

# THE MILK FLOW

NOVEMBER 2021

## Message from the Chair James Neal

As a Board, we have farewelled two longstanding board members Jane Sherborne and Delia Dray. Their strong leadership, strategic thinking and governance capabilities will be sadly missed and we wish them well on their retirement from Dairy NSW. We have welcomed three new Board members, in the very capable, Carissa Wolfe, Phil Ryan and Dimity Smith. We had strong interest from farmers and industry during the recruitment process, which speaks highly of Dairy NSW reputation. Tony Burnett and I were fortunate to be re-elected to the Board for another term. I am privileged to have been elected to the role of Chairman again and I look forward to delivering for dairy in the upcoming year!

The Dairy Australia dairy levy spend of \$55–60 million a year plays a crucially important role in maximising the productivity and profitability of Australia dairy farmers now and into the future. The Dairy Plan highlighted a number

of important challenges going into the future. Having no dairy levy spend will dramatically affect how these issues will be addressed, especially for RDP's as we are reliant on continuing funding from Dairy Australia to exist.

The Dairy NSW Board has reviewed the dairy levy poll options and the process undertaken to determine them. The board encourage you to do the same to learn more about the Dairy Poll and what the different options mean for you so that you can make an informed decision. After reviewing the information, the Dairy NSW Board are supportive of the recommendation by LPAC to increase the Levy by 20%. In March 2022, it will be up to you to make your decision, and we encourage you to review the information and participate in the poll.

Levy payers will vote in March 2022, to learn more about your voting options visit [dairypoll.com.au](http://dairypoll.com.au).



### Staff profile

**Alicia Richters**

Regional Extension Officer  
South Coast and Highlands region

Alicia Richters has joined us as a Regional Extension Officer for the South Coast and Highlands region. Alicia has been involved in dairy in one way or another her whole life with her grandparents dairying in Albion Park before relocating to Jaspers Brush just south of Berry. Her Uncle and Aunt now own and run the farm and when at the farm is often helping around the place and has helped at a number of shows over the years. Alicia has been based in Northern NSW for the past four years with Subtropical Dairy as a Regional Extension Officer before relocating south again. I have really enjoyed working more closely with farmers over the past 4 years, in particular with the Young Dairy Network, attending an established discussion group and setting up a new discussion group. I enjoy hearing about how farmers manage things in their own way and how they achieve success. I also enjoy problem solving, finding information and solutions as they arise and delivering practical useful information and programs to farmers and their employees. I look forward to working with all the farmers in the area to help them achieve their goals.

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### Director profile

**Dimity Smith**

Director

Dimity Smith is an engagement psychologist, communications, events and engagement specialist based in Tamworth in rural NSW. Dimity has worked for the past 12 years as a registered psychologist across corporate allied health, rural women's development, human resources and marketing, specifically engaging with rural women and agricultural audiences across Australia. Dimity has held a previous board role and multiple leadership roles which have built her skills and expertise in corporate governance, the equine industry, communications, and agricultural innovation.

Dimity is the daughter of dairy farmers from Scone, NSW. Whilst being based in Tamworth, she plays a significant role in supporting her family behind the scenes as they navigate the ever-changing dairy industry. She has a strong passion for Australian agriculture as a result of her upbringing, and has a real motivation for helping agricultural businesses and organisations move into the future with innovation, great communications, diversity and supportive workplaces. Dimity is really looking forward to joining the board of Dairy NSW and meeting farmers and stakeholders from across the state from October 2021.

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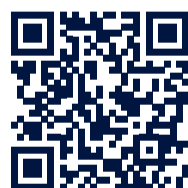
## COVID-positive cases on NSW dairy farms

To date we have had a couple of positive COVID-19 cases on NSW dairy farms. Thankfully, they have been resolved and people are recovered or recovering. There are quite a number of farms that have had staff impacts where one or more staff member needed to isolate, in some cases putting significant strain on the remaining labour force.

Dairy NSW, Dairy Australia, NSW Health and NSW DPI held a webinar to update farmers on some practical advice to manage the situation. Missed it? Don't worry we have uploaded the recording online for you to view on the go see [youtube.com/watch?v=7fAtvsLv4KA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fAtvsLv4KA).

### Key considerations

- Cases are forecast to increase in regional areas as we open up.
- Limit the chance of COVID getting on farm.
- Limit the chances of spread.
- Plan for a positive case on farm.
- Helpful resources are available online at Dairy Australia's **COVID directory**.



Webinar



COVID directory



## Investing in the future of dairy

Dairy farmers will determine their investment in the industry's future when they vote on the dairy service levy in March 2022.

The independent committee reviewing the dairy service levy, the Levy Poll Advisory Committee, determined an increase in the levy is in the best interests of the industry. Their recommendation is a 20% increase in the levy.

Dairy Australia has four priority areas for increased investment to tackle labour shortages, enhance the regional service offering to farmers, address high priority issues relating to climate, and bolster policy support.

The Dairy NSW Board has reviewed the options and the process undertaken to determine them. The board encourage you to do the same to learn more about the Dairy Poll and what the different options mean for you so that you can make an informed decision. After reviewing the information, the Dairy NSW Board are supportive of the recommendation by LPAC to increase the levy by 20%. In March 2022, it will be up to you to make your decision, and we encourage you to review the information and participate in the poll.

Find out more at [dairyaustralia.com.au/dairylevynews](http://dairyaustralia.com.au/dairylevynews)



## Focus Farm progress

In the May edition of MilkFlow we introduced you to the new Dairy NSW Focus Farmers, Kevin and Brodie Game. The couple are milking 250 cows on a 240ha leased property at Bemboka, in the Bega Valley, and leasing an additional 160ha to run young and dry stock and to harvest silage.

Like many young farmers, Kevin and Brodie's business took a bit of a battering during the drought and bushfires and this also bruised their confidence. Brodie explained,

**"The past few years have certainly thrown some curve balls at us and have altered our perception of our risk profile. We've had to pick ourselves back up a few times, but we decided to lean on the mindset that it takes a crisis to change the conversation so in turn these moments are just a turning point for us and a chance to learn and grow."**

In March 2021, Kevin and Brodie selected a support group of 20 people to advise on all aspects of farm management for the 2-year duration of their Focus Farm project. The support group comprises of other local farmers and service providers selected by Kevin and Brodie. The group is facilitated by Justin Walsh of Jasper's Brush, himself a previous Focus Farmer, with some additional guidance from dairy consultant Phil Shannon. Drawing on his own recent experience, facilitator Justin Walsh said the Focus Farm program

**"is not supposed to be a best practice demonstration farm, but a real farm, with real people, making real decisions in real time to get some real results."**

### Meeting 1

The first Focus Farm meeting was held in late April and aimed to equip the support group with enough information about Kevin and Brodie's goals, farm situation and available resources to do a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis.

"It's about getting inside Kevin and Brodie's heads to see things from their point of view and offer advice on how they can achieve their goals given the resources available to them" explained Justin.

The impact of external factors including the drought and fires has reduced business cash flow, whilst at the same time, things such as the banking royal commission have made it more difficult to access the finance needed to take the next step toward the couple's ultimate goal of farm ownership. The first big question for the support group was to help Kevin and Brodie assess whether a move from leasing to ownership makes good business sense, and if so, how to optimise the resources available to maximise the farm's performance in pursuit of their goal.

Having downsized their herd during the drought, Kevin and Brodie were looking for some guidance on ideal cow numbers and how to best utilise the feed they grow on-farm. The support group took a familiarisation tour of the property, which led to good discussion on grazing management and strategies to deal with the sometimes-erratic nature of pasture growth in the Bega Valley. This has been a source of frustration at times for Kevin, "being leasees, our ability to construct capital infrastructure to enable growth in our business is limited, so our money is currently predominately made off the back of homegrown fodder. With a goal of 70% homegrown fodder a lot of management and labour is required to achieve this in the Bega Valley".

Support group member Will Russell of 'Jelgowrey' explained how transitioning his farm toward a more structured and precise approach to grazing management (as a result of his participation in the SIPs2 project and Feeding Pastures for Profit) is showing early signs of improving pasture utilisation. Given Kevin and Brodie's desire to implement a pasture-based system, maximising pasture growth and utilisation, and the impact this has on financial performance will be a major topic for future support group discussion. To get the ball rolling it was decided soil testing needed to be undertaken.

### Meeting 2

Meeting 2 occurred in late June, after the support group had the opportunity to look at the business's financial information. Discussion centred around 2 key areas: farm purchase vs leasing and ideal cow numbers. Facilitator Justin Walsh explained "these issues have been dominating Kevin and Brodie's thoughts recently, so it was appropriate that we spent a good chunk of time going through them at this meeting."

Discussion about the farm purchase goals were largely around the timing: buy now at current land prices and risk over-extending finances; or concentrate on optimising business operational performance with

the goal of being in a stronger financial position in the future, but risk uncertainty in land prices. After some financial modelling and discussion of the pros and cons of each option the support group advised Kevin and Brodie to focus on optimising the farm's performance to improve the cash position and revisit the farm purchase conversation again later.

Much less debate was needed around ideal cow numbers: The support group was unanimous in its recommendation to purchase 50 extra cows as soon as possible to take the milking herd to 310. The door was also left ajar on the possibility of increasing the herd size further again in the future. Cash flow is currently "tight", whilst Kevin and Brodie make significant inroads into some of their short-term debt, so the group explored some of the options available to Kevin and Brodie to finance the purchase of the cows including sale of other stock (steers), sale of assets (plant/equipment/residential real estate), milk processor cash advance, and leasing options e.g. CowBank.

Buying cows is not without its risks and the group discussed factors Kevin and Brodie need to consider including:

- Biosecurity – health status of cows being introduced including previous exposure to Theileria
- Age of the cows/heifers
- What calves they are carrying, if any
- What type of dairy they have come from – herringbone, rotary, walk through, robot, etc
- Genetics merit and/or breed of the stock
- How far they will need to be trucked and the cost of transport.

These guys don't muck around! When I spoke to Kevin and Brodie two weeks after the meeting, they had found 50 suitable cows, planned finance and transport, organised some initial health checks including milk pestivirus and mastitis PCR testing, and were about to take delivery of their new cows. When asked how they were finding the Focus Farm project so far they said,

**"Whilst we are only in the early days of the project we are thoroughly enjoying the process and the push to make changes. Whilst daunting at first it was quite refreshing to literally lay everything on the table and have peers from the industry be so keen to help us move forward."**

## Dairy farm masterclass

In 2021/22, dairy farm businesses across the country have welcomed a shift in momentum of the operating environment. Positive farm gate prices and significantly improved seasonal conditions have provided the opportunity to truly make hay while the sun shines. This opportunity is almost novel considering the adversity faced by many regions across NSW over the years preceding. Most have experienced crippling drought, fires and floods – or in some cases, the trifecta.

To successfully operate a sustainable and profitable dairy farm business through these and other challenges in order to now make the most of an exceptional season, requires capabilities by farm owners and managers that should not be underestimated.

Dairy Australia recently completed a study to identify and articulate the core capabilities required by people working in dairy farm businesses. After hearing the opinions of farmers and industry stakeholders, nine capabilities have been identified.

These are:

- Dairy farming practice
- Farm business performance
- Sustainability and environment
- People management
- Digital technologies
- Professionalism and lifelong learning
- Communication
- Leadership; and
- Critical thinking for decisive action.

Capability is developed as a product of learning. Sometimes that learning comes through lived experiences, trial and error or repetition; and sometimes it comes through more targeted, formal experiences such as courses, discussion groups and field visits.

Reflecting on my own experiences through drought and bushfires, I often wonder whether we always get the balance between lived experiences and more formal learning right. Certainly, it is during adversity that our capability strengths and weaknesses become most apparent and whilst personally, our business has



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survived and is here to make the most of great seasons, there were many lessons learnt the hard way during adversity because we still had more to learn.

The positive operating conditions we enjoy now, are an opportunity to reflect on our own capabilities and that of our staff. There will no doubt be challenging seasons in the future and that is a given. Opportunities exist to use this time to invest in developing ourselves and the capabilities of our staff as much as we do the other areas of our business. It is important that we are always positioned as best as possible, to make the most of the good times and manage the tough times sustainably, learning proactively rather than reactively.

To aid with this, the Masterclass in Dairy Farm Management has been developed by the dairy industry in partnership with the University of Tasmania and

provides an opportunity for people aspiring to farm management roles or those already in the role, to develop and consolidate their capability. The course is delivered online and includes field visits in different locations around the country, making it accessible for all.

Consider whether the Masterclass in Dairy Farm Management may be a learning opportunity suitable to develop the capability of you or your staff. For more information about the course, visit [utas.edu.au/tia/study/masterclass-in-dairy-business](https://utas.edu.au/tia/study/masterclass-in-dairy-business) or contact [dairy.education@utas.edu.au](mailto:dairy.education@utas.edu.au).

Enjoy and make the most of the season ahead, a well-deserved opportunity after a difficult few years.

**April Browne**

Dairy farmer and Lead of Learning and Development Partnerships, Dairy Australia



**Dairy Australia**

# Sign up to Our Farm, Our Plan and get started

**An initiative of Our Farm, Our Plan**

**GAME PLAN**

- Farm Fitness Checklist
- Quick Plan
- Plan on a Page
- 1 on 1 with Consultant

## DairyFeedbase Feeding Cool Cows Project

### Contribute to a more resilient dairy industry

The DairyFeedbase Feeding Cool Cows team are investigating how cows respond to hot weather and cost-effective ways to reduce the negative impacts of heat stress.

We are looking for Partner Farms from all over Australia that have mainly Holstein Friesian cows. Importantly, the farm must have inline milk meters and be willing to provide daily milk records. Genomic testing and herd testing are preferred but not essential.

Data can be collected remotely, with minimal intrusion and we will work with farmers to facilitate this. Participating farms will receive regular summaries of their herds performance, first-look project updates from the Feeding Cool Cows project and opportunities to be involved in further research.

For further information please contact Dr. Yvette Williams – Partner Farms Liaison 0417 168 535 [yvette.williams@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:yvette.williams@agriculture.vic.gov.au) or visit [dairyfeedbase.com.au/feeding-cool-cows](http://dairyfeedbase.com.au/feeding-cool-cows)



## What's on?

### November

Nov-Dec	OFOP online
2, 9, 19, 23	Farm Business Fundamentals online
16, 19, 23, 26	NSW Fertcare Dairy Nutrient Management
17-18	DRF Symposium online
30	Advanced Nutrition in Action online

### December

Nov-Dec	OFOP online
1	Advanced Nutrition in Action online
2, 10	Farm Business Fundamentals online

### January

18	OFOP
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More info at [dairyaustralia.com.au/dairynsw](http://dairyaustralia.com.au/dairynsw)

#### Enrol online anytime

Milking and Mastitis Management (online)

#### Online expression of interest anytime

Farm Business Fundamentals

Dairy Farm Business Analysis

Our Farm, Our Plan

# Delivering for Dairy

## How does the dairy levy deliver for farmers?

The dairy service levy is invested by Dairy Australia to deliver benefits to dairy farmers and protect the right to farm.

This includes enhancing farm business management, responding to critical events, supporting employment needs, driving herd and pasture innovation, managing climate and environment, marketing to promote dairy products and the industry, growing international markets and contributing to policy outcomes.

Dairy Australia delivers this by services to farmers through eight locations in dairying regions across the country: Subtropical Dairy, WestVic Dairy, Murray Dairy, GippsDairy, DairyTas, DairySA, Dairy NSW, and Western Dairy.

Dairy Australia delivers to dairy farmers in many different ways:

### Enhancing farm business management

Dairy Australia provides farmers with access to business planning and risk management tools, and insights to support on-farm decision making and improve profitability.

### Responding to critical events

Dairy Australia provides farmers with timely information and tools to navigate events such as drought, floods, bushfires or COVID-19.

### Supporting employment needs

Dairy Australia creates awareness of the career opportunities in dairy and providing resources to support farmers in hiring and managing staff and building skills for successful careers in dairy.

### Driving innovation

Dairy Australia delivers on-farm gains as a result of outcomes of research to improve genetics of pasture and cattle, and provides valuable data to inform farm business decision making.

### Managing climate and environment

Dairy Australia delivers initiatives for efficiency of major farm inputs such as water and energy and supporting action on-farm to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### Marketing to promote dairy products and the industry

Dairy Australia builds community trust and support for Australian dairy by promoting the health credentials of dairy, the quality of our products, and reinforcing our broader commitment to sustainability.

### Growing international markets

Improving market access while building and maintaining strong international trade relationships.

### Contributing to policy outcomes

Dairy Australia supports policy development in areas of critical importance to the industry, particularly water security, climate changes, energy, animal health and welfare and workforce/labour access.

For more information on how Dairy Australia is delivering for dairy, visit [dairyaustralia.com.au/whatwedo](http://dairyaustralia.com.au/whatwedo).



## Australian Milk Quality Awards

This month, Dairy NSW has announced the Australian Milk Quality NSW Award Winners for 2021!

### Congratulations to the winners

#### Top 100 – gold

D. Warner

Warwick Farm Enterprises

P.F. Borham

#### Top 5% – silver

A.C. Shipton

C.N., P.M., K.J. & L.M. McDonald

C.R. & D. Emerton

Farm Prophets Farm Profits Pty Ltd

Parkers Dairy

R.E. & N.D. Worth

The full list of national winners is available online at [dairyaustralia.com.au/mqa](http://dairyaustralia.com.au/mqa).



## Rare opportunity for aspiring dairy researchers

Dairy UP – the \$16m project to unlock the potential of the NSW dairy industry – is calling for candidates for nine PhD projects, creating a rare opportunity for aspiring dairy researchers.

Dairy UP program leader, Professor Yani Garcia said the candidates would be supervised by world-leading researchers from the Dairy UP team.

"There's a range of topics, but the common theme is using innovative technologies to collect close-to-real-

time data to better monitor and improve pastures, dairy cattle, crops or the management system.

"The projects use cutting-edge science to explore real-world challenges and deliver solutions that will make a tangible difference on farm," he said.

Scholarships are available for eligible students with the relevant academic qualifications. The team is keen to get the projects underway quickly so anyone interested should follow up quickly. For more information, visit [dairyup.com.au/phd-opportunities](http://dairyup.com.au/phd-opportunities).