



WestVic Dairy Annual Report

2023/24



DELIVERING
for **DAIRY**





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Cover photo: Lisa Findlay
Photo opposite: Sarah Cole

About WestVic Dairy

WestVic Dairy Inc. (WVD) is Dairy Australia's (DA) Regional Development Program for Western Victoria and is responsible for delivering extension activities and programs.

WVD is overseen by a regional Board of Directors, the majority being dairy farmers. It works closely with DA and local industry partners to facilitate technology transfer for the advancement of the sector.

DA is the national services body for the dairy industry. Its role is to help farmers adapt to a changing environment in order to establish a profitable and sustainable industry.

WestVic Dairy aims to accelerate the extent and rate of adoption by farmers of industry standard practices, new ideas and technology.

Both DA and WVD are precluded by their charter from agripolitical activity, which is the role of representational bodies, such as *Australian Dairy Farmers* (ADF) and its affiliates (i.e. *United Dairy Farmers of Victoria* and *Dairy Farmers Victoria*).

DA largely funds WVD and provides it with centralised administrative functions, which allows WVD to focus on extension planning and delivery. With the support of DA, WVD provides a wide range of services to stakeholders.

Industry collaboration

WestVic Dairy works collaboratively with a wide range of organisations and individuals in order to deliver its services to the industry. The dairy industry is a significant part of the regional economy and community and working with other stakeholders is a part of the way we operate. Key organisations with which we work are:

- Agriculture Victoria
- Catchment Management Authorities
- Dairy Farmers of Victoria
- Deakin University, Warrnambool
- DemoDAIRY Foundation
- Food and Fibre Council Great South Coast
- Gardiner Foundation
- Local government
- Milk processing firms
- Regional Development Victoria
- The Rural Financial Counselling Service
- United Dairy Farmers Victoria.

Numerous other agencies, educators and private sector service provider businesses are an important part of this network. Much of this collaboration occurs informally through strong networks and formally through the regular meetings of the latest Industry Leadership Group. WestVic Dairy is fortunate to have good input to operational planning from two advisory committees and a strong response to regular surveys on extension planning and performance. Considerable additional input on industry matters is provided by WestVic Dairy to the wider community on issues such as regional strategy and action plans, infrastructure, water, sustainability, skills and employment, and health and wellbeing.

Snapshot

The Western Victorian dairy region extends west from Geelong to the South Australian border, with the largest concentration of farms around the coastal area between Simpson and Koroit. It is currently Australia's second largest dairy producing region, producing almost two billion litres in 2023/24. This figure equates to about 22 per cent of Australia's milk volume.

In order to achieve our mission, our strategic priorities are:

Our vision

A vibrant, profitable and valued dairy region.

Our mission

We strive to advance the South-western Victorian dairy industry through engagement to promote innovation, skills and sustainability.

2 Attracting and developing great people for dairy

To support farm businesses in the attraction, recruitment, retention and transitioning of personnel and in their training and skill development and to recognise the importance of their health and wellbeing.

1 Resilient dairy farms

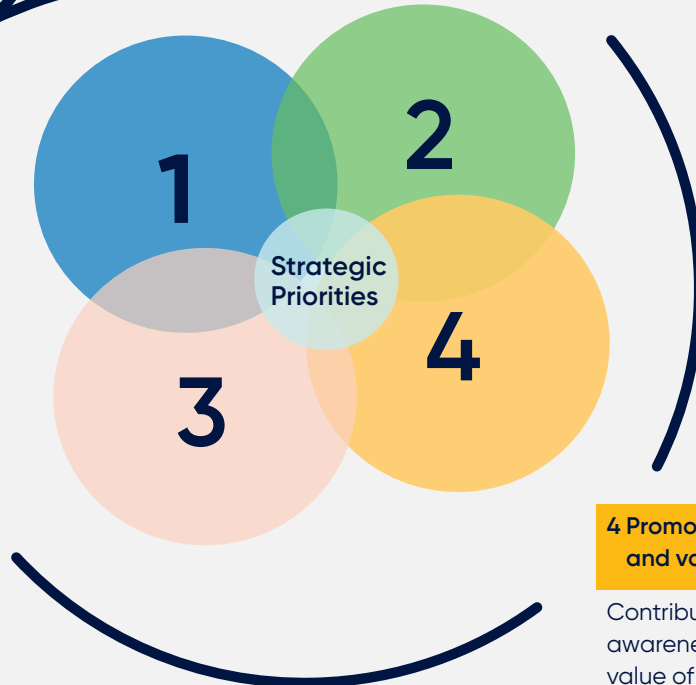
To support farm businesses to be more resilient to external impacts so that they remain productive, sustainable and profitable.

3 Strategic, positive and proactive communication and engagement

Open interaction with farmers and other stakeholders in responsive communications and through encouraging and responding to feedback.

4 Promoting a trusted and valued industry

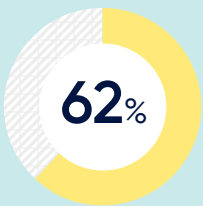
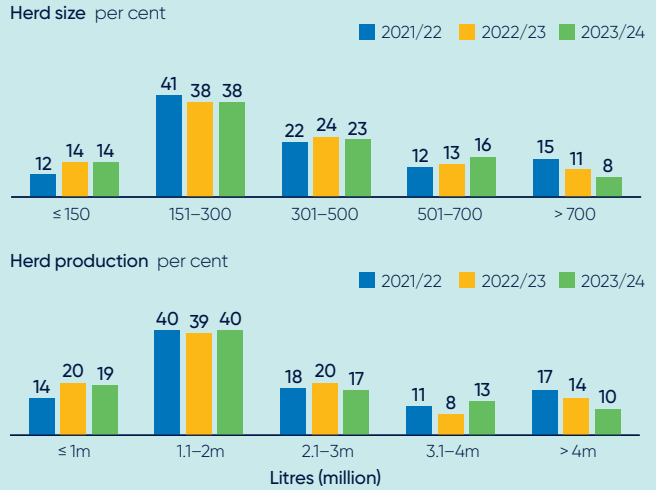
Contribute to an improved awareness by others of the value of the industry through demonstrating collaborative leadership and social responsibility.



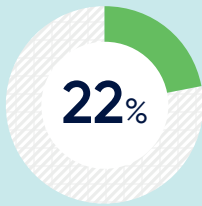
The 'average' western Victorian farm

Number of dairy farms	858
People employed on farm	2,600
People employed in the dairy industry workforce	6,000
Number of cows	280,000
Average herd size	326
Annual milk production (million litres)	1,844
% of national milk production	22%
% of Australia's dairy exports (volume)	25%
% share of export value	22%

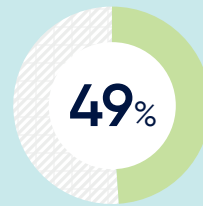
Current herd size and production



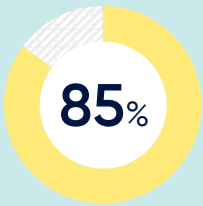
Sentiment
Positive about industry future



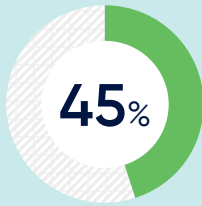
Enterprise phase
Expanding



Challenges
Climate



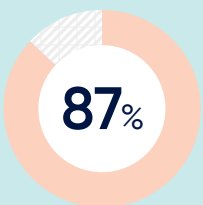
Sentiment
Positive about own business



Enterprise phase
Steady where they want to be



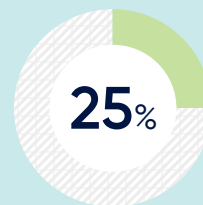
Challenges
Input costs



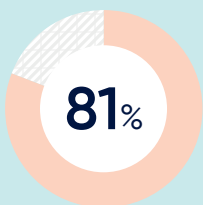
Profitability
Made profit in 2022/23



Enterprise phase
Steady and unable to expand



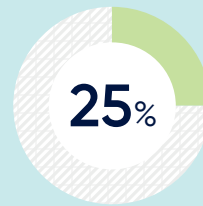
Challenges
Labour



Profitability
Expecting profit in 2023/24



Enterprise phase
Winding down



Challenges
Milk price



WestVic Dairy's 30-year anniversary

This year marks the 30-year anniversary of the organisation. We are pleased to recognise this important milestone and reflect on the journey that has contributed to the successful way the organisation operates today in the service of the region's dairy farmers.

1990 Before WestVic Dairy

In 1990, visionaries within the industry formed the *Western Victoria Dairy Industry Committee (WVDIC)*. This committee was chaired by Trevor Westacott with Russell Sessions as Secretary and comprised: A Adams, A McLachlan, A Hawkins, R Parsons, R Holland, B Baker, D Notley, P Haynes, S Coats, I Boyd, K Reed, J Pye, D Stuart, G Bell, C Logan.

The first annual meeting was held at Western Herd Improvement offices in Warrnambool on 14 May 1990, and reported on the first year of operation. The highlights of the report referred to the establishment of the Committee, the successful Milk Flow for Profit conference and the spirit of cooperation that existed between industry sectors and widespread support from industry, particularly dairy farmers.

Despite some ups and downs in industry conditions and politics, the Committee seems to have developed a good rhythm and had buy-in from all sectors of the industry, so got on with the business of co-ordinated dairy research and development across the region.

WVDIC became more directly connected to funding via the industry body, the *Dairy Industry Research and Development Corporation (DIRDC)* and so the organisation got to the point of needing a name change and a re-fresh.

1994 WestVic Dairy is formed

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in June 1994 between *Agriculture Victoria*, DRDC, *Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture*, *United Dairy Farmers of Victoria* and WVDIC, which became WestVic Dairy. This was the formal step that enabled the committee formerly known as WVDIC to move towards the goals that they have strived for over some years.

WestVic Dairy was the first to establish and formalise the relationship with DRDC. Following the new set-up, various disparate committees from other regions across the country also formalised their relationships, and across the nation a number Regional Development Programs were established.

1994 to today

For 30 years WVD has had broad industry representation including members from local district councils of UDV, *Agriculture Victoria*, educational institutions, manufacturing and herd improvement organisations, with an independent farmer as Chairman. Working collaboratively and strategically, WestVic Dairy has always worked to ensure farmers and their farm businesses are well-supported and successful.



Message from the Chair

In any business, there are good times and more challenging times. Following several years of favourable milk prices and good seasons, this 2023/24 reporting year has proven to be more difficult. This year has been marked by dry conditions, general inflationary pressure, the loss of the export heifer market and a lower milk price. During challenging times, it is crucial to have a strategy to ensure that farm businesses can remain resilient through short-term issues.

WestVic Dairy remains steadfast to its vision of a vibrant, profitable and valued dairy region and guided by its three-year strategic plan. Supporting farmers and their businesses is at the core of our mission. While we remain committed to our four strategic priorities, we are also prepared to adapt. Providing the support and resources that farmers need most is always WestVic Dairy's top priority. An example of our commitment is the *Tactics for Dry Times* sessions, which were organised to aid farmers in decision-making when the autumn break didn't arrive. Farmer needs guide our purpose and WestVic Dairy has been a great resource to dairy farmers in our region over the years and continues to offer that support. The value of having a regionally based organisation to support the dairy industry is clear.

This year we once again held the Great South West Dairy Awards, an event that not only recognises excellence within the dairy industry, but also highlights the dairy industry's contributions to the wider community. It was wonderful to hear the stories, acknowledge, and celebrate the achievements of those in the region. Congratulations to all those who were nominated, the finalists, the runners up, and of course, the winners, who all exemplified best practice, hard work, and passion for the dairy industry.

It is wonderful to see that our younger cohort of dairy farmers are incredibly passionate about the industry. We continue to support younger people's development in the industry through the Young Dairy Network by providing social networking and learning opportunities through a variety of events such as *Field Days*, the *Trivia Night*, and for the first-time the *Dairy Farmers' Ball*. This year WestVic Dairy organised for some young farmers from the region to have the opportunity to attend The Australian Dairy Conference and a Study Tour to New Zealand.

This was possible thanks to the sponsorship of the Gardiner Foundation and DemoDAIRY Foundation. The aim of providing these opportunities to young farmers is to help them learn more about the dairy industry, be inspired, and consider different ways of farming. Speaking with these young farmers, it is pleasing to hear that the learnings they take away will influence their farming practices at home and that they are keen to share their new knowledge with their communities.

WestVic Dairy celebrated its 30th Anniversary this year. Reflecting on the evolution of the organisation over the decades, it's evident that the commitment to supporting the levy-paying community of dairy farmers in South-west Victoria has remained steadfast. The way this has happened has changed over the years – different funding sources, different operational models and responsibilities. But that one common thread remains, the altruistic effort by many industry participants to help and support others in their pursuit of a successful farming business. This is what makes a healthy wider industry and a strong community and I'm grateful for the foresight of those founding farmers who set-up WestVic Dairy and its predecessor, the South-west Dairy Industry Committee, to direct and lead the industry in the south-west.

I would like to sincerely thank my fellow directors, whose contributions ensure the organisation's governance and strategic direction remain a reflection of the needs of farmers in our region. Ella Credlin (director) and Bruce Officer (associate) have been on the Board this past year and we are fortunate to welcome them to the team and have their valuable insights. I'd also like to acknowledge and thank Brad Collins, who stood down from the board at last year's AGM, for his four years of contributions.

Thank you also to WestVic Dairy's wonderful team of staff for their diligent work to promote innovation, skills and sustainability through engagement. WestVic Dairy is in good hands as it strives to advance the South-western Victorian dairy industry.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brendan Rea'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Brendan Rea
WestVic Dairy Chair

Message from the Regional Manager

How quickly things turn around to make farming a challenging business. Wet seasons have given way to dry, high milk prices have softened, and costs have escalated. It does highlight the fact that a business needs to have clear objectives and be flexible enough to adapt to the times.

Good decision making is not that simple and requires useful and timely information. Useful information includes market data and climatic data and in an increasingly sophisticated world it also needs to include a good understanding of the science of dairy farming. To that information mix, technology can be applied to benefit the business. The information supply-chain from research through to extension can be long and fraught with dead-ends and unexpected results. Nevertheless, on balance, it provides a good return on investment for levy-payers.

Our part in this system is here at the farm-level, providing input to the design of learning materials and providing quality delivery so that farmers may benefit from this information. Our current business plan has been designed with valuable input from those in the region at grassroots level. We appreciate the people who participate in our surveys as they provide very useful insights into our farmers' priorities as we plan our extension strategy and activities to suit the region's needs.

We also get good input to the planning from the experts at Dairy Australia and oversight by the WestVic Dairy board. We trust that it provides the information that you, your associates and staff need to help make with decision making. However, we are sufficiently flexible to be able to include new initiatives and opportunities that arise during the year.

Our staff are professionally qualified and regularly up-skill in technical areas such as climate, soils, feedbase, animal genetics and workforce management. Also important for us is putting into practice both proven and new communication and facilitation techniques to communicate effectively with the participants in our activities. The team gets great satisfaction from seeing farmers use this information to benefit the business and the people in it.

I'm pleased to say that our level of extension activity has matched our status of being a top producing region in the nation. Our regular programs in production and business areas continue to run strongly with both face-to-face sessions across the region and with on-line options. The *Our Farm, Our Plan* and *Workforce* programs continue to see a good response from farmers and excellent speakers in these areas have drawn big numbers of participants.

We have seen some staff changes this year with Chris Walsh, Melissa Humphries and Jacinta Langdon departing and Emma Collins joining the team. We are fortunate to have such experienced and capable staff here in the South-west and I sincerely thank them all for their efforts during the year. We have also gained from mentoring post-graduate students in the *University of Melbourne* agriculture program.

The strategic plan designed by our Board guides our focus on the extension deliverables and our responsiveness to levy-payer needs. The Board's support for our team has been invaluable. Our Chair, Brendan Rea contributes considerable additional time to his role, and we value his leadership. Support from other regions and from colleagues in Dairy Australia is appreciated and reflects our 'One Team' value.

Many thanks to our sponsors, industry partners and to all our region's farmers for your participation in our extension activities. We appreciate the feedback you provide when attending our sessions as that helps sharpen our work, so suggestions or comments on what we deliver are always welcome.

I look forward to meeting you at one of our events over the next year.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. Ferguson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lindsay Ferguson
Regional Manager

Our people

WestVic Dairy Board

The Board works to provide strategic direction and manage our investments, priorities and goals in our strategic and operational plans.

- **Brendan Rea**, Chair, Dairy Farmer, Allansford
- **Will McDonald**, Vice Chair, Dairy Farmer, Bessiebelle,
- **Rhonda Henry**, Treasurer, Agribusiness, Warrnambool
- **Lucy Collins**, Director, Dairy Farmer, Dixie
- **Ella Credlin**, Director, Dairy Farmer, Ecklin South
- **Mike Huth**, Director, Specialist, Cobden
- **Brooke Lane**, Director, Dairy Farmer, Alvie
- **Bruce Officer**, Associate Director, Specialist, Geelong

WestVic Dairy Team

The WestVic Dairy team works to deliver the annual operating plan in order to achieve WestVic Dairy's mission. Staff employed during 2023/24 were:

- **Lindsay Ferguson**, Regional Manager and Executive Officer

Extension Team

- **Libby Swayn**, Extension Team Lead
- **Sheeraz Ahmad**, Extension Coordinator – Farm Business Management
- **Sam Andrews**, Farm Engagement Lead
- **Liza Fahey** – Project Coordinator
- **Peter Gaffy**, Extension Advisor – Feedbase and Farm Engagement Lead
- **Jacinta Langdon**, Workforce Attraction Project Lead
- **Michelle Seabrook**, Extension Advisor – Workforce
- **Debbie Twiss**, Extension Advisor – Animal Health and Performance
- **Chris Walsh** Extension Advisor – Our Farm, Our Plan
- **Matt Wood**, Extension Advisor – Workforce

Administration Team

- **Emma Collins**, Administration Coordinator
- **Amanda Heard**, Project Support Officer
- **Melissa Humphries**, Administration Coordinator
- **Aylish Tobin-Salzman**, Communication Coordinator

Regional activities

The following details the range of extension activities run during the 2023/24 year. These are scheduled across the region at seasonally relevant times, and according to demand. They aim to provide a service for all farmers and agribusiness professionals in all aspects of the business of dairy farming.



Animal performance

Extension Advisor Debbie Twiss delivered and facilitated animal performance extension activities in multiple locations across South-west Victoria over the year. These extension activities supported dairy farmers in improving management of milk quality, calf health, fertility, welfare and nutrition in their dairy herds. These activities reached as far north as Ballarat, as far west as Gazette, and as far east as Birregurra.

Core extension activities

Euthanise Livestock

A one-day workshop to give participants knowledge about the responsibilities for animal welfare on-farm and the skills to perform humane euthanasia.

Down Cow Management

A one-day on-farm workshop with Dr Phil Poulton to understand the requirements for the successful nursing of down cows.

Genomics in Practice

A one-day course on-farm for farmers to review how genomic testing could add value to their farm business.



Healthy Hooves

A one-day practical lameness treatment and prevention workshop.



Milking and Mastitis Management

A two-day workshop for participants to understand how to detect, treat and prevent mastitis and gain knowledge about milking plant hygiene to support milk quality on-farm.



Rearing Healthy Calves

A two-day workshop with a farm visit to understand the fundamentals of calf health management.



Transition Cow Management

A one-day workshop for anyone involved in the feeding and management of cows through the four weeks before and after calving.

Additional extension activities

Further to the core activities described above, farmers engaged in activities that were developed and delivered to meet additional farmer needs.

Managing farm biosecurity

Managing biosecurity is becoming an increasingly important issue that all farms must address to support business continuity. No farm business is immune to disruption or disaster from a biosecurity event, which is why refresher biosecurity sessions were delivered. Some of these sessions were delivered in collaboration with Helen Chenoweth from *Agriculture Victoria*. Acknowledgement is given to Dr Craig Wood for his support of the on-farm animal health session for the Ballarat Discussion Group.

Pilot program – managing cow health in heat stress conditions

This pilot program was held in the Larpent region and focused on managing cow productivity and fertility in heat stress conditions.

At the heart of the WestVic Dairy's animal performance extension activities is the focus on delivering a learning experience that will help farmers make positive changes to their management practices.

“Thank you for all the information, I now understand the reason of why I have to do the job in a certain way.”

- Milking and Mastitis Management farm employee participant

“I thoroughly enjoyed this course and have taken onboard new information which I hope to implement on our farm.”

- Farm employee after attending Rearing Healthy Calves

“A great course, great environment – the practical aspect was interactive, and I enjoyed working with the presenters.”

- Healthy Hooves farmer participant

Farm business management

Effective farm business management is crucial in both prosperous and challenging times. WestVic Dairy supports local dairy farmers in achieving profitable and sustainable businesses through various workshops, events, and initiatives.

Workshops

Our Farm, Our Plan

Since its official launch in 2020, the *Our Farm, Our Plan* (OFOP) program has met with tremendous success with over 1,200 farmer participants consistently rating it greater than nine out of ten for value to them and their business. This program has evolved over the last few years, taking on feedback from participants. While OFOP always involves one-on-one support over two years, there are now various ways that the program can be participated in: face-to-face group workshops, national online workshops, and engagement-led workshops. In the financial year 2023/24, 314 farmers across Australia participated in the program, with 83 farmers from the WestVic Dairy region.



Dairy Farm Business Fundamentals

In August 2023, Farm Management Consultant Paul Groves, delivered a face-to-face course in Simpson. Over the two-day course, 12 participants gathered their annual farm numbers and learnt the basics of financial management – budgeting, compliance, and farm financial systems. Participants left with an understanding of the Dairy Standard Chart of Accounts and the Dairy Cash Management Planner. Additionally, two national online courses were delivered by external consultants.

Dairy Farm Business Analysis

In August 2023, participants attended an advanced three-day course in Warrnambool to analyse their dairy farm business performance. The course was delivered by farm management consultant Fiona Smith, who emphasised the importance of recording annual physical and financial farm numbers to help identify opportunities and manage risk.

The 14 participants were supported in using the *DairyBase* tool to generate reports to interpret and understand cash, profit and wealth for their farm business. Additionally, farmers in the region had the opportunity to attend two national online courses.

Farm Business Seminars – Dairy Australia's Situation and Outlook Report

In October 2023, DA's Head of Economics, Data, and Insights, John Droppert, and Agriculture Victoria's Farm Business Economist, Natalie Nelson, presented three Farm Business Seminars. John provided an update on the DA Situation and Outlook for the remainder of the season, sharing his insights on the current state of dairy markets both locally and internationally. Natalie shared results and insights from the *2022/23 Dairy Farm Monitor Project Annual Report*. These seminars were well attended, with 38 participants at the dinner in Koroit, 52 at the breakfast in Warrnambool, and 17 at the lunch in Simpson.

In June 2024, DA's Analysis and Insights Manager, Eliza Redfern, and DA's Climate and Energy Manager, Elissa McNamara, presented on the latest *DA Situation and Outlook Report* and the *Australian Dairy Carbon Calculator* respectively. These Farm Business Seminars drew 37 participants at the service providers breakfast in Warrnambool and 24 at the farmers' lunch in Cobden.

Making sense of milk price

In June 2024, Paul Groves, and John Droppert delivered a workshop in Cobden on making sense of the milk price. Thirty participants attended this interactive session to understand what drives milk prices to maximise profitability and manage risk. There was the opportunity for participants to ask questions and topics discussed included milk pricing structure, understanding milk solid prices, factors influencing fat and protein content, production models and the impacts of milk markets.



Succession planning workshop

WestVic Dairy facilitated a workshop to support South-west Victorian families understand the succession planning process on in April 2024 in Cobden. The *Our Farm, Our Plan* program identified the need for a succession planning session. Many farmers have goals on succession but are unclear how to start the process and progress. The most recent workforce survey revealed less than 14 per cent of farms in the WestVic Dairy region have an agreed plan written down for the transition of the farm.

This workshop was facilitated by Colin Wright, a Principal and Agri team leader with Phillipsons Accounting, who said that succession planning was a critical part of farm business management. The day concluded with panel discussion with two local dairy farming families. Thank you to Terry Place and his son Grant, and Alan Campbell and his daughter Sarah for sharing their own succession planning stories.



Business Focus Farm

The Focus Farms program centres around farming families and enterprises. It aims to assist Focus Farmers to achieve their stated goals during a defined period in which they are supported by a WestVic Dairy team member and a support group made up of farmers and local service providers.

Bostocks Creek Focus Farm

Farmers	Peter and Marnie Kerr
Facilitator	Libby Swayn
Consultant	Paul Groves, farm management
Farm size	320 cows, 282ha (182ha milking platform)

Project goals

- Improve water infrastructure to reduce reliance on town water and improve water supply throughout the farm.
- Improve time efficiency on-farm by reducing the time for dairy chores including milking and feeding.
- Increase profitability through improved management of pastures, feeding and reproduction.
- Reduce debt and increase equity in the business to allow for future expansion.
- A support group that provides a valued network which shares relatable ideas, compares benchmark data and works towards achieving business goals.

Peter and Marnie Kerr joined the Focus Farm program in April 2022. Peter and Marnie have an interesting background with neither having immediate family on a dairy farm. Marnie grew up on a sheep and cropping farm to the north of Camperdown. Peter grew up in Melbourne but spent many of his school holidays visiting and working on his uncle's dairy farm in Simpson. On leaving school, Peter moved to Simpson to work on the farm while undertaking training courses. Peter began share farming at Simpson before moving to the farm at Bostocks Creek with Marnie. The Kerrs were sharefarmers on the farm for seven years before purchasing 120ha of the farm and leasing the remainder.

Peter and Marnie went into the project having completed the *Our Farm, Our Plan* program and setting out a clear vision of what they were aiming to achieve. This assisted the Kerrs and the support group to develop clear goals that were achievable over the period of the project.

Over the two years of the project, the Kerrs have made significant improvements to the farm operations, and this has continued to be a very profitable business. The support group recognised that the water infrastructure was one of the most important issues that needed to be addressed. The farm was reliant on town water as the main source of supply for both stock and the dairy. This was not only expensive, but a bigger issue was that low pressure of the mains meant that the water could not keep up with the stock's requirements. Over the period of the project, a disused bore has been recommissioned, a new storage tank and pump has been installed, together with building a large new dam. Future work will include installing a pump for the new dam.

The time taken to milk and do the essential chores was identified as an issue in the early days of the project. During the period of the project a backpacker was employed, ensuring that the basics were all covered and allowing some time 'off' farm duties for Pete and Marnie during the week.

The farm continued to be profitable and has been able to make significant debt reduction over the two years, allowing for future expansion of the business.

Pete and Marnie Kerr successfully completed their two-year Focus Farm. Having found it such a valuable experience for their farm, the Kerr's decided to continue as a Focus Farm and in May 2024 set new business goals. They will once again work to achieve the goals with the guidance of a newly formed support group.



Feedbase

Feedbase extension activities provide information and resources to support dairy farmers to manage their feeding and farm systems, including pastures, crops, feed supplements and nutrition management.

Feeding Pastures for Profit

The *Feeding Pastures for Profit* course begins each year in autumn with two theory days that are based in the classroom. This is then followed by five on-farm days throughout the year. On-farm the theory is put into practice by incorporating the challenges and opportunities of the different seasons. Extension Advisor Peter Gaffy delivered the program in Timboon in 2023. Project Lead, Jacinta Langdon with consultant Tom Farren took responsibility for its delivery in 2024. This program began more than 20 years ago, and it continues to run in the region each year with strong participation. *Feeding Pastures for Profit* is widely recognised as best practice for managing pasture and cow nutrition to maximise business success.

Nutrition Fundamentals

The *Nutrition Fundamentals* program gives farmers an understanding of the basic nutritional requirements of cows, how nutrition affects profitability on-farm and how best to approach purchasing of feed and feed budgeting.



Two Nutrition Fundamentals programs were delivered this year. Extension Advisors Peter and Debbie delivered the first program in 2023 at Grassmere. After two days of theory at the Grassmere Hall, day three allowed participants to get practical and take what they learnt and apply it to a real situation. Thank you to Liam Ryan for allowing the group to go onto his farm and observe the cows and feed.

The second *Nutrition Fundamentals* was held at Cobden for day one and two with Debbie and consultants Pip Gale and Pip Bruce delivering. The third day and practical session was held at Albert and Carin Pol's farm at Jancourt East. Thank you to Albert and Carin for giving the group the opportunity to assess nutrition in the field.



PastureSmarts

In April 2024, the *PastureSmarts* web application tool was launched at the Ellinbank Smart Farm open day. This web-based tool was developed during the first stage of the *Dairy Feedbase* program, an applied science research program for the dairy industry that is a joint venture between Dairy Australia, Gardiner Foundation and Agriculture Victoria.

PastureSmarts allows farmers to better manage their pasture by providing an accurate daily estimate of pasture availability or the pasture wedge on-farm. Utilising BOM data and historical pasture research, *PastureSmarts* can also forecast pasture growth rates which will greatly aid in feed planning and budgets. If all the features of the tool are utilised, it can lead to better pasture use, more profitable supplementary feeding and increased milk production.

The tool is now available to be used on a phone, tablet or computer. It is an exciting outcome for farmers to be able to realise a tangible benefit for their farm after years of research. Thank you to the several local farmers who have contributed with feedback during the piloting stage of the development with further enhanced features in progress.

Profitable Feeding Systems

Following multiple profitable years being recorded by the Dairy Farm Monitor Project, the Profitable Feeding Systems (PFS) Steering Committee identified that it would be an ideal time to investigate feeding and housing infrastructure that would be suitable for the grazing system here in South-west Victoria. It was decided a Field Day would be held as DA's Karen Romano and Agriculture Victoria's Scott McDonald were at the same time looking to share the newly developed Farm System Evaluator and the Dairy Feedpads and Contained Housing National Guidelines.

In March, the PFS Field Day began at the Naringal Hall where farmers heard from Karen about how the new Farm System Elevator tool can be used to guide future investments in feeding and housing infrastructure. The group also discussed case studies of the different levels of investment and farming infrastructure that farmers from across Australia had built.

The group then visited Simon and Pip Rea's farm near Cudjee. Simon described how ten years ago he made the decision to invest in herd shelters and a feedpad to better manage his cows in the wet conditions and make the most out of his home-grown feed. The shelters and feedpad have resulted in improved herd health, milk production, pasture production and labour efficiencies.

The extended dry season in 2024 saw the PFS Advisory Committee convene in late June to discuss the conditions across the region and the existing and potential issues arising. The consensus from the group was that although isolated areas were experiencing a good season, most of the region was severely dry and feed shortage was a concern. It was advised that Tactics for Dry Times seminars would be an appropriate course of action to bring together resources and practical advice tailored to help with making important decisions in the challenging dry conditions.



Land, Water, Climate

FertSmart

The Corangamite Catchment Management Authority this year funded a *FertSmart* program, delivered as Sustainable Dairies, based in Timboon. The program was funded through the Victorian Government's program 'Our Catchments, Our Communities' and was delivered in conjunction with Agriculture Victoria.

This year the *FertSmart* component of the Sustainable Dairies was a pilot of the newly redesigned program. The four-day course included three days of the FertSmart program and a field day at the conclusion. The field day included guest speaker, Dr Pauline Mele, who provided a presentation of soil biology in addition to demonstrating how to undertake a visual soil assessment in the paddock.

All participants received five soil tests and a comprehensive nutrient management plan, prepared by an independent consultant as a part of their involvement in the program.

Multi-species Pastures Project

The collaborative project between Dairy Australia and the University Melbourne on multi-species pastures continued in its second year, with field work and a final workshop taking place in June 2024. The project was funded by Dairy Australia and the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and looked at how multispecies pastures might work to make grazing-based dairy more climate resilient in the Southern Australian dairy industry.

Reports are currently being finalised with preliminary findings showing that:

- There are no negative implications from using multi-species pastures in terms of production and quality, and there are potentially quality benefits.
- Maintaining species diversity in a perennial system is potentially an issue, with most systems using some level of over-sowing.
- Over the period of the study there was no differences in the soil carbon or nitrogen cycling (results may be different over a longer period of time).
- If there are no extra costs from sowing and maintaining multi-species pastures there can be an overall benefit from the extra dry matter produced in the shoulders of the season.





People

Young Dairy Network

The year was a busy one for the WestVic Dairy Young Dairy Network (YDN). In addition to the core extension activities of Field Days and social evening meetings, two exciting new events took place. These were the Dairy Farmers Ball and the New Zealand Study Tour.

The structure of the YDN sees a WestVic Dairy staff coordinator working with the YDN Leadership Team to plan interesting, relevant and engaging events suitable to the group's demographic. One meeting is held each month, alternating between the two core extension activity formats. The events are a mix of technical information, topics of interest and networking/socialising opportunities.

These activities are in line with the YDN's strategic plan, which is to provide networking, self-development and social interaction opportunities to young people working in the dairy industry.

The Leadership Team consists of young industry people, representing a cross-section of the YDN cohort. Along with planning, its role includes promoting the YDN, co-hosting events and the self-development of the leaders. Two in-person planning meetings are held annually, with Zoom meetings taking place every one to two months as needed.

2023/24 Leadership Team:

- Chloe Brown – Farm owner, Kirkstall
- Pip Bruce – Nutritionist, Colac
- Zoe Greenslade – Share farmer, Peterborough
- Max Bond – Farm employee, Cooriemungle
- Billy Buckingham – Farm employee, Jancourt East
- Sam Kermond – Farm employee, Nullawarre
- Rachael McGrath – Farm manager, Orford
- Gregor Mews – Farm employee, Koroit
- Liam Allan – Share farmer, Terang (stood-down in December)
- Matt Grant – Farm lessee, Naringal (stood-down in January)
- Isaac Hose – Farm employee, Garvoc (stood-down in December)

There is a great core of YDN members, ensuring that events are well attended, and social and networking opportunities are being seized. Participation at YDN gatherings has been strong throughout the year, with numbers as high or higher than ever.

Core Extension Activities

A total of five social and four field day events took place this financial year.

Topics covered in the Field Days included the Smith's robotic rotary dairy; what's your next step? (share farming/leasing); calving and calf rearing infrastructure; and feedpads – what are your options? As always, we are most grateful to all the farmers that opened their gates and hosted our Field Days. These events create a great learning opportunity and have the added interest of being in a practical setting and being able to see things firsthand.

A range of social events were held throughout the region. There was a good mix of activities, such as mini golf and barefoot bowls, along with more technical content, including Influencing your dairy career and Milking in the mud.

The annual *Trivia Night* has become a mainstay of the WestVic Dairy social calendar. Whilst hosted by the YDN, the evening is open to all. The Noorat Football Netball Club was the venue for the event in September 2023. Around 100 people went along to test their general knowledge and take their chances in the extensive charity raffle. The ongoing support from *Proud to be a Dairy Farmer* enabled all ticket sale proceeds to be donated to charity, namely *Need for Feed* and *Blaze Aid*.

Dairy Farmers' Ball

The idea of hosting a black tie, charity Gala Ball had been mentioned for a while, so 2023 was the year that the YDN Leadership team made it happen. The aim of the Ball was to provide an opportunity for dairy farmers and industry people to kick off the work boots, suit/frock up, network, enjoy a classy night out, all whilst raising money for charity. As with the Trivia Night, the Ball was organised by the YDN, but open to all ages.



Lely supported the Ball as the events exclusive sponsor. As well as direct funding, Lely provided the major prize that was raffled off to raise funds for the selected charity – Let’s Talk. The prize was a trip to the Netherlands to tour the Lely headquarters and visit associated farms. Flights, accommodation and meals were included. The lucky winner was Oscar Baxter, a farm manager from Laang. Oscar was a worthy winner, having been well engaged with the YDN for several years.

Along with the raffle, a small charity auction took place which helped raise further funds. In total, over \$10,000 was donated to the mental health awareness charity, Let’s Talk.

The entertainment provided by the band *Good Faces 4 Radio*, was thoroughly enjoyed by the 175 attendees. Feedback from the night was fantastic, with most already looking forward to the next one.

New Zealand Study Tour

With financial support from the *DemoDAIRY Foundation* (DDF), the YDN’s inaugural overseas tour took place this year. The trip visited the Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions of the North Island. Along with taking in a variety of farm businesses there were three key areas of focus:

- Maximising pasture and forage utilisation for profitable milk production.
- Adapting to changes in environmental legislation and public perception.
- Utilising technology to improve efficiency – including Halter virtual fencing.



Participants were selected through a competitive process. Applicants submitted an expression of interest form, before being short-listed, then moving on to an interview. The number and quality of applicants was exceptional – a great sign for dairying in our region.

Following the process, a final group of 18 participants were selected. Accompanying the party were Extension Advisors Matt Wood and Debbie Twiss, Chloe Brown (DDF Director), and Rowan Priest (Livestock Improvement Corporation – LIC). LIC supported the visit by covering the cost of minibus hire and fuel.

The five-day tour had a packed itinerary, with nine farms and four industry events visited. The host farmers were all very welcoming and happy to share everything about their businesses. This allowed the group to learn a great deal and take away many learnings from the trip.

On return, many of the tour party spread word of their adventures through a range of media.

The tour was an undoubted success, and the YDN hopes to offer similar study tours in the future.

Australian Dairy Conference

In February, four young south-west farmers attended the *Australian Dairy Conference* in Melbourne. After a selection process, the four delegates had all their costs covered by *Gardiner Dairy Foundation* grants. The conference was a high quality, inspiring event that was thoroughly enjoyed by the attendees.

Our Farm, Our Plan

In June, a YDN specific *Our Farm, Our Plan* intensive was held in Lorne, facilitated by farm business consultant, Fiona Smith. In the 24-hour program, Fiona guided the 14 participants through where they are now, where they want to be, and then formulated smart goals to get there.

Dairy NSW YDN Conference in Wollongong

Three YDN Leaders – Billy Buckingham, Chloe Brown and Max Bond – attended the *National YDN conference* hosted in Wollongong. This was made possible thanks to the Gardiner Foundation. The trio attended the two-day event as part of their own development and to learn more about how the event was managed, along with whether a conference is something the WestVic Dairy YDN should consider in the future. Their findings were shared within the Leadership Team.

Workforce planning and action

Attracting and retaining skilled labour has been one of the most significant issues facing dairy farmers in recent times. Although the end of COVID restrictions saw a return of an abundance of working holiday makers, filling skilled farmhand and management roles with suitable long-term applicants remains a significant challenge.

Workforce attraction

Attracting good people into the industry remains a challenge. An increase in backpacker enquiries was certainly noticed during the beginning of 2024, with many looking to complete their 88 days to satisfy visa requirements. The interest from backpackers has been welcomed by some farmers within the region, however most farmers are looking to fill vacancies with long term employees. This year WestVic Dairy prioritised increasing awareness of career pathways and opportunities available in the dairy industry in the South-west.

Project Lead, Jacinta Langdon, worked to increase dairy career awareness in school students, jobseekers and career practitioners and advisors in South-west Victoria. In addition to school visits and attendance at careers expos, this year a dairy industry tour for careers teachers and advisors was coordinated. The group had the opportunity to visit two dairy farms, a stockfeed mill, a milk processor and a genetics facility, where they heard from employees and were able to see the variety of opportunities within each business. It is hoped that students and jobseekers will benefit from the knowledge and experiences gained by those who attended the day.

Over the past 12 months WestVic Dairy has responded to 43 jobseeker enquiries made directly to WestVic Dairy and a further 101 regional enquiries received via the Dairy Australia website. The Dairy Jobs Board continues to be utilised with 33 job vacancies advertised.

Engagement with jobseekers and students at careers expos has continued with more than 160 individual interactions. Attendance at expos continues to be effective in promoting the industry and its pathways and opportunities.

WestVic Dairy has continued working with and supporting the following:

- AgFutures Program
- Ballarat Jobs and Training Expo
- Career Teachers networks – Warrnambool and district and Colac Otway
- Cows Create Careers Program
- Employment agencies across the South-west Victoria region
- Glenelg Shire (Portland) Careers Expo
- Glenelg and Southern Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network

- Koorie Aspiration Day
- South West Local Learning and Employment Network (SWLLEN)
- Maths and Science at Work project – Cobden Tech
- Neil Porter Legacy
- National Farmers Federation – AgCareer Start Program
- Timboon Ag Project – Timboon P-12
- Warrnambool College Industry Connections Project
- Western District Youth Camp

WestVic Dairy continues to support the SWLLEN through connecting students with potential host farmers for work experience and structured workplace learning placements. Several students have been placed on farms in our region over the past twelve months.

WestVic Dairy recognised opportunities to build on existing relationships. The past year has seen Jacinta establish relationships or reconnect with the following organisations and schools:

- Apollo Bay P-12
- Ballarat Christian College
- Growing Careers Project – The Smith Family
- Marcus Oldham Careers Expo
- Mt Clear College
- Portland Secondary College
- Rotary Defying the Drift Program
- St Joseph's School, Colac
- SWLLEN Ag Fund Project
- Terang College
- Trinity College Colac
- Warrnambool Careers Expo
- Wave School Warrnambool

Visa Workshops

With near record low unemployment in South-west Victoria, many farmers are exploring other options, including the recruitment of skilled visa workers. WestVic Dairy has responded to this need by supporting several external events focused on visa options. A webinar focused on the Dairy Industry Labour Agreement (DILA) was also delivered at a national level, with Industrial Relations Lawyer Jennie Corkhill and migration agent Fadi Malek.

Extension Advisors Michelle and Matt have been able to provide multiple farmers with information regarding the DILA and also the Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA), serving as an important 'first call' in heading in the right direction with the visa application process.



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Paying a Flat Rate

This year saw the introduction of a *Paying a Flat Rate* in-person workshop in the WestVic Dairy region - a first across the country. WestVic Dairy ran three of these workshops, in Allansford, Terang and Colac. Around 30 farmers participated in these sessions, which focused on the options available to pay a flat rate to staff, and raised awareness of the resources on the People in Dairy (PID) website which can be used to ensure employers are compliant.

The *Employment Starter Kit initiative* (ESKi) and PID website have become standard resources that are used by many dairy farm businesses and service providers. They are frequently updated with changes to National Employment Standards and the Pastoral Award, and WestVic Dairy keeps farmers up to date with changes via email and social media throughout the year.

Farm Safety

With safety on-farm remaining a critical area for improvement, WestVic Dairy developed and ran two Getting started with farm safety workshops, one in Cobden and the second in Warrnambool. Whilst uptake from farmers was slow, those that attended left with a better idea of where they were heading with their farm safety plan. As part of the workshop, participants are walked through the online safety templates and resources available. For those that prefer hard copy records, WestVic Dairy continues to promote the *Farm Safety Manual* and *Farm Safety Starter Kit*. Matt and Michelle have helped farmers put in place procedures and identify safety 'hotspots' on their farms.

Expert guest speakers

This year WestVic Dairy was lucky enough to combine with the large herds program to welcome two high calibre guests to the area, in Nollaig Heffernan and Mandy Johnson.

In May, Nollaig presented five workshops across the region, focusing on being an employer of choice and strategies for successful staff management and retention. Around 100 farmers and service providers participated in one or more of the five sessions on offer.

The large herds program generally facilitates Mandy Johnson's *People and Culture Accelerator Program* (PCAP) as a four-day course in Melbourne, given strong interest from farmers across the region we were able to run it locally in Warrnambool for the first time. Ten farm businesses attended the first two-days in March, with a further two businesses joining for the second half of the program in June.

We were fortunate enough to secure funding from the *DemoDAIRY Foundation* that allowed us to run a standalone Mandy Johnson workshop. Mandy presented her *Building Remarkable Workplaces* session to farmers at Panmure in late June.

Calm the Farm

In February, WestVic Dairy joined with the National Centre for Farmer Health (NCFH) to host a Calm the Farm session in Simpson. This workshop focused on wellbeing and mental health on-farm, for both business owners and employees. It highlighted pressure points and spotting issues when they arise. NCFH counsellors then provided practical tips and advice to prevent, and if needed, deal with wellbeing issues in a farm setting. WestVic Dairy also helps promote the services available through the NCFH through its communication channels.

Online resources

WestVic Dairy supported and promoted a number of online programs delivered by Dairy Australia, including Farming with my Team, Managing People, and Employment Basics. These courses each ran over several weeks and were offered to all farmers nationally.

A number of resources have been developed with support from WestVic Dairy and are available to download from The People in Dairy website, including:

- Share Dairy Farming in Australia - Model Code of Practice
- Leasing Dairy Assets Resource Pack
- Shared Equity Arrangements Resource
- Farm Safety Starter Kit
- Farm Safety Manual
- Employment Starter Kit initiative (ESKi).

One-on-on support

Most importantly, help is available for farmers to access and utilise all these employment resources. With both Matt and Michelle working in the workforce planning and action space this year, more farmers than ever before were able to tap into this support. Upwards of 80 HR farm visits were made for the year, and multiple phone queries were answered each week. This one-to-one assistance is an extremely valuable service to the region's farmers, and a highly effective form of extension.

Supporting the Future

WestVic Dairy sees that part of its role is to help prepare personnel for the industry of the future. For many years WestVic Dairy has taken on university students as part of the internship component of their studies. This can range from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, supporting our extension activities and assisting with preparation and follow up. Depending on the university requirements, students have also undertaken a project that gave them a deeper experience of extension operations and provided us with a useful report. During the last year we welcomed two *University of Melbourne* students studying Agriculture, Maima Sine who was completing his masters degree and Molly Rowles who was completing her undergraduate degree.

Dairy Discussion Groups

Discussion groups provide opportunities for dairy farmers to share experiences, learn and socialise.

Colac and District Discussion Group

The Colac and District Discussion Group held two standalone functions this year and were part of a number of activities within the region during the year. The group had a Pasture Trial Field Day at the Pasture Network Trial site west of Colac in spring to hear about what is happening with the research at this site. The discussion group had a stand along workshop on Biosecurity presented by Agriculture Victoria staff together with WestVic staff. Other activities that group members were involved were multi-species pasture Field Days and an Our Farm, Our Plan program.



Cooriemungle Discussion Group

The Cooriemungle Discussion Group continued strongly this year, with Tyson Sinclair handing over the reins as leader in March to Luke and Susan Benson. The group aims to meet on the first Wednesday of the month, with breaks in November and January.

The year began with a joint visit to 'Hilltop Farm' with the Port Campbell Discussion Group (PCDG). Hilltop runs a very different business to most in our region, with the 800+ cows throughout their lactation, milked three times a day and fed a TMR diet.

Interesting visits to the Casey and Lucas family farms followed, before another joint meeting at Nick and Kelly Thompson's farm at Timboon, for a close look at tile drainage. The PCDG was also invited to the day with around 60 people given an insight into the drainage process, and the impact it has had on the Thompsons' farm.

Facts and figures, including return on investment through the extra grass grown and utilised were compiled by Webber and Chivell and shared with the group. This was a timely discussion in early September as most farmers found themselves experiencing a very wet season.

After a month off for harvest, the group had the annual Christmas breakup this year which featured bare foot bowls at the Simpson bowls club in December. As usual, this event was a well-supported, fun family night out, with plenty of lucky door prizes donated by local businesses.

After an extended break over summer, the group met at the Benson's farm in March for the annual planning meeting and handover of leadership, with ideas for the next 12 months set out. The group also got an insight into the capital works happening on the Benson farm, and heard the plans for the business over the next five years.

An interesting agenda was set out for the calendar year and included a visit to Jason and Abbey Burleigh's farm in April to look at their setup including robotic calf feeding system. In May the group visited the Stevens' farm at Jancourt, where group member Nathan and his family have been working through a succession plan, with Nathan coming home as the third generation currently living on-farm.

The financial year concluded with a visit to Matt and Tarsha Hogan's farm at Princetown, where he share farms with farm owner Ian Lester. The group got an insight from both Matt and Ian into how the successful share farming relationship works, and the exciting expansion plans they have for the future.

The group looks forward to another interesting year of events ahead.



Lakes and Craters Discussion Group

The Lakes and Craters Discussion group held three meetings this financial year. The first was to Adam and Natalie Robert's farm at Tesbury. A good turnout of members enjoyed looking around all aspects of this progressive business, including their cow shelter, dairy upgrades and maize silage.

Later in the year the group met at the Place family farm, Pomborneit. The main discussion points were the new flood-washed, concrete feedpad; the family's use on genomics on the Holstein herd; and the succession story that has seen Grant take over the business from Terry and Jo.

The group also enjoyed a Christmas catch-up at the Hampden Hotel. This gathering also served as a planning meeting for the rest of the calendar year.

The group aims to meet more regularly next year, with the plan to hold a meeting on a bi-monthly basis. There is also hope the group can visit Tasmania to look at virtual fencing.



Port Campbell Discussion Group

The Port Campbell Discussion Group meets on the first Tuesday of the month, ten times a year. WestVic Dairy supports the group by providing personnel and resources to ensure its smooth operation. In August 2023 a planning meeting was conducted with discussion group members providing input into the year's activities.

September saw the group join with the Coorriemungle Dairy Discussion Group at the Thompson family's farm in Timboon to focus on subsurface tile drainage. In October, the group returned to Timboon to revisit the Whitehead's (a past Focus Farm) to discuss new infrastructure, including a pivot and dam.

To conclude the calendar year, the group visited the Renyards' Meon Valley Farm in Curdievale to observe the new dairy and see the progress made by the Renyards over the past couple of years.

The new year kicked off with a social catch-up and annual dinner at the Port Campbell Hotel. In March 2024 the group got together again to visit to Bryan Dickson's farm in Terang to see the feedpad, maize crop, shed, and collars, and to observe the Dicksons' achievements over the past few years. In April the Port Campbell and Coorriemungle Dairy Discussion Groups once again held a joint meeting, this time at Jason and Abbey Burleigh's farm in Nullawarre to discuss transition feeding, calf rearing, and the irrigation system. The following month the group visited the Pols's dairy farm in Jancourt East to hear about the families experience moving from the Netherlands to Australia and to discuss differences in policies, regulations and feeding systems.

A delightful social catch-up took place at Dairylicious Farm Fudge in Timboon in June. This event featured industry experts discussing on-farm biosecurity and pasture management. Helen Chenoweth from Agriculture Victoria and Debbie Twiss from WestVic Dairy presented the latest on-farm biosecurity protocols.

Private Discussion Groups

Three private dairy discussion groups have benefited dairy farmers in the region this year. These are the Central Farm Discussion Group, the West Farm Discussion Group (west of Warrnambool), and most recently in February 2024, the South WestVic Young Farmer Discussion Group in Terang was formed.

The members of these groups come together regularly throughout the year to discuss topics of interest to them, topics included: managing export heifers, joining strategies, drought-resistant diets, ideal stocking rates, staffing requirements and rosters, water management, summer feeding strategies, best use of feed pads, and succession planning.

Farm Engagement

Further to the emphasis that WVD has had on the farmer engagement over the last eight years, DA has now invested heavily in this activity to strategically provide a more tailored level of support to levy payers.

The Farm Engagement Lead (FEL) position ensures DA and WestVic Dairy continue to meet dairy farmers' needs. Sam Andrews has continued to work in this role with Peter Gaffy finishing up as an Extension Advisor and starting in the FEL role in May. Pete and Sam have been out regularly meeting farmers and working closely with them to help build an understanding of their farm business needs and goals, and the goals they have for their life. Once this is established Sam and Pete are able to recommend the right DA and WestVic Dairy services and resources to help support them and their farm business. Pete and Sam are also able to make introductions and connect farmers to the right people to support them, which includes the DA and WestVic Dairy team, service providers and other farmers. The FEL role offers an additional opportunity to receive feedback from farmers about existing services and resources and to hear suggestions for future extension offerings. This in turn allows WestVic Dairy to better support the profitability and sustainability of individual farm businesses. Our FELs are looking forward to continuing to work with the regions farmers and learning about how DA and WestVic Dairy can best support them.



Special Events

From Idea to Innovation

Innovation was the key focus at WestVic Dairy's *From Idea to Innovation* forum held at Deakin University, Warrnambool in February 2024. The forum looked at future farm trends and underscored the significance of innovation in overcoming challenges and ensuring the industry's future success.

The day began with a panel discussion featuring innovation experts including:

- Mary Sharma, Head of Research and Development at Bulla Dairy Foods.
- Paul Douglas, Area Sales Manager at ST Genetics.
- Mike Brady, Irish Farm Consultant and director on the board at Nuffield International.

The panel discussion was followed by workshops focusing on innovation in technology, animal tech, and on-farm innovation. Workshops were run by:

- Brett Wood from Halter Tasmania.
- Erika Oaks, Data Gene's Information and Technology Project Manager.
- Liam Ryan, Dairy Farmer at Grassmere.

Liam recently brought significant innovation into the operation of the whole business. Extending a typical calving system out to a rolling lactation of 400 days plus, had major implications for feed, livestock management, labour and finances.

Great South West Dairy Awards

The *Great South West Dairy Awards* are hosted every second year to recognise and celebrate the achievements, dedication and hard work of those in the dairy industry in South-west Victoria. Each awards year, the winners are announced at an awards night. With a rich legacy of over 15 years, this setting allows for a grand celebration, acknowledging and honouring the contributions of dairy industry participants who have excelled in the region. The event saw 300 dairy farmers and industry members come together to celebrate and acknowledge their peers. The awards – across five categories and a photo competition – were handed out at a gala dinner, held in Warrnambool on 16 May 2024.

Dairy Farm Business Management Award

Winner	Greg and Kim Wilson (Irrewillipe)
Runner up	Harold Benzon (Minhamite)
Finalist	Dave Stewart (Glenfyne)

Young Dairy Leader Award

Winner	Rachael McGrath (Orford)
Runner up	Chloe Brown (Kirkstall)
Finalist	Gregor Mews (Southern Cross)

Natural Resource Management and Sustainability Award

Winner	Harris family (Larpen)
Runner up	Aurora Dairies Poorinda (Cooriemungle)
Finalist	Aurora Dairies Welbourne (Simpson)

Employee Award

Winner	Kerry-Leigh Hume (Glenfyne)
Runner up	Gregor Mews (Southern Cross)
Finalist	Romar Grolleman (Mepunga)

Service Provider Award

Winner	Eamon Maher (Naringal East)
Runner up	Lisette Mill (Laang)
Finalist	Harold Hanlon (Colac)

South West Dairy Ladies Luncheon

A sell-out crowd of over 300 dairy industry women attended the annual *South West Dairy Ladies Luncheon* in August 2023, hearing from a range of industry guest speakers including Regional General Manager for Westpac Agribusiness in Queensland, Peta Ward, and Caroline Simmons, co-founder of Timboon Fine Ice Cream.

This major ladies' dairy event brings together women in the dairy industry to connect, relax and enjoy networking opportunities with others in the industry.

A highlight of each year's luncheon is the inspirational guest speaker. Broadcaster, TV presenter, journalist, and writer, Myf Warhurst certainly delivered on last year's theme of "just for laughs".

The events success is made possible by long time sponsors *WestPac* and the *Gardiner Foundation*. Thank you to the committee for their efforts in organising the event with the support of WestVic Dairy.



Financial Statements

For year ended 30 June 2024 WestVic Dairy (non-reporting) Inc.

Your Board members present the financial report of WestVic Dairy Inc. for the financial year ended 30 June 2024.

Board

The names of the Board members throughout the year and at the date of this report are:

- **Brendan Rea** Chair
- **Will McDonald** Vice Chair
- **Rhonda Henry** Treasurer
- **Michael Huth**
- **Bruce Officer**
- **Lucy Collins**
- **Brooke Lane**
- **Ella Credlin**
- **Jacqueline Soares**

Principal activities

The principal activities of the association during the financial year was as the Regional Development Program (RDP) for the Western Victorian dairy region, and the delivery of dairy extension activities and programs. There were no significant changes in the nature of these activities during the year.

Significant changes in the state of affairs

No significant change in the nature of these activities occurred during the year.

Operating result

The deficit from ordinary activities for the financial year amounted to \$(76,722) (2023: Surplus of \$104,976).

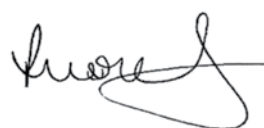
After balance date events

No matters or circumstances have arisen since the end of the financial year which significantly affected or may significantly affect the operations of the association, the results of those operations, or the state of affairs of the association in future financial years.

Signed in accordance with a resolution from the board:



Brendan Rea WestVic Chairperson
Dated at Warrnambool
9 September 2024



Rhonda Henry WestVic Treasurer
Dated at Warrnambool
9 September 2024

Statement of income and expenditure

For the year ended 30 June 2024

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Income		
Events	21,500	8,022
Interest received	28,742	12,789
Other income and refunds	262,791	13,194
Project income	139,687	129,418
Program funding	1,030,000	1,126,500
Total income	1,482,720	1,289,923
Expenditure		
Advertising and promotion	12,365	21,107
Amortisation	38,601	31,200
Audit and accounting fees	-	5,200
Bank charges	2,150	2,152
Board fees and development	37,682	26,580
Catering	12,580	11,009
Conferences	10,837	17,902
Contractors	164,338	115,810
Depreciation	4,692	4,690
Donations and gifts	25,955	16,278
Electricity and gas	5,937	4,527
Employee benefits expense charged	902,194	756,678
Extension costs	113,888	79,533
Insurance	14,348	13,721
Interest expense	4,086	463
Lab tests (soil, plant, animal)	2,709	9,222
Motor vehicle costs	100,910	8,266
Newspapers and magazines	773	614
Postage	8,243	3,525
Printing and stationery	11,583	4,448
Repairs and maintenance	6,241	4,157
Staff development	3,101	1,127
Subscriptions	2,220	2,283
Sundry	16,045	7,157
Telephone and technology	17,082	6,502
Tools and equipment	1,091	4,399
Travelling and accommodation	39,791	26,397
Total expenditure	1,559,442	1,184,947
Surplus /(deficit) for the year	(76,722)	104,976

Statement of financial position

As at 30 June 2024

	Note	2024	2023
ASSETS		\$	\$
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	2	924,408	1,065,543
Financial assets		259,134	254,173
Trade and other receivables	3	73,163	16,310
Prepayments		3,001	7,858
Total current assets		1,259,706	1,343,884
Non-current assets			
Leasehold improvements, plant and equipment	4	21,958	26,650
Right of use asset	5	290,048	173,487
Total non-current assets		312,006	200,137
Total Assets		1,571,712	1,544,021
LIABILITIES			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	6	20,446	41,757
Lease liabilities	7	27,315	29,187
Grants received in advance		55,054	38,000
Total current liabilities		102,815	108,944
Non-current liabilities			
Lease liabilities	7	255,429	144,887
Total non-current liabilities		255,429	144,887
Total liabilities		358,244	253,831
NET ASSETS		1,213,468	1,290,190
Equity			
Retained earnings		964,716	1,041,438
Extension committee		8,752	8,752
Minimum reserve		240,000	240,000
Total equity		1,213,468	1,290,190

Statement of changes in equity

For the year ended 30 June 2024

	Retained earnings	Extension Committee	Minimum reserve	Total
	\$	\$	\$	\$
Balance at 30 June 2022	936,462	8,752	240,000	1,185,214
Surplus attributable to the entity	104,976	-	-	104,976
Transfers	8,752	(8,752)	-	-
Balance at 30 June 2023	1,041,438	8,752	240,000	1,290,190
Surplus attributable to the entity	(76,722)	-	-	(76,722)
Balance at 30 June 2024	964,716	8,752.00	240,000	1,213,468

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 30 June 2024

	Note	2024	2023
		\$	\$
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts from customers		1,414,179	1,340,923
Payments to suppliers and employees		(1,532,603)	(1,159,633)
Interest Received		28,742	12,789
Net cash provided by / (used in) operating activities	8	(89,682)	194,079
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of investments		(4,960)	(3,565)
Net cash used in investing activities		(4,960)	(3,565)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Repayment of leases		(46,492)	(31,536)
Net cash (used in) financing activities		(46,492)	(31,536)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held		(141,134)	158,978
Cash at the beginning of the financial year		1,065,542	906,565
Cash at end of financial year	2	924,408	1,065,543

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2024

Note 1

The financial statements are special purpose financial statements prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act (VIC) 2012. The Board has determined that the association is not a reporting entity.

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis and are based on historical costs and do not take into account changing money values or, except where stated specifically, current valuations of non-current assets.

The following material accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless stated otherwise, have been adopted in the preparation of these financial statements.

(a) Accounts receivable and other receivables

Accounts receivables are recognised initially at the transaction price (i.e cost) and are subsequently measured at cost less provision for impairment. Receivables expected to be collected within 12 months of the end of the reporting period are classified as current assets. All other receivables are classified as non-current assets.

At the end of each reporting period, the carrying amount of accounts receivable and other receivables are reviewed to determine whether there is any objective evidence that the amounts are not recoverable. If so, an impairment loss is immediately recognised in the statement of income and expenditure.

(b) Accounts payable and other payables

Accounts payable and other payables represent the liabilities at the end of the reporting period for goods and services received by the association that remain unpaid. Accounts payable are recognised at their transaction price. Accounts payable are obligations on the basis of normal credit terms.

(c) Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise of cash on hand, demand deposits and short term investments which are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

(d) Revenue and other income

The association has applied AASB 15: Revenue from Contracts with Customers (AASB 15) and AASB 1058: Income of Not-for-Profit Entities (AASB 1058).

Operating Grants, Donations and Bequests

When the association receives operating grant revenue, donations or bequests, it assesses whether the contract is enforceable and has sufficiently specific performance obligations in accordance with AASB 15.

When both these conditions are satisfied, the association:

- identifies each performance obligation relating to the grant
- recognises a contract liability for its obligations under the agreement - recognises revenue as it satisfies its performance obligations. Where the contract is not enforceable or does not have sufficiently specific performance obligations
- recognises the asset received in accordance with the recognition requirements of other applicable accounting standards
- recognises related amounts (being contributions by owners, lease liability, financial instruments, provisions, revenue or contract liability arising from contract with customer)
- recognises income immediately in profit or loss as the difference between the initial carrying amount of the asset and the related amount

Interest income is recognised using the effective interest method.

(e) Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO is included with other receivables or payables in the balance sheet.

(f) Leases

Leases of property, plant and equipment, where substantially all the risks and benefits incidental to the ownership of the asset (but not the legal ownership) are transferred to the association, are classified as finance leases.

Finance leases are capitalised by recording an asset and a liability at the lower of the amounts equal to the fair value of the leased property or the present value of the minimum lease payments, including any guaranteed residual values. Lease payments are allocated between the reduction of the lease liability and the lease interest expense for that period.

Leased assets are depreciated on a straight-line basis over the shorter of their estimated useful lives or the lease term. Lease payments for operating leases, where substantially all the risks and benefits remain with the lessor, are charged as expenses in the periods in which they are incurred.

(g) Employee benefits

All employee benefits, including annual leave and long service leave are held by Dairy Australia Limited.

(h) Economic dependence

WestVic Dairy Inc. is dependent on Dairy Australia for the majority of its revenue used to operate the business. At the date of this report the Board has no reason to believe Dairy Australia will not continue to support WestVic Dairy Inc.

Note 2 Cash and cash equivalents

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
ANZ transaction account	261,965	726,714
ANZ cash management account	662,443	338,829
Total cash and cash equivalents	924,408	1,065,543

Note 3 Trade and other receivables

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Trade debtors	65,000	2,850
Other receivables	8,163	13,460
Total trade and other receivables	73,163	16,310

Note 4 Leasehold improvements, plant and equipment

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Leasehold improvements at cost	45,000	45,000
Less accumulated depreciation	(23,076)	(18,564)
	21,924	26,436
Plant and equipment at cost	12,183	12,183
Less accumulated depreciation	(12,149)	(11,969)
	34	214
Total leasehold improvements, plant and equipment	21,958	26,650

Note 5 Right of use assets

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Right of use asset - office	300,049	300,889
Less accumulated amortisation	(10,001)	(127,402)
Total right of use assets	290,048	173,487

Note 6 Trade and other payables

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Current		
Trade payables	-	337
Other payables	7,465	27,418
Credit cards	12,981	14,002
Total trade and other payables	20,446	41,757

Note 7 Lease liabilities

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Current		
Lease liability - office	27,315	29,187
Non Current		
Lease liability - office	255,429	144,887

Note 8 Reconciliation of cash flow operations with surplus for the year

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Surplus from operations	(76,722)	104,976
Non cash flows		
Depreciation	4,692	4,690
Amortisation	38,601	31,200
Changes in assets and liabilities		
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	(56,853)	25,789
(Increase)/decrease in other assets	4,857	(4,951)
(Decrease)/increase in trade and other payables	(21,311)	(5,625)
(Decrease)/increase in grants received in advance	17,054	38,000
	(89,682)	194,079

Note 9 Events occurring after the reporting date

No matter or circumstances have arisen since the end of the financial year which significantly affected or may significantly affect the operations of the association, the results of those operations or the state of affairs of the Association in future financial years.

Note 10 Association details

The registered office of the association is:
WestVic Dairy Inc.
5 Cressy Street
Camperdown VIC 3260

Statement by members of the board

For the year ended 30 June 2024

The Board has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the Board the financial statements:

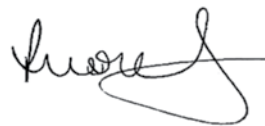
- 1 Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of WestVic Dairy Inc. as at 30 June 2024 and its performance for the year ended at that date.
- 2 At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that WestVic Dairy Inc. will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board of management and is signed for and on behalf of the Board of management by:



Brendan Rea WestVic Chairperson

Dated at Warrnambool
9 September 2024



Rhonda Henry WestVic Treasurer

Dated at Warrnambool
9 September 2024

INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF WESTVIC DAIRY INC.

Opinion

We have audited the financial report of WestVic Dairy Inc., which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024, the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of material accounting policies and statement by members of the committee.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the entity as at 30 June 2024, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act (VIC) 2012*.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the entity in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of Matter – Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the committees' financial reporting responsibilities under the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act (VIC) 2012*. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Report

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act (VIC) 2012* and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, management is responsible for assessing the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the entity's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Independence

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the independence requirements of Australian professional ethical pronouncements.

McLaren Hunt.

MCLAREN HUNT
AUDIT AND ASSURANCE

N.L. McLean.

N.L. McLEAN
PARTNER

Dated at Warrnambool, 12 September 2024

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Acknowledgements

WestVic Dairy sincerely appreciates the support and financial assistance of many people and organisations. During 2023/24 we again worked closely with the Gardiner Foundation and the DemoDAIRY Foundation on several events and training opportunities. We particularly value their willingness to invest in the training and development of young dairy people in our region and we look forward to working together in the year ahead.

We would like to extend our thanks to:

- All dairy farmers in Western Victoria
- Agriculture Victoria
- Australian Dairy Farmers
- Dairy Australia (DA)
- Dairy Farmers Victoria
- Deakin University, Warrnambool
- DemoDAIRY Foundation
- Gardiner Foundation
- United Dairyfarmers Victoria (UDV)
- The seven other Regional Development Programs across Australia: GippsDairy, Murray Dairy, DairySA, Western Dairy, DairyTAS, DairyNSW and SubTropical Dairy
- The milk processors that source Western Victorian milk
- The Corangamite and the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authorities
- The local shires: Corangamite Shire, Warrnambool City Council, Moyne Shire, Colac Otway Shire, Glenelg Shire, Surf Coast Shire, Southern Grampians Shire and those around Ballarat
- Local dairy farm consultants and service providers
- South West LLEN
- RIST and SWTAFE
- VicWest Rural Financial Counselling Service
- Food and Fibre Great South Coast
- Our project facilitators
- Our sponsors of the Great South West Dairy Awards, the South West Dairy Ladies' Luncheon, and the YDN events and extension activities.







Western Victoria

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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.

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