

FARM PERFORMANCE

Ellinbank SmartFarm Innovation Open Day 2024



Walking to the Enhancing Pasture Productivity session

By Karen McLennan, GippsDairy

Over 200 people attended The Dairy Innovation Open Day held at Agriculture Victoria's Ellinbank SmartFarm on Thursday, 9 May.

There was a lot of excitement on site for the opportunity to better understand the latest research being completed and how it can apply on farm. Attendees were inspired by the three breakout sessions. Each session had a panel of presenters that included a Gippsland farmer with a connection to the research outcomes. Around $\frac{1}{4}$ of the attendees on the day were dairy farmers. The projects presented on the day were all made possible by the DairyFeedbase initiative funded through Dairy Australia, Agriculture Victoria, and Gardiner Foundation.

Session one focussed on maximising cow performance with Marlie Wright, Christie Ho and Stewart Mc Rae as panel presenters. The Smart Feeding project, simple in design and not requiring any additional inputs, has shown how reserving pasture for those cows leaving the milking shed in the second half of a herd can increase milk production.

The key points from this research include:

- Every hour cows are away from pasture, there is a reduction in milk yield of 1.9L/cow.
- This reduction in milk yield is partially due to a decrease in the amount of pasture available and the nutritive characteristics of what is left for cows that return to the paddock later in the grazing session.
- Reserving pasture and re-allocating the amount of grain for cows that are milked later are potential strategies that can mitigate the negative production effects of time away from pasture.

Stewart Mc Rae, a dairy farmer in Denison, has applied these research outcomes on his farm and has seen increased production. His farm design enabled the splitting of his herd into two groups and allocate a different paddock to each group. Stewart identifies that this may not be possible on all farms and requires additional staff time to move the two herds.

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Ellinbank SmartFarm Innovation Open Day 2024

GippsDairy Board seeking Specialist and Farmer Directors

The First 100 days project compared the milk production impacts of different dietary intakes for cows in the 100 days following calving.

This research has concluded:

- In the fresh period (0 to 30 days post-calving), feed maize with high-quality palatable, forages to achieve high intakes.
- A grain mix of wheat, barley and canola meal is better than just wheat and barley in early lactation (31 to 130 days post-calving).
- The best performing combination is maize grain plus canola meal in the fresh period, followed by a wheat, barley and canola meal mix in the early lactation period.

Session two focused on being climate prepared with Leah Marrett, Graeme Nicoll, Richard Williams, and Elyssa Mc Namara.

Graeme's key message was that an efficient dairy farm operation results in lower greenhouse gas emissions. Graeme has been monitoring his carbon emissions for over 11 years and has seen how efficiencies in the best use of forages at peak lactation have contributed to emissions reduction. Changes in the time of the calving period have assisted Graeme in using forages more efficiently, averaging 5 lactations per cow.

Information was shared on the tools being used to understand and monitor methane production in cows at Ellinbank. Future work in this space will focus on finding feed products that reduce methane production that can be used throughout a full lactation period, as well as understanding the impacts of feed products on rumen microbiome and milk production and quality. Developing a breeding value for methane emissions is the holy grail being worked towards.

For the Feeding Cool Cows Project, a better understanding of how heat events impact production is important.

Research results were shared on the impact on heat production of different forages (consumed by the cow) before during, and after heat events. Results showed that the type of forages consumed by cows before during, and after a heat event will have an impact on their thermal heat production. Better quality forages consumed during a heat event will allow cows to maintain a lower body temperature.

All attending this session were encouraged to get ahead of the curve and know your carbon number (carbon emissions).

This is supported through the Australian Dairy Carbon Calculator workshops which are currently available through Dairy Australia/ GippsDairy.

Enhancing pasture productivity was the final session with Liz Morse Mc Nabb, Anna Thomson, Grant Williams, and Kevin Smith.

There was information on the new PastureSmarts app, developed to help farmers remotely optimise the productivity of their pastures. PastureSmarts offers simple day-to-day management options, leading to pasture being grazed and conserved more effectively. More detail on this App can be found <https://dairyfeedbase.com.au/pasture-smarts/>

The Resilient Forages project outline was shared. The research aims to address the issues around pasture production and the impact of climate by examining multi species swards. Over the next five years, the project expects to gain an understanding of which multispecies sward will offer similar or improved nutritive value when compared with conventional forage systems. The project will also increase understanding on how multi-species pastures can assist to reduce methane gas emissions, decrease reliance on nitrogen fertiliser, and improve pasture persistence. Grant Williams also shared his experiences over many years of utilising multispecies and the opportunities for use on various soil types across his farm.

Without a doubt, this innovation day provided an excellent understanding of current dairy related research being undertaken at Ellinbank and other locations. For more information on any of these projects, please contact Cindy Morrison cindy.morrison@dairyaustralia.com.au



Dairy Australia Board members with David Nation (Managing Director), Karen McLennan (GippsDairy) and Clare Hill (VDIA)



East Gippsland dairy farmer Stewart McRae discussing animal nutrition and feeding strategies

GippsDairy are currently accepting applications for two Specialist and two Farmer Director positions on the GippsDairy Board.

This is a terrific opportunity for anyone working in the dairy industry to help promote a vibrant and sustainable dairy industry that provides economic, social, and environmental benefits to all participants and our wider community.

The GippsDairy Board's most recent Farmer Director appointments were Lisa Broad and Aaron Thomas. Both Lisa and Aaron saw joining the Board as an opportunity to help shape the industry and play an active role in its future.

Lisa is passionate about providing farmers with the tools to make successful business decisions through resources and education. "I wanted to be a part of an organisation that plays a role in growing the number of farmers entering the industry or staying in it long-term," she said. Lisa grew up on a dairy farm at Bass and, along with her husband, has taken an active role on dairy farms across Victoria for over 30 years. "I've always had a passion for the dairy industry and a desire to help keep it a viable and vibrant career for future generations," she said. "So, applying for the GippsDairy Board made sense as a way I could contribute to that."

GippsDairy Directors can expect to commit up to 12 days per annum, comprising: six board meetings, teleconferences, annual general meeting, a strategic planning day, sub-committee meetings, and industry events as appropriate.

Directors have the opportunity to develop a greater understanding about industry activities, especially in relation to research, extension,

and skills development. Farmer Director Aaron Thomas has been in the industry since 2007 and is now a sharefarmer in the Wellington shire. Aaron has found the experience of being a board member rewarding and challenging at the same time. "I have to remember that in terms of running programs and decisions we make at Board level, something that isn't a priority for my farm may be hugely beneficial to others," he said. "I joined the Board because I wanted to give back to the industry, and also help shape it."

For anyone that is considering applying for a Board position, both Lisa and Aaron believe you have everything to gain and nothing to lose. Aaron emphasises that "Joining the Board will help you develop skills that you can take anywhere."

Lisa encourages people to take the opportunity to join a group of likeminded people keen to ensure the future of the industry stays healthy. "The experience so far has been refreshing and fulfilling," she said. "You will be welcomed, encouraged, and embraced by existing members."

Applications must be submitted by email or post by Friday 19th July 2024 and shortlisted applicants will be interviewed in early September 2024.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information and to request an application form, please contact **Karen McLennan** at karen.mclennan@gippsdairy.com.au or **0409 179 706**.



Panel speakers at the Climate breakout session

Catch up on the latest industry insights for Gippsland

Couldn't make it to our recent Industry Updates dinner?

Catch up on the key factors driving local and international dairy markets ahead of the new season, presented by Dairy Australia's John Droppert.

Visit <https://bit.ly/GippsUpdate> or scan the QR code to watch the video.



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New Zealand – A Breadth of Insights



"Thank you to Gardiner Foundation & Australian Dairy Conference for providing me with this opportunity, it was an absolute honour being a part of this program!"

By Kristen Davis, GippsDairy

In mid-march I was fortunate enough to attend a study tour of the South Island of New Zealand through the support of Gardiner Foundation and the Australian Dairy Conference.

This experience challenged me both personally and professionally, with exposure to heightened challenges around social licence and environmental implications and legislations. This exposure prompted forward thinking to the Australian industry as we navigate changing social and environmental expectations.

This week spent in New Zealand provided exposure to varying farm and industry businesses/organisations across the supply chain, showcasing collaboration across industry but also throughout the agricultural sector to ensure the success and profitability of the food and fibre sector.

New Zealand's Dairy Industry is highly export orientated making them increasingly more vulnerable to changes in consumer demands and perceptions compared to us here in Australia. The Export revenue in the food and fibre sector equates to \$57.4 billion, with dairy making up \$26 billion of this. A resonating theme across the businesses we had exposure to was the constant forward thinking to ways of upholding their competitive advantage to maintain and grow market access.

The importance of data driven decisions to assist in supporting that competitive edge whilst maintaining profitability and sustainability was evident. Around 76% of herds within NZ herd test in comparison to our 42% here in Australia, improving robustness of data across the industry whilst support informed decision making at an individual farm level.

Both the Lincoln University Dairy Farm and South Island Dairy Demonstration Centre stand by the importance of researching, implementing and evaluating the latest research and technologies for the better of their industry now and into the future. Commercialisations of these research outputs and new innovations was at the forefront of their minds, with consistent transparent sharing of findings and progress to allow for farm benchmarking.

New Zealand prides themselves on their environmental status, with engrained values of a deep relationship of respect and reciprocity with the natural world. They are continuously encouraging to embark on more sustainable land use practices, with commitments focused towards

improving water quality and biodiversity alongside reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This brings with it number of challenges and barriers for the NZ dairy industry when it comes to environmental legislation and requirements, with processors providing incentivised programs for farms that are reaching targets and goals.

Some of these environmental requirements are:

- Restriction of 190kg of synthetic nitrogen per hectare per year.
- Requirement to have both a farm environmental plan and freshwater farm plan along with an effluent consent agreement including a dairy effluent discharge permit.
- Low pasture growth rates during the winter months in the South Island lend farmers towards alternative wintering options which provide their own environmental challenges. When intending to intensively winter graze, farmers are required to ensure that national regulations and guidelines are met, with required documentation or consensual approval taking place prior to wintering. This is aimed at helping reduce nutrient and sediment run-off and improve soil productivity.

Similar to here in Australia, themes of people and culture were strong. With one farmer saying that people are the special piece when "turning a good farm into a great farm". Without a high functioning, satisfied and empowered team the farms success is limited, with all staff requiring autonomy, value and purpose to thrive and grow.

"You are an average of the 5 people you surround yourself with", so surround yourself with those that will challenge, support and enable your growth and development. This tour has fostered lifelong friendships with dairy leaders across Australia. I couldn't have asked for a more empowering group to have spent this week with!

Experiences like these reinforce the importance of growing your networks to enhance your career whilst exposing yourself to environments that challenge your thinking and ways of working. In the dairy industry we are incredibly fortunate to have numerous opportunities to get involved in to develop ourselves. I encourage you all to put yourself out there and gain as much exposure as possible, the learning and growth that takes place is invaluable.

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New Zealand – A Breadth of Insights

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PROMOTING DAIRY

Gardiner Foundation Community Showcase Event



Join us for the Gardiner Foundation Community Showcase on Wednesday 19 June at Yallourn Golf Club from 10:30am to 2:30pm.

The Gardiner Foundation is excited to present a unique event to share the latest trends and insights from your region, provide you with a chance to network with fellow farmers and community members and play a pivotal role in shaping the future of your community.

On the day, you will hear from guest speaker Professor Jacki Schirmer. Jacki leads the Regional Wellbeing Survey team at the University of Canberra. Her research focuses on understanding how to support the wellbeing and resilience of people and communities across Australia.

Lunch will be provided, and during this time, we will be awarding the 22nd round of small community grants in partnership with the Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal (FRRR).

Towards the end of the event, we will host a community consultation session. Here, you'll have the opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing your region, and your input will help spark action.

Before attending the event, we ask you to **consider** the question: *What do you think is the biggest challenge or opportunity for your community?*



Don't miss out, register now by visiting:

<https://bit.ly/gfshowcase> or scanning the QR code.



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Dairy Australia Board visits Gippsland

By Karen McLennan, GippsDairy

Six Gippsland dairy farms were visited on 7 and 8 May 2024 by representatives from the Dairy Australia Board.

James Mann (Dairy Australia Board Chair and farmer), David Nation (Managing Director, Dairy Australia), Paul Roderick (Dairy Australia Board member and Southern QLD farmer), Professor Allan Bell (Dairy Australia Board member) and Paul Bennett (Dairy Australia Board member and Tasmanian dairy farmer) met with farmers as part of an annual visit to each of the eight dairying regions to hear about topics important to farmers and share information on current activities being focussed on both nationally and within regions.

Along with the farm visits, an open dinner was held on Tuesday 7 May in Moe with 34 attendees, and a Young Dairy Network dinner was held in Trafalgar on Wednesday 8 May with 22 attendees.

Farms were visited in Jindivick, Poowong, Inverloch, Nambrok, Foster, and Leongatha North. The focus of the visits was to speak with farmers of varying backgrounds and exposure to Dairy Australia/GippsDairy services. Across all farms visited, there was clear passion for the dairy industry and acknowledgement of the high-quality milk produced in Gippsland. Some farmers were being introduced to the resources and services that Dairy Australia/GippsDairy provide for the first time, while others have engaged with us previously.

Topics discussed during the conversations included:

- The need for cow breeds other than Holsteins to be involved in dairy research being undertaken.
- Promoting efficient farm operations amongst the broader community as evidence of a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable industry, broader than just the carbon and methane story. Making sure the whole carbon story is promoted by accounting for the regular and frequent growth of pasture and crops.
- Equipping new entrants to the dairy industry with relevant skills that can be applied during internet, power, and other technical outages, ensuring workers have both the practical and technical skills.
- Understanding further education opportunities that can be completed alongside a current dairy role where you are not required on campus full time.
- Innovation in battery storage of power, helping farmers make the best use of batteries and renewable power sources. Legislation around transferring solar power over different land titles and limits on numbers of solar panels are not supporting the needs of dairy farmers.
- Understanding Dairy Australia's role in the industry as a provider of research and extension, noting the inability for Dairy Australia to be taking on advocacy roles due to funding arrangements with the Australian Federal Government. Research is completed mostly in herd health and genetics (Datagene), feedbase and pasture and nutrition.

- The importance of taking every opportunity in schools, workplaces, sporting clubs, and community groups to promote the industry in a positive way and connect consumers to Australian dairy products. We can't take the right to farm for granted and consumer pressure remains, farmers are seeking support in this space.
- How a reducing milk pool is impacting on the Dairy Australia budget. Projects have been cut back, redevelopment of some extension programs have been delayed, resources in marketing have reduced and there is a lesser head count of staff at Dairy Australia.
- The need to secure dairy farmers for the future, and identifying and promoting varied finance options and structures for those seeking farm ownership.
- The importance of reliable access to water for irrigation areas and being able to access it easily when needed.
- That the industry as a whole has optimum use of existing manufacturing resources and facilities.
- Knowing when virtual fencing may be available for use in Victoria.
- Skilled, professional, and passionate extension staff to support the diverse needs of farmers across the Gippsland region.
- Preparing for legislative change around telehandler licensing, rearing bobby calves, and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Restrictive practices and significant government bureaucracy impacting on infrastructure projects on farm.
- Access to bulk supplies of tree seedlings to create shelter belts on farm.
- Starting succession planning early and having the right skills available to suit varying situations.

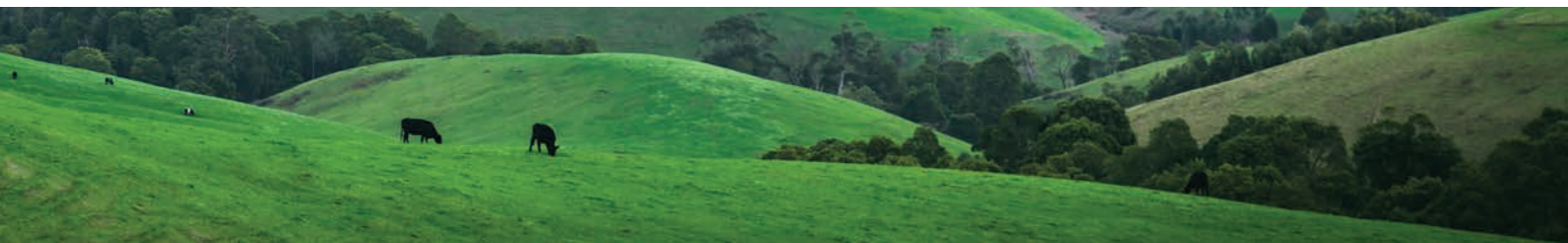
More information on these topics will be shared over coming months through our electronic fortnightly newsletter and future How Now Gippy Cow publications.

These visits also highlighted the importance of access to advocacy support to address some of these opportunities and challenges.

Dairy Australia and GippsDairy Board members gained a lot from these conversations and enjoyed the interactions with farmers and service providers. This visit has been timely to help the Dairy Australia Board better understand dairy farming in Gippsland as they begin planning the next Dairy Australia 5 year strategic plan.

MORE INFORMATION

The Dairy Australia and GippsDairy Boards are always open to opportunities for conversations with farmers. If you are interested in hosting an on-farm discussion in the future, please contact **Karen McLennan** on **0409 179 706**.



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A Circular Economy for Silage Plastic: Regional Collection and Recycling Trial Summary

By Ian Olmstead, Dairy Australia

The Australian Dairy Industry Council set a goal under the Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework to recycle 100 per cent of the silage plastic waste produced on dairy farms by 2030.

Dairy Australia supports this target and recognises consistent feedback from dairy farmers that finding an avenue for responsible disposal of silage plastic is an ongoing concern for the industry.

Project background

In January 2021, Dairy Australia was awarded a \$965,400 grant from the Australian Government under the National Product Stewardship Investment Fund. The grant has allowed Dairy Australia to fund research into the development of a national product stewardship program for silage plastics.

The project was designed to address a problematic industry waste stream and assist the Australian Dairy Industry Council meet industry recycling targets. The project has three phases, including a silage plastic collection and recycling trial in the dairy region of Western Victoria ('regional trial').

The aim of the regional trial was to carry out an extended, on-the-ground assessment of the silage plastic collection and recycling systems proposed in preliminary work carried out by MRA Consulting while validating key assumptions underpinning the design for a national program.

A critical aspect of the trial was to gather farmer feedback while also gaining experience with, and challenge testing, downstream aspects of running a farm plastic collection and recycling service. This included processes such as engaging waste collectors/transporters, evaluating the quality of the silage plastic collected, and the capacity of the recycling industry to produce valued products with suitable end-markets.

The project also sought information on the user experience of key stakeholders within the plastics management chain, ensuring that the industry was armed with the necessary information to launch a cost-effective, practical, and sustainable silage plastic collection and recycling program.

Silage bale wrap and silage pit cover, made from linear low-density polyethylene (LLDPE) and low-density polyethylene (LDPE) respectively, were the materials targeted during the trial.

Combined, there are approximately 8,800 tonnes of these products used in Australia each year.

The method

Following an expression of interest process, which saw almost 160 farms in western Victoria seek to participate, 92 farms were recruited to be part of the regional trial.

Farms were selected based on location, herd size, silage use, farm type and willingness to undertake basic cleaning and storage of the silage plastic. Participating farms were provided with purpose-built recycling bins and clear plastic bin liners for storing their used silage plastic.

Farms were also allocated an individual farm number and educational resources to help farm staff understand how to prepare the plastic as well as arrange for collection or drop-off of the plastic for recycling.

Working with local councils, five waste transfer stations in the region were made available for free drop-off of plastics, while local contractors provided on-farm collection of the plastic for a fee.

The plastic collected was aggregated at one of the participating waste transfer sites (Corangamite Landfill) before being transported to Olympic Polymers – a plastics recycler in Clayton, Victoria that could process the LLDPE/LLDPE materials collected.

The 'bin and liner system' – used by Plasback in its successful silage plastic recycling program in New Zealand – was selected based on several features.



The clear liners contain the silage bale wrap, making it easier to handle and keep clear of contamination during storage and transport. The clear liners also provide a means for checking for contamination prior to acceptance of the plastic by the service provider, while a liner full of plastic acts a unit of volume to keep track of material flows and charge service fees to users.

The use of a bin and liner system also provides flexibility in on-farm storage volumes that a traditional skip bin waste collection service does not, allowing for more cost-effective plastic collection for farmers.

Over the course of the regional trial, 64 tonnes of silage plastic was collected and recycled – equating to approximately 50,000 silage bales.

KEY OUTCOMES

Most farmers responded well to the bin and liner (or bulk bag system) supplied. All of the plastic collected was suitable for recycling with very low rates of contamination:

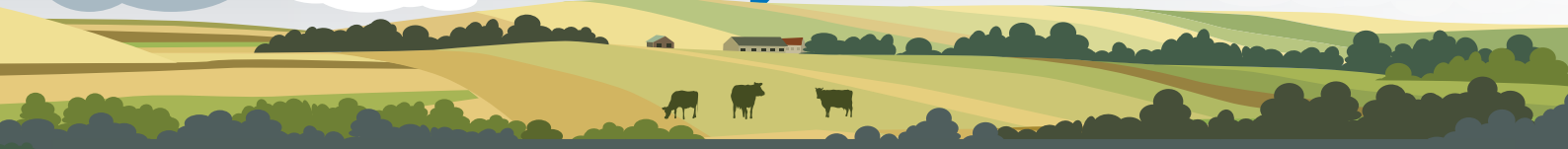
- On average, 72 per cent of survey respondents found the bin and liner storage system suitable for their needs.
- On average, 93 per cent of survey respondents said the cleaning requirements were not too strict or difficult to meet.
- On average, 94 per cent of survey respondents said the educational material supplied were easy to understand and follow.

Farmers appreciated having a choice between either free drop-off of plastic at local collection points or arranging for paid on-farm collection of the plastic. On average, 60 per cent of survey respondents said they would drop their plastic at temporary collection point, while 30 per cent said they would rather pay for on-farm collection.

The cost of the preferred collection model is comparable to current best practice.

Overall, the regional trial provided the Dairy Australia team with a huge number of learnings that will be used to inform the ongoing development of a long-term solution for collecting and recycling silage plastic in Australia.

Hoofing around Gippy town



DATE	TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
Thursday 6 June 2024	11:00am-1:00pm	Farming with My Team – Day 1 National	Online
Wednesday 12 June 2024	10:00am-3:00pm	Pastures 101 – MID	Nambrok
Thursday 13 June 2024	10:00am-3:00pm	Pastures 101 – West Gippsland	West Gippsland
Friday 14 June 2024	10:00am-3:00pm	Pastures 101 – South Gippsland	South Gippsland
Monday 15 July 2024	12:00pm-1:30pm	Dairy Farm Business Analysis – Day 1 National	Online

OTHER GIPPSLAND EVENTS

Wednesday 19 June 2024	10:30am-2:30pm	Gardiner Foundation Community Showcase	Yallourn
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Save the date!



HERD'25

12-13 March 2025 | Bendigo



Upcoming events

To view and register for any of our upcoming events, visit the GippsDairy events calendar:
<https://bit.ly/GippsDairyEventsCalendar>
 or scan the QR Code.



Hay and Grain reports

Scan the QR codes or visit the Industry Statistics page of the Dairy Australia website to view the most recent hay and grain figures.

Hay Report



Grain Report



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