

# Discussion Group project activities during 2019



## **Belinda Haddow**

Subtropical Dairy Extension Co-ordinator Darling Downs and South-east Queensland

Discussion groups have a long and successful history in the Subtropical Dairy region. During the Target 10 and Aim High extension days over twenty years ago, the delivery of extension activities and peer support through discussion groups was very highly regarded.

Discussion groups have found favour again as an extension approach for providing dairy farmers with support, information, up-to-date research and development and even an opportunity for benchmarking. This isn't really surprising. Discussion groups provide a non-threatening place for farmers to learn from industry peers and other farmers and share ideas amongst themselves. They provide a short, informal learning experience and often have the option for a farm walk to 'check out' what the host farmer has been up to.

There are currently 14 active discussion groups in the Subtropical Dairy region. Some have stood the test of time and have operated over a number of years, others are short lived with a planned number of meetings around a purpose. Some groups are focused around a particular location or region, while others a particular topic or interest.

Over the last ten months, Subtropical Dairy with Dairy Australia, has been funding discussion group activities for existing or new discussion groups in the Subtropical

Dairy region. Eleven activities have been funded during that time, including two multi-day farm tours, formation of four new groups and group meetings for extension follow-up activities.

One of the new discussion groups which has formed over the last six months is the South Burnett Women in Dairy group. Reminiscent of the Women in Dairy groups which operated throughout Queensland during previous droughts, this group brought together dairy women in the South Burnett region keen to support each other and share successes, issues and challenges of the current dairying environment. The group has met three times to date. The last meeting held in February, 2019 brought the group together to complete their Certificate in First Aid.

New discussion groups have also formed in the Far North Coast (FNC) New South Wales and the Southern Darling Downs regions. Both groups have had successful first meetings with follow-up meetings planned for April, 2019. The FNC group will travel to different members farms for each meeting looking at production systems and other technical matters. The Southern Downs group had their first meeting focused on Rearing Healthy Calves and will continue with the calf rearing and heifer rearing theme for the next two meetings. ■



**If you would like to know more information about Subtropical Dairy discussion groups, please contact Belinda Haddow on 0423 00 3638 or [belinda@subtropicaldairy.com.au](mailto:belinda@subtropicaldairy.com.au)**