

InCharge Dairy Herd Fertility Pilot Program wraps up in SEQ

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The InCharge, five day dairy herd fertility workshop series was piloted in the Subtropical Dairy region during July through to September this year. The program is designed to take farmers on a journey through everything they should consider when building an effective herd reproductive management plan and improving their farm's herd fertility. Dr Carl Hockey, from Rural Vet Pty Ltd, who is a Dairy Australia Repro Right trained veterinarian, facilitated the five sessions.

The InCharge program worked through four classroom learning sessions and culminated with an on-farm workshop focused on collating the groups learnings together and reviewing a reproductive plan for the host farm.

The first classroom day of the InCharge series focused on demonstrating the impact of reproductive performance on the efficiency and day-to-day operations of a dairy farm. Participants looked at how reproductive performance can be used to exploit the natural characteristics of a farm and considered how manipulation of reproductive performance can assist in achieving the business's goals. The four farms participating in the pilot program shared their current farm reproductive procedures and recording processes and goals. All four businesses had very unique operations and the range of reproductive strategies used on farm ranged from very intensive management to a more minimalistic approach.

The second classroom workshop day, held two weeks after the first, looked at how submission rates, heat detection, conception rates and calving pattern affect herd reproductive performance. These topics were followed by herd synchrony programs, bull fertility, replacement heifers and cow health on the third day.

The Transition Cow Management workshop made up Day 4 of the program and this session was open to all farmers in the region, which led to a discussion including even more management practices. The Transition Cow Management workshop discusses similar concepts to the on-farm Low Stress Calving sessions held throughout the region in September and October, however, it delves further into the transition cow management practices on farm and looks at calculating cow requirements and diets to address the transition cows needs during this period to maximise her performance once in the milking herd.

The final day of the InCharge pilot program was held at the Lehmann's farm in Kalbar, where the group were able to focus their attention on the reproductive procedures and benchmarks for that particular enterprise and review all of the contributing factors to a farm's individual reproductive plan and performance. This session provided an excellent opportunity to apply all areas of the previous workshops. It also allowed some discussion regarding the management procedures of the different components of the herd during the current seasonal conditions – particularly the dry and transition cows. ■ ■



Heat detection aids can make mating timing decisions much easier. This girl will be ready for breeding after the afternoon milking.



Walking through the different herds on the Lehmann's farm to discuss relevant decisions and performance indicators.



One of the most crucial herds in the farm's reproductive planning and management – the dry cows and transition herd.

More information around managing fertility in dairy herds can be found at the Dairy Australia website

www.dairyaustralia.com.au/farm/animal-management/fertility