

# DISCUSSION GROUPS: Tour to Central West NSW



**Ray Murphy**  
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Queensland



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**During July 2018, twelve subtropical dairy farmers visited three dairy farms in the central west of NSW. This included Moxey Farms which presently milk 6,500 cows in free stall barns.**

**The tour, organised by Ray Murphy from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and Mike Ryan from Eagle Direct, looked closely at cow comfort and calf rearing infrastructure.**

The first day of the tour was spent at Moxey Farms, Gooloogong NSW, where cows are milked three times a day to produce 225,000 litres of milk per day. The day started with viewing milking in an 80 stand rotary dairy. This is one of two milking sheds which operate 23 hours a day. This was followed by a look through a tunnel barn which houses 1,000 cows in free stalls with sand bedding and flood wash alley ways. The use of fans was a hot topic for subtropical farmers, both in the tunnel barn and in the dairy shed.

Everyone on the tour were very impressed by the calf raising facilities, where calf comfort and hygiene were obvious priorities. The day concluded with an inspection of silage buns, made on a huge concrete slab with silage removed using a silage facer to leave a perfect face that minimised spoilage.

The second day started with a visit to Col and Erina Thompson's farm, Silvermere Holsteins, near Cowra where they milk 400 cows. Similar to Moxey farms, the cows are housed

in free stall barns using sand bedding with fans installed throughout the barns. The calf rearing facilities were also impressive, with the use of removable pen dividers sparking the interest of the farmers on tour. The visit to Silvermere Holsteins was very useful as they use infrastructure and technologies similar to Moxey Farms, but on a scale the tour group could relate to.

The final stop of the tour was to Andrew and Cassandra Kath's farm near Forbes, where they use grazing and a mixed ration to feed 300 cows. Andrew and Cassandra ran their family farm near Toowoomba for many years and have moved south to be a share farmer. While their irrigation water is providing quality feed for the milkers, the drought has limited feed production for other stock on dry land paddocks.

An unexpected bonus to the tour was the networking opportunities with another 12 dairy farmers, consultants and service providers from Victoria and NSW who also

visited Moxey Farms and shared a meal that night.

The reaction to the tour was overwhelmingly positive. Farmers liked visiting the farms and seeing how they operate. There was also the sharing of information within the tour group and with other farmers they met. The tour group also established contacts with service providers such as Eagle Direct, who design and build packages for animal housing, management and feeding systems and GreenCon who design and construct dairies, feed pads, free stalls and effluent systems.

The farmers on the tour listed the areas they intend to change on their farms as:

- Installing fans into existing and planned barns and dairy sheds;
- Possibly converting an existing barn into a tunnel barn;

- Making changes to calf sheds, using small pen designs and auto feeders;
- Building improved commodity sheds;
- Changing effluent management systems;
- Using the Moxey approach of a concrete base for silage buns rather than building a pit, and
- Investigating the purchase of the silage shavers used on two of the farms visited.

The cost of the tour to farmers was offset by Discussion Group funding provided by Subtropical Dairy Programme, as well as contributions from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Lallemand Animal Nutrition, McLanahan manure separators and the Dairy Farmers Milk Co-op. ■ ■

