

How Now Gippy Cow



Your Levy at Work

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Hard data on once-a-day milking

Stuart and Belinda Griffin have been transitioning to once-a-day milking on their family owned farm in Westbury. Now into their third season, the Griffins have solid data behind them which can help identify the strengths and weaknesses of the new milking system. Stuart has shared his insights with How Now Gippy Cow readers into the benefits and challenges of once-a-day milking.

Labour

Hours worked – improvements for both full time employee and sharefarmer/owner!

Pinch point is still calving – not a huge reduction in workload at this time of year, but there's still a noticeable improvement in the time we got home in the evening. It depends on how you normally manage calving - we are fairly intensive with both calving pattern and calf management (12 hours collections and colostrum tubing of every calf, and we are continuing to milk our fresh cows twice a day).

Milking - For season 17/18 we split cows into two herds, with the second milked at 8.30am after school drop off. Two permanent part time employees were added to staff, milking the second herd four days per week.

Animal health

Mastitis and cell count - this is often the first question we get! If udder health is good when milking (T-A-D), this shouldn't be a major issue. We had no increase in problems through the spring, with some mastitis in January/February, but mainly in older cows or repeat offenders. BMCC is still between 120,000 and 170,000. Improvement in fertility has given us confidence to cull repeat offenders.

Lameness – a general reduction with very few problems this season.

Fertility – we've had improvements in six week in-calf rate, and reduction in empty rate. The 2016/17 results were a 6.5% empty rate and 80% six week in-calf rate (12 week joining). In 2017/18 season saw an 11-week joining with preg testing to take place mid February. We plan to move to a 10-week or less joining period in the future and have eliminated the use of calving induction. Previously when milking TAD our empty rate was in the 10-12% range, and we utilised non-cycler treatments in a moderate number of cows.

Cost reductions

Concentrates – grass is king in a (O-A-D) system. It always should be, but with OAD you can't get out of trouble with large amounts of grain. Continuing to reduce our feed costs will be a focus of the next few seasons.

Power – removing one milking helps to bring down power costs, but with the single milking being a bit longer, it's not a 50% reduction. Our research prior to moving to OAD showed that there is generally a 30-45% reduction in shed power usage. With the change in our peak times of use and minimal afternoon demand, we are investigating the use of solar to reduce our cost of power more significantly.

Water – less used for stock and in the dairy.

R&M – less maintenance of tracks and dairy.

Labour – in moving from 420 to 520 cows we have only increased labour by around 0.3 (Full time equivalent). For the 2017/18 season we are working on around 175 cows/FTE.

Capital requirements – OAD offers potential to milk more cows through a smaller dairy (however take note of potential challenges). We have never considered milking 520 cows TAD through our shed, but a single longer milking is much more palatable. Milking that number TAD would eventually require investment in a rotary. We have split the milkers into two herds (due to length of milking and yard size) and change milkers between herds with each person milking 260 cows.

Now that cow numbers have stabilised, the focus of the next few seasons will be on cost reductions and improvement in cow performance. There have been increased costs in setting up new milking area, as well as a catch-up of maintenance after the past couple



of more challenging years. We expect the cost reductions of OAD to continue to improve into the future. We also hope to match the research into OAD herds that shows an improvement in cow performance after the first season through adaptation of the herd and removal of underperforming cows.

One-percenters

Topping earlier – this is hard to put an exact value on, but we're very happy with pasture quality through the spring.

Regular pasture walks – maintaining correct rotation and supplement amounts.

Better management of young stock – with improvement in cow fertility we have not increased the number of calves reared as the milking herd has increased. This has led to a comparative reduction in calf rearing costs, but we still have the ability to cull cows or increase herd size.

Increase in stock sales – potentially in-calf cows or beef.

Potential challenges

Shed design – can your milk lines, milk pumps, pre-cooling and vats handle all the milk coming in one milking?

Paddock sizes – Big positive of OAD is to put cows away after milking and leave them until the next morning. Paddocks, however, are often arranged for TAD rotations, with day and night paddocks of different sizes. For us, that has sometimes meant moving cows during the day - it's not a hard job but takes a little time. This can be reduced by having gates between paddocks etc.

Use of crops – Same as with TAD, often put onto crop and moved off to pasture +/- silage. The challenge has been chicory, with it being 25-30% of the milking area during summer/autumn. When we were milking TAD it was used as night feeds, but under OAD, cows have to be moved in the afternoon to their chicory allocation. We are looking at novel ways of reducing the number of moves, potentially sowing 1/3 of some paddocks to chicory. Can't wait for virtual fencing to become commercially available and affordable!

Managing the transition to OAD

Loss of cows - some cows may not adapt, with potential for up to 10% of the herd to be culled in the first year, however we have not had that experience – having a herd already suited to OAD (cross breed cows) and milking the heifers OAD the season before the full transition I think has helped keep the culling rate low.

Reduction in income – this depends on how cows adapt (how many have to be culled), whether herd numbers are increased in the first season and what the actual production drop per cow is in the first season. Make sure budgets are done, get advice if you need it, and keep your bank informed – the first thing they will see is the drop in income, not the reduction in expenses.

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Lifestyle

For Belinda and myself, the change to OAD milking is certainly not a winding down or move to retirement strategy – we have many years ahead of us in the dairy industry. Therefore the number one focus of the system is still to drive profit from our business. We know that an OAD system will not be quiet as profitable as TAD when conditions are ideal (milk price, seasonal conditions and input costs all in the right direction), however by driving lower cost production we also hope that when conditions are not ideal, we are still able to remain profitable (or certainly not go too far backwards). Again, this is nothing new for our industry, and it's the way we are choosing to tackle the ups and downs that dairy farming can throw at us.

What OAD milking has given us, is flexibility in how we manage our time. While we all know that on dairy farms there are more jobs on the list than hours in the day, but OAD milking gives you more choice in how and when you get things done. By reducing the amount of “locked in workload” i.e. milking, it now gives both ourselves and our staff opportunities to hopefully have a better work/life balance. I certainly haven't missed afternoon milkings on 35+ degree days (and neither have the staff or the cows). It's also easier to make it to evening meetings and social events and, with two young kids, we know life is only going to get busier. We have also attracted a staff member who was keen to be in the dairy industry but due to a young family was not able to milk at the traditional times – milking our second herd at 8.30am is the perfect fit.

Summary

At the end of the day, the basics of dairy farming remain the same whether you milk once, twice or three times a day. Know the opportunities and challenges of the system you choose to operate, have a plan to manage these through various seasonal and market conditions and make sure that it is sustainable for your farm, cows and, most importantly, yourself and your family.

Farm overview

Located in Westbury, family purchased original land and commenced milking in 1920.

Farm area (prior to November 2016) – 110 ha milking area, 100ha run-off. All dryland, 900mm rainfall

Area increased by 40ha in Nov 2016. For 17/18 season breakdown will be 158ha milking area, 100ha run-off

Fully seasonal calving, dry off for approx. 4 weeks each year, calving start date 25th July

Pasture consumption average – 8.5-10.5t/ha (milking area)

15/16 season – 390 cows, with 100 of those (first calvers) milked once a day. – 110 ha, S.R 3.5 cows/ha

16/17 season – 418 cows, all once a day from calving. – 110 ha, S.R 3.8 cows/ha (dropping to 2.6 from November)

17/18 season – 520 cows, all once a day from calving – 158 ha, S.R 3.3 cows/ha

Once a Day Vs Twice a Day gross and net production.

Net production = Gross production – feed costs (\$ value converted to a litre or milk solids volume)

Feed cost = cost of grain, fodder (including home grown, often use market price rather than cost to make), and nitrogen applications.

Figures are calculated in the first week of each month.

Calving start date: 25/7

Aug.	No. Cows	L/cow	L/ha	kgMS/ha	Net L/cow	Net L/ha	Net S/ha	% comp to previous year
TAD – 15/16	150	16.1	21.9	1.92	13	17.7	1.56	
OAD – 16/17	145	15.5	20.4	1.66	13.3	17.5	1.42	▼ 9%
OAD – 17/18	184	9.2	10.7	0.94	6.75	8.72	0.76	▼ 46%

Sept.	No. Cows	L/cow	L/ha	kgMS/ha	Net L/cow	Net L/ha	Net S/ha	% comp to previous year
TAD – 15/16	345	22	69	5.29	16.2	50.7	3.89	
OAD – 16/17	335	16.1	49	3.88	14	42.7	3.38	▼ 13%
OAD – 17/18	443	17.9	50.3	4.0	14.2	40.0	3.2	▼ 5%

Oct.	No. Cows	L/cow	L/ha	kgMS/ha	Net L/cow	Net L/ha	Net S/ha	% comp to previous year
TAD – 15/16	390	23.5	83.6	6.15	17.8	63.2	4.65	
OAD – 16/17	415	15	57	4.39	13.1	49.7	3.82	▼ 18%
OAD – 17/18	503	17.9	57	4.47	15.1	48.6	3.82	

Nov.	No. Cows	L/cow	L/ha	kgMS/ha	Net L/cow	Net L/ha	Net S/ha	% comp to previous year
TAD – 15/16	390	19.8	65.3	4.7	14.3	47.3	3.44	
OAD – 16/17	418	15.1	57.3	4.38	12.1	46	3.52	▲ 2%
OAD – 17/18	516	15.1	49.4	3.99	12.7	41.4	3.34	▼ 5%

Dec.	No. Cows	L/cow	L/ha	kgMS/ha	Net L/cow	Net L/ha	Net S/ha	% comp to previous year
TAD – 15/16	387	16.8	59	4.48	10.8	38	2.88	
OAD – 16/17	414	15.2	57	4.48	12	45.2	3.55	▲ 23%
16/17 with extra land	414	15.2	39.7	3.13	12	31.5	2.47	
OAD – 17/18	513	11.4	37	2.94	7.2	23.4	1.85	▼ 25%

Note: Extra area added to milking area in November 2016, figures for 16/17 adjusted from December to reflect this. % comparison to last year is calculated on increased area figure when comparing between 16/17 and 17/18

Feb.	No. Cows	L/cow	L/ha	kgMS/ha	Net L/cow	Net L/ha	Net S/ha	% comp to previous year
TAD – 15/16	380				5.6	18.3	1.43	
OAD – 16/17	405	11.5	41.8	3.4	8.9	32.8	2.69	▲ 88%
16/17 with extra land	405	11.5	29.1	2.38	8.9	22.8	1.87	
OAD – 17/18	506	10.9	34.8	2.85	7.32	23.4	1.89	▲ 1%

Notes on comparison

As land is our largest capital expense and most limiting to expansion, our comparisons are done on a per hectare basis (what output is your most expensive asset generating). While this remains an important benchmark, when expansion takes place it can skew the results a bit – overall we have been producing more milk (except for December due to seasonal factors – it was crap!), yet our net production per hectare is reduced due to a reduction in stocking rate. Interestingly the Feb figures for both years of OAD outperform the last year of TAD (goes to show what a shocker it was by then!) These figures help us to determine the ideal stocking rate for our farm, but the impacts on other parts of the business need to be considered when we're making decisions around how many cows to milk.

Making the most of autumn

Murray Goulburn Trading agronomist Scott Travers runs through his autumn pasture checklist for Gippsland dairy farmers.

Spraying

By mid-March most people should have their paddocks sprayed out or very nearly ready to be sprayed out.

The first thing is to ensure that the spray you are using will control all the weeds and insect pests that you need to control. I've seen plenty of examples where people have sprayed out a paddock and left a lot of the weeds that they were trying to eradicate because they didn't use the right herbicide option. If you are not sure, ask someone.

The other thing to consider is plant-back periods. When you use a herbicide – particularly a broad-leaf herbicide – there is a period stated on the label during which you can't plant grasses, clovers or other crops.

The plant-back period generally doesn't start until you've had 15mm of rain, which is an area where people get confused. They think that if they have sprayed today, the plant-back period starts straight away, but that is not the case. It doesn't start until you've had enough rain to wet the soil and start the breakdown of the chemical in the soil.

Paddock preparation

Particularly in higher rainfall areas, ripping up paddocks in the autumn is often a bad idea. If you need to level paddocks out, it's better to do it in spring when it has all summer to settle back in. If you do it in autumn and it's a wet winter you will find the cows sink straight down to the depth that the soil was worked – and you've ruined soil structure for probably five years.

Sowing

There is always a question of when the ideal sowing date is. In Gippsland, I think late-March and early-April are relatively risk free, because even if it is dry, the worst of the hot weather is behind us and hopefully rainfall is becoming more reliable.

People often plant an annual with no intention of putting in a follow-up summer crop in the spring. To me, that is a wasted opportunity. An annual will have a defined end period sometime between October and December. If you have no intention of putting in a summer crop, then pay the extra dollar or two a kilo and put in an Italian ryegrass because, if you have a summer like we just had with a dry spring and then plenty of rain over summer, an Italian will carry through until the next



autumn. At an extra two dollars a kilo at 30 kilos per hectare, you don't have to grow a lot of feed to make your money back. To me, it's a no brainer.

People need to watch the endophyte space fairly closely. There will be interesting times ahead, but at the moment we are still in the learning curve of what we can and can't do with endophytes.

Fertiliser

Ideally, farmers would always soil test a paddock prior to sowing. The problem with an autumn soil test is that you need some moisture to get an accurate result. So I would hope that these paddocks would have been flagged for renovation last year and a test would have been done in spring. You need to identify issues that need correcting. There's no point spending \$600 or \$700 a hectare on new pasture and then finding out it didn't work because you have an Olsen P of 7. If you are going to spend the money, do it properly and you will get the results.

Follow up

Make sure you follow up fertiliser and follow up weed control. So often I see paddocks that come-up, look absolutely fantastic and then are just left to become overrun with weeds or there's no follow up fertiliser because the farmer wants to save \$80 a hectare.

Manual helps safety become automatic

In a world where it seems everything is available on the web, the dairy industry is deliberately taking an old school approach to its Farm Safety Manual.

The manual, which is a step-by-step approach to building and maintaining safety systems for dairy farms, can only be accessed in hard copy by those who attend a Farm Safety Manual workshop.

GippsDairy regional extension officer Leah Maslen said farm safety is an issue that needs to be addressed through education and co-operation and requires a hands-on approach to succeed.

"When we were building and piloting the Farm Safety Manual with dairy farmers, the advice was for a Farm Safety Manual hard copy folder, online access to key documents and templates, as well as support to build and improve farm safety systems via opportunities to discuss farm safety with experts," she said.

"Keeping people safe on dairy farms is much more than a box ticking exercise, it requires a commitment from owners, managers and staff to ensure everyone gets home safely every night."

To register for a workshop, contact GippsDairy or head to www.thepeopleindairy.org.au

"The workshops will help farm businesses protect their people and protect their businesses from safety related legal action," Leah said.

"Every business has an obligation to set safety standards that are simple, effective and can be followed every hour of every day on the farm."



Topics covered in the manual include induction, farm vehicles, dealing with contractors, working with livestock, farm chemicals and power and electrical.

While key documents and templates are available on line, the entire manual is only available in hard copy.

Leah urged farmers to contact GippsDairy to organise a workshop in their local area.

"We are currently looking at where to hold the workshops and need to hear from farm businesses so we know the locations where there is interest," she said.

"I'd urge farmers to consider signing on for a workshop to help us reach the target of zero farm deaths. It's a great goal to work towards, but one that needs everyone to get on board if we are to achieve it."

Register for a workshop by going to www.thepeopleindairy.org.au or contacting Leah at leah@gippsdairy.com.au or on 5624 3900.

contact us

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Pasture pests and your farm operating plan

Insects and slugs are common pests in Gippsland dairy pastures (Table 1) but often inadequately managed because there is little forward planning. Pests are often temporally and spatially sporadic – that is, they are seasonal or do not occur every year, and often only some parts of the farm may suffer damage due to differences in soil types, pasture species or cultivars, or grazing management. These seemingly unpredictable occurrences of pest outbreaks mean farmers rarely have a management plan in place. As a consequence, damage to pasture can occur before the infestation and associated pasture damage is detected, if at all, and there is limited opportunity to respond in a timely and effective manner.

Pest	Dispersive/ migratory behaviour	Occurrence of damaging infestations		
		Sporadic ¹	Persistent/ chronic ²	Seasonally eruptive ³
Armyworms	++++	✓		✓
Cutworms	++	✓	✓	✓
Oxycanus grass grub	+++	✓	✓	
Corbies	++	✓	✓	
Argentine stem weevil	++		✓	
Black beetle	+++	✓	✓	
Pasture cockchafer	++	✓	✓	
Locusts	++++	✓		✓
Wingless grasshoppers	+		✓	✓
Black field cricket	++		✓	✓
Lucerne (clover) flea	-		✓	✓
Redlegged earth mite	-		✓	✓
Blue oat mite	-		✓	✓
Slugs	-		✓	✓

¹Sporadic – infrequent both temporally and spatially

²Persistent/chronic – damage to be expected in most years in particular regions or particular farms

³Seasonally eruptive – populations build to damaging levels only in favourable years; damage very seasonal

Note: Some pest species can be persistent/chronic on some farms, yet sporadic and/or seasonally eruptive on others.

Pests are important when they interfere with our ability to balance feed budgets. They reduce the amount of quality feed available, limit ability of pasture to respond when favourable growth return conditions (e.g. poor pasture growth following the autumn break), and adversely change pasture composition, generally leading to open or weedy pasture with poor content of sown species. Often there is an interaction with other stressors acting on pasture species, with pest damage being most acute on farms with high stocking rates, during periods of moisture deficits, or where there are nutrient deficiencies. These interactions add complexity and lead to farmer uncertainty about management options

A forward-looking, strategic plan (rather than a reactive response) is the most effective approach to dealing with pest-related risks to your farming operations and bottom line. Look to build pest management into the 'farm operating plan' for those pests that can be identified as a risk factor in your business. Adopt monitoring methods for early detection of sporadically occurring pests. Key elements should include:

1. Assessment of risks

Learn what pest species are likely to occur on the farm; do some research on their biology to understand why, where and when damage is likely to occur; and identify the opportunities to limit pasture damage and thus maximise returns from pastures. Some basic understanding of pest biology goes a long way to identify risks on farms and being able to plan appropriate management strategies.



Armyworms have recently infested Gippsland.

2. Species/cultivar selection

Select forage species/cultivars for sowing with the greatest tolerance or resistance to the pests identified as posing the greatest risk on the farm. Be wary of species and cultivar promotional material where trial data does not relate specifically to Gippsland, as plant performance can vary with climate, pasture management and pest conditions. If in doubt sow some trial strips in a paddock before committing to sowing large areas of the farm.

3. Endophyte selection

Use the endophyte option in your pasture species selection where appropriate. Note that endophytes are not effective against all pests, as pest resistance in endophyte-infected ryegrasses and fescues is dependent on which chemicals (alkaloids) are produced by particular endophyte strains. It is therefore critical that the right endophyte–cultivar combination is selected for the pest situation on your farm. In Gippsland, the use of endophytes is most relevant to Argentine stem weevil and black beetle control.

4. Break the life cycle with forages not favoured as food plants for pests

The life cycle of many pests can be disrupted and damage in subsequent pastures can be reduced by sowing a break crop. Brassicas as a break crop before resowing pasture can be an effective control strategy for black beetle, cockchafer, Oxycanus grass grub, corbies and some other pests, provided the crop is free of grass weeds. Be aware that some pests are highly mobile and can rapidly reinfest a new pasture.

5. Pasture establishment methods

Adopt pasture establishment methods that offer the best opportunities to reduce pest numbers. Cultivation is an effective control option for larger, soft bodied soil-dwelling pests such as slugs, caterpillars and beetle larvae. However, adopt minimum tillage or direct drilling methods when it is known that cultivation disrupts natural biological controls and leads to subsequent pest outbreaks – this is most relevant to soil-dwelling caterpillars (e.g. Oxycanus grass grub, corbies) and beetle larvae (e.g. cockchafer, and black beetle).

Always use an insecticide seed treatment to protect seed and young seedlings from a range of pests and thus maximise pasture establishment. The establishment of dense, vigorous swards is foundational to all other aspects of our pasture-based dairying systems, so insecticide seed treatment is money well spent.

6. Staff training in pasture monitoring/pest recognition

Ensure you and your staff are able to detect pest damage early through pasture monitoring (include checks for pests in your weekly farm walk), and able to correctly identify the pest or know who to contact when the identification is uncertain.

7. Trigger points/economic thresholds

The objective of planned approach to pest management is to maintain pest numbers below that causing an economic loss in pastures. For pests not covered by your farm plan, know when to act to give a reasonable expectation of an economic pasture response.

By Gary Barker Researcher and Gippsland farmer, Landcare Research

Focus on new applicants

With a new round of Focus Farms on the way, three former Focus Farmers talk about their experiences and encourage others to consider applying for the project.



Paul and Louise Sherar, pictured here with Focus Farm facilitator Matt Harms, are strong advocates of the program.

Paul Sherar

Loch Focus Farmer with wife Louise (2014-2016)

I really like that involvement in Focus Farms and Discussion Groups because it gets different farmers and industry providers together to throw ideas around.

I think back when I was a younger farmer and wasn't involved in discussion groups, you sometimes feel like you are on your own and everything is going against you. Support groups and discussion groups are almost like therapy sessions, because you can talk to other farmers about what is going on at their place and you realise you are not the only one dealing with those problems.

With the support group, you have a bit of a choice about who you have in it. I'd really look forward to those monthly meetings and the input from those people. We knew some people in the group didn't necessarily agree with what we were doing, but it was good to have constructive criticism. It was something to listen to, go away and have a think about. It's not all about people coming in and saying we are doing a great job, it's about listening to advice on ways you can do things differently to improve.

There's no harm in applying (to be a Focus Farmer). If you are thinking about it, you are obviously thinking it could benefit you. I'd just go for it."

Jon Ryan

Part of the Newry Ryan/Clynes Focus Farm (2012-2014)

We found the experience particularly positive and got a lot out of it. I would recommend it to anyone in the early stages of their business, in a transitional stage or just anyone who wants to improve their business.

I'd be more than willing to do it again as we've got a new farm now (around 500 acres at Denison) and are building up numbers.

I did find you have to drive it and you have to put forward what you want to do and you need to challenge your group.

Apply now

GippsDairy is seeking expressions of interest from dairy farmers for their next round of three Focus Farms starting in July 2018. Focus Farms will operate over two years with funding provided by Dairy Australia and GippsDairy.

The Focus Farm project focuses on farm businesses while integrating farm family needs. The project aims to improve profitability through strengthened understanding of operational costs, maximising home grown feed and managing risks to the business. This is achieved by close monitoring of farm activities and expenditure and support from an experienced farm facilitator and support group made up of farmers and local service providers.

Applications should be submitted by COB, Friday, 20 April 2018. If you would like further information please contact Karen Romano for an EOI application form on 0417 524 916 or email karen@gippsdairy.com.au



Jon Ryan found Focus Farms to be a positive experience.

Trent and Belinda Crawford

Binginwarri Focus Farmer with wife Belinda (2012-2014)

I think fertiliser management was the big area we improved on. Whereas it was fairly haphazard before, now it is a lot more calculated.

In general, just making decisions earlier would be the main thing we got out of the Focus Farm.

Rather than wondering if you should be doing something, actually doing it before it's too late, especially in terms of urea and cutting silage. It definitely helped switch up our grass management.

Budgeting has definitely improved. Before we were Focus Farmers the budget was nowhere near as accurate, or even very regimented. It's changed from just buying something and working out later on if we could afford it.

I think by being the Focus Farmer I definitely gained more than if I had been a support group member of someone else's Focus Farm. You are actually pushed to implement ideas, which is a good thing.



Belinda and Trent Crawford refined their pasture and financial management.

Reminders

APRIL

Have a plan for pasture management. The plan for the home farm and out blocks could include the following:

Drainage

Wet farms need drainage to be able to be managed to their potential. Soil and pasture issues related to drainage can only be fixed by improving drainage. Wet soils in Gippsland tend to drain better across the surface than they do down the soil profile therefore surface drains make sense.

Fertiliser program

If you have not put your normal application of fertiliser on and it has already started growing it might be good to include nitrogen in your fertiliser application for additional growth.

Areas for milking cows, dry cows and young stock

A planned approach feeding pasture to groups of cows and young stock is an advantage although, the ability to change the plan to suit soil conditions and pasture growth rates is important.

Preparing areas of pasture before they are required is key, a wedge of pasture for winter management will create options for grazing and best milk production from pasture.

Management for new or oversown pasture

When managing newly sown pasture, consider timing, based on the weather, soil type and farming system. Early planted pasture is very productive provided it does not get too dry or hot once it has emerged, late planted pasture can result in very slow pasture development and paddocks that are prone to pugging in the following winter and spring.

Control broadleaf weeds in new and old pastures once the weeds are about 3 to 5cm in diameter and most plants have emerged.

Do the 'pluck test' to check new sown pastures are ready for grazing. Newly sown pastures can support more than three live leaves and should be grazed before canopy closure. Allowing plants to grow more than two leaves results in root development and the production of tillers leading to increased persistence. Avoid

Pastures/forages

Ryegrass leaf appearance rate	10 to 15 days per leaf (depending on soil moisture on dryland and irrigated farms)
Area of farm to graze today	1/30th to 1/60th of grazing area in 24 hours
Recommended pre-grazing decisions	In autumn, it is important to allow pastures to grow beyond two leaves before grazing. This generates stronger, deeper root mass and leaf area
Recommended post grazing decision	Try not to graze below 4 to 6 cm. This ensures faster growing ryegrass plants in autumn
Average daily pasture growth rate	6 to 25kgDM/ha/day on dryland farms depending on autumn rainfall or irrigation
Estimated daily evaporation	4 to 6mm per day
Seasonal management tasks	Apply nitrogen to pastures when you need the additional growth and the pasture becomes blotchy in appearance to indicate areas of nitrogen response to dung and urine patches

overgrazing new plants; leave at least 4 to 6cm residual.

Weed management (in established pastures)

Barley and Winter Grass are both annual grasses and should be controlled once they have struck with selective herbicides. This needs to be carefully planned and managed well to get a good result. Speak to your local agronomist for advice.

Broad leaf weeds such as Cape Weed and Flat Weed need to be controlled once all have struck and before the weather becomes too wet to allow all the appropriate areas to be sprayed. Broad leaf weeds have a major impact on pasture productivity throughout the year and are well worth controlling.

Pasture Pest activity

Keep an eye out for Lucerne Flea and Red Legged Earth Mite in pastures, they are easily controllable and can be damaging to pastures if left untreated.

Red Headed Cockchafers are often a problem in autumn, they are not able to be controlled but some management can minimise the damage to pastures. Test pasture in affected areas, that's ready to graze for pulling by grabbing pasture and trying to pull it out. If it pulls out consider pre graze topping the pasture to minimise cows pulling out the pasture.

Cows

- Prepare to dry off spring calving cows (depending on calving date). The process of drying cows off well, will impact the likelihood of mastitis in the following lactation.
- Prepare a plan for dry cow feeding and transition cow feeding along with your preferred calving areas on the farm to minimise labour and to maximise cow comfort.

Heifers

- Feed calves well with healthy weaning weights in mind using milk, fresh water, some fibre and calf pellets.
- Feed quality supplements to dairy heifers. Advice from the InCalf project suggests that heavier, well grown heifers get in calf easier, produce more milk in their lifetime, compete better with mature cows and survive longer in the milking herd.

Business Management

- Review your third quarter GST results, have a look at cash flow by month and check your cash position going into winter. A discussion with the bank may be necessary to allow for best input timing and management this winter.

ComingUp

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

Feeding Pastures for Profit (FPFP)

FPFP develops dairy farmer skills and decision making in growing and optimising pasture consumption. The program involves two days 'up-front' classroom style delivery plus five on farm group days over the next 10-12 months. Each participant is entitled to a one off farm visit to support pasture rotation decisions. Places are limited, to register contact Karen Romano on 0417 524 916 or karen@gippsdairy.com.au

MID

Date: 1 May and 8 May
 Venue: TBA

South Gippsland

Date: 2 May and 9 May
 Venue: TBA

West Gippsland

Date: 4 May and 11 May
 Venue: TBA

All days 10.15am to 2.30pm.

Focus Farms

The final Focus Farm Open Days will be held in late June across Gippsland. Lunch will be provided at all days. Please RSVP with GippsDairy for catering purposes T: 5624 3900 or info@gippsdairy.com.au

Fish Creek Focus Farm Final Open Day

When: Tuesday, 26 June 2018
 Time: 10.15am for a 10.30am start to 2.30pm
 Where: 195 Kerrs Road, Fish Creek
 Host Family: Graeme, Jenny & Shaun Cope
 Facilitator(s): Karen Romano, GippsDairy & John Mulvany, OMJ Consulting

Jindivick Focus Farm Final Open Day

When: Thursday, 28 June 2018
 Time: 10.15am for a 10.30am start to 2.30pm
 Where: 335 Main Jindivick Road, Jindivick
 Host Family: Steve Ronalds & Brenton Ziero
 Facilitator: Matt Hall, Matt Hall Consulting

Won Wron Focus Farm Final Open Day

When: Friday, 29 June 2018
 Time: 10.15am for a 10.30am start to 2.30pm
 Where: 100 Greigs Creek Road, Won Wron

Host Family: Paul & Lisa Mumford
 Facilitator: Matt Harms, OnFarm Consulting
 Presenter: Richard Shephard, Herd Health

National Muster

Get the facts behind the claim that there are real profit gains to be made from using breeding indexes and genomics. Hear the Jelbart dairy business management story. Learn how astute genetic selection is now less complex. See the figures on the value of genomic testing your heifers.

Where: Jelbart Dairy - 60 Nicholas Road, Leongatha South, Victoria 3953

When: Thursday 10 May 2018 at 10:00am

RSVP: Attendance is free but registration is essential: www.nationalmuster.com

For more information contact Sallie Clynes, GippsDairy on 5624 3900 or info@gippsdairy.com.au