

Driving Dairy Forward



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DAF's C4Milk research project has completed its first six week grazing experiment at the Gatton Research Dairy. As part of Dairy Australia's \$2.1 million investment in R, D & E over the next five years, the team of dairy scientists will complete a series of experiments that aim to improve the quality of pastures and crops to increase milk production from forage. The initial experiment looked at how the pre-grazing height and pasture structure of lucerne affects the feed intake, diet quality and milk production of dairy cows. To help extend this information and some of the preliminary findings, the experiment was opened up to industry over the 17th and 18th May. Service providers and dairy farmers were able to visit the site to gain insight and get a close look at the trial in progress.

As part of the two day event, a Service Provider Update (SPU) session was held, where over 30 people representing Dairy Australia staff, service providers and farmer representatives from interstate Regional Development Program groups (RDP) across Australia attended the presentations. This is an ongoing series, with the first held in October 2017, that promote the R & D work completed in the northern dairy region by Queensland Department of Agriculture. These events highlight ongoing research opportunities and create an environment that fosters sharing of ideas between scientists from around the country in refining grazing and mixed ration feeding systems.

Following the successful SPU, a C4Milk R&D Open Day was held primarily to showcase the current lucerne grazing trial. This gave everyone an opportunity to see the different treatments being applied (different grazing heights and intensities). The experiment has generated a large amount of data. This will be reported in later editions of Northern Horizons and in C4Milk workshops across all regions during this spring.

Guests at the C4Milk R & D Open Day viewed two developmental projects that are work in progress. The first was a portable drafting gate that is solar powered. This has been developed for the purpose of assisting farms to differentially feed cows. A working prototype of the mobile drafting systems was shown. This generated a lot of discussion around its use with feed pads and pastures, allowing cows to be sorted for feeding, whilst still managing a single herd at milking times. The second developmental trial is investigating duckweed, commonly seen growing naturally on many farm dams. DAF is currently growing duckweed at the Gatton Research Dairy under experimental conditions to further understand its high growth rates and quality. Future work will be focussed on assessing its feasibility to be grown on farm as a low cost protein source.

These and other R & D trials continue to progress, so keep an eye out for updates in future Northern Horizon articles or field days held on farm. The next animal grazing experiment looking at recommended post-grazing height of lucerne pasture will commence in August, with SPU and Open Days to be held in September. We look forward to seeing you then, if not before. ■■

