



dairynews

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EDITORIAL



Tony Dowman

Technical Specialist, Kempsey

Most dairy farmers who have supplied Dairy Farmers Co-op over the years have received a welcome Christmas cash injection as a result of the sale of the Co-op. The question now is 'what to do with the money?'. The recent global financial meltdown is a real wakeup call about the risks associated with any investment and the need to show a little restraint when chasing high yielding returns. Get good quality advice before committing your hard earned money to an investment strategy.

The recent cash handout by the Federal Government is causing similar confusion on a smaller scale for individuals. On one hand the government wants the recipients to spend the money to stimulate the economy, while some financial advisers are recommending using the money for debt reduction. As debt is one of the reasons that we are in such a mess, people with high debt are at more risk when things go wrong such as reduced income, job loss or for dairy farms, lower milk prices.

So, what should you do with the money? Do nothing just yet. Leave it in a secure interest earning Government guaranteed account until you have had sufficient time to discuss with all family and business partners what the future direction of both the business and the people involved is. You should also be talking to your accountant, bank manager, solicitor and other trusted advisors before deciding what to do.

Be prepared for a conflict of ideas within the family and between business partners as we all have a different attitude towards risk, personal desires and aspirations, and plans for the future of the business. Succession planning now becomes an important consideration before committing any of the money. There is a wealth of information on the Dairy Australia web site under "The People in Dairy" section about all aspects of people management from recruitment to succession planning. Go to www.dairyaustralia.com.au and follow the links to The People in Dairy site, or contact NSW DPI for help.

On behalf of the Dairy section of NSW DPI I would like to wish all dairy farmers a Merry Christmas and a prosperous new year in 2009. Hopefully the southern areas of the state in 2009 will get to enjoy the good seasonal conditions that the northern half have had in 2008.

A new Dairy Officer for Deniliquin



Michael Cashen new dairy officer for Deniliquin

NSW DPI has responded to dairy farmer concerns in the Murray Valley by appointing a new staff member, Michael Cashen to join the DPI dairy extension team. Michael comes from within the ranks of NSW DPI having spent a number of years in agricultural extension programs in NSW including; 'The Farming for the Future' and the 'WaterWise on the Farm' programs.

Michael has recently been travelling around the state delivering workshops entitled 'The farmers guide to managing climate risk', to over 800 farmers across NSW. The workshop involves understanding what drives the weather, why our climate can vary so much from season to season, and what risk management strategies should be developed for managing a farm business in a changing climate. Michael is currently working with the DPI dairy extension team, including research agronomist Katrina Sinclair, to develop a similar workshop specifically for dairy farmers.

Michael holds a degree in Agriculture Science and post graduate qualification in Education and has recently completed an Advance Climate Course with The Bureau of Meteorology in Melbourne.

Michael and his family will be based in Deniliquin and are looking forward to actively contributing to the Deniliquin community and assisting the dairy industry meet the challenges of 2009 and beyond.

He can be contacted at the Deniliquin DPI office from early February on (03) 5881 9922.

E-mail alerts protect heat stressed cows

Dairy farmers can now receive a free e-mail alert service warning them of when their cows are at risk of heat stress.

A first for the dairy industry, the email alert and a district weather forecasting tool are accessible through the Cool Cows website, a Dairy Australia initiative to help dairy farmers deal with heat stress in their herds.

Farmers who subscribe to the alert service will automatically receive an email when the forecasted weather conditions for their area put their herds at risk of high to severe heat stress.

Dairy Australia's Grains2Milk program leader Dr Steve Little said the two major factors that contribute to a cow's 'heat load' are temperature and humidity.

The Temperature Humidity Index (THI) is a simple indicator of the risk of heat stress.

The alert will prompt dairy farmers to take action in the week ahead to keep their cows cool and reduce the effects of heat stress.

"Farmers can also use the new Weather Forecaster tool on the Cool Cows website to see THI, temperature and humidity levels forecast for the coming week and recorded over the past week."

"The heat load information is specific to sites in all dairy regions in Australia. It helps farmers prepare for any potential 'melt down' events," said Dr Little.

The email alert and weather forecasting tool are two examples of the wealth of information and interactive resources available on the Cool Cows website.

Cool Cows resources have been developed with funding from Dairy Australia and the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

For more information visit www.coolcows.com.au and see Coming Events at end of Dairy News for Cool Cows Workshops coming to a town near you.

Picasso Cows – A MOOving work of Art!

Michael Ison

Dairy Officer – Human Resources, Paterson



Picasso Cows came to 10 primary schools on the South Coast of NSW during the past two terms, having quite an impact on the students. The Picasso Cows concept is new to the dairy industry and involves the delivery of unpainted, life-sized fibreglass cows to participating schools. Students designed and painted the cows according to a theme.

The theme this year was the environment, broken down into three areas; clean water, healthy landscapes and energy efficient dairies. One major sponsor, the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority, was particularly pleased with the finished products.

As an opportunity to involve students in an educational activity, Picasso Cows came out on top. As Carmen Perry pointed out, "For the schools involved, Picasso Cows has made learning about local dairying fun and hands-on. I am sure they will remember the experience for years to come." Carmen is the Schools Education Coordinator (LandLearn NSW) with NSW DPI based at Maitland.

The cows will be displayed at important events around NSW giving the public an opportunity to get up close and personal with all the dairy divas.

Many thanks are extended to Lynne Strong for driving this project along and for initiating an ongoing series of Picasso Cows, supported by Dairy Australia, during 2009 and beyond.

Other sponsors who have contributed to the project including ANZ, the Royal Agricultural Society, South Coast Dairy, Landcare Magazine, Westons Animal Nutrition, Cows R Us, Kiama Council, Matisse Derivan, South Coast and Highlands Dairy Industry Group and Tangalla.

**The Picasso Cows will be on display at the Royal Easter Show in Sydney
and Tocal Field Days in May 2009.**

Tocal Dairy Farm = profitable training!

Kerry Kempton

Dairy Officer, Tocal

Tocal dairy farm is owned and operated by NSW DPI as part of Tocal College, located on the Paterson River near Maitland.



Tocal Dairy Team: Kerry Kempton, Basil Gijbsbers, Michael Ison, Alfred Vidler, Donna Nichols, Matt Hogan

The dairy exists primarily to provide hands on training for students at the college. It is one of the few commercially focussed dairy farms providing training in Australia.

The often conflicting goals of providing first class training and improving farm productivity are a challenge for the management team at Tocal. The philosophy at Tocal College dairy is to operate an effective training farm by being as efficient and productive as possible, reflecting the practices of a modern commercial dairy farm.

This is not always easy given the demands on a multi use facility such as Tocal, and with the staffing policies and budgetary constraints of a government department. Apart from the Tocal students, there are often busloads of school kids or other visitors wanting to tour the farm, and field days and short courses to fit in around.

Over the past seven years, Tocal Dairy has made huge improvements in both productivity and profit, whilst at the same time training and mentoring more than 350 young people seeking careers in agriculture.

Back in 2001, the farm was running 150 milkers on a milking area of 85 hectares, and produced

900,000 litres of milk. Now in 2008, there are 250 milkers on the same 85 ha, producing 1,700,000 litres, with no real increase in staff numbers over this time.

Pasture utilisation at Tocal dairy has increased over the last five years, from 6 tonnes Dry Matter per hectare to 12 tonnes DM/ha, while the amount of concentrates fed has remained fairly similar, at just under 2 tonnes per cow.

So like the Future Dairy project, they have been able to increase milk production per cow and stocking rate at the same time, without feeding excessive amounts of purchased feed. Much of this growth is due to better management of home grown feed, and to the focussed efforts of the team that work on the dairy.

Under the management team of Basil Gijbsbers and Matt Hogan, the farm has moved from making a loss in 2003/04 to making a healthy profit in 2007/08. Mr Gijbsbers says that the key to turning around farm performance has been giving ownership to line management, and engaging all the farm staff and resources in focussed improvement targets and activities. Programs such as Managing Pastures for Profit and Milk Biz have been a helped to achieve production targets.

Matt Hogan and Kevin Watts have participated in the Managing Pastures for Profit program delivered by the DPI dairy extension team, and began applying the principles learned in the autumn of 2006.

“The simplicity of the program really impressed me”, said Matt. “We knew we could grow the grass, and the MP4P tools made sure we were feeding it of at exactly the right time to keep the rotation at the right length for grass quality and quantity”.

“The program also taught us to make sure we kept the grazing pressure right, getting the cows to eat it down to about 5 cm residual, not wasting any grass but not flogging it too hard either. We could adjust the grain in the bails to make sure the cows ate all the grass, but weren’t going hungry at any stage.

PEOPLE AND BUSINESS

We use the wooden blocks in the dairy to show which paddock the cows are grazing next. This system works well here, where we have four staff and a range of students coming through as part of their training.”

The DPI farm analysis program Milk Biz has been used every year since 2001 to analyse farm performance, and to help set the direction for the year ahead. According to Basil Gijsbers, “Milk Biz assists me in knowing how the farm is tracking. We can look back on 7 years of Milk Biz reports and compare year on year. Knowing what drives our profit allows us to respond to ups and downs in the economy. I’d recommend Milk Biz to any dairy farmer who is trying to improve their business, as it really shows the impact of the decisions you make.”

“The challenge for Tocal Dairy is to keep improving each year, whilst investing in

infrastructure and new technology. We focus on complying with government policies, so we can provide excellent training and education on a farm where all the people have pride in their work.



Above: Matt Hogan, Tocal Dairy Manager

Give Your Farm a Tocal Trainee for the New Year

Although the Tocal Traineeship Program accepts enrolments continuously there are many reasons why this Christmas period may be the ideal time to consider a Rural Trainee for your farming business.

With so many potential employees now leaving school now is the time to construct an employment package which attracts the very best applicants with the attitudes you want on your farm. Part of an appealing package might include study at a Registered Training Organisation such as the NSW DPI administered, Tocal College.

Potential benefits include allowing you and your trainee access to:

- Training in the general skills needed in your industry
- Training in specialist areas to fill an identified Skills Gap
- Advanced training and provision of a clear career pathway
- Assessment and recognition of skills learnt in the workplace or elsewhere
- The skills and resources of NSW DPI, including experienced trainers, Tocal Dairy and its staff
- Block release study focusing on industry best practice, personal development and group learning
- Significant State and Federal Government Incentives (see an Australian Apprenticeship Centre for more detail).

Already 60% of current occupations require a nationally recognised qualification with around 70% of new jobs in the future requiring the equivalent of a Certificate III or higher (DET Newsletter, 2007).

If you would like to know more about how the Tocal Traineeship Program can help your new employee gain such a qualification and also receive effective training for your farm business, then please call James Hooke on 02 4939 8960. Help can also be given to contact an Australian Apprenticeship Centre to discuss incentives and sign up.

Introduction of the Fair Work Bill

Michael Ison

Dairy Officer – Human Resources, Paterson

The Minister for Employment & Workplace Relations, Julia Gillard introduced the Fair Work Bill into Federal Parliament on Tuesday 25 November 2008. The new Bill attempts to streamline and simplify existing arrangements by combining seven departments into one agency called “Fair Work Australia”. The Fair Work Act, if all goes to schedule, will commence on 1st July, 2009 with the National Employment Standards and ‘modern awards’ set to commence in January, 2010.

Introducing this legislation will create a new environment for employment and raises a couple of questions;

What are the impacts for employers in the dairy industry in NSW?

In general, the changes will apply to those employers classified as ‘national system employers’, which are constitutional companies, government agencies and Territory employers.

One key change with this legislation is the abolition of individual workplace agreements. When “WorkChoices” was first introduced, the legislation allowed for individual contracts to be set up between employees and employers, these contracts were called Australian Workplace Agreements or AWA’s. The major concern that led to the change in the most recent legislation was that the rights of an individual could be undermined and taken away in negotiating an individual contract.

Enterprise agreements can still be entered into but must pass several tests including the “better off overall test’ where the employee must be deemed to fare better than if they were covered by the relevant Award. As well, a majority of employees at that workplace must agree to the enterprise agreement.

Another important change for dairy farms and for all small business, is that from 1 July 2009, they will no longer be exempt from the Unfair Dismissal Laws, although there will be some concessions for businesses employing less than 15 people.



Under the new legislation for the purposes of Unfair Dismissal, a small business is defined as employing less than 15 people.

To fairly dismiss an employee you will need to show that you have;

- Clearly warned the employee in writing or verbally, of their need to improve
- Provided a reasonable amount of time for them to improve
- Where applicable provided training or an opportunity to improve
- Informed the employee of the reason they were being dismissed and given them the opportunity to respond.

If you meet these criteria, the employee will not be able to make an Unfair Dismissal Claim. Any claims need to be lodged by the employee within 7 days of dismissal.

The new “Fair Work Bill” will also provide a safety net through ‘modern awards’ and a set of National Employment Standards. Modern awards are being negotiated with industry to streamline the award system nationally and to provide a set of 10 basic standards for employment.

The other changes include good faith bargaining and the right of the employee to be represented in the workplace.

What reviews should farmers carry out to their system for employing people?

The current situation will remain in place until 1 July, 2009 so I would suggest that now is a good time to review your arrangements with employees and prepare for the changes in 2009. Those covered by State Awards will be affected only as the State Awards move to line up with the modern awards. Some areas to review would be;

- Are people employed under the correct Award? –*Check with www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au*
- Your written contract of employment – *do you have one?*

- Employee classification and rate of pay and conditions – *Are you meeting Award obligations?*
- Compare your current situation to the 10 standards laid down in the new modern awards this information can be found at www.workplace.gov.au
- The process you have in place to dismiss employees –*How do you go about dismissing an employee?*

Implementing a clear process for employing people can help not only with compliance but with developing an improved workplace culture. The People in Dairy website found at www.thepeopleindairy.com.au has a comprehensive array of templates, tools and resources to help develop a robust system for your farm.

For more information and questions contact Michael Ison at NSW DPI on 4939 8814.



HERD MANAGEMENT

Dairy cows get groovy

Darold Klindworth

Cow Time

A dairy yard surface must provide confident footing for cows under all conditions. CowTime's Darold Klindworth explains that simple grooving in the cement can make a world of difference to cow flow into the dairy and safety for cows and workers alike.

"Some dairy yards become very slippery when wet or worn. Injury is inevitable when cows (and even workers) slip. A slippery yard surface affects cow flow into the dairy because cows become fearful and hesitate. It's just not worth the risk because it's so simple to fix."

Concrete yards can have a number of successful treatments applied to reduce their Slipperiness. Cutting grooves into the yard surface is a very common solution.

A diamond pattern is easy to construct while providing good traction.

For best results:

- Diamonds should be at least 12mm wide and 12mm deep.
- The points of the diamond should point up and down the slope to help with yard washing.

When doing a new concrete surface, use an experienced contractor with a good track record in cow yards. Many yards have been spoiled by inexperienced installers.

Make sure the surface is not too rough as this causes lameness. To test, walk on the yard in bare feet. If it is uncomfortable for you, it's too rough for your cows.

For more information refer to the CowTime Guidelines (Chapter 4, p 70 and 71), available on www.cowtime.com.au or contact:

Darold Klindworth, ph 03 5624 2269

email darold.klindworth@dpi.vic.gov.au

Silage as part of the feed plan

Ray Johnston

Livestock Officer – Dairy, Taree

A field day on the inclusion of silage in a feed budget was held on the Rose's family property at Coopernook near Taree in October attracting over 50 people.



Visitors were able to inspect the new 180 metre feedpad and laneway constructed by the Roses following their participation in a Farmer Targets for Change (FTC) course. The feedpad proved to be extremely beneficial during the autumn flood and wet winter.

The pad is 9 metres wide and has a 0.25% fall lengthwise with a 1% fall crosswise from the centre to both sides. The pad is 150 mm thick and uses SL82 reinforcement with a concrete strength of 25 Mpa.

Clarence Rose was able to explain the great benefits of feeding the cows on the feedpad. These included reduced damage to pastures which could potentially lead to soil erosion and less feed wastage.

A homemade front end scraper has been designed to remove any excess feed from the pad. This operation occurs weekly.

Silage making has now become an important part of the total feed plan for the Rose family. They have a goal to feed their cows better and obtain more milk from the same number of cows.

Bunker silage, round bale silage (aim of 1000 bales per year) and 10 ha of maize silage crop will account for nearly $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total feed intake for their 190 cow milking herd. The feeding period for silage will be extended with the installation of the new feedpad. The feedpad also doubles as a laneway into their cow yard benefitting cow flow and reducing time taken from yarding to milking.

Clarence uses feed budgeting information to determine the optimum fodder mix for his herd.

Neil Griffiths, District Agronomist from Tocal, outlined to the group the goals for successful silage. These include the need to:

- * Select pastures that produce high quality forage.
- * Harvest at the recommended growth stage. It is tempting to delay harvest until pastures are mature for more bulk, however this will lead to lower quality silage and less milk.
- * Wilt to the target dry matter content as quickly as possible, ideally within 24 hours but less than 48 hours.
- * Ensure machinery is well maintained and appropriate for the job. For example tedder rakes produce quicker drying to target dry matter but in hot dry windy weather, there is a risk of over drying.

Silage fact sheets are available from NSW DPI website- www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

A new round of Topfodder Silage courses will be offered in 2009 with Kempsey, Wingham, Tocal and Berry likely venues.

For further information on these Topfodder Silage courses or calculating a feed budget for your farm, contact your local NSW DPI office.

Warmer Summer on the horizon

Michael Cashen

Climate Risk Management, Tocal

The Bureau of Meteorology National Climate Centre regularly releases rolling three monthly forecasts for both rainfall and temperature, and these can be viewed at www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead.

These three monthly forecasts predict the chance of you exceeding your historic median for either temperature or rainfall for the next three months. Not surprisingly the operational temperature forecasts from the site have historically been more reliable than rainfall, which is always harder to predict particularly during summer and autumn; but more about that in the next issue of Dairy News.

The probability of exceeding the historic maximum temperature in any region over this summer (December-February) can be determined by examining the map below.

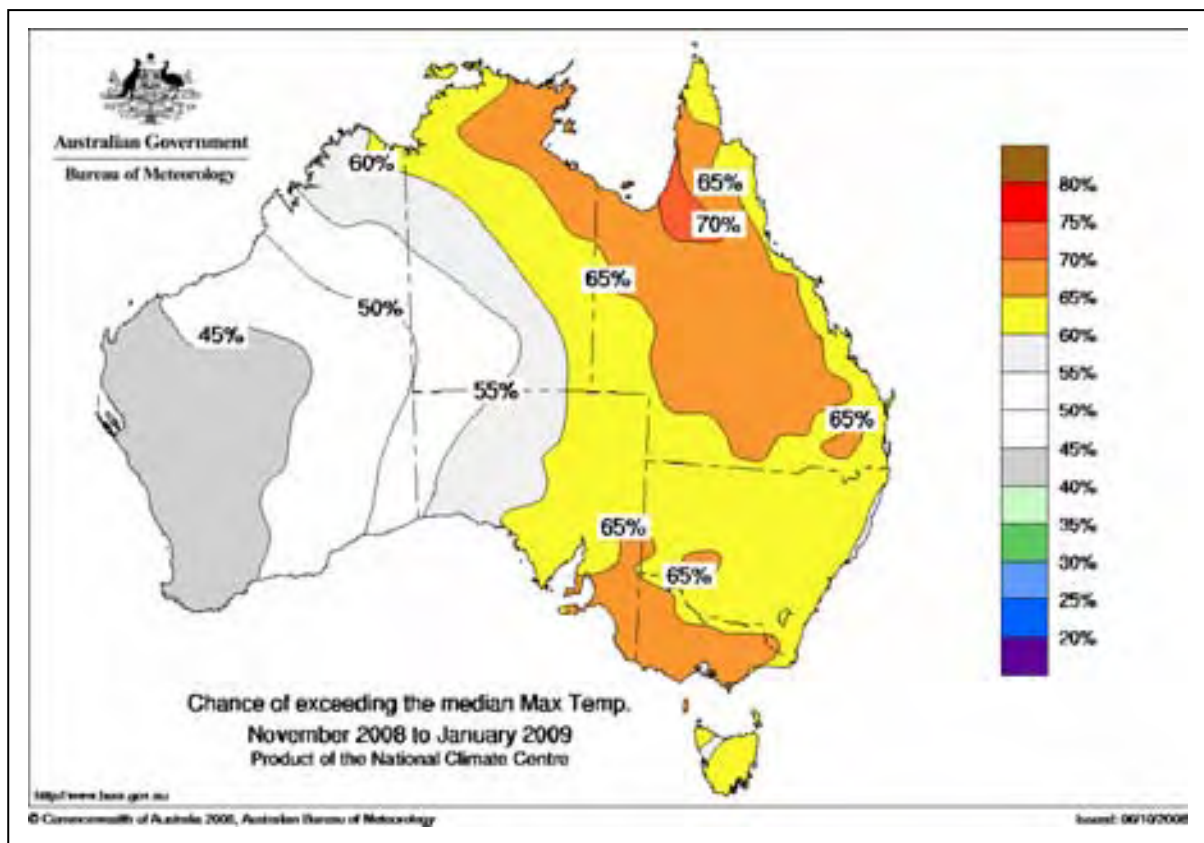
For those living in the Murray Valley and iverina valleys the chance of exceeding your long term medium maximum temperatures is 60 % -65%, which I wager is better than the odds of your horse in the Melbourne Cup.

When looking at climate forecasts it is useful to look at how skilful or accurate that product has been in the past, to see what weighting should be placed on the current forecast, as this can vary considerably.

To access the skill map for the period in question click on the **outlook confidence** *hyperlink* on the site and then the **variable (temperature max/min or rainfall)** and the **season** on which the current forecast period relates. In short, the darker the pink on the confidence map, the more accurate the forecast for that variable has been in the past for that location. So for those living in and around Deniliquin historically the maximum temperature forecasts for this period have been right 65% of the time, or wrong 35% of the time if you are a glass half empty type.

Warmer maximum temperatures should they eventuate will obviously increase evapotranspiration rates and increase herd heat stress and as such should be considered in your management decisions this summer.

The Cool Cows booklet has a number of strategies to minimise heat stress on cows. See Coming Events section for dates of Cool Cows Farm Field days or contact your nearest DPI Dairy Officer.



NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

ON-GROUND WORKS

34 dairy farmers, between Hannam Vale and the Queensland border have contributed \$917,699 to a \$1.3M project targeting improved farm management and environmental outcomes as part of the 2007/08 Dairy NRM Works for Healthy Soils, Rivers and Catchments.

The project was initiated by the Northern Rivers Dairy Natural Resources Management Committee (NRDNRMC) and co-ordinated by the NSW Dept. of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) with support from the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority and funding from the National Landcare Program.

All farmers had participated in the 'Farmer Targets for Change' (FTC) workshop series run by the NSW Dept. of Primary Industries and it was through this process that their environmental works were prioritised. The FTC Workshops provided a framework for reviewing practices on the farm and planning for the adoption of best management practices with the assistance of Technical Officers from NSW DPI.

This is one of a series of case studies showcasing improved natural resource management on dairy farms on the north coast of New South Wales.

NSW North Coast Dairy Farms



Effluent and Nutrient Management - SOLIDS TRAPS and IRRIGATION



Above - 3 generations of farm and environmental management

Harold and Mark Griffiths
'Greener Pastures', Dorrigo

The Griffiths family of Dorrigo have tackled the problems of erosion, and stock health and safety issues of the Dorrigo slopes and soils by progressively upgrading their laneways over the last few years to 100mm thick concrete using a locally fabricated 'sled' to lay the concrete.

With a recent increase in herd size the next priority targeted was the effluent system from the dairy so that the local waterways could be protected from high nutrient run-off and the valuable nutrients could be re-cycled on the farm.

The project involved:

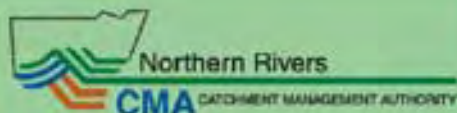
- additional concreting of the yard surfaces and formation of a kerb on downslope margin of yards to direct wash-down flow;
- construction of a 'trafficable solids trap' (see rear page for more information on availability);
- installation of pump and pipeline to supply a dedicated 'travelling effluent irrigator' to disperse effluent on grazing pasture.



Photo (left) shows a galvanised angle-iron stone and solids filter to protect the pumping mechanism



Funded and supported by:



Northern Rivers
Dairy Natural Resources
Management Committee
NRDNRMC

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Stone-Trap ,Travelling Irrigators and Riparian Vine Weeds

Hand Family, Kempsey

Lee and Clarke Family's , Kempsey

The stone-traps installed on both these properties have been modelled on a design developed by Charlie Taylor of Raleigh. Effluent and water from the yard wash-down is directed into the galvanised steel stone-trap. A series of steel baffle plates settle the solids and liquid flows down into the collection sump and is then pumped out to a travelling irrigator.

Once the cells are full of solids the trap is tipped over on a collection pad or a trailer for spreading where required.



Above: (Lee & Clarke family) Stone- trap being installed



Above (Hand family) Travelling Irrigator assisting the upgrade of pasture. And Below: Weed control work on Madera Vine will be undertaken annually as part of their project.



Weed species - Madera Vine

Aerodora cordifolia

Photos- Coastcare)

Left : fleshy leaves and

aerial tubers ,

Right : in flower



Installing a 'trafficable solids trap' and effluent irrigation

Andrew Noakew , Upper Rollands Plains

An upgrade of the holding yards to direct effluent into an effluent system was required to address high nutrient runoff into the drainage line above the Wilson River.

The holding yards shown in the photo below will direct flow into a sump with a gravel grate and then down to the ' trafficable solids trap' and the effluent water will be used to irrigate pastures. The solids from the trap will be combined with manure dry scraped from the new holding yard and sawdust to make a compost to improve organic material in the soils and maximise value of nutrients from the collected effluent.



Below: The trafficable solids trap has been constructed using a mould developed by the Mid-north Coast Dairy Pasture Council and funded by Subtropical Dairy.

The mould is held at the NORCO Factory at Raleigh and available for loan to farmers. An Instruction Manual is available from the NORCO Office or DPI Office in Kempsey.



For further information and technical advice contact:

NSW Dept. of Primary Industries

KEMPSEY OFFICE

Phone : 02 65 626244

Photos (unless otherwise noted) by Dairy Central, Prepared by NSW Dept of Primary Industries

COMING EVENTS 2009

JANUARY		COOL COWS FARM FIELD DAYS	
5 th	Dorrigo	21 st	Denman
6 th	Kyogle	22 nd	Dubbo
7 th	Casino	23 rd	Tamworth and Forbes
19 th	Dungog	24 th	Wagga Wagga
20 th	Singleton		

FEBRUARY Bega District MARCH/APRIL Taree & Gloucester Districts

AUGUST 5th & 6th NSW Grasslands Society Conference at Taree Contact: Ray Johnston 02- 6552 7299

NSW CONTACT DETAILS

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (September 2007). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of New South Wales Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.