

# How Now Gippy Cow



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YOUNG DAIRY NETWORK

## Don Campbell Memorial Tour 2024



By Kristen Davis, GippsDairy

The Don Campbell Memorial Tour has come to a close for another year. Fourteen of Gippsland's young dairy professionals visited nine farms, two factories and attended the Tasmanian Dairy Conference and Awards Dinner over six days.

This year's tour offered the opportunity to showcase a number of farming business ranging in size, management, acquisition and ownership. Opportunities within the industry and progression, with a key focus on culture and development, was evident across our visits inspiring participants to challenge themselves and consider their future careers in dairy.

A key component of the tour is day one's personal and professional development session, focusing on the participant's careers and aspirations going forward. This session is aimed at setting participants up for success to get the most out of the experience, whilst providing skills and techniques to support them going forward in their careers.

This was followed by a site visit of the Fonterra Wynyard factory, specialising in cheddar production and with capacity sitting at 8,000

million tonnes per annum. We then made our way to Tall Timbers in Smithton for a taste of Cape Grim Beef for our welcome dinner.

For the first time in a number of years we had the opportunity to visit the North West of Tasmania, a highly productive portion of the region hosting the largest proportion of dairy cattle in the state.

Our first farm visit kicked off with the inspiring story of progression, showcasing what you can achieve when you have clear goals, direction, and determination. Immigrating to Australia in 2011, not even knowing the language, Jeffrey Gijsbers and Monique Mulder progressed to farm ownership with their first farm purchase in 2021, followed by a second farm purchase in 2023. Participants were encouraged to build connections across the industry and not be afraid to ask questions to help drive their growth.

We were then left amazed by the scale and processes in place at the 40 South non-replacement calf facility, rearing 6,500 calves annually. The theme of progression and growth within the industry was further emphasised by our visit to Circular Head Farms, showcasing the support and growth of farmers into share farming roles through local investment in 12 farms across the Circular Head region.

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Don Campbell Memorial Tour 2024

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A bit of spare time between visits gave us the opportunity to do some sightseeing around the Edge of the World before wrapping up the day with a farm tour of a GEA robotic milking system with the local YDN. This was followed by dinner at the Marawah pub that was kindly sponsored by GEA.

We started Wednesday morning off in the historic town of Stanley with a picturesque chairlift ride and walk around the Nut, and its stunning views overlooking Bass Strait. As we made the move to the Central North of the state, we stopped in on the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture's Dairy Research Facility. Alongside seeing some of the latest technological upgrades to the dairy, effluent and irrigation, current research was also showcased. The key piece of work was the Farmler Trials, which is aimed at examining the plant-animal-environment interactions between different pasture compositions and varying rates of nitrogen use.

The group had their first exposure to flexible milking on day four, with Luke Davey-Baldock discussing the benefits of 10 in 7 for their 1,040 cow operation. The resonating theme across the farm businesses visited on this day included people, development, and culture. Luke emphasised the importance of "empowering staff and supporting them to grow", building an environment where staff feel safe to push themselves out of their comfort zones and try new things.

This was followed by a visit to last year's Dairy Farm Business of the Year winner Troy Ainslie at Woodrising Dairies owned by Compass Agribusiness Management Australia, attributing their success to culture and their team. Troy said that "the key thing driving profit is their team," and focuses on work life balance: "I want them to come to work to live their life, not live their life to come to work," he said.

At this visit, we also had the opportunity to gain a more in depth understanding of the Halter virtual fencing collar system and its opportunities for a dairy business.



We wrapped up the day with the career progression story of Jesse Weaver who is currently contract milking, having started out in the US, moving to Australia 10 years ago. Jesse shared his insights on growth and career pathways within the industry.

Our second last day was filled with opportunities to network and learn in a more formal setting at the Tasmanian Dairy Conference and Awards Dinner. There were a few words of wisdom throughout the day once again emphasising some of the key themes we had seen throughout the trip. When managing and leading teams "clarity builds commitment" throughout your journey, be sure to only "control what you can and celebrate success along the way."

Our final visit of the tour took us to Ashgrove Cheese. Having started from humble beginnings in 1908 the business has grown to five dairy farms with 3,000 dairy cows, producing milk to make the Ashgrove brand supplied right across Australia.

After a turbulent flight delayed the start of this year's tour, we also had to wrap it up with a delayed end. When finally on route to Melbourne from Devonport, we had to return to Tassie mid-flight due to plane complications, changing our Melbourne bound ETA from 3:30pm to 8:30pm. The group handled it like troopers, but safe to say we were glad to finally arrive back in Melbourne.

This year's tour once again left participants feeling inspired about their future and what their career in dairy might hold. The Tasmanian dairy industry highlights the vast array of opportunities available in our industry and the variety of ways you can get to your end goal.

The success of the tour heavily relies on the willingness of farms to open up their business and share their stories. We are incredibly thankful for the farmers and businesses that were willing to host us and help support the growth and development of this year's Don Campbell Memorial Tour participants.



Don Campbell Memorial Tour 2024

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Byproducts Report – April 2024

By Isabel Dando, Dairy Australia

In April, prices for all feed byproducts covered in Dairy Australia's Byproducts report either fell or held steady for a second consecutive month. Most byproducts are boasting plentiful supply, with corn and soybean harvest well and truly underway. As such, dried distillers' grain (DDG) corn has been sold at around \$330/tonne out of the Riverina in NSW, with prices 6 per cent below last year.

Additionally, wheat millrun (ex NSW Riverina), soyabean meal (ex-Melbourne) and brewers' sweet grain (ex-Melbourne) showed the largest price decreases from March, falling \$70/tonne, \$60/tonne, and \$35/tonne respectively.

Falling cereal grain prices alleviated pressure on starch-based byproducts over summer, in addition to weaker demand, both domestically and globally. However, as conditions started to dry out in some areas in March, demand for supplementary feed picked up again and grain prices started to move up in response.

At this time, fodder inventories were starting to deplete across parts of Gippsland, and other areas of Victoria and southern NSW were beginning to dry out again. In the last weeks of March and first of April however, much of southeastern Australia received relatively unexpected and timely rainfall. This provided a much more favourable start to the winter growing season than initially expected in a lot of regions.

In some southern dairying regions, this rainfall will bolster pasture growth and feed conservation opportunities, somewhat mitigating

immediate demand on purchased fodder and sparing fodder replacement types such as almond hulls.

Depending on how the rest of the winter growing season pans out, this timely rainfall will prove supportive for fodder and grain production later this year. As such, alongside a generally favourable supply of tradeable fodder, feed grain and most feed byproducts, there are little signs of upward pressure on byproducts prices emerging in the coming months.

April 2024 byproduct prices compared to previous month and the year prior

Indicative prices in \$/tonne ex site

	Apr-24	Mar-24	Apr-23
Almond hulls (Northern Victoria)			
DDG dried (corn) loose (Ex NSW Riverina)	\$130	↓4%	N/A
Palm kernel extract (Melbourne port)	\$330	↓3%	↓6%
Canola meal solvent (Northern Victoria)	\$400	↓2%	↓25%
Gen Y: 1978 – 1994	\$580	↓5%	↑4%

Sibling, Spouse, Boss, Employee



By Rural Financial Counselling Services Gippsland

Being a 'farmer' isn't just a job title but a lifestyle. If your farm is like the 90%+ of Australian farms estimated to be operated by families, this lifestyle started from the time you were in nappies and may be passed down to your children's children.

When your job is your way of life, sometimes (if not all the time) it can be tricky to differentiate work from play and play from work, or colleague from sibling or spouse. Business models and corporate structures can go out the window as does the standardised way of running one's business.

When family are also colleagues and bosses this can complicate things. As an employee in a 'normal' job, it is clearly defined where you stand. Company policies are outlined and individuals' ideas/perspectives and contributions are usually welcomed and asked for. An individual's age and personal life history don't impact things within the workplace, more their current work ethos and ability to do the job are the defining factors. This kind of business structure is often not a natural progression within family-run farms.

Have you heard of the term Psychological Safety? The term was coined by Harvard Business School professor Amy Edmondson in 1999. It refers to a sense of comfort that allows individuals to take social risks, speak their minds, and express concerns without the fear of negative reactions such as ridicule or rejection. This creates an environment where people feel free to share creative ideas without fear of personal judgment, upsetting others, or stepping on toes.

Encouraging open dialogue and idea-sharing is crucial on family-run farms. Not only will this make for better working conditions, but also

have a positive impact on your family relationships and individual improved mental health.

Did you know Aussie farmers are more prone to depression and anxiety and it is estimated that every 10 days one Aussie farmer takes their own life?

Together, we can help change these statistics. Psychological Safety is the right to be respected and 'heard.' So, wherever you sit in the family tree or what role you hold on the farm, keep in mind everyone has the right to feel psychologically safe and it is important to open up that dialogue and not suffer in silence.

Know that you are not alone, help is a phone call away. At RFCS Gippsland, not only do we care about your financial wellbeing...we also care about your health and wellbeing.

We provide our agricultural industries and small rural businesses with FREE and CONFIDENTIAL services with a qualified team of agribusiness, financial and wellbeing specialists. RFCS Gippsland offer financial counsel, planning and guidance as well as additional support for your wellbeing. RFCS Gippsland has over 35 years of experience supporting farming and rural communities.

If you are struggling emotionally or financially (or know someone who is), protect them and yourself by referring to the free confidential services of RFCS Gippsland. Our specialised rural financial support team will work on improving your finances whilst a dedicated wellness support officer will focus on you.

MORE INFORMATION

Call 1300 045 747 or visit [rfcsgippsland.org.au](http://rfcsgippsland.org.au) to find out more.

YOUNG DAIRY NETWORK

Open Farm Day

Recently, members of the YDN gathered for an open farm day in Winnindoo. Discussion topics ranged from calf rearing to herd health, animal performance and pasture management.

A huge thank you to our farm hosts Rod Warren, Kallan and Lucy Young!



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**Automatic Milking Systems Discussion Group**

By Jessica Russell, GippsDairy

The Automatic Milking Systems (AMS) Discussion Group has had several farm visits over the last six months. Host farms have included Gordon Lockett in Neerim, the Hammond's family farm in Buln Buln, and Luke and Melanie Wallace's farm in Poowong.

At Gordon Lockett's farm in September, the group of 29 farmers saw the six newly installed robots and discussed the challenges of adding them to his existing cow yard.

For our November visit, we were hosted by Lilly Hammond on her family farm at Buln Buln. We spoke about all things generational farming, with three generations of her family all still very active within the business. Lilly discussed the benefits of a robotic system, with her taking on a full-time role on the farm and what that means for her day-to-day. Lilly also spoke about next steps and goals for her and her family.

To kick off our visits for 2024, we were hosted by Luke and Melanie Wallace out at Poowong North in March. We discussed the reasoning as to why they initially put in two robots, and the need to add an extra one in almost a year later. We also discussed the differences with milking jerseys through a robotic system.



**MORE INFORMATION**

If you are interested in hosting an Automatic Milking Systems Discussion Group visit on your farm, please get in contact with GippsDairy Extension Coordinator **Jess Russell** on 0427 275 654 or [jessica.russell@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:jessica.russell@gippsdairy.com.au)

**INDUSTRY INSIGHTS**

**World conflict**

Recent years have seen us become almost desensitised to new or escalating armed conflicts around the world.

The doomsayers are always wrong, and life goes on, albeit with some extra costs sprinkled here and there – be it increased shipping costs, higher feed prices, or more expensive diesel. Although the world has indeed not ended at the time of writing, these conflicts continue to emerge at a concerning rate, and the potential for miscalculation or overreach that leads to something with more far-reaching consequences is real.

Hiding under the bed won't do much good, but keeping risk management top of mind when it comes to purchased inputs (even the minor but critically important ones) and decisions around milk marketing for the upcoming season remains prudent.



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**Big genetic gains for Australian dairy farmers**



Victoria Jersey breeder Bill and Andrew Cochrane



Andrew Rushton

By DataGene

Some Australian dairy farmers have made genetic gains of more than 200 per cent in recent years thanks to industry tools such as the genomic testing, the Balanced Performance Index, Good Bulls and sexed semen.

These huge genetic improvements, measured by increases in each herd's average Balanced Performance Index (BPI) since 2020, were uncovered as part of DataGene's review of herd performance.

DataGene Stakeholder Relations Specialist Peter Thurn said this analysis demonstrated that tweaks to breeding – using modern herd improvement tools – can deliver tangible benefits to a dairy farm business faster than ever before.

"Herd average BPI is generally something that moves very slowly, but in the case of some herds, their progress has been quite rapid," he said.

"This fast improvement is due to the use of industry tools, especially genomics, and then using this genomic DNA information to choose the highest BPI animals to breed their herds' next generation."

Genomic testing analyses an animal's DNA from a sample such as ear tissue or a tail hair, to predict future performance. Heifers can be tested as young calves, so farmers can make early decisions about their future in their herd.

"The result of this can be improvements in fertility, production, survival, mastitis resistance and in some cases, this means less replacements are required from year-to-year and it could open new income streams such as dairy-beef."

Victoria Jersey breeder Bill Cochrane attributes the 168 BPI gain or 310 per cent rise in his herd's average BPI to "losing the bottom of the herd" and genomic testing.

"We trusted genomics when it first came in and we were quite happy to use a bull just on his genomic figures," he said.

"Genomics also played a role in eliminating the bottom end of our herd. For the past three or four years we've used beef on the bottom – according to genomics – and sexed semen to breed our heifers. Years ago, we'd just chuck a bull in with our heifers, but they are our better animals and using sexed semen ensures we breed our replacements from them."

Bill and Kaye Cochrane operate Craigielea Jerseys with their son Andrew and will milk 550 cows this year.

In DataGene's April release of Australian Breeding Values (ABVs), the Cochranes have the equal top Jersey cow, Craigielea Vicky 6151 VG 87 at 502 BPI.

Bill said DataGene's BPI system was a good guide for breeding because it enabled dairy farmers to chase production as well as type traits that improved the functionality of cows.

The BPI accounts for traits that affect a cow's lifetime contribution to the farm business: production, health/fertility, longevity, workability, feed efficiency and type.

NSW Riverina dairy farmers Bernard and Jenny James attribute their improvement of 359 per cent or 211 BPI units to a "tough" approach to managing fertility as well as sexed semen and using a group of three to four Good Bulls to improve herd traits.

Bulls that carry DataGene's Good Bulls logo meet the minimum criteria for Balanced Performance Index and reliability and are available for purchase.

Bernard said genetic gains were valuable to his business and he was looking forward to future improvements.

"I'm excited to think about what's going to happen in the coming years after this big jump in the last few years; it is really only just starting," he said.

"We have a beautiful line of cows that are well-natured, and we don't have the cull heifers that we used to. Milk production is slowly climbing, and we expect that to keep climbing."

Using genomic data to make decisions about which heifers to retain - when they are young calves - and those to breed with sexed semen has helped Andrew Rushton and his family improve their BPI by 310 per cent to 172 BPI.

Andrew, his wife Jess, dad Bryan and mum Lee operate Benlock Jerseys at Rochester, milking 280 cows.

"The BPI takes into account so many other things that aren't visual such as survival, daughter fertility and all the things you can't see," he said.

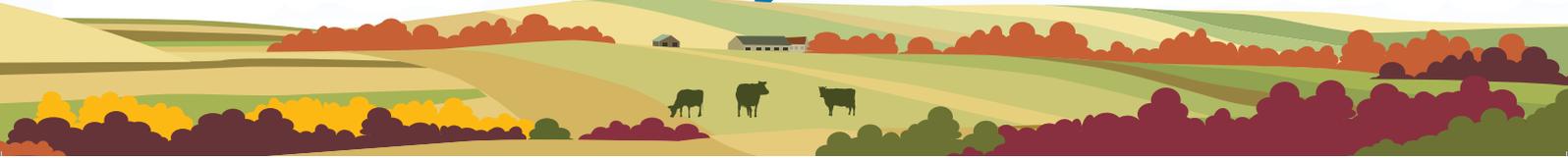
"We've improved our BPI by using genomics to understand our best BPI heifers before we start milking them and then we used that data to breed our best heifers with sexed semen to improve our genetic gain."

Visit [www.datavet.com.au](http://www.datavet.com.au) to look up the DataGene's latest release of Australian Breeding Values and indices such as the BPI.

**MORE INFORMATION**

For more information contact: **DataGene 1800 841 848** or [abv@datagene.com.au](mailto:abv@datagene.com.au) or [www.datagene.com.au](http://www.datagene.com.au). DataGene is an initiative of Dairy Australia and the herd improvement industry.

# Hoofing around Gippy town



DATE	TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
Wednesday 8 May 2024	6:30pm-8:30pm	YDN Fancy Dress Pub Dinner	Trafalgar
Thursday 16 May 2024	11:00am-2:00pm	YDN West Gippsland – Autumn Sowing	Lang Lang East
Tuesday 21 May 2024	10:00am-1:00pm	Women in Dairy – Making sense of milk price	Warragul
Thursday 23 May 2024	10:00am-1:00pm	Women in Dairy – Making sense of milk price	Sale
OTHER GIPPSLAND EVENTS			
Thursday 9 May 2024	8:30am-3:00pm	Dairy Innovation Open Day	Ellinbank SmartFarm



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### Upcoming events

To view and register for any of our upcoming events, visit the GippsDairy events calendar:  
<https://bit.ly/GippsDairyEventsCalendar>  
or scan the QR Code.



### Hay and Grain reports

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

#### Hay Report



#### Grain Report



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