

Genetics Australia Share Dairy Farmer of the Year Award 2006

Conducted by
The Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria and
The Victorian Agricultural Societies Association



In conjunction with
The United Dairy Farmers of Victoria



Victorian Farmers Federation
United Dairyfarmers of Victoria



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GENETICS AUSTRALIA SHARE DAIRY FARMER OF THE YEAR 2006

The Share Dairy Farmer of the Year Award was initiated by the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria in 1979.

Aims

The aims of the competition are to:

- reward top sharefarmers for their contribution to productivity.

- encourage young farmers to the dairy industry.
- extend the performances of the top sharefarmers to others by way of a field day.
- lift the image of the sharefarming profession.
- encourage the formation of a good relationship between the sharefarmer and the owner.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

Judging the Genetics Australia Share Dairy Farmer of the Year Award is a rewarding experience. At each farm we received a warm welcome and entrants were willing to answer questions and openly discuss their enterprise.

A common theme in all entries was that they recognised the value of seeking information relevant to their farming needs. They all had the ability to sift through the huge amount of available data, analyse it and then implement strategies.

The seven entrants judged in the finals came from varying backgrounds. The farms all were at different stages of development, which was interesting in itself and presented a huge challenge for us as judges.

No entrant was penalised for anything that was out of their control.

The seven finalists were judged against each other as the best share dairyfarmers in the state in this year

Herd types varied from registered herds to mixed herds, typical of sharefarmers establishing a herd. There were also differences in the breed composition. Herd management was controlled by all entrants and was examined critically.

Our summary of the herds in order of our visit:

Wayne & Leah Brunt had what can best be described as a "cow change". Originally from a forestry background, they had enthusiasm, passion, pride and energy, which they directed towards improving their dairy farming skills. Their knowledge of the herd was excellent. They had a fantastic attitude to learning the business of dairy farming and applying themselves to a major career change. They proved themselves to be very adaptable. Their young stock also scored highly in the judge's opinion.

Brett Nutting & Jodi Probert impressed us with their well-rounded skill level — including the way they approached the share farming vacancy by interviewing the owner to determine if the role would fulfil their requirements. Knowledge seeking and then sharing it with others was a key to their success. Quiet achievers, doing a fantastic job without too much fanfare.

Aaron Bidmade & Sarah Beard are an enthusiastic, energetic and vibrant young couple. They had a "marginal" conversion property, which was still under development. They are an inspiration to other young people

entering the industry. They have shown what can be achieved with a healthy attitude and good work ethic.

New paddock and lane layouts enable better pasture management. If there was a prize for a "wow farm", this was it.

There is nothing short of sensational in the way **Bruce & Kylie Hill** had gone about maximising their opportunity. The farm had been severely run down, so a mountain of work had been done in a very short time — pasture renovation, shed and vat updates, laneways and fencing along with continual upgrades to the herd and use of an auto calf feeder. It all says "watch this space" as the benefits start to flow. They had a huge amount of energy and enthusiasm. Full marks for taking on a task that many would not engage in.

Dehne Vinnicombe & Sarah Fairbrother showed cows that were well fed and in the best condition of any we saw. This was a unique entry, which centred on Dehne's interest in breeding to add income and interest to dairyfarming.

They capably demonstrated the benefits that can be achieved through a defined and strategic focus on the elements of a carefully thought out breeding plan.

Matthew & Kaye Baxter demonstrated the synergies you can get from a well run family farm operation with great communication and shared goals. Three generations were involved with both sharefarmer's parents having an influence.

Extra income was generated through rearing dairy beef cross calves. First calvers entered the herd in an optimal size and condition.

Ian & Alice Holloway's farm at Gundowring North was a sensational entry. They met all the competition criteria competently and completely. Herd condition was great, pasture management was well implemented and there was a good balance of family and community involvement. They also recognised the benefits of seeking extra information and peer support. Experience gained from careers outside the dairy industry had a strong influence on their decision-making ability.

Confidence in the dairy industry was demonstrated in that all entrants had improved their asset base by investing in their dairy farm operation through herd ownership, land purchase, or leasing land.

The State Judging Panel was Jamie Snell (past winner), John Verstedden (UDV and past winner) and Tim van der Poel (Genetics Australia).

AWARDS

First prize

The title of Genetics Australia Share Dairy Farmer of the Year, semen to the value of \$3300, 12 month membership of the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria and a trophy.

Second prize

Semen to the value of \$2000 and a trophy.

Third prize

Semen to the value of \$1100 and a trophy.

Zone winners

Semen to the value of \$700 each.

Zone runners up

Trophies

PAST COMPETITION WINNERS

1979	Pat & Elsa Horan, Dumbalk	1993	Geoff & Debbie Evans, Toolong
1980	Hank & Trish Hayden, Simpson	1994	Gary & Samantha Owen, Budgeriee
1981	Bruce & June McGregor, Dingee	1995	Jamie & Anne Snell, Newry
1982	Ron & Wendy Costin, Nambrok	1996	Wolfie & Kerrie Wagner, Bunyip North
1983	Ross & Dianne Burke, Timboon	1997	Geoff & Vicki Wickham, Nullawarre
1984	Peter & Rosemary Mathieson, Whorouly	1998	Stephen & Denise Cusack, Katunga
1985	Brian Walker, Boisdale	1999	Andrew & Carolyn Balfour, Willow Grove
1986	Ian & Helen Herron, Gainsborough	2000	Brendan & Michelle Rea, Allansford
1987	Gordon & Elaine Ailey, Heytesbury	2001	Daryl & Leilani Hoey, Tallygaroopna
1988	Gerard & Lynette Santamaria, Orbost	2002	Jason Leslie & Nicole Broadbent, Denison
1989	Max & Heather Farley, Tallangatta	2003	Kelvin & Lindy Bruce, Undera
1990	John & Lyn Verstedden, Longwarry	2004	Mark & Tania Neville, Mepunga
1991	Wayne & Vickie Crole, Cobden	2005	Barry & Megan Coster, Ripplebrook
1992	Ian & Dale-Maree Florence, Kyabram		

2006 WINNERS

State Prize Winners for 2006

Ian & Alice Holloway, Gundowring North	First Prize
Wayne & Leah Brunt, Newry	Second Prize
Brett Nutting & Jodi Probert, Glen Alvie	Third Prize
Aaron Bidmade & Sarah Beard, Koroit	Outstanding achievement
Dehne Vinnicombe & Sarah Fairbrother, Mitiamo	Genetic improvement award
Matthew & Kaye Baxter, Cobram	Excellence in farm management
Bruce & Kylie Hill, Carpendeit	Farm Improvement award

Group Runners-up for 2006

Mark & Kim Bayne, Beeac	Second Place, South West Victoria
Region Judges, Anthony Shelly, Vicki Wickham, Wayne Crole	
Paul & Annette Morrissey, Cobrico	Second Place Far West Victoria
Region Judges, Anthony Shelly, Vicki Wickham, Wayne Crole	
Peter & Rachel Romans, Kergunyah	Second Place North East Victoria
Region Judges, Arthur Dingle and Trevor Ennals	
Mark & Lisa Wilms, Trafalgar	Second Place Gippsland
Region Judges, Bill Lack, Nicole Broadbent and Max Warren	
Sharon & Gary Hunt, Welshpool	Second Place South Gippsland
Region Judges, Alan Blum and Stewart Twedde	



For more information on the Genetics Australia
Share Dairy Farmer of the Year Award
visit the Genetics Australia website at www.genaust.com.au
or contact the Royal Agricultural Society on 03 9281 7444.

Farm Owner: Arthur & Geraldine Dingle

Effective hectares of home farm	175ha	Feed bought in	Grain @ 1.4 tonne per cow
Effective hectares of run-off block	204ha	Irrigation water used	Home block 1430ML
Fodder conserved from home farm	500 rolls silage, 100 rolls hay	Average annual rainfall	425mm
Fodder conserved from run-off block	1500 rolls hay	Mating start dates	Spring: 25 th Oct, Autumn: 1 st June
Feed bought in	Grain	Share agreement	33 1/3%

Feeding

Eight kg of grain is fed in the dairy. Additional silage and hay is fed to to fill feed gaps.

Matt is in charge of pasture management, pasture rotations and fertilizer applications. We try to over sow 1/3 of permanent pasture every year. We try to have a balance of permanent pasture and annuals so we have a balance for spring and autumn calving. We also work together with our nutritionist to get the most out of the cows.

Calf rearing

The calves are bottle fed two Litres of colostrum while they are on the calving pad. Calves are housed in open sheds on straw bedding. The calf sheds are located at Arthur's old dairy. They're fed twice a day on calfateria teats in the shed with a total of six Litres, for the first two weeks. Then once a day with four Litres using a suckle bar of 30 teats. The calves also receive two kg of grain 70% wheat and 30% canola. They are weaned at 12 weeks of age.

Breeding program

We use the best bulls available from Genetics Australia as well as random progeny test semen. Genescreen is also used effectively to help with mating decisions.

In the spring we join using heat mount detectors for six weeks and then mop up with Angus and Friesian Bulls.. For the autumn joining we use the detectors for 21 Days only and use the same mop up strategy.

Herd health

We use Ivomec Plus injection for the treatment of liver fluke and the whole herd is treated with Enduro Dry Cow, 7 in 1 and vitamin B 12.

Best Fed Base minerals plus pellets and grain are fed in dairy.

Cows are monitored closely for sickness, lameness and other ailments. Veterinary treatments are given if required.

Replacements

All Holstein heifer calves are kept and weaned at 12 weeks. Depending on available feed, they may go to agistment or to the run-off block. We also keep all beef calves to rear as another income source.

Fertiliser

After having soil tests done, blends are put on different parts of the farm. Lime has been used all over the farm.

Herd production

Season (production year)	No. of cows	Milk (L)	Fat (%)	Fat (kg)	Prot (%)	Prot (kg)
Factory Figures						
2002-2003	430	6912		280		231
2003-2004	430	6900		277		234
2004-2005	430	7218		289		250
2005-2006	430	7385		278		253
Herd Test Figures						
2005-2006	383	7755	3.8	295	3.4	267
Production for each age group (current season)						
2-year-olds	63	6107	3.8	230	3.5	211
3-year-olds	67	7658	3.7	284	3.5	265
4-year-olds	63	8368	3.7	310	3.4	284
Mature cows	149	7820	3.8	298	3.4	266



Milking system

Two people are required in the dairy. At the peak of the season milking takes 2½ hours. We have two very reliable relief milkers.

Farm records

We keep all herd records using a computer and the Easy Dairy program. We are also responsible for Murray Goulburn Milkcare Quality records.

We keep our own financial records using the Quicken program. Kaye and Geraldine jointly calculate the splitting of invoices.

Lifestyle

Our leisure revolves around family events and our children's sporting activities. It is always nice to get off the farm and have a day out.

Each year in June we go for a two-week holiday and try to take other breaks when possible and enjoy family time with the kids.

Making the most of the property

When coming to the farm , we lasering everything that wasn't lasered. We installed new poly pipe and bigger water troughs in all paddocks. We have also had power connected to spear points. The cow yard at dairy was extended and a backing gate installed. We built a bridge over the main.

Farm owners: Jim & Alyson Ferguson

Effective hectares of home farm	155 milker plus 40ha dryland	Irrigation water used	690ML
Effective hectares of run-off block	70	Average annual rainfall	690mm (last year 949mm)
Fodder conserved from home farm	-	Mating start date	Cows 25 th Oct, heifers 11 th Oct
Fodder conserved from run-off block	-	Commenced sharefarming	July 2004 on present farm
Feed bought in	75t hay, 638t grain plus 21t for calves	Share agreement	50%, sharefarmers own herd

Feeding

We follow the Target 10 program 'Feeding Pastures for Profit':

- Grazing pasture at the 3-leaf stage, except in spring we bring the leaf stage back to 2½ to try to minimise seed heads.
- Feeding stuffiest grain so that the cows leave behind a 5 cm residue and are fully fed.
- We crush our own grain also adding a mineral supplement pellet.
- We use the Rotation Right tool to determine the area of pasture to be grazed everyday.
- Our aim is to keep our cows fully fed at all times, which results in consistently high production through out the year to maximise profit.

With our high production just before drying off in late autumn, we have achieved the same average milk price as autumn calving herds, without the problem of finding enough feed for fresh cows in the winter.

Calf rearing

New calves are picked up once a day, and taken to the calf shed. Heifer calves are kept in pens of 10, bobby calves are kept in a separate calf shed. Both heifer and bobby calves are then tube fed 3.5 litres of colostrum. Heifer calves have a follow up feed of another 3.5 litres in the morning. They are then taught to drink from the feeder the next day.

We have set up a system to pump milk from a storage vat into the calf feeders. This has saved us a lot of time and effort. Pellets, straw and fresh water are always on offer.

Calves are weaned at about Week 8 when they are eating about two kg pellets a day. They are then taken up to the calf paddock where they remain on pellets plus lucerne hay and quality pasture.

Breeding program

We select Australian Holstein proven bulls using around 250 straws. We also use around 300 progeny test straws. This year we selected BULLBAR, JUSTIFIER, NINEFOLD, GOLDSMITH and DONANTE. We look for production, fertility, teat alignment, cell count and type when we choose bulls. Our herd breeding policy is to spend that little bit extra on premium semen. You'll never stop reaping the benefits. For the difference of around \$22, we believe it's a great investment.

Herd health

We believe in identifying and dealing with sick animals quickly giving them a good chance of recovery. We think it is profitable to spend money on veterinary help to eliminate health problems quickly and efficiently. With the help of consultants we identified several problems the milking plant has had since it was built and was causing teat damage and mastitis. Fixing the problem improved cell counts greatly.

At dry off, we Dry Cow all milkers, drench for fluke and worms and vaccinate with 7 in 1. We also worm with a nil withhold pour-on around late December. We always get a great response. All young stock are vaccinated with 7 in 1, wormed and fluked according to the product guidelines.

Replacements

Cows are culled for:

- Cell count – over a period of seasons
- Production – low production, low fat and protein
- Empty cows when production drops below a profitable margin.
- Late calving.

Herd production

Season (production year)	No. of cows	Milk (L)	Fat (%)	Fat (kg)	Prot (%)	Prot (kg)
Factory Figures						
2004-2005	350	2,578,455	4.14	106,706	3.73	96,232
2005-2006	340	2,545,995	4.10	104,510	3.39	86,389



When we started on the farm two years ago there were no yearling calves, so this past season we have had no home bred replacements. This coming season we have one hundred heifers to calve so this will give us the opportunity to cull harder and to increase our cow numbers.

Fertiliser

Fertiliser used	N	P	K	S
kg/ha	290	49	95	55

Milking system

Our dairy is a 50-stand rotary. Milking in the peak takes 3.5 hours including clean-up. We put the main herd through the shed first, and then the colostrum herd, followed by the antibiotic herd. When things are back to normal, a milking takes about 2.5 hours from start to finish.

Farm records

We are responsible for all herd records, milk care, grazing management using the Rotation Right tool, and urea applications using a spreadsheet that Jim created to ensure all paddocks get a regular application. We also irrigate. We collect all data on feeding and irrigation, which Jim then feeds into a spreadsheet to work out feed profit margins. This information is also used in our discussion group.

Lifestyle

We all like motorbike riding, horse riding, camping, and gardening in our spare time. We also enjoy taking the children to junior football and catching up with other parents.

Once a year we go on a family holiday for two weeks. This year we went to Mermaid Beach in Queensland, taking the children to all the theme parks. We haven't worked out who enjoyed it the most, the kids or us.

We have a full-time employee and once calving and joining is over we both have two days a week off milking, we feel it is important to still have time to ourselves.

The last four years we have been very busy learning how to become dairy farmers and also meeting new friends.

As this was our first ever move from our birth town we are gradually getting involved in our new community with junior football and our children's schools.

Farm owners: David & Margaret Holloway

Effective hectares of home farm	218	Fodder conserved from run-off block	Nil
Effective hectares of run-off block	80	Irrigation water used	70 ML
Fodder conserved from home farm	Silage 350tdm	Average annual rainfall	914 mm
Feed bought in	Grain 624 tonnes, hay 180 tonnes	Mating start date	21 June

Feeding

Our aim is always to feed as much grass as possible but this is often limited due to seasons on a dry land farm. Pasture consumption is around 5.8TDM/ha. We try to conserve at least 1000 wet tonnes of pit silage. Our aim is to peak at 2.2kg milk solids/cow/day as soon as possible and hold it for as long as possible. Feeding before and during early lactation is critical.

Cows are fed dairy ration mix of triticale, canola and additive and cows were fed 2.12T last year. Grain mix is fed year round in bail ranging from 6kg to 12kg per cow/day. Good quality clover and lucerne hay are bought in to supplement silage and this is fed on feed pad during non-growing period.

Calf rearing

Calves are navel sprayed at birth, brought into the calf shed within 24 hours and fed 2 litres of colostrum twice a day. After drinking well are moved into pens of six with calf pellets and cereal hay adlib. Calf pens are supplied with fresh water drinkers. Before calving begins, calf shed is disinfected. This year we trailed feeding calves twice a day for six weeks before going onto four litres once a day and also diluted colostrum with 15% boiled water. This seemed to be successful in avoiding scouring in calves. Calves are bedded down on mixture of rice hulls and sawdust, which is changed regularly. Calves are moved to paddock at six weeks and then fed once a day for two more weeks. Calves are vaccinated with 5 in 1, drenched with white drench, ear tagged and dehorned while still in the shed.

Breeding program

Ian chooses sires with APR, type and mammary systems as the main criteria. Cows are run through the Genescreen program with some alterations made for selected cows. Criteria are set to emphasise improving feet and legs, udders and pin height and width. We use 100-120 straws of PT on selected cows.

Joining is managed using heat mount detectors and tail paint for heat detection. AI is carried out over a 7-week period. Cows are submitted naturally as they cycle and we have a very good submission rate. Cows are drafted off during morning milking and we use a very experienced local AI technician.

Herd health

Cows are fully fed year-round. Blanket dry cow treatment was used this year with great success. Cows are vaccinated with 7 in 1 and drenched at dry-off. Springers are lead fed 2-3 weeks before calving. Mag C is used in water troughs in calving paddock. Additives of minerals, vitamins and buffers in pellet form with extra dical phos and salt are added to grain ration. We have supplied premium milk without any grades for the last 12 months and milk is picked up every day to supply the cappuccino market.

Tracks have been topped with shale and rolled and feet soreness is not an issue.

Replacements

Each year we rear around the 100 AI heifers and are then able to bring a good proportion through into the milking herd. This means we are able to cull whenever needed and we are also able to sell late cows as spring calvers. Heifers are joined to calving ease bulls over one round, using Why Wait system and then run with natural bull for mop up. 60-80 are calved into the herd and the later heifers are sold to export or locally as spring calvers. Calving heifers to AI speeds up genetic gain. Yearlings are fed grain and hay though dry period and are some years sent off farm on agistment.

Empty, high BMCC and cows with genetic weaknesses are culled. This system is working very well as we have 280 calved within 8-9 weeks and also receive good income from stock sales.



Fertiliser

Fertiliser used	N	P	K	S
kg/ha	158	42	68	

Milking system

A 20 swing-over herringbone dairy with automatic cup removers, milk meters, stall gates and individual feed system is used. There is a 280-cow yard with flood wash. Cup removers have assisted milking times and reduced labour in the dairy and since installing we have had a much lower cell count. Time spent milking including washup varies during season between 1½ and 2 hours per milking. One person can milk with this set up with second person to help during calving and joining. Milk is cooled and stored in a 14,000L vat.

Farm records

We are responsible for all farm records including Mistro farm for herd details, Quicken for financial records and have been in process of registering the herd over the past three years. Herd testing is carried out every month. All stock events, treatments are entered onto system by Alice. Ian also keeps details for fertiliser, sowing and spraying pastures.

Lifestyle

Ian is involved in the local UDV, CFA and 30-30 projects in the area and enjoys hunting and fishing. Alice is currently studying nursing at TAFE College.

Financial management

We use budgets, comparative profit and loss statements regularly and like to know throughout the year how we are travelling financially.

We belong to a discussion group facilitated by John Mulvany which provides us with monthly data on milk income/feed costs per cow and also complete a Farm Analysis each year. We have been able to see our assets climbing steadily.

Making the most of the property

The property was only converted to dairying in 1995 and there has been a heavy period of development. Since Ian has been home on farm, major projects include irrigation dam and system, feed pad, track upgrades, calf shed, expansion of water trough system and much of the river flat country has been developed. There has been extensive work done fencing out creeks, wet areas and erosion and planting of trees. Effluent system has also been upgraded which enables effluent to be irrigated onto pastures.

Pasture and feed management

About 130 ha is over sown in the autumn using mainly annuals and DAP. During autumn 2 in 1 is applied at 200-300kg/ha. Pasture booster is applied after silage, which often gives a second cut. 24 tonnes of urea was spread last year, follows the cows, autumn, winter and spring. A feed pad helps preserve paddocks during wet weather and also prevents wastage of feed. During summer we grow a non-irrigated sorghum crop on the river flats, which provides a bulk of feed in late lactation and for dry cows, 25ha under lateral irrigation is used as autumn break start up which is supplied by a 70ML dam. Nine ha was sown in autumn with rape, ryegrass and clover which yielded 5.5TDM/ha and was fed to early lactation cows.

Pastures are sprayed for broadleaf and noxious weeds and pests annually.

Livestock management

Ian is responsible for livestock management – herd health, culling, sales of stock, milking, rearing calves and breeding; with assistance from owners or employee as necessary. Feeding decisions are made jointly with owner.

Sharefarmer/owner relationship

We work together with owners as a family unit sharing values and owners have always been very progressive in development of an

efficient and highly productive farm. Share farming agreement has evolved over past years and we are currently on a 40% share, which we arrived at with the help of Farm Consultant John Mulvany. Ours is apparently an unusual set up but works because of its simplicity. We receive 40% of all farm income and pay 40% of all costs excepting capital improvements. Ian has increased his ownership of equipment, which is also used for contracting. The only other difference is a 50/50 split on contract income, which is carried out by Ian putting away pit silage for other farms.

Attitude to dairying and aims for the future

We believe the dairy industry offers opportunity for young farmers to build assets and achieve financial stability. We have found a great deal of help and support is available for anyone wanting to improve, advance and learn. Our on farm discussion group has been invaluable in facing challenges and making decisions.

Aim at present is to continue to build herd ownership and then move on to lease or management situation.

Family and leisure time

We have three children aged 8, 12 and 14 and enjoy spending time together visiting family and friends. We aim for at least one family holiday per year, last year to the Gold Coast and a couple of extra weekends camping or staying with relatives.

Herd production

Season (Production Year)	No. of cows	Milk (L)	Fat (%)	Fat (kg)	Prot (%)	Prot (kg)
Factory figures						
2002-2003	296	1,949,155	4.04	78,696	3.3	64,856
2003-2004	248	1,945,585	4.01	78,072	3.4	65,947
2004-2005	276	2,074,955	4.07	84,618	3.33	69,163
2005-2006	265	2,133,550	3.94	84,094	3.36	71,711
Herd Test figures						
2003-2004	239	7762	3.45	268	3.98	309
2004-2005	270	7420	3.45	256	4.08	303
2005-2006	272	8092	3.36	272	3.86	313
Production for each age group (current season)						
2-year-olds	84	23.3	3.77	0.88	3.26	0.76
3-year-olds	47	26.7	4.00	1.07	3.29	0.88
4-year-olds	57	30.0	3.90	1.17	3.30	0.99
Mature cows	93	30.0	4.10	1.23	3.26	0.98

SOUTH GIPPSLAND

Brett Nutting & Jodi Probert, Glen Alvie

Farm owners: Murray and Bronwyn Wilson

Effective hectares of home farm	140 ha, 12ha calf area (JDCAP)	Irrigation water used	Nil
Effective hectares of run-off block	-	Average annual rain fall	950mm
Fodder conserved from home farm	200t pitsilage, 50 round bales silage, 60 4x5 rolls of hay	Mating start dates	30 th September
Feed bought in	180t additive, 683t grain, 170t lucerne, 40t hay		

Feeding

We aim to harvest as much pasture as possible then to top up with grain, Lucerne, silage and Brassica crops to make sure the cows are fed to their potential.

For the last season we have fed about 2.3 tonnes of grain and additive combined.

This season we are aiming to reach 8,000 litres per cow. The approach we take each season is to ensure profitability for the type of feed used. Cows are lead fed two to three weeks prior to calving to prevent milk fever and RFMs.

Calf rearing

All heifer calves are banded in the paddock and all births are recorded in a book with band number and cow number. Calves are collected ASAP as we are doing the JDCAP program.

All animals taken to sheds, then fed two litres of colostrum via a stomach tube. Keepers are tagged with brass, NLIS and yellow tags. Calves are then fed twice a day, 2 litres per feed, colostrum for 1 week.



Then once a day in the morning 4 litres, also ad lib straw, water, calf meal till eating sufficient grain, preferably 1kg, then cut back in litres between 6-8 weeks.

Calves will then be moved to the paddocks, still eating ad lib grain and straw. They are weaned by weight.

Calves are dehorned, drenched & vaccinated (7 in 1, copper and B12+selenium) on being sent to paddocks. Any calves that start to look off colour are taken back to shed for "tender loving care".

Jodi rears calves with Brett and Mat (our staff member) called on if required. Problems and feeding regimes are recorded in shed 1, so if Jodi can't make it everyone knows what is going on. When they are about 3 months of age the calves receive copper, cobalt and selenium bullets. They are drenched as required.

Breeding program

We have got together with the owners and decided that teat placement, teat length and milking speed was to be our main criteria. We use 25% progeny test and 75% proven semen. The herd has been submitted to Genescreen to select sires that suit our herd and breeding corrections. Sires with a high APR are selected.

The cows are vis-vagged about 4 weeks after calving. Dirty cows are treated with Metricure.

Four weeks before MSD cows are painted with red paint and observed for heats and then painted green. Any red cows at the end of 3 weeks are vet checked and either PG or CIDR or left if calving interval is not long enough.

On October 7th the cows all have red Estrus Alerts applied. Every morning the cows are observed for heats and are inseminated by a technician. Once mated the cow is painted blue. This continues for six weeks and then mop-up bulls are used for six weeks.

All cows are pregnancy tested 7 weeks after AI is finished and then the non-pregnant cows are retested 8 weeks after the bulls are removed. We use ultra sound to pregnancy test.

Last season was the first time that the heifers were mated using AI. We are aiming for more replacements, as this is a closed herd. Easy calving sires were used. The remaining heifers were mated using Jersey bulls. The mating timeframe for the herd is 12-13 weeks. Our empty rate for the farm last season is unusually high at 14%. This was because mating was pulled forward by 10 days last season.

Herd production

Season (Production Year)	No. of Cows	Milk (L)	Fat (%)	Fat (kg)	Prot (%)	Prot (kg)
Factory figures						
2003-04	350	2,237,029	4.16	93,247	3.44	77,152
2004-05	350	2,576,016	4.03	103,707	3.42	88,125
2005-06	370	2,708,944	4.02	108,872	3.46	93,861
Herd Test figures						
2003-04	322	6585	4.0	266	3.5	229
2004-05	322	7457	4.0	299	3.5	257
2005-06	339	7519	4.0	298	3.5	264
Production for each age group (current season)						
2-year-olds		6388	3.7	237	3.5	224
3-year-olds		7426	4.0	298	3.5	262
4-year-olds		8080	3.7	314	3.5	281
Mature cows		7486	4.1	306	3.5	255

Herd health

The herd health program involves an annual 7 in 1 booster, salmonella vaccine and a drench for the 2 and 3 year olds. All the cows receive minerals in the feed additive we use. Lameness cows have their feet trimmed and treated as soon as seen and are then put in a paddock close to the dairy to minimise walking. If they are real bad we milk them once a day. Mastitis cows are treated accordingly. Milk cultures are analysed to discover the strain of bacteria we are dealing with. The general policy is '3 strikes and you're out'. All cows are given a blanket dry cow treatment.

Replacements

All replacements are fed calf grain at a rate of 1-2kg until they are yearlings and are then sent out to agistment. When there is an abundance of feed, calves are strip grazed and fertiliser is applied for regrowth. Hay and silage is made from these paddocks. Heifers are weighed at weaning and then again every 6 months to give us an idea of the growth rates. Anything below the target is fed accordingly.

Fertiliser

Fertiliser used	N	P	K	S
kg/ha	275	25	54	30
Soil test levels		15-77	223-756	10-17

Milking system

The cows are milked in a basic 40-unit rotary. Milking commences at 5.30-6.00am and 3.30-4.00pm. The average milking time in the peak is about 2½ hours from start to finish for 370 cows.

Farm records

The records kept include animal health, animal movements (grazings, rotation), cow feeding rates, Mistro Farm, MG milkcare and our own financial records.

Lifestyle

We have about two weeks each year of actual holiday time as a family, as well as 1-2 days off per fortnight for off-farm activities such as motocross, football and visiting friends.

Farm owner **Les Fox**

Effective hectares of home farm	188	Feed bought in	20t cereal hay
Effective hectares of run-off block	-	Average annual rainfall	950 mm
Fodder conserved from home farm	600t silage, 670t hay	Mating start date	10 th October, 23 rd May
Fodder conserved from run-off block	-	Share agreement	67%

Feeding

Everything is predominantly pasture-based with the majority of the farm now in pasture. Our target is to lift pasture efficiency from 66% or 1.57 tonne per cow dry matter to a pasture efficiency of 84% or 2.19 tonne per cow dry matter, adding our budget of 429 tonnes of grain for the year.

Our target for total milk production is expected to lift from 5,111 litres or 396 kg total solids per cow to 5,631 litres or 479 kg total solids per cow.

Calf rearing

A new calf feeding system is being implemented. It involves a new shed, automated calf feeding station and a Cablevey grain-feeding system. The four hours daily that it took to feed calves in the spring will be cut to half an hour. The feeding system is a powder only system. Cereal hay is also fed ad lib.

Breeding program

We like to select sires from proven cow families. We like to see three or more generations of VHC or better, based on ADHIS proofs. Sire selection follows our basic rules:

Milk Proof	greater than	+300
Protein	greater than	+15
Fat	greater than	+20
Temperament	greater than	+92
Overall Type	greater than	+0.5
Mammary	greater than	+0.1

We use a mixture of Australian proven sires and American and Canadian proven sires. We will also select two progeny test sires to use each year. We use our computer program to monitor and minimise in-breeding (Easy Dairy). We evaluate each cow through the milking season for areas of improvement.

Cows are joined for first six weeks with proven sires. Any return cows or slow cycling cows are then joined to progeny test sires – most yearling heifers are joined to progeny test sires.

Herd health

Cows are treated twice yearly (January and June) with Cydectin, injected with Clepto 7 in 1, yearly in June.

Young stock are treated twice yearly with Cydecten, 7 in 1, Vitamin B12 + Selenium.

Calves receive Vitamin A,D and E at birth. Then they get Clepto, 7 in 1 at 6 weeks and again at 12 weeks, Vitamin B12 + Selenium at 12 weeks.

Cows are treated with Dry Cow at drying off.

Herd production

Season (production year)	No. of cows	Milk (L)	Fat (%)	Fat (kg)	Prot (%)	Prot (kg)
Factory figures						
2004-05	254	938,875	4.71	45,282	3.64	35,019
2005-06	293	1,373,060	4.76	65,418	3.69	50,686



Replacements

We rear 90 replacement calves each year: 30 in the autumn and 60 in the spring. We have just installed an automatic calf feeder. The object of this exercise is to reduce time spent feeding calves; give calves better feeding ration and reduce the risk of disease and infection.

At six months old the weaners are sent out on agistment on a Weight-for-Gain contract. They return home just prior to calving.

Fertiliser used	N	P	K	S
kg/ha	80	63	45	30

Fertiliser

Milking system

The dairy is a renovated 12-a-side double up herringbone with stall gates. Milking takes about 2½ hours in peak, milking about 140 an hour. Washing down the yard currently takes about an hour. This issue is being addressed with the planned installation of a flood wash system.

Farm Records

We are responsible for all farm recording. All animals are listed in our Easy Dairy program. Paddock history and renovation records are recorded in a Paddock Diary.

Lifestyle

We really enjoy our Jersey club outings. With the club we go out for meals, have trivia nights, on-farm challenges, farm walks and discussion time. This gives us an opportunity to get away from the farm and get ideas from other farmers regarding problems or ways to do things better. Socialising is a big part of our lifestyle.

Farm owners: Andy & Lois Beard

Effective milking hectares	228	Average annual rainfall	750mm
Sheep, beef and young stock	126ha	Mating start date/s	23rd June, heifers 6th June
Fodder conserved from home farm	504t silage, 280t hay	Share agreement	20%, no cost, but employ labour
Feed bought in	528t grain		

Feeding

Our feeding strategy is to feed the cows to their potential to gain maximum milk production. Strict feed budgeting allows us to keep income after feed cost to a maximum.

Profitability is a major focus so we are trying to grow as much feed on the farm as possible. In our first year, 2004 we made 350t DM of fine chopped silage and in 2005 we made 600t DM. We are also increasing hay cut on the property by over sowing with short-term ryegrass. We aim to over sow a third of the farm every year with a continuous renovation program each year, which, with turnips provides good quality feed over the summer months.

2006 aims: Grain per cow to go from 1.6t to 1t if the season allows us, Silage harvested 600t DM to 750t DM, Hay harvested 280t to 360t.

Calf rearing

When a calf is born we stomach tube it with two litres of colostrum. Calves are then placed in a calf shed for three to seven days and fed twice a day. Then they are taken to half acre paddocks where they are fed once a day with milk and have access to calf pellets, fresh water and hay at all times. Once they reach six to eight weeks they are weaned and taken to grass paddocks and given calf pellets everyday along with ad lib hay. Calves are then given 7 in 1 and drenched at required intervals.

Breeding program

When we decide on bulls we consult the semen companies and our local AI companies. We set a budget at the start and try to stick to it. We only use proven bulls with good components and workability, mainly bulls with a lot of daughters. Our heifers are joined to Jersey bulls for calving ease.

We AI for a week, then give each cow that hasn't been joined a shot of PG, which will bring on 2/3 of the herd. We AI for another seven days then anything insert CIDRS in anything that hasn't been joined or has a suspicious heat. We AI for 6 weeks and then put bulls out for nine weeks. We use tail paint and heat mount detectors in the detection process.

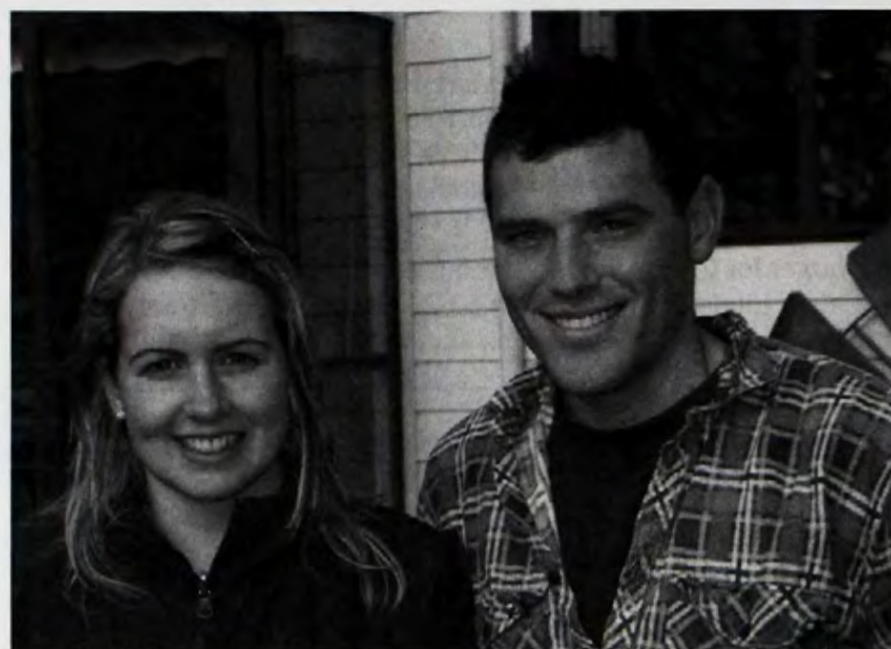
Herd health

Cows are treated with dry cow and with orbenin enduro. Heifers are treated with Amplicox dry cow and are also given a leptos shot at dry off. They are dry for 50 days. We teat spray our cows thoroughly every milking and we have a three strike policy (three cases of mastitis and they are culled). Good record keeping is essential for this to work. Cows with mastitis are always milked last and kept in a separate herd until they are clear and out of the withholding period. We strip individual cows for seven days after calving looking for mastitis. Every cow is also checked for retained membranes four days after calving and treated with a pessary if needed.

Cows are drenched once a year with Eprinex. We also lead feed the cows with two kg of pellets per day, with additional anionic salts for 10 to 14 days before they calve as a milk fever preventative.

Herd production

Season (production year)	No. of cows	Milk (L)	Fat (%)	Fat (kg)	Prot (%)	Prot (kg)
Factory Figures						
2003-04	330	5387		219		175
2004-2005	330	6801		268		218
2005-2006	330	6150		265		215
Production for each age group (current season)						
2-year-olds	70	29.9	3.29		3.21	
3-year-olds	80	31.2	3.49	1.088	3.23	1.008
4-year-olds and mature cows	180	32.8	3.37	1.105	3.21	1.051


Replacements

With our herd replacement strategies we look at individual cows for fertility, production, mastitis, cell count and lameness. We aim to breed 60 to 70 replacements every year. Any that are poor we sell off.

Fertiliser

Fertiliser used	N	P	K	S
kg/ha	150	33	36	41

Milking system

We use a 20-a-side swing over which was built by Andy nine years ago. It has a cablevey grain system. Two years ago we decided to put in DeLavel swing arm cup removers, which has made it a comfortable one-person operation. At peak milk it takes 3½-4 hours to milk 360 cows. Our long-term plan is to redo the dairy in the next couple of years.

Farm Records

We are responsible for all records including quality assurance, dairy data and cow records such as calving, joining and mastitis. Our business bookwork uses QuickBooks and budgeting programs.

Financial management is the most important part of the business. We meet with Andy and Lois at the start of each financial year and cover all the expected costs using a spreadsheet. We itemise them and work out the amount we can spend on each. At the end of each month we meet and review how much has been spent in each area and match it to the budget. We also do weekly income over feed cost budget.

Lifestyle

We enjoy water skiing, camping, fishing, and playing football. Sarah especially enjoys shopping. We are both involved in the local discussion group which is a great way to meet other farmers from around our district and learn and swap ideas with each other. We are members of the local fire brigade and Sarah also works part time as a hairdresser at the Port Fairy Day Spa.

Property owner: Ron & Maree Vinnicombe

Effective ha of home farm	110 ha	Irrigation water used	1258 ML
Effective ha of run-off block	304 ha	Average annual rain fall	375mm
Fodder conserved from home farm	Nil	Mating start date	22 October
Feed bought in	345t grain, 95 rolls hay	Share agreement	50%
Fodder conserved from run-off block	524t silage, 550 round bales lucerne, 1000 round bales of sub & cereal hay		

Feeding

We are focused on growing and consuming as much grass as possible. The stocking rate is 5.8 cows/ha on permanent pasture. The permanent pasture produces approximately 16.5 t/ha; with a target of 18 t/ha 2006-07 to get this all pasture will be over sowed this season.

To fully feed the cows we use 1.6 t/cow of wheat and the balance is supplemented with good quality hay (cereal hay in the spring, sub hay in the early summer and lucerne hay for the rest of the season, plus silage). This is mixed up and fed on the feed pad that was constructed in 2006. We put the feed pad down to get the best out of the mixer and so we did not wasted to much feed.

To lift cow production and to produce better quality feed there has been a need for lasering Drainage and a feed pad to minimise feed loss and pasture damage.

As none of the properties had reached their full potential, a business plan was drawn up in 2001. We decided the most feasible way to expand was lift the production of each cow and produce a better quality feed.

Calf rearing

All calves are reared on 5 litres whole milk in a shed for approximately three weeks. From the shed the calves are de-horned and vaccinated, grouped into small mobs of approximately 40 calves per paddock next to the shed and fed with a 50 teat feed trailer. Each paddock has a water trough hay ring with Lucerne hay and grain. Once the calves are weaned off milk they taken to the run-off block and pasture on Lucerne paddocks and grain. Sarah feeds all the calves.

Breeding program

We use Genescreen on all flush cows and have had one done on the herd, as we place a number of our bulls into AI breeding programs. This gives a predicted ability on APR, ASI and type, which we find very valuable to our herd. Embryos are placed in heifers and the bottom 20% of milkers that we do not wish to breed from. All other cows are Aled. Selecting bulls with good APR and ASI plus overall type is important.

Embryo transplanting has been used since 1996 as this has been a good way of value adding and increasing better stock with out the burden of excessive costs. As above we use Genescreen as a breeding policy.

Herd health

All cows are wormed, treated for fluke and 7 in 1 at dry off with a 7-8 week dry-off period. Cows are checked out 2 weeks before starting AI for cysts, infections and other anomalies. Then all cows are checked to make sure they are pregnant by ultrasound at approximately 6 weeks after removing the bull. Any cow with an SSC over 250,000 is treated with dry cow. All the cows that need to be are foot trimmed before dying off. We make our own leaded feed for the cows, this is feed 21 days prior to calving.

Herd production

Season (production year)	No. of cows	Milk (L)	Fat (%)	Fat (kg)	Prot (%)	Prot (kg)
Factory figures						
2006	230	1,630,400	4.23	69,124	3.50	57,104
2005	220	1,418,760	4.26	60,501	3.54	50,284
2004	220	1,045,633	4.30	45,806	3.41	35,752
2003	180	916,080	4.13	37,889	3.29	30,200
2002	190	1,168,890	4.20	49,125	3.30	39,261
2001	180	759,945	4.15	31,578	3.29	25,042
Herd Test figures						
2006	240	7334	4.2	310	3.5	256
2005	191	5794	3.9	226	3.5	202 (245d)
2004	220	4752	4.3	208	3.4	162 (305d)



Replacements

All heifer calves are kept for replacements as they have very good value for placing of embryos. Approximately 20 bulls are kept with a large percentage going to progeny testing.

Fertiliser

Fertiliser used	N	P	K	S
kg/ha	Sparingly, heading towards organic	31-20 on run-off	350-210 on run-off	8.8

Milking system

The dairy is a 12 double up herringbone with automatic cup removers which one person can manage to milk a120 cows per hour. This means that we spend approximately 4½ hours on a daily basis.

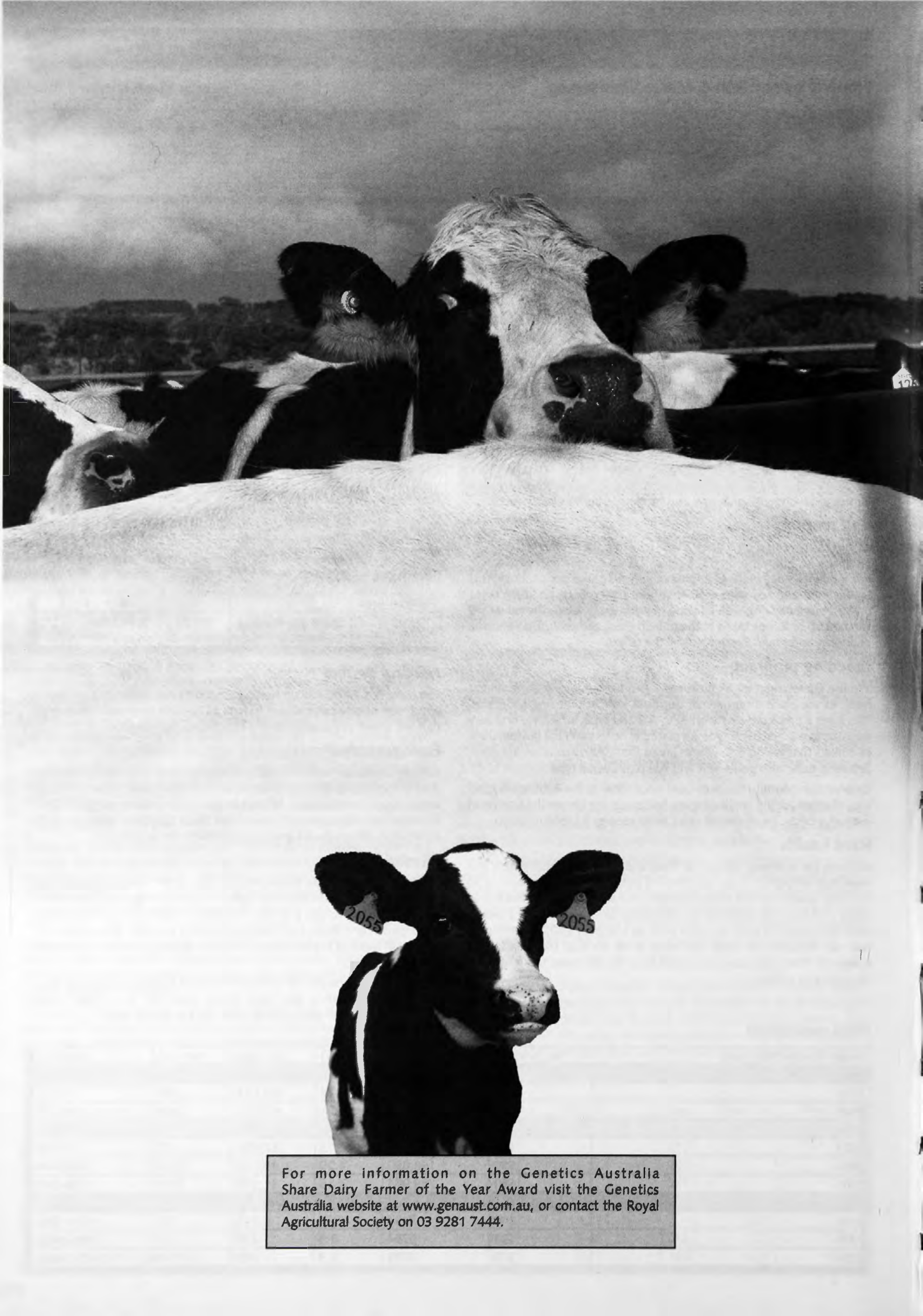
Farm records

All cow records are kept on a palm computer using Easy Dairy. The palm data is transferred to a computer at Ron's home, other records include water usage, feed budgets. All bookkeeping data is done using Quicken. Financial and management reports are done quarterly when the BAS statements are produced and discussed with the accountant.

Lifestyle

We are involved in the Holstein club with youth camps, football and cricket, and we are in the East Loddon Land Care group. There are a few of us trying to get a group of farmers together once a month or so to go on farm walks and meetings, the last one was a Genetics Australia bull night at the local hotel. Sarah is working on our landscaped garden project.

We try to take time off the farm with 4 weeks holidays a year. We have employed a worker to give more leisure time. We like to have some weekends off to go away off the farm, or just for the day.



For more information on the Genetics Australia Share Dairy Farmer of the Year Award visit the Genetics Australia website at www.genaust.com.au, or contact the Royal Agricultural Society on 03 9281 7444.