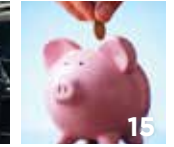
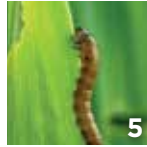




**Inside this issue**  
Fall Armyworm Workshop  
Managing Blast in Ryegrass  
Routine Jobs, Young Workers, Real Risk  
Key Changes to Super  
+ more



## Beyond Calving

# Intergenerational Impacts of Heat Stress and the Slick Advantage

### Danielle Antonio

Research assistant at QDPI and Master of Animal Science at UQ-Gatton

### Dannylo Sousa

Dairy Australia National Lead in Nutrition



An extremely hot day can be hard on any cow. The heavy breathing, the hunt for shade, the feed left in the trough, and the drop in milk that follows are all easy to spot. But what if the real damage from heat stress isn't the milk we lose today, but the hidden changes it causes that we don't see? Heat may not only affect the cow herself, but it may also carry through to her calf, influencing its growth, health, and even its ability to produce milk in the future.

In the December 2024 issue of Northern Horizons, Dr. Dannylo Sousa wrote about the hidden effects of heat stress before calving. He explained that dry cows exposed to high temperatures can start losing production potential well before they rejoin the milking herd. Building on that discussion, this follow-up study looks even deeper, not just at the cow, but at what happens to her offspring.

A long-term dataset from the Gatton Research Dairy (GRD, 2016–2025) at the University of Queensland was used to group cows according to whether they experienced consistent heat stress (Temperature-Humidity Index > 68) in the 45 days before calving. We compared pure Holstein cows to Slick-gene Holsteins and looked at how heat exposure during late pregnancy affected both the dam and her offspring.



A Slick-gene Holstein is a Holstein cow that carries a gene variation that makes its hair coat much shorter and smoother than normal

Figure 1. Gatton Research Dairy Holstein and Slick-gene Holstein cows

continued page 3

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# Northern Horizons Editorial SDP Chair



## Welcome to *Northern Horizons*.

This edition of Northern Horizons contains details regarding upcoming workshops with Nollaig Heffernan. Dr Nollaig Heffernan, an internationally respected specialist in leadership and organisational psychology, will return to Australia in 2026, touring all dairy regions. With nearly 20 years of hands-on experience working alongside dairy farmers, processors and industry leaders, Nollaig understands the unique pressures facing modern dairy businesses – from people management and succession planning to decision-making under constant change. Nollaig’s sessions are practical, relatable and grounded in real dairy farm experience. She focuses on:

- Strengthening leadership of people and teams.
- Improving communication within farm teams and family businesses.
- Navigating generational change and succession.
- Building resilient, high-performing workplaces.

Farmers who have attended her previous workshops have consistently valued her ability to translate research and psychology into clear, actionable strategies that can be applied immediately on farm. Whether you’re managing staff, working through generational change, or simply looking to improve performance and wellbeing across your business, Nollaig’s presentations offer fresh insights and proven tools to support long-term success.

This edition also features information on a pilot workshop developed by Dairy Australia and its partners on Fall Armyworm (FAW) identification and management. The workshop covers key areas including monitoring for crop damage, pest management planning, surveillance programs, and spray strategies. Subtropical Dairy acknowledges Dairy Australia and its collaborators for producing these valuable resources. Given the destructive impact FAW can have when infestation levels are high, these tools support farms in adapting to what has become a significant operational challenge.

Once again, welcome to Northern Horizons and I hope you find this edition of value and interest to your business.

**Luke Stock**, Chairman,  
Subtropical Dairy Programme Ltd.  
P 0474 800 245

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The links to other websites are provided as a service to users. We are not responsible for and do not endorse linked sites, nor are we able to give assurances regarding their content, operation or accuracy.

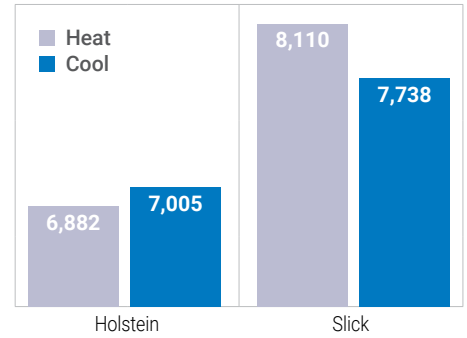
Performance was evaluated through total milk yield over a full 305-day lactation, along with lactation patterns and calf growth.

For readers of Northern Horizons who may not be familiar with the term “Slick-gene Holstein,” here is a brief explanation: A Slick-gene Holstein is a Holstein cow that carries a gene variation that makes its hair coat much shorter and smoother than normal (Figure 1, Page 1). Because of this short coat, these cows cope with heat better. They stay cooler, sweat more efficiently, and maintain production under hot conditions. The gene came from Senepol cattle and was introduced into Holsteins through crossbreeding. Only one copy of the gene is needed for the cow to show the slick coat.

The results make it clear that heat stress before calving reduced milk production in pure Holstein cows (Figure 2). Holsteins that experienced heat in late pregnancy produced 6,882 L in the following lactation, compared with 7,005 L when calving under cooler conditions. In contrast, Slick-gene Holsteins not only maintained production under heat but outperformed all other groups. Slick cows exposed to heat produced 8,110 L, and even under cool conditions they reached 7,738 L. This means Slick cows out-produced Holsteins in both environments by a large margin, showing an advantage of more than 1,200 L when heat stressed and over 700 L even in cooler conditions. These results indicate that the Slick trait offers a consistent performance benefit to the dam regardless of environmental conditions. It is important to note that this was an observational study, and the results should be interpreted with caution.

The results make it clear that heat stress before calving reduced milk production in pure Holstein cows.

### Effect of heat stress on lactation performance of the DAM



**Figure 2.** Effect of late-pregnancy heat stress on milk production in Holstein and Slick dams

The drop in milk production seen in heat-stressed dams is only part of the story. The effects also showed up in their calves. The first sign was visible at birth, where calves born to Holstein dams under heat stress averaged 37.6 kg, compared with 39.1 kg when their dams calved in cooler conditions (Figure 3, Page 4). Slick calves were also lighter when heat stressed (36.9 kg vs 37.6 kg under cool conditions), but the overall difference between the breeds is important.

When we look at the average across both environments, Holstein calves weighed 38.3 kg at birth, while Slick calves averaged 37.3 kg. In other words, Slick calves start life about one kilogram lighter. That may sound minor, but it has practical implications. A slightly smaller calf has lower maintenance requirements and needs less feed to grow. In hot conditions, eating less can be an advantage, because every kilo of dry matter eaten generates internal heat the animal has to get rid of.

So, while heat stress lowered birthweight in both breeds, the naturally smaller size of Slick calves may help them cope better with heat from day one. This aligns with what we saw in the dams. Slick cows are not only less affected by heat, but they may also pass on traits that help their calves manage it more efficiently.

continued page 4 ▶

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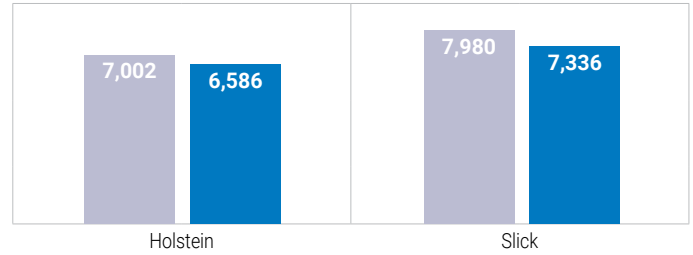
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### Effect of heat stress on lactation performance of the offspring



**Figure 4.** Lactation performance of daughters born under heat and cool conditions

■ Heat  
■ Cool

This study shows that heat stress in the last weeks of pregnancy doesn't just hurt the cow in the next lactation, it also leaves a lasting mark on the next generation. Holstein dams exposed to heat before calving produced less milk and gave birth to lighter calves. The cost of heat stress is not limited to one season, it carries through to the cows that replace them. Slick-gene Holsteins told a different story. Even when exposed to the same heat conditions, Slick dams maintained higher milk yields and their daughters outperformed Holstein offspring. Their calves were also naturally smaller at birth, which likely reduces feed requirements and internal heat load, an added advantage in hot conditions.

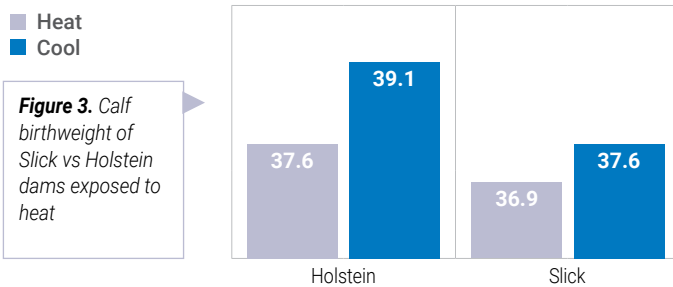
Taken together, the results make one thing clear: managing heat stress in late pregnancy should be a priority, not just to protect the current herd, but to protect the replacements coming after them. And where genetics can help, the Slick trait stands out as a practical tool offering resilience for both the cow and her daughters, across environments and across generations. ■ ■

This study shows that heat stress in the last weeks of pregnancy doesn't just hurt the cow in the next lactation, it also leaves a lasting mark on the next generation. Holstein dams exposed to heat before calving produced less milk and gave birth to lighter calves.

### Contact

**Danielle Antonio** [d.antonio@student.uq.edu.au](mailto:d.antonio@student.uq.edu.au)  
**Dannylo Sousa** [dannylo.sousa@dairyaustralia.com.au](mailto:dannylo.sousa@dairyaustralia.com.au)

### Effect of heat stress on birthweight of the offspring



**Figure 3.** Calf birthweight of Slick vs Holstein dams exposed to heat

Two years after birth, the long-term effects of heat stress during late pregnancy showed up again. This time when the offspring entered the milking herd. Holstein daughters of heat-stressed dams produced 7,002 L in their first lactation, compared with 6,586 L when their dams calved in cooler conditions (Figure 4). This confirms that the drop seen at birth carried through into adulthood.

The Slick offspring, however, stood out just like their dams. Daughters of heat-exposed Slick cows produced 7,980 L, and even under cool conditions they reached 7,336 L. That means Slick cows not only started lighter at birth but still went on to outperform Holsteins later in life, regardless of whether they were born under heat or not. When we connect all three steps, dam performance, calf birthweight, and the daughters' first lactation it becomes clear that the Slick gene supports both generations by helping them cope with heat, maintain intake efficiency, and protect milk yield over time.

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Contact John Pio  
0417 224 306  
[john@tropicalgenetics.com](mailto:john@tropicalgenetics.com)

[tropicalgenetics.com](http://tropicalgenetics.com)

# Fall Armyworm Workshop – Far North Coast NSW – Lismore



Fall armyworm (FAW) is a highly destructive pest capable of damaging maize, sorghum, ryegrass and oat pastures quickly. Early detection and correct identification can make all the difference in the amount of damage to forages. Knowing your options and developing a management plan could reduce your farm's risk of losing valuable fodder.

Join Dairy Australia and industry experts for an informative workshop covering integrated pest management, effective spray practices and the latest in using drones to control FAW. Participants will receive our new FAW risk & assessment tools and field guide developed by Qld DPI FAW scientist Dr Melina Miles.

Delivered in partnership with Dairy Australia, NSW Local Land Services, Norco Agri-solutions, Spraysafe & Save and All Flight Agricultural Services.

The workshop will cover:

- Identifying FAW from other caterpillars in an interactive session.
- Monitoring crops or pastures & recognising FAW damage.
- Developing a pest management plan.
- Hear about Local Land Services FAW surveillance system across dairy farms in NSW.
- Assessing FAW risk and identifying damage in crops and pasture using Dairy Australia's decision chart and field guide.
- Spray planning for effective management – online - Craig Day, Spraysafe & Save
- Effective drone spray -application – in person - Michael Barnes, All Flight Agricultural Services. ■■



This workshop is targeted for dairy farmers, farm employees, agronomists, contractors, rural store staff and service providers wishing to know more about managing FAW damage.

**WHEN**  
Monday 9th March 2026  
5 pm – 8 pm (dinner provided)

**WHERE**  
Lismore Workers Sports Club  
202 Oliver Ave,  
Goonellabah NSW 2480



[REGISTER HERE](#)

There is no cost for participants to attend this event. Dinner will be provided. Please advise if there are any special dietary requirements.

**FOR ANY ENQUIRIES, CONTACT**

Ali Briggs  
ali@dairyaustralia.com.au

Muhammad Aarsal  
muhammad.aarsal@lls.nsw.gov.au

Brenda McLachlan  
Brenda.mclachlan@dairyaustralia.com.au



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# Managing Blast in Ryegrass

In tropical and sub-tropical regions there are often reports of blast affecting ryegrass forages. Blast is hosted by many cool season and tropical species and is spread by the wind. It affects all ryegrass varieties.



## What is Ryegrass Blast?

Ryegrass blast, also known as Grey Leaf Spot is a serious fungal leaf disease caused by *Magnaporthe oryzae* (syn. *Pyricularia oryzae*) that thrives in warm, moist conditions (25–27°C). It causes significant damage to all ryegrass types, leading to oval-shaped lesions, leaf yellowing, production loss, and in many cases, plant death. It is spread by spores that are carried on the wind. It is inevitable that all ryegrass paddocks in sub-tropical regions will get exposed to the pathogen.

Unfortunately the pathogen does not only affect ryegrass. It can infect many popular C4 grasses, such as setaria and kikuyu that may already be present in paddocks oversown to annual ryegrass. Blast is not known to cause notable damage or loss to these C4 species, however it creates a 'green bridge' for the disease to survive year to-year in the local environment.



**Figure 1** Regions that may be affected by ryegrass blast



The occurrence of blast is most usually associated with several factors, which can worsen the incidence of the disease:

- Pastures/crops declining below certain soil fertility thresholds, especially N, P and K.
- Moist, humid conditions (especially overnight)
- Leaf litter, residues and thatch at planting
- Canopy closure and grazing management
- Cultivar susceptibility and tolerance

A combination of these factors could easily lead to severe disease infections and crop damage.



## Canopy and Irrigation

Irrigation should be scheduled early after grazing before the canopy has closed.



## How to Manage Ryegrass Blast?

### Grazing & Canopy Management

Quick early feed is always desirable, however the conditions that often drive the best autumn growth (warm-mild moist conditions) are also the best conditions for the disease and early plant infection.

Seedlings and juvenile plants are much more susceptible, and this is often coupled with the perfect conditions for the disease: temperatures around 26°C, warmer night time temperatures (around 20°C+) and wet leaf for extended periods.

### Why Canopy Management matters

If walking through a paddock of ryegrass leaves your lower legs or pants wet, then conditions are perfect for blast and the paddock should be grazed before widespread infection occurs and the sward is lost.

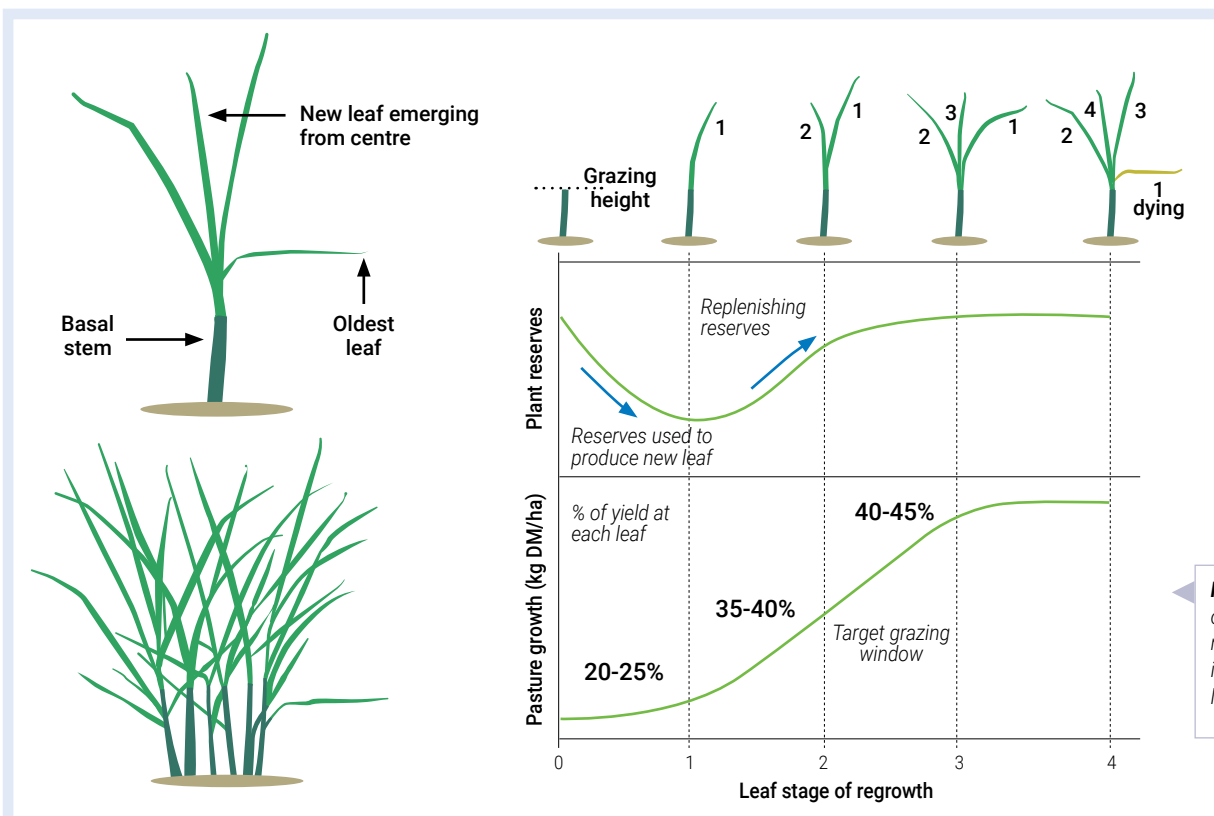
As the season progresses, if canopies have closed or there are large amounts of little or remnant leaf material present, the infection may worsen. All cultivars seem to eventually succumb to infection.

### Perfect Canopy Management

Ryegrass, especially annual ryegrass, is designed to be grazed so don't be afraid to make the most of it.

Ideally, we want to graze our annual pastures as soon as we can, and re-graze ASAP.

- Graze immediately at canopy closure (or if plant is anchored)
- Look to graze at the two and a half leaf stage. This will be optimal for canopy management, quality and yield
- Utilise heavy stocking rates in a rotational grazing strategy to increase utilisation and remove as much canopy cover as possible.
- Never let the sward exceed three and a half leaf or a closed canopy as this will exacerbate the disease.





### Manage Fertility

Fertility can be a double-edged sword. On one hand we need adequate nutrients to ensure we have good production and a healthy plant. On the other, we don't want to have excess nutrients as this can be expensive and also impact our blast management.

Having adequate fertility is essential for a healthy plant, and a healthy plant is a productive plant. If we don't have adequate nutrition, especially N, P and K, we ultimately stress the plant, and it struggles to perform its normal functions. Unfortunately, if a plant is stressed by inadequate nutrition, it has a lower immune responses to pathogens and more susceptible to disease.

#### Different Varieties, Differing nutritional management

All varieties require different management. New, higher yielding cultivars should have different fertiliser strategies compared to older lower yielding varieties. If a new pasture is producing say 25% more than other paddocks, extra nutrients may be needed to maximise productivity.

#### Nitrogen Timing

Although nutrition is good for the plant, we need to be careful with our nitrogen management. A strategy of adequate and often should be followed. If we load the plant up with excessive N, we get great production early, but we need to sustain the plant for the rest of the season. We also run the risk of quick canopy closure, which if not managed adds another risk to the management of blast.

Ultimately, we need to set the plant and crop up for success, and an agronomist/advisor with the help of a soil test can do this.

### Cultivar susceptibility

There is a strong association with blast and cultivars with poorer disease tolerance. Blast may often be seen first in paddocks planted with more susceptible varieties. However, this can be misleading as other factors may lead to higher rates of infection such as closed canopies, poor soil fertility or warm moist weather conditions. So often, it's the paddocks that have the right conditions and right timing for disease that will be infected first.

Not all new varieties are screened for acceptable levels of blast tolerance. In a seasonal blast outbreak, susceptible cultivars will be affected and have limited ability to recover.

Cultivars with good blast tolerance will help to mitigate the disease and assist with management timeframes for response.



**Figure 3** Difference in susceptibility to blast between cultivars, Northern Plateau Left & USA Tetila Right

## Alternate Strategies

At times we may need to think outside our normal approach to fill feed gaps or deal with the situation at hand. Some alternate strategies include:

### Stagger Planting

Staggering planting times can reduce the risk if the wrong conditions come along and a mass infection event occurs. It may also help you budget your feed throughout the winter season.

### Use alternate species

The addition of **Commander Chicory** and **Persian Clover** to ryegrass not only offers vast improvements in feed quality and potential milk yield but both species are not affected by blast.

For early planting, species like **Forage Oats** are unaffected by blast. It's important to consider newer varieties like **Sorcerer Forage Oats** for improved disease resistance, especially in warm, moist environments.

**Forage Brassicas** can add considerable feed quality to either a forage oat or ryegrass planting and are unaffected by blast. It is important to consider what animal safety issues can arise from inclusion of brassicas. **Falcon leafy turnip** is a safe option, that suits the early planting window very well with it being one of the quickest brassicas to graze safely at 6-8 weeks.



## Summary

Utilising more tolerant varieties, grazing and soil fertility will help to minimise the impact of blast.

### To mitigate blast, look to use a combination of:

- Plant more tolerant cultivars such as Northern Plateau Annual Ryegrass over more susceptible cultivars such as USA Tetila
- Avoid planting early (conditions drive infection levels)
- Ensure the crop has adequate nutrition and fertility
- Ensure canopy is managed
- Stagger plantings to spread risk and manage feed peaks
- Use alternate species for early planting, such as oats, brassica, chicory or clovers

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# Routine Jobs, Young Workers, Real Risk

### Di Gresham

Human Resource Consultant



**Karen had been working on the farm for about four months. She hadn't grown up on a dairy, but she loved being outdoors and was enjoying the work.**

One afternoon, she was bringing the cows up the undulating laneway into the dairy yard for milking. Only a few stragglers remained, and one of the two gates at the back of the yard had already been closed by another worker.

Karen was on the quad bike. Wanting to save time and avoid getting off, she manoeuvred the bike alongside the open gate. Reaching out with some force, she grabbed the top rail and swung it around to close it. She finished the job by nudging the gate shut with the front of the bike.

With both gates together, she stood up on the footrests and leaned forward over the handlebars to fasten the chain clasp.

She noticed the gates now had a new chain and fastener – a big improvement on the old fencing wire that had previously been used. What she cannot clearly recall is how her right thumb slipped between the chain and the gate rail and became caught within the links.

Instinctively, she tried to free it with her other hand, releasing the hand brake to do so. Under normal circumstances that might not have been a problem –

except the quad bike's foot brake was not working properly. No matter how hard she pressed it, it would not engage.

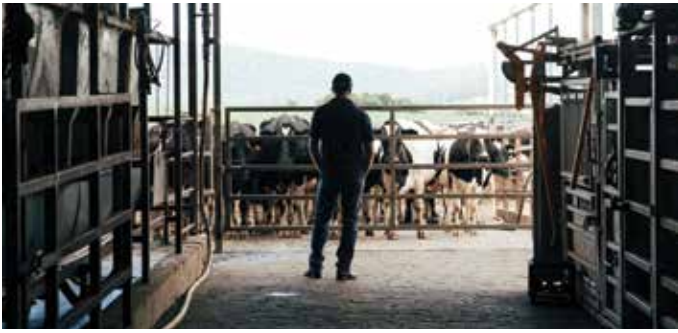
Because the laneway sloped slightly into the yards, the bike began to roll backwards. As it moved, the tension on the chain increased, crushing Karen's thumb and the base of her hand.

She was now trapped. If she held the hand brake, the bike would stay put – but it had already rolled back as far as her trapped thumb would allow. She found herself bent almost in half, stretched awkwardly over the handlebars.

She considered trying to get off the bike, but that would mean letting it roll away – something she worried her employer would not appreciate. She tried reaching under herself to press the accelerator, inching the bike forward slightly, but each time she stopped, it rolled back again. Her thumb remained firmly wedged in the chain.

After about 15 minutes, another staff member came looking for her and found her still trapped. He had to locate the boss for assistance – one person to stabilise the bike, the other to help Karen safely dismount, and then carefully work to free her thumb, which by that stage had turned a pale shade of blue.





## Where Did This Go Wrong?

Karen's injury didn't happen because she was reckless. It happened because a series of small, familiar farm behaviours lined up at the wrong moment.

- She wanted to save time.
- She didn't want to get off the bike.
- She didn't want to look slow or incapable.
- She assumed the bike would stay stationary.
- She assumed it would only take a second.

Young or newer workers often have confidence — sometimes more than experience. They are keen to prove themselves. They don't want to be seen as making mistakes or holding others up. That quiet pressure can lead to shortcuts.

This incident wasn't caused by one bad decision. It was the combination of several contributing factors:

- Attempting to close and fasten a gate while seated or standing on a quad bike
- Wanting to save time and take a shortcut
- A new gate latch configuration — unfamiliar hardware
- Standing on the quad bike footrests while leaning forward
- A sloped laneway increasing the risk of bike movement
- A faulty or poorly maintained foot brake
- Limited experience (four months on farm)
- Lack of active supervision at the time
- Concern about employer reaction and fear of letting the bike roll away
- No clearly reinforced rule about dismounting before closing gates

Supervision on farms isn't just about showing someone how to do a task once. It involves:

- Reinforcing safe methods repeatedly
- Checking equipment condition
- Observing how the job is actually being carried out
- Creating a culture where stopping and doing the job properly is expected

Karen had only been on the farm for four months. She knew how to bring cows up. She knew how to shut a gate. But had clear expectations been set that:

- You always dismount the quad to close and secure a gate?
- Saving seconds is never worth increasing risk?

Of course, Karen should have been able to expect that the quad bike's brakes were safe and fully operational. Her hesitation about speaking up regarding faulty equipment highlights another issue — whether workers feel confident reporting defects without worrying about repercussions.

These conversations matter — especially with younger workers who are still forming their habits and learning what “normal” looks like on a farm.

## Practical steps to prevent a repeat

### 1. Implement a clear rule: Dismount to close gates

**Make it a non-negotiable expectation:**

- Quad bike in neutral, park brake applied, engine off if required — get off the bike to close and secure gates.
- Write it into your Safe Work Procedure.

### 2. Equipment maintenance

- Ensure all quad bikes are safe and fully operational.
- Implement a simple pre-start checklist.
- Remove defective bikes from service immediately.

If the brake isn't right — the bike isn't used. No exceptions.

### 3. Young worker supervision

**Workers in their first 6–12 months need:**

- Closer monitoring
- Regular check-ins
- Observed task performance
- Reinforcement of safe behaviours

Not because they're careless — but because they're learning habits.

### 4. Culture shift: What are your expectations?

**Make it clear:**

- Getting off to shut a gate is expected.
- Taking an extra 30 seconds is not a weakness.
- Reporting faulty equipment is responsible behaviour.
- No piece of equipment is worth an injury — a hand injury is life changing.

Young workers especially need permission to slow down.

### 5. Remove the “Impress the boss” pressure

If a worker believes; “The boss won't be happy if I let the bike roll,” then we need to ask what signals are being sent about productivity versus safety. Supervision includes modelling calm and safe decision-making.

Karen was fortunate. While the injury was painful, it did not require any medical treatment beyond an ice pack and rest. Given the amount of time her thumb was trapped and the pressure involved, the outcome could easily have been far more serious — including fractures, nerve damage or permanent loss of function.

On dairy farms, it's often the everyday jobs — shutting gates, moving cows, riding quads — that carry the greatest risk because they feel routine. Familiar tasks can quietly lead to shortcuts, especially when workers are trying to be efficient or prove themselves.

This incident is a reminder that small decisions matter. Clear expectations, properly maintained equipment, active supervision and a culture where workers feel confident to slow down and speak up are what prevent injuries.

Because the next outcome may not be as forgiving. ■■



#### Further info

Young workers | [WorkSafe.qld.gov.au](http://WorkSafe.qld.gov.au)

# Workshops with Dr Nollaig Heffernan



Dr Nollaig Heffernan, an internationally respected specialist in leadership and organisational psychology, will return to Australia in 2026, touring all dairy regions, including Subtropical Dairy.

Nollaig's sessions are practical, relatable and grounded in real dairy farm experience. She focuses on:

- Strengthening leadership of people and teams.
- Improving communication within farm teams and family businesses.
- Navigating generational change and succession.
- Building resilient, high-performing workplaces. ■■

Sessions in the Subtropical Dairy region include;

**24th March 2026**

**Taree** – Club Taree, Taree NSW

**25th March 2026**

**Gatton** – DPI Research Station Conference Room, Gatton Qld

**26th March 2026**

**Kandanga** – Country Club, Kandanga, Qld

**27th March 2026**

**Malanda** – The Dairy Centre, Malanda Qld



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# Discussing Dr Nollaig Heffernan's Discounted planner

## The discounted time approach to effective planning

**Dr Nollaig Heffernan**  
Human Resource Consultant

It is common thinking on farms to work until the job is done. This is a cumulative or adding up approach to time which is often inefficient and stress inducing. It also leads to the long workdays which threaten the dairy sector's image as a desirable place to work. A more productive mindset is to think about getting the work done in the time allowed. This mindset can be achieved by using a discounted time approach to planning, where you work backwards from a bigger picture.

- While most businesses have a five-year plan, you should at least be thinking a year out from where you are and using a yearly wall planner is ideal for this.
- Colour-coding the planner helps to visualise time consumption on farm.
- Time can then be broken down (yearly/planner → monthly/ calendar → weekly/diary → daily/to-do list) to enable proactive intervention,
- Placing the colour-coded planner in a common area where it can be viewed, discussed and modified turns it into a powerful communication and time management.

**TOP TIP: Time management and planning as learnable skillsets are multi-billion-dollar industries with plenty of references and resources available, ranging from phone apps to formally delivered courses.**

### COMPLETING YOUR PLANNER

- Ideally this exercise is started no later than December or in the equivalent final month of the business year by the employer/ unit manager so information can be locked in before the calendar is given to staff at the beginning of the new year.
- By planning the year so clearly in advance, there is universal certainty about what needs to be done.
- This is common practice in other industries and as dairy is competing with other industries for access to the employment pool it is a practice that should be readily adopted by the dairy sector.

### TAKING A BLANK YEARLY PLANNER...



**NB!** Colour-coding is quicker than reading written entries and reveals patterns and conflicts at a glance:

- keep in mind some people may prefer shading/patterns/ stickers to colour-coding → ask the people in your business what they prefer
- remember to keep a key of what the colours/patterns/stickers represent.

### 1. Discount the time not available to farming



→ Discounted time can take several forms:

- protected-time-off might include holidays, red-letter days, non-farm-related events, personal health appointments, "bucket list" wishes, etc. Protected time-off is not flexible and the business is structured around this time off definitely being taken.

→ Many farmers offer protected-time-off, typically holidays, to their staff first believing it is a more generous thing to do, however it causes resentment and frustration for both the farmer and his/her family who have all the risk of the business and should have some of the perks. Discount your own protected time first.

- negotiable-time-off is non-essential time

→ Compromising on negotiable-time-off is a quick and easy win for the employer when it comes to staff satisfaction.

- skeleton shift/essentials may happen around significant festivities/holidays or prior to stressed periods such as block calving.

→ Every farm should strive to achieve a skeleton shift rota at weekends to compensate for the often challenging 7-day week nature of farming, helping to attract employees who wish to align with the 'rest of the world' and have weekends off! This will significantly increase the employee candidate pool.

### 2. Mark known events in the farming year



→ There are many predictable events in the dairy year no matter what the system. Mark in:

- calving (divided into intense and less intense weeks),

fertilising, breeding, sowing, harvest, silage/hay windows, grass measuring, herd testing, drying off, discussion group days, conferences, farm-related events, etc,

- If you are in an All Year Round (AYR) system, then many of the above would add pressure to an already full day so it is critical to spot extra pressures to the daily routine.
  - the more information you can provide the better your planner will work
  - if certain times of the year are more difficult than others it is important to let people know.
- Offering an explanation as to why things are tough, when it's likely to end and how to cope in the meantime could be the difference between someone staying on or leaving because they believe they are not coping.
- In addition to the planner, the "year in pictures" would also help tell the "story". Somebody who has never experienced a drought or seen animals under those conditions would value the re-assurance that while not ideal it is manageable, for example.

**TOP TIP: At this point look for any conflict between time off farm and critical work and make sure you have some solutions to manage that clash, with cancelling your protected-time-off being a worst-case scenario solution.**

### 3. Relieve known stressed periods in the preceding months

- To be resilient, it is critical not to find yourself doing anything other than what you should be doing, particularly in a known stressed period.
- When we are under excess pressure, we have limited thinking capacity and can only deal with what's in front of us. Extra stress burdens the system and can have a very high psychological cost. It is critical to remove as much panic and reactive behaviour as possible to maintain a resilient system.
- By looking for gaps on the planner we can take advantage of quieter times to catch up with tasks that will make upcoming stressed periods easier:
  - mark in dates for forward-buying to prevent the cost of reactive/panic purchasing, carry out water and feed audits to anticipate requirements in advance, have a fencing focus so paddocks are always ready when they're needed, etc
  - gaps in the planner also provide great opportunities for spontaneous (paid) time/days off to reward great performance or alleviate tired bodies, as well as management and development opportunities such as attending training sessions, conferences or farm walks.



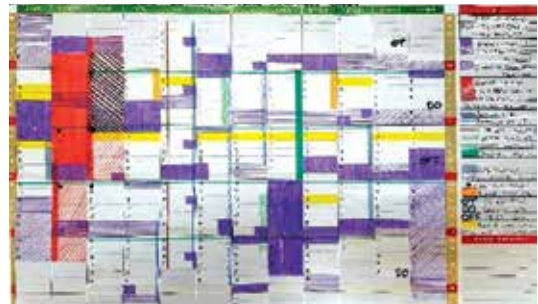
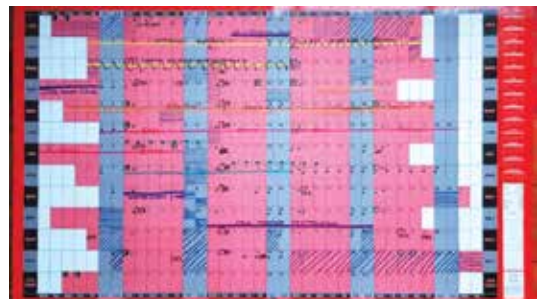
### 4. Add staff availability

- Finally, with a comprehensively informed planner you can:
  - ask your staff to discuss, negotiate and confirm their time off with attention being paid to critical times of year where taking time off is discouraged

- Ideally employers should include the times of year when staff should not take leave in the employment contract and have employees agree to and sign to confirm that agreement e.g. block calving, breeding, etc. Not to do so exposes the business at a critical time. This is common in other sectors.
  - where there are several members of staff and the planner begins to get messy, come up with a solution collectively (greater buy-in) as how best to represent the information. For example, print the planner on clear plastic (stationery/office supplies shops/online will do this) with a separate plastic sheet for each member of staff and then place these sheets over the original planner prepared by the farmer/unit manager.
- The planner is further strengthened if individuals are assigned to the marked-out tasks in advance.

### ADDITIONAL NOTES:

- Yearly planners can be printed vertically or horizontally with people preferring either format → ask the people in your business what they prefer.



- When planning the following year, the previous year's planner can be reviewed to assess whether time allocation was accurate and where the bottlenecks occurred informing future procedure.
- Effective time management has a dramatic impact on personal well-being, stress management and life-satisfaction ratings.
- Effective time management is a core principle in project, lean and change management. ■■

#### FURTHER READING

- 7 Habits of Highly Effective People** – Stephen Covey (esp. Habits 1,2 & 3)
- Eat that Frog** – Brian Tracy
- The On-Time, On-Target Manager** – Ken Blanchard & Steve Gottry
- The One Minute Manager Meets the Monkey** – Ken Blanchard, William Oncken JR & Hall Burrows

**The Organized Mind** – Daniel Levitin (advanced reading taking a deeper look into how the brain processes information including time management)

#### TEDTALKS

- How to Multiply your Time** – Rory Vaden
- Inside the Mind of a Master Procrastinator** – Tim Urban

# Payday Super

## Key changes to super guarantee



**Australian Government**  
**Australian Taxation Office**

### What is Payday Super?

Payday Super is a change to how you calculate and when you pay your employees' super guarantee.

From 1 July 2026 employers will need to pay employees their super guarantee on payday, at the same time as their salary and wages.

Super guarantee is:

- calculated as 12% of qualifying earnings (QE), which is a new term that brings together ordinary time earnings (OTE) and other payments
- paid to an employee's super fund on payday and received by the super fund within 7 business days (unless an extended timeframe applies, such as for new employees).

### What employers need to do

- Check what is changing in the following table.
- Plan ahead. Review your payroll systems, super guarantee processes and get ready to pay super guarantee more frequently.
- Stay informed. Visit [ato.gov.au/paydaysuper](https://ato.gov.au/paydaysuper) or speak to your tax professional for advice.

### Expected changes

The information below is intended to help you prepare for anticipated changes from 1 July 2026.



For updates on the progress of the law visit [ato.gov.au/paydaysuper](https://ato.gov.au/paydaysuper).

### Tip for employers.

You don't need to wait until 1 July 2026 to start paying super at the same time as you pay salary and wages – you can start now.

Topic	Now	Changes from 1 July 2026
<b>Super guarantee payments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be received by a super fund within 28 days of the end of the quarter, but can be paid quarterly or more frequently e.g. monthly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid to an employee's super fund at the same time as paying qualifying earnings (QE), on payday, and received by the super fund within 7 business days.</li> </ul>
<b>Super guarantee contributions due date</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 28 October</li> <li>• 28 January</li> <li>• 28 April</li> <li>• 28 July</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due within 7 business days of payday. Some exceptions may apply (including for new employees).</li> </ul>
<b>Basis for super guarantee calculation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Super is calculated as 12% of ordinary time earnings (OTE).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Super guarantee is calculated as 12% of QE, which includes OTE and other payments.</li> </ul>
<b>Super guarantee charge (SGC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applies when amounts aren't received by a super fund within 28 days of the end of a quarter.</li> <li>• Is calculated based on salary and wages.</li> <li>• Includes interest at 10% per annum.</li> <li>• Includes a flat administration fee.</li> <li>• Is self-assessed and requires the lodgment of an SGC statement.</li> <li>• A tax deduction can't be claimed for the payment of SGC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applies when amounts aren't received by a super fund within 7 business days of payday (unless an extended timeframe applies, such as for new employees).</li> <li>• Is calculated based on QE.</li> <li>• Includes interest that compounds daily at the general interest charge rate.</li> <li>• Includes an administrative uplift which can vary based on an employer's history of meeting super guarantee obligations and may be reduced by a voluntary disclosure.</li> <li>• Is assessed by the ATO.</li> <li>• SGC is tax deductible.</li> </ul>
<b>Penalties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximum of 200% of the SGC, which can be remitted in part or in full.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% or 50% of the unpaid SGC depending on any prior penalties.</li> </ul>
<b>Single Touch Payroll (STP)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report either OTE or super liability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report both QE and super liability.</li> </ul>
<b>Small Business Superannuation Clearing House (SBSCCH)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closed to new users on 1 October 2025.</li> <li>• Existing users have access to the service until 30 June 2026. All users must transition to an alternative option to pay their employees' super. Visit <a href="https://ato.gov.au/howtopaysuper">ato.gov.au/howtopaysuper</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SBSCCH is no longer available.</li> </ul>
<b>Employee data and payment processing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Super payments may take a number of days to be received by a super fund.</li> <li>• Employers receive incomplete or inaccurate data from their employees, which causes errors when they try to contribute to a super fund and delayed payments.</li> <li>• Employers are unaware of key changes to large super fund's details.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SuperStream data and payment standards will be revised to allow payments made via the New Payments Platform and provide better error messaging to help employers address errors faster.</li> <li>• A new member verification request will enable employers to confirm that a super fund can match their employee contribution to the super fund for the first time and will accept a contribution for them.</li> <li>• Improvements to the Fund Validation Service will give employers early notice of key changes to large super fund's details, such as fund mergers, that could affect their ability to make contributions to super funds.</li> </ul>
<b>Expected changes – not law yet</b>		
<b>Stapled fund access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers must provide their employees with a choice of super fund and request stapled super fund details from the ATO if no choice form was received from an employee.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers can request a stapled super fund and offer this to their employee at the same time as they provide a choice form.</li> <li>• Employers must still provide their employees with a choice of super fund and request stapled super fund details from the ATO if no choice form was received from an employee.</li> </ul>
<b>Allocations by super funds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Super funds have 20 business days to allocate or return contributions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Super funds have 3 business days to allocate or return contributions. ■</li> </ul>

# Contractor or employee?



Farmers may choose to engage an independent contractor when they have a specific job which needs to be done by a person with a particular skill, for instance, silage making or hay making.

It is important to be able to distinguish between an independent contractor and an employee as the law imposes different rights and obligations on those who engage independent contractors and those who engage employees.

## What is a contractor?

A contractor is someone who you pay for a service. They can choose to take the job, they can delegate who does the task, they are responsible for getting the job done and they supply their own equipment. They have an ABN and are responsible for their own Workcover and super.

## What is the difference between a contractor and an employee?

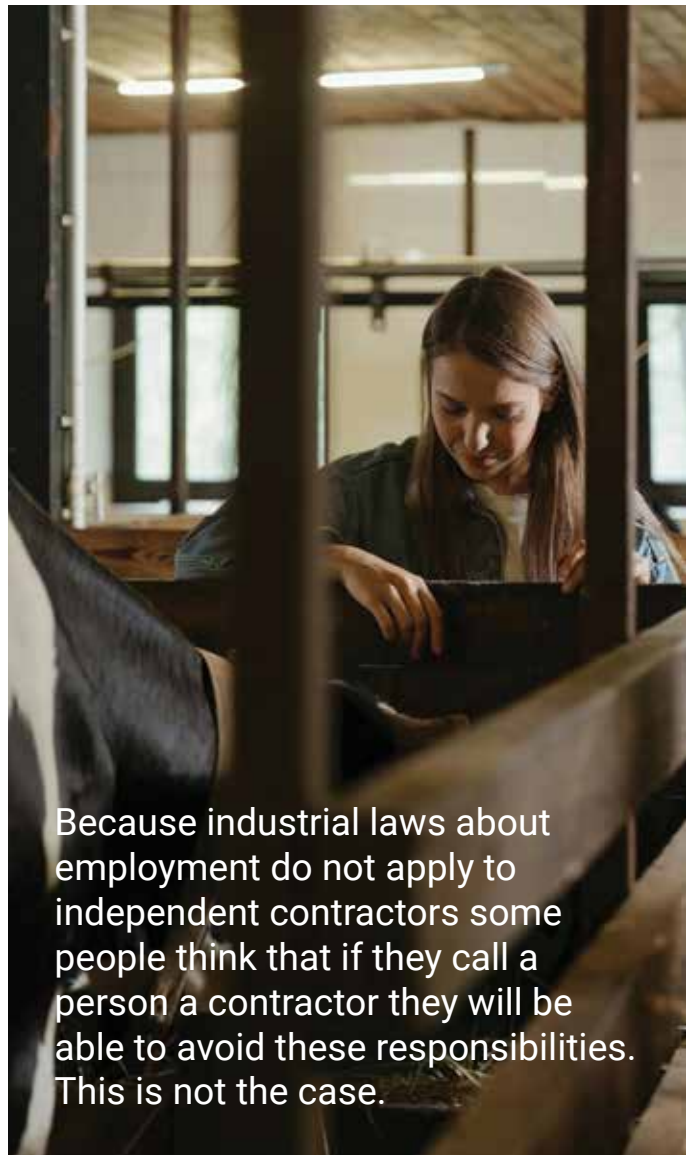
An independent contractor is a person who works under a written commercial contract or a written contract for services. The independent contractor can operate as an individual or through a partnership, company or trust.

An employee is defined as a person who works under an employment contract or a contract of service.

If a person working on a dairy farm has nothing else to sell other than their labour, then they will more than likely be an employee, not a contractor. Someone does not become a contractor simply by supplying an ABN.

## Can I employ a relief milker as a contractor?

It is unlikely that a relief milker would be a contractor.



Because industrial laws about employment do not apply to independent contractors some people think that if they call a person a contractor they will be able to avoid these responsibilities. This is not the case.

## The Law

### Sham contracts

The federal industrial laws make it an offence to do any of the following and significant penalties apply:

- dismiss an employee for the purpose of engaging them as an independent contractor;
- represent an employment relationship as independent contracting;
- make a false statement for the purpose of influencing or persuading an individual to enter into an independent contract.

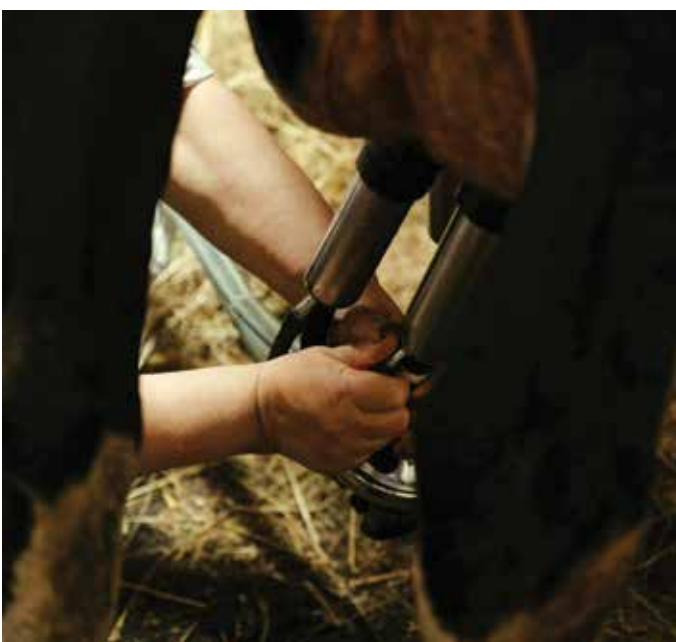
### Common law

Employment is regulated by state and federal industrial relations laws including awards. An employee does not have the right to control how and when work is performed and cannot delegate work to others.

Some laws such as workers compensation and superannuation laws as well as some taxation laws deem workers to be employees regardless of the common law definition.

Because industrial laws about employment do not apply to independent contractors some people think that if they call a person a contractor they will be able to avoid these responsibilities. This is not the case.

Calling a person an independent contractor, when the true nature of their engagement is as an employee, does not avoid these laws applying.



## Contractor v. employee

The law about independent contractors has changed in 2024 and whilst it is still important that there be a comprehensive written contract which details the parties' obligations, how the contract is actually performed in practice is a key consideration.

The totality or true nature of the relationship is key to deciding if a person is in practice an employee or an independent contractor.



**There are a number of questions which can be asked to help decide whether a person will be considered to be an independent contractor at common law.**

- Control – how much control does the principal have over the work done by the contractor? A Contractor will be able to control how and when work is done.
- Delegation – can the contractor delegate all or some of the work or do they have to do it personally? A contractor will usually have the right to delegate the work to another person or entity.
- Can it be said that the contractor is working in their own business? A contractor will be running their own business.
- Does the contract provide for payment by fixed fee related to outcome or achievement of a satisfactory result rather than a time based pay rate? It would be unusual for a contractor to be paid by the hour for their labour alone.
- Does the contractor have invoicing systems, standard terms of trade, insurance, debt collecting systems, appropriate financial records etc. which businesses commonly use?

**The following questions can also be asked to help to decide if the true nature of the relationship is one of employee and employer or contractor and principal.**

- Is the person doing similar work for other people?
- Do they advertise their services to the public?
- Does the work lead to an ability to make a profit or is the work the same as an employee would do for wages?
- Was the contract price negotiated commercially?
- Does the person bear the risk for poor performance?
- Does the person use their own assets, tools and equipment to do the work?
- Does the person benefit from good will?
- Has the person agreed to provide a particular outcome or result and when the result has been achieved will they leave?

**If the answers to these questions are no then it is unlikely that the person will be found to be a contractor.** ■ ■



**Further reading**

Read about independent contractors, including a draft contract for services on dairy farm template and understanding criteria to qualify as an independent contractor vs employees – visit [thepeopleindairy.org.au/employment-rewards/independent-contractors](https://thepeopleindairy.org.au/employment-rewards/independent-contractors)



**Want to know more?**

Visit [thepeopleindairy.org.au](https://thepeopleindairy.org.au) and use the search box at the top right of the screen. Type in a keyword, click Search to bring up a list of related topics.

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# Advanced microbial testing to improve disease detection in dairy calves



## Dr Brito Rodriguez

Dr Brito Rodriguez hopes using advanced microbial testing tools will improve the accuracy and timeliness of disease detection in calves.

### Dairy UP researchers using advanced microbial testing tools to better understand disease patterns in Australian dairy calves hope to improve the accuracy and timeliness of disease detection.

As part of their research, a broad spectrum of pathogens has been identified in pre-weaned calves, generating valuable baseline data and laying the foundation for better diagnostic protocols that can support improvements in disease monitoring, diagnostics and on-farm decision making.

Project lead Dr Barbara Brito Rodriguez, from the NSW Department of Primary Industries, says this could be a critical step in avoiding unnecessary use of antibiotics and preventing antimicrobial resistance.

“To have a clear and early diagnosis of what viruses, bacteria and parasites are causing a disease on a farm means you can target the control and treatment based on that,” Dr Brito Rodriguez said.

As part of the research, the Dairy UP team visited 72 New South Wales farms to collect nasal and rectal samples from both sick and healthy calves up to 7-weeks-old. In addition, samples were collected from cows that had calved within the past 50 days.

Dr Brito Rodriguez said the sampling strategy involved different farms in different regions to represent all NSW. The work focussed on calf scours and respiratory diseases in NSW dairy calves, but the findings enable early identification of new microbial variants and have the potential for broader application across Australian dairy regions.

The study found Rotavirus A on almost all farms, including some with vaccination programs. It also identified a range of viruses not previously thought to be common on NSW dairy farms, including Kobuvirus and Adenovirus, which are not usually tested by labs but were present on half the farms, and Rhinitis A and Rhinitis B, potentially important causes of respiratory disease. Pestivirus was found on 17 farms.

The team has prepared a series of fact sheets, collating current knowledge about 11 bugs for farmers and vets.

The study detected genes known to be used by bacteria to cause disease and commonly found in *E. coli* and *Campylobacter*, associated with scours, and identified several parasites associated with scours. Little evidence of *Salmonella* – considered an important microbe in calf scours and respiratory disease – was detected in this study.

Dr Brito Rodriguez said that in the past, diagnostic labs would test a sample for a particular pathogen but the new approach sequences all DNA and genetic material to test for different microbes.

“We don’t have to ask the sample what we have to test for – the sample will tell us what’s there. It’s untargeted testing which is unbiased in detecting all those organisms that are usually hard to test for in the lab.

“We are being more accurate with diagnostics and understanding what is present in those organisms.”

More research is needed to understand antimicrobial resistance and how that could be decreased, and the prevalence of the rotavirus bug. “We found rotavirus present in almost all farms,” Dr Brito Rodriguez said. “Some farms with really good management of calves in general, still have issues with rotavirus, and we want to understand the genetic diversity of the bug and if that is impacting the vaccine that is used to prevent it.”

The project is part of Dairy Up’s portfolio of projects aimed to unlock the potential of cows and is a collaboration between researchers from Dairy UP, University of Technology Sydney (UTS), NSW DPI, Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute, Scibus and the 72 participating dairy farms. Two PhD students enrolled at UTS, Zain Ul Abedien and Aleksandra ‘Ola’ Stanczak, are working on the project. ■■

More information: [dairyup.com.au](http://dairyup.com.au) or email [barbara.bitorodriguez@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:barbara.bitorodriguez@dpi.nsw.gov.au)



# Effluent Management: Why expert design matters

**Cath Lescun**

National Soils & Water Lead – Dairy Australia



**Effluent management isn't just a box to tick—it's a vital part of running a successful and sustainable dairy farm. Every farm produces effluent, and how it's handled can make a big difference to productivity, compliance, and environmental outcomes.**

Effluent doesn't have to be a problem—it can be a resource. When managed effectively, it can help grow feed and improve nutrient cycling on-farm. But to unlock these benefits, effluent systems need to be designed and operated correctly. That's where expert advice comes in.

Farmers also have a clear responsibility to manage effluent systems properly. Done well, these systems prevent pollution of air, water, and land. Done poorly, they can lead to serious issues such as odours, greenhouse gas emissions, nutrient loss, and leachate entering waterways or land where it doesn't belong. Beyond the environmental impact, failing to manage effluent correctly can put farmers at risk of breaching their state's Environmental Protection Act.

Designing an effluent system isn't a one-size-fits-all job. It requires knowledge of state guidelines, system components, application methods, and contingency planning. It also involves understanding compliance, economics, and how effluent can be integrated into farm productivity. Getting it wrong can be costly—not just financially, but environmentally and reputationally.

To support farmers, Dairy Australia, in partnership with Agriculture Victoria, runs the Design Livestock Effluent Systems

(DLES) program. This program regularly upskills service providers across the country, ensuring they have the latest knowledge in effluent design, management, and application. These experts cover everything from agronomy and irrigation to regulatory requirements, giving farmers confidence that their systems meet best practice standards.

In 2025, ten more participants completed the DLES program, adding to the growing network of accredited service providers. This means more farmers now have access to qualified professionals who can help turn effluent from a challenge into an opportunity.

If you're planning a new effluent system—or reviewing an existing one—the first step is to consult a properly qualified expert. The full list of accredited service providers is available on the Agriculture Victoria website.

Effluent management is too important to leave to chance. By working with qualified experts, farmers can protect the environment, stay compliant, and make the most of a valuable resource. It's an investment in the future of your farm—and the industry as a whole. ■■



**[Click here for more information on effluent management and resources for dairy farmers.](#)**



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# SLICK Genetics Now Available for Heat-Stressed Dairy Herds in Australia



Image 1: Vala Sunsation Harpoon-P

## SLICK Genetics – At a Glance

### What is it?

Dairy genetics carrying the SLICK gene for improved heat tolerance.

### Why does it matter?

Heat stress reduces feed intake, milk yield and fertility.

### Reported benefits:

- Improved feed efficiency
- More stable milk production
- Fertility performance maintained
- Better body condition in hot conditions

### Available in:

Holstein-Friesian, Jersey and crossbred lines

**Australian dairy and beef farmers can now access a proven genetic solution to thrive in the heat. Tropical Resilience Genetics (TrRG) launched its breakthrough All SLICK genetics catalogue at the International Dairy Week (IDW) 2026, Tatura Park, Shepparton**

Heat stress remains one of the costliest challenges in dairy systems, particularly in tropical, sub-tropical, and increasingly warmer regions in Australia. Reduced feed intake, lower body condition, poor fertility and milk production losses are common during extended periods of heat.

SLICK cattle carry naturally occurring genetic traits that enable improved heat dissipation. Research conducted internationally has demonstrated that cattle carrying the SLICK gene maintain lower body temperatures, especially under hot conditions, allowing them to sustain appetite, milk production and reproductive performance.

Published studies have reported improvements, including:

- Higher milk yield in heat-stressed environments (up to 1,000–1,200 litres per lactation in comparable systems)
- Improved feed efficiency under heat load
- Earlier puberty and improved fertility performance

TrRG now offers SLICK sire semen across three dairy options - Holstein-Friesian (Australian and NZ), Jersey and crossbred lines, enabling farmers to select genetics aligned to their herd structure and feeding systems.

Farmers will be encouraged by the high BPI ratings of the Australian bulls, which will appear in the Good Bulls guide from the April run.

“As climate variability increases, producers are looking for new long-lasting tools that build resilience into their herds. Our launch is timely, given the recently released report of positive outcomes for SLICK genetics in the University of Queensland herd at Gatton,” said Dr Dave Hayman, Managing Director of Tropical Resilience Genetics. “Genetics is one of the few permanent solutions available, and we are also aware that export markets will soon be calling for SLICK heifers available for export, which will further encourage the uptake of Sexed SLICK semen.”

John Pio has been appointed for Australian Customer Development and Support to engage directly with farmers and herd improvement providers across key dairy regions, to discuss practical SLICK integration into herd breeding programs. John is based in Toowoomba, Queensland, and can be contacted by phone or WhatsApp on 0417 224 306, or email, john@tropicalgenetics.com. The Sire catalogue can be downloaded from [www.TropicalGenetics.com](http://www.TropicalGenetics.com).

## About Tropical Resilience Genetics

Tropical Resilience Genetics (TrRG) specialises in delivering heat-resilient dairy genetics for producers operating in tropical, sub-tropical and heat-stressed environments. By combining global research, world-class cow families and on-farm validation, TrRG provides practical genetic solutions designed to improve productivity, fertility and profitability under heat stress. ■■

## Contact

John Pio – Regional Customer Development  
M: +61 417 224 306  
E: [john@tropicalgenetics.com](mailto:john@tropicalgenetics.com)

Dr David Hayman, Managing Director  
M: +64 274 965 983  
E: [Dave.Hayman@tropicalgenetics.com](mailto:Dave.Hayman@tropicalgenetics.com)  
W: [tropicalgenetics.com](http://tropicalgenetics.com)

# New CEO reconnecting with Australian farmers

**After nearly 10 years in the US, Dr Emily Piper is looking forward to reconnecting with Australian farmers.**

As DataGene's new CEO, Dr Piper believes the organisation is well placed to continue providing genetic evaluation and herd improvement services that make Australian dairy farm businesses more profitable.

And she thinks the sky's the limit in developing additional data insights to help all agricultural industries.

Based with Zoetis in Kalamazoo Michigan for the past nine years, most recently heading its Business Process and Strategic Programs for its Precision Animal Health group, Dr Piper's career has centred on developing and commercialising genomic and precision technologies for livestock producers.

She started as a pioneer in the commercial delivery of genomics in Australia. With a PhD in veterinary science, she went on to lead the Animal Genetics Laboratory at the University of Queensland and in 2014 joined Zoetis Australia as Technical Services Manager for Genetics which led to her US role.

**Now she's looking forward to being back in front of the Australian dairy industry, listening to what farmers want and need and determining how DataGene can help.**

"It has been wonderful working in the US but it is not where my heart is," Dr Piper said. "I'm looking forward to coming home and working with Australian farmers."

Dr Piper's interest in the field stems back to her university studies. "I had a professor at Sydney Uni, Chris Moran, who in our third-year biotech classes started talking about molecular genetic markers and the GeneStar technology which was new at the time. I ended up doing more studies in genetics and that was that."

Her grandparents were fine wool Merino producers and her father's family are

still on sheep, cattle and cotton farms. "That's a large part of why I was inspired by agriculture and wanted to spend my career in it," she said. "My parents moved to the city and never looked back but I've always had a passion for the land and agricultural production."

Dr Piper has been working alongside DataGene since its transition from ADHIS in 2015. In her role with Zoetis Australia, she teamed up with DataGene to launch genomic evaluation for female dairy cattle. "DataGene had been evaluating bulls and young sires but we believed there was an opportunity to take the technology and apply it for female selection and management purposes," she said.

This was the start of a fruitful connection. "I have had a long relationship with DataGene and know the incredible impact it has had on the industry over the past 10 years and the value that has been given back to farms from genetic gain and improvements in herd management services. It has always been a great leader in the industry, applying data sciences and genetic technologies for the benefit of Australian agriculture."

Dr Piper said both the prospect of leading DataGene and wanting to return to Australia led her to the role. "The stars aligned," she said. "It has been a fantastic nearly 10 years; I learnt a lot, met a lot of great people and had some great experiences with Zoetis. My husband and I weren't in a huge hurry to return to Australia but the plan was never to be in the USA forever."

"One of the reasons I was keen to work with DataGene is the loyalty, trust and recognition it has in the industry. In my career, I've always looked to people in the DataGene team for advice. I'm genuinely excited to work these well-respected experts in their fields, applying and extending technology that is underpinned by the world class research we have in Australia. I believe that's why farmers and customers also want to work with DataGene."

Dr Piper says DataGene is uniquely positioned to continue to provide value to the Australian dairy industry from its provision of genetic evaluation and herd



improvement services. "The foundation work done in the data aggregation space has set the stage to provide other data insights to Australian dairy farmers that will make their operations more profitable into the future," she said.

Dr Piper sees science and farming continuing to work hand-in-hand and says there are opportunities for DataGene to apply expertise in data aggregation and software development, to facilitate the development of tools that bring together capabilities to benefit farmers not just in dairy but in broader livestock and agricultural industries.

"As an industry, we have been doing genomic testing for about 15 years, but I would offer we're still not as good as we could be at making that data accessible and usable for farmers in the software that they use every day on farm to manage their animals," she said.

"There are significant opportunities – not just in dairy genomics – but in the way data is collected, transformed and used across agriculture to become an enabler and value-add."

A common thread throughout Dr Piper's career has been making technology work at scale and she hopes to apply that at DataGene. "I have a background in scaling data-driven companies and I've been involved in translating research and development outcomes in genetics and genomics into customer-usable tools my entire career," she said.

As a leader, she aims to "empower talented people to do what they do best, remove obstacles, rally the team around the company vision and ensure the voice of our customers is at the centre of what we do".

Dr Piper is married to Justin and, along with their two Australian Kelpies, she looks forward to returning to the Australian bush for camping and hiking.

# Conference to focus on cattle breeding innovation

**A conference in Geelong next month will show Australian cattle breeders how new technologies and innovations can shape the future of their herds and businesses.**

The GA 2026 Today, Tomorrow and Beyond conference hosted by Genetics Australia on March 17-18 will feature local and international speakers, farmers and dairy and beef industry leaders.

The conference at GMHBA Stadium follows a similar event in 2024 and retains the same focus on the use of genetics and other cutting-edge technologies to advance farming businesses.

It will feature segments on future technology and sustainable farming, the road to new markets, tomorrow's agriculture and securing the future.

Keynote speakers will include co-founder of Audacious Agriculture Stuart Austin on harnessing artificial intelligence to transform agriculture, Midfield Group General Manager Dean McKenna on how technology shapes a modern meat business, and Distinguished Professor of Cooperative Extension in Animal Biotechnology & Genomics, University of California, Professor Alison Van Eenennaam, on Advances in Gene Editing Techniques for Cattle.

International speakers from Europe, USA and South Africa will feature on the program.

Farmers from around Australia will showcase their business innovations, herd improvements and their thoughts on the future of farming as part of a panel discussion. There will also be presentations from DataGene leaders on reproductive innovation.

Genetics Australia CEO Anthony Shelly said the GA 2026 Today, Tomorrow and Beyond conference would bring together like-minded farmers and industry people to network and hear about how new research and innovation is creating more sustainable and profitable farming systems.

The program features a cross section of speakers covering both dairy and beef farming.

Mr Shelly said the conference would give people a glimpse into the future. "Agriculture is evolving at a fast pace and being aware of new and emerging technologies is essential for farmers to stay progressive and profitable," he said. ■ ■ ■

"We've retained the same theme as 2024, 'Today, Tomorrow and Beyond', because the conference will have something to help farmers and service providers today and give them many new ideas for the future."



**17-18th MARCH 2026**  
GMHBA STADIUM, GEELONG

The conference will be at

**GMHBA Stadium**  
**370 Moorabool Street South Geelong.**

People can visit [Trybooking Link](#) for ticketing information and the full program.



**REGISTER HERE**

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Media representatives are invited to attend the conference.

## PLEASE CONTACT

Rick Bayne  
0418 140 489 or [mediamastersvic@bigpond.com](mailto:mediamastersvic@bigpond.com)

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# 2026 Event Calendar

DATE	EVENT	REGION	LOCATION	CONTACT
<b>March</b>				
3	Heat detection/Reproduction Q&A	South-east Qld	Peak Crossing	Belinda Haddow
4	Heat detection/Reproduction Q&A	Sunshine Coast	Kybong	Belinda Haddow
9	Fall Armyworm management	Far North Coast NSW	Lismore	Ali Briggs
11-12	Nutrition Fundamentals	Far North Qld	TBC	Fiona Neville
13	Healthy Hooves	Darling Downs	Warwick	Belinda Haddow
20	Euthanase Livestock	Sunshine Coast	Gympie	Belinda Haddow
23	Disbudding workshop	South-east Qld	Harrisville	Belinda Haddow
25	Nollaig Heffernan workshop	South-east Qld	Gatton	Belinda Haddow
26	Nollaig Heffernan workshop	Sunshine Coast	Kandanga	Belinda Haddow
27	Nollaig Heffernan workshop	Far North Qld	Malanda	Fiona Neville
TBC	Disbudding workshop	Far North Qld	TBC	Fiona Neville
<b>April</b>				
22	Heat detection/Reproduction Q&A	MNC NSW	TBC	Brad Granzin
23	Heat detection/Reproduction Q&A	FNC NSW	TBC	Brad Granzin
28	Heat detection/Reproduction Q&A	Darling Downs	Crows Nest	Belinda Haddow
29	Heifers on Target/Dairy Beef	Sunshine Coast	Kandanga	Belinda Haddow
<b>May</b>				
20	Heifers on Target/Dairy Beef	Darling Downs	Crows Nest	Belinda Haddow
26	Milking Mastitis Management	Far North Coast NSW	TBC	Brad Granzin
27	Milking Mastitis Management	Mid North Coast NSW	TBC	Brad Granzin
<b>June</b>				
2	Milking Mastitis Management	Darling Downs	TBC	Belinda Haddow
3	Milking Mastitis Management	South-east Qld	TBC	Belinda Haddow
4	Milking Mastitis Management	Sunshine Coast	TBC	Belinda Haddow
TBC	Milking Mastitis Management	Far North Qld	TBC	Fiona Neville

Brad Granzin 0431 197 479  
 Belinda Haddow 0423 003 638  
 Fiona Neville 0427 033 709  
 Ali Briggs 0456 971 331

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**CHAIRMAN**

Luke Stock  
0474 800 245

**EXECUTIVE  
OFFICER**

Dr Brad Granzin  
0431 197 479

**REGIONAL EXTENSION OFFICERS**

**SEQ/DD/Burnett**  
Belinda Haddow  
0423 003 638

**Sunshine Coast**  
Belinda Haddow  
0423 003 638

**Northern NSW**  
Brad Granzin  
0431 197 479

**Far North QLD/CQ**  
Fiona Neville  
0427 033 709