

Dairying Better 'n Better for Tomorrow improves sustainability for Gin Gin dairy farmers

KEY POINTS

- The Soil and Nutrient Management Plan improves sustainability and farm profits
- Reef Rescue grant helps to upgrade farm infrastructure and manage potential risks to water quality
- New pasture yield research and colour coded farm maps improve fertiliser use across the farm

Sustainability has always been a high priority for the Perry family and the *Dairying Better 'n Better for Tomorrow* program has helped them move a step closer.

Pat and Rose Perry and their son Neil operate a 170 Holstein Friesian dairy herd on 132 ha of clay loam to sandy loam soils 40 km west of Bundaberg. The milking cow area comprises of 38 ha which is irrigated using 3 travelling irrigators and an allocation of 136 ML from the Burnett River.

This forward thinking family have always been early adopters of sustainable dairy practices and over several years have made significant improvements to their farm by fencing the Geramanbulian creek, upgrading their holding yards and effluent management facilities, and participating in an industry Water Use Efficiency program (WUE_{milk}).



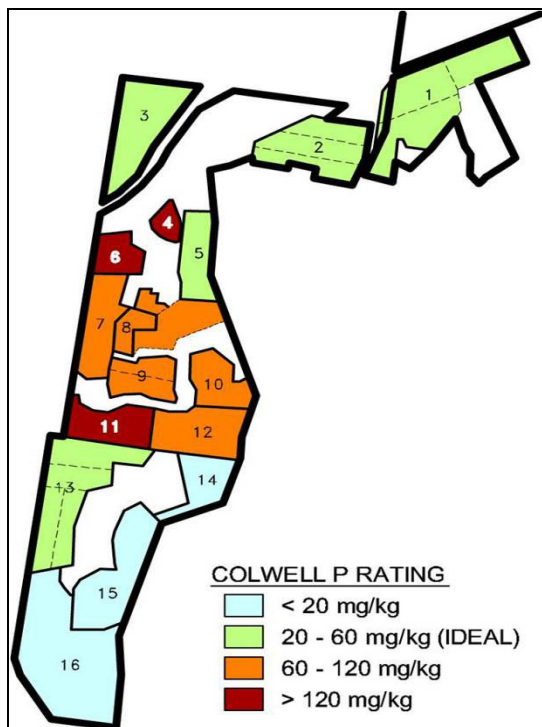
Pat Perry shows the dairy holding yards before the upgrades were made through the Dairy Reef Rescue Program Water Quality grants

In 2009, the Perry family welcomed the opportunity to get involved in the Baffle Creek *Dairying Better 'n Better for Tomorrow* group and were one of the first dairy farms to have a Soil and Nutrient Management Plan developed through the Dairy Reef Rescue Program.

Under the same program they also received a water quality grant which they used to concrete high traffic areas in the dairy holding yards and a laneway, capturing and diverting nutrient run-off to an existing overland flow pond system.

The Soil and Nutrient Management plan was prepared by an industry approved consultant with expertise in soils, nutrient management and agronomy. During a

visit to the farm, soil samples were collected across several paddocks and the current management systems were discussed with the Perrys. The consultant used the Perry's comprehensive farm records and the soil analysis reports to prepare a plan which included colour coded farm maps and detailed soil and nutrient management recommendations for the whole farm. Mr Perry said "The farm map has all the paddocks and fences marked and is an excellent planning tool".



Colour coded maps show the soil Phosphorus and Nitrogen levels, and the risk of nutrient loss across the farm.

The latest pasture yield research from the *Accounting for Nutrients* Project was used by the consultant for the fertiliser recommendations. This more precise approach has already saved the Perry family more than \$5000 (approximately \$90/ha in some paddocks) in fertiliser costs and at the same time reduced potential risks to water quality. "Fertiliser

application is becoming much more precise" said Mr Perry "Because we have large feed requirements for our dairy herd, we can't afford to be under-fertilising either. We need to be applying enough fertiliser for our pastures without wasting it".

Mr Perry was very impressed by the service and the amount of detail in the plan. "The soil and nutrient management plan was very comprehensive," says Mr Perry, "It has helped us to identify areas on our farm with low, medium and high levels of phosphorus. Now we can apply the effluent to the paddocks low in phosphorus where there will be bigger gains in production and less impact on the environment."

Mr Perry said "There are some paddocks with enough Phosphorus in reserve that we won't need to add any fertiliser for a number of years", he said, "We will conduct trials to see if we can go without Phosphorus fertilisers and not affect production".

For more information, please contact the Queensland Dairy Natural Resource Management team at the Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation, Tel. (07)32362955.

