

How Now Gippy Cow



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PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

A professional development journey



By Meghan Lodwick, Gardiner Foundation

Traveling at 95 kilometers per hour on a jet boat in Queenstown may not seem like your typical professional development activity – but for Gippsland dairy farmer Miranda Knight, it was a thrilling end to her eight-day New Zealand study tour.

"It was my first time overseas and seeing New Zealand's leadership in dairy firsthand deepened my understanding of the industry. I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn from others who work in dairy," Miranda said.

Miranda, along with eleven other dairy professionals, participated in the 2024 Gardiner Foundation New Zealand Study Tour to enhance their industry knowledge and leadership skills. This tour was just one of many professional development activities Miranda has engaged in since starting at Ken and Jill Lawrence's Jindivick dairy farm in 2017.

"After high school, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but growing up around dairy, I decided to give it a try. I soon realised that dairy farming is more than just milking cows—it's about working outdoors with animals, and I knew I wanted to be a part of it," Miranda explained.

Ken and Jill have been pivotal in Miranda's professional growth. "They've been incredibly supportive, allowing me to take days off for TAFE and providing numerous opportunities for courses and study tours. The training is structured for working professionals, so I can directly apply what I learn on the farm," Miranda said. "Ken is a strong advocate for both on-farm and off-farm education."

Miranda has been actively involved in various farm tasks, including artificial insemination (AI), calf rearing, general herd health and pasture management. She has completed several GippsDairy short courses, including first aid, rearing healthy calves and career progression programs.

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A professional development journey

These courses have significantly enhanced her ability to contribute to the farm's operations and adopt new practices. Ken, who has been farming in Gippsland for over 30 years, said it's important to support the next generation of dairy farmers.

"The key to professional development is a genuine desire to improve. Miranda has taken the initiative to complete Cert III and IV and participate in trips with GippsDairy and Gardiner. Supporting her growth benefits both her and our farm."

Ken believes that having a clear career path is crucial for those looking to advance.

"There are diverse goals within the industry. Not everyone wants to move towards business ownership, but it's important to provide tools and training for those who do," he said.

"My own journey involved moving from an employee sharefarmer to buying a farm independently of family connections, not everyone has that generational farming background, and that doesn't necessarily reflect a person's skills or opportunities."

"The drive needs to be there, no matter what background you come from, and that's why courses and training resources are so essential to the industry."

Another component of professional development is learning from others. Miranda also participates in discussion groups facilitated by Ag-Challenge Consulting and GippsDairy, where she learns from other farmers and industry experts. These groups offer valuable insights into animal and financial management and foster a sense of community and shared learning.

"Learning from different people and their experiences has been invaluable. These networks will be important as I develop my career moving forward," Miranda said.

At 25 years old, Miranda Knight exemplifies how dedication and continuous learning can pave the way for a successful career in dairy



farming. Her journey highlights the supportive environment and abundant opportunities for professional development within the industry.

Ken sees Miranda's progress as a testament to the benefits of investing in professional development. "If it fits what's being done on the farm, then it's a green light. Supporting her career advancement is a win-win. If it means she's going places, I've done my job," he said.

Miranda and her partner, who joined the farm two years ago, have been collaborating closely with Ken and a few relief workers. The team dynamic is one of mutual support and collaboration. Recently, they completed their AI certificates and have been implementing these new skills on the farm.

Miranda's commitment to her career is also evident in her personal investments. She and her partner have purchased land and built an investment property in Warragul. They have invested in heifers and are expanding their herd on Ken's farm. Looking ahead, Miranda is considering pursuing a Diploma in Agribusiness.

Professional development is crucial on a dairy farm as it enhances workers' skills and knowledge, leading to better farm operations and productivity. Continuous learning through training opportunities enables workers like Miranda to implement innovative practices, contribute effectively to the farm's success, and prepare for future leadership roles in the industry.

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

Local and National Market Insights

Having arrived at the middle of August, Australia's annual 'silly season' around farmgate milk prices is now over, with minimum prices set, and supply contracted through to next June.

For processors, the focus turns to nailing down the last commodity sales for the spring period, and farmers will be getting on and dealing with the local idiosyncrasies of this year's weather. Taking a market analyst point of view, milk forecasts from here on will be driven by the impact of what farmers are doing.

Dairy Australia has projected a flat milk volume for this season, with production to remain just above 8 billion litres. Farmgate prices have so far tracked to the expectations contained in that forecast, but weather conditions have started to cloud the outlook. Autumn and early winter rainfall in Gippsland has been varied across the region, but other areas

along the coast were unseasonably dry – particularly western Victoria and southeast SA. Parts of WA and Tasmania also struggled, extending a difficult run for both last season. Feed availability from autumn-sown pasture has lagged in these conditions, and fodder demand is well up, with prices rising too.

Coastal New South Wales has the opposite problem, being far too wet. Under weather-related pressure, and with less cash coming in, farmers in these regions are managing risk and margins by reducing stocking rates.

As this impacts milk flows, the calculus underpinning farmgate prices may shift later in the season; holding the potential of good news for the income statement – especially if commodity prices recover. However, fodder markets are well worth keeping an eye on in the interim.



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By Zoe Carter, GippsDairy

In mid-June, the Gippsland Young Dairy Network ran a series of Calf Rearing workshops across the Macalister Irrigation District, West Gippsland, and South Gippsland.

Along with farm hosts Luke Randall, Evan Campbell, and Mitchell Jones, local veterinarians Alex Boileau and Rob Bonanno were on hand at the events to provide expert knowledge and answer questions.

Discussion topics ranged from weaning paddocks, shelters, and shedding to bedding, first aid, and collars. The host farmers provided

insights into the various challenges they have faced on their particular farms, including illnesses, and ways to overcome them. The vets were available to answer any questions attendees had about breeding time windows, pneumonia causes, testing colostrum, and blood cell counts.

The three host farms provided great contrasts in their size and operations, and it was great to see how different farms manage their calf rearing processes.

A huge thank you to our host farmers and veterinarians for sharing your time and knowledge, and to Burra Foods who provided catering for all three events.



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Dairy Learn Pathways Program 2024



By Belinda Griffin, GippsDairy

The second pilot of the Dairy Learn Pathways Program was recently completed in Gippsland. 34 students from Leongatha, Korumburra, Foster, and Neerim District secondary colleges, Bass Coast College FLOW campus, and Berry Street School Morwell completed a mix of certified theory-based and practical learning.

The program is designed to encourage secondary students into the industry by showcasing the broad range of career paths available in dairy. Once again, we were fortunate to have the support of a variety of local farmers and service providers who guided the participants throughout the course.

Some of the students finished the program with certificates of completion for Dairy Australia's Cups on, Cups off and Rearing Healthy Calves courses.

Dairy farmer Ben Vagg hosted students on-farm for the practical day of Rearing Healthy Calves. Students completed research on how calves were managed on farm with the assistance of veterinarian Jamie McNeil.

Tania and Clint Staley hosted students for day two of Cups on, Cups off, where students explored on-farm mastitis detection, and took part in cleaning and spraying teats under the guidance of veterinarian Andrew Perry.

Dairy farmers Terri Geary and Gordon Lockett held robot dairy tours on their farms. The hosts, along with representatives from LELY Gippsland, engaged students with current technology in robot milking systems.

Nicole McDonald from CQUniversity ran a session on RIASEC, a program that looks at an individual's six main areas of skills/interests and uses them to help identify potential career paths.

Hico Korumburra showed students around their facility, looking into Artificial Insemination, semen despatch, herd testing, calf dehorning and freeze branding.

Milk processors Fonterra and Burra Foods gave tours of their factories, highlighting the products or ingredients they manufacture, and discussed the different technical roles within their workplaces. The factories provided a fitting example of the breadth of career paths available in the dairy industry that are not necessarily on farm.



On the final day, students had a tour of the Ellinbank Research Farm with Joe Jacobs, giving them insights into the research currently being undertaken.

Throughout the program, students were mentored by Belinda Griffin, Zoe Carter, Nicole McDonald, Tomei Dal Pozzo, Tania Staley, Sarah Kelly, Rachel Willard - Turton and Kay-lee Bransgrove.

After completing the program, three of the participants have begun school-based apprenticeships/traineeships in dairy. A further three students are also now undertaking work experience on dairy farms.

The Dairy Learn Pathways Program is funded by the Victorian Government Secondary Schools Agricultural Fund (SSAF). A total of 60 students from seven secondary schools in Gippsland have now completed the first and second pilot programs.

MORE INFORMATION

If you are interested in being involved with future SSAF Dairy Learn Pathways Programs, please contact Belinda Griffin at belinda.griffin@gippsdairy.com.au or 0428 020 810.



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By Karen McLennan, GippsDairy

Despite several staffing changes during 2023-24, the GippsDairy Team delivered the highest number of extension events and activities in recent years.

A total of 143 extension events were delivered, up by 25% on the previous two years. Average extension attendances have been steadily increasing since COVID years, with 21 being the average number of participants for extension in 2023-24.

There were six large events with more than 100 attendees that were GippsDairy led or supported.

Event name	Date	Location	Number of attendees	Role of GippsDairy/Dairy Australia
Ladies Lunch	23 November 2023	Narkoojee Winery, Tyers	163	Support to Gippsland Women in Dairy Committee.
Jelbart Field Day – Feed pads, renewable energy and more	13 December 2023	Jelbart Dairy – Leongatha South	143	Partner with Agriculture Victoria to deliver event.
GippsDairy on Farm Muster	14 March 2024	Paul's farm, sharefarmed by Egan & Reid, Trafalgar	202	Event lead.
Growing Beef from Dairy Field Day	21 February 2024	W&S Jelbart farm, Woodleigh	100	Event lead.
Ellinbank Dairy Innovation Open Day	9 May 2024	Ellinbank Smart Farm, Ellinbank	200	Support to Gardiner Foundation and Agriculture Victoria.
Just a Farmer Screening	27 June 2024	Lardner Park function centre	170 (lunch and dinner)	Support to Gippsland Jersey and Agriculture Victoria.

These events could not be successful without the support of farmer hosts, event sponsors, and partners. Thank you to all who helped and contributed.

Farmer demand was highest this year for Milking and Mastitis Management extension, Automatic Milking Systems (AMS) Discussion Group, Young Dairy Network events, and pasture and human resource focussed extension.

External funding was secured for two key workforce attraction focussed programs in Gippsland:

1. Dairy Learn Pathways Program, funded through the Secondary Schools Agricultural Fund
2. Cows Create Careers delivery at Fulham Correctional Centre, funded through Gardiner Foundation

In May 2024, GippsDairy received feedback from 112 responses to an industry survey (30 respondents were service providers or industry representatives) to understand needs for the coming financial year. The themes from this survey will be incorporated into the 2024-25 delivery calendar; ensuring discussion groups are responding to seasonal conditions at the time of meeting, more extension for career progression and managing people, more extension on pasture innovation, a focus on energy and carbon, and more awareness of all resources available including through online self-paced learning. Expressions of interest lists for extension and access to visiting industry leaders and speakers will also inform extension planning. A calendar for 2024-25 extension and event delivery will be available soon.

The GippsDairy Board is keen to ensure that momentum generated in 2023-24 around our Gippsland dairy assets inspires and engages every dairy farm business in Gippsland. Our assets and opportunities include Ellinbank Smart Farm, the annual GippsDairy Muster and Ladies Lunch events, Cows Create Careers program expansion into non-school settings, and maintaining safe farm workplaces. GippsDairy looks forward to evolving and growing our partnerships with farmers over this season.

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Dairy Feedbase and the Smart feeding project



By Dr Josie Garner, Dairy Australia

The Dairy Feedbase research project, Smart feeding, has been uncovering better ways to use management strategies to optimise nutrient intake in pasture-based dairy farm systems.

The aim is to increase average herd milk production from the same amount of available feed. The project used innovative technologies to measure the individual feed intake of grazing dairy cows.

Through cutting-edge technologies, the Dairy Feedbase research program strives to boost on-farm profitability by providing real-time insights for informed decision-making in both the paddock and the dairy. This approach ensures optimal animal nutrition, health, welfare, and milk production, ultimately supporting sustainable and efficient dairy operations.

Managers of pasture-based dairy herds face a unique set of challenges to provide optimal nutrition. Dairy cows managed in pasture-based systems can spend several hours away from pasture each day, walking to and from the dairy and waiting at the dairy to be milked. This can result in a significant inconsistency in pasture intake of cows within a herd, leading to differences in milk production. Understanding individual cow dry matter intake is critical in enabling herd managers to formulate and feed diets that are optimal for lactating cows.

On most Australian pasture-based dairy farms, cows graze on pasture and are milked twice daily. Over recent years, herd sizes have grown substantially, but many milking facilities haven't kept up with this rapid increase in cow numbers. As a result, it's not uncommon for some cows in large herds to spend three or more hours away from the paddock at each milking event.

Spending extended periods away from the pasture can negatively impact a cow's ability to consume sufficient nutrients from grazed pasture, which is essential for maximizing production. This can also affect the uniformity of feed and nutrient intake across the herd. Generally, the first group of cows milked has access to superior quality pasture compared to the last group, which can lead to significant differences in nutrient intake.

Offering a nutritionally optimal diet to grazing dairy cows on pasture-based farms in Australia can be quite challenging. Farmers must consider many variables that influence the availability and quality of grazed pasture, such as pasture nutritive characteristics, pasture biomass, and daily allocation to the herd. Additionally, factors like infrastructure, stage of lactation, and the time cows spend away from pasture play significant roles.

Researchers at the Ellinbank Smart Farm found from experimental work that for every hour cows spend away from the paddock, there is a reduction in milk yield of 2.15kg per cow per day, or up to 5-6kg per cow per day reduction in milk yield. Milk protein percentage is also affected, with cows that arrive back to the paddock first having higher milk protein than those who return up to three hours later. This reduction in milk yield was persistent regardless of the cow's stage of lactation.

Pasture intake declines as cows wait longer at the dairy for milking. The pre-grazing pasture mass also decreases linearly over the three hours, meaning the last cows back to the paddock miss out on the majority of the available pasture cover. The energy of the pasture also declines each hour, so the last cows back to the paddock graze on pasture lower in metabolizable energy than what the first group received. Crude protein

also declines each hour, while fibre levels increase from the time the first cows return to the paddock to the last cows.

Time away from pasture also impacts profitability. The cows that arrive back to the paddock first had a net benefit of \$2.48 per cow per day more than the cows that arrived last.

A consistent difference between the first and last cows milked in a pasture-based herd presents an opportunity to develop management strategies to even out nutrient supply and milk production across the herd. This can potentially increase overall average herd milk yield without using extra feed resources. One strategy tested was reserving an allocation of fresh pasture for cows that return to the paddock later.

Experiments show that under normal conditions in a typical pasture-based dairy herd, there is an uneven supply of feed nutrients. Cows that reach the paddock first tend to eat more pasture with higher metabolizable energy and crude protein, and produce more milk than those that return later. To mitigate this uneven supply of nutrients, researchers tested an experiment replicating mini paddocks, where they offered each group of cows an even allocation of pasture separated in different strips; one strip for the cows returning immediately after milking, the next strip for the cows returning 1.5 hours after milking and the last strip for the cows returning 3 hours after milking.

While reserving fresh pasture for the later-returning cows didn't increase overall milk yield under experimental conditions, these cows did have greater feed conversion efficiency. This means they produced more milk from less feed compared to the control group. The research also highlighted that reserving fresh pasture resulted in a more even and optimised supply of nutrients to the cows, which is of considerable benefit for animal nutrition and overall performance.

This strategy was tested on a commercial dairy farm in Denison, Victoria (part of the Macalister Irrigation District) where the farmer split their large herd into two separate herds grazing separate paddocks. The findings were very promising with improvements in average daily herd milk yield of around 1.6 litres per cow.

For farmers, this means there is an opportunity to marginally increase stocking rates and milk solids yield per hectare. The lowest producing cows are typically those that return to the paddock last. By reserving fresh pasture for them by either splitting the herd or reserving a second strip in the paddock, nutrient supply can be balanced across the herd.

Another option for distributing feed resources on the farm is to reallocate the total amount of grain supplements given to the herd. Instead of each cow receiving a flat rate of concentrate supplement per day, the cows milked first are fed less, and the cows milked last are fed more concentrate.

Three grain allocations were tested during the Smart feeding project:

1. Cows milked first and returning to the paddock immediately after milking were allocated 4kg of dry matter (DM) per day.
2. Cows returning to the paddock after waiting 1.5 hours after milking received 6kg DM per day.
3. Cows returning last, after waiting 3 hours after milking, were offered 8kg DM per day.

CONTINUED OVER

Dairy Feedbase and the Smart feeding project

Overall, this reallocation of grain strategy produced marginally more milk solids during early lactation, indicating that this approach has some promise as a mitigation strategy. Economic analysis of this data shows that the reallocation of grain generated a nine cent (9c) per cow per day advantage in milk income minus feed costs. So, for a 500-cow herd this could equate to \$45 per day.

Another advantage of the reallocating grain strategy compared to reserving fresh pasture in the paddock is that it is less labour intensive and easier to implement, particularly in modern dairies. Depending on the farm system, this strategy may be another option for farmers to mitigate production loss caused by time away from pasture.

Over an entire lactation, ensuring a consistent and balanced supply of nutrients for your herd may improve negative energy balance, fertility, and reduce the incidence of health issues.

Key messages

- We recommend that farmers consider the potential impact of time away from pasture on their herd. While milk production impacts from time away from pasture are more likely to affect larger herds, the outcomes equally apply to smaller herds, especially if cows are spending more than two hours at the dairy during milking. In smaller herds, if possible, consider holding cows back from pasture until most cows are

milked to give all cows an equal opportunity to graze.

- In larger herd systems it is often not practical to hold cows back from pasture until the majority of the herd are milked. It could be important to consider the practical implications of either splitting your large herd into two smaller herds grazing separate paddocks, or reserving a fresh pasture strip for those cows arriving back to the paddock later.
- If you can individually feed different amounts of grain through your dairy feed system, consider analysing your herd's milking order and allocate grain amounts accordingly to redistribute nutrients amongst the herd.

MORE INFORMATION

If you would like more information or support, contact the GippsDairy team or visit the Dairy Feedbase website where you can find more detailed information.

<https://dairyfeedbase.com.au>

Dairy Feedbase is a collaborative initiative between Dairy Australia, Agriculture Victoria, and the Gardiner Foundation.

COMMUNITY

What is Happiness?

By Davina Warman, RFCS Gippsland

Have you ever thought about what happiness is? The Oxford Dictionary defines it as a 'feeling or showing a deep sense of pleasure or contentment, arising from satisfaction with one's circumstances or condition.'

But what is it really? Happiness is like water, it's fluid and changeable. You can consume it and be surrounded by it. It can flow both fast and slow, freeze solid, slip through your fingertips or suddenly dry up, and can taste different for everyone. And just like water, happiness is affected by the elements surrounding it. The one distinguishable difference that makes happiness unique from water, is the meaning of happiness is solely what it means to YOU.

We know, but sometimes forget, that happiness is important for both our emotional and physical health.

Let's talk about this importance in a work setting. There are many studies out there, for example, the Better Health Channel by the Victorian State Government Department of Health, which outlines the negative impacts of stress in a workplace setting "Work-related stress is the second most common compensated illness/injury in Australia, after musculoskeletal disorders." In contrast, there are also many studies out there outlining the impacts of happiness on productivity such as an article published by Forbes entitled "Finally, Proof That Happiness Does Make Us Work Better." It's not just about work; although we spend a lot of time there, happiness outside of work is also important.

The feeling of happiness encompasses more than just the lack of sadness

or stress, it reflects our general contentment and fulfillment in life. It is possible to feel happy while simultaneously experiencing apathy, disconnection, or emotional numbness. What is most important is knowing you are the driver of your own happiness as it comes from within.

We all experience hardship (are affected by the elements surrounding us). Unlike water, we don't have to adapt based on the elements surrounding us, our response to our experiences are what makes the difference. Thankfully we have the ability to learn new coping skills to help us overcome obstacles that could be blocking our happiness. Our specialised Detect & Protect Wellness team at RFCS Gippsland can help you learn coping skills.

RFCS Gippsland offer free and confidential assistance to help you get back on track with both personal wellbeing and financial wellbeing. RFCS Gippsland are deeply proud to be part of the Gippsland farming community for nearly 40 years.

If you are struggling emotionally and financially (or know someone who is), protect them and yourself by referring to the free confidential services of RFCS Gippsland. Our specialised rural financial support team will work on improving your finances whilst a dedicated wellness support officer will focus on YOU.

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Women in Dairy Ladies Lunch

THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER
10AM - 2PM, MORWELL BOWLING CLUB

All women in dairy across Gippsland, you are invited to our annual ladies lunch!

This year's theme, *Use Words*, aims to share and celebrate the knowledge, resilience, and determination of dairying women.

Connect with like-minded individuals and hear from a panel of local dairy farming ladies.



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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

