills and experience in planning, preparing and delivering your message in your business, community or industry.

You will gain skills and experience in an idea or plan that you’re passionate about and will be relevant to you and your interests. Winners in each of the two categories of the Challenge will receive a $2,000 Bursary towards an agreed study tour or development opportunity.

Your idea or plan could be in the area of:

- industry or community leadership
- moving up your career ladder
- pitching a new idea or concept within your farm business
- preparing for bank (or other professional) meetings
- other circumstances where a verbal or visual presentation is required to be presented.

The ‘Next Gen Challenge’ includes a two day ‘retreat’ with other participants, a presentation to a panel, prizes for three finalists in each category, and a prize of a $2000 bursary for the overall winner in each category.

We encourage all young dairy farmers to consider this opportunity to take their ideas to the next level. To discuss the Challenge in more detail, please contact Bec Hehir on 0418 951 324 or rebecca@dairysa.com.au or join up at the ‘Next Gen Challenge’ Nomination form at DairySA/News&Events.

Entries close January 30 2018, so don’t delay.
**Tips on managing staff from ‘People in Dairy’ discussion group**

‘Getting it right is important, getting it wrong can be costly’

That’s the take home message from a recent ‘Employment Basics Workshop’ held for the South-East’s ‘People in Dairy’ Discussion Group. Fair Work Inspectors from Mount Gambier, Suzi Stephens and Natalie Goldsworthy, highlighted some important practical details that overlay staff management in every business, including the national employment standards, award wages and conditions, employment contracts, individual flexibility agreements and the importance of time books, pay slips and record keeping.

There are some very useful websites that provide a host of information in this area.

They include:

- The Fair Work Ombudsman website houses loads of information and is easily accessible [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au)
- Pastoral Award – make sure you review this regularly, especially meal breaks [www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/engagement-reward/pastoral-award.htm](http://www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/engagement-reward/pastoral-award.htm)

In addition, Harriet Keatley, a stock and real estate agent, and Principal of Ray White Keatley, had some valuable learnings to share of her experience with recruiting and managing staff within their business.

Harriet’s key messages included:

- Be sure to include a ‘reward for effort’ as a basis for the workplace culture – the culture of the business is important.
- When recruiting, advertising can be difficult, as it’s a long process to to filter through many applicants to identify those who “want to work”.
- Don’t underestimate the value of hand written resumes or video application, as it shows the applicant has a care factor, and hasn’t just taken a template taken from the internet!
- Spend time on ‘the big picture’ – not just the ‘day to day’ of running a business. While it requires a commitment, it is so important. This can be thought of as ‘working on the business’ not just ‘working in the business’.
- Good communication with staff is important. Consider holding regular meetings off site to avoid distractions from the business and to keep communication clear.
- Deal with the difficult conversation early, don’t let it fester!

If you would like any further information on any of these issues please contact DairySA’s People in Dairy Coordinator Kylie Boston on 0407 231 547 or via email on kylie@dairysa.com.au