

# How now GIPPY COW



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## GETTING A HEAD START IN AG

By Leah Maslen, Regional Extension Officer



**Georgie Spencer loves being around and working with cows.**

**Having grown up regularly helping out on her family's beef farm, she believes it's in her blood.**

**"I love the whole aspect of being on the farm, it is really awesome" she said.**

Georgie is currently studying Year 11 and has just started a school-based traineeship through Head Start Gippsland,

which is a program aimed at keeping young people at secondary school while working towards an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Georgie is employed 11 hours each week at Kerry & Andrew Perry's farm at Kongwak, milking over 300 cross breed cows in a mixed dairy and beef enterprise. One day per week, Georgie studies at TAFE Gippsland undertaking the Certificate III in Agriculture, with three days at Leongatha Secondary School working towards her VCAL certificate.

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# Getting a HEAD START in Ag

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Georgie feels the workload is manageable. "I have to be very organised" she said. All going to plan, when Georgie finishes secondary school, she will not only have her VCAL Certificate, but will also have a great head start to her career pathway in agriculture by having a Vocational Education & Training (VET) certificate behind her.



**Georgie believes employers will be looking for people with a combination of hands-on work experience and formal training.**

"It will be a real benefit for the future" she said.

Georgie has enjoyed the opportunity to learn on-the-job and find out about different aspects of farming.

"Recently we dehorned some calves.

Andrew explained everything in depth, from why we needed to do things a particular way and the sorts of medication to use. It was really hands-on", she said.

Andrew Perry sees the benefit of increasing a young person's employability by developing their real work skills.

"It is often their first exposure to the workforce and definitely an opportunity to have conversations about life skills. Something I had to stop and think about was it's not just explaining the dairy and beef work, its explaining things about entering the workforce" he said.

**Andrew believes it is important to remember when mentoring and coaching a young person to be clear on workplace expectations and to be able to communicate this well.**

**He said employers thinking about starting a school-based trainee need to be fully aware of the commitment of taking on a trainee.**

"You can't just give them hours and leave them to it; they won't have a licence and will need supervision".

**With time and lots of encouragement, the trainee will develop more and more skills. The bonus for Andrew is the refreshing enthusiasm and good attitude that comes with a young trainee.**

"Georgie gets stuck in and can help with the little things you don't get time to do normally", he said.

Having assistance from Head Start Coordinator Tanya Nelson has been invaluable to Georgie and Andrew in setting up and progressing with the school-based traineeship.

"It is good to have Tanya available on the phone and to help sort out the nuts and bolts of the traineeship" Andrew said.

Georgie believes she has an "awesome boss" and has definitely learnt so much already from her experience working on Andrew's farm.

**"I would highly recommend other farmers to give someone like me a chance in a school-based traineeship, absolutely go for it."**



## Head Start School-Based Traineeships in Agriculture

Head Start is a new model for apprenticeships and traineeships for school students. Head Start students spend more time doing important, paid, on-the-job training while completing their VCE or VCAL at school. The program helps students to develop skills and have experiences that employer's value. Head Start helps students to get the best start in their career of interest.

Continued over >>

**Intensive on-the-job training alongside formal education.**



Head Start is an apprenticeship and traineeship pathway that allows school students to spend more time working, while undertaking the required vocational training and a senior secondary qualification. Upon completion, students will have achieved:

- a senior secondary certificate (VCE or VCAL)
- recognition for, or significant progress towards
  - a VET certificate
  - a full apprenticeship or traineeship

**Upfront agreement on a structured pathway**



Head Start students are required to follow a structured pathway, which is negotiated, agreed and endorsed prior to commencement. Under Head Start, there are minimum hours of paid employment that students must follow.

- minimum one day per week in Year 10
- minimum two day per week in Year 11
- minimum three days per week in Year 12

**Commitment by employers to support students through to completion**



Head Start employers must genuinely commit to supporting students to complete all education and training components, including VCE/VCAL.

Under Head Start, employers will agree to periodic workplace visits by Head Start Coordinators to ensure student wellbeing and quality of training.

**Continuous, one-to-one support from dedicated staff**



With consent, Head Start Coordinators will continue to support students and their employers throughout the completion of their apprenticeship/traineeship and vocational training, even after they have completed their senior secondary qualification.



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Dedicated school-based Head Start Coordinators work to support the engagement of students in apprenticeships and traineeships. They work with local schools, training providers like TAFE Gippsland and employers, towards the best outcomes. Students are supported throughout the traineeship to best ensure completion and/or the transition to full-time work or further study.

A student can begin Head Start from Year 10. Students will need to be at least 15 years old; enrolled in a Head Start participating school for a senior secondary qualification; and be an Australian Citizen or Permanent Resident.

#### There are 11 schools involved in Head Start Gippsland:

- Drouin Secondary College • Foster Secondary College • Korumburra Secondary College • Leongatha Secondary College
- Lowanna College • Mirboo North Secondary College • Neerim District Secondary College • Trafalgar High School • Traralgon College • Warragul Regional College • Wonthaggi Secondary College

To date there are nine Head Start trainees employed on local farms in Gippsland from Foster, Leongatha, Yarragon and Heyfield. All

trainees are completing at least two days a week on the job training and incorporating their Certificate III in Agriculture – Dairy Production or a general Certificate III in Agriculture with their VCAL/VCE schooling. TAFE Gippsland is the local training provider for agricultural courses.

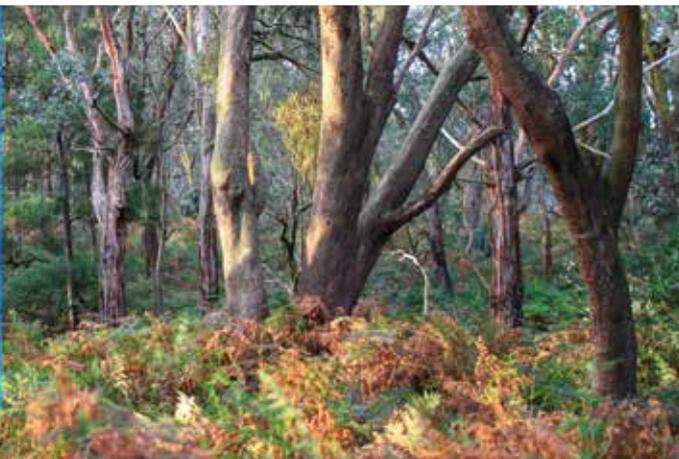


**i** To find out more on the agricultural courses available through TAFE Gippsland contact **Louise Underhill**, Program Manager Agriculture & Animal Science on **0418 661 862** or **lunderhill@tafegippsland.edu.au**

To obtain further information about the Head Start Program please contact **Tom Hallinan** on **0477 990 212** or **thomas.hallinan@education.vic.gov.au**

If you would like to register your expression of interest in employing a trainee in your farm business in the future, please contact **Leah Maslen** on **0448 681 373**

# Native vegetation removal on farms



**In Victoria, the removal of native vegetation is generally regulated under local planning schemes. Some farming activities are exempt from needing a planning permit, while other works or activities will need a planning permit for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation. This can also include works or activities that will result in the future loss or death of native vegetation.**

Understanding the rules around this can be confusing and hard to understand. Sometimes it's not clear if the native vegetation you want to clear on your farm can be done under an exemption or if a planning permit is needed. However, help is available!

#### Where can I get help?

If you want to remove native vegetation, DELWP can answer any questions you have and help you prepare a planning permit application if one is needed. For help with all things native vegetation, simply contact:

- your local DELWP Natural Environment Program (NEP) staff through the Traralgon regional office at (03) 5172 2100
- the Native vegetation regulations team directly at: [www.environment.vic.gov.au/native-vegetation/farming-and-native-vegetation](http://www.environment.vic.gov.au/native-vegetation/farming-and-native-vegetation), or

- your local council environmental planner, who can also tell you if there are other planning provisions that apply to your land that may trigger the need for a planning permit.

In both Latrobe and Wellington Shire Council areas, the environmental planners are committed to working closely with DELWP NEP staff to help farmers work through the native vegetation regulations and planning requirements. If a planning permit is needed to remove native vegetation, native vegetation offsets will need to be secured before any permitted clearing can start. This is to compensate for the biodiversity impacts associated with permitted clearing.

#### What about exemptions?

The native vegetation regulations also include a range of exemptions specifically for farmers with land in the Farming and Rural Activity Zones. All exemptions require the proponent to only remove the minimum amount of native vegetation to enable the use or activity specified in the exemption. Some exemptions have limits on what can be cleared.

#### Some activities you may be able to do on your farm without a planning permit include:

- removing native vegetation to build a boundary fence or maintain an existing fence on your land

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# Native vegetation removal on farms

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- collecting fallen timber or removing small trees for personal use, such as firewood or fencing (small trees have a diameter of 40cm or less at breast height)
- grazing stock
- mowing or slashing grass for maintenance
- removing dead native vegetation (except for dead trees with a diameter of 40cm or more at breast height)
- maintain existing buildings or works used for agricultural production.

Before relying on an exemption, contact either DELWP or council to make sure what you're planning to do satisfies the exemption requirements. It's always good to get this advice in writing, as the person responsible for removing native vegetation under an exemption may be liable for any breaches of the planning scheme.

## How do I know if I need a planning permit to remove native vegetation?

Once you start planning new works or activities on your farm that may involve native vegetation removal or impacts, best practice is to contact DELWP NEP or council to arrange a preplanning meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to find out if what you are proposing to clear is covered under an existing permit exemption or if you will need to apply for a planning permit.

### If a permit is needed, council and DELWP will work with you to:

- design your new works, development or activities to avoid impacts to native vegetation wherever practicable
- help minimise impacts to native vegetation when it is impossible to avoid them
- identify the information you will need to support a planning

application (or rely on an exemption)

- identify if native vegetation offsets will be needed
- discuss the offset options available to suit your needs and determine if offsets can be secured
- find out what the different offset options might cost, and
- help you understand, consider and address any other planning permit requirements.

## What sort of works or activities can indirectly impact native vegetation?

Sometimes new works, development or activities on farms will result in negative impacts on native vegetation, even if it's not being removed. Examples of these that must be considered under the native vegetation regulations include:

- works or soil disturbance within the Tree Protection Zone or Structural Root Zone of native trees
- works or development that will result in shading or other environmental changes to retained native vegetation, such as:
  - changes to hydrology (pivot irrigation, flood irrigation, rising ground water tables)
  - effluent discharge or changes to soil nutrient levels
  - stormwater runoff
  - compaction (works involving heavy machinery near native vegetation)
  - excavation (soil disturbance to a degree that affects more than 10% of the tree protection zone).



## Where can I find more information?

The DELWP Native vegetation website has lots of information and resources available, including a dedicated portal and information sheet for farmers:

- <http://www.environment.vic.gov.au/native-vegetation>
- [www.environment.vic.gov.au/native-vegetation/farming-and-native-vegetation](http://www.environment.vic.gov.au/native-vegetation/farming-and-native-vegetation)
- [www.environment.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0026/91259/Native-vegetation-removal-in-the-farming-and-rural-activity-zones-Information-sheet.pdf](http://www.environment.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/91259/Native-vegetation-removal-in-the-farming-and-rural-activity-zones-Information-sheet.pdf)
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# Practical silage tips to combat the “Weather Gods”

By Karen Romano, Regional Extension Officer



**This year is shaping up to be “one out of the box” for grass growth – but if it keeps raining it may prove problematic at silage harvest.**

Decision making is not as clear cut in wet conditions – sometimes we need to adjust our mindset and take the “practical not perfect” approach. In a wet winter some soil types can remain wet well into the harvest season. The ground may be damp, air temperature cool, and the skies often overcast. If this is the case even light showers can impede the movement of silage equipment.

Forward planning can make a difference to silage quality and value this season by applying some practical tips and principles around stage of growth at cutting, mowing, wilting and harvest.

## Stage of Cutting:

For maximum silage quality, cut pastures early in the season when they are at vegetative or early reproductive stage of growth and at or near canopy closure. This is the optimum stage of growth for grazing in spring.



Although delaying cutting often produces a higher silage yield, silage quality from early cutting is usually higher. Pasture regrowth is usually greater, which means that total production from the pasture (as both silage and regrowth) is also higher.

Despite wet conditions the aim should still be to make the best quality silage from the material available. Delays in harvest equate to rapid declines in quality: 7-10 days may result in digestibility dropping 3-5% and protein 1-3 units. If paddock damage is avoidable – cutting earlier with a small amount of rain damage will produce a better-quality silage than cutting later. Removing paddocks from the grazing rotation early involves some risks. For example, there may be a temporary shortage of pasture for grazing if an unexpected weather change slows regrowth. Paddocks closed very early will be ready for cutting early in the silage season when there is a greater risk of unfavourable weather affecting the wilting process.

## Wilt quickly and harvest as soon as possible:

Mowing time is important – particularly in Gippsland when weather is thrown into the mix. Mow after morning dew has lifted as it is more easily evaporated if the crop is standing.

The quicker the wilt the better the silage. Aim to have forage in the pit or bale within 24-48 hours after cutting. The target dry matter for baled silage is 40-50% and pit silage 32-38%.

In wet conditions, avoid extending wilting periods beyond 3-5 days after mowing. The longer forage spends on the ground and the more rain that falls on it, the greater the dry matter and quality losses - at worst the final product may not be much better than compost!

## Some practical strategies to increase wilting rates:

- Mowing forage with flail or tined-type mower conditioner
- Use a tedder or tedder rake immediately after mowing – this will substantially increase wilt rates by 50-80% allowing you to harvest earlier and possibly beat the rain!
- If using a mower conditioner, leave the swath boards as wide as possible for a quicker wilt
- Use silage additives - they are NOT a guarantee of success but may increase the likelihood of more favourable fermentation - a handy insurance policy
- Avoid incorporating mud or dirt into the forage as this will contaminate your stack or bale and may result in poor silage quality.



## Seal quickly and airtight:

The better the compaction, the less air will be trapped in the stack or bale resulting in a higher quality silage. Stacks should be sealed airtight as soon as harvest is complete. Baled silage should have stretch-wrap applied within one to two hours. The longer bales are without plastic the greater the dry matter and quality losses.

**i** While making great silage in wet conditions may be tricky, there is an opportunity to follow some basic principles of silage making to help you beat “The Gippsland Weather Gods”. For more information check out the “Quality Pasture Silage” booklet: [www.dairyaustralia.com.au/-/media/dairyaustralia/documents/farm/animal-care/animal-welfare/calf-welfare/rearing-healthy-calves-manual-2nd-ed](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/-/media/dairyaustralia/documents/farm/animal-care/animal-welfare/calf-welfare/rearing-healthy-calves-manual-2nd-ed). which highlights five easy steps for making high quality temperate pasture silage.



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# Feeding systems - from hay rings to freestalls

By Scott McDonald  
Agriculture Victoria



As part of the Profitable Feeding Systems Field Days, Agriculture Victoria dairy and livestock specialist Scott McDonald presented his five-step approach used when working with farmers considering investing in feed infrastructure or a feeding area on their farm.

## Step 1 - Why do I need to invest in a feeding area?

The first question is - why are you building a new feed area? Some of the common answers include - to help fill the feed gaps when pasture is limiting, to reduce feed waste, because you are chasing a flat milk price incentive, you need a contingency area in a fire or flood or you need an area to put the cows to protect pasture from pugging in winter and protecting residuals in summer.

By determining the motivation for investing in new feeding infrastructure, it helps to define what an appropriate level of investment should be. One size doesn't fit all.

For example, in some situations something simple like a well-designed dirt feeding area with hay rings and plenty of water might be the most logical and profitable solution. In another situation this may not be adequate and a greater investment in concrete and earthworks may be justified.

Trying to minimise feed waste is an important consideration, but it shouldn't be the only motivation for investing in a feeding area. Other factors apart from where feed is fed out can contribute to feed wastage such as poorer quality feed being refused by the cows, or over allocation of feed. A comprehensive assessment of the current situation needs to be considered.

## Step 2 - What Type of System?

You need to be clear on what you are trying to achieve. Some of the questions you will need to consider are - how are you going to use the new feeding area? is it just going to be a top up area on the entrance or exit of the dairy? And how many hours a day is the herd going to spend on the feeding area?

Other questions include - are you going to use the feeding area all year round or just for short bursts during the year? do you need to build it so every cow in the herd can eat at the same time or will the herd pass through the area over an extended time period, so a smaller feeding area will do?, and do you need to build a bigger feeding area compared to what you currently need to allow for an increase in herd size?.

Finally, think about if you are better off to have a permanent system or something that is easy to relocate and if what you are proposing to build ultimately fit in with your desired feeding system now and into the future.

## Step 3 - Costing the system and the ripple effect

Some of the simple systems can be cheap but effective and will meet your identified needs well. For example, a simple sacrifice paddock

with hay rings that the cows might spend three to six hours a day for two to three months of the year, might meet your requirements and be as cheap as \$50 per cow.

In contrast a concrete sloped pad would be more appropriate if the herd is spending eight -12 hours a day in the feeding area for 12 months of the year. This kind of feeding infrastructure would cost more like \$800 per cow.

The message here is you need the right level of investment in the feeding area depending on the type of system you have decided to build and how you are going to use the feeding area.

It's a worthwhile exercise to calculate what your payback period will be on the level of investment. It's also good to work with a trusted advisor when estimating these numbers.

Also, you need to consider the ripple effect of the type of system you choose to implement. The ripple effect refers to the other aspects that might be affected once the feed infrastructure is commissioned. For example, you most likely will need to increase your effluent holding capacity if you have a new larger concreted area. The intensity of use of laneways to the feeding area will increase so they may need upgrading. The machinery used to feed out might need to be upgraded if larger volumes of feed are to be fed out in the new area.

## Step 4 - Planning a system

Before you order the concrete truck spend some time carefully planning.

To get it right the first time some of the things you should consider include - what's the best location for the new feeding area? how am I going to clean the feeding area? where will I store the piles of solids that will be scraped off the pad? have I considered cow comfort and cow flow when designing the feed pad? do I need any planning permits? It's no good realising you don't have power to run the effluent pump at the bottom end of your feedpad after the concrete has set.

As Benjamin Franklin said, "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail!" Agriculture Victoria has a web-based tool that can assist in the planning process of your next farm development. Google 'Navigating Farm Developments' to find it.

## Step 5 - Management

Once the feed pad is commissioned it's not a set and forget and requires ongoing management to operate effectively. Regular cleaning with a dry scrape or a flood wash is critical, repairing any holes in concrete work, repairing fences or gates, removing waste feed from feed troughs and maintaining water troughs.



For more information contact **Scott McDonald** on **0438 227 779** | [Scott.McDonald@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:Scott.McDonald@agriculture.vic.gov.au)  
or **GippsDairy** on **5624 3900** | [info@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:info@gippsdairy.com.au)

# From management to employer of choice



**Dr. Nollaig Heffernan is currently presenting a dairy specific online webinar series titled 'From Management to Employer of Choice'.**

This highly informative series includes practical pointers on how to develop your own and your staff's management skills.

It is important to develop your staff's management skills, as well as your own, so that other people in your business can take on positions

of responsibility which will allow you to take a break and maintain a better work-life balance.

Employees who feel empowered usually experience greater job satisfaction and are also more likely to be retained. The key areas required to be in the desirable position of 'employer of choice' will be covered with immediately actionable tips for improving your business.

Tried and tested people management theories and models will be explained with dairy relevant examples with the opportunity to send questions in advance of each topic.

## Schedule of upcoming webinars' in this 'Employer of Choice' dairy themed series:

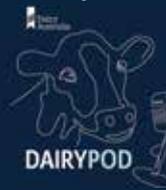
Delivering on Your Promise	Wednesday 8th July (Recording available on request)
Accountability	Wednesday 22nd July (Recording available on request)
Investing in Your People Asset	Wednesday 5th August (Recording available on request)
Respect: The Superglue of Human Relationships	Wednesday 19th August
You: The Key Stakeholder	Wednesday 2nd September

**Nollaig has filmed a video introduction to this series and it can be viewed here:**

**YouTube** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=hW6JYM-FHJl&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hW6JYM-FHJl&feature=youtu.be)

For more information, contact **Sarah Cornell** on [sarah@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:sarah@gippsdairy.com.au)

**Listen to Nollaig on the latest DairyPod Podcast**



# Nuffield Farming Scholarship

**Gippsland is home to a few Nuffield Scholars. If you are keen to chat to someone who has undertaken the scholarship, please contact Sarah Cornell on: [sarah@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:sarah@gippsdairy.com.au) and she will put you in touch with someone**

Applications are now open for the Nuffield Farming Scholarship for a Victorian dairy farmer.

The scholarship, sponsored by the Gardiner Dairy Foundation and Nuffield Australia, provides a chance for the successful applicant to travel and investigate their field of interest. It is open to applicants between the age of 28–45 years.

Further details on the program is available at on the Gardiner Foundation website: [www.gardinerfoundation.com.au/nuffield/](http://www.gardinerfoundation.com.au/nuffield/)



**Applications close on 11 September.**

Information on the full 2021 Nuffield Scholarship Program is available at: [www.nuffield.com.au/](http://www.nuffield.com.au/)



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## Management reminders

### Pastures/Forages

Ryegrass leaf appearance rate	8 to 12 days per leaf
Area of farm to graze today	One 1/30th to 1/40th of grazing area in 24 hours
Average daily pasture growth rate	15 to 40 kg DM/ha/day, the growth rates speed up with increased warmth and day length
Recommended pre grazing decisions for all stock	Check pasture that is about to be grazed is at the leaf stage, cover and quality that you are targeting
Recommended post grazing decisions for all stock	Aim to graze down to 4 to 6 cm pasture height between clumps

### Grain feeding this spring for a margin

- When the grain price and milk price change the opportunity to make milk from grain for a margin also changes.
- Grain prices vary depending on the type of grain fed, additives used and volume delivered the price is currently between \$280/t as fed and \$400/t as fed.
- To work out if it is worth feeding grain we can calculate the milk price:grain price ratio (MP/GP Ratio). A ratio of less than 1.5 means it is not worth feeding grain, a ratio of 1.5 is marginal and a ratio greater than 1.5 shows it is worth feeding grain. For Example:
  - Milk Price (c/kgMS) divided by Grain Price (\$/T)
  - 575 c/kgMS divided by \$350/T gives a ratio of 1.64 – definitely worth feeding grain
- Don't forget to consider the things that will determine your milk produced for a kilogram of grain fed, **pasture availability, stage of lactation, diet balance, animal health, cow condition etc.**
- Remember, **when feeding grain the last Kg fed is likely to get the lowest marginal response in production**, it's the law of diminishing returns.

### Pasture Management

- Rotations lengths need to be long enough to get critical volume and residuals need to be low enough to get quality next time the pasture is grazed.
- Consider the use of nitrogen to boost pasture production and potentially minimise the use of expensive supplements, pasture responses of 10 – 20KgDM/ha for every Kg

of Nitrogen/ha are common in spring and represent very good value for money if you need and or can utilise the additional feed grown.

- Estimate your silage and hay requirements for the coming year, spring can be a good time to source extra quality fodder. A focus on fodder quality will lead to more milk produced by cows when it's fed.
- Watch for pasture pests such as lucerne flea and consider control if you think they are damaging pasture. This may look like slower pasture growth than expected and or a dull looking pasture.
- Applications of fertiliser may significantly boost pasture and crop growth rates if your last application was in autumn.
- Consider soil testing to assess your soil nutrient levels and plant requirements.

### Cows

- Take the opportunity to feed cows as well as possible, check the margin between milk price and grain price, consider the likely milk response to feeding an extra kilogram of grain to cows to assist your decision.

### Calves

- Calves should be given access to clean water and pellets/grain. A fibre source must be introduced by week three as per animal welfare standards. They can be weaned when they are consistently eating 1 to 2 kg per day.
- Weaned calves should weigh at least 75 kg for Jerseys and 100 kg for Friesians, at two to three months of age. For more information on calf rearing see: <http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/-/media/dairyaustralia/documents/farm/animal-care/animal-welfare/calf-welfare/rearing-healthy-calves-manual-2nd-ed>

## Contact us

GIPPSDAIRY TEAM MEMBERS CAN BE CONTACTED ON (03) 5624 3900 OR VIA THE DETAILS BELOW.

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## GippsDairy is currently taking expressions of interest for our online courses:

**OUR FARM OUR PLAN** - gives farmers a clear vision of their long-term business and personal goals and assists with better decision making, especially the big decisions.

**TRANSITION COW MANAGEMENT** - provides farmers with an opportunity to improve cow health, milk production and reproductive performance.

**MILKING AND MASTITIS MANAGEMENT** - online and on-farm training. The course takes participants through five modules for an effective, low-stress milking, including, bringing the cows into the dairy, putting cups on, taking cups off, post-milking teat disinfection, detecting clinical mastitis.

**FARM BUSINESS FUNDAMENTAL** - focuses on farm financial management providing the skills and knowledge to pull together annual farm financial numbers.

If you would like to register, please contact GippsDairy on 5624 3900 or [info@gippsdairy.com.au](mailto:info@gippsdairy.com.au)

What's on?

Visit the GippsDairy events calendar for more information [www.gippsdairy.com.au](http://www.gippsdairy.com.au)