



YOUNG DAIRY NETWORK

Don Campbell Memorial Tour Showcases Innovation, Leadership and Collaboration

By Jessica Blackstock – GippsDairy

This year's Don Campbell Memorial Tour brought together 14 Gippsland farmers and three tour leaders, who travelled to Tasmania from March 2 to 7 for a week of insight, connection and professional development. Although the tour began with weather related flight delays, the disruptions did little to diminish the enthusiasm of the group, and the experience quickly became a highlight in the participants' careers.

Over five days, the group visited 10 farms across Tasmania's northern dairy belt, exploring a wide variety of operations. These included organic farms, enterprises undertaking microbial trials, corporate businesses, and family run properties, providing a broad perspective on the diversity within the Tasmanian dairy sector. Several farms also showcased new and emerging technologies, such as teat spray robots, collar based monitoring systems and virtual herding platforms, illustrating how innovation is shaping the future of dairy farming.

CONTINUED OVER

RAMPAGE

NOTMAN
PASTURE SEEDS

Late, leafy, annual ryegrass



Don Campbell Memorial Tour Showcases

30 Years Strong: GippsDairy marks a milestone

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Beyond the farm gates, participants also enjoyed Tasmania's scenery and local attractions, adding another dimension to the experience.

Leadership development remained a core focus throughout the tour. Participants took responsibility for formally thanking each host for their time and openness, and they facilitated reflective discussions between farm visits, encouraging shared learning and deeper engagement with the insights gained.

A standout social highlight of the week was a trivia night held in collaboration with the local Tasmanian Young Dairy Network (YDN). The evening provided an opportunity for participants to connect with

their Tasmanian peers, exchange experiences and enjoy a relaxed break from the structured tour program.

The tour was proudly supported by DeLaval, whose sponsorship helped make the 2026 Don Campbell Memorial Tour possible and ensured participants could access a diverse and well rounded program.

The 2026 Don Campbell Memorial Tour ultimately offered a powerful blend of education, industry engagement and leadership growth. It strengthened connections across regions, showcased the depth of innovation within the Tasmanian dairy industry and helped build confidence and capability among Gippsland's emerging dairy leaders.



By Karen McLennan – GippsDairy

From humble beginnings in 1996, GippsDairy is celebrating 30 years. We have been dipping back into the milk vat of history and hoping to share a number of stories and achievements with you throughout this year.

GippsDairy was incorporated in April 1996. Industry stalwarts involved at the time GippsDairy commenced include; Don Campbell (first GippsDairy Board Chair), Graeme Anderson (first GippsDairy Deputy Chair), Jakob Malmo, John Gallienne, Sandra Jefford (first GippsDairy Executive Officer), Barrie Bardsley and many others. Compared to the rich history of dairy in Gippsland since the late 1800s, GippsDairy could still be considered a teenager.

Dairying in Gippsland took off in the late 19th century, as European settlers cleared land for agriculture and recognised the region's natural advantages; rich soils, reliable rainfall, and a mild climate. Early farms were small and labour intensive, with milk processed locally into butter and cheese to supply nearby towns and Melbourne.

The establishment of local butter and cheese factories in the late 1800s and early 1900s was a turning point. These factories allowed farmers to pool milk, improve quality, and reach wider markets. Many Gippsland towns grew around these early processing hubs.

The industry expanded rapidly through the early 20th century, particularly following soldier settlement schemes after World War I and World War II. Returned servicemen were allocated land, and dairy farming became a key pathway for families to establish themselves in the region.

A major boost came with the development of irrigation, especially the Macalister Irrigation District, which supported more consistent pasture growth and higher milk production. This helped Gippsland cement its reputation as one of Victoria's most productive dairy regions. From the 1960s onwards, Gippsland dairying continued to modernise. Farms gradually became larger and more specialised, embracing new technologies in milking, pasture management, genetics, and animal health.

While the industry has faced challenges including price volatility, climate pressures, and changing global markets Gippsland dairy farmers have built a strong reputation for adaptability and innovation.

GippsDairy is one chapter in 130 years of dairy history in Gippsland. We look forward to bringing you the stories on how GippsDairy has influenced and impacted the Gippsland and national dairy industries during the last 30 years.

If you have a story you would like to share, or to call out a key achievement of GippsDairy (through a program, board or staff member) from the last 30 years, please make contact. We are aiming to acknowledge all who have contributed to where GippsDairy is today, especially uncovering the not so well-known accomplishments.

MORE INFORMATION

Contact GippsDairy Office on (03) 5624 3900



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Forage Value Index

By John Penry – Former Principal Scientist Dairy Australia

The Forage Value Index, or FVI, was first introduced by Dairy Australia in 2017. It was the result of collaboration between DA and Dairy NZ and has also been influenced by science from Teagasc in Ireland.

The intent of the FVI is to assist dairy farmers and their advisers make evidence-based decisions on profitable ryegrass variety selection, based on independent trials across many dairying regions. The trial partner for the FVI is the Pasture Trials Network with representation from all seed companies offering ryegrass varieties in Australia.

Each year, in February, FVI Tables for perennial, annual and Italian ryegrass are published for the three dairying regions of Victoria in addition to other locations. The tables rank the varieties principally based on seasonal dry matter yield, with an associated economic value plus nutritive value for perennial ryegrass. The five seasons described in the tables are summer, autumn, winter, early spring and late spring.

One of the important features of the FVI is that all trial data, both

recent and historic, for each variety detailed in the tables are used so the estimate of ryegrass performance is based on every piece of independent trial data we have. The analytical method of using this data makes the estimate of ryegrass performance robust. For a variety to be included in the FVI table they have to have a set minimum number of trials that reach a satisfactory conclusion. For perennial ryegrass, this represents a trial running successfully across 3 years. All FVI tables are easily located on the DA website by heading to “feeding and farm systems” and then “pastures”.

Dairy HIGH 2 farmlet study nearing completion in Tasmania
For the past four financial years, one of the largest farmlet based studies undertaken in Australia has been conducted at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture research farm in Elliot. The initial year involved setting up the irrigated farmlets (four at 8Ha each) and the full lactation experiment is now in its third year. Farmlet research involves the testing of system questions in “mini-farms” where the full interaction and effect of all aspects of a dairy farm system can be evaluated and compared. The farmlets were based on 4 varying systems level approaches to feedbase and fertiliser as summarised in this figure:

Dairy HIGH 2 – Treatments

Farmlet (8 x 0.92 ha)	N (annual), SR	Pasture composition (% on a DM basis)
1	300 kg N/ha 3.94 cows/ha	80% grasses (perennial ryegrass) 20% legumes (white clover)
2	150 kg N/ha 3.94 cows/ha	80% grasses (perennial ryegrass) 20% legumes (white clover)
3	150 kg N/ha 3.94 cows/ha	40% grasses (perennial ryegrass) 30% legumes (white clover) 30% herbs (plantain)
4	0 kg N/ha 3.00 cows/ha	40% grasses • 20% summer-active tall fescue • 10% perennial ryegrass • 5% summer-active cocksfoot • 5% brome 30% legumes • 30% clover (white, red, strawberry) 30% herbs (plantain & chicory)

Each farmlet can be considered a “treatment” with the combination of agronomy, change in agronomy over time and N fertiliser being the basis for each treatment. The responses measured, over three completed lactations, have been a combination of per cow performance, per Ha performance and economic performance at the farmlet level, as well as several agronomic measures including pasture production and consumption and botanical composition changes.

In addition to the main study, a soil health and function additional study was placed alongside the main farmlet work to assess changes in soil function on each farmlet over the four-year life of the work. One of the early results from the study has been the substantial change in botanical composition of the pasture sward in Farmlets 3 and 4. The white clover composition in all farmlets was above target in year 1 but has declined gradually as the ryegrass component becomes more dominant in years 2 and 3. Still there is a strong clover component left



in all 4 farmers in year 2 though. However the Plantain (herb) aspect quickly declined to minimal levels in F3 and F4 quite early on in the study.

Final results from this significant study should be published soon after June this year. They are assured to be of interest for all Gippsland farmers considering their pasture species mix long term along with supporting fertiliser approach.

MORE INFORMATION

Monthly updates from the team at TIA on this project can be found by scanning this QR code



CalfWays: Building stronger beef from dairy pathways



By Andy Hancock, Dairy Australia

CalfWays is an industry led initiative focused on improving outcomes for dairy born calves not required as replacements for the milking herd.

The program supports the development of practical and profitable beef from dairy pathways through resources, case studies and real world projects that enhance calf care, build value and strengthen market confidence across the supply chain.

Project updates

In the Alpine Valleys, a producer led pilot project is underway to establish an economically sustainable and trusted beef from dairy pathway for local dairy businesses. Since commencing, the project has progressed through several important foundational activities, including a site visit to the Teys Jindalee Feedlot in February 2026. This visit provided valuable insight into a successful beef from dairy collaboration model operating at scale. With strong engagement from both producers and industry partners, the project remains on track for completion by June 2026 and continues to lay the groundwork for a transparent, scalable and commercially viable pathway for the region.

In Tasmania, a retrospective economic analysis is being conducted on a large seasonal dairy farm to better understand the role of a beef from dairy enterprise within the overall farm system. The project aims to assess the impact of this enterprise on whole farm profitability, including interactions with the milking operation. Insights from this work will help optimise the study farm’s enterprises and provide valuable learnings that can be applied across similar dairy systems common in Tasmania and other regions.

Stay connected with CalfWays

The CalfWays website is now live at calfways.com.au, bringing together the latest information on the initiative. The site features updates on projects, upcoming events, news, resources and case studies. You can also sign up to receive the quarterly CalfWays newsletter via the website to stay informed about progress and opportunities across the program.

Get involved

Organisations interested in being part of CalfWays are encouraged to visit the website to explore ways to get involved. Opportunities include becoming an endorsing organisation, supporting the CalfWays program, or collaborating directly on projects that contribute to improved beef from dairy outcomes.

WORKFORCE

Designing Your Team for Business Success

By Jackie Aveling, GippsDairy

Your people are one of the biggest drivers of success on your farm. The skills, experience and attitude of your team have a direct impact on production, workplace culture, staff wellbeing and overall farm performance. Taking a bit of time to plan how you find, support and develop your team can really pay off in the long run.

Before you advertise your next position, it’s worth stepping back and thinking about what skills your business needs now – and what you might need into the future. Being clear about this helps you write job ads that attract the right people and set clear expectations from day one.

Dairy Australia has some practical tools to help. One option is the Enlight self assessment tool, which potential employees can complete as part of their application. This gives you early insight into a candidate’s skills, experience and approach to learning before they even start.

Another valuable tool is the Dairy Capability Guide. This guide helps you understand where each team member sits across the different tasks and responsibilities on your farm. It makes it easier to spot skill gaps and have constructive conversations about what development might look like next. Once gaps are identified, you can work together to create a simple development plan with clear goals and timeframes. Development doesn’t have to be complicated – it often works best when it includes a mix of:

- On farm mentoring and coaching
- Gradually increasing responsibility and hands on experience
- Formal training courses, including those offered by Dairy Australia

When staff know what’s expected and can see that you’re invested in their development, it builds trust, improves engagement and strengthens your farm culture.

For existing team members, working through the Dairy Capability Guide can be a real eye opener. It helps them see new opportunities on farm, build confidence, develop leadership skills and take on roles they might not have considered before can help you build a stronger, more capable team – and a more successful dairy business.

If you’re looking to move your business forward, focusing on the following can help:

- Identifying skill gaps
- Selecting the right people
- Providing targeted training and development

MORE INFORMATION

If you’d like help using any of these tools, please get in touch with one of our Farm Engagement Leads:

- David Morgan – South Gippsland | 0401 425 708
- Jackie Aveling – other Gippsland regions | 0474488750

Australia-European Union Free Trade Agreement: What it means for dairy farmers

By Karl Ellis – Dairy Australia

After nearly a decade of discussions, Australia and the European Union concluded negotiations on their Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on 24 March 2026. The FTA is the last major FTA to be secured with one of Australia's key trading partners and Government has highlighted that it will deliver significant economic benefits. However, the deal has always presented significant risks for dairy.

Across not only trade but all policy issues, the Australian Dairy Industry Council, consisting of Australian Dairy Farmers and the Australian Dairy Products Federation leads the advocacy effort for the dairy industry. Dairy Australia (DA) plays an important support role, by providing technical expertise and industry data to help inform industry advocacy positions and advise Government of opportunities and risks brought about by different agreements with trading partners. The work on trade policy is led by Karl Ellis, Manager – Economic Sustainability and Competitiveness, within the Sustainable Dairy group, led by Susannah Tymms – GM Sustainable Dairy.

DA has been heavily engaged on the EU FTA since negotiations commenced in 2018, though we've been pushing back on the introduction of Geographical Indications for the last 20 years in international organisations (UN Food and Agriculture Organisation) and pushed back against the introduction of EU style GI systems into some of our key export markets (e.g. Japan, South Korea, Singapore) which varying degrees of success.

While DA doesn't lobby or advocate to Government Ministers, we do regularly engage with officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Agriculture, to ensure they have industry information at hand and understand the industry dynamics to assist them in the negotiation process.

The final outcome reached in the FTA reflects the inherent challenge of negotiating with the European Union, a dominant global dairy producer that provides significant domestic support to its farmers.

On Geographical Indications, DA analysed the Australian production of at-risk cheese names (e.g. Parmesan, Feta, Gruyere), identified potentially impacted manufacturers and quantified a cost to industry if a full EU style regime was imposed. This information has been used by industry advocacy groups and provided directly to Government and has significantly assisted the Australian negotiators to pursue an outcome which carries as little cost to industry as possible.

A key win in the FTA is the outcome for Australian cheese makers to retain the use of the term "Parmesan," while those already producing cheeses like "Feta" can continue to do so. This avoids unnecessary rebranding costs and preserves the value of established products.

However, the market access outcomes are not balanced. Australia will fully liberalise its dairy market to EU imports within three years, increasing competition domestically. In contrast, access into the EU will remain constrained, with tariff-rate quotas continuing to apply to products such as skim milk powder, butter and high-protein whey. This limits the scale of potential export gains.

For farmers, this means a more competitive domestic market, particularly in higher-value categories. Despite these constraints, the agreement provides some benefits. It reduces tariffs across a wide range of products entering the EU and strengthens Australia's presence in a high-value global market. Over time, this could support stronger demand for Australian dairy.

The focus now turns to fully understanding the impact of these new settings and strengthening the reputation of Australian dairy at home and abroad.

Young Dairy Network leadership update

By Jessica Blackstock – GippsDairy



Mikayla Killeen

The Young Dairy Network (YDN) has recently seen several changes across its Local Area Committee (LAC), along with an exciting transition in leadership.

We're pleased to welcome Mikayla Killeen as the new YDN Chair. Mikayla brings strong energy, experience and a genuine passion for supporting young people across the dairy industry, and we look forward to her leadership as YDN continues to grow.

We would also like to sincerely thank Sarah Kelly for her time and dedication as Chair of YDN. Sarah has made a significant contribution to the network during her leadership, and we're pleased that she will remain on the committee as a general member, continuing to support YDN and its activities.

We also farewell several valued LAC members who have recently stepped down from their roles:

- Peta Dorrity – MID representative
- Tom Glen – South Gippsland representative
- Alex Boileau – West Gippsland representative

YDN would like to thank Peta, Tom and Alex for their time, commitment and valuable contributions to the network. Their involvement has helped strengthen connections and opportunities for young people across Gippsland's dairy regions.

Interviews will soon be held with applicants for the vacant LAC positions, so keep an eye out for introductions to the new members once appointments are finalised.

Looking ahead, the YDN committee is currently working on the YDN events calendar for the next financial year. If you have ideas or suggestions for events or topics you'd like to see included, please contact Jess Blackstock at: jessica.russell@gippsdairy.com.au or reach out to any of the current YDN committee members.

We look forward to what's ahead and continuing to support young dairy people across Gippsland.

Dairy industry mobilising to respond to supply and price issues

By Dairy Australia

Dairy Australia is working closely with the broader dairy industry to respond to fuel and fertiliser supply and pricing challenges, supporting farmers during a period of ongoing uncertainty.

Ongoing tensions in the Middle East are impacting global supply chains, with flow-on effects being felt across Australian dairy farms. Fuel supply constraints and rising fertiliser prices continue to be reported across Australia, as global market disruption and increased demand place pressure on availability. These impacts are expected to continue for some time.

In response, Dairy Australia has activated its Issues Management Framework to ensure a coordinated and consistent industry response across the dairy supply chain. We are working closely with Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF), the Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF) and governments to identify on-farm impacts of supply chain disruptions and ensure farmer needs are clearly understood and supported.

Broader industry engagement is underway through national coordination and advocacy efforts. This includes participation by ADF, ADPF and Dairy Australia in discussions through the Federal Government's National Coordination Mechanism, as well as industry representation at the Minister's Agriculture Fuel Supply Roundtable. In parallel, whole of agriculture advocacy is being led through peak farming bodies, calling for government recognition of the potential impacts on food production and regional communities.



What's Driving Gippsland's Production Recovery?

By Madelyn Irvine – Dairy Australia

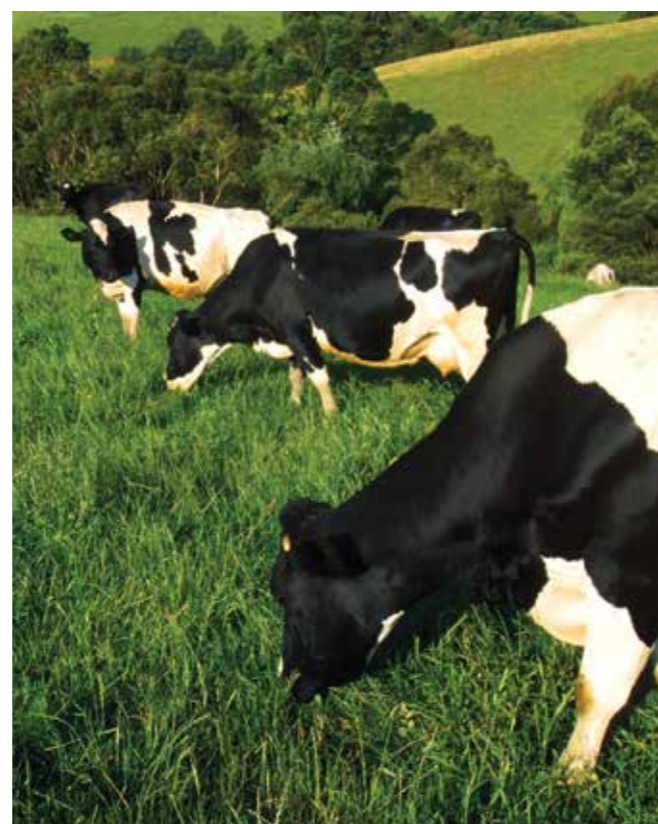
Once again, Australian agriculture remains at the mercy of weather conditions. After milk flows in Gippsland struggled through much of 2025, production turned in December, with the region now recording year-on-year growth for three consecutive months; a run not seen since late 2024.

Digging deeper, performance has varied across the region. East Gippsland has recorded year-on-year growth throughout this season, while the Macalister Irrigation District has seen growth emerge in recent months. Central Gippsland has remained relatively steady, while production in South and West Gippsland has been down.

Rainfall and water availability appear to be key drivers of these differences. Improved precipitation and resulting soil moisture have likely supported pasture growth in eastern areas, underpinning higher production. Meanwhile, below average rainfall across parts of western and southern Gippsland has been a constraint. Rootzone soil moisture rankings in East Gippsland have been above average, with absolute soil moisture at 38% in March, compared with 24% in South Gippsland.

Irrigation has also played an important role, with around one-third of Gippsland milk production sourced from the Macalister Irrigation District. Lake Glenmaggie storage volumes have tracked above year ago levels since July 2025, and water deliveries in the district have remained above the five-year average in every month so far this calendar year.

While improved conditions have supported some recovery in Gippsland milk production, longer-term momentum remains highly dependent on rainfall and irrigation availability.



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Hoofing around Gippy town



SAVE THE DATE

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
Wednesday 20-22 May	Raising the Roof	Shepparton
Sunday 14 June	Japan Dairy Farm Study Tour	Japan

GIPPSDAIRY EVENTS – MAY TO JUNE 2026

Thursday 7, 14 & 21 May	Dairy Farm Business Analysis	Traralgon
Thursday 7 & 14 May	Milking and Mastitis Management – West Gippsland	Drouin
Tuesday 12 May	Cash, Costs and Margins – MID	Sale
Wednesday 13 May	Healthy Hooves – Yarram	Yarram
Wednesday 13 May	YDN: Building Financial Confidence	Morwell
Tuesday 19 May	YDN: First Aid Certificate	Traralgon
Wednesday 20 May	Managing People	Online
Thursday 21 & 28 May	Milking and Mastitis Management - MID	Tinamba
Wednesday 27 May	Euthanise Livestock Training – Orbost	Bairnsdale
Wednesday 3 June	West Gippsland Yarra Valley Discussion Group: Farm Audit Essentials	Nilma North
Thursday 4 June	MID Discussion Group: Drenches, Vaccinations and Minerals	Nambrok
Wednesday 10 June	Making Our Farms Safer: Practical Workshop	Tinamba
Thursday 11 June	2IC Program	Churchill
Tuesday 16 June	YDN: Smart Systems for Sustainable Dairying	Nyora
Thursday 18 & 25 June	Rearing Healthy Calves – South Gippsland	South Gippsland

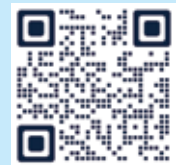
Upcoming events

Scan the QR code or visit:
dairyaustralia.com.au/gippsdairy
 for our full calendar of upcoming events.



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.



GIPPSDAIRY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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