

# The Northern Dairyfarmer

DECEMBER 2006-JANUARY 2007

## Extra drought aid

### KEY POINTS

- EC extended to 16 regions in Qld
- Mobile drought aid bus service launched
- Farmers should seek advice – do not self-assess
- Help for small business



Farmers in many areas of Queensland have been affected by drought conditions for several years. Many have been forced to look at alternative feed sources, particularly this year. When using new feed sources, it is important to have them tested. See story on page 4.

THE QUEENSLAND Dairyfarmers Organisation has welcomed the additional drought assistance announced by the Federal Government. It is pleased that the government has responded to a significant number of requests from QDO and other rural organisations to improve drought assistance programs.

The additional billion-dollar-plus drought assistance package announced has seen current Exceptional Circumstances (EC) declarations extended in 16 Queensland regions. This will help many farming families battle through current difficult conditions.

For Queensland dairying regions, EC declarations have been extended through to June 2008 for the Darling Downs, Burnett, South-east Queensland, Central Queensland and western part of the revised Sunshine Coast region. The QDO will continue to monitor other dairying regions relative to the EC declaration eligibility criteria.

The main features of new drought package announced include:

- Extending or reinstating EC declarations in 44 regions for up to 20 months, and for those regions EC now covers "all producers" – there are no longer any industry exclusions. If unsure check website <[www.daff.gov.au](http://www.daff.gov.au)> for details.
- The extra \$10,000 off-farm income allowance will continue and the family off-farm asset test is now \$458,000 relative to interest rate subsidies.
- The cap on Farm Management Deposits has been raised to \$400,000 and the non-primary production income portion has been raised to \$65,000.
- Removing the rule that farmers could not access drought assistance for more than three out of

five years, which will allow many farmers in long-term drought-affected areas to access assistance;

- Increasing the overall EC interest-rate subsidy cap per enterprise from \$300,000 to \$500,000 (\$100,000/year) subject to an independent viability test is vital.
- Providing eligible farms in areas that have been EC-declared for more than three years, with grants of up to \$5000 to help with professional business and financial planning.
- \$9 million for rural financial and other counselling services, which are under increasing service demands.

The QDO welcomes the launch of a mobile bus service by the Federal Government, which has been expanded to three bus

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ANIMAL HEALTH

## People are our strength

THE STRENGTH of any organisation can be gauged by the quality of the people working for it. In this regard, Subtropical Dairy and the Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation have been well-served for many years. Change will occur — it is necessary to keep any body alive and focused. So it is with mixed feelings that we have witnessed the changes to the team of Subtropical Dairy.

Philip Chamberlain, who has been program manager for more than 10 years, has decided to end his tenure at the end of this year. Mr Chamberlain's passion for the dairy industry and belief in its future have been a driving force behind many projects that have come to fruition. His foresight in understanding the pressures of environmental issues to dairyfarming has been instrumental in developing the extremely successful Dairying Better 'n Better program and the appointment of natural resource management (NRM) officers. Mr Chamberlain was also behind development of the website <dairyinfo.biz> as an information silo accessible by all dairyfarmers. We wish him well for his new venture and feel sure he will not be too far away if needed in the coming months.

As we say good-bye to Mr Chamberlain, we also say hello to our new program manager, Janine Teese. The Teese family has played a part in the Queensland dairy industry for longer than most people can remember. Both Ms Teese's father and grandfather were active in the industry. Since completing her degree in applied science, Ms Teese has worked in a range of jobs across many countries, including Uganda, The Netherlands and Israel. She has welcomed the chance to settle down in an area and industry with which she is familiar. In the next few months she hopes to catch up with many people in the northern dairy industry, in particular the regional groups. Welcome, Ms Teese. We hope your stay with Subtropical Dairy is long, happy and productive.

Speaking of changes, I am, in effect, the other change that has occurred recently. I was elected chairman for Subtropical Dairy at the annual meeting in August. I have taken this role following the retirement of Shane Gittins, who had held the position for 10 years. For those who do not know me, I am from Beaudesert where my wife, Denise, and I run a 200-cow dairy on the Logan River. Like many farmers in the northern regions, we have faced many years of drought that have forced changes in management of our farm. I see Subtropical Dairy as a key player in making available information and tools needed by farmers seeking a place for their enterprise in the future.



**Laurie Dunne**  
Chair  
Subtropical Dairy



## Milk returns key issue

DURING the past month I have had the opportunity to talk to many producers at meetings across Queensland. On the Atherton Tablelands, we had just about every dairyfarmer turn up to talk to industry representatives from the local region as well as with Adrian Peake and myself.

We congratulate the Northern District Council on distributing the proceeds of the Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation (QDO) Cyclone Relief Fund, in the form of steel posts, at this meeting.

We have also visited farms at Eungella to hear first-hand their concerns and challenges, and they provided us with an opportunity to see what their region offers for dairy production. I also attended supply co-op annual meetings in Beaudesert, Bundaberg and Brisbane as well as a number of branch meetings.

As always, returns for milk was a top order issue for many producers. We discussed at length what influences this, including quality payment systems, and the impact this can have on a producer's income. This is an important issue at this time as feed supply and alternative options are limited for producers. Quality penalties have a big impact, and if rations are not altered early enough, it can be hard to rectify. I encourage producers to talk to their milk companies, feed suppliers or industry bodies to seek the help they need to maximise their returns.

In recent months the QDO and the Australian Dairy Farmers have made a number of public comments in response to media reports that milk prices to consumers will rise because of drought. We will keep on informing consumers that it is at farm level where the biggest drought impact and costs occur, and therefore if consumers are faced with any price rises with the excuse of drought, they should question the retailer 'is it getting to the producer?'

On that note we welcome announced rises from Dairy Farmers and Norco, and acknowledge National Foods producers will share in extra returns after January 1.

On behalf of Laurie and myself and our respective teams at QDO and Subtropical Dairy, we take this opportunity to wish all our loyal supporters a very merry Christmas and a much wetter 2007. We look forward to meeting the challenges 2007 may bring and we hope with all to see renewed prosperity for the New Year.



**Wes Judd**  
President  
Queensland Dairyfarmers  
Organisation



The Northern

## Dairyfarmer

The Northern Dairyfarmer magazine is a joint industry owned and operated publication targeted at delivering the latest research and development information and industry news to dairyfarmers and industry stakeholders of the northern dairy industry. The Northern Dairyfarmer is published on about the 13<sup>th</sup> of every second month in February, April, June, August, October and December.

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# Long list of feeds, but care needed

## KEY POINTS

- Number of alternative feeds available
- All new feeds should be tested
- Balanced diet in sugars, starch, fibre important
- Obtain vendor declarations

## By Alastair Dowie

DAIRYFARMERS in Queensland and northern NSW have integrated a wide range of feed sources in the wake of continued dry conditions and drought. On the wanted list are a range of forage replacements, high-energy and high-protein supplements.

Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries research scientist (ruminant nutrition) Dave Barber said feed alternatives included brewers grain, cannery and fruit waste, citrus pulp, flour, sugarcane silage (in really bad times) and factory waste in the form of

chips, biscuits and biscuits, cakes and waste bread.

Depending on location of the dairy farm and the time of year, other byproducts included potatoes, sweet potatoes, mangoes and bananas.

He said in many cases it was a case of using whatever was available and most alternatives had become the norm for dairyfarmers in the region.

A number of these feeds, once sourced, were kept in the system in the long term for continuity of supply while some were only available for a short time, then disappeared again. While the latter might fill the gap, they might not provide the full benefit, Mr Barber said.

He said many byproducts varied greatly in feed quality and dairyfarmers should have feeds tested, particularly new feed types not used before.

A major issue when considering alternative sources was to ensure the new feed was similar to the old feed. Forages should replace forages. For example,

molasses would be an inappropriate forage replacement.

Mr Barber said a range of feeds could provide digestible fibre but act differently to the regular forages source. A balanced diet, particularly in terms of sugars, starch and fibre, was important.

Mr Barber said dairyfarmers needed to stick to quality assurance (QA) requirements and, when sourcing new feeds, address issues such as residues and withholding periods.

The dry conditions had also seen dairyfarmers in Queensland including a range of brassica crops in their cropping/pasture planting in recent years.

Mr Barber said climatic conditions had changed the way dairyfarmers looked at forage sources and crops such as turnips, radishes, and a lot more chicory and plantain were now used in the cropping mix, particularly in irrigated systems.

The brassicas offered fairly large amounts of dry matter production over a fairly short season but were a good sugar and starch



Farmers considering a new feed or byproduct should have it tested so it can be fitted into their herd's overall feed requirements.

source when the bulbs of the plants were consumed.

Dairy Farmers senior field services officer, Cameron Whitson, Buderim, Queensland, said the important message was to get the feed tested for nutritional quality and obtain vendor declarations.

Dairyfarmers should also be wary of storage of some products on farm as moist warm conditions provided an ideal breeding ground for moulds and potential mycotoxins.

## Extra drought aid

### From page 1

services. These buses will tour drought-affected areas to provide farmers with information and help prepare assistance applications.

These buses will act as a fully functional office and farmers will be able to apply for drought aid and other government support on the spot. Farmers are urged to contact the mobile unit or Drought Assistance Hotline on 13 23 16 to check their eligibility.

The QDO also welcomes the \$200 million announcement by the Federal Government that support will be provided to small businesses in EC-declared areas whose income is at least 70% dependent on the farming sector.

It is well-known that it is not only farmers and their families who are impacted by severe drought. Small businesses in drought-affected areas are also under significant pressure.

The new assistance will extend income support and interest-rate

subsidies to enterprises employing up to 20 staff until at least March 2008. Businesses based outside EC-declared areas that derive at least 70% of their income directly from farmers located in such areas can apply for aid.

The QDO supports enhancing the Drought Force program to allow people who have lost their jobs to undertake volunteer work on farms in EC-declared areas. People can undertake such work for 15 hours per week and still receive the Newstart allowance, while those working more than 30 hours per week do not have to actively search for other work.

The QDO also welcomes the commitment by the Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries Minister, Tim Mulherin, to continue providing drought aid through the State Government's Drought Relief Assistance Scheme.

The QDO urges farmers not to self-assess as they often wrongly assume they are ineligible for

drought assistance. Rather, all farmers in EC-declared regions should get advice.

The QDO has been in discussions at a national level to re-evaluate and prioritise what additional measures can be undertaken to further help producers.

The QDO, along with other organisations, will disseminate information to help producers evaluate their options and make informed decisions.

The QDO has recently posted out an updated drought fact sheet, which outlines the *various assistance measures*, to all dairy farmers in drought declared areas.

### MORE INFO

**QDO**  
 Phone: (07) 3236 2955  
**QFF**  
 Phone: (07) 3837 4747  
**Drought Hotline**  
 Phone: 13 23 16  
**QRAA**  
 Phone: 1800 623 946

### Best feed prices

IT HAS been brought to the attention of the Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO) that another feed supplier recently put up their prices substantially overnight.

The QDO advises dairyfarmers to shop around. The QDO has raised feed price at a national level. For the latest fee report go to <[www.dairyaustralia.com.au](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au)>.

### Six more declared

THE MINISTER for Primary Industries and Fisheries, Tim Mulherin, has approved declaration of Eidsvold, Mundubbera, Gayndah, Monto, Banana and Biggenden shires as droughted shires. Under these declarations primary producers are able to apply for freight subsidies on fodder and water, stock returning from agistment and on stock bought for restocking through Drought Relief Assistance Scheme. Contact DPI&F on 13 25 23.

# Call to cut water fees

**KEY POINTS**

- **NSW and Vic Governments reduce irrigation fees for drought affected farmers**
- **Call for drought tariff for Qld**
- **State Govt has \$3.7 billion surplus**

THE NSW Government has waived water charges for drought-affected irrigators without any water allocation. The Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation (QDO) is calling on this to be matched by the Queensland Government as farmers face the prospect of a sixth failed wet season.

The NSW decision follows a decision in October by the Victorian Government to offer a \$5000 rebate on water charges where water allocations were below 50%. The Federal Government has extended its drought aid to all irrigated farms in drought-affected areas as part of its \$900 million package.

The QDO is calling on the Queensland Government to show it fully appreciates the devastating effect of drought on irrigated farms. Rural Queensland is

looking to its State Government to show it fully understands the difficulty of the year that lies ahead and the support needed.

The QDO said the Queensland Government needed to develop a drought tariff for irrigators receiving less than half of their water allocation.

The Prime Minister, John Howard, has also entered the debate with a public request to the NSW Government to suspend water charges during the drought to ensure a good percentage of drought relief does not just go to paying for water access with no supply.

Less water means less production and less income, and that can mean financial hardship. Some irrigators, including many in the Warrill, Lockyer and Condamine valleys, have received little or no water allocation for up to five years, but are still expected to pay part of the fixed costs for water they do not receive.

With 16 of the 23 main irrigation schemes in Queensland looking at less than 35% in water storages (six at less than 10%), most are facing the prospect of tightening water allocations this year. Yet, this year, irrigators will pay millions of dollars to the State Government for water they will



Some irrigators in Queensland have received little allocation for the past five years.

not receive, and have done so for several years of this drought.

It is counterproductive to insist on farmers paying for water that will not be delivered in areas already deemed eligible for Exceptional Circumstances drought relief. The State Government has a surplus budget to work with — more than \$3.7 billion.

The QDO and Queensland Farmers Federation continue to seek an outcome on this issue as well as a range of other water-related policy, security, charges and pricing issues.

## QFF drought officer funded

Employment Minister John Mickel has announced his department will fund the Queensland Farmers Federation's drought relief officer for another year. Mr Mickel acknowledged that with large parts of the state in drought, "... there are great concerns about the health of rural economies and labour markets in this environment. The drought co-ordinator will work with rural communities to increase awareness of available government programs and assist rural workers to remain in the local community," he said.

Any rural producers seeking information on drought aid or their eligibility for drought aid should contact Mr Perkins, phone (07) 3837 4747.

## Freight subsidies available

PRIMARY producers in Queensland shires that are not drought-declared by the Queensland Government (different from EC) can apply for individually droughted property (IDP) status.

This may make them eligible for freight cost subsidies of up to \$20,000 for fodder transport, water for livestock, livestock returning from agistment, and animals bought for restocking after the drought.

Special circumstances applications can be made to extend the level of aid to \$30,000.

See website <[www.dpi.qld.gov.au/drought](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/drought)> or call 13 25 23 for more information.

## Increases must go to farmers

IF MAJOR retailers increase the price of dairy products to help meet the cost of drought and underpin supply, they should reassure the consumer the increased price is getting back to farming families.

Australian Dairy Farmers president, Allan Burgess, said dairyfarmers were very loyal to the Australian consumer and knew consumers would want to support them in these very difficult times.

"For many, the cost of production caused by the drought is above the price received but most farmers will continue to produce to meet supply requirements and maintain their breeding stock," Mr Burgess said.

"About 50% of milk produced in Australia is sold on the domestic market in products such as fresh milk, ultra heat-treated (UHT) milk, cheese, butter and yoghurt. Australian dairyfarmers would appreciate consumer support on these products.

"The other 50% of product is exported and international prices are the main determinant of prices for those products."

## Drought influences market

IN RECENT weeks a number of dairy co-operatives and companies have made moves to implement stronger pricing arrangements to help producers battle severe drought conditions and seek maintenance of milk supplies.

The Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation (QDO) welcomes these moves to provide this price-linked support to suppliers through these difficult times.

The QDO encourages all processors to explore all available opportunities, especially with retailers where possible (taking into account existing contracts) to seek to recover the increased costs of operation at farm level due to drought.

Any comments on drought

influence on food prices, which are doing the rounds, need to be put into context. It is an undisputable fact that the sector that incurs the highest costs in times of drought is at production level.

As such, at farm level QDO continues to encourage processors to seek to recover these increased costs from the marketplace, wherever possible. But at the same time, we need to ensure any price rises go to the area where the increased costs are incurred as a result of drought — the farm gate.

So when a retailer announces prices need to rise because of drought, the question needs to be asked of them: "Are they, and can they, demonstrate passing that back to the farm producing the produce?"



# Key meetings for industry's future

## KEY POINTS

- Industry groups discuss key issues including drought response
- Recommendation to retain levy at current level

NATIONAL industry meetings held in November focused on key issues for dairyfarmers and the industry.

The Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) board met to discuss a range of issues including drought response initiatives and issues, feed and grain supply, farm gate returns, water, Dairy Australia (DA) levy vote, trade, natural resource management, education, collective bargaining, animal health and welfare, genetics, new research bids, bio-security and priority planning for the year ahead.

The ADF board also met with

DA Regional Development Program representatives to discuss DA's planned activities, impacts of drought and funding implications, allocating \$1.5 million for drought response activities, and the dairy levy vote process and timing.

The Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) held a breakfast where the industry paid tribute to the tremendous commitment and service that Pat and Mary Rowley have given, with Pat retiring from his last major industry posting as the inaugural chairman of DA. Pat was presented with the inaugural ADIC outstanding service award.

At the ADIC breakfast, Lyn O'Connor from Far North Queensland spoke on the impact of Cyclone Larry and the industry's response program, and chair of Murray Dairy, Ian Cobbledick spoke on working with drought and the importance of collective,



President of the Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation Wes Judd congratulates Mary and Pat Rowley on the work they have done for the industry.

cohesive action. Other presentations provided updates on plant genetics, genomics, nutrition and genetics.

Following this Dairy Australia held its AGM, where Mr Rowley provided a strategic overview of the formation of DA, its achievements and direction.

He stressed the importance of the ability of the industry to achieve collective action through organisations such as DA and to be able to attract other investments to add to levies to fund major industry projects that derive outcomes that farmers would not be able to achieve by themselves.

Managing director, Dr Mike Ginnivan, provided an overview of DA's investment of producers' levies and funds provided by the Federal Government and other stakeholders in research, development and extension, education, promotion, trade and issues management.

Dr Ginnivan also provided an overview of DA's drought response program, including providing bulletins, weekly fodder market updates, appointment of regional drought co-ordinators, help to access government support, training farm service providers, national survey of grain stocks, and on-farm and input monitoring.

The Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation (QDO) and Subtropical Dairy, in partnership with DA, will be appointing a regional drought co-ordinator to assist more farmers to access to the latest information and assistance.

In relation to the levy vote, DA announced that, given the impact of the drought, it would not recommend an increase to the dairy service levy and recommends a holding position for the current levy rate. The dairy service levy poll options are a 15% increase, no change or a zero levy option, which by legislation must be included as an option.

It was stressed that all options result in an effective reduction in capacity due to the rising costs of doing business, particularly with leading edge research. DA is continuing to seek out efficiencies and to find better ways to deliver results for farmers.

Dr Ginnivan thanked Mr Rowley for his leadership in guiding DA through some challenging events and times.

Max Roberts, a dairyfarmer from Bega on the New South Wales south coast, was elected chairman of DA. Mr Roberts said it was an honour to be elected as chairman of an industry-owned organisation that provided the critical services needed for it to remain internationally competitive, innovative and sustainable.

Gippsland dairyfarmer, Kelvin Jackson, and former Kraft Foods director, John Doyle, were elected as directors.

The QDO sincerely thanks Pat and Mary Rowley for their commitment and contribution to the Australian dairy industry during so many years.

Congratulations go to Max Roberts on his appointment as DA chairman and to John Doyle and Kevin Jackson on their election to the board.

## Subtropical Dairy appoints new manager

SUBTROPICAL Dairy has appointed Janine Teese as the new manager for the organisation. The program manager role, previously held by Philip Chamberlain, has been expanded to a full-time position to oversee the activities and programs run by the Subtropical Dairy program in addition to developing the communication capacity of the organisation.

Ms Teese has as an agricultural background, growing up in the Beaudesert district where her family had a heifer rearing business.

In 1998 Ms Teese completed a Bachelor of Applied Science in Rural Technology, and in 2004 a Masters in Agribusiness at the University of Queensland.

In the past eight years, she has worked in Europe, South-East Asia and Eastern Africa as a project manager. During this time she designed, acquired funding for and managed the



Janine Teese has been appointed to a new full-time role with Subtropical Dairy.

start-up of agribusinesses with a focus on market access, value-adding locally, quality assurance and strengthening supply-chain alliances.

Ms Teese said she looked forward to applying her agricultural knowledge and project management skills in her new role as program manager of Subtropical Dairy.

# QDO distributes Cyclone Relief Fund

**KEY POINTS**

- **QDO Cyclone Relief Fund**
- **Fence posts distributed to farmers in FNQ**
- **Additional cyclone recovery aid sought**

IN OCTOBER Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation (QDO) president, Wes Judd, and chief executive officer, Adrian Peake, travelled to Far North Queensland (FNQ) on behalf of the QDO to help distribute fencing materials bought by the QDO Cyclone Relief Fund to dairyfarmers impacted by Cyclone Larry.

When Cyclone Larry hit, the QDO had many calls from around Australia from concerned farmers and industry stakeholders asking how they could help. The QDO Cyclone Relief Fund was then set up to provide an avenue for the goodwill of so many to be transformed into on-farm aid.

The QDO, along with regional QDO councillors and industry representatives, recommended the bulk purchase of more than 8000 galvanised-steel fence

posts to help dairyfarmers rebuild their fencing, which has been a major problem right across the region.

Provision of these posts complements the provision of fencing wire, donated by Dairy Farmers and Dairy Farmers Milk Co-operative.

Farmers are adept at managing adversity and dealing with changes in climate every day, but in extreme events such as that caused by Cyclone Larry, a helping hand makes a difference in assisting farmers and families get back on track.

With distribution of the assistance, a social function and barbecue was held to give farmers an opportunity to come together to swap a few yarns. The event was well-attended by more than 160 farmers and family members.

The QDO thanks all from around Australia who donated to the QDO Cyclone Relief Fund.

"I would also like to acknowledge the QDO Northern District Council, Dairy Farmers staff, the Malanda Cyclone Response and Recovery Team and QDO staff in supporting and managing the QDO Cyclone Relief Fund," Mr Peake said.



Farmers receive fence posts in Far North Queensland that were bought with money from the QDO Cyclone Relief Fund.

"Local farm supplier TGT, of Mareeba, was the successful tenderer, and we sincerely appreciate the support of this local business in procurement and supporting our distribution of this assistance.

"We also sincerely thank the QDPI&F Farm Clear teams, who were unable to undertake farm clear work on the day of distribution due to rain and were able to help load posts for farmers."

The QDO over many weeks has also been seeking additional cyclone aid from the State and Federal Government to support

recovery of the region's dairy industry. While the Queensland Government has formally made a funding commitment of \$1.25 million subject to matching funds being provided by the Federal Government, the Federal Government has still not responded.

"We are pleased, however, that the National Party's Senator Ron Boswell is working with industry to secure the necessary support from the Federal Government so that the initiative can be implemented ASAP," Mr Peake said.

## Dam issues raised

LAST month more than 2000 primary producers and residents of the Mary Valley attend a meeting where the Deputy Premier of Queensland, Anna Bligh, tried to present the Government's position on the planned Traveston Dam. The message from residents to the proposal left the Deputy Premier in no doubt about what they thought of the proposal.

The Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation (QDO) will continue to work with local QDO representatives to assist where possible. The QDO continues to raise a number of issues with the Queensland Government that need to be addressed for affected farm families and their businesses.

The Queensland Government has offered aid packages for businesses and workers affected by dam proposals. The Business Adjustment Package, to be administered by the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority (QRAA), has several criteria, including:

- all businesses with fewer than five employees will be assessed and compensation payable if the value determined is \$5000 or more;
- all larger businesses, six employees or more, will be assessed and compensation payable if at least 25% of profits (as defined by the QRAA) are affected, and the value of compensation determined is \$10,000 or more;
- further, QRAA may, in exceptional circumstances, take account of other factors in considering the compensation to be paid at its discretion.

## Water funds, tour on offer

THE QUEENSLAND Dairyfarmers' Organisation in partnership with the Departments for Natural Resources and Water and Primary Industries and Fisheries, has designed the new Rural Water Use Efficiency, Dairy Water for Profit (DWP) program.

The program includes a new series of on-farm irrigation and effluent management field days and workshops, which will start early in 2007. The program also has planned an industry tour to NZ for February next year to allow participants to studying a range of different irrigation and effluent management systems and technology.

The core DWP program includes an enhanced Financial Assistance Scheme to support:

- hiring expert advice to undertake on-farm system assessments of irrigation and/or effluent management systems;
- the upgrading of irrigation and/or effluent management systems to improve water use efficiency and effluent management and reuse; and
- implementing major changes to irrigation and/or effluent management systems to improve water use efficiency and effluent management and reuse.

The QDO has posted 'expression of interest' packages for the program and the tour to dairyfarmers across Queensland. If you haven't received a package and you are interested, contact the QDO as soon as possible, phone (07) 3238 4213.



Darling Downs dairyfarmers Peter and Ross Garratt have a better understanding of what their soil-test results mean after attending a Saving our Soils Project workshop.



A new project shows there is strong commitment to supporting sustainability of soil resources used within the dairy industry.

## Understand your soils better

**By Theresa Kunde**

DARLING Downs dairyfarmers are still keeping an eye on long-term sustainability of their businesses, even during the current tough climatic conditions.

Twenty-eight farmers attended a soil nutrition workshop where they learnt how to better interpret their soil-test results into something meaningful for the soil manager.

The workshop was held in

September as part of the 'Saving our Soils' Project.

The project, funded by the National Landcare Program through the Condamine Alliance, is managed by Subtropical Dairy.

"I now have a better understanding about what my soil-test results mean practically in the field," farmer Peter Garratt said.

"The day was really informative and, combined with the funding we have received through the project, it is allowing us to better manage our soil resource."

Mr Garratt and his wife, Jess, along with Peter's father and mother, Ross and Robyn, farm 440 hectares near Pittsworth on the Darling Downs.

Three years ago the Garratts bought an adjoining 44ha paddock to expand their operations. The contour banks on this paddock were worn and did not match those on the existing block.

Through the 'Saving our Soils' project, the Garratts received \$2300 to help re-contour the new block.

"We are very grateful for the funding," Mr Garratt said. "The cost of building banks has increased due to diesel prices, so the seven kilometres of banks that we put in cost us \$14,000."

The project made available \$115,000 to farmers to improve

### KEY POINTS

- Workshops explain how to interpret soil-test results
- Funding to help farms with soil sustainability works

sustainability of their soil management practices. Fifty-four farmers accessed this money and matched the funding with more than \$120,000 of cash and in-kind.


"I believe this level of investment on behalf of the farmers and Condamine Alliance demonstrates there is strong commitment to supporting sustainability of soil resources used within the dairy industry," project facilitator Theresa Kunde said.

"When the financial assistance program opened up, we were flooded with interest. It was great to see that even though times are challenging at the moment, farmers are still prepared to invest in the future of their land."

The project will run a conservation farming workshop in early 2007.


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# Match riparian fencing to needs

## KEY POINTS

- Fencing streams improves riparian health
- Also improves animal health and handling
- Main options are barbed wire or electric fences

By Rob Chataway and Theresa Kunde

FENCING to control stock access to streams is one of the key management actions required to improve stream health, riparian health and water quality in Australia. Managing stock access can also have general farm benefits in terms of reduced mustering time and reduced risk of animals suffering injuries or diseases such as mastitis.

Fencing enables managers to control the timing and number of stock accessing the riparian zone. This area of the farm is particularly vulnerable to grazing pressure during very wet periods, when banks are most vulnerable to erosion and trampling; or very dry periods, when vegetation is susceptible to overgrazing.

In some situations, completely excluding stock from the riparian area may be the most practical solution while, in other situations, controlled grazing may achieve useful environmental gains while having a minimal impact on farm productivity. A range of fences can be used on dairy farms.

For this article, we sought the opinions of a fencing contractor from the Fassifern Valley and three landholders (two dairy and one intensive beef) who recently installed riparian fencing.

## Types of fencing

When considering the type of riparian fence, three main factors are cost of erection, effectiveness and flood risk.

According to fencing contractor Geoff Podlich, there are generally two types of fencing used – conventional four-strand barbed wire, or two-strand or three-strand electric fence.

“The barbed wire fences are typically erected with 4.5-metre spacing using hardwood posts and box stays,” he said. “These types of fences cost about \$7/metre (GST included) erected and are very effective at controlling stock.

“However, they aren’t the most suitable for flood-prone areas. A flood-damaged, plain wire fence is a lot easier to repair. However, if you really want a barbed fence, you can erect a drop-down flood fence that swings away in a flood.



Ian Martin, Kerry, Qld, with newly erected fence to control cattle entering gully.

“An electrified, two- or three-strand plain wire fence is cheaper and generally a better proposition for riparian areas.

“They cost about \$4.40/m (GST included) for a two-strand and \$5/m (GST included) for a three-strand plus cost of the energiser. Electric fences are more suited to areas with a risk of flooding, or difficult terrain.”

Mr Podlich noted a poor performance from electric fences was often attributable to them not being earthed properly.

“The mistake most people make is that they just place a steel peg in the ground and attach the earth wire to it,” he said. “Doing it this way will result in a substantial loss of power.

“Earth kits are not very expensive and contain a steel rod with a clay and chemical mixture that is mixed into a slurry and poured down the hole with the steel rod. This ensures a good earth and has the earthing power equivalent to three steel pegs.”

## Examples of fencing

Ian and Pearl Martin, at Kerry, Qld, decided to fence off a major gully to stop their cattle entering the gully to water because they were causing erosion and sedimentation. They chose to use barbed wire because although water moves quickly down this gully during flooding, the area where the fence is sited is not flood-prone.

The Martins chose to set the fence back from the top of the gully and create a gully paddock because, according to Mrs Martin, “we still want to graze this area but as cattle have a tendency to walk along the fence line, we needed to place the fence back to avoid them damaging the top of the bank.”

The Martins used split posts along the sections of the fence that receives stock pressure during mustering and steel posts for the rest to decrease the costs involved.

Pat and Rose Perry, near Gin Gin, Qld, fenced their section of Geramanbulian Creek in 2004. They chose to erect an electric fence with treated pine strainer posts rather than a conventional barbed-wire fence because an



Steel end assemblies used by Don Suddolz at his Harrisville, Qld, farm.

electric fence is easier to manage and establish, given the zigzag nature of the creek.

So far, the fence has survived floods, with only small pieces of debris getting caught. The Perrys use break-away wires on sections of the fence that cross the creek, to minimise flood damage.

Don Suddolz, at Harrisville, Qld, fattens Brahmans on improved pasture adjacent to Warrill Creek. He installed a three-strand electric fence using steel posts and end assemblies. This fence has been sited back from the top of the stream bank to create a wide riparian buffer strip.

“We run big Brahman bullocks here and have no trouble containing them,” Mr Suddolz said. “It is a good, sturdy fence that is easy to maintain. The only ongoing maintenance is to make sure the grass doesn’t grow up around the fence.

“We chose the steel-end assemblies concreted into the ground because we were looking for longevity. It cost us a little more but they will still be here long after we’ve gone.”

Mr Podlich said Mr Suddolz’s approach would probably become more popular in the future.

“As the cost of timber increases, these steel and concrete end assemblies become more cost-effective; rust isn’t a real issue if you concrete in the posts,” he said.

In summary, a number of fencing options are available for riparian areas. With fencing comes improved stock control and associated environmental and general farm management benefits.

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# Act now to control ticks and buffalo flies

## KEY POINTS

- Tick and buffalo fly costly to dairy industry
- Well-planned control program required
- Rotate chemicals used to prevent resistance
- Chemical-free buffalo-fly traps useful

## By Glen Chopping

QUEENSLAND milk suppliers who do not practise stringent integrated cattle tick and buffalo-fly control management strategies could be losing more than 2.6 litres of milk per cow per day.

That adds up to a significant monetary loss in an industry where profit margins in recent years have been notoriously tight.

For all dairy managers within Queensland's coastal ticky country extending from the subtropical south-east corner north to the Atherton Tableland, tick and buffalo-fly control has been ranked by Subtropical Dairy (SD) as one of the major issues confronting the industry.

Dairyfarmers need to take a pro-active role in controlling external parasites by adopting recommended control measures. First and foremost, uncontrolled or ineffective control of external parasites presents an animal-health issue that, in turn, impacts on productivity.

The strategic management challenge for dairyfarmers is to minimise use of a limited selection of registered chemical formulations that can be used on lactating cows to prolong effective life of the chemical group. This can be assisted by using proven non-chemical control measures such as Tickguard Plus vaccine and buffalo-fly traps.

At the onset of the annual spring seasonal flush when storm rains trigger a rise in tick numbers, stockowners should instigate a strategic tick-control program based on four to six treatments spaced three weeks apart to break the tick life-cycle.

Because the build-up of chemical resistance in tick populations has become a serious issue for the dairying industry, producers should collect tick samples from their cattle and submit them for testing before buying product and treating stock if they are in doubt about effectiveness of the chemical they are using.

Whether treating ticks or buffalo fly, it is advisable to rotate use of differing chemical groups to prevent selection for chemical resistance.

New cattle introduced onto the property should be treated with an approved tickicide and kept quarantined in the cattle yard for three to four days.

Producers should take advantage of the range of macrocyclic lactone pour-on chemicals that effectively control intestinal worms, lice, ticks and buffalo fly. These treatments are expensive



Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries central region dairy extension manager Glen Chopping (right) and Rossmoya, Qld, district milk supplier Michael Clews, Slatewood, discuss the tick and buffalo-fly control program for the Clews family's 240 milkers.

but provide an effective chemical rotation in an integrated parasite control program.

Buffalo-fly infestations can negatively affect milk productivity from high-yielding cows. Acceptable dairy-cow tolerance levels are about 30 buffalo flies per animal (15/side) whereas beef cattle can be subjected to 200 flies without any appreciable productivity losses.

It is recommended producers delay chemical control of buffalo fly at the start of the season until the population reaches the above threshold. Milk suppliers need to forward-plan their buffalo-fly control program incorporating a reduced reliance on chemical treatments and greater use of non-chemical alternatives as there can be rapid build-up of chemical resistance within the 14-day life-cycle under optimum conditions.

Organophosphate formulations should not be used for more than two years in succession. Use of synthetic pyrethroids should be restricted to one season. Synthetic pyrethroid chemicals should provide protection for up to 21 days. If they fail to control buffalo fly within a few days of application, that indicates insecticide resistance.

Using chemically impregnated buffalo-fly control ear tags are an option at the peak of the summer fly season. However, they must be removed after their effective 10- to 16-week lifespan, depending on the product.

When using some pour-on formulations, it is advisable to check the label to ensure there is

no detrimental chemical effect on the dung beetles that effectively bury the fresh cow manure in which the buffalo-fly larvae develop.

Healthy dung-beetle activity in cow pats can lower buffalo-fly emergence four-fold, compared to beetle-free pats.

The intensive nature of dairy herd management lends itself to using chemical-free, walk-through buffalo-fly traps that can be left in service all year.

These commercially available walk-through tunnel structures physically remove flies as the animal passes through the trap. These traps can be strategically placed in the laneway system.

Dairy research trials indicate irritation and distress caused by this blood-sucking insect when populations exceed 30 flies per animal, resulting in milk losses of about 0.5 litres/cow/day.

A comprehensive list of registered chemical products for treating cattle ticks and buffalo fly on lactating dairy cattle can be accessed from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries website: <<http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/health/3574.html>>.

## Special offer to fight ticks

TO HELP dairyfarmers control ticks, the Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation (QDO) has made a once-off TickGard Plus discount offer.

These special rates deliver savings to producers of more than 50% off regular retail prices.

Bulk prices, inclusive of freight and GST, are:

- \$1.70 per dose for 0-10 packs of TickGard Plus;
- \$1.50 per dose for 11-20 packs of TickGard Plus;
- \$1.25 per dose for 21 or more packs of TickGard Plus.

For producers new to the program, QDO is also prepared to provide the booster shot of TickGard Plus free (equivalent to the number of head being treated) when the initial order is placed.

Contact: To order – QDO, phone (07) 3236 2955.

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# SEQ dairy effluent ponds in study

## KEY POINTS

- Effluent from 18 ponds in south-east Qld studied
- Much variation in chemical characteristics
- Nutrient worth average \$2000/year

By Alan Skerman

SAMPLES collected from 18 dairy-effluent ponds in south-east Queensland were analysed in a recent study carried out by the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F), Queensland, with funding support from the Subtropical Dairy South-East Queensland Subregional Team.

The results showed each pond could supply an average of three megalitres of effluent for irrigation onto crop or pasture annually. The annual average fertiliser replacement value of this effluent was estimated at \$2000 per pond.

Effluent ponds are gradually replacing small-capacity, pump-out sumps that have become incapable of handling increased manure loadings and yard washdown volumes resulting from herd expansions and more intensive production practices.

Producers are recognising effluent ponds have several advantages over sump-pump-sprinkler systems—they do not require daily attention, can store effluent for extended periods, and enable scheduling of effluent irrigation to suit soil, crop and pasture conditions.

The study indicated chemical characteristics of the pond effluent were highly variable due to a wide range of factors outlined in the final report, available on the website <[www.dairyinfo.biz](http://www.dairyinfo.biz)>. Table 1 provides a summary of the effluent analysis results.

Other findings from the study include:

- There were major differences in effluent characteristics between samples collected from the 11 single and seven double pond systems.
- Nutrient concentrations varied more widely for the 11 single ponds sampled compared with the seven double-pond systems, reflecting the greater degree of effluent treatment in the double-ponds systems.
- Ponds assessed as being overloaded had significantly higher nutrient concentrations and a wider range of values compared with ponds that were not overloaded. Loading rates were evaluated using DPI&F's dairy pond calculator and visual assessment of the degree of crusting on the pond surface and the presence of visible sludge accumulation.
- DPI&F's dairy effluent calculator did not provide accurate predictions of individual pond effluent nutrient concentrations. However, calculator predictions were generally within the range of measured values, with similar averages. This indicates the calculator cannot adequately account for many variables affecting nutrient concentrations.
- Fertiliser replacement values of the pond effluent ranged from \$256 to \$5209 per year, with an average value of \$2036, based on replacing applications of urea, super phosphate and muriate of potash.
- The minimum recommended effluent irrigation areas ranged from 0.7 to 5.9 hectares, with an average of 2.3ha, based on achieving sustainable applications of nitrogen and phosphorus on grazed tropical pasture during summer, and ryegrass during winter.
- Most of the effluent samples had medium to high salinity ratings; however, relatively high effluent application rates should be possible without adversely affecting production of low salt-tolerant plants for most effluent/soil type combinations.
- A further analysis accounting for the combined effect of salinity and sodium adsorption ratio suggested none of the effluent sam-



One of the 18 south-east Queensland effluent ponds sampled as part of the study.

ples were expected to have any adverse effects on soil structure or permeability.

- The chloride and sodium levels in some of the samples could cause foliar damage in moderately sensitive crops but diluting the effluent with fresh water and careful irrigation management could alleviate potential problems.

The analysis results obtained through this study provide valuable baseline data to promote better effluent management. However, the wide variability between results for individual farms means it is not possible to make general assumptions about pond effluent characteristics across all farms in south-east Queensland.

Copies of the final report can be found on website <[www.dairyinfo.biz](http://www.dairyinfo.biz)>.

Alan Skerman is senior environmental engineer with DPI&F, Toowoomba, Qld.

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Table 1. Summary of effluent analysis results for 18 ponds sampled (excluding results from 2 ponds diluted with fresh water).

| Parameter   | Units                             | Min   | Max   | Average | Median | Standard deviation |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|--------|--------------------|
| Total kjeldahl nitrogen (TKN)                       | mg/L                              | 22    | 459   | 167     | 118    | 148                |
| Total phosphorus (Total P)                          | mg/L                              | 10    | 85    | 36      | 28     | 22                 |
| Potassium (K)                                       | mg/L                              | 3     | 1,020 | 274     | 148    | 299                |
| Electrical conductivity (EC)                        | µS/cm                             | 1,040 | 9,680 | 3,904   | 3,480  | 2,111              |
| pH  |                                   | 7.2   | 9.0   | 7.9     | 7.7    | 0.6                |
| Nitrite (NO <sub>2</sub> <sup>-</sup> )             | mg/L NO <sub>2</sub> <sup>-</sup> | <0.1  | 12.4  | 2.3     | 0.3    | 5.0                |
| Nitrate (NO <sub>3</sub> <sup>-</sup> )             | mg/L NO <sub>3</sub> <sup>-</sup> | 0.2   | 6.1   | 1.2     | 0.9    | 1.3                |
| Nitrite nitrogen (NO <sub>2</sub> <sup>-</sup> - N) | mg/L                              | <0.03 | 3.77  | 0.69    | 0.08   | 1.51               |
| Nitrate nitrogen (NO <sub>3</sub> <sup>-</sup> - N) | mg/L                              | 0.05  | 1.39  | 0.28    | 0.21   | 0.30               |
| Total nitrogen (Total N)                            | mg/L                              | 23    | 460   | 167     | 118    | 148                |
| Chloride (Cl <sup>-</sup> )                         | mg/L                              | 71    | 914   | 234     | 171    | 207                |
| Calcium (Ca <sup>++</sup> )                         | mg/L                              | 36    | 187   | 98      | 99     | 51                 |
| Magnesium (Mg <sup>++</sup> )                       | mg/L                              | 34    | 254   | 103     | 74     | 66                 |
| Sodium (Na <sup>+</sup> )                           | mg/L                              | 54    | 748   | 225     | 173    | 168                |
| Sodium adsorption ratio (SAR)                       |                                   | 1.4   | 8.9   | 3.7     | 3.4    | 1.9                |



# How to improve water efficiency

## KEY POINTS

- Farmers improve water efficiency
- System design critical
- Improving application efficiency important too
- More water efficient crops selected

DROUGHT, a drier climate, increasing water prices and water-use restrictions have made improving water-use efficiency a critical factor for the future profitability and viability of the Queensland dairy industry.

Under stage three of the Rural Water Use Efficiency Initiative, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) is working in close collaboration with the program manager, the Queensland

Dairyfarmers Organisation (QDO), and the major program funder, the Department of Natural Resources and Water (DNRW), and major industry groups to help farmers improve their on-farm sustainable resource management and encourage adoption of efficient water and effluent-use practices.

Areas of water-use efficiency improvement have included:

**Systems design and systems comparisons** – depending on topography and existing infrastructure, appropriate systems vary. The low-pressure sprinklers (centre pivots, solid set, etc) are the most efficient but well-designed, high-pressure operations can deliver acceptable results.

When designing a system, a few things need to be considered:

- crop water requirements;
- capital cost;
- labour requirements;
- running and maintenance costs.

**Application efficiency** – basically the irrigation water losses occurring on-farm, should also be considered. Up to 35% of applied water can be lost. Water losses include:

- spray drift – irrigating in windy weather;
- evaporation – irrigating in the middle of the day;
- run-off – too much at one time;
- poor distribution – nozzle selection;
- leaks;
- pipe friction losses – mainline size.

**Crop and pasture water use** – Many producers have allocated their water use to high-yielding crops such as sorghum or corn for silage. Harvested cereal crops are generally more water-efficient than grazed irrigated pastures.

Producers have been able to improve their water-use efficiency with aid from the program. Efficiency improvements ranged from 5%-10%. This has been

achieved through either reduced water use and/or increased productivity.

In most cases, this has been achieved by maximising crop production from limited water supply. The indication is that crop and pasture production, under irrigation, had increased through improved management of existing water.

Importantly, improved water-use efficiency not only relates to the water but to whole-farm management. Correct fertiliser, crop selection, herd genetics, cow nutrition and business management all contribute to increased water efficiency.

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## Project delivers NRM outcomes for farmers

## KEY POINTS

- Farmers identify NRM issues on their farms
- Workshops held discuss solutions

By Sarah Kenman

THE DAIRYING Better 'n Better for Tomorrow program has assisted more than 60 south-east Queensland dairyfarmers to become active about addressing natural resource management (NRM) issues affecting their farms and local catchment areas.

Activities included farmers using the Dairy Self-Assessment Tool (DairySAT) checklist and guide to identify and prioritise NRM issues for their enterprise. Individual farm priorities were then addressed collectively through workshops and farm action plans. Funding for the groups was provided by SEQ Catchments.

The program was implemented on a local basis, allowing NRM issues specifically affecting farm-

ers in each local catchment to be addressed through a series of workshops. One of the groups based in the Woodford district, identified its NRM priority issues as understanding vegetation management and legislation, soil fertility and fertiliser application and the control of weeds such as Giant Rats Tail grass.

A dairyfarmer from Mt Mee Darryn Crouch said the program had enabled the group to gain access to technical speakers and information about issues "that we know are important but too often get put to the side, particularly during the dry times".

"We were able to learn from other farmers' experiences, and for many farmers the program has improved confidence in their ability to manage their farms' natural resources," he said.

Incentive funding up to \$3000 was made available to each farm co-financing activities designed to benefit the environment and enable improved natural resource management.

Positive changes in farmer attitudes were noted throughout the program, with many hesitant at



Woodford Dairying Better 'n Better for Tomorrow group learning about control methods for Giant Rats Tail grass from Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries principal extension officer Graeme Elphinstone.

first to openly discuss NRM issues. Farmers realised that small, often inexpensive improvements to their system would allow them to make significant gains in natural resource management. The farmer groups will continue to work together beyond the project addressing NRM and other issues.

Based on the success of the south-east Queensland program a similar program is being implemented in other regions including North Queensland, Eungella, Maleny, Nanango and Gympie.

Strong support was received from the regional NRM bodies to implement the program.

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# Build your know-how

## KEY POINTS

- FarmBis funds available for range of training courses
- Easy-to-use website to find training

FARMBIS is a jointly funded initiative between the Australian and State Governments that provide financial aid to producers to participate in training and education activities.

A 50% subsidy rate applies across all training categories which include human resource management, financial management, general business management, marketing, production management, and natural resource management/biodiversity.

Dayboro, Queensland, dairyfarmers Greg and Jenny Easlea feature in a new press advertising campaign for FarmBis throughout Queensland. Armed with the

slogan, 'Build your know-how', the advertising campaign calls for dairyfarmers to improve their business and farm management practices through training.

The Easleas were invited to participate in the campaign because of their strong commitment to training. "We're always on the look-out to do things more efficiently and profitably, to learn from the experience of others," Mr Easlea said.

Chair of the FarmBis Queensland State Planning Group, Leith Bouilly, is confident FarmBis will help convert the dairy industry's growing awareness of training opportunities into action.

How do you access the FarmBis money for training? Identify a training course that meets your needs on the FarmBis website and then contact the training provider to find out when it can be delivered. Once you have organised your training, you need to submit your

forms to FarmBis for funding approval.

When you are approved, you can start your training. There are more than 125 training providers available to work with your group to meet your training needs in a wide variety of learning areas.

To find out what is available through FarmBis, head to the website <[www.farmbis.qld.gov.au](http://www.farmbis.qld.gov.au)>. It has a current database of approved learning activities. You can search the database by training provider, topic of training, location or title of the learning activity. Begin your search by exploring the "Topic" line to get an idea of the broad range of activities available.

If you cannot find a course that meets your needs, contact a FarmBis Networker, who will be happy to identify trainers and learning activities that meet your needs.

Currently there are five dairy industry training providers regis-



Dairyfarmers Greg and Jenny Easlea support training and FarmBis funding.

tered with FarmBis to deliver training in a broad range of topics from production-based courses such as Top Fodder and Effluent Management through to Advanced Computer Usage and Business Management.

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Sam and Fleur Tonge, Casino NSW.

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# Forum provides practical focus

## KEY POINTS

- Forum opportunity to meet other farmers and hear latest research
- Farmers from Qld and northern NSW attend

By ROSS COOMBER

FARMERS from Queensland and northern NSW travelled to Coffs Harbour in October to attend the New Generation Dairy Farmers Forum.

They did it because of the “strong focus of the program on the positive nature of the future dairy industry”, the “reputation” the forum has built up and because they had, in some cases, been to a previous forum at Coffs Harbour and wanted to repeat the experience. They also wanted to talk with dairyfarmers and meet others in the industry from different areas.

After an opening address by Pat Rowley, Dr Ian Lean set the standard of the presentations by looking at problems and opportunities associated with autumn calving of cows and the ability of farmers to take advantage of increased pay rates for autumn milk offered by some milk processing companies.

This, together with the latest research on water-use efficiency of pasture species by James Neal, of the University of Sydney’s dairy project, and use of these research results on a



Simon Wieck, Kulpi, Qld; Ivan Wendt, Chambers Flat, Qld; Steven Stenhouse, Rossmoya, Qld; Jason Larsen, Monto, Qld; Scott and Victoria Menkins, Rosalie Plains, Qld; Wayne Bayliss, Baffle Creek, Qld; and new Subtropical Dairy co-ordinator Janine Teese at the conference.

Casino farm, presented by Sam Tonge and Paul Judge, highlighted the value of research, sound technical knowledge and good advice to farmers.

Simon Wieck, from Kulpi, Qld, said he liked the way the forum presented farmer’s stories after some technical and background talks. He said this was an ideal way to get information and he was particularly impressed with speakers on the second day who talked about managing finances and working with employees.

These, together with two presentations by farmers on how they had progressed to become part of the business and gain their goals, were particularly important sessions, Mr Wieck said.

Cotton farmers Richard and Susan Wright, of Moree, NSW,

were among farmers who told their story, about how they successfully came into a family farming arrangement.

Victoria Menkins was impressed with their talk as they were “just not from dairying” but putting into practice thoughts and ideas that could be used by a lot of farmers in a number of rural industries.

She said this was good information from a young couple “doing it for real”.

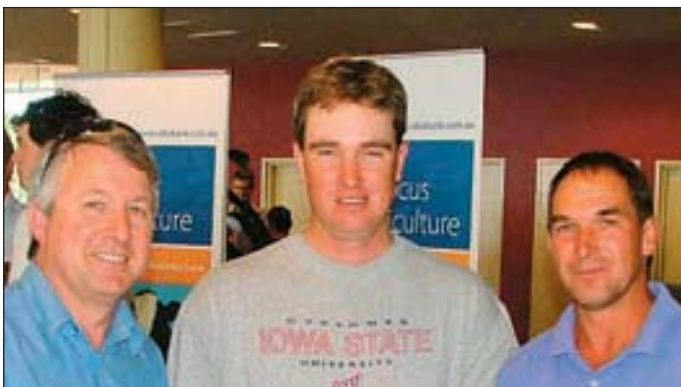
Scott Menkins said the two InCalf talks on herd fertility by InCalf project co-ordinator, Dr Steve Little, and Victorian farmers Paul and Kerry Price, who had been using tools available in the InCalf package in their herd, were useful.

He said he had a better understanding of the problems and choices he had with herd fertility,

and some good ideas he would use “back home”.

With 100 farmers present, it was also a good opportunity for the new Subtropical Dairy co-ordinator, Janine Teese, to be introduced to some people she would be working with in Queensland and northern NSW. Ms Teese said it was an “opportunity to meet people and to catch up on some of the current thinking on a range of topics”.

In closing the forum, organising committee chairperson, Jason Bake, commented on the importance of the forum to the northern dairy industry as it was the only forum of its type available for these producers looking for up-to-date information from such a diverse group of speakers. He said he hoped to see strong representation from the northern farmers again next year.



Parmalat Rockhampton farm services officer Charlie Ernst chats with dairyfarmers Simon Wieck, Kulpi, Qld, and Scott Menkins, Rosalie Plains, Qld, at the forum.



Castlegate VGS rep Ian Downey (second from left) chats with NSW northern rivers dairyfarmers Alan Graham, Andrew Wilson and Paul Weir.

- January 13-19:** **International Dairy Week, Tatura Showgrounds, Vic**  
 Contact: International Dairy Week  
 Phone: (03) 5772 2871; fax: (03) 5772 3201  
 Email: <info@internationaldairyweek.com.au>; website <internationaldairyweek.com.au>
- February 26-March 1:** **Australian Dairy Conference, Shepparton, Vic**  
 Contact: Esther Price Promotions  
 Phone: 1800 177 636; mobile: 0418 931 938  
 Email: <esther@estherprice.com.au>
- April 5-18:** **Sydney Royal Easter Show, Homebush, NSW**  
 Contact: Phone: (02) 9704 1111; fax: (02) 9704 1122  
 Email: <enquiries@rasnsw.com.au>; website <www.eastershow.com.au>
- May 20:** **Murgon Dairy Heritage Festival, Queensland Dairy Industry Museum, Murgon, Qld**  
 Contact: Phone: (07) 4169 9000  
 Email: <krewald@burnett.net.au>
- June 14-16:** **Primex, Casino, NSW**  
 Contact: Phone: (07) 5531 4600; fax: (07) 5531 3072  
 Email: <exhibits@bigpond.net.au>; website <www.primex.net.au>
- August 9-18:** **Ekka, RNA Showgrounds, Gregory Terrace, Bowen Hills, Brisbane**  
 Contact: Phone: (07) 3852 1831; fax: 07 3257 1428  
 Email: <enquiries@ekka.com.au>; website <www.ekka.com.au>
- August 29-30:** **Dairy Science World Series 2007 Melbourne, Vic**  
 Contact: Phone (03) 9731 3393; fax: (03) 9731 3206  
 Email: <info@diaa.asn.au>; website <www.diaa.asn.au>

Keep a watch out for Dairy Water For Profit and Nutrition Plu\$ courses, which will be scheduled for the region through 2007.

**DIARY DATES** To have an event included in the diary dates, send information to **Carlene and Alastair Dowie**  
 Phone/fax: (03) 5464 1382 Email: <alastair.dowie@ruralpress.com>  
 or submit event to website <www.dairyinfo.biz>

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