



Queensland Dairy Accounting Scheme (QDAS)

Support your dairy business decision making with your own financial data

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Queensland has a very diverse range of dairy systems which are evolving rapidly to adapt to a range of challenges and opportunities. From the constant uncertainty of farming through climate variability to the endless opportunities to advance technology, there are limitless options to invest in change that are being considered by dairy farmers every single day. So, which change will benefit your dairy business the most in the current environment; where should you focus your time and money; and how do you make an informed decision?

What information does QDAS provide?

Benchmarking through the Queensland Dairy Accounting Scheme (QDAS) provides the opportunity for participating dairy farmers to annually compare the physical, cash flow and profitability aspects of their farm operation. The comparison of your own business performance year-on-year is the internal

benchmarking aspect of QDAS, offered to all participants. External benchmarking allows you to compare your farm to other farms in the Queensland industry and participation in this aspect of QDAS is voluntary.

The top 25% of QDAS farms in 2023/2024

Forty-five dairy businesses participated in QDAS in 2023/2024 with these farms representing a broad cross-section of the Queensland dairy industry. As part of QDAS analysis, the Top 25% of farms are anonymously identified as the farms with the highest Earnings Before Interest & Tax (EBIT) measured in dollars per cow. EBIT is the amount of profit retained after paying all expenses except finance costs and tax, with allowances included for depreciation, owner's labour, and cattle and feed inventory changes. Table 1 (page 3) shows the average, high and low values for the physical indicators of the 11 farms

Physical Indicator		Average	High	Low
Number of cows (Milking + Dry)		357	1075	120
Annual milk production (L)		2,554,538	6,581,165	668,729
Milk production per cow (L)		7,156	10,330	5,337
Cow liveweight (kg)		595	680	480
Feed intake of milking herd (kg DM/day)	Forages - Grazed	6.3	13.5	0
	Forage - Conserved	5.5	11.9	0
	Concentrates	9.6	13.9	5.7
Milk from homegrown feed (%)		43	64	30
Litres per labour unit		420,973	531,983	334,365

Table 1. The average, high and low values for selected physical indicators of the 11 farms in the Top 25% of QDAS participants in 2023/2024.

Cash or Profit Indicator	Average	High	Low
Purchased feed cost (cpl*)	33.2	43.7	22.4
Fertiliser (cpl)	2.9	8.9	1.5
Total feed cost (cpl) (including inventory change)	41.2	54.4	23.5
Employed labour (cpl)	12.6	17.0	2.5
Owners unpaid labour (cpl)	5.8	14.0	2.5
Repairs and maintenance (cpl)	4.5	7.0	0.9
Finance and land lease (cpl)	4.9	11.8	0.8
Equity (%)	79	100	40
Liabilities (\$/cow)	3,702	9,484	0

*Cents per litre

Table 2. The average, high and low values for selected cash and profit indicators of the 11 farms in the Top 25% of QDAS participants.

in the Top 25% in QDAS in 2023/2024, while Table 2 (page 3) shows the average, high and low values for selected cash and profit indicators of these farms. The high and low values for each indicator represents their range across all 11 farms, meaning all the high values are not values from the same farm and similarly for the low values.

The standout from the Top 25 % of QDAS farms in 2023/2024 was the broad range of farm sizes, systems, regions, breeds,

feed sources, debt levels, costs and labour structures represented within the 11 farms. This is evident from the large range between high and low values of all indicators in Tables 1 & 2. There were grazing farms from every region, including North Queensland, as well as partial mixed ration (PMR) and total mixed ration (TMR) farms from South-east Queensland and the Darling Downs.

The broad range in the value of all indicators in the Top 25% shows that there are dairy farmers in every region of the Queensland industry who have adapted to a varied range of systems and structures that optimise the profitability of the farming business they want to run. There is no ideal size or system that maximises profitability on all farms, rather individuals finding the right balance for their operation. These actual numbers from real commercial farms collected annually provides real time context for physical and financial indicators for all dairy farmers in the Queensland dairy industry.

Participation in QDAS offers the opportunity to network and compare with this group of dairy farmers operating a broad range of profitable systems. The collection and processing of the physical and financial data conducted from August to October each year enables the development of farm cash flow, profit and feed reports for each individual farm. Figure 1 (page 4) shows an example of a profit map developed for each individual farm. This internal benchmarking allows comparisons to be made with previous years and the impacts of any changes made during the year to be analysed through physical and financial indicators. For example, how much did the new grain mill reduce purchased feed cost? Did milk production and/or components increase?

QDAS workshops run in November every year offer participants the opportunity to externally benchmark their farming operations. These workshops are attended by participants and QDAS data collectors only, to confidentially discuss group, regional and farming system trends and results for the year. These workshops allow participants to identify areas for improvement and network with other farmers who may have experience and advice to offer with changes that you may be considering for your farm. This is where the real opportunity lies for QDAS participants to make more informed, supported and confident decisions to continuously improve their farms.

With the end of financial year upon us, QDAS collection is about to kick off for another year. After a three-year break, Ray Murphy will be returning to the DPI dairy team in 2025 to take the reins of QDAS management again. For all continuing QDAS farmers, keep an eye out for your inventories in your inbox. If you would like to give QDAS a go for the first time in 2025, call any of the DPI collectors listed below. All Queensland dairy farmers are welcome and encouraged to participate in this free and confidential program.

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Group dairy farm profit map

Figure 1. Group Average Dairy Farm Profit Map – All 45 QDAS Farms 2023 - 2024

