



HOTLINE

Newsletter of the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria

May 2010

President's Report



Dairy wash down license win a "water shed" for farmers

April brought a big win for Victorian dairy farmers, with the successful resolution of the Dairy Shed Water Licensing issue. Since the Licence Transition Program was launched by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) last year, the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) and the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria (UDV) have always maintained that the program would not achieve its intended objectives unless our concerns were adequately addressed. These concerns included the issues surrounding unregistered farm dams, Goulburn-Murray Water's license fees, and the metering requirements for licenses issued under the program.

After months of hard lobbying by the UDV in partnership with the VFF Water Council and policy group, I was delighted to receive the announcement from Water Minister Tim Holding's office just before Easter, advising that the Dairy Shed Water Licensing Transition Program had been amended to accommodate all of our major concerns, and the amnesty period extended by another month.

The major wins gained for dairy farmers include:

- Reduced application fees for the majority of Goulburn-Murray Water customers who apply during the amnesty period;
- In relation to farm dams, a choice between a conditional licence or a normal licence - fees will not apply to conditional farm dam licences as they are not transferable; and
- Water authorities will have discretion on whether a meter is required for new licences for surface water under 10 GL and groundwater under 20 GL.

These amendments to the Dairy Shed Water Licence Transition Program will ensure all dairy farmers are correctly licensed for the water they use in the dairy shed, and will provide a level of security for the future.

This is a fantastic achievement for the UDV, and an excellent example of what can be accomplished when dairy farmers unite and make their voices heard. I would like to thank all the members who contacted the UDV to express their views on this vital issue, as well as VFF Senior Water Policy Adviser Dr. Ammar Jarrar and Chair of the VFF Water Council Richard Anderson for their assistance during this long and challenging campaign.

Around the office

We have been busy preparing for the UDV Conference which will be held later this month, with the program now finalised and looking outstanding. I am looking forward to catching up with many of our members at the Conference, and hopefully meeting some new faces too - as we are inviting all dairy farmers this year, including non-members, and we will welcome anyone who wishes to come along.

This year we are trialling a different system where individuals can register for Conference without the need for the Branch delegate system. As an aside, Echuca-Moama is also a

great place to spend a few extra days to rest and recharge the batteries. Check out the details and registration options inside this Hotline.

We are also keeping busy with a number of important issues currently on the horizon. The draft Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy has been released and the VFF has been holding forums throughout the South-west to get farmers' feedback. The VFF will shortly develop a submission in response to the draft strategy.

Smart meters have also been a hot topic in recent weeks, with the state-wide roll-out beginning to impact financially upon dairy farmers. We are currently doing some in-depth research into the real costs of installing and running smart meters, and have also requested more detailed information from the Victorian Government about this issue. The UDV would like to hear from dairy farmers who have had smart meters installed. Please give us a call on **1300 882 833** to share your experience.



Chris Griffin
President
United Dairyfarmers of Victoria

origin Join in

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UDV Conference 2010: Earning respect and influence

A harsh look: the future of advocacy in modern times

Wednesday 26th & Thursday
27th May 2010

Moama Bowling Club
6 Shaw St, Moama NSW 2731

The UDV invites all Victorian dairy farmers to come and join us in Moama for an informative, inspiring and thoroughly enjoyable 2010 UDV Annual Conference.

A fascinating and innovative program has been developed for this year's UDV Conference. We have put together a great speaker line-up that will provide perspectives from a range of organisations and lobbying styles – and in gathering those perspectives, we will expose our audience to some remarkable people with great stories to tell. Our philosophy with this program is that we are not necessarily seeking to copy their style of lobbying and industry representation – but we are certainly looking to learn from them and their experiences.

Spearheading the line-up is UK-based dairy farmer, Nuffield scholar and farm lobby commentator David Homer, who has recently completed a scholarship on attitudes and

relationships of the dairy industry. David will discuss the effectiveness of his country's National Farmers Union, his observations of the effectiveness of similar organisations in Europe and what he considers "best-practice" in terms of building respect, membership and influence.

Fellow international speaker Jeff Simmons, the President of the US-based animal health firm Elanco will also join by video Conference. Jeff will discuss the lessons learned from dealing with many of the world's largest food companies, international governments and environmental groups and in particular the future direction of agricultural advocacy.

To this the UDV has added local expertise in the form of leading professional lobbyist Mark Textor from the Sydney-based firm Crosby Textor, and many of our well-known Victorian dairy industry leaders. We are also looking forward to a thoroughly entertaining evening on Wednesday 27 May with special guests The Coodabeen Champions at the Elanco Industry Dinner.

Check out the program and online registration form on our website at www.vff.org.au (under the "About" menu, then select "Dairy"), or ring the office on **1300 882 833**.



Australian Dairy Farmers - Board nominations

UDV members are invited to nominate themselves for a position on the Board of Australian Dairy Farmers Limited (ADF). ADF is the national representative organisation for dairy farmers, and its members are the six state dairy farmer organisations including UDV. ADF is the national voice of Australia's dairy farmers, and strives to advance our shared national interests.

The UDV is required to nominate seven representatives (including the UDV President) and two deputies to the ADF Board, which

meets four times per year. All UDV members are eligible to nominate for these positions. Please provide a CV including details of why you wish to represent the UDV on the ADF Board. Nominations can be faxed to the UDV office on **9207 5611** by close of business Thursday 20 May, or they can be handed to John Borromeo at the UDV Conference, prior to 2pm on Thursday 27 May. Successful candidates will be notified after the UDV Central Council's Annual Meeting on 27 May.

Why be a member of the UDV?

Membership of the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria (UDV), the dairy commodity of the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF), provides Victorian dairy farmers with protection from the potential for governments to introduce poorly considered policies which may place an onerous burden on their farm business.

View a UDV membership as insurance. Why have any insurance: car, home, life etc. when you may never use it? If all the unfortunate people who suffered directly as a result of the Victorian bushfires in 2009 did not have home insurance where would they be now?

Join the UDV/VFF today so that you can help us ensure a long-term, profitable and sustainable future for all Victorian dairy farmers.

Animal Health and Welfare update from ADF

By Kevin Sheill, Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF)

Foot and Mouth Disease Symposium

The ADF and Dairy Australia were active participants in the International Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Symposium held in Melbourne, 12 to 14 April 2010, with President Wes Judd making a presentation on the dairy industry's role in managing an FMD outbreak.

The principle focus of discussions at the symposium was on technical developments:

- Epidemiology and surveillance
- Understanding viruses and host interactions
- Diagnostics – advances and applications
- Vaccines and their applications

Speakers from many countries, with a range of experiences in managing outbreaks, vaccination programs, research and dealing with FMD as an everyday reality, enabled a valuable interaction and improved understanding.

Dealing with milk produced in areas that are declared an FMD Restricted Area is a subject currently being considered by a national working group, and was one raised at the symposium. ADF President Wes Judd emphasised the importance of recognising industry quality

assurance and biosecurity standards and working with these to enable management of minimal risks in moving milk from the Restricted Area to processing facilities outside this area. ADF and Dairy Australia have provided detailed submissions to the national working group on ways milk can continue to be collected from non infected herds in restricted areas. It is important that these procedures are agreed and in place prior to any outbreak. ADF and DA will continue to pursue this on behalf of the dairy industry.

Cattle Welfare Standards

The ADF supported by Dairy Australia, is working with other industry groups and state and federal governments on the development of national cattle welfare standards. The dairy industry's position is that the standards need to be outcomes focused, non prescriptive and based on science. This should enable individual dairy farmers to use existing systems to demonstrate how they deliver the required welfare outcomes. The ADF will provide dairy farmers with information on what the standards mean and if there are any necessary changes to existing practices required once the draft standards have been written.

For further information on either of these topics, please contact Kevin Sheill at Australian Dairy Farmers on **(03) 8621 4200**.

VFF Workplace Relations Department offers assistance with IFAs

The Victorian Farmers Federation Workplace Relations Department has been extremely busy tailoring flexibility agreements for the dairy industry. Demand for the flexibility agreements has increased once the membership has become aware of the benefits to employers and employees. Individual flexibility agreements have to some extent taken over from Australian Workplace Agreements.

There are legal requirements that must be fulfilled when drafting an individual flexibility agreement (IFA) and can only used to vary five award matters. The IFA must detail how the agreement results in the individual employee

being "better off" overall in relation to the individual employee's terms and conditions of employment.

Employers should be aware that individual flexibility agreements cannot be given to prospective employees before they commence working. The employee must have commenced work and there must be genuine agreement between the parties.

Please contact the VFF Workplace Relations Department to discuss tailoring individual flexibility agreements for your workplace on **1300 882 833**.

With the draft national cattle welfare standards currently under development, interested UDV members will have an opportunity to make comments throughout the process, with the first opportunity to be some time in the second half of this year. Both the UDV and VFF Livestock Group will be seeking comment on the draft from members. For further information please contact the office on 1300 882 833.

Diary Dates

17th May

Geelong Colac DC General Meeting and dinner. 7pm, Marcus Oldham College Geelong, cost \$25 for dinner. Special guest speaker Graeme Anderson – Senior subject specialist- DPI Geelong. RSVP to DC Secretary Wendy Bittans on **9394 1107**.

19 May

"Your Dairy Industry – Structure, Influence and Milk Pricing" workshop. Flying Horse Inn, Warrnambool, 11am with lunch provided. Come along and learn more about your industry organisations, milk companies, how farm gate milk price is calculated, and what influences it. This workshop will be held in conjunction with the National Centre for Dairy Education and the South-West YDDP, and funded by the Gardiner Foundation. RSVP to Kate at krandall@vff.org.au or call **1300 882 833**.

Farm Improvement Grants

Did you know that farm improvement grants of up to \$2,000 are available to eligible drought-affected farmers who currently receive Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payments from Centrelink? As part of its \$47 million drought package, the Victorian Government is providing these grants for farmers to invest in farm improvements such as fixed fodder and water storages, irrigation system upgrades and permanent repairs to fixed infrastructure.

For more information about these grants, or to find out whether you are eligible, contact Rural Finance on **5448 2600** or visit www.ruralfinance.com.au.

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Flexible working arrangements for dairy

There is good news for dairy farmers and workers in the new Pastoral Award 2010 which contains a "flexibility clause" that allows employees and employers to vary some conditions if both parties agree.

Dr Pauline Brightling who manages Dairy Australia's The People in Dairy program explains these "Individual Flexibility Agreements" are easy to set up, but they do need to comply with the "better off overall test".

The conditions that can be varied under Individual Flexibility Agreements (IFA) include working hours, overtime rates, penalty rates, allowances and leave loading.

"IFAs are quick and straightforward in that they do not need to be approved by Fair Work Australia but they must meet the 'better off overall' test: an employee must be better off overall on the IFA compared to the modern award," said Dr Brightling.

Dairy Australia's The People in Dairy program has made it easy for dairy businesses to set up IFAs by providing a template which can be downloaded and customised for each individual agreement. It also has more details on IFAs and how they work.

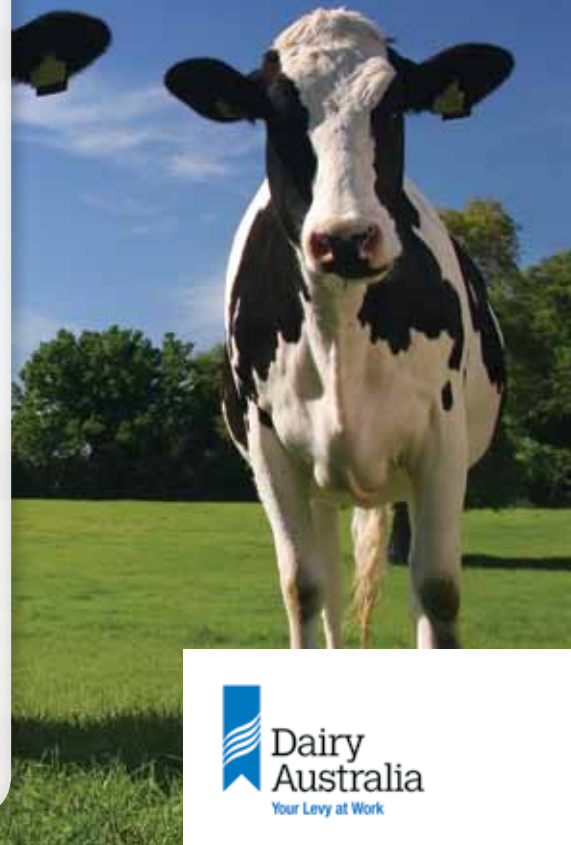
It is the employer's responsibility to ensure the agreement is made correctly and meets all of the requirements of the Fair Work Act.

Individual Flexibility Agreements can only vary the following award terms:

- Arrangements for when work is performed such as working hours
- Overtime rates
- Penalty rates
- Allowances
- Leave loading

Award entitlements relating to any of these five award matters can be varied by agreement between an employer and an individual employee provided that overall the employee is 'better off' under the IFA.

The People in Dairy program is one of many examples of your levy at work. For more information on your levy investments, visit www.dairyaustralia.com.au.



Young Dairy Development Program

YDDP has great pleasure in welcoming Gemma Monk as the new Northern Region Coordinator. Gemma comes to the position with a wealth of experience having worked in the dairy industry previously in the South-west and Gippsland. Most recently Gemma has worked as a dairy industry trainer for National Centre for Dairy Education Australia. She currently farms with her husband John and young family at Rochester. Welcome to the team Gemma!

Northern - calf & heifer workshops with Dr John Moran

Murray Dairy was fortunate enough to engage the services of Dr. John Moran at a Calf Rearing Workshop run by YDDP at Tatura in March. The workshop attracted 46 people including six Indonesian students who are studying

Agriculture with GOTAFE.

The open delivery format allowed lots of questions and information sharing plus an opportunity to speak with John on a more individual level over lunch.

There are plans underway to run the Calf Rearing Workshop in the Riverina some time in June or July, so keep your eye on the back of the Target 10 newsletter and the Murray Dairy website for a date. If you have any suggestions or requests for this workshop or another in your area, please contact Gemma on **03 5833 5928**.

South west - setting the scene on setting the price

Our dairy industry thrives - or barely survives - on the basis of the price we receive for our milk. But the process used in the setting of milk prices is often a mystery to many people in

the industry. We hope to unravel some of that mystery when we host two forums at Colac and Warrnambool on May 19.

The forums will help explain how milk prices are set, why there are step-ups, and the differences between the companies. They will also explain the impact of international markets on domestic price structures, and the Warrnambool forum will provide further information about local and on-farm influences, as well as up-to-date information about dairy industry structure, organisations and roles.

Representatives from each of the major processing companies in Western Victoria and Dairy Australia's Jo Bills will lead the sessions. Dairy industry consultant Cameron Smith, of Farmanco, will also present at the Warrnambool forum, as part of the UDV/NCDEA's "Your Dairy Industry" workshops which are funded by Gardiner Foundation.

The lunch forum will be held at the Flying Horse Inn in Warrnambool at 11am, and a dinner forum at the Pirron Yallock Pub (cost \$15) at 7:30pm. Contact Liza on **03 5592 2477** for further details.

Disclaimer: This publication is provided in good faith and as a guide only. It may be of assistance to you, but the VFF/UDV does not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or consequence that may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

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