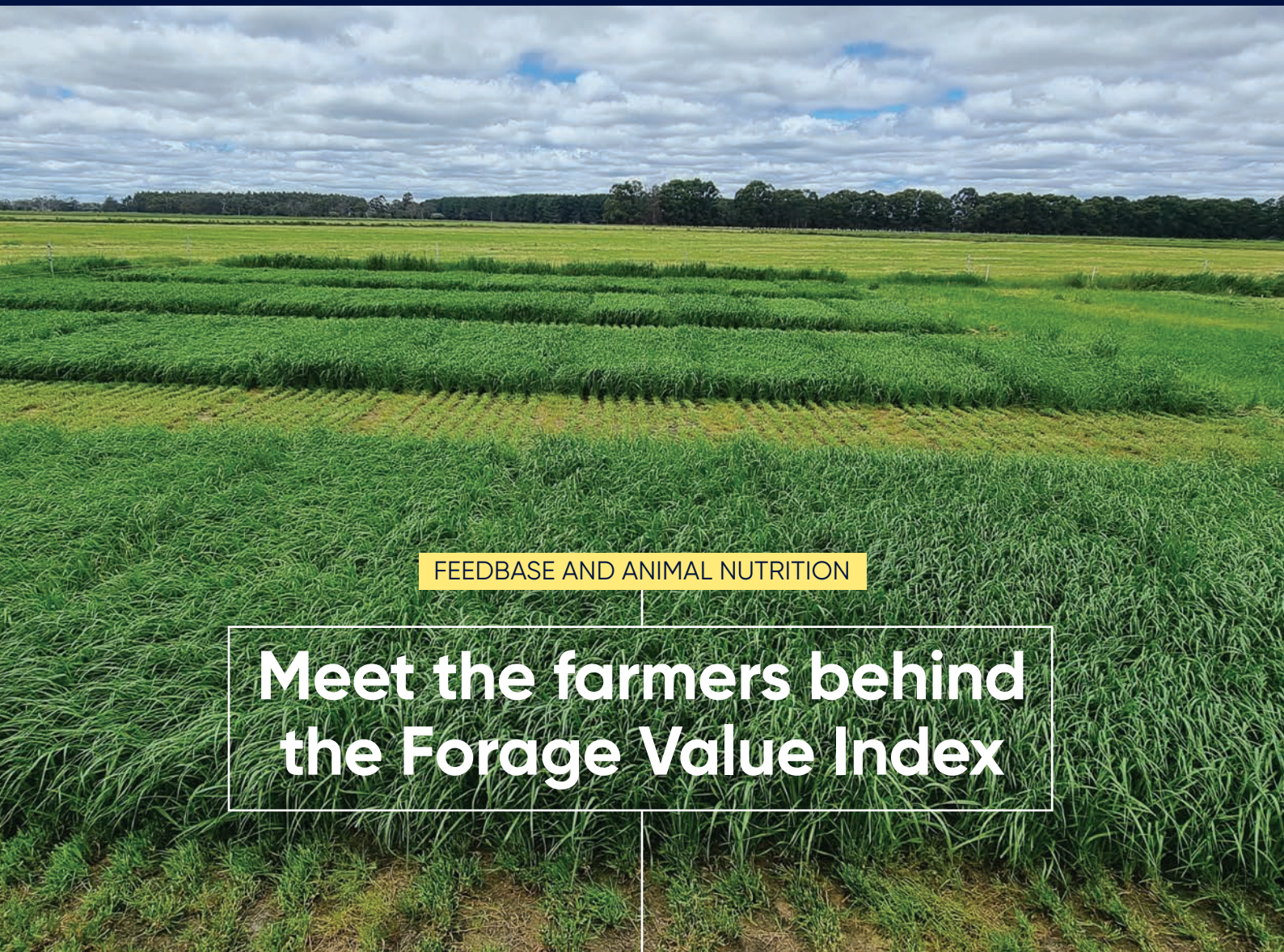


# How Now Gippy Cow



A GIPPSDAIRY PUBLICATION – ISSUE 310 – MARCH 2025



FEEDBASE AND ANIMAL NUTRITION

## Meet the farmers behind the Forage Value Index

By Ruairi McDonnell, FVI Project Lead for Dairy Australia

Dairy Australia's Forage Value Index (FVI) has been updated for the 2025 pasture sowing season, giving farmers and service providers access to independent and unbiased information on the most profitable varieties of perennial, annual and Italian ryegrass.

The FVI uses data from 37 trial sites across the ryegrass pasture growing regions of Australia. The vast majority of trial data comes from the Pasture Trial Network (PTN), a partnership between Dairy Australia

(DA), Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) and leading Australian seed companies.

The 2025 FVI includes a number of new innovations, including perennial ryegrass lists now adding forage quality data for the first time. The perennial FVI lists also now contain a Dry Matter and Metabolisable Energy value for each variety, ensuring seasonal yield and forage quality are both reflected in the overall FVI value for each variety.

CONTINUED OVER

# RAMPAGE

**NOTMAN**  
PASTURE SEEDS

**Our #1 annual ryegrass**

Cropmark  
**Rampage**  
Annual Ryegrass





Meet the farmers behind the Forage Value Index

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Figure 1. Map of trial locations across South-eastern Australia used in the 2025 FVI.



Andrew Cavill has hosted FVI trials on his South Australian farm.

Andrew Cavill utilises the FVI for his 260ha farm at Bool Lagoon in South Australia, where he milks 750 cows on a predominantly irrigated farm. His farm hosted irrigated perennial and Italian ryegrass PTN trials sown in autumn 2023.

Having seen the value that improved animal genetic innovations – such as genomic selection – has had on his business, he is a keen supporter of resources and tools such as the FVI and PTN to improve adoption of superior pasture genetics too.

“From our perspective, it’s really important to be involved in industry initiatives to help farmers become more informed about the best ryegrass varieties to select for sowing,” Cavill explains.

“Pasture production is the foundation of our business and, given our reliance on irrigated pasture, I’m really keen to access unbiased and reliable information on varieties with the best summer yield. Being able to access data on seasonal dry matter yield of different varieties via the FVI and PTN is invaluable.

“I’m looking forward to the completion of the three-year perennial ryegrass trial on our property in autumn 2026 and the inclusion of these results in the FVI and the PTN.”



Peta and Benn Thexton see the importance of having flood irrigated variety trials as part of the FVI.

For Gippsland farmer Benn Thexton – who with wife, Peta, operates the Thexton Farm Group milking over 2,000 cows on approximately 1,500 hectares in the Macalister Irrigation District (MID) and Gormandale – the FVI is invaluable.

Maximising milk production from perennial ryegrass pasture is a key theme for their business and an important component is the selecting the most profitable varieties of ryegrass. In autumn 2023, a flood irrigated PTN perennial ryegrass variety trial was sown at Nambrok on one of their farms.

“Ryegrass is such an important part of our business, and we were really keen to take the opportunity to host a PTN trial site for the benefit of the industry at one of our irrigated MID farms,” says Thexton.

“While the FVI and the PTN provide important independent trial data to farmers, we felt that having a flood irrigated perennial ryegrass trial in the MID region would really allow us to assess the performance of leading varieties under typical local conditions.

“We are pleased to support the collection of this trial data and looking forward to seeing how the leading industry varieties perform in the trial when it is completed in 2026, and the results are made available.”

Farming at Dorrigo the mid-north coast of New South Wales with his son Harrison, who also has a professional background as an agronomist, Adam Darley is excited to be a part of the 2025 PTN trial program. Milking over 400 cows in their year-round calving system and having just invested in a new 50-bale rotary shed, improved pasture production is a major focus of their business.

“We are really looking forward to having some local data from our farm to contribute to industry initiatives like the FVI and PTN,” says Adam.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Meet the farmers behind the Forage Value Index

“Here in Dorrigo, we have an altitude of 750m above sea level and annual mean rainfall of 1,600mm, so during the winter and spring months ryegrass is the most important source of grazed pasture on our farm. In recent years we have focused on Italian ryegrass varieties that have a later maturity as they suit our system quite well.

Being able to support industry initiatives like this that provide impartial and independent data on ryegrass variety performance will be valuable for many NSW farmers.”

Mark Billing, the President of the Dairy Farmers Association of Victoria, milks 400 cows on a pasture-based farm at Colac in South west Victoria and is currently hosting a PTN trial site.

“I think the Forage Value Index is a highly valuable initiative for the industry to help select the best ryegrass varieties, and has benefits too for the broader industry” Billing says.

“We have sown newer varieties for several years now and it was really reassuring to see that the FVI confirmed what we already experienced on our farm when it first came out a few years back, in terms of the best performing varieties.

“We jumped at the opportunity to host a PTN trial that contributes to the FVI, over the last couple of years. This season was particularly challenging in the south-west and much drier than normal.

“The perennial ryegrass trial is about to enter its third year, and I’m very interested to see which varieties held up best in the tough seasonal conditions once the trial is concluded next year.

“I’d encourage farmers to check the new FVI listings for 2025 before buying seed to ensure they are selecting a profitable variety.”



Caption: Cows grazing on the Darley’s dairy farm in Dorrigo, NSW

MORE INFORMATION

To access the FVI 2025 tables, visit: [dairyaustralia.com.au/fvi](http://dairyaustralia.com.au/fvi) or scan the QR code.



BOARD BLOG

Different journeys will still lead to success

Hi! Welcome to a new feature called “Board blog” where GippsDairy board members will provide a short article about themselves and/or what’s happening in the Gippsland dairy industry.

By Ken Lawrence, dairy farmer and GippsDairy Board Deputy Chair



I’m Ken Lawrence and I have just started my second term on the board as a Farmer Director and am currently the Deputy Chair.

My dairy journey began as a 23-year-old when I started helping out at a relative’s farm on a weekend. This later morphed into a full-time position on-farm.

Approximately six years later and newly married, my wife Jill and I moved to Darnum in West Gippsland where we share-farmed for the next nine years. In 2000, we purchased our own farm in Jindivick.

Along the way we’ve had our ups and downs and it hasn’t been easy, but dairy has been an incredible opportunity for wealth creation for us. Too often we hear people say that this kind of journey is not achievable now, but I beg to differ – I know of several young couples that are forging a career in dairy, rapidly building their assets through stock numbers and investing in property and/or shares.

As farms get bigger and more expensive, we perhaps need to look at ownership structures other than sole traders to share the debt burden. My motto has been that big cows have little cows, which grow into big cows. Tractors and machinery cost money to buy, money to maintain, and then cost more money to replace. Prioritising where to spend money and exploring less traditional business structures can help you in the long run to achieve your goals.

At GippsDairy and Dairy Australia there is a huge wealth of knowledge and resources available to assist farmers at any stage in their farming journey. We regularly advertise courses that are coming up but the team is always there to assist individuals with any specific enquiries.



Colleen Bye 0467 533 003  
Steve Fallon 0427 352 231  
Wayne McKay 0419 486 282



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# GippsDairy Muster

Farming into the Future

Imagine | Inquire | Innovate

## Meet our speakers



### Innovations in monitoring animal welfare and performance

Alex Turney

Alex grew up on a 250-cow dairy farm in North Island, New Zealand and has been involved in Australian agriculture and agribusiness for over 25 years. Alex has first-hand experience across pigs, poultry, dairy and feedlot, and the feedmill & premix segments. Over the last 14 years with Lallemand, Alex has been involved in forage conservation, feed additives, and other leading technologies like SmaXtec. Alex has a keen interest in helping farmers make profitable decisions based on sound technologies.



### Utilising drones on farm

Jason Hornbuckle

Jason Hornbuckle has a long history in the IT industry, but has always been passionate about farming and rural life. Over the past 10 years, he has managed a hay sales and contracting business alongside a small beef cattle operation in West Gippsland.

Recently, he has expanded into the emerging agricultural drone sector, starting Bunyip River Ag Drone Services, offering contract drone spraying and spreading. Jason sees this as the perfect blend of his extensive experience in both agriculture and the technology sector. He is excited to expand the possibilities of how drones can assist in modern dairy operations.



### PastureSmarts update

Allan Cameron

Allan Cameron was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Gardiner Foundation in September 2021. Allan's professional career has been spent in rural and regional communities developing a strong background in agriculture, agribusiness, financial services and rural extension. Allan has a deep understanding of Australian agriculture and extensive relationships across stakeholders in the Australian dairy industry.



### PastureSmarts update

Wolfie Wagner

Wolfie has 35 years' experience in the livestock industry, particularly the dairy industry as a farmer, consultant, and in research. Wolfie previously worked at the Geoffrey Gardiner Dairy Foundation in establishing nationwide benchmarks for dairy farm performance and was a previous winner of the Genetics Australia Dairy Share Farmer of the Year. He has completed a Masters of Agribusiness and was a former member of the DairyTas Board. Wolfie joined agCap in 2013, and currently manages two dairy farms on King Island for Saputo Dairy Australia, and is the General Manager of PastureSmarts.



### Legislation updates

Mark Billing

Mark is a fourth-generation dairy farmer with over 40 years of experience in the industry. Mark, Sam and their four children run their dairy farming business in Larpent, South West Victoria, with 400 cows in a grassland-based system.

Mark's goals are to make a difference and give back to the industry he loves. He is president of Dairy Farmers Victoria (DFV) and is working to ease the burden on dairy farmers and promote the industry's strengths.

Outside of dairy farming Mark is a keen retired baseball player, a die-hard Ford fan, skilled in incident management and response and with strong research experience.



### Virtual herding

Brett Good

Brett Good has a long history of management experience both in and out of the dairy industry. He has been involved in the management of all types of milking plants, including a large-scale robotic dairy.

Brett is currently the Head of Tasmania at HALTER, working with farmers to help make their farm businesses more productive and sustainable through the implementation of cutting edge technologies in pasture management, animal health and reproduction to drive both animal welfare and milk production.

## Event details

The GippsDairy Muster 2025 will showcase the latest trends, technologies, and practices in dairy farming. Hear insights from industry experts and local farmers on ways to enhance the future of your farm business using new and developing technologies. The Muster is being held at the Federation University Churchill campus on Wednesday 30 April from 9:30am – 2:15pm.

9:30am	Registration, morning tea and networking	
10:15am	Event welcome	Callum Moscript
10:25am	Innovations in monitoring animal welfare and performance - presentation including a panel of Gippsland and Northern Victoria farmers	Alex Turney (SmaXtech)
10:55am	Utilising drones on farm - presentation including a panel of Gippsland farmers	Jason Hornbuckle (Bunyip River Ag Drone Services)
11:40am	A word from our Major Sponsor	Allan Cameron (Gardiner Foundation)
11:45am	PastureSmarts update	Allan Cameron (Gardiner Foundation) Wolfie Wagner (PastureSmarts) David Brumby (dairy farmer)
12:05pm	Lunch	
1:05pm	Legislation updates	Mark Billing (President – Dairy Farmers Victoria)
1:25pm	Virtual herding - presentation including a panel of industry professionals and a Tasmanian dairy farmer	Brett Good (HALTER)
2:10pm	Close	Karen McLennan (GippsDairy)

To register please scan the QR code or visit: [dairyaustralia.com.au/gippsdairymuster](https://dairyaustralia.com.au/gippsdairymuster)



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## Dairy effluent management

By Environment Protection Authority Victoria

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) are conducting inspections at dairy farms across Gippsland and there are some things you can do to manage your environmental risks.

Effluent (liquid waste and sewage) produced on dairy farms is considered an industrial waste. If not managed well, dairy effluent can impact rivers, creeks, and other waterways resulting in a risk of harm to human health and the environment. Failing to prevent the discharge of dairy effluent into our waterways is not only harmful to our waterways, but it is also illegal and can result in hefty fines. Effective management of dairy effluent can produce measurable benefits and be a valuable resource for farmers in providing nutrients for the land.

Managing and capturing dairy effluent for re-use back into the soil provides producers with natural fertiliser to increase pasture growth. This can save farmers money by reducing the need to purchase fertiliser, while at the same time preventing a financial penalty from the environmental regulator for illegal discharges. Managing effluent appropriately also helps farms avoid the impacts to their reputation which could also risk jeopardising contracts with milk production companies if they are subject to regulation or fines for mismanaging effluent.

During recent inspections of farms across the Gippsland region, Environment Protection Authority (EPA) authorised officers discovered poor dairy effluent management and other non-compliances with the Environment Protection Act 2017 at over 64% of the 53 farms inspected. Having a good dairy effluent management plan enables the producer to meet regulatory and compliance requirements, avoid sizeable fines or sanctions, and saves money in the long run.

There are many resources available to help farmers manage effluent on dairy farms, including examples of best practice on farms across Gippsland:

1. EPA Guidelines
2. Dairy Australia on effluent management
3. AgVic - Managing effluent
4. Dairy Australia - Fert\$mart

Being aware of, and complying with, environmental regulations and seeking better ways to manage dairy effluent is beneficial to the environment, farmers, and the industry as a whole.

## MORE INFORMATION

For further help and guidance, visit: [epa.vic.gov.au](http://epa.vic.gov.au)

## COMMUNITY

## The Grass Isn't Always Greener

By Davina Warman, Rural Financial Counselling Service Gippsland

Have you ever caught yourself gazing across the fence, wondering if your neighbour's life is easier, their work less demanding? They seem to have it all figured out. It's a familiar feeling for many of us—a quiet comparison that sneaks into our minds.

It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking others have it better. Maybe you've scrolled through social media and seen photos of someone else's shiny new equipment, or perhaps you've heard stories about neighbours expanding their operations while you're just trying to stay afloat. But remember: what we see is only part of the story. The "greener grass" we envy might come with its own set of weeds—financial stress, family tensions, or sleepless nights worrying about the next season. Everyone faces challenges; they just don't always show them. Instead of comparing yourself to others, try focusing on what makes your own patch special. Celebrate the small victories—like finally finishing that never-ending fencing job. Gratitude for what you have doesn't mean ignoring your struggles; it means recognising that even in hard times, there are things worth appreciating.

Farming, while deeply rewarding, can often feel isolating. The solitude of farming, combined with the pressures of unpredictable weather, markets, and machinery breakdowns, and general life 'busy-ness', can be challenging. Neighbours might be kilometres away, and community events can feel out of reach when there's always so much work to do. Even when we do make it into town, there's an unspoken pressure to keep up appearances—to show that everything is fine, even when it's not.

But the truth is: you're not alone. Behind every seemingly perfect business or property is someone else wrestling with their own set of challenges. And while it might feel like everyone else has it together, the reality is that many farmers share the same doubts and struggles you face; **you'd be surprised how many of your neighbours have reached out and sought help.**

Connection is key. One of the best ways to combat feelings of loneliness is by connecting with others who understand what you're going through. Small steps can make a big difference. Like reaching out to a neighbour for a cuppa or joining that community event no matter how busy you are. Sometimes just knowing someone else "gets it" is enough to lighten the load. And don't forget about family and friends. It's easy to let farm work

take over every waking moment, but carving out time for loved ones is crucial. Whether it's sitting down for dinner together or taking a quick walk around the property, these moments remind us that we're part of something bigger than ourselves.

Feeling empowered: Farming often requires resilience in the face of unpredictable conditions like droughts. Preparation not only equips us for the challenges ahead but also empowers us with a sense of control and confidence, improving both our mental and physical resilience. Programs offered by GippsDairy, Agriculture Victoria and other industry bodies as well as financial and wellbeing support services can assist in drought preparations, such as infrastructure projects like water storage improvements, stock containment areas, and soil moisture monitoring systems. By taking proactive steps now—whether through improved water management systems or pasture recovery strategies—farmers can better weather future dry periods while maintaining productivity.

**Together, let's make sure your grass stays green—not because it's perfect but because it's yours.**

If you've been feeling isolated or overwhelmed, know that help is available.

At NEX (formerly RFCS Gippsland), we've spent nearly four decades walking alongside farmers like you—listening to your stories and helping you find practical solutions for both financial and personal challenges. We understand that farming isn't just a job; it's your life's work. That's why our services are designed to support not just your business but also your wellbeing.

NEX is a not-for-profit organisation committed to delivering exceptional value through expert business planning and support to farmers and agribusinesses. With over 200 years of combined industry experience the NEX team are highly skilled and qualified counsellors, consultants and advisors, and will support clients to improve their business and personal lives – securing a more healthy and financially future.

## MORE INFORMATION

Learn more about our new services by contacting NEX today on **1300 045 747** and let's cultivate success together.

## Preparing to dry off your cows



By Lauren Foster, GippsDairy

Drying cows off can be done in different ways, with the aims being to give the udder tissue time to repair and rejuvenate before calving, treat any underlying infections in the udder and reduce the risk of new udder infections during the dry period. A minimum of six weeks, but preferably eight, is recommended between drying off and calving.

Accurate calving dates are essential for drying off so cows get enough time to rest before calving, and to ensure that withholding periods are followed for any treatments given at dry off. This is especially important if you are using a long acting intramammary antibiotic dry cow treatment.

In addition to calving dates, production needs to be monitored. Ideally cows should be producing less than 12 litres but more than five litres per day when they are dried off. This is to reduce the risk of mastitis and milk residues from intramammary dry cow products at calving.

Some things to consider when drying off:

**Will I use blanket or selective dry cow therapy in my herd?**

If possible, use selective dry cow therapy to only use antibiotic tubes in cows with a higher risk of infection based on their individual cell count and mastitis history. You can follow Dairy Australia's fact sheet or seek advice from your veterinarian as to the most suitable course of action for your farm if this is not something you have considered before - [guide-to-choose-appropriate-dry-cow-treatment-factsheet.pdf](#)

**Will I use an internal teat sealant?**

Internal teat sealants are used to protect uninfected quarters during the dry period and extend protection provided by dry cow therapy. These can provide protection to cows not receiving long acting intramammary antibiotics at dry off and provide more protection from environmental bacteria, especially in wet and muddy conditions.

**Staff training – the drying off team**

Both dry cow antibiotic therapy and internal teat sealants have the risk of making cows very sick if done poorly. Hygiene is very important to ensure no bacteria are introduced into the teat canal during this process. Dairy Australia has resources on how to dry cows off, and the two-day

Milking and Mastitis Management course also allows participants to practice this on-farm. If you require further farm specific training, contact your veterinarian.

**What about my heifers?**

The aim of the dry period for cows who have not milked before is to prepare them for calving and prevent them picking up an infection prior to calving. In herds with a high incidence of mastitis soon after calving, or very wet and muddy calving conditions, internal teat sealants can be considered in heifers.

**What vaccinations do my cows need to ensure their colostrum has good immunity for the calves?**

In addition to ensuring cows udders have time to repair prior to calving, we also need to consider the first milk they will be making, colostrum. Colostrum is packed with antibodies to provide immunity for calves in their first few weeks of life. Vaccinating cows at the right time will help to ensure the colostrum contains high levels of antibodies for specific diseases on your farm. Colostrum formation starts five-six weeks prior to the expected calving date. Therefore, cows with a short dry period or who are given vaccinations after this time will likely have reduced quality colostrum. All vaccinations and programs vary slightly so it's best to discuss your plan with your veterinarian and follow the vaccine manufacturer's advice.

**Do I need to cull any cows?**

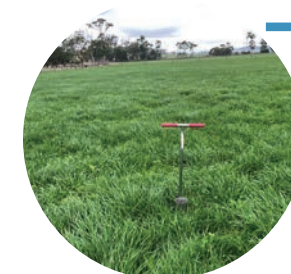
Individual cell counts and clinical mastitis cases should be considered prior to drying cows off, and culling should be considered for cows with a long term very high cell count or repeated cases of mastitis throughout the lactation. Making the decision to cull cows should be done before drying them off to ensure there are no withholding periods that need to be followed.

## MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to learn more about animal health and welfare, or are interested in attending an Animal Performance workshop, please contact Lauren Foster on **03 5624 3900** or [lauren.foster@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:lauren.foster@gippsdairy.com.au).

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## SERVICES

- Agronomic advice
- Fertiliser and Lime/Gypsum spreading and bulk deliveries
- Soil & plant tissue testing

# Hoofing around Gippy town



SAVE THE DATE		
DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
Sunday 9 March 2025	Gippsland Dairy Youth Show	Warragul
Wednesday 12 March–Thursday 13 March	Herd '25	Bendigo
Thursday 27–Friday 28 March	Farm World	Lardner Park
Friday 11–Saturday 12 April	East Gippsland Field Day	East Gippsland
Sunday 6 April–Monday 21 April	2025 World Jersey Conference	Various locations across Victoria and Southern NSW
Tuesday 22–Thursday 24 July	AFIA National Fodder Conference 2025	Gold Coast
GIPPSDAIRY EVENTS – MARCH AND APRIL 2025		
Thursday 6 March	Milking and Mastitis Management	Tinamba
Friday 7 March	YDN open farm day – Regenerative Ag and Organics	MID
Wednesday 12 March	Milking and Mastitis Management	Drouin
Thursday 13 March	Automatic Milking Systems Discussion Group	TBC
Friday 14 March	YDN South workshop	South Gippsland
Tuesday 18 March	Women in Dairy – Gippsland Jersey Factory Tour	Pakenham
Friday 21 March	YDN West workshop	West Gippsland
Wednesday 26 March	Orbost Discussion Group – Fertility	Marlo
Wednesday 2 April	Farm Business Fundamentals	Traralgon
Thursday 3 April	Yarra Valley/West Gippsland Discussion Group	Yannathan
Wednesday 9 April	MID Discussion Group	Winnindoo
Thursday 10 April	Employment Basics	Central Gippsland
Friday 11 April	YDN social event	MID
Thursday 17 April	YDN social event	South Gippsland
Thursday 24 April	YDN social event	West Gippsland
Wednesday 30 April	GippsDairy Muster 2025	Churchill

## 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



General enquiries:  
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