

# Focus on Drought Feeding sessions across Queensland and northern NSW

Dairy farmers and service providers across the Subtropical Dairy region were invited to attend 'Focus on Drought Feeding' workshop sessions throughout January and February. Extended drought conditions, high commodity prices and varying feed availability led to the development of the half day, informal sessions.

Dr David Barber (Dairy Team Leader and Principle Scientist) and Ross Warren (Senior Extension Officer) from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Queensland facilitated the sessions throughout southern Queensland and northern New South Wales and Jim Wade facilitated the Far North Queensland session.

The workshops were deliberately designed to be informal and focus on the needs of those attending. With 15-20 farmers and service providers attending the sessions in Oakey and Nanango there was good discussion and sharing of ideas and strategies drawing on the expertise of industry service providers and dairy farmer peers in the rooms. Key areas of discussion focused on strategies for drought feeding and management and planning for the autumn winter season ahead.

Some of the concepts and feed options discussed during the Darling Downs and Burnett sessions included;

- **Strategies for feed purchasing** – What to buy, when to buy, comparing different feed options on their merit of price, nutritive value or transport/storage considerations, availability of payment terms available and whether or not to contract purchase.
- **The current feed options available** including soy hulls, palm kernel extract (PKE), dry distillers grain (DDG), corn gluten meal and other byproducts.
- **The use of feed additives to assist with drought feeding.** The merits of using mycotoxin binders, rumen buffers and modifiers were discussed in a range of feeding systems.

- **Common issues to avoid when feeding the herd a drought ration** – botulism, blue-green algae in water sources, prussic acid in stressed sorghum crops, nitrate poisoning in drought-affected forages.
- **Managing the herd to maximise margin over feed costs (MOFC)** – if practical, splitting the herd to feed appropriate rations to different herds, selling/culling excess stock on farm enabling the productive animals to be better fed, and altering milking frequency.

Subtropical Dairy recommends that advice should be sought from an experienced nutritional or herd health adviser before making any significant changes to diet formulations or dairy herd health and management .

Further information regarding drought feeding and resources can be found at the Subtropical Dairy website [www.dairyinfo.biz/drought-assistance/](http://www.dairyinfo.biz/drought-assistance/)

The Feed Plu\$ feed analysis database is available online at [dairyinfo.biz](http://dairyinfo.biz) and is a good source of feed analysis results which can be used as indicators of common nutritional compositions of a range of feedstuffs that can be used to feed dairy cows [www.dairyinfo.biz/technical-information/farm-business-management/feedplu-ver4-0-feed-analysis-database/](http://www.dairyinfo.biz/technical-information/farm-business-management/feedplu-ver4-0-feed-analysis-database/)

The weekly Hay and Grain Report is available in the Subtropical Dairy eNews which is emailed to all farmers and service providers in the Subtropical Dairy region each Thursday. ■■



Drought assistance resources available to farmers can be found at the comprehensive FarmHub website [www.farmhub.org.au](http://www.farmhub.org.au).