



Newsletter Grab from Grains2Milk

For immediate release: 13 November 2009

Head: Sprinklers essential for summer (340 words)

Every dairy yard in Australia should be fitted with sprinklers to provide cows with evaporative cooling over hot summer months.

This is the recommendation from Dr Steve Little leader of Dairy Australia's Grains2Milk program.

"Apart from trees, a sprinkler system is the cheapest and easiest cooling strategy for a dairy farm, yet less than half our dairy farmers have one. In hot weather, sprinklers improve milk production, make for more contented cows and also keep the flies away," said Steve.

Sprinklers don't need to use a lot of water and they don't need to cost a fortune.

"Aim to sprinkle cows for one to three minutes out of every 15, using a moderate to large water droplet rather than a fine mist. This will wet the cows effectively and allow water to evaporate before the next cycle," he said.

Evaporative cooling relies on air movement so make sure the cows are not packed too tightly, and if necessary use fans.

A permanent sprinkler system should be planned and installed well ahead of hot weather, but a simple, short-term set up can make a difference in the meantime.

"I know of a farmer who prevented milk production losses last summer by using garden sprinklers on poles, milking earlier in the morning and allowing the cows to spend most of the day in the shade near the dairy," he said.

In very hot weather give the cows the best paddocks for grazing overnight when it's cooler. During the day, feed the cows a high quality forage or partial mixed ration wherever they can easily access shade or sprinklers," said Dr Little.

Wetting the dairy yard for an hour before cows arrive helps dissipate the heat stored in the mass of concrete. To conserve water, use a two minutes on; five minutes off cycle.

In hot weather, shade is king, but it's not a matter of waiting years for trees to grow to provide shade.

"Take a look at the western side of your dairy. If it's exposed to the afternoon sun, consider ways to provide shade. Something as simple as a shade cloth blind from the local hardware can make a big difference," he said.

The Cool Cows book and website have more details on dairy yard sprinkler systems and keeping cows cool, visit www.coolcows.com.au or www.dairyaustralia.com.au. And look out for Cool Cows on-farm events happening this summer. Contact Steve Little 0400 004 841 email slittle@dairyaustralia.com.au.

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Photo (from InCalf book)

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Caption Sprinkler systems are the cheapest and easiest cooling strategy for a dairy farm; they improve milk production and keep the flies away.

About Grains2Milk (background information for media)

The Grains2milk program provides dairy farmers with the training, resources and support they need to make better decisions about using grains and concentrates in their businesses. The program is funded by dairy farmers through Dairy Australia.

Media contact: This media release has been issued by Monks Communication on behalf of Grains2Milk. Contact Monks Communication for inquiries about photos and interviews or to have your contact details removed or updated on our distribution list:

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