



Your Levy at Work



DairySage building mentoring partnerships for young people in the Subtropical Dairy Region

For the past six months, 10 young people involved in the northern Australian dairy industry have participated in the DairySage mentoring course which has been run by the Young Dairy Network.

The program kicked off at Maleny in early December 2016 with mentees and mentors coming together for a two-day workshop to build mentoring partnerships and set goals for each mentee to work through over the ensuing six months. Each month everyone met online to discuss their progress and share successes or challenges in working towards their goals. These monthly connections were a massive contributor to the overall success of the program as day-to-day life often gets in the way of long term goals.

DairySage Mentoring is a supportive relationship between two people and provides the individuals involved with an opportunity to share and develop their knowledge, experience and skills. One such partnership was between Dominique Hinchliffe and Mal Maroske. At the start of DairySage, Dominique had just finished her degree at UQ Gatton and taken on a six-month position at the DAF Gatton Research Dairy. Dominique was looking to develop her skills and confidence as a dairy extension officer and in particular

assistance with facilitating discussion groups. DairySage was able to match Dominique up with dairy extension veteran Mal Maroske as her mentor. Mal, who retired two years ago, has spent his whole career working in the dairy industry and knows a bit about facilitation of discussion groups. Mal was also keen to be involved in the program as a way to assist young people develop themselves as dairy industry professionals. As Mal is now retired, he had the time to work with Dominique one on one and travel with her to various discussion groups she was facilitating. His knowledge created a wonderful opportunity for Dominique to learn and develop her skills as an extension officer which will be a great foundation to her future career.

Another mentoring partnership fostered by DairySage was between Nikita Suridge and Ross McInnes. At the time the program started in December 2016, Nikita was just about to embark on a career opportunity taking her from a 2IC position to farm manager. Nikita stated in her DairySage application that her "career goal is to own and operate my own dairy enterprise. I aim to find a mentor who could assist me in furthering my knowledge on the steps required to go from an employee to employer". Ross McInnes also applied

to become a mentor in the program keen to pass on any experience to younger participants in the Queensland dairy industry. This mentoring partnership allowed Nikita to have a very experienced dairy farmer as her sounding board to assist with many decisions she faced during the initial few months of her new role as manager. Ross was available for Nikita to ring and ask questions, get direction on how to tackle a new situation, and to work through what training Nikita will require to further develop her dairy farm management skills.

DairySage offers an excellent opportunity for our young people in the dairy industry to build a positive and supportive network of people around them to develop a future career path in the industry.

DairySage Mentoring was developed by WestVic Dairy and The People in Dairy team from Dairy Australia with funding provided by the Geoffrey Gardiner Dairy Foundation. It has been adapted for the Subtropical Dairy region and run by the Young Dairy Network.

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