

How Now Gippy Cow



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FEEDBASE AND ANIMAL NUTRITION

Pasture 365 Project



Agriculture Victoria scientist surveying the botanical composition of a Pasture 365 experimental plot at Ellinbank SmartFarm.

By Agriculture Victoria

Pasture 365 is a research project aiming to find forage mixes that could potentially provide feed for all 365 days of the year.

Agriculture Victoria is measuring whether species-diverse pastures can grow feed all year round to negate the summer-autumn feed gap.

Getting the mix of grasses, legumes, herbs, brassicas, and cereals right, has the potential to increase productivity for farmers with grazing animals across all livestock sectors.

Agriculture Victoria teams conducting the research at the Ellinbank and Hamilton SmartFarms include; agronomists, animal nutritionists, experts in water movement and soil nutrients, plus on-ground practitioners.

Why Pasture 365 is an important project

Farmers of grazing animals in temperate southern Australia often experience an annual summer-autumn feed gap, where supplementary feed is needed off-farm.

This tends to occur in most pasture-based systems, usually where there are perennial monocultures that are typically ryegrass-based. During dry periods such as summer into early autumn, these pastures perform poorly resulting in a feed gap. Under future climate scenarios, the duration and severity of dry periods are predicted to increase requiring forward-thinking solutions to reduce feeding gaps.

CONTINUED OVER

VATBUSTER

NOTMAN
PASTURE SEEDS

Base AR37, 4Front NEA, Reward Endo5, Matrix plus Clovers



Pasture 365 Project

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Pasture 365 experimental plot at Ellinbank SmartFarm.



Pasture 365 experimental plot at Ellinbank SmartFarm.

Traditionally, farmers purchase off-farm feeds or design containment feeding strategies to maintain livestock productivity. If homegrown feed bases fail it can result in destocking, increased financial costs, and negative wellbeing impacts for farmers. That's why designing multi-species pastures able to grow feed all year round is highly important for the agriculture industry.

How the project will benefit food producers

Based on a robust and innovative experimental design, the extent of the trials ensures multispecies pasture systems are tested under an expansive range of control systems, climate, and soil conditions under varied management.

Grazing animal farmers will be able to apply learnings produced by the research project and may provide farmers with practical science-based strategies.

Implementing appropriate multispecies pasture mixes suitable to their environment that are resilient to changing climate conditions and have potential to grow all year round.

Experimental plots at Ellinbank SmartFarm

The multispecies pastures selected for the project were informed by a co-design process including farmers, Traditional Owners, and agronomists.

Ellinbank SmartFarm is investigating four different multispecies combinations. Each combination has an assigned N fertiliser regime based on the nitrogen-fixing capacity of the species mixes planted.

In addition, the project is also investigating the inclusion of native and annual species, in some of the mixes being tested.

Project partners

The research is a national initiative, with long-term experimental sites in Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia.

Comparable studies are being run by our partners, who are sowing multispecies mixes. Including South Australian Research and

Development Institute, Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, The University of Western Australia, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development Western Australia. It is anticipated that multispecies mixes will differ according to the environment they are being tested. The aim is to develop multispecies options best suited to local conditions such as rainfall.

Satellite sites are also being run across participating states where individual farmers implement a single multispecies mixture.

Pasture 365 is a 5-year research project that started in 2023 funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Future Drought Fund.

How to get involved

Farmers are invited to contribute to the project through large paddock-scale sowings. Up to five satellite farms are currently being sought in Gippsland and Western Victorian regions to sow with a demonstration multispecies pasture.

This project is aiming to increase the ability to assess the effectiveness of multispecies pasture mixes, reducing or eliminating feed gaps and providing producers a chance to see how these multispecies pasture systems perform on their own land.

Participating farmers are being invited to complete an optional survey about the importance of reliable pastures to their personal wellbeing and business outlook.

MORE INFORMATION

Interested in becoming a Pasture 365 satellite site? Contact Craig Butler: craig.butler@agriculture.vic.gov.au. Farms to be selected by Autumn 2025. For more information about Pasture 365, contact Craig Butler: craig.butler@agriculture.vic.gov.au.



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GippsDairy Board update

By Karen McLennan (GippsDairy)
and Sarah O'Brien (GippsDairy Board Chair)

The GippsDairy Board recently held another successful AGM and Farmer and Industry Dinner at the Tinamba Hotel. The partnership efforts of GippsDairy staff and dairy farmers for recent projects were celebrated, and changes in board members were shared.

The Board farewelled farmer Director Jessica Knight (farming in the MID region), after a three-year term on the board. Jessica's valued contributions included; Chair of the Major Events Subcommittee to plan the 2024 on-farm Muster, input to ensure a strong and thriving Gippsland Young Dairy Network, and a passion for leadership in the industry and guidance to the Board in areas of regulation and compliance. We wish Jessica well as she continues to positively influence the dairy industry through other leadership opportunities.

The Board welcomes farmer Director, Raelene Hanratty. Raelene is from the MID and is no stranger to a director role, occupying current and previous board roles in health, not for profit organisations, sporting associations, as well as regionally based government committees.

Ken Lawrence (Farmer Director and Deputy Chair from Jindivick), Peter Fort and Martin Fuller (both Specialist Directors) have been reappointed to 3-year board terms. Sarah O'Brien remains Board Chair (MID farmer), Mick Fuller as Public Officer and Secretary (Inverloch farmer), and Lisa Broad (Farmer Director from Wonthaggi), Tony Platt (Specialist Director), and Aaron Thomas (Farmer Director from Won Wron) make up the nine-director board.

Over recent months, the GippsDairy Board has been setting the 2024-25 budget and staffing levels, supporting the GippsDairy team in launching an annual calendar of extension delivery, planning the next GippsDairy Muster event for April 2025, and consolidating service delivery in a constrained budget environment. For 2024-25, the GippsDairy Board has paused the allocation of new grant funding through the grants policy established in 2023. This will be reviewed when setting the 2025-26 budget. The Board is dedicated to fulfilling grant projects that are already underway.



We welcome our new farmer Director, Raelene Hanratty, to the Board.



The GippsDairy Board farewells farmer Director Jessica Knight.

One of the Board's main priorities is to ensure a vibrant future for Gippsland's dairy industry. The Board has provided considered input into the development of a National Extension Practice Plan by Dairy Australia, had representation in the development of the Southern Rural Water Macalister Fresh Strategy, and is the funds holder on behalf of the Gippsland Dairy Industry Leadership Group for the development of a 10-year Gippsland Dairy Industry Strategy. The consultation process for the development of this strategy will also inform the development of the Dairy Australia 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.

All GippsDairy board members aim to be visible at events and initiatives across the Gippsland region, feel free to approach them with ideas or feedback at any time.

MORE INFORMATION

For a copy of the 2024-25 GippsDairy Extension Calendar, contact the GippsDairy office on **03 5624 3900** or **info@gippsdairy.com.au**, or speak to any of our team members at our upcoming events.

Congratulations

to all the Gippsland dairy farmers that have been awarded a
2024 Australian Milk Quality Award

Scan the QR code to view the full list of national winners



Making agriculture more accessible



By Zoe Carter, GippsDairy

Life doesn't always deal us the hand we desire and for many individuals with disabilities or impairments, the physically demanding nature of work in dairy can create barriers that prevent them from pursuing their passions in the industry. Yet with thoughtful adjustments and innovative solutions, we can create pathways that empower these individuals to turn their aspirations into fulfilling careers in dairy.

In Australia, approximately 4.4 million people are living with disabilities, encompassing a wide range of conditions. These can include physical impairments that limit mobility, visual or hearing challenges, speech difficulties, or cognitive limitations. Despite this significant population, only 1.8% of people with disabilities are employed in the agricultural sector and the figures for areas like dairy are even lower. This underrepresentation raises an important question: how can we make agriculture more accessible and inclusive for those with disabilities?

One of the major factors influencing accessibility in agriculture is the equipment used on farms. By reevaluating our tools and machinery, we can make significant strides in inclusivity. For instance, replacing two-wheeled vehicles with four-wheeled options can provide greater stability and ease of use for individuals with mobility challenges. Similarly, transitioning from manual to automatic machinery or work vehicles can simplify operation and boost confidence among those who may feel hindered by physical limitations. Advancements in GPS technology and the design of tractors can enhance accessibility, allowing individuals to operate machinery with greater independence. Making these adjustments can help bridge the gap for those who aspire to engage with farming but may feel held back by their physical capabilities.

To further promote accessibility, it's essential to minimize the physical strain involved in on-farm tasks for not only those with disabilities or impairments but to aid all workers. This can be achieved by investing in equipment that alleviates the burden of heavy lifting. Electric lifts, specialized machinery, and trollies allow workers to transport materials safely without risking injury.

Ergonomically designed tools can also play a pivotal role. For example, using handles that reduce strain or tools that require less force can make everyday tasks more manageable. These small changes can have a big impact on an individual's ability to work effectively and confidently on the farm.

Another critical aspect of making agriculture more accessible is offering tailored training programs. By identifying roles that suit the skills and capabilities of individuals with disabilities, we can create opportunities that allow them to thrive. For instance, workers might benefit from training in areas such as genetics, pasture maintenance, artificial insemination, property management or administrative tasks.

Investing in upskilling and providing specialized training can empower individuals to contribute meaningfully to their workplaces in dairy while pursuing their interests.

Creating an inclusive agricultural environment goes beyond equipment and training; it requires a cultural shift within the industry. Encouraging open dialogue about accessibility and disability can foster understanding and promote collaboration among all workers.

By taking proactive steps to make agriculture more accessible for individuals with disabilities, we can unlock the potential of a significant portion of our population. From rethinking equipment and reducing physical strain to providing tailored training and fostering an inclusive culture, every effort counts in creating a more equitable agricultural sector.



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Your Farm, Your Legacy and Your Future



By Davina Warman, RFCS Gippsland

Planning is in every aspect of our lives, and as we creep towards a new chapter, the better we plan for it, the more control we have over our future. Everything we do in life has a plan; a dietary plan, students have a study plan, football coaches have a game plan, and many of us write out a daily plan to help keep focused. But it is surprising how many people run a business without having a business plan, and even fewer have a retirement or succession plan, which is often the most important plan of all.

Succession planning is more than just passing on the farm; it's about securing your legacy and shaping the future of your farm business. As a farmer, you've invested years of hard work, dedication, and passion to nurture your land, and to build your farm business. Now, it's time to ensure that your efforts continue to bear fruit for generations to come.

A well-crafted succession plan acts as a roadmap for the future of your farm. It outlines how management and ownership will transition, typically from one generation to the next. This plan is crucial even if you don't have a clear successor in mind, as it helps "disaster-proof" your business against unexpected events like sudden resignations, retirements, or other unforeseen circumstances that could have huge implications for your farm, your legacy and your future. This proactive approach not only safeguards your business but can also provide an opportunity to shape the future narrative of your farm business.

When developing a succession plan, consider these key components:

- 1. Clear Vision and Goals:** Define your vision for the farm's future and set specific, measurable goals that encompass both short-term and long-term objectives.
- 2. Financial Analysis:** Conduct a thorough assessment of your farm's financial position. This includes current asset valuations, cash flow projections, debt analysis, retirement income needs, and capital requirements for business growth.
- 3. Management Transfer Strategy:** Outline how management responsibilities will be transferred. Identify key roles and responsibilities and create a timeline for transferring decision-making authority.
- 4. Ownership Transfer Plan:** Determine how farm assets will be transferred. Options may include gifting, selling assets, or using trusts or company structures for distribution of future earnings.

- 5. Risk Management:** Identify potential risks to the succession plan and develop strategies to mitigate them through insurance policies or contingency plans.
- 6. Communication Strategy:** Establish open lines of communication among family members involved in the farm. Regular family meetings can help address concerns and align expectations.
- 7. Legal and Tax Considerations:** Consult with legal and financial professionals to ensure that your plan is legally sound and tax-efficient.

Remember that every farm and family situation is unique; therefore, tailor each step of this process to fit your specific circumstances.

While succession planning is crucial for farm longevity, it often presents challenges. These may include reluctance to discuss the future, balancing fairness with farm viability, generational differences in management styles, financial constraints, lack of a clear successor, and emotional attachment to the farm. Overcoming these hurdles requires open communication, willingness to compromise, and creative problem-solving. Solutions might involve gradual transitions, fair (rather than equal) asset distribution, and exploring alternative succession options by separating the farm business operations and ownership. Sometimes, having a third party not emotionally tied to the situation can help put perspective and provide professional guidance while alleviating stressors amongst the family, solving problems more effectively. By anticipating and addressing these challenges proactively, farmers can smooth the path to successful succession and secure their legacy.

It's never too early to start thinking about your farm's future and the legacy you wish to leave behind. By planning now, you're taking control of your farm business future narrative.

MORE INFORMATION

Are you ready to begin planning for your farm's future? Don't leave your legacy to chance. **Contact RFCS Gippsland today** for expert guidance tailored to your unique situation on **1300 045 747** or visit **rfcsgippsland.org.au** for more information on succession planning or book an appointment. Our experienced team is here to help you develop a succession plan that ensures a smooth transition and continued success for your agricultural enterprise. Your legacy deserves nothing less than careful consideration and planning!

Understanding and Managing Facial Eczema

By Shanky Sungroya, GippsDairy

Facial eczema is caused by cattle ingesting spores of the fungus *Pithomyces chartarum* through pastures. Once ingested, the fungus produces a toxin called sporidesmin in the gastrointestinal tract.

This toxin causes damage to the liver and mammary glands and leads to photosensitivity in animals. Infected cattle may develop red, swollen, and peeling skin, particularly around unpigmented areas like their face and udder. Early identification and preventative management of this condition is crucial for maintaining herd health.

Signs and symptoms of facial eczema

Facial eczema can have huge impacts on animal health. Symptoms may vary from mild to severe and can include:

- Cows becoming restless and seeking shade due to sensitivity to sunlight.
- Reddening, thickening, or peeling of unpigmented skin, particularly around the face, ears, and udder.
- Sudden drop in milk production (up to 50%).
- General signs of ill health, such as lethargy, loss of appetite, and weight loss.

Conditions that promote facial eczema

Facial eczema is of particular concern for Gippsland dairy farmers, as weather patterns create more favourable conditions for its occurrence. The disease is most prevalent in late summer and early autumn when warm, humid conditions are optimal for fungal sporulation. High spore counts (>80,000 spores/gram) in pasture are particularly dangerous, so it is essential to monitor environmental conditions closely.

Control and prevention strategies

Effective facial eczema management involves control and prevention strategies:

1. Pasture Spore Monitoring - Regular monitoring of pasture spore counts is vital during high-risk periods. The Facial Eczema Spore Monitoring Program is taking place again in 2024-2025, funded by GippsDairy and supported by Dairy Australia. This program monitors

pasture spore levels throughout high-risk regions during the risk period and allows for intervention as counts starts to rise.

If you would like to subscribe to the fortnightly spore monitoring report, please contact the GippsDairy office at info@gippsdairy.com.au or 5624 3900.

2. Zinc Supplementation - Zinc is a proven preventative measure for facial eczema if managed well, as it forms a complex with the sporidesmin toxin and prevents its ability to form oxygen free radicals and cause cell damage. Zinc also inhibits intestinal absorption of copper that catalyses the reaction. Zinc can be given via water, feed, or a bolus, but needs to be commenced 2-3 weeks before the expected high-risk period. It is important to follow veterinary guidance on timing and zinc dosing to avoid toxicity.

3. Pasture Management - Manage the build-up of soft litter by avoiding topping, manage pasture quality in late spring and avoid grazing below 4cm pasture height during the high-risk period to reduce spore intake and growth.

Alternative Forage - Feeding cows with alternative forage, such as silage or hay, during high-risk periods can also help to reduce grazing pressure and minimize exposure to spores.

4. Shade and Skin Care - Affected animals should have access to shade to prevent further skin damage due to sunlight exposure. In cases of severe skin irritation, topical treatments and supportive care may be necessary.

Facial eczema poses a significant threat to dairy herds, particularly in regions like Gippsland where environmental conditions can promote the growth of harmful fungal spores. By staying vigilant and implementing preventive measures, such as zinc supplementation and pasture management, farmers can protect their herds while still maintaining productivity during high-risk periods.

MORE INFORMATION

For detailed information on facial eczema visit: <https://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/animals/health-and-welfare/facial-eczema/resources>



Dairy Australia Scholarship Program



By Stacey Alfred, GippsDairy

Recently, a group of delegates from Japan visited the Gippsland region as part of Dairy Australia's Scholarship Program.

The program is an immersive technical training program for mid-tier dairy professionals in major dairy export markets. Each year, small groups of delegates are selected to visit Australia from China, Japan, and Southeast Asia. The scholarship ranges from classroom-style lectures, and practical workshops to visits to farms and processing facilities. Delegates learn about Australian dairy farming practices and connect with our dairy farmers and processors to better understand how we produce premium product.

This year, the group of 12 Japanese delegates visited Caldermeade farm and toured the Burra factory in Korumburra. They were joined by GippsDairy's Extension Team Lead Veronica McLeod and Farm Engagement Lead Jackie Aveling.

2024 marks the 25-year anniversary of the Scholarship Program in Japan and China, and 2025 will be 10th year in Southeast Asia. To celebrate this year's milestone, a 25th anniversary program for Japan and China was organised with the support of State and Federal funding. The program included industry seminars, product demonstration masterclasses, alumni dinners, and forums. Providing these opportunities to exchange insights helps to keep Australian dairy front of mind for the program alumni as we continue to foster strong, long-term relationships.

The key to the program's success is the alumni network that continues to maintain a link with the scholarship participants for years after they visited Australia. Having active advocates for the Australian dairy industry in key overseas markets brings with it a strong preference for Australian dairy, and invaluable market intelligence.



The program is also dependant on dairy farmers and processors opening their farms and businesses to showcase Australian dairy operations. Australian animal welfare practices, environmental care, and food safety are the key areas where we received positive feedback from scholarship delegates, along with the quality of our products.

In recent years when the Australian milk pool has been contracting, the scholarship and alumni program has amplified Australian dairy's presence in market when otherwise we may have been forgotten. Throughout the Covid 19 pandemic we continued to see ongoing support that the program delivered despite not being able to travel.

Within the program, there is an increasing focus on leveraging partnerships with others to generate better outcome and value. Whether it be Austrade, Global Vic, the Federal Department Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Counsellor network, the China Dairy Industry Association, dairy exporters or other Australian food and wine sectors, the Dairy Australia scholarship program is extremely well connected



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Wednesday 12 March – Thursday 13 March 2025	Herd '25	Bendigo

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Tony Platt	Specialist Director
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Wishing you a
Merry Christmas
from everyone at
GippsDairy!

Our office will be closed from Tuesday 24th December and reopening on Thursday 2nd January 2025.

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

Hay Report



Grain Report



Contact us 

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