

The Milk Flow

Winter edition – 2025



Dairy NSW board update to NSW dairy farmers

The start of the 2025/2026 season will be welcomed by many. For some, this is a chance to mark a fresh start following an extremely challenging finish to the 2024/2025 season and for others, a chance to maintain the momentum of positive conditions. The past twelve months have also been a busy time for Dairy NSW and, as we reflect, we are proud of the events and initiatives our team have driven.

Over the past twelve months, the Dairy NSW Board has proudly observed several key highlights that demonstrate the strength and momentum of our region. The successful completion of the Storm and Flood Industry Recovery Program, capably led by Carly Potts, marked a major milestone. It delivered strategic investment and meaningful outcomes for farmers recovering from extreme weather events over the past five years. Our transition to the Farm Engagement Lead team structure has further strengthened connections across the state, with many producers now benefiting from tailored plans aligned to their business goals and long-term sustainability. We're also excited by the rollout of new extension programs (such as the 2IC Development Initiative, calf disbudding workshops, and improved irrigation management training) bringing renewed focus, practical skills, and relevant learning opportunities to support the ongoing success of NSW dairy farms.

Whilst some regions have now moved into favourable seasonal conditions, I am acutely aware of the ongoing challenges in the flood affected areas of the Mid-North Coast and lower Hunter. Whilst recovery is underway, we acknowledge the many challenges still ahead for farmers in these regions. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of those involved in the flood recovery in these areas. In particular, our local team member Ali Briggs who has worked tirelessly to support recovery efforts in the region. As I wrote in snapshot some weeks ago, "while the conditions remain incredibly difficult, what stands out most is the resilience, generosity, and spirit of our dairy farming communities. Seeing how people have come together – to lend a hand, share resources, and support one another – fills me with pride and reinforces our commitment to keep moving forward with you."

June sadly saw us farewell Jane Bower from Dairy NSW. Jane has been a terrific contributor in the Hunter and Central West regions and will be dearly missed. Our loss is Regional Investment Corporation's gain, and we are glad that Jane will remain a familiar face to farmers through RIC.

Earlier this year, the Dairy NSW Board resolved to engage in formal preparation for regional evolution within Dairy Australia. This decision reflects our commitment to strengthening the alignment between national and regional delivery and to promote efficiency. We continue to diligently and thoroughly work through these proposed changes to ensure that the outcomes are in the best interest of farmers in the Dairy NSW region.

Dairy Australia recently farewelled Managing Director, David Nation after seven years in the role. We wish David all the best for his future and extend a warm welcome to Matthew Shaffer as the new CEO of Dairy Australia. With a strong background in agricultural leadership – most recently as CEO of DataGene – Matt brings valuable insight to help guide Dairy Australia through its next phase. His appointment comes at a pivotal time, as Dairy Australia embarks on a new five-year strategy.

The Dairy NSW team remains focused on delivering locally relevant programs across business planning, climate readiness, workforce development, animal care, and farm systems innovation. Our role is to support your ambitions and provide the tools and insights to ensure your success.

On behalf of the Board of Dairy NSW, thank you for your continued trust and engagement. We are proud to work with you – in recovery, in reinvestment, and in every season to come.

Andrew Smith
Chairperson, Dairy NSW Board

Dairy NSW spotlight

Meet Melissa Chittick

NSW dairy farmer and newest Dairy Australia Ambassador



Dairy Australia proudly welcomes Melissa Chittick to the national Ambassador Program as a third-generation dairy farmer, passionate advocate for the industry, and inspiring voice for modern Australian dairy.

Originally from the Shoalhaven and Gerringong regions of NSW, Melissa, together with her husband Tim and three young children now lead the operations of a progressive dairy farm in Cowra, in the Central West region of NSW. Melissa and Tim have driven the transformation of the farming business – successfully shifting from a traditional pasture-based system to a fully housed Total Mixed Ration (TMR) model. The couple brought 60 cows with them from Gerringong and have maintained a herd of 340 Holsteins, with a handful of Brown Swiss cows adding a personal touch – Melissa’s hobby and passion. Showing stud Holsteins has long been a big part of Melissa’s life, and now she’s enjoying passing on that love for dairying to the next generation.

With a professional background in Occupational Therapy, Melissa brings a unique perspective to the farm – balancing strategic leadership, hands-on care, and a passion for cattle health and genetics.

“The dairy industry and my family are my world,” she says. “Being part of the Ambassador Program gives me the chance to share our story and connect with others who are just as passionate.”

Melissa is a familiar face in dairy show rings and a strong advocate for youth involvement in agriculture. She believes cattle shows build community, foster the next generation, and spotlight the excellence of Australian dairy genetics. Melissa is also a vocal champion for women in dairy, determined to challenge stereotypes and elevate the visibility of women across all levels of farm business.

Whether she’s welcoming students to the farm, sharing insights on herd care, or enjoying early mornings with coffee in hand watching the cows, Melissa’s enthusiasm is contagious.

Her appointment to the Dairy Australia Ambassador Program reinforces a powerful message: leadership in dairy comes in many forms, and Melissa Chittick is leading with heart, drive, and a clear vision for the future.

Meet Mahlah Grey

NSW dairy farmer and champion for on-farm education



From her regenerative micro-dairy on the South Coast of New South Wales, Mahlah Grey is helping shape the future of Australian dairy – one cow, one conversation, and one scoop of gelato at a time.

Mahlah, together with her husband Kel and their three young daughters, runs *The Pines*

in Kiama, a sixth-generation family dairy farm milking just 26 cows. But size doesn’t limit impact. In fact, Mahlah’s passion for soil health, animal welfare, and creating thriving ecosystems has positioned their operation as a leading example of small-scale regenerative agriculture in action.

With a background in both Veterinary Science and teaching, Mahlah brings a unique perspective to dairy. Her decision to join the Dairy Australia Ambassador Program was driven by a desire to continue educating others about dairy – particularly through immersive, on-farm experiences – and to deepen her own understanding of the broader industry.

“I farm alongside my husband, Kel, and our three daughters as sixth-generation dairy farmers,” Mahlah says. “With a passion for regenerating soil, animal welfare and creating thriving ecosystems, I now work to share my knowledge through on-farm education and agri-tourism.”

Through *The Pines’* on-farm processing facility and produce store, the family not only sells handcrafted cheeses and gelato, but also invites the community into their daily rhythm – connecting consumers directly with the story of Australian dairy.

“Walking the cows down the laneway after morning milking, knowing that you’ve still got a busy day ahead, but taking time to make that first coffee with fresh milk... priceless,” Mahlah reflects.

As an Ambassador, Mahlah is proudly championing the role of farmers as educators, connectors, and stewards of land – and bringing warmth, authenticity, and purpose to the next generation of dairy conversations.



NSW Dairy poised to lead through a changing season

As Australia’s dairy industry steps into the 2025/26 season, New South Wales emerges as a standout – steady, strategic, and resilient. In a year defined by tightening margins, climatic pressure, and input volatility, the NSW dairy sector is demonstrating quiet leadership rooted in sound fundamentals and smart investment.

According to Dairy Australia’s *Mid-Year Situation and Outlook Report*, NSW is the only state forecast to record year-on-year milk growth, while national production is expected to decline by up to 2%, settling at 8.24 billion litres. National herd contraction and dry seasonal conditions have forced early drying-off across key southern regions. In contrast, irrigation access, on-farm consolidation, and stable herd numbers have helped NSW maintain momentum.

Over 90% of NSW dairy businesses plan to invest in the next two years, with capital focused on irrigation efficiency, cow comfort, infrastructure, and housing for workers. These are deliberate, future-focused moves – designed to build resilience, not just survive.

Of course, the road ahead isn’t without challenge. Water prices in the Murray Irrigation system are up nearly 500% year-on-year. Pasture hay prices have risen 21% in the Bega Valley and 18% on the North Coast. Fodder, fertiliser and labour markets remain tight. But NSW dairy continues to prepare, not retreat.

In retail, dairy is performing strongly. Consumption of milk, cheese, yoghurt and spreads all grew in the year to February 2025, driven by in-home use and digital discovery. NSW is well placed to respond, but must stay agile as trends evolve.

Take-home tips for NSW dairy farmers

- Review your risk exposure:** With climate and input volatility rising, revisit your cashflow, feed reserves, and water allocation strategies.
- Prioritise smart investment:** Capitalise on available funding to upgrade infrastructure that boosts long-term efficiency and resilience.
- Stay connected to markets:** Understand shifting consumer trends—protein-rich products, provenance, and sustainability sell.
- Benchmark your business:** Know where you stand on cost of production, herd performance and feed use efficiency.
- Lean on support:** Tap into Dairy Australia and regional resources, including advisory programs, situation outlooks, and local networks.

Visit dairyaustralia.com.au to read the full *Mid-Year Situation and Outlook Report*, and reach out to your local Dairy NSW team member to see how we can support you over the coming year.

Farmer Ambassadors drive pride and trust in our industry

Dairy farmers have long been one of the most trusted voices in the community – and Dairy Australia is helping ensure that voice is heard.

The Farmer Ambassador program, now in its sixth year, supports dairy farmers across Australia to proudly share their personal experiences and champion the value of the dairy industry. Whether it’s speaking at a school, taking part in a media campaign, or sharing on social media, Farmer Ambassadors play a vital role in building consumer trust and farmer-to-farmer confidence.

Recently, twelve passionate dairy farmers from across the country – including several from NSW – came together in Melbourne for the 2025 Farmer Ambassador Skills Forum. Over three days, they took part in practical sessions covering media training, presentation delivery, social media strategy, personality profiling, and shared leadership values.

Each ambassador receives tailored training, a suite of communication resources, and ongoing support through quarterly online sessions.

Over 12 months, ambassadors are expected to complete three workshops and promote the industry through at least four community or media engagements.

With more than 100 farmers now trained, the program is helping create a growing alumnus of positive, authentic spokespeople for Australian dairy.

If you’re proud of your role in dairy and want to help lead the conversation, the Farmer Ambassador program might be for you. For more information, email **Jess Phillips** at jess.phillips@dairyaustralia.com.au or reach out to your local Dairy NSW team member.



NSW dairy industry recovery from May 2025 flood catastrophe

In late May 2025, a stationary lowpressure system delivered unprecedented rainfall – up to 600mm over four days in some catchments – triggering the most destructive flooding ever recorded across NSW’s Mid North Coast and parts of the Lower Hunter region, including Taree, Kempsey, Dorrigo and Port Macquarie. The Manning River peaked at more than 6m, isolating over 50,000 people and resulting in five fatalities.

Impact on dairy farms

The flooding event delivered catastrophic impacts for dairy farming families. Torrential rainfall, river surges and prolonged isolation inundated properties, submerged pastures, and swept away herds. Many farmers lost animals, with livestock drowned or suffering from significant health impacts. Infrastructure was severely damaged – milking sheds, clean-in-place systems, laneways, feed stores and fencing were destroyed or rendered inoperable. Pastures remain waterlogged and contaminated, causing animal health challenges and limiting winter grazing.

Dairy emergency leadership group response

In response, Dairy NSW – alongside Dairy Australia, NSW DPIRD and other industry partners – mobilised rapidly to deliver meaningful, practical support. The Dairy Emergency Leadership Group (DELG) helped secure:

- A dedicated Dairy Liaison Officer in the State Emergency Control Centre.
- Veterinary support from local vets, Dr. Neil Moss and the University of Sydney team.
- Direct farm visits and contact from Dairy NSW and Dairy Australia staff.
- Emergency logistics including hay, woodchip, and lameness treatment.
- Regional mental health support visits from Andrew Cavill.
- Access to financial counselling and disaster recovery grant guidance.
- PiNDDA data collection advocacy to shape recovery funding.

Communications remain a priority, with a central resource hub on the Dairy NSW website promoting emergency services, recovery resources, herd health and farm business operations information, and emotional wellbeing support.

Our team members continue to visit farmers in the local region to develop a bespoke, long-term support plan – connecting them with Dairy Australia programs and services when they need them.

Technical & practical takehome tips for dairy farmers

- 1 **Biosecurity health checks:** Inspect and isolate sick or injured livestock (lepto and mastitis risk). Inspect feed brought in from new sources and consider limiting areas it is fed out.
- 2 **Secure fodder logistics:** Feed budget, and use transport subsidies to bring in hay/silage.
- 3 **Power contingencies:** Maintain generators or off-grid energy for milking.
- 4 **Fence audits:** Prioritise containment fencing in flood-prone zones.
- 5 **Insurance review:** Explore updated cover for flood-exposed assets.
- 6 **Agronomy support:** Work with Dairy NSW to guide pasture and soil recovery.
- 7 **Finances:** Assess cashflow, apply for grants where applicable and maintain communication with bank

Dairy NSW and Dairy Australia are committed to long-term recovery efforts and has a flood recovery advisory service in place. Affected farmers can access a range of consultants to support their recovery. Reach out to our team to see how we can support you with your disaster response and readiness planning.



Animal welfare remains a top priority for NSW dairy farmers

NSW dairy farmers see their animals every day – and that close connection puts animal health and welfare at the heart of every decision on farm.

Dairy Australia’s Sustainable Animal Care Manager, Andy Hancock, a qualified veterinarian based in Timboon, Victoria, leads a national team focused on delivering key initiatives under the Animal Care commitment of the Australian Dairy Sustainability Framework (ADSF). This includes work in priority areas such as animal health and welfare, surplus calf management, antimicrobial stewardship, biosecurity, and emergency animal disease (EAD) preparedness – all highly relevant to the daily realities of dairy farmers in NSW.

Through collaboration with regional teams like Dairy NSW, these national frameworks are implemented locally, ensuring farmers in NSW receive support, resources and education to continuously improve practices and meet evolving community expectations.

The ADSF, owned by the industry, showcases Australia’s commitment to producing high-quality, sustainable dairy. It includes four pillars: enhancing economic viability, improving wellbeing, providing best care for animals, and reducing environmental impact.

Dairy Australia’s work under the Animal Care commitment has already delivered results, including the industry-wide phase-out of tail docking and calving induction, and continues to evolve. Following a recent materiality assessment, new goals and targets have been approved, bringing stronger focus on biosecurity and surplus calf management.

For NSW farmers, this means:

- Enhanced biosecurity planning and EAD preparedness to protect market access and farm productivity.
- Support for the CalfWays roadmap, aiming to eliminate routine euthanasia of viable surplus calves and establish clear, valued market pathways by 2035.
- Continued emphasis on transparency and community engagement, helping to connect consumers with where their food comes from – and why Australian dairy is trusted globally.

Like all regions, NSW faces practical challenges around surplus calves – from fluctuating beef markets to labour and infrastructure limitations. NSW dairy farmers have however shown their willingness to adapt and innovate. With the right support and incentives, there are real opportunities to improve outcomes for calves, while supporting farm profitability and social licence.

Animal welfare remains a shared priority for Dairy Australia and NSW dairy farmers. Whether it’s improving herd health, planning for biosecurity threats, or navigating changes in market and consumer expectations, the focus is clear: practical, on-farm solutions that uphold world-class standards of care.

To learn more about how Dairy Australia supports animal health and welfare on NSW farms, visit: dairyaustralia.com.au/animals or connect with your local Dairy NSW team member.

Enhancing farm business management: Turning insights into practical support for NSW dairy farmers

Running a dairy farm in New South Wales today requires adaptability, forward planning and clear oversight of your business numbers. Whether it's navigating seasonal variability, managing rising input costs or responding to environmental challenges like floods or droughts, the ability to make informed decisions with confidence has never been more important.

At Dairy Australia, the Economics, Data and Insights team leads research and regional support initiatives focused on improving productivity, profitability and long-term resilience for farmers – including those across NSW. By providing data-driven tools, practical programs and economic insights tailored to dairy, we help farmers manage risk, assess performance and plan for the future.

Local insights informing practical support

Our work includes national surveys like the *Farm Business Management Report*, which captures data from 400 dairy farms – including many in NSW. The report helps shape resources and programs that are aligned with what's happening on the ground – from cash flow pressures and debt servicing to workforce planning and transition needs.

The latest findings are encouraging:

- 56% of farmers are now updating key financial data (like feed costs and milk income) at least monthly – up from 47% in 2022.
- More farmers are using profitability indicators like EBIT (62%) and Return on Total Assets (49%).
- 80% of farmers have some form of a business plan – though only 20% have documented it.

While these signs point to progress, there's still work to do – especially when it comes to writing down business and succession plans. A documented plan brings clarity, supports communication with advisers and family, and provides a guide in times of uncertainty.

NSW farmers can access a range of Dairy Australia programs and tools to support both day-to-day and strategic business management. These include:

- Dairy Cash Budgeting Tool – to forecast income and manage expenses
- Farm Business Snapshot – to assess financial position quickly
- Standard Chart of Accounts – to help align farm records with benchmarking
- Our Farm Our Plan – an in-depth planning program delivered in partnership with local Dairy NSW teams.

These tools are backed by local staff in NSW, who are available to guide you through using them and applying the insights on-farm. Through programs like the Dairy Business Support Services (DBSS) – currently available to NSW dairy businesses – farmers can also access free 1:1 support from experienced consultants in areas like business planning, budgeting, and transition.

For NSW dairy businesses – especially those recovering from recent climate events or looking to strengthen their business for the future – now is the time to make use of the support available. Taking a proactive, informed approach helps reduce stress, strengthen decision-making and build confidence in what's ahead.

Visit the Farm Business page at dairyaustralia.com.au or reach out to your local Dairy NSW team to find out more about how we can help you enhance your farm business.

Stay informed, stay ahead: Upcoming events with Dairy NSW

At Dairy NSW, we know that running a successful dairy business requires more than hard work – it also means staying connected, informed and supported. That's why we host a range of regionally tailored events designed to support you and your team in real, practical ways.

Whether it's workshops on animal health, business management, effluent planning, succession or nutrition – our events are grounded in the latest research and delivered by experienced service providers who understand your local conditions. Many of our events are hands-on, farmer-led, and offer opportunities to build knowledge, ask questions, and share insights with your peers.

Attending a Dairy NSW event is more than just a day off-farm – it's an investment in the long-term productivity, profitability, and resilience of your business. You'll walk away with tools, strategies, and connections that support better decision-making back at the dairy.

We encourage you to explore what's on offer and book into an event near you. Our team is always happy to help you find the right workshop to suit your farm's needs.

Visit the Dairy NSW Events Calendar at dairyaustralia.com.au/dairynsw to view upcoming events in your local region.



Upcoming events:

September

All month	Mid Coast Flood Recovery Advisory Service
9-11	Bale Up Conference – Kingscliff

October

14	Understanding Farm Carbon Workshop – Bega
16	Understanding Farm Carbon Workshop – Bomaderry

November

26-27	2025 Dairy Research Foundation Symposium
27	Dairy Australia Annual General Meeting 2025, Wollongong

Visit the Dairy NSW Events Calendar on our website at dairyaustralia.com.au/dairynsw for events taking place in your local region.



Stay connected:



Visit our website
dairyaustralia.com.au/dairynsw



Follow us on Facebook
facebook.com/dairynsw.au



Follow us on Instagram
@dairynsw



Sign up to receive Snapshot – our monthly email newsletter
bit.ly/dnswsnapshot



Call us
1800 004 377



Dairy NSW PO Box 4028
Shellharbour NSW 2529
dairyaustralia.com.au/dairynsw
E info@dairynsw.com.au

Paul van Wel
Regional Manager
0407 434 073
paul@dairynsw.com.au

Natalie Campbell
Executive Assistant and Project Manager
0438 261 912
natalie@dairynsw.com.au

Rachel Chittick
Communications
0413 506 419
rachel@dairynsw.com.au

Tania Ketteringham
Research and innovation
0412 040 504
tania@dairynsw.com.au

Jane Woolacott
Farm Engagement Lead
Far South Coast and Wagga
0409 076 140
jane@dairynsw.com.au

Ali Briggs
Farm Engagement Lead
Mid Coast
0456 971 331
ali@dairynsw.com.au

Disclaimer: The content of this publication is provided for general information only and has not been prepared to address your specific circumstances. We do not guarantee the completeness, accuracy or timeliness of the information.

Acknowledgement: Dairy Australia acknowledges the funding from levy payers and contribution by Commonwealth Government.

© Dairy Australia Limited 2025. All rights reserved.