



# New Strategies to Effectively Manage Downer Cows in Far North Queensland (FNQ)

**Jo Srhoj**

Subtropical Dairy Extension Officer Far North Queensland



**On Thursday 27th August 2020, Subtropical Dairy hosted a Downer Cows session at John, Dianne, Brad and Annaliisa Daley's farm at Millaa Millaa in FNQ. The event was well attended with 16 farmers, four James Cook University veterinary students, and three service providers represented. Farmers from around the region enjoyed the opportunity to connect in person following months of little, or no face to face interaction. Dr Bill Tranter facilitated the session which involved a presentation followed by a demonstration on how to establish an effective downer cow nursing area on farm.**

The presentation captured the key findings from Dr Phil Poulton's research where he studied the outcomes of 218 downer cows in South Gippsland, Victoria. Some of the key learnings from this research are listed below:

- Once a cow has been down for more than a day, her chances of recovery are not largely determined by the condition she originally went down with;
- Downer cows commonly experienced secondary complications as a result of being down. In Phil's study, 79% suffered 'clinically important' secondary damage and 46% of cows

had more than one type of secondary damage;

- To prevent secondary damage to nerves, organs and structural processes, the following is required: soft, deep bedding, regular rolling, confinement to a small area and close monitoring;
- Response time is critical – damage to nerves, organs or structural processes can start to occur after only a few hours of being down;
- Farmers should have a plan which can be implemented when a down cow occurs on farm.

Brad and Annaliisa had established a simple but effective downer cow nursing area using a calf shed with existing sawdust as a substrate. The shed was close to the dairy for easy monitoring and rolling, had 50cm hay on top of the sawdust, and a barrier to restrict movement. A key take home message from the day for many farmers was the need to act quickly, and move the down cow to a suitable nursing area to give her the very best chance of recovery.

For more information visit [www.dairyaustralia.com.au/animal-management-and-milk-quality/animal-health/down-cows#.X445ZtAzaUk](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/animal-management-and-milk-quality/animal-health/down-cows#.X445ZtAzaUk)