

# Dairy Diary

March / April 2019

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW E-NEWS

Pretty sure I wasn't the only one lying in bed awake a week before last, waiting for the rain to come ....felt like a kid on Christmas Eve again! Things have been damp for a week now and with dry weather for the next week to 10 days, more wet is scheduled and will come. things should start to lift a bit before winter gets here. Fingers crossed.

Of course with the long awaited rain we also have to put a few other things back on the radar to watch out for, we will go into these in a moment.

As I have been heading around the traps pregnancy testing cattle, it has been a common theme that people are planning ahead and taking action to minimize the impact on the cow herd. Having a dry season will result in a drop in milk production. Rather than try and eek out every last milk solid, the emphasis has to be on maintaining the engine room so when things pick up you can start smoking it again. From what I have seen and heard people have been quick to drop to once a day, dry off low producing cows, pregnancy test early and get rid of empties, and securing extra feed for winter as they chip into winter feed on hand.

So far the pregnancy testing has been going pretty well. Definitely an improvement on last year which shouldn't be a surprise given the largely improved spring period. Our twice a day herds are sitting around a 13% empty average and the once a day herds are around 9%.

## What's coming up for this season

We hopefully will get a good Autumn flush when the rain eventually comes. Some things to start thinking about are:

- Lepto vaccinating your herd
- Drying off—Book your Dry Cow Consultation with Joe now and have everything ready.
- Worm your stock - recommended by Joe, to use a combo drench (Boss, Eclipse)



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## Facial Eczema Monitoring

As we have discussed earlier, this year spore counts have been very low owing to the low moisture levels on all but irrigated pasture. That could change if we get good rain in the next couple of weeks. Keeping an eye on our monitor farms spore counts is a good start, however variations occur from paddock to paddock let alone between different properties. If you have a history or are concerned/interested get stuck in and do some of your own spore counts.

It can be hard to know what impact FE is actually having on our stock at the subclinical levels. Blood testing 20 ewes at the start or end of mating is a great way to establish whether or not the girls have been tickled up by a bit of FE. We have a look for elevated liver enzymes and can then compare that to trials where they have tracked it through compared to scanning performance. In the past when I have done these we have identified properties where either no outward or very minor outward signs in the ewe flock have actually had significant impact on their mating performance – good to know when weighing up the value of treating or not treating, spraying etc.

## Autumn Trace Elements

The autumn dry-off period is an ideal window of opportunity for trace element supplementation, ensuring your cows come through winter in excellent condition.

Do they need supplementation? What reserves do they have?

A blood test from a mob of 10 cows testing for B12 and selenium levels answers some of these questions.

Copper is another important trace element and deficiency is a known problem in winter due to stock being on brassica crops. Liver levels are the only way to accurately measure an animal's copper reserves accurately. Liver biopsies are easy and safe to do from a cross selection of up to 10 animals from the herd.

Also remembering it is a really good idea to also have bloods done for copper levels on your R1's and R2's pre and post winter grazing to prevent skeletal fragility in young stock due to poor copper levels.

## Young Stock Drenching—Beware of the Larval Tsunami

With the bit of rain we have had and the continuing warm weather the grass growth has been really impressive. What we can't see is the rapid development and emergence of the infective parasite larvae. They will have been in a holding pattern over the last 2 months, and there will likely be a mass emergence and challenge of infective larvae over the coming weeks. Now is a great time to switch from oral drenches in our young stock to a double combination pour on / injection. Boss and Eclipse are both very good product choices.

The benefit of a pour on double combo over and above an oral combo is that we will get a couple of weeks persistent activity and protection for our young stock against the incoming larvae—these are the little bug-gers that do a lot of damage and can massively impact on growth rates.

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