

Technical advice, along with funding and support, is helping farmers in the Lachlan Valley and Riverina lift their profitability and improve the environment.

HOW IT'S BEING USED

The Alley Family Forbes

A new stock watering system at the Alley family's dairy farm at Forbes has improved the quality of stock water.

The poly pipe and trough system is also the first step in protecting 1.2 km of riparian areas along the Lachlan River.

The system is the result of Ian Alley's involvement in a DairySAT project with his local dairy discussion group.

The group of 11 farmers from around Forbes won funding from the Federal Government's Envirofund in 2006 to finance a number of farm projects identified through DairySAT to improve on-farm productivity and management, and enhance the natural environment.

Ian Alley and his family milk an average of 240 cows on 270 ha of pasture on their property at Forbes, which fronts the Lachlan River.

Half the farm's pasture is irrigated when water allocations are available. Three-quarters of the irrigation involves flood irrigation while a quarter uses a travelling

A change in fencing to avoid cattle access to drains and irrigation channels.



WHY IT WORKS

The Lachlan Valley and Riverina Better Prac project:

- aims to improve both farm and environmental management;
- has farmer advocates helping farmers get involved;
- uses DairySAT, a natural resource management self assessment tool, to help farmers benchmark their management against industry best practice;
- links farm management to the catchment management;
- strengthens links between farmers and the organisations responsible for managing natural resources (Lachlan CMA); and
- is a pilot for the Pathways to Environmental Management Systems (EMS) project.





With 4.6 km of frontage to the Lachlan River, it is necessary to protect riparian areas.

CONTACT

Jess Jennings, Dairy NRM Coordinator, DIDCO, phone 0423 224 750, e-mail j.jennings@uws.edu.au

Aerial photo shows the need for shelter belts and tree corridors.



sprinkler system. Ian's long-term plan is to replace the flood irrigation with a centre pivot or travelling sprinkler system to improve water use efficiency.

Ian's local discussion group became interested in on-farm environmental projects in 2005 when they looked at how changes to natural resource management (NRM) could benefit farm management and the broader catchment.

The group decided to use DairySAT to look at their NRM at an individual farm level and as a group.

Working with DairySAT facilitator Mike Reynolds, members were given aerial photographs of their farms by the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority (LCMA). Mike visited each farm for an individual consultation using DairySAT.

The aerial photographs gave Ian Alley a different perspective of his farm and a clearer view of the link between his farm management and the environment.

"The aerial photographs helped us visualise changes to our farms, such as including shelter belts for shade, shelter and reducing wind erosion, linking shelter belts with remnant vegetation and the river for increased biodiversity and protecting river banks to reduce erosion and increase water quality. Shade is important to ensure milk production in this area as high temperatures have a major impact on production and cow fertility," Ian said.

Each farmer in the group completed DairySAT for their individual farm management and by mid-2006 received a report on the DairySAT results that let them compare their individual results to others in the group.

The report help set priority areas where the biggest gains could be made in improving both farm efficiency and the environment, on both individual farms and across the whole group.

The group also invited the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority to view the report and suggest funding opportunities and areas where the two groups could work together.

The three top issues across all farms were effluent management, biodiversity and irrigation management.

Sixty individual projects were identified across the 11 farms, including: improved farm laneways, improved effluent management, establishing feed pads, improved rainwater management, windbreaks and fencing remnant vegetation, stock watering systems, fencing riparian areas, and improved irrigation management.

Ian was surprised at how many issues affected all farmers involved.

"The report showed that once the projects were introduced at the farm, there were benefits to the environment as a whole and to each of our dairy farm businesses, including reduced salinity, improved irrigation efficiency, lower water costs, improved water quality, better paddock access and increased cow comfort."

Based on their DairySAT results, all members of the group applied to the Australian Government's Envirofund and received funding for on-farm work.

The Alley family received funding to install three stock troughs and in the coming year plan to fence off 1.2 km of the Lachlan River to exclude stock from the environmentally sensitive riparian area.

SUBS/DPA/2008-09



Australian Government

www.dairyingfortomorrow.com



DairyingForTomorrow