

# Tassie Dairy News

www.utas.edu.au/tia/dairy | June 2017



## CALF ROADSHOW

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#### Lesley Irvine, TIA Dairy Centre

I know, you aren't ready to start thinking about calf rearing yet, but just imagine for a moment that you had 6000 calves to rear in the upcoming season. That is how many the guest speaker at the upcoming calf roadshow events, Joanne Leigh from Top-Notch Calves, rears each year.

Joanne and husband Jonathan, set-up Top-Notch Calves 14 years ago.

The commercial calf rearing facility is located at Tirau in the Waikato on the North Island of New Zealand. Each year, they take in about 6000 calves at four days of age and rear them through to weaning when they are returned to their owners.

Not only does Joanne have extensive calf rearing experience, she was brought up on a dairy farm in Tirau and then completed a degree in Agricultural Science at Massey University. Joanne became a Consulting Officer for DairyNZ, running discussion groups and providing information for farmers on how to improve profit and productivity on farm. She then met her husband and they started their farming

career in partnership, first 50/50 sharemilking, then purchasing their own dairy farm, followed by their calf rearing unit.

Joanne is heavily involved in their calf rearing unit and loves feeding calves. She has continued with her consultancy work on a part time basis, holding field days at their farm, visiting other farms mainly around the Waikato and has also travelled to Chile three times to share her expertise in rearing calves.

"I get huge satisfaction from helping people, making things better – not just more profitable, but better for the people on the ground, the people that are doing it," Joanne said.

Joanne will be sharing her knowledge during the calf roadshow being held from June 21-23 2017.

Also at the roadshow:

- **The latest research in accelerated calf rearing programs.** There is growing interest in accelerated calf rearing programs. Research projects have recently been undertaken in Victoria and Tasmania investigating the growth benefits and cost of

these programs. The results from these projects will be presented at the roadshow.

- **Options for bull calves.** TIA's Tom Snare recently undertook a Nuffield Scholarship where he travelled to several countries to look at how they manage their bull calves. Tom will outline how this is done around the world and some options that we should be considering in Tasmania.

Each of the roadshow sessions will be unique. Some of the other presentations which will take place at some of the events will be local vets speaking about colostrum management, local farmers speaking about their experience with dairy beef and a panel discussion on dairy beef options.

Dates for the roadshow sessions are (*more details in the calendar*):

June 21 – Smithton and Burnie

June 22 – Deloraine

June 23 – Branxholm

The Smithton session will be available live online, please register for this or any of the other sessions by contacting Lesley at [Lesley.Irvine@utas.edu.au](mailto:Lesley.Irvine@utas.edu.au) or 0428 880 287.



# Stepping up, stepping back

**Sam Flight, TIA Dairy Centre**

DairyTas recently organised John Mulvany to present some Stepping Up Stepping Back sessions in Tasmania. As the name suggests, the sessions were aimed at those wishing to 'step up' within the dairy industry and those wishing to take a 'step back'.

One aspect of 'stepping up' is entering into a share farming agreement and this article describes some of the tools John spoke about during the sessions.

Share dairy farming describes two parties operating a dairy business together: the farm owner and the 'share farmer'. Each party provides something to the share farming arrangement whether it be land, machinery, equipment, livestock, labour or management. Income is shared and there is a degree of cost sharing as well as risk, responsibility, skills and control of the dairy business.

There needs to be potential for both parties to grow wealth, therefore the arrangement needs to be fair and affordable. Both parties are seen as individual entities while working together for the business. A true share farming arrangement is not an employment contract, but rather a form of independent contracting.

Share farming can be a big decision for all parties involved. Setting the share farmer arrangement up for success is essential.

It is recommended that anyone planning to get into a share farming arrangement should follow the model code of practice – this is the industry-agreed approach to building successful share dairy farming arrangements.

This code of practice covers questions such as: Is the arrangement fair and affordable? Is it share farming from a legal perspective? What should the parties discuss and what should be in the written agreements? The model code of practice can be found on the Dairy Australia website. It includes a number of tools which are outlined below.

## Fairness and affordability calculator

This calculator generates an indicative Return on Assets (RoA) for both the owner and the share farmer. A fair arrangement will provide an adequate RoA for both in an average year. In relation to affordability the calculator does this for an indicative cash position, is this affordable for both parties?

## Test guide to assess share dairy farming arrangements from a legal perspective

This part of the code of practice looks at assets contributed by the share farmer, the control of operational decisions, the financial risk and

potential to accumulate wealth by the share farmer.

## Share dairy farming checklist

This can be a great starting point when starting to look at a share farming arrangement.

- ✓ Physical attributes such as land, water, improvements including house, livestock, historical performance and farm inspection.
- ✓ The agreement and its term, income and expenses, dispute resolution and termination.
- ✓ Operations such as fertiliser, repairs and maintenance, fodder reserves, pasture renovations, duties and obligations, management and control. We want to know how much control the sharefarmer has over these operations.
- ✓ Communication – think about the meetings that have been agreed upon and the frequency and nature of these. Have you agreed on records to be provided and minute taking?

## Model share dairy farming agreement

This is a template agreement that can be modified to suit individual circumstances.

# Farmers doing the physical work to make a difference

Rachel Brown, DairyTas

It is fantastic to see Tasmanian dairy farmers still undertaking on-farm projects to protect and improve water quality and biodiversity, despite milk price challenges. We are now tracking at:

- 150 farms with Fert\$mart plans.
- 107 farms with Clean Rivers projects. This represents \$588,500 provided to dairy farmers for on-ground works.
- Over 300 dairy businesses involved in NRM projects over the last five years, with over 50,000 ha of dairy farm businesses involved.

Recent tracking of dairy Natural Resource Management (NRM) projects shows there has been \$3.5M spent over the last five years in on-ground works

for water quality/biodiversity outcomes, with over 63 per cent of this investment coming from farmers (plus time and labour to physically do the projects).

In addition, there are many other capital upgrades undertaken with no NRM funding or through milk company support. Funding for on-ground works and Fert\$mart has come through external funding, not levy funding.

We are working hard to secure funds for more projects through our NRM partners. The Australian Government and the Tasmanian State Government have all contributed towards Fert\$mart and Clean Rivers funding. NRM North, Cradle Coast NRM and NRM South have all funded Fert\$mart and Clean Rivers and we really appreciate their support.

The focus of dairy NRM projects in Tasmania has been to ensure we are addressing real world sustainability.

Currently, work is underway to address water quality concerns raised by oyster growers in Circular Head. Cradle Coast NRM has invested in a Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP) for the Duck, Welcome and Montagu Rivers. Key recommendations from this report included preventing livestock from accessing waterways and improving effluent management by having sufficient winter storage. DairyTas has also purchased some water meters to improve understanding of water use and effluent management in dairies.

We are now looking towards the next five years and looking at what our goals should be to help improve Tasmanian dairy farms. Below are some suggestions.

<p><b>Realistically, it has to start with a people and profit focus:</b></p>	<p><b>Protecting water quality:</b></p>	<p><b>Whole farm planning and sustainable farming practices:</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Create a culture where there is buy-in from family members, farm staff and managers about resource use efficiency. Family and staff need a personal motivation to make changes.</li> <li>✓ Resource use efficiency will see financial savings as well as environmental gains. Monitor power bills, fertiliser bills, in calf rates, MS/ha.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Stock out of all waterways and creeks with off-stream watering</li> <li>✓ Right product, right rate, right time, right place (Fert\$mart) approach to using nutrients across the farm</li> <li>✓ Effluent system designed and operated for farm soil type and cow numbers, with a focus on using effluent as fertiliser to grow as much grass as possible</li> <li>✓ Right rate, right time, right place irrigation management on the irrigated farms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Good farm maps for all farms</li> <li>✓ Farm staff involved with whole farm planning discussion</li> <li>✓ Shade and shelter for cow welfare and to maximise production</li> <li>✓ Protecting high value remnant bush. Protecting is easier than regenerating, which is easier than revegetating.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resource use efficiency:</b></p>	<p><b>Tackling greenhouse gas emissions:</b></p>	<p><b>If you have any suggestions for where the environmental focus should be in the next five years, please contact Rachel Brown, DairyTas Sustainable Farming Adviser on 0409 333 381 <a href="mailto:rbrown@landly.com.au">rbrown@landly.com.au</a></b></p> <p>What we do in Tasmania should be aiming to achieve the national dairy industry sustainability targets set through the Australian Dairy Industry Sustainability Framework <a href="http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Industry-information/Sustainability/Industry-sustainability.aspx">http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Industry-information/Sustainability/Industry-sustainability.aspx</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Energy/fuel efficiency and using renewables where possible</li> <li>✓ Fertiliser efficiency (Fert\$mart)</li> <li>✓ Recycle silage wrap</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ In calf, on time, every time</li> <li>✓ Identify and cull less productive animals</li> <li>✓ High quality feed</li> <li>✓ Good N fertiliser management</li> <li>✓ Keep cows comfortable with shade and shelter, optimal cow health</li> <li>✓ Smarter energy use</li> </ul>	

# How right does repro have to be?

John Mulvany, OMJ Consulting

The annual dairy calendar has changed with some interesting questions raised as a result. Twenty years ago most herds had one calving period per year and most farms actually stopped sending milk for a month or two. The pressure was on to get a high standard of reproductive performance in your herd, or bear some serious consequences for profit.

Now we see an increased number of herds calve during more than one period per year, and only two percent of farms actually stop sending milk for a time. So, in these times of carrying over empties, having multiple calving periods, and supplying milk all year round, how good does reproductive performance have to be to succeed as a profitable dairy farm?

To try and answer that question, OMJ Agricultural Consulting (John Mulvany) and Herd Health Pty Ltd (Richard Shephard), as part of the Dairy Australia In-Calf program, conducted an investigation of seven very profitable dairy farms from Victoria, New South Wales, and Tasmania. Do these very profitable dairy farms have best practice reproductive performance? And if they don't, how do they compensate to still be very profitable?

Features of the farms analysed:

- The herds included single calving, split calving and an all year round calving herd.

- There was also a mixture of breeds: cross breeds and Holsteins.
- Each farmer indicated that they "chose" their calving frequency, particularly the all year round calving and split calving herds. It was not because reproductive performance had been poor.
- All achieved consistently high profit.
- All had good quality reproductive data.
- All farmers used the simplest system possible to achieve their targets, indicating that simple systems were easier to monitor and implement.
- The farms fell into one of two groups:
  - » One group achieved excellent reproductive results. On these farms the intensity of reproductive monitoring and the achievement of high reproductive performance impacted on getting all the annual activities correct. It was the foundation for annual performance and an absolute focus for the operators. These farms tended to have fewer replacements and actually considered too many replacements as a cost to the business. Interestingly this group included some of the single calving period herds and an all year round calving herd in NSW.
  - » The second group consisted of those who achieved "good" but not outstanding reproductive performance. They accepted a lower level of performance, but had some very clear guidelines below which they were determined not to fall as they felt that it would then impact negatively on profit. For example, one commented that greater than 20 per cent empty rate after a twelve week joining would be regarded as potentially impacting on profit and unacceptable.

The investigation had two parts:

- An analysis of the farm's historical reproductive performance data using the key indicators recommended in the In-Calf program.
- Completion of a survey in an effort to "get into the heads" of these very profitable farmers, and find out what their program is, what they measure and what they believe is important in reproduction.

Some key findings:

- All farms placed a strong focus on matching the herd's feed requirements with their farm's pasture growth pattern, aiming to achieve a maximum number of days during lactation with a high pasture intake. This meant that the right cow had to be in the right place at the right time.
- All farms measured several key reproductive performance measures accurately and had a good understanding of the measure.

Those with "good but not excellent" reproductive performance were absolutely uncompromising in targeting at least 30 per cent replacements of peak milker numbers. This was considered the number that would allow the operator to still achieve the "right cow in the right place at the right time".

This has a cost to the business, but the businesses in the survey were still able to perform extremely well financially because the higher replacement number meant that other compromises which might impact on profit did not

“ All farmers used the simplest system possible to achieve their targets, indicating that simple systems were easier to monitor and implement. ”

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have to be made. For example carrying over cows with mediocre production, or having too many cows calving late, therefore not achieving their lactation potential or doing so at a higher cost due to lack of pasture.

All of the farmers in the project could very clearly explain why they wanted certain measured outcomes.

They all highlighted their focus on certain activities such as transition feeding, calving and joining.

Contrast all of the above to another group of farmers not represented in this sample group. As a result of poor breeding outcomes they “drift” into accepting cows calving at the wrong time and being forced to keep too many sub-optimum carryovers.

You always hear about the rare one that lasts the distance with high levels of production, not the cow producing 1.0 kg MS that’s kept because she does a bit more than cover cost - that’s a long way from an optimum cow. It all sounds a bit like the punter who only talks about their wins.

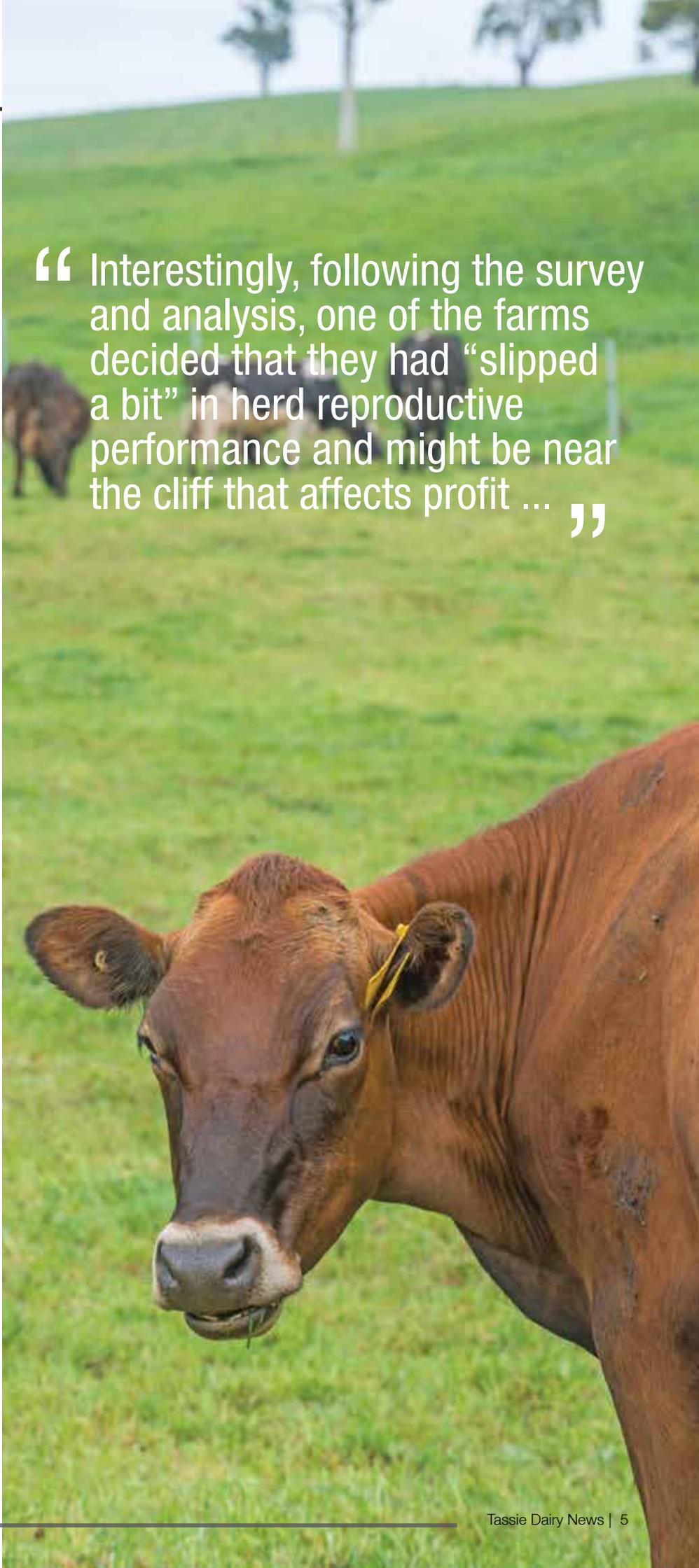
For those who want to look a little deeper, the survey results presenting the joining, calving and transition cow management details of the herds studied in this project will be available on the In-Calf website in late June.

Interestingly, following the survey and analysis, one of the farms decided that they had “slipped a bit” in herd reproductive performance and might be near the cliff that affects profit, so recently completed the In-Calf course.

It’s worth considering: Have you “drifted” to where you are in terms of herd reproductive pattern and performance? Perhaps it’s time to re-assess the current situation and clarify where you actually want to be and focus on what’s needed to get there.

**For further information on this project, contact Richard Shephard, John Mulvany, or GippsDairy.**

*DairyTas is co-ordinating In-Calf training throughout June in Tasmania, more details are available in the calendar.*



“ Interestingly, following the survey and analysis, one of the farms decided that they had “slipped a bit” in herd reproductive performance and might be near the cliff that affects profit ... ”

# DairyTas update

For more information contact DairyTas Executive Officer Mark Smith, phone 6432 2233, email [admin@dairytas.net.au](mailto:admin@dairytas.net.au) or view the website at [www.dairytas.com.au](http://www.dairytas.com.au).



Your Levy at Work

## What is happening at DairyTas?

The DairyTas Board will be meeting next in Dairy Plains on 29 June. At lunchtime we will be having a get together with local farmers and will have John Droppert from Dairy Australia there to talk about the latest DA Situation and Outlook and farmer survey results.

### Dairy Conversion Plans

DairyTas is supporting a further two dairy conversion plans in the Northern Midlands region as part of the IntoDairy project, which will take the total to 18 plans over the project. This project is winding up and a Dairy Conversion Field Day is being planned for 18 July in Meander at Clear Springs.

### Dairy Shed Water Metering

A new dairy shed water metering project is starting in Circular Head with VDL farms the focus in the first year of this two year project. The project has funding support from Cradle Coast NRM, DairyTas, Dairy Australia and VDL.

### Contractors

DairyTas has invited expressions of interest for its Workforce Education and NRM program contractor coordination roles in the coming year. This is part of ensuring that we have the best service in the future for these programs in engaging with dairy farmers.

### Budget Announcements

DairyTas welcomes the recent announcement by the State Government for the Stock Underpasses support project. Continued support for the Safe Farming

Tasmania program with Phill John is also welcomed. Plus the new Strategic Industry Partnerships Program is a great opportunity for the dairy industry with the implementation of the Dairy Industry Strategic Plan.

### Agfest Dairy Pavilion

Thanks to all those farmers that visited us in DairyTas' Legendairy Pavilion at Agfest in May. Support as always was good with both industry service providers and foodies reporting good business.

### Dairy Trail Guide

DairyTas is pleased to advise that we will be supporting an initiative to include our Tasmanian dairy produce sector into the Wine Trail Guide for 2018. This is part of a plan to continue boosting the image and profile of the Tasmanian dairy industry and the emerging small scale producers with their specialty products and the growing visitor/tourist market around the state. It is based on initial work that was done by Rachel Brown at Landly Pty Ltd to develop a dairy gourmet guide. This activity is funded by a Small Project Grant and the IntoDairy project.

### Taking Stock and Feed Budgeting Consults

Last chance for these farm visit activities in June.

### Business Governance Workshop

19 June, Bush Inn Deloraine and 20 June, Agritas in Smithton

This one day workshop is aimed at dairy businesses who are looking to improve their strategic planning, risk management and governance. The workshop is delivered by rural advisor David Heinjus from South Australia.

### Milk Production Update

Tasmania's milk production remains well below 2015/16 and after 10 months we are 6.8 per cent down. This is slightly better than the national situation which is down by 8 per cent. This is a loss of 53.5ML so far compared to last year and by year end it will be close to 830ML. This maintains Tasmania at 9.5 per cent of the national production.

Milk Production	Tasmania YTD April (ML)	Australia YTD April (ML)
2015/16	783,994	8,366,149
2016/17	730,364	7,698,229
<b>change</b>	<b>-6.8%</b>	<b>-8.0%</b>



# The In Calf Challenge

*Grant Rogers, Dairy Systems*

There are two key factors that impact on three week submission rates and ultimately six week in calf rate. These are cow body condition score at calving and days open from calving to mating.

Winter is an important time in the dairy calendar and it doesn't take much for it to go pear-shaped. Setting yourself up for success started months ago. Now is the time to pull it all together and go into the calving period in good shape.

## Assess and monitor body condition

- Winter is a difficult time to put on condition, studies show the maximum animals generally put on is 0.5 BCS, so don't rely on a last minute rush to the finish line, the efforts should have happened up front. Having said that, animals that are below target should still be preferentially fed to give them the best chance of getting back in calf early in the calving period.

- R2s should be closer to BCS 5.0 in June. Now is the time to work on under-performing young stock separating them out and preferentially feeding them.
- Ensuring all stocks mineral levels are sufficient and supplementing if not is also important pre-winter.

## Make sure feed requirements are being met

- Review your feed budgeting. Sit down and work through all the options with a team of respected, trusted rural professionals. *Funding is still available through DairyTas to have a feed budget completed for your farm.*
- Destocking is a good option. Culls should be gone by now. Consider reducing numbers of poor producing and late calving cows if feed budgets are too tight.
- For those on crops, the calculated yield of the crop must be as accurate as possible to measure and plan daily allocations. Make sure the person allocating the feed has a good understanding of what is being offered and how much crop and supplements is being eaten.

- The importance of transitioning cows between grass and winter feed seems to be well known but not necessarily adhered too. The number of days taken to transition does make a difference and no one likes seeing cows going down to nitrate poisoning.

## Maximising days open from calving to planned start of mating

- It is well proven that cows calving in the first few weeks have a massive advantage when it comes to getting back in calf.
- The dice for this season coming has already been thrown last mating, but there are a few things that can be done to manipulate next season's results. This revolves around late calving cow management and to do this we need accurate mating and pregnancy data.
- If late calvers are known we can manipulate days open by culling or selling these animals (or a portion of them) or via a small percentage of inductions (remembering inductions are being phased out and other strategies need to be developed to maintain good reproductive performance).
- If you are going to induce it is essential it is done to industry standard. Plan to induce early as cows induced at the end of calving rarely get back in calf in the desired timeframe. If you are going to be using inductions, ensure calving dates are known and correct, cows are young and in good health and body condition.
- At the end of the day the best way to achieve maximum days open is to focus on getting as many cows in calf as early as possible.

## TIA Dairy Team Agfest 2017

Thank you to everyone who stopped by for a chat at Agfest. Everyone who checked their contact details with us was entered in a prize draw. The winner of the prize pack was **Kate Carter at Ringarooma**. People that stopped by were also asked a few questions about ryegrass leaf stage:

- 67% of people had heard of leaf stage prior to talking to us at Agfest
- 54% of people had checked the leaf stage in their paddocks in the past 12 months
- Most people correctly estimated that you gained an extra 40-50% growth by grazing ryegrass pasture when it reached 3-leaf stage compared to grazing at 2-leaf stage.

# DAIRY DIARY 2017

## June

**June 8:** Legendairy Women's Discussion Group, Deloraine (DairyTas)

**June 8:** InCalf Herd Fertility Planning Workshops (Day 1 of 5), Scottsdale (DairyTas)

**June 8:** Pasture Management Workshop, TIA Dairy Research Facility, 124 Nunns Road, Elliott. 10:30am-2:30pm (TIA)

**June 9:** North West Discussion Group, S & S Fowlie's, South Forest

**June 13:** Euthanase Livestock, Scottsdale (DairyTas)

**June 13:** Transition Cow Management Workshop, Smithton (DairyTas)

**June 13:** 4 Fundamentals Program, Deloraine. For more information contact Nicki Hayward 0477 334 080 (No.8HR)

**June 14:** InCalf Herd Fertility Planning Workshops (Day 2 of 5), Devonport/Sheffield (DairyTas)

**June 14 & 15:** Quad Bike Training, Burnie (2 courses) (TasTAFE)

**June 14 & 15:** Weeds, Pests and Diseases, Deloraine (TasTAFE)

**June 15:** InCalf Herd Fertility Planning Workshops (Day 2 of 5), Scottsdale (DairyTas)

**June 18 to 26:** YDN New Zealand Tour (DairyTas)

**June 19:** Business Governance Workshop, Bush Inn, Deloraine (DairyTas)

**June 19:** Business Governance Workshop, AgriTas, Smithton (DairyTas)

**June 20:** Euthanase Livestock, Deloraine (DairyTas)

**June 20 & 21:** ChemCert, Launceston (TasTAFE)

**June 21:** InCalf Herd Fertility Planning Workshops (Day 3 of 5), Sheffield (DairyTas)

**June 21:** Dairy On PAR Calf Roadshow – Achieving Calf Rearing Success & Options for Bull Calves, Circular Head Community & Recreation Centre, Smithton. 10:30am-3:00pm (TIA)

**June 21:** Dairy On PAR Calf Roadshow – Achieving Calf Rearing Success & Options for Bull Calves, Wellers Inn, Burnie. 6:00pm-8:30pm (TIA)

**June 22:** Dairy On PAR Calf Roadshow – Achieving Calf Rearing Success & Options for Bull Calves, Bush Inn, Deloraine. 10:30am-3:00pm (TIA)

**June 22:** InCalf Herd Fertility Planning Workshops (Day 3 of 5), Scottsdale (DairyTas)

**June 23:** Dairy On PAR Calf Roadshow – Achieving Calf Rearing Success & Options for Bull Calves, Imperial Hotel, Branxholm. 10:30am-3:00pm (TIA)

**June 27 & 28:** Beyond 8 Steps Program, Agritas, Smithton. For more information contact Nicki Hayward 0477 334 080 (No.8HR)

**June 28 & 29:** ChemCert, Burnie (TasTAFE)

**June 28:** InCalf Herd Fertility Planning Workshops (Day 4 of 5), Sheffield (DairyTas)

**June 29:** InCalf Herd Fertility Planning Workshops (Day 4 of 5), Scottsdale (DairyTas)

**June 29:** 2017/18 Seasonal Outlook Sessions, Smithton & Dairy Plains (DairyTas)

**June 30:** Central North West Mid-Winter BBQ, Wynyard. More information and RSVPs (by June 26), contact Sheryl van der Drift on 0438 454 409.

## July

**July 4 & 5:** Chainsaws, Launceston (TasTAFE)

**July 4 & 5:** 8 Steps Program, Agritas, Smithton. For more information contact Nicki Hayward 0477 334 080 (No.8HR)

**July 5:** InCalf Herd Fertility Planning Workshops (Day 5 of 5), Sheffield (DairyTas)

**July 6:** InCalf Herd Fertility Planning Workshops (Day 5 of 5), Scottsdale (DairyTas)

**July 6:** Circular Head Pasture Coaching Group (first meeting). If you would like to join the group, contact Symon on 0418 876 089 (TIA)

**July 12:** Quality Assurance, Deloraine (TasTAFE)

**July 18:** Dairy Farm Conversion Field Day, Clear Springs, Meander

**July 26:** 4 Fundamentals Program, Scottsdale LINC. For more information contact Nicki Hayward 0477 334 080 (No.8HR)

**July 27 & 28:** Beyond 8 Steps Program, Agritas, Smithton. For more information contact Nicki Hayward 0477 334 080 (No.8HR)

## Contact us

Tassie Dairy News is provided free to all Tasmanian dairy farmers and is funded by TIA and Dairy Australia.

For more information, please contact a TIA Dairy Centre adviser, phone 6430 4953 or email [tas.dairynews@utas.edu.au](mailto:tas.dairynews@utas.edu.au).

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Your Levy at Work



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DairyTas (03) 6432 2233

TIA (03) 6430 4953

TasTAFE 1300 655 307

Agritas (03) 6415 4100

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