



## **Managing Pastures - Readers' Note**

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<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/dairy-cattle/feed/publications/managing-pastures>

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## Feed planning

Feed planning is planning your feed supply to meet your target levels of milk production and the nutritional requirements of the herd.

The level of feeding and the continuity of feed supply account for the biggest differences in productivity and income between dairy farms. Feed planning can help you achieve maximum farm productivity and profits by balancing feed quality and quantity.

For most dairy farmers the cheapest way to feed dairy cows is with pastures, which comprise 60%–100% of the cows' feed intake. For profits on pasture-based dairy farms to be increased, it is vital that these pastures be well managed. Feed planning is essential to achieving this.

Feed for dairy cows accounts for 50%–80% of total variable costs. Feed planning allows you to reduce costs and increase profits by:

- reducing feed shortages and underfeeding of cows
- maximising the use of surplus feed
- examining management alternatives and options
- using farm equipment effectively
- optimising the use of pastures and supplements
- increasing pasture production
- increasing milk production
- optimising the use of fertilisers
- using irrigation more effectively
- optimising the use of supplements per cow
- maximising levels of profitable production for your farm.

Feed planning needs to take into account farm plans, feed budgets and grazing plans:

- **Farm plans** are long-term plans that set targets for pasture and milk production for the whole farm. They consider herd size, calving patterns, patterns of production and farm development.
- **Feed budgets** are medium-term plans that examine management alternatives to overcome feed imbalances and make the best use of pastures, supplements and conserved feed.
- **Grazing plans** are short-term plans that maximise pasture production and use through various pasture and grazing management strategies.