

FEEDBASE AND ANIMAL NUTRITION

Pasture start-up: a step-by-step Gippsland guide

By Jason Hibbs – Notman Pasture Seeds

Autumn remains the most influential pasture window for Gippsland dairy systems. Variable autumn breaks don't make pasture resowing easy, however being well planned can streamline the pasture resowing process.

Step 1: Early March – Setting yourself up

Target paddocks that simply won't carry their weight through winter and spring. Soil tests guide pH, phosphorus, potassium and sulphur

decisions, and any lime needs should be addressed before sowing, not after establishment begins.

Step 2: Firm, fine, clean seedbed

Aim for a seedbed that offers clean soil contact and minimal live competition. Allow early autumn weeds to germinate, then remove them so you're planting into a genuine reset rather than fighting regrowth. A tidy surface holds moisture more evenly and supports consistent strike across March and April.

CONTINUED OVER

NOTMAN PASTURE SEEDS



Gippsland's dairy pasture experts

Pasture start-up: a step-by-step Gippsland guide

Meet the GippsDairy Muster breakout session facilitators

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Step 3: Winter grass control

If winter grass is a known issue, consider a pre-emergent at sowing, especially in cultivated perennial paddocks. These products mode of action act during germination, limiting root and shoot development of annual grass weeds so they never properly compete for light or space. This is far more effective than trying to manage a thick winter grass mat later in June.

Step 4: Sowing Window – March and April

Even establishment is the goal, regardless of whether you sow or use a contractor. Seed needs enough warmth and contact to move quickly; too deep and emergence slows into cold soil, too exposed and it dries out. Starter nutrition at sowing supports root growth and early density. On heavier country avoid unnecessary working so soil structure holds up once autumn rain settles in.

Step 5: Early weed control – 3–6 weeks after sowing

Once pasture is up and away, don't ignore the next flush of weeds. Treating seedling broad-leaf weeds 3-6 weeks after sowing and before the first full grazing stops them stealing moisture, light and space from young ryegrass and clovers. Missing this step usually means more chemical later and less pasture growth in the meantime.

Keep chemical application rates or something else sensible. Need to define what rates, to protect new clovers; short-term suppression is better than a paddock full of mallow and chickweed.

As seedlings emerge, support them with starter nutrition, not heavy "rescue" fertiliser. Phosphorus and sulfur applied at or near sowing help root development and early growth. Nitrogen should be held until plants have their roots down and are starting to tiller; applying too early risks loss and doesn't add much to early emergence. Walk new sowings regularly through this period and watch for insects, slugs, crickets or bare patches so any problems are picked up before first grazing.

Step 6: Late April–May (or even June) – first grazing

Plan to graze new pasture as soon as plants won't pull out – roughly at 7–8 cm height in good conditions. Use lighter stock if you can and avoid hammering it; the aim is to tidy the leaf, encourage tillering and keep light down at the base. In many seasons, an early nitrogen application once plants are well established and actively growing can help drive tillering and speed the run-up to the second grazing. The combination of timely first grazing plus well-timed nitrogen sets the platform for solid winter rotations and a thicker sward heading into June.

The GippsDairy Muster 2026 brings industry experts and local farmers together to share insights that can support building a sustainable future for dairy farmers.

Focus areas include developing future ready farms through strategic planning, effective succession, new opportunities in animal genetics and pasture strategies while showcasing the latest trends, technologies, and practices in dairy farming.

It features a range of engaging and informative speakers delivering relevant and practical content for the dairy industry.

YOUNG DAIRY NETWORK

LAC Member

By Mikayla Killeen - YDN Local Area Committee member



Hi All,

My name is Mikayla, and I am a representative for the MID on the YDN committee.

My husband Will and I entered the dairy industry nearly 2 years ago when we made the switch from beef to dairy farming. We purchased our 220-acre flood irrigated property in Glengarry where we milk 230 head, supported by 286 acres of dry land for young stock and fodder production.

As Will still works off farm and I am raising our 3 beautiful children (Angus, 5, Lena, 3, and Hamish 10 weeks) we are supported on farm by a contract manager so we can try to achieve some level of work life balance. This isn't always easy to get right, but we always involve our kids in our farm jobs, wherever it's safe and practical to do so. We love the life that dairying provides for our children, growing up with the space to play and learn, getting dirty and spending time as a family, working towards a common goal.

I had not been involved in dairy farming at all before we purchased our farm and I have been impressed by the amount of support that is available in this wonderful industry. It has been conversations and sessions from both local dairy farmers and GippsDairy that has made this transition so much easier and filled us with hopes of success.

I hope to also be a beacon of support for other farmers both old and new through my role on the YDN. I believe that young people have so much purpose and potential in the dairy space and that we can all benefit if we support young people on their journey in dairy farming whether they aim to own their own asset or grow their knowledge of a particular area of dairying.

I believe that Dairy is an industry like no other. The willingness to share ideas, the breadth of opportunities and passion for success provides a chance for so many to find employment and enjoyment whether it be as a farm owner, worker or service provider. Growing up in the Latrobe Valley, I have always known the job landscape to consist of major industry such as the local power stations, paper mill and hardwood mills.

As these industries are no longer long-term stable options for employment I see a gap opening in opportunities for young people entering the workforce. I believe that there is so much that our dairy industry can benefit from this changing landscape, if we could absorb some of that workforce to increase the availability of qualified trades, train new milking/farm staff and encourage farm ownership from these workers looking for a new stable future.

The future is bright in dairy and I am so proud to be a little part of it.

Feel free to reach out if you have queries or ideas about/for the YDN, I am always happy to chat.

Thank you

Mikayla Killeen

SUCCESSION – Claire Booth



Claire Booth has 20 years' experience as a solicitor working with family and farming businesses across NSW and Queensland. She brings strong, unique commercial insights from roles in rural and agribusiness firms and from co-establishing a

contracting business servicing mining and civil infrastructure projects across the Hunter Valley and north-west Western Australia.

In 2011, this experience helped establish BoothAg, a mixed farming operation producing irrigated crops and breeding Angus cattle, which her husband Brendan joined full-time in 2015. Claire has worked continuously in the legal sector since 2003 and now specialises in wills, succession planning, and trust and tax law, with expertise in water law and irrigated agriculture.

Claire works extensively with dairy clients nationwide and has delivered keynote addresses at major industry events, including the Australian Dairy Conference, Cream of the Crop, and Western Dairy Innovation Day. She serves on several boards across the agricultural, water, tax, and renewable energy sectors and lives on their farm in Geurie, NSW, with her family.

PASTURES – Phil Shannon



Phil has been directly involved in dairy farm extension and consulting for over 30 years. With a family dairy farm background Phil invested many

years developing and delivering practical programs focussed on understanding dairy farming systems before starting his own independent private consulting business. With 30 plus years of experience Phil has developed a broad range of skills.

He has strengths in business analysis, farm transition and succession planning, human resource management, and continues to support farmers achieve their goals and manage challenging conditions. Phil was the key developer of the nationally successful and award winning 'Feeding Pastures for Profit' program that has stood the test of time.

GENETICS – Dr. Michelle Axford



Michelle is intrigued by the vital role that genetic selection plays in lifting farm productivity and driving long-term sustainability in the dairy industry.

Throughout her leadership roles with DataGene, she has focused on developing and extending tools that make Australian Breeding Values and indexes more accessible, practical and valuable for farmers and their advisors. Recently, she completed research into the use of genomic selection to improve calf health. Born in Canada, Michelle is a fifth-generation dairy farmer with her roots now firmly planted in South Gippsland.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information or to register for this event please visit: www.dairyaustralia.com.au/gippsdairy/programs/gippsdairy-muster



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SERVICES

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- Fertiliser and Lime/Gypsum spreading and bulk deliveries
- Soil & plant tissue testing

Effluent and environmental management

By Jennifer Gibson – EPA

Effluent and environmental management: What EPA commonly sees on farm and how to stay ahead?

Effluent management is one of the most important environmental responsibilities on dairy farms. Victoria's environmental laws require farmers to understand the activities on their farm that could cause environmental harm and take reasonable steps to prevent it. EPA inspections across Gippsland show that many farms are managing risks well. But common issues still appear, and most can be fixed with simple, proactive actions.

Effluent storage: Staying on top of capacity

One of the most frequent findings during inspections is insufficient storage capacity. This is especially true heading into the wetter months. Effluent ponds must maintain enough freeboard to prevent overflow after rain. Simple regular checks and a quick level record can help you catch issues early.

Sludge build up is another contributing factor. As solids settle at the bottom of the pond, storage capacity drops and treatment becomes less effective. Keeping solids traps clean, maintaining separation equipment, and scheduling regular desludging helps the whole system perform as intended.

EPA also sees cases where herd numbers have grown, but the effluent system has stayed the same. Increasing effluent volume without increasing capacity is one of the quickest ways to lose compliance. Reviewing your system whenever the herd size changes is a practical safeguard.

Vegetation on pond surfaces is another simple but common issue. Vegetation floating on, or covering the pond, reduces capacity and makes it hard to visually check freeboard. Keeping it controlled makes routine monitoring easier.

Consider having backup or contingency measures. This could include spare components, an emergency pump, or alternative storage options. These small steps help prevent problems if something breaks at the wrong time.

Irrigation practices: Prevent runoff and over application

Proper effluent irrigation practices are important. Irrigation is one of the easiest ways for effluent to escape the system if something goes wrong. EPA finds farms that don't have enough irrigable area, particularly during winter, crop rotation, or wet periods. Times when irrigation simply isn't possible.

Over irrigation is another common issue. Effluent must never leave the property or enter drains or waterways, so EPA checks that runoff is captured, typically via a reuse pond. Matching irrigation to soil moisture, moving irrigation areas around the farm, and keeping an eye on low-lying areas all help to reduce risk.

Other environmental risks that EPA check

Alongside effluent, EPA also checks other risks on dairy farms, including:

- Waste tyre storage and fire risk
- Appropriate farm waste management – e.g. not burning silage wrap etc.
- Chemical leaks or poor liquid storage
- Stormwater contamination
- Dust from tracks or laneways
- Odour issues around effluent, manure or dead stock management (appropriate burial/disposal)

EPA's regulatory approach is to prevent harm rather than repairing it later. Inspections aim to inform, educate and support farmers. EPA wants to make sure farms have good systems in place and decisions are based on practical, on farm data.

Farm business update

By Veroncia McLeod – GippsDairy

GippsDairy will deliver a comprehensive program of farm business extension and wealth creation workshops over the coming months, offering learning opportunities for dairy farmers, farm employees, new entrants and advisers across Gippsland.

The workshop series has been designed to ensure participants at every stage of their dairy journey can take away practical skills and tools to support stronger businesses into the future. This will be the only opportunity during the current financial year for farmers and industry participants to take part in these programs.

Last year, GippsDairy piloted a Cash, Costs and Margins workshop, which is now nearing readiness for full delivery. This one-day workshop is expected to be offered later in the financial year and will provide participants with the opportunity to apply skills gained through Farm Business Fundamentals using their own farm figures.

It will also support continued learning through the Dairy Farm Business Analysis program.

Due to the interactive nature of the workshops, places are limited, and early registration is encouraged.

Farm Business Fundamentals

The Farm Business Fundamentals program will be held at the Traralgon Bowls Club on 11 and 18 March, with delivery by respected farm business educator Gerard Murphy.

The two-day course is designed to build a strong foundation in farm business management, helping participants better understand financial concepts, make more informed decisions, and improve how information is managed and used within their business.

Wealth Creation Workshops

Two Wealth Creation Workshops will be held at the Century Inn, Traralgon, catering to different stages of the dairy workforce.

The Grow Your Wealth Through Farming workshop will take place on 25 March and is a one-day program aimed at new entrants, Young Dairy Network members, farm employees and family members who are working on farms as salary or wage earners.

The workshop explores ways to start saving, building wealth and transitioning from wages towards asset ownership, including potential partnership options. Participants will also hear from farmers who have recently built their own investment "snowball" and learn how they achieved it.



Following this, the Optimise Business Potential for Future Growth workshop will run over 26 and 27 March and is tailored to established dairy businesses. The two-day program supports farm owners looking to assess future opportunities, improve profitability, plan for sustainable growth or begin stepping back from day-to-day operations. Risk management tools and real-world farmer experiences form a key part of the program.

Dairy Farm Business Analysis

To round out the program, GippsDairy will deliver the Dairy Farm Business Analysis workshop at the Traralgon Bowls Club on 7, 14 and 21 May.

This three-day course is designed to help farmers and advisers better understand and analyse farm business performance by focusing on cash flow, profitability and wealth creation. Participants will work through the process of farm business analysis, including the use of DairyBase, cost of production calculations, risk-reward considerations and accounting concepts specific to dairy farming.

The workshop is recommended for all dairy farmers and advisers, with GippsDairy encouraging all decision-makers within a business to attend together to maximise the benefit.

The Dairy Farm Business Analysis workshop will be facilitated by farm business consultant Dan Armstrong.

MORE INFORMATION

For further information or enquiries about any of the workshops, contact Veronica McLeod at: veronica.mcleod@gippsdairy.com.au

Agriculture Victoria's farm advisory service

By Agriculture Victoria

Farmers from across the state now have access to a second Farm Advisory Service one-on-one consultation with a technical specialist.

More than 720 farmers across the state have already accessed a one-on-one session with an advisor to take stock and manage the season. Specialist consultants include agronomists, veterinarians, animal nutritionists, business advisors and farm planners, with expertise across dairy, beef, sheep and wool, horticulture and cropping.

All farmers anywhere in Victoria can access advice from technical specialists, such as:

- farm business advisers
- livestock nutritionists
- soil and pasture specialists
- water experts
- Veterinarians.

Information and advice is provided through one-on-one discussions, webinars, workshops, field days and resources.

Any Victorian farmer can book a one-on-one session with a specialist from our panel of farm advisors. Sessions are up to three hours and either face-to-face on-farm or online—plus a follow-up call. You can indicate your preferred consultants from our list of experienced advisors.

**MORE INFORMATION**

Find more information about drought support: www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/drought or call 136 186.

Milk production improves, but outlook is cautious

Madelyn Irvine - Dairy Australia

Milk production in Gippsland lifted 1.1% year-on-year (YOY) in December, marking the regions first increase in eight months and its strongest December since 2021.

The growth follows improved seasonable conditions, with above-average rainfall from October to December across much of the region. In turn, soil moisture levels improved which supported pasture growth. Favourable late-spring conditions also allowed for strong hay and silage production, helping underpin milk flows.

The recovery was not isolated to Gippsland; northern Victoria recorded a 0.9% YOY increase, while western Victoria lifted 2.7%.

This led to the state's total milk production rising 1.6% compared to the previous December.

Despite the recent improvement, a full-season recovery remains uncertain. Gippsland's season-to-date production is tracking 2.0% below this time last year. In order to finish off the current season level with 2024/25, the region would need to produce around 827 million litres between January and June, a volume reached only once in the past five seasons (adjusted for leap years).

While favourable seasonal conditions would help reach this, climate outlooks suggest average rainfall and above-average temperatures across the region. These conditions could impact production over the next few months, leaving some uncertainty over whether the gap to last season will close.

The future for Food & Fibre Gippsland is coming!

By Food & Fibre Gippsland

Gippsland's food and fibre sectors are entering one of the most important periods in our region's history – and Food & Fibre Gippsland (F&FG) is stepping forward with renewed energy, purpose, and confidence.

After months of engagement with stakeholders, thoughtful review, and careful planning, we're preparing to release our **2026–2029 Strategic Plan** — a bold roadmap designed to strengthen our industries, grow our region, and position Gippsland as a national leader in sustainable, innovative food and fibre production.

And we can't wait to share it with you.

A Stronger Vision for a Stronger Region

The upcoming plan brings F&FG into a new era, with a refreshed mission focused on collaboration, innovation, and strategic growth. Our direction recognises the changing needs of industry, the pressures of local and global markets, and the enormous opportunities across Gippsland.

Central to the strategy is a renewed commitment to our improved operations to:

- Building a viable and resilient business model
- Growing a diverse and stable revenue base
- Operating with greater transparency and accountability
- Embedding a culture of continuous improvement

This is about building an organisation that will deliver consistently, sustainably, and with impact.

A New Membership Model Designed for Clarity & Value

One of the most exciting changes is the introduction of a simplified, future-ready membership model.

The new structure is easier to understand, fairer, and better aligned to industry needs.

It includes:

- A **General Membership** offer is scaled for businesses with less than 10 employees, 10 to 99 employees and more than 100 employees.
- **Corporate Partners (Networking) and Corporate Partners (Premium)** are offered valuable benefits and exclusive networking opportunities as well as co-branded participation in major events across the F&FG calendar.
- **Local Government Authorities**, your local councils, are also offered a strategic partnership model that will see our strong ties provide support for regional development, industry access and active strategic partnerships.
- Businesses based within Shires, that elect to participate as Strategic Partners, will be offered free **Associate membership**.

Members will benefit from stronger networks, greater visibility, active communications and more opportunities to collaborate in shaping Gippsland's economic future.

Introducing Gippsland Trusted: A Regional Brand with Purpose

Perhaps the most transformative element of the strategy is the proposed activation of the Gippsland Trusted (GT) brand.

GT is more than a logo — it's a powerful regional identity built to:

- Showcase the authenticity, traceability and quality of Gippsland products
- Boost visibility and pride for our regional producers
- Strengthen SME participation in premium markets
- Align our food and fibre producers with the region's visitor economy, agritourism, and value chain initiatives

A sustainable funding model will support the brand's rollout, including proposed LGA sponsorship, user subscriptions, and targeted grant investment.

Gippsland Trusted (previously named Gippsland Trusted Provenance) has the potential to become a widely recognised mark of excellence — a unifying symbol of what makes Gippsland exceptional.

A Fresh Look for a Forward-Thinking Organisation

To reflect our renewed strategic direction, a soft rebrand of F&FG has been developed. This evolution signals a confident, modern organisation, one that is ready to lead.

It includes:

- A refreshed colour palette
- Updated visual elements
- Streamlined brand governance
- Consistent integration across digital channels and business operations

Building Revenue, Capability and Momentum

Food & Fibre Gippsland's new strategic plan outlines the path forward as we grow through 2026 and 2027 and continue to evolve as we respond to our sector, the needs of our local producers and important economic opportunities.

Modest but meaningful new revenue streams are expected through our Memberships, strategic partnerships, Gippsland Trusted subscriptions and of course our important work in agriculture and horticulture extension, through our network of funding partners.

Stay tuned, more news is coming

We're a small team delivering big plans, so we appreciate your patience as we roll out our strategy over the coming weeks in February and March.

We will be meeting with many of you to share our news and talk about what this means for you and your business.

This strategic plan is more than a document; it's a commitment to our members, our partners, and our region. It reflects where we are, where we're going, and how we'll get there — together.

MORE INFORMATION

The full plan is coming soon, and we're excited to share the vision that will guide Gippsland's food and fibre future. If you have any questions or would like to discuss what these plans mean for you, please contact our CEO, Simon Johnson on simon.johnson@foodandfibregippsland.com.au

Measles is back. Are you fully protected?

By Gippsland Region Public Health Unit

If you were born during or after 1966 and before 1992, you may need a top up measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination.

Many people in this age group received only one dose of the measles vaccine as children. Two doses are needed for full protection, and measles remains an ongoing public health concern — including here in Gippsland, where exposure sites have recently been identified.

Measles is a highly contagious virus that spreads easily through the air and can cause serious illness, particularly for babies, pregnant people and those with weakened immune systems.

While most vaccinated people are protected, lower vaccination coverage globally and increased travel have led to a recent rise in measles cases.

Not sure how many doses you've had?

That's very common — and the good news is it's safe to have another MMR vaccine even if you're unsure how many doses you've already received. There's no harm in getting an extra dose, and it helps ensure you're fully protected.

How to get your free MMR vaccination

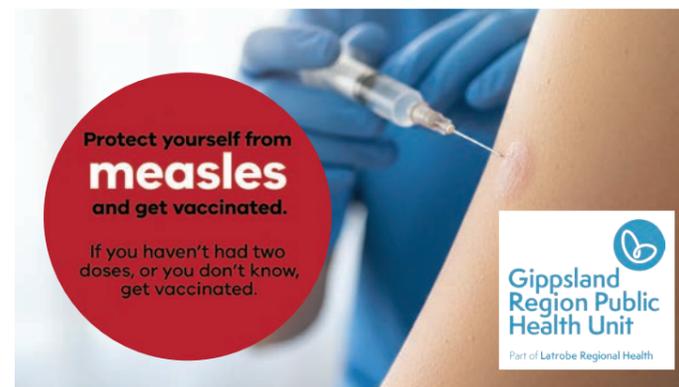
Free MMR vaccinations are available across Gippsland to 20-59 year olds. You can:

- Walk in to a participating pharmacy, or
- Book through your local council's immunisation program

Find a vaccination location near you and book here:

<https://tinyurl.com/3mc9zeh5>

You can also speak with your GP about measles vaccination.



A timely reminder

With measles exposure sites identified in Gippsland, now is a good time to check your vaccination status and get a top-up MMR vaccination. Even if you don't think you've been exposed, staying up to date with routine vaccinations helps protect you, your family, and the wider community.

Are you a big employer that offers seasonal flu vaccination to staff?

If your business offers on-site seasonal flu vaccination, Gippsland Region Public Health Unit now offers a program to add MMR to your 2026 program, with costs reimbursed. Learn more at <https://lrh.com.au/gippsland-region-public-health-unit/workplace-measles-vaccination/>

Vaccination is a simple step that offers long-lasting protection. Taking action now helps reduce the spread of measles and keeps our community healthy.

ANIMAL PERFORMANCE

Preventing Q fever on farm: subsidised testing and vaccinations available

Q fever is an infectious disease caused by the bacteria Coxiella burnetii. People usually get infected by breathing in air or dust that has been contaminated by Q Fever bacteria from birth fluids, urine, faeces, blood or milk of infected animals.

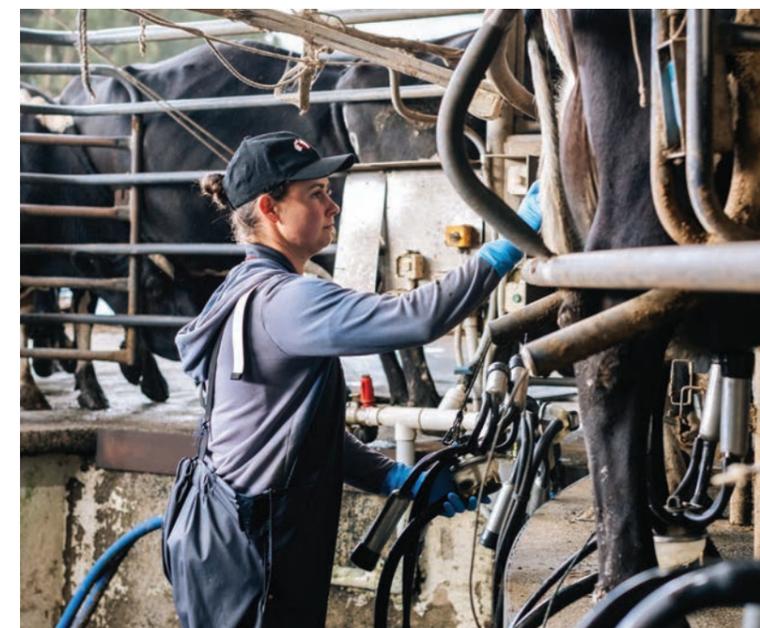
Q fever symptoms can vary – with some people experiencing severe flu-like symptoms and long-lasting, debilitating impacts of chronic Q fever.

GippsDairy is leading a project that provides Gippsland dairy farmers, employees and family members (over 15 years of age) with access to subsidised testing and vaccinations for Q fever.

There are now 9 participating medical centres around the region providing subsidised testing and vaccinations. Two appointments, one week apart, are required for testing and vaccination.

Medical centres now taking bookings:

- Neerim South Medical Centre
- Traralgon, Breed St Medical Centre
- Leongatha, Long Street Medical
- Korumburra Medical Centre
- Foster Medical Centre
- Warragul, Central Clinic
- Stratford Medical Centre
- Sale Medical Centre
- Orbost Medical Centre



MORE INFORMATION

Find out more about Q fever visit: <https://tinyurl.com/yrncyfnf>



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At Vision First, we specialise in helping Australian farms connect with reliable dairy operators.

As a registered migration agent, we handle every step from sourcing qualified operators to managing visa applications and compliance – so you can focus on what matters most: running your farm.



Hoofing around Gippy town



SAVE THE DATE		
DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
Thursday 23 April	GippsDairy Muster	Toora

GIPPSDAIRY EVENTS – MARCH TO APRIL 2026		
Wednesday 4 March	Advanced Nutrition in Action (ANIA)	Ellinbank
Wednesday 4 March	Euthanise Livestock Training	South Gippsland
Thursday 5 & 12 March	Milking and Mastitis Management	MID
Wednesday 11 & 18 March	Farm Business Fundamentals	Traralgon
Friday 13 March	Women in Dairy: Coffee, Cake & Connection – MID	Glenmaggie
Friday 13 March	YDN MID – Pub night	Rosedale
Monday 16 March	Having a Seat at the Table: An Introduction to Governance and Peer Leadership with Nollaig Heffernan	Morwell
Monday 16 March	Taking the next step: skills for career progression into management with Nollaig Heffernan	Morwell
Tuesday 17 March	Its starts on day one: Creating a great workplace with Nollaig Heffernan	Morwell
Thursday 19 & 26 March	Rearing Healthy Calves	West Gippsland
Friday 20 March	YDN West Gippsland – Pub night	Drouin West
Tuesday 24 March	Grow your wealth through farming	Traralgon
Wednesday 25 & Thursday 26 March	Optimise Business Potential for Future Growth	Traralgon
Friday 27 March	YDN South Gippsland – Pub Night	Meeniyang
Thursday 2 April	Healthy Hooves	MID
Wednesday 8 & 15 April	Milking and Mastitis Management	South Gippsland
Thursday 9 April	MID Discussion Group – Heifers on Target	Tinamba
Thursday 9 & Friday 10 April, Thursday 30 April & Friday 1 May	2IC/Manager program	Churchill
Wednesday 22 April	Healthy Hooves	West Gippsland
Thursday 23 April	GippsDairy Muster	Toora
Thursday 30 April	Orbost Discussion Group	Orbost

Upcoming events

To view and register for any of our upcoming events, visit the GippsDairy events calendar: <https://bit.ly/GippsDairyEventsCalendar> or scan the QR Code.



Hay and Grain reports

Scan the QR code or visit the Industry Statistics page of the Dairy Australia website to view the most recent hay and grain figures.



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