

How Now Gippy Cow



Your Levy at Work

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Steady state - are you there yet?

By John Mulvany
OMJ Agricultural Consulting

I recently attended a Field Day conducted on the farm of ex-Gippslanders Ruth and Neville Kydd who have farmed at Finley in NSW since 1985. The day reinforced some very strong business principles held by the Kydds and the importance of what is described as the 'steady state' dairy business.

All dairy businesses go through a growth phase, when cash is very tight and genuine progress is often questioned; there is high capital expenditure and high debt servicing. However, following on from that, there should be a phase when the business is in a "sweet spot" and the major settings of stocking rate, calving date, and land resources are constant. During this period, consolidation and debt reduction can occur. It is also the time when analysis of the business shows clear messages. True performance, good or bad, becomes very evident. In the absence of steady state it is far more difficult to identify progress. Signs of an inability to achieve steady state are large fluctuations in cow numbers, low replacement numbers and even volatility in the farming system.

The Kydd business grew from 167 cows in 1985 to 1,250 cows in 2016. However, over that 31 year period there were periods of steady state involving consolidation and debt reduction. From 2010 to 2016 cow numbers varied by only 20% on the same milking area; prior to that there was a steady state of 800 - 900 cows on a smaller milking area. The message is clear that once you have the right combination don't change it unless one of the basic resources such as land changes.

Despite farming in a very volatile environment, with water availability and price both varying dramatically, the Kydds have averaged 11.74% return on asset and an \$EBIT of \$2.20/ kg milk solids over the past 5 years. They do not receive a "premium" NSW milk price. The business has grown in stages and now has a net worth (assets minus liabilities) of \$13.6 million.

Some comments, notes, and observations from the Field Day were:

- "...We did a whole farm plan, so we could be more efficient at growing grass, and so that we knew that any improvements or changes we did would fit into our long term plan and add value..."
- "...We had 40% equity early in our career, but decided early that when we had debt the objective was always to pay it off..." Equity has only varied from 92-100% since 2004. This is exceptional in the dairy industry, but is regarded as a resilience strategy by the Kydds. If debt is present it is paid off as soon as possible.
- The farming system is simple and conservative with a moderate per cow production from a three way cross, high fertility herd (96% in calf rate). Only 27% of feed was imported in 2015/2016.

The Kydds' dairy business principles are equally applicable to all dairy businesses, irrespective of where you farm or how many cows you milk. Obviously the older you are the more relevant the debt reduction story becomes, as this introduces flexibility for the individuals in the business.

Ruth and Neville were asked to list what they saw as the critical success factors in achieving their success, to which they replied:

- Monitor, review, and be prepared to change.
- Do the important things well.
- Do the little things on time, so they don't become big things.
- You need to be a team heading in the same direction. Take everyone on the journey with you.
- You need to question and understand advice you are given.
- Everyone has good ideas; you need to pick the ones that work for your business.



- Don't waste your time on stuff you are not good at, get help.
- Time is not infinite - use it well.
- Build relationships - they will support you when things are tough.
- Enjoy what you do.
- Don't expect someone to do something that you wouldn't do yourself, unless it's their passion.
- Be prepared to be flexible with loan repayments so you can be in a good position when opportunities come up.
- Adversity always opens up opportunities. Always try to be in a good position when these arise.
- If you pay too much for something, it's very hard to make money on it.
- In tight times, decide what you can't afford not to do.
- Deliver on things that you say you are going to do.
- Focus on returns, not on production.

These might all sound just common sense, but sometimes in an industry that suffers from "complexitis", a focus on production rather than profit, and excessive debt in many cases, a dose of simple common sense, from individuals who have gradually grown after periods of steady state, can help to re-focus.

It might also serve to support the reader of How Now Gippy Cow who has a dairy "model" that seems to work and generate profits, even if it is not the "glossiest". There was nothing fancy at the Kydd farm. Everything was earning its place.

If milk price and season are reasonable next year, and you are in a period of "steady state" then a practical objective could be to reduce a specific debt and consolidate, rather than expand or expend. However, debt reduction is not something that people boast about and is generally private. That can make it harder to do, but it is very satisfying when it happens!

If you are not in a period of "steady state" ask yourself "Why not?" Is it because you are genuinely in a growth phase and are working to a definite plan with a definite outcome, or are you just swapping and changing because you can? That tactic might need deeper thought.

Pasture – first grazing is critical

Establishing a new pasture doesn't stop at sowing. Management during the first twelve months is critical. Good management gets the best out of a new pasture and will help it persist.

A pasture should not be considered successfully established until there is a dense, well tillered pasture that has survived a summer. Pasture management through this time has a major impact on its future performance.

Pastures grow slowly until they are nipped off, which accelerates both their growth rate and tillering. Before a new pasture is ready for its first grazing it needs to pass the 'pluck test' to see if plants are firmly rooted, so animals won't pull them out of the ground. Make sure that the new ryegrass plant will not pull out of the ground when pulled up by hand, i.e. the leaves tear off rather than the roots pull out of the ground.

The first grazing is about removing the tips of plants to encourage their growth, not about feeding animals. Graze in dry conditions to avoid soil and plant damage. Let stock graze the top 3-4 cm off plants; do not bare the pasture out.

Graze with lighter young stock if possible. Cows can be used, but take care as they may only need an hour or two in the paddock (depending on numbers).

In good conditions the first grazing can be 6-8 weeks after sowing a perennial ryegrass (typically 1-2 weeks sooner for an annual, Italian or hybrid). Dry or cold conditions can prolong this.

Apply fertiliser as required. New pasture responds well to nitrogen, and over the first 6 months, generally two small applications are used (e.g. 25-30 kg N/ha) when conditions allow (not water logged and soil temperature greater than 7°C).

Monitor new pastures closely for emerging weeds. The specific weeds present determine your herbicide choice. If it doubt seek advice from your local rural retailer, seed company, consultant or to identify weeds on-line visit <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/>

Having large, strong, well-tillered grass plants and clovers prior to summer will help ensure survival.

Follow these tips:

- Graze for the first time when new seedlings cannot be pulled out by hand plucking, usually 6-8 weeks after sowing.
- Graze consistently to the same residual through the first winter and spring, leaving a 4-5 cm residual. This encourages growth and tillering of new ryegrass and helps avoid shading and suppression of white clover seedlings (as well as maintaining pasture quality).

- Graze consistently at the same pre-grazing mass, for example when pasture height reaches 10-15 cm. Letting a pasture get too long reduces its density, particularly in late spring.
- Do not make hay or heavy crops of silage from new pastures in the first year as this damages plants (reduces tillering and root growth).
- Apply fertiliser as required. New pasture responds well to nitrogen, and over the first 6 months, generally two small applications are used (e.g. 25-30 kg N/ha) when conditions allow (not water logged and soil temperature >7°C).

In late autumn/early winter aim to graze ryegrass pastures at canopy closure or as close to the three leaf stage as possible.

This maximises the potential growth of the pasture. Leaves are solar panels – harvesting the free sunlight and turning it into valuable feed.

After a grazing event the ryegrass regrowth starts slowly, but as it produces more leaf the growth rate steadily increases.

Research demonstrates that the third leaf on a ryegrass plant is up to 40% heavier than the second leaf yet it takes the same number of days to grow – so getting out towards the three leaf stage is a key to optimising pasture growth (and reducing expensive supplement requirement).

A dense healthy pasture at the three leaf stage is often about 2500kgDM/ha in late autumn/early winter.

If grazing occurs after the three leaf stage or beyond canopy closure, the bottom leaves decay and die and the pasture in the base of the sward will become stemmy and less palatable. Future pasture density and yield may be compromised as lower amounts of light reach the base of the ryegrass plant, reducing the production of the daughter tillers required to build pasture density.

Canopy closure is the point at which you can no longer see any soil through the pasture sward. At this point the pasture is capturing maximum sunlight so there is no gain in delaying grazing.

Other signs of canopy closure include yellowing in the base, stem elongation and eventually production of non-viable aerial tillers (leading to pasture thinning).

Also, at canopy closure pasture quality will start to decline as a result of both older leaves dying (being shaded out) and the base of the plant becoming stemmy. Canopy closure can also lead to greater wastage and post grazing residuals being above desired target levels

Get in charge of fertility

FOR Mick and Julie Fusinato, completing an InCharge Fertility workshop has meant better calving outcomes and healthier cows.

The Neerim South couple made the five day commitment to the workshops and have since noticed lower empty rates in their younger cows.

"I initially baulked at the five day commitment, but when you actually see what is covered over those five days, you couldn't make it any shorter," Julie said.

"It's worth investing the time to get the information."

Mick believes fertility was already a strength of the farm, but the course showed them where they could make improvements, especially with weighing and target feeding younger stock.

"It's already had an impact," he said.

"We used to get four or five empties out of 40 two-year-olds, but now we are down to about one. So by weighing them and making sure they are up to target weight has made a difference."

GippsDairy regional extension officer Louise Sundermann urged dairy farmers to sign on for the InCharge workshops, which will be run in Korumburra, Foster, Warragul and Maffra starting in late May or early June.

"Mick and Julie are great examples of how farmers who are already performing above the average in fertility can still find improvement by doing the course," she said.

"With fertility rates falling across the industry, it's an area where every farmer can improve their business bottom line and ease the stress of calving by accessing the information and skills offered by InCharge."

Louise said the workshops can help the farm business by giving it:

- control over the timing of calving and peak feed demand



InCharge has paid dividends for Mick and Julie Fusinato.

- a better rate of genetic gain
- more options to cull or sell less desirable animals
- lower cost of replacement stock
- lower greenhouse gas emissions, and
- reduced calving induction.

GippsDairy is holding InCharge fertility courses in Korumburra (Mondays starting 29th May 2017 - excluding 12th June), Foster (Thursdays starting 1st June 2017), Warragul (Fridays starting 2nd June 2017) and Maffra (Tuesdays starting 30th May 2017).

For more information, contact Louise Sundermann on 5624 3900 or email to louise@gippsdairy.com.au

From flood to spray irrigation?

By Greg O'Brien, senior dairy extension officer

In many situations flood irrigation (also referred to as border check irrigation) is an efficient method for irrigating pastures. However, if poorly managed or used on inappropriate soils, flood irrigation systems can use too much water and contribute to the development of shallow water tables, nutrient losses to river systems, and salinisation problems.

In situations where flood irrigation may be inappropriate, conversion from a border-check to a spray irrigation system, such as a centre pivot, is one option for reducing water use and alleviating the environmental impacts of irrigation.

There are many things to consider.

The daily amount of irrigation water required by perennial pasture is important in selecting and designing an irrigation system. The capacity to deliver water must meet the peak requirements of the crop or pasture being irrigated. To allow for breakdowns and flexibility in operations (e.g. to limit irrigation to 5 days a week or to use off-peak power) the system capacity can be increased further.

When purchasing a spray system you should explore all options and clarify your requirements with a designer so that you invest in a system with appropriate capacity. Of course the capital cost of the system increases as system capacity increases.

How efficient is spray compared to flood irrigation?

The general message is that in appropriate circumstances flood irrigation efficiency can approach that of efficient spray systems.

However, soil variability, management, and topography impact on the performance of flood systems to a greater extent than on spray systems. This results in more situations where high irrigation efficiencies cannot be obtained using flood irrigation.

The improvement in irrigation efficiency associated with conversion from flood to spray is likely to be greatest where soil types are permeable and deep drainage losses are high, or where existing flood systems cannot capture and reuse surface run-off. Water use on a highly permeable soil can be halved when converting from low flow surface irrigation to a spray system.

It is important to note that well managed flood irrigation can potentially achieve better irrigation efficiency than poorly managed spray irrigation. Thus there are no hard and fast rules on what levels of water savings you can achieve by converting to a spray system.

Conversion from flood to spray irrigation is not cheap. Nevertheless, conversion can be economically viable for a dairy farm if substantial water savings can be achieved and used to expand the area of irrigated pastures on the property. The labor savings from converting are quite large, with some conversions meaning more sleep and sometimes a labor unit cost saved. Conversion is less economic when there is no potential to expand the irrigated area on the property, however if water prices increase substantially or there is less water availability, spray irrigation may become economic on farms without any available land for expansion.

Investment viability will vary with individual circumstances and will largely depend on changes in water use, forage production, labour requirement and pumping costs.

Euthanasia – doing it the right way

Ellie Field loves working with dairy cows, which is why it was so important to her to learn how to euthanase them in the safest and most pain-free way possible.

The Tinamba dairy employee, who works on Neil Gannon's farm, last year did the Humane Euthanasia of Livestock course through GippsDairy and recommends every person who works with animals should do the same.

"Killing an animal might seem horrible, but understanding the reasoning and knowing how to do it safely and pain free is important," she said.

"I think everyone should learn how to euthanase properly."

Ellie studied firearm and captive bolt methods, which gave her the confidence to make the right decisions and use the correct techniques when animals need to be humanely euthanased.

"It's all about doing it so there is no pain for the animal. You need to minimise the chance of anything going wrong."

GippsDairy regional extension co-ordinator Tony Platt said the Humane Euthanasia of Livestock courses give farmers the most up-to-date information in a vital area of animal management.

"Dairy farmers look after their cows with the utmost care and at times, the most humane treatment of a sick or injured animals is safe and humane euthanasia" he said "Farmers who have the confidence to know the correct way to euthanase an animal will do a better job, making it pain free for the cow and less stressful for the farmer."



Ellie Field said the Humane Euthanasia of Livestock course is a must for every dairy farmer.

"It's a one day program that will provide farmers and their employees with a vital skill they can use for the rest of the careers."

The workshops will be held in the MID on 16 May, West Gippsland on 17 May and South Gippsland on 18 May.

To RSVP or for more information contact Tony Platt on 5624 3900 or email tony@gippsdairy.com.au

No change to 457 visas

Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) has said the Federal Government's changes to 457 visas will have no impact on the Dairy Industry Labour Agreement, which allows dairy farmers to recruit senior farm hands. In a statement, the ADF said it has been assured that:

- Existing labour agreements remaining in effect
- Existing visa holders will not be impacted unless they apply for another visa impacted by the changes outside of the labour agreement programme
- New nominations that farmers intend to lodge related to visa applications are not impacted – including applications for occupations which have been 'removed' from the standard programme or are now subject to a caveat in the standard programme but remain specified in the agreement

The ADF also said it that under the changes, which come into effect in April:

- Dairy cattle farmers are included on the short-term skilled occupation list and only able to apply for a 2-year visa
- Two-year visas can only be renewed once, which will lead to an increase in administrative burden and red tape on farmers looking to access these new visas

- Dairy, like other agricultural commodities is not included on the medium to long term strategic skilled occupation list to access 4-year visas
- Changes have been made to the Employer Nomination Scheme (subclass 186) visa and to the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (subclass 187) visa

The ADF said it was seeking clarification on the status of current visa applicants who are waiting on approvals and the additional occupations available to support regional employers.

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Taking disbudding by the horns

Dr Blair Summerville
Regional Extension Officer
WestVic Dairy

Over the last twelve months there has been a lot of changes in the conventional way of disbudding young calves in the first few months of life. The use of hot iron cautery is still the main method, however there are a number of new approaches, including the use of sedation and local anaesthetics with or without the addition of pain killers.

Generally, instead of calves being restrained in a cradle/head bail and the hot iron used on them, each calf is injected with an anaesthetic into their rump while the calves are around a feeder. This drug takes about 5-10 minutes to act and the calves will all sit down and have a snooze for up to 1 hour depending on the dose.

The hair around the horn buds is then clipped and 3-5mL of a local anaesthetic is applied to each horn bud. In addition to this a pain killer may be given to the calf either orally or as an injection. The local anaesthetic normally takes around five minutes to act, after which the calf is dehorned with the hot iron in the conventional way.

Why has this all come about and what are the reasons why some farmers are adopting these variations as common practise for dehorning their calves?

In recent times there has been a lot of research into the benefits of adding sedatives, local anaesthetics and pain relief for calves. Results indicate that dehorning calves in this matter leads to improved welfare and subsequent health and production benefits. The studies have looked at comparing the stress response or pain felt by calves being dehorned with three different methods:

- Without sedation, local anaesthetic or pain killers
- With sedation only
- With sedation and local anaesthetic
- With sedation, local anaesthetic and pain killers

These responses were measured through observing both behavioural changes and the stress hormone cortisol in their blood before and in the hours following dehorning, up to 24hrs in some cases.

All studies have shown that the best combination for reducing cortisol levels after dehorning and therefore the calves' pain response is the full combination of sedation, local anaesthetic and pain relief. Good responses were also seen by using sedation alone and sedation with local anaesthetic, but the duration of pain relief and stress started to diminish once these agents began to wear off in the 2-3hrs after the procedure was performed.

From an animal welfare point of view it would seem that the full combination of sedation, local anaesthetic and pain relief is the best way to go.

All studies have shown improved benefits from an animal welfare point of view, but are there any health benefits from adopting these different disbudding protocols? Some of the research has also looked at potential benefits in terms of feed intake and weight gains of using these new methods. Most of these have demonstrated clear advantages as indicated from the results below.

Three to six week old calves, 0-15 days after disbudding without sedation or local anaesthetic or pain relief had the lowest growth rates at 0.55kg/day. If given pain relief without sedation or local anaesthetic their growth rates were better at 0.65kg/day. If sedated and given local anaesthetic there

appeared to be no difference in growth rates between calves when given and not given pain relief i.e. 0.63kg/day and 0.64kg/day (see table).

Growth rates were continued to be monitored 16-30 days after disbudding in these calves. There was no significant effect of



administering pain relief on growth rate, but the sedated and local anaesthetic calves grew faster (0.76 kg/day) than the non-sedated, non-local anaesthetic calves (0.66kg/day).

Overall, for the first 30 days after disbudding, if pain relief was not used, calves that were sedated and had local anaesthetic grew faster than calves that were not sedated and received no local anaesthetic. However if pain relief was used at disbudding there was no difference in growth rate between calves that received sedation and local anaesthetic vs calves that received neither sedation nor local anaesthetic. Mean cumulative milk consumption for the 11 days after disbudding was greater for calves disbudded under sedation and local anaesthetic, but there was no effect when received pain relief treatment.

These findings are important as on the back of this some milk factories are now considering that pain control for disbudding of calves (and dehorning of cattle in general) must become a minimum industry standard. It is important to know that the industry standards and guidelines currently being worked into legislation do not mandate pain relief for animals under 6 months of age. This will make it difficult for factories to make it a compulsory practice for suppliers, however it is possible as part of the factories' own internal welfare quality assurance programs that they will continue to work with all farmers to move towards this outcome

For more information on using these methods to disbud your calves contact your local vet clinic as most clinics in the local area have adopted and are using these practises on numerous farms in the area

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2. Kevin J. Stafford, David J. Mellor, Addressing the pain associated with disbudding and dehorning in cattle, Applied Animal Behaviour Science, www.elsevier.com/locate/applanim

Method used	Weight gain 0-15 days after disbudding
No sedation, anaesthetic or pain relief	0.55kg/day
Pain relief only	0.65kg/day
Sedation with local anaesthetic only	0.64kg/day
Sedation with local anaesthetic and pain relief	0.63kg/day

Dairy advocacy for the future

Advocacy is an important part of securing the future for the dairy industry. Victorian dairy farmers are conducting an independent study of the challenges and opportunities for the leadership, governance and effectiveness of advocacy for the dairy industry in Victoria and in a national context.

The Dairy Advocacy Review Team (DART) has been established to provide recommendations on the most effective advocacy model to take the industry forward over the next 20 years. The project is supported by the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria (UDV), the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) and with UDV project funds from Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF).

The DART consists of a group independent, successful, young farmers brought together by UDV Vice-President and Gippsland dairy farmer John Versteden, with former Department of Primary Industries Executive Director Dr Clive Noble as Executive Officer.

To learn more about the DART and the opportunity to make comment, please visit www.darteam.com.au



John Versteden is part of the advocacy review panel.

Jindivick Focus Farm

Labour Efficiency Goals and Plans Explained
By Matt Hall, Focus Farm Facilitator

Brenton Ziero (share farmer)
Steve Ronalds (farm owner)

The Jindivick Focus Farm shares a common issue for the dairy industry, in that the key person for farm management has developed a simple system that relies on their imputed labour (unpaid labour) for the farm to run efficiently.

This may be as a result of the need for large amounts of imputed labour to allow cash in the business to be directed to other more apparently urgent areas in the budget.

With systems in place and the available cash to pay labour, farmers may be able to have more structured time off or spend more time in the management space for potentially better farm management outcomes.

One of the goals for the focus farm is to 'increase labour efficiency using improved systems and organisation'.

The farm has a very good dairy, including some automation, and good infrastructure to assist with labour efficiency. It is also well laid-out with efficient laneways and stock water and has support land that is close by which all assists with time, effort and labour efficiency.

Labour Cost and efficiency are reported below in Table 1 and have been measured using Dairy Farm Monitor Project data Dairy Base data.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Average
Cows/*FTE (**JFF)	124	115	NA	148	135	131
Cows/*FTE (**DFMP top 25%)	114	110		140	120	121
KgMS/FTE (JFF)	63,568	56,527	NA	57,481	64,435	60,502
KgMS/FTE (DFMP top 25%)	60,468	54,596		71,586	60,385	61,758
Labour imputed and paid \$/KgMS (JFF)	0.87	1.01	NA	1.19	1.01	1.02
Labour imputed and paid \$/KgMS (DFMP top 25%)	1.19	1.15		1.09	1.19	1.16

Table 1. Labour cost and efficiency.

* FTE - Full Time Equivalent in labour being 50 hours per week for 48 weeks of the year.

** JFF - Jindivick Focus Farm measured actual from Dairy Farm Monitor Program data.

*** DFMP Top 25% - Dairy Farm Monitor project Data (Average top 25% of Gippsland)

It is clear from the measures in Table 1 that the Focus Farm has historically stacked up well against the top 25% of Dairy Farm Monitor Project farms. The measures above could be interpreted as the farm labour efficiency being very good and not having much, if any, room for improvement.

In 2014 the farm labour arrangement changed from being run by Steve (with staff) to a share farming arrangement where Brenton provided all paid and imputed labour on the farm, except for some hours provided by Steve when required. Brenton has made a decision to provide the labour as below:

- Steve works on the farm for up to 6 hours per week - 416 (hours per year)
- Brenton works full time on the farm for 80 hours/week - 4160 (hours per year)
- Farm hand works full time on the farm 40 hours/week - 1920 (hours per year)
- Milker works part time on the farm. 12 hours/week. 576 (hours per year)
- Total yearly hours - 7072

As a result of this system Brenton has difficulty having structured time off as the majority of hours and management are done by him. This seems to have resulted in a low focus on systems for



Brenton and Steve on the Jindivick Focus Farm

employees. The Focus Farm Support Group have identified that the systems in place need to be changed to allow Brenton more flexibility for time off and time spent in the management space. As a result, one of the measures for the Focus Farm is labour efficiency operator time off in days per year or month and operator time in the management space, time dedicated to implementing management skill.

Systems planned to be in place are:

- Formalized management – this is recorded and communicated management so staff and all others are aware of the decisions made on farm, why those decisions have been made and what it means to their daily activities. This may include some regular staff meetings and the farm will trial the use of a cloud based software for:
 - o Paddock treatments (fertiliser, weed and pest control, over sowing or renovation including species, sowing rates etc).
 - o Grazing management (date grazed, pre and post grazing feed available or leaf stage, pest activity).
 - o Mob based animal treatments (young stock vaccination's and grazing movements).
 - o Job lists communicated to staff and staff able to indicate when jobs have been completed.
 - o Timesheets for all people on the farm including the ability to indicate what jobs have been done on a day of work.
- Policies – these are the rules of work on the farm that all must abide by and may include the following:
 - o Time sheet policy - all fill out timesheets and include a list of activities on those timesheets.
 - o Roster policy - some rules about rosters and changes to rosters including requests for holidays and days off work or changed hours.
 - o Code of conduct policy – a set of rules for behavioural standards that must be followed.
 - o Occupational health and safety policy – ensure all safety issues are communicated as soon as they appear to ensure they are addressed in a timely manner.
- Position descriptions - a list of the normal duties performed by each member of the team, this does not mean this list is exclusive. It is simply to allow all team members to better understand one another's roles. The Support Group insisted that this should not be a complicated list of all the duties and areas of responsibility on the farm, rather a list of dot points that is easy to refer to in case of any confusion about areas of responsibility and duties.
- Procedures - simple recorded processes to successfully achieve the details of specific jobs on the farm, which increases the likelihood that all tasks to be completed to a high standard and as required to have the best outcome. These procedures should be used as follows:
 - o Updated when a change occurs to a process.
 - o Located in a sensible area that is easily referred to by staff.
 - o Written in simple terms to ensure they are well understood.

As the Focus Farm continues we plan to implement this or a variation of this system to improve the share farmers structured time off and assist with time spent specifically on management by the share farmer.

Reminders JUNE

Pastures and Feeding

- Use nitrogen and pasture management to make sure you have enough pasture in front of your cows to feed them well through July and August or create a wedge of pasture for calving cows.
- If soils have a history of low levels of available Sulphur it may be worth including some Sulphur with nitrogen applications in cold soil conditions.
- Gibberellic acid may be a useful addition to increase pasture growth rates, if needed and conditions are suitable (cold air and soil temperatures).
- If not already done, now that most broad leaved weeds, like capeweed and erodium, have struck control them with appropriate herbicides before they grow too large.
- If you farm on wet soils expect some wastage of pasture through pugging and take this into account when you allocate pasture to cows:
 - If you have plenty of pasture in front of cows you can speed up the rotation for short periods of wet soil conditions to protect pasture from pugging.
 - You can also use on-off grazing and stand off areas such as feed pads and dairy yards if soils become very wet.

Cow Health

- Drying cows off is an important part of animal health and needs to be planned and competed well to ensure a successful lactation in the following season, for more information refer to the Dairy Australia web site www.dairyaustralia.com.au and look under mastitis.
- Plan your transition diet for calving cows. The aims are to ensure the cow's energy and protein requirements are met, and introduce grain to the diet if it is required.
- A properly-formulated lead feed ration or the use of anionic salts in the water troughs

Pastures/forages

Ryegrass leaf appearance rate	14-20 days per leaf on irrigated and non-irrigated pastures.
Area of farm to graze today	1/30 to 1/60 of grazing area in 24 hours.
Recommended pre-grazing decision	Graze pasture with current growth rates and soil moisture conditions in mind.
Recommended post grazing decision	4-6cm of residual pasture between the clumps is ideal.
Average daily pasture growth rate	15 to 25 kg DM/ha/day depending on soil moisture, nitrogen use, soil temperature and sunlight hours.
Seasonal management tasks	Consider the possibility of a wet July/August and strategies for managing waterlogged soils.

should be considered to assist in prevention of milk fever. Even a low level of milk fever in the herd has many flow-on effects including calf losses during calving, retained foetal membrane and calving paralysis. Learn more at www.dairyaustralia.com.au in the feeding and nutrition section.

- Keep in mind your calving paddocks would be best if they are sheltered and on a well-drained soil type. Change the paddock when it becomes muddy or dirty with manure to avoid mastitis.
- Mastitis can be managed in many dairy cows, some don't respond to treatment, removing cows with chronic infections reduces the bacterial challenge to other unaffected cows and helps to protect the herd. Refer to your local vet for specific advice or the Dairy Australia web site for more information www.dairyaustralia.com.au look under animal management.
- Monitor the dairy herd for lameness and treat promptly, the use of foot mats in the entrance to the platform may be useful. For more information about treatment and prevention of lameness visit www.dairyaustralia.com.au under animal welfare, cows and reducing lameness.

Replacement Heifers/Calves

- Feeding calves and young stock for a great future in the herd needs to be done well. This money spent can be a good investment

if young stock are well enough grown to produce well after calving, get back in calf and last a long time in the herd.

- Calf rearing plans are important and should be made to ensure the highest possible rate of survival and healthy growth. For more information on calf rearing refer to <http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au>
- Young stock are often put on an out block and assumed to be fed well from pasture during the autumn and winter period, however this is often not the case and young stock growth rates can be lower than expected during this period. This pasture feeding needs focus to ensure young stock grow well through this period. If done well target growth rates are usually achieved, for more information visit <http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au>

Financial

- Budgets need to be monitored in order to be effective. Review costs and income for this year and understand what effected the budget this year.
- Complete an annual budget for the 2017/2018 year based off this year's costs and next years expected opening prices.
- Once you have an opening milk price predict your spring income over feed cost margins and milk price grain price ratios to have some targets to follow.

ComingUp

See the GippsDairy events calendar for more information
www.gippsdairy.com.au/eventscalendar.aspx

Euthanase livestock

This course trains farmers in the humane euthanasia of sick, injured and unsaleable animals. The one day program gives farmers skills in using a captive bolt device and an understanding of the relevant welfare laws.

Location: MID
Date: 16 May
RSVP: [GippsDairy 5624 3900 or info@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:GippsDairy56243900@info@gippsdairy.com.au)

Location: West Gippsland
Date: 17 May
RSVP: [GippsDairy 5624 3900 or info@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:GippsDairy56243900@info@gippsdairy.com.au)

Location: South Gippsland
Date: 18 May
RSVP: [GippsDairy 5624 3900 or info@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:GippsDairy56243900@info@gippsdairy.com.au)

InCharge fertility

InCharge fertility course aims to help bring your herd's fertility under control, helping to save time and money.

The InCharge workshops, which are held on five days over five weeks, allow you to develop a fertility management plan, tailored for your farm and aligned with your business goals, helping improve your herd's fertility over time.

Location: Korumburra
Date: Mondays starting 29th May 2017 - excluding 12th June
RSVP: [Louise Sundermann on 5624 3900 or louise@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:LouiseSundermann@56243900@gippsdairy.com.au)

Location: Foster
Date: Thursdays starting 1st June 2017
RSVP: [Louise Sundermann on 5624 3900 or louise@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:LouiseSundermann@56243900@gippsdairy.com.au)

Location: Warragul
Date: Fridays starting 2nd June 2017
RSVP: [Louise Sundermann on 5624 3900 or louise@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:LouiseSundermann@56243900@gippsdairy.com.au)

Location: Maffra
Date: Tuesdays starting 30th May 2017
RSVP: [Louise Sundermann on 5624 3900 or louise@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:LouiseSundermann@56243900@gippsdairy.com.au)

Women in Dairy discussion Group (South)

Once a Day milking: Does it suit your system? Louise Sundermann and Belinda Griffin will discuss how once-a-day milking impacts on every aspect of farm and family life. Please feel comfortable to bring along your children - just bring some toys your child would be happy to share. Paper and pencils/crayons will be supplied as well as a light lunch.

Location: Leongatha Community House
Date: Friday 2 June from 11.30am to 1.30pm
RSVP: [Leah Maslen on 0448 681 373 or leah@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:LeahMaslen@0448681373@leah@gippsdairy.com.au)

Women in Dairy Discussion Group (West)

Dr Tim Luke will lead a discussion on 'Raising calves that thrive - latest developments & best practice'. Topics will include pre calving care; colostrum management; nutrition residue risk management; health and weaning management; and an opportunity for the group to share calf rearing experiences - the good, bad and ugly. Please feel comfortable to bring along your children - just bring some toys your child would be happy to share. Paper and pencils/crayons will be supplied as well as a light lunch.

Location: Baw Baw Skills Centre, 59-71 Wills St, Warragul
Date: Tuesday 13th June, 11.30am - 1.30pm
RSVP: [Leah Maslen on 0448 681 373 or leah@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:LeahMaslen@0448681373@leah@gippsdairy.com.au)