



GIPPSDAIRY

Celebrating 25 years of How Now Gippy Cow

By Karen McLennan, GippsDairy

Welcome to the 300th edition of How Now Gippy Cow, celebrating 25 years of publication.

To set the scene for the year 1999 and the first edition of How Now Gippy Cow, various events worldwide were shaping our lives.

Cher's song Believe (Do you believe in Life after Love?) was the number one song, significant preparation and planning was occurring around the millennium bug (Y2K – when all electronic equipment needed to transition from 1999 to 2000), a referendum was held on whether Australia should become a republic and make changes to its constitution, and the Euro currency was introduced in 11 European countries, creating a single market.

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Those credited with the first ever How Now Gippy Cow edition in January 1999 were:

- Janet Granger, Ellinbank (Agriculture Victoria) – Editor.
- Sandra Jefford, GippsDairy and Greg Cook, Target 10 – Key contributors.
- Meaghan Johnston, Ellinbank (Agriculture Victoria) – newsletter naming rights. Meaghan would love to say it was a call for understanding research (How now?) but more than likely, she reflects she was just trying to be witty.

The first edition was promoted as a three-in-one newsletter, bringing together information from Agriculture Victoria, Target 10 and GippsDairy. The three-in-one approach was aimed at reducing the amount of publications for the industry, and providing one single place for farmers to access information.

GippsDairy, as an organisation with a governing Board, was three years old at the time of the first edition. The team consisted of Sandra Jefford and Kaye McLennan and their main focus was on priority setting, and scoping and monitoring projects.

The team at Agriculture Victoria had two units that conducted research at Ellinbank and ran extension programs for farmers. The Target 10 project had the principal goal of increasing pasture consumption by 10% within five years on 50% of the dairy farms in Victoria. Regional Target 10 committees were comprised of farmers, service providers, factory field staff and agricultural consultants, and their main core activities were grazing management courses and on-farm management discussion groups.

Gippsland Dairy farmers featured in edition one included:

- Rocky and Wendy Murdica – Focus Farmers in Labertouche who were three years into their new dairy farm. The farm consisted of 55 hectares converted from beef to dairy where they were milking 106 cows and aiming to increase to 115. John Gallienne, Focus Farm

Project Coordinator was the article's author and there were five other Focus Farms operating across Gippsland at the time.

- The Buln Buln (West Gippsland) discussion group had visited Jenny & Colin Gray's farm and debated profitability impacts of their 120-cow milking herd being without pellets for two days. The article was titled "Turning a loss into a profit" by David Cole.
- Greg Travers from Yarram had saved \$4,000 a year by participating in the Phosphorous for Dairy Farms Project (a two-day course). Greg had contributed \$120 to receive two sets of soil analyses, soil test results and assistance in interpretation of results.
- Shirley Noble from Maffra, fairly new to the dairy industry, was part of the Welcome Aboard, Women's skill development program and had become president of the Farmlink group.

It is interesting to reflect on industry challenges and innovations in 1999 that were mentioned in the first newsletter. Tim Clark's (Ellinbank - Agriculture Victoria) article titled "The Holy Grail" was introducing milk meters as an industry game changer that had been developed over a three year period with the commercialisation process being planned.

Programs being delivered in the 1999 era included:

- The second annual Don Campbell Memorial Tour (12 participants).
- The electronic discussion group, GippsDairy-I.
- Small project grants of \$5,000. These grants were used to support industry initiatives and learning teams working with a small group of farmers on a specific topic to find the information needed to make good decisions.

It is exciting to note that many of the farmers and industry support people behind many of these projects are still involved in the Gippsland dairy industry today.

We have seen a lot of changes across the Gippsland dairy industry since 1999, as reflected in the below table.

Data source	Item	1999	2023
GippsDairy Annual reports: 1999/2000 and 2022/2023	Farmgate value of Gippsland milk production	\$570 million	\$1.3 billion
	Gippsland Dairy farms	2,700	1,028
	Milk production	1.9 billion litres	1.9 million litres
	Average milking herd	155 cows	273 cows
	Gippsland's % of Victoria's milk production	29%	35%
Dairy Base	Business performance – EBIT (Earnings before interest and tax) \$/kgMS	0.52 (2001)	1.66 (2022)
Rural Bank	Land prices – median price per hectare, Victoria	Just over \$2,000	Around \$14,000 (2022)

Across the 25 years of How Now Gippy Cow there have been articles showcasing the personalities and achievements of Gippsland dairy farmers, reports on Focus Farm goal progress, farm management reminders, dairy research results, board and staff changes, and articles to help farmers thrive despite variable seasonal conditions and climatic conditions.

In recent years, the newsletter has also been made available digitally via email. To ensure you are getting the newsletter in the format that you prefer, and to give feedback on the types of articles that you value, please email: info@gippsdairy.com.au or call: 5624 3900

Thank you

The newsletter would not be what it is without business advertising and the articles contributed by valued partners across the Gippsland dairy industry, especially Agriculture Victoria.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this newsletter from 1999 until now, and we look forward to the next 25 years.

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How Now Gippy Cow – *Mooving* through time

"I remember the (many) fantastic articles that Frank Mickan (Dairy Extension Officer, Agriculture Victoria) used to write. I recall an article with a photo of Frank Mickan pretending to eat silage.

I always like the way he was upfront and direct in his approach to writing to farmers and service providers. He was very good at communicating scientific knowledge in a practical and clear way.

I was Regional Manager for the Agriculture Victoria's dairy extension team in 2016. During this time there were some issues that significantly impacted the dairy industry in Gippsland.

The newsletter was a good way to communicate with farm businesses and service providers in a timely and targeted way. For example, we were able to communicate (and coordinate) events and support that were available to Gippsland farmers from multiple sources."

Dr Jessie Horton, Victorian Government

"The editor, Janet Granger, was really fun to work with and had such a great vision putting this together.

There were such great contributors over the years such as John Roache, Cameron Gourley, Sharon Aarons, David Nash...the list goes on.

I am a big believer in transfer of knowledge. I think the farmers that read, ask questions, and implement new things relative to the trial in their local region benefit.

I am still a bit old school and think information to farmers needs to be in both printed and digital formats. I would like to think that the publication still connects farmers to research and trials in their local areas.

It is also a way of highlighting Dairy Australia courses and open days in the area. I hope it continues to connect farmers with the awesome research in their industry going on at Ellinbank and keep the scientists at Ellinbank connected to the Gippsland farmers."

Meaghan Johnston, Bega Cheese Limited

(Formerly Ellinbank Research Farm)

'How Now Gippy Cow started as a way to provide information from GippsDairy and the research and extension units of the Department of Agriculture to Gippsland dairy farmers and the support sectors. It was distributed via tanker drop.

The best part for me were the stories about Focus Farms. Because these were real farms, with farmers prepared to discuss their issues, and we could all relate. Lots of good detail, and human stories.

At the time, extension programs were being done through Agriculture Victoria, which has now moved to GippsDairy (and the other Regional Development Offices). Hence GippsDairy was just me and an assistant. GippsDairy's role was to determine priorities, scope projects, check progress. We also funded small projects valued up to \$5000. Some projects went across regions because many issues are not specific to one region.

I clearly remember natural products such as fish and kelp were described as muck & magic by the Dept – even though some farmers were having big success, I think there's now wider interest in soil improvers, and a big growth in microbe products.'

Sandra Jefford, Wilandra Farms

(Former Executive Officer, GippsDairy)

'Localised information was presented, so it was relevant and timely for the farmers. Many key research findings have been delivered through HNGC articles.

The benefit of newsletter articles is they can't be too long, so the key messages need to be front and centre. Also, being a newsletter, farmers can access the articles whenever is suitable for them.

I hope HNGC continues for the next 25 years and continues to focus on presenting key local, relevant information to dairy farmers and the wider industry in a timely and easy to understand manner.'

Rachael Campbell, Agriculture Victoria



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Keeping your cows cool for summer 2024



By Dairy Australia

Cows start to actively manage their core body temperature when air temperature is below 5°C or above 25°C. Methods cows use to effectively shed heat include standing in water, shade, or breeze; sweating; panting and reduction in feed intake.

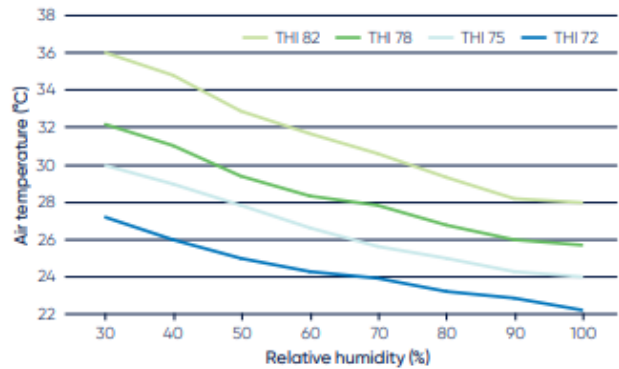
The goal of these behavioural responses is to keep core body temperature between 38.6°C to 39.3°C. The effectiveness of evaporative cooling depends on the difference in cow skin humidity and temperature

Table 1: THI at different relative humidity and air temperatures

THI	Temp	Humidity
82	35	40
82	30	70
82	28	100
72	26	40
72	24	70
72	22	100

compared to air humidity and temperature. As air humidity and temperature increase, the difference between skin and air decreases and the effectiveness of evaporation strategies used by cows rapidly declines. The combination of air temperature and humidity is described by the temperature humidity index (THI). Different air temperatures and relative humidities can result in the same THI, see table 1 below. Cows experience heat stress when their strategies to actively manage core body temperature start to be overwhelmed by THI greater than 68. Research at the Ellinbank smart farm has seen decreases in In-calf rates and milk production at THI as low as 60-64; at THI >85 can cause severe heat stress which can lead to death.

Figure 1 Temperature Humidity Index



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Keeping your cows cool for summer 2024

THI is a conservative estimate of heat stress a cow will experience on a given day. It will underestimate heat stress experienced by

- high producing cows
- cows which have experienced successive days of high humidity/high temperature
- cows subjected to sudden increases in temperature -i.e., unusually hot days in Spring/early Summer

Shade, clean cool water, and diet management are strategies which can support feed intake and milk production through humid summer conditions. The response to management will be influenced by cow factors (including genomics), farm location and local climate.

(i) Shade

Trees planted in paddocks or laneways can reduce the radiant heat load by 50% or more. The aim is to provide 4m² of shade per cow from midday. When looking at future farm layout, consider possibility of orientating the long axis of paddocks north-south to help maximise shade throughout the day.

A cow produces as much heat on a hot day as a 1500-watt hair dryer on high! So, when cows are standing close together in a dairy holding yard, a lot of heat is transferred, and their body temperatures can rise quickly (within half an hour).

Actions you can take to ensure your holding yard is a cooling centre (and not a sauna) are:

- Use sprinklers, pre-wetting your dairy holding yard for the hour before cows arrive for afternoon milking really helps dissipate the heat stored in the mass of the concrete. This can be done by hosing, flood washing or sprinkling, but using a sprinkler system with an adjustable on/off timer (e.g., 2 minutes on / 5 minutes off) will conserve water.
- Finish morning milking by 9am and delay afternoon milking until 5pm on hot days.
- Run smaller sized milking groups if practical.
- Consider a shade structure and fans as the next upgrade for your holding yard. The aim of any shade structure is to optimise feed intake. Feed and water should ideally be provided within close proximity to the shaded dairy holding yard. Ensure cows can move freely between both areas during hot weather

(ii) Clean cool water

In hot weather cows' daily water consumption doubles to 200 litres plus. Standing in a holding yard before milking and eating dry grain/concentrates in the bail makes them thirsty. Cows are capable of consuming 30-40% of their daily water intake at the dairy exit. Having a large, easily accessible water trough on the exit side of the dairy, which is well positioned to avoid disrupting cow flow, will help reduce heat load in cows. Why would you want to limit cows' access to clean cool drinking water when it makes up 85% of the product you sell – milk?

Consider shade and water for dry cows - while dry cows in late pregnancy produce less metabolic heat than lactating cows, they are still affected by heat stress through impaired function and development of the udder and placenta and suppressed immune function. Cows that are dry in hot months may therefore have reduced milk production in the next lactation, smaller, less viable

calves and a higher risk of the health problems commonly seen around calving than cows that are dry in cool months.

(iii) Nutritional considerations

Hot conditions make cows drool from their mouth instead of letting saliva flow into the rumen. On top of that, heat-stressed cows will have lower concentrations of bicarbonates in their saliva. A drop in the flow and the concentration of bicarbonate means the natural buffering activity is reduced. At the same time, the cow may be consuming less effective fibre and more grain or feed concentrate. This also increases the risk of a fall in rumen pH and ruminal acidosis problems.

Dairy Australia's investment in the "Feeding Cool Cows Project" is supporting the investigation of cost-effective summer feeding strategies by identifying ingredients that help cows maintain feed intake during hot weather. Diets which include high quality forage fibre (i.e., lower neutral detergent fibre (NDF)) and adequate protein (canola meal or lupins) has been shown to reduce increases in body temperature and support cows to maintain milk production in warm conditions.

The research has shown that betaine is a reliably cost-effective strategy to maintain lower body temperature. Betaine is a component from sugar beet, and is a simple diet supplement in powder form offered at 15-20 g/cow/day for the whole summer period. High quality forages, such as chicory and hays with low NDF concentration have been used in research trial diets with excellent results in lowering cow body temperature and maintaining milk yields.

It is important seek advice from your nutritional consultant to ensure the diet will meet, but not exceed specific production needs of your herd. There is an energetic (heat) cost for excreting excess nitrogen when too much protein is fed to cows, but adequate crude protein in the diet is essential to ensuring milk yields are high.

Mineral recommendations for hot weather from the Dairy Australia "Cool Cows" booklet include:

- 1.3-1.6% potassium in the diet (DM basis)
- 0.45 to 0.6% sodium in the diet (DM basis)
- 0.35% magnesium in the diet (DM basis)

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on strategies to support cool cows in hot conditions contact GippsDairy for a copy of Cool Cows



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Silly Jolly Holiday Season

By y Rural Financial Counselling Services Victoria

With the main part of the silly season past us and the dawning of a new year is here, it is the perfect time to for reflection of the past year and start forward planning. It's the opportunity to contemplate the future and work toward a 'jolly-er holiday season' next year.

How did you feel as the year came to a close? Exhausted or optimistic? Do you feel like business is where it should be; were you organised; did everything run smoothly; financially on track; ready for a break knowing you've worked hard, achieved and can relax? Are you feeling loved and connected with your family and friends? Or were you experiencing feelings of failure, the weight of financial distress, guilt, incompetence, loneliness, and resentment toward family and friends? Or is it a mixed bag? Why does it matter? Holidays are hard, but are nearly over, and it's time to put your head down and get straight back into it. Yes, that could be your modus operandi, but you might just end up in the same position next year.

Without spending some time reflecting things will never change, you won't remember what you did or didn't do that helped or hindered your situation.

This time of year is perfect for reflection because all our emotions tend to get amplified, making it easier to work out how we really feel about things and what matters most. If you were surrounded by loved ones over the holidays, chances are this brought immense joy. Similarly, financial struggles or challenges become more apparent during this period, making you realise that business may not be in the best financial situation.

This message is not about setting a goal or a New Year's Resolution, majority of people fail to keep their New Year's resolutions, according to a recent survey by Forbes Health. The Forbes Health survey found that the average resolution lasts just 3.74 months. It's a common phenomenon that people tend to fail at keeping their New Year's resolutions, so don't feel bad if this is you.

This failure is so widespread that various unofficial dates are observed to commemorate it. Some sources suggest that January 17 is celebrated as "Ditch New Year's Resolutions Day," while others mark the second Friday in January as "Quitter's Day." Surely the stats can't be that bad? But they are, with other resources showing as little as 9% of people actually stick to their resolutions. Here's how it ends up happening... the ball drops a few weeks or months after New Year's, energy and excitement wear off and the same old habits and life continue. Those feelings that were amplified at holiday time look different now, they don't feel as justified or as important.

Forget about New Year's resolutions, but take a deeper look at that word reflection and ask yourself some difficult questions. What do you



really want out of your businesses and finances? How much do your relationships matter to you, and which do you want to focus your time and energy on? Answering these questions truthfully within yourself and for yourself is the first step to finding a pathway for personal and professional growth and success.

Beyond that first step, it's not that straightforward or obvious. Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither is meaningful change; it takes time, dedication, persistent effort, support and most importantly a PLAN. The effort and time doesn't have to be all-consuming. Planning can be done in manageable steps (actions). Each step moving you forward and working toward your desirable future (goal). How these steps link together is your plan in action. So, this time next year, maybe you can reflect differently against your plan?

Remember, Rome wasn't built alone either – it was built by many people; skilled individuals working together. Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) Gippsland is an option to help support and guide you in areas you need it most. We want to see you succeed where you want to succeed most. RFCS Gippsland is a FREE and CONFIDENTIAL service within your reach that offers financial counsel, planning and guidance as well as additional support for your wellbeing. RFCS Gippsland has over 35 years of experience supporting farming and rural communities.

MORE INFORMATION

Did you have a Jolly holiday season? Would you like to plan for a Jolly-er holiday season next year? Call RFCS Gippsland, we can help you put that plan into action.

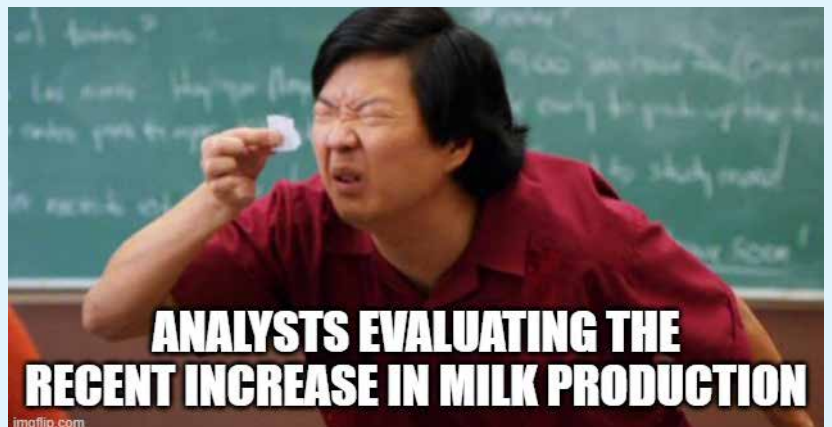
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INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

Australian Milk Production

Australia's milk production increased 2 per cent in October, compared with the same month in 2022.

For the season to date, volumes have grown just under 1 per cent, a very modest recovery after the extended wet conditions and flooding of last spring. Dairy Australia's initial forecast for the 2023/24 season anticipated such a recovery, but also a tighter second half with production falling away as drier than average conditions and continuing cost pressures muted growth. On balance, things are looking more positive than that, with well-timed rainfall supporting pasture growth and homegrown fodder production in many areas. Other challenges such as workforce and cost pressures remain, but Australia may just continue to notch up the small monthly increases a bit longer than originally expected.



GippsDairy Muster

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14 March 2024

On-farm, Trafalgar

For more information visit:

<https://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/gippsdairy/about/gippsdairy-highlights/gippsdairy-muster>

or scan the QR code below.



Hoofing around Gippy town

DATE	TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
Wednesday 24 January 2024	10:00am-2:00pm	Day 1 – Nutrition Fundamentals	Maffra
Tuesday 6 February 2024	10.00am-2.00pm	A Good Day on the Farm – mental health workshop	Traralgon
Wednesday 7 February 2024	10:30am-12:30pm	AgTech Innovation Showcase webinar	Online
Tuesday 13 February 2024	11:00am-12:30pm	Day 1 – Our Farm, Our Plan – National	Online
Wednesday 21 February 2024	9.30am-3.00pm	Growing Beef from Dairy Field Day	Woodleigh
Wednesday 28 February 2024	9:30am-2:30pm	Succession – Fair or equal? How to pass on the family farm...	Inverloch
Wednesday 13 March 2024	10:30am-12:00pm	Day 1 – Farm Business Fundamentals – National	Online
Thursday 14 March 2024	10:00am-3:00pm	GippsDairy Muster – Pastures Pathways Performance	Trafalgar

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Dairy Australia

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Growing Beef from Dairy Field Day

Hosted by Will and Sarah Jelbart

Wednesday 21 February 2024

Woodleigh, Victoria

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mla.com.au/gbfd-woodleigh
or scan the QR code below:



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Upcoming events

To view and register for any of our upcoming events, visit the GippsDairy events calendar:
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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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