

## Season to Date:

The weather continues to heat up with some very hot days forecast for the next few weeks. Dryland farms will be well underway with silage feeding at this stage, while irrigated farms have begun irrigating earlier than usual. Rainfall for the year is down across the whole state, and many are preparing for a long summer.

2015 Rainfall to date (18/12/2015)				
	Albany	Bunbury	Margaret River	Serpentine
MTD	48.4mm	2.2mm	12.8mm	38.6mm
YTD	594.4mm	552.2mm	835.6mm	861.0mm

## Forage Management

To conserve fodder some farmers have been drying off their cows a bit earlier than usual, to ensure they will have enough feed for fresh calvers in the New Year. A feed budget is essential to determine if you will be short on feed over the summer months. In particular, calculating how much conserved forage you have on hand will be beneficial as we approach the end of the dry period in early autumn.

## Concentrate Management

At this time of year the protein levels of pasture are quite low, as the plant becomes more fibrous. Managing your diets is therefore crucial to ensure adequate protein levels in the ration. This may require increasing the amount of protein supplements (e.g. lupins or canola meal) being fed to your herd. Getting your silage tested will give you a more accurate estimate of total dietary crude protein levels. Also take care when adjusting rations to allow the rumen time to adapt, a large influx of rapidly fermentable grain (such as wheat or barley) into the rumen can result in ruminal acidosis, so it is best to make changes to the diet at a rate of around 1kg per day.

## Animal Health

With the days starting to warm up now is a perfect time to be vigilant at checking all troughs to ensure they are working correctly and stock have access to fresh water at all times. Making sure all floats and pipes are intact could save you an overflowing trough later in summer, or worse a bone-dry one.

Being conscious of heat stress is important, allowing animal's access to shade and where possible avoiding moving the herd at the hottest time of the day can minimise the risk. The addition of fans and sprinklers in the dairy can keep cows cool while they are waiting to be milked in the yard, and can also help keep flies out of the dairy shed during milking. Dairy Australia has a best practise management guide book called "Cool Cows" which provides a good practical guide to minimising heat stress and can be sent out to you if required, or you can visit the website: <http://www.coolcows.com.au/>.

Having in place a young stock feeding program to ensure all stock on the farm are well fed through the summer months is important, and in particular good management of young heifers, which are likely to become replacements, is just as important as looking after the milking herd, and also gives you peace of mind over the summer, especially if you're going away for a couple of weeks.

Having time off over the Christmas and New Year break can be difficult to get, but it is important to wind down and we would remind all our farmers to try to take some time off over the "silly season" if you can, and spend some quality time off farm.

**\*\*The Western Dairy Hub office will be closed from the 24<sup>th</sup> of December until the 4<sup>th</sup> of January. We want to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, hoping this coming one brings you good season.**

## Upcoming events

YDN Genomics Workshop January 2016 – more details to come in the New Year.

Jessica Andony | 0435 174 719 | [jessica@westerndairy.com.au](mailto:jessica@westerndairy.com.au)

