

## The dairy at Tocal in 360 - transcript

[00:10 ] Hello my name is Matt Brett, I'm the manager here at Tocal dairy. This is a New South Wales Department of Primary Industries dairy and here at Tocal College we operate a dairy which is basically used for the purpose of educating students in all aspects of how a dairy runs. So every student gets to experience all aspects of the dairy so that's everything from milk into feeding calves to feeding cows, tractor work, fencing and that all adds to their competence to become a really day valuable member of the of the workforce when they leave here.

[00:50] So we run the dairy as a commercial operation so we milk at the moment approximately 270 cows every day of the year and we do have a calving pattern where we're projected to get up to about 300 milkers, so we are increasing the size of herd at the moment. The herd is predominantly Holsteins so the black and white cows and we do have some Illawarras - the red cows - here in the herd and we do have a few cross-breds as well like a Holstein Jersey cross as well. Our milk here is sold to Saputo they have a factory in Sydney and the milk mainly goes into the liquid drinking market and then it is also made into products like cheeses and powdered milk eccetera.

[01:42] The farm here is what we call a pasture-based dairy farm so you can see all the paddocks around here are basically all set up for us to be able to graze cattle. So ideally day and night every day of the year we would like to be grazing cattle on these paddocks so we just set our rotation and we have paddocks here 1 to 8 in this section here - all about you know between 4½ to 5½ hectares each paddock - and we basically just you know we start and we move along as the pasture starts to grow and we lock that paddock up immediately that the cow finish it, so we can basically get back around to the spot that they are grazing in today ideally they'll be back there in about 3 weeks time and it'll be - at the moment it's rye grass in our paddocks so you know we'd be looking to have Rye grass approximately 2000 kg of dry matter to the hectare three

leaf stage so really high energy high protein feed that can allow the cows to produce a lot of milk.

[02:50] So at the moment it's springtime here so a great time of the year for production on a pasture based dairy. Our cows are actually producing around about 29 litres of milk per cow per day and we're sending off about 7000 litres of milk everyday off the farm. It does get picked up on the second day so we do hold 14,000 litres here and then it gets sent off. We do everything here as far as tractor work and paddock work, so the students are involved in preparing the paddocks, sowing the paddocks all those sorts of things. So every year in the Autumn we oversow these paddocks to Rye grass - probably put some clover some chicory and some plantain in there as well.

[03:42] If you look down toward our dairy there you can see that we have that the dairy in the feedpad close by so we do feed the cows a supplement or some extra food when we don't have enough grass in the paddock and that's mainly in the form of silage that we conserve off these paddocks in times of excess. So that's our main goal is when we have more than what the cows need to eat at any one time we conserve it and put it into silage and we can feed it back out through the months when we the pasture growth does not quite match the demands of the of the herd.

[04:18] Now the dairy itself is a 15 a side parallel stall gate dairy and it's double up so we can milk 30 cows at one time. The students are in the in the dairy milking morning and night - the morning shift starts at 3 a.m. well 3:30 a.m. by the time the students get here and get started - and the afternoon shift we usually have cups on by 2pm in the afternoon.

[04:48] So other things that we would do here at the dairy, students are involved in rearing the calves right through from day old up to about 3 month old they stay on milk and then they're on pellets and hay and what not all the way through until they're about 12 months old and by then they are usually just on pasture and they grow up to become a

milker in the herd by about 2 years of age so we mate them a 15 months and we try and get them to calve in for their first calf at 24 months.

[05:20] As far as recent developments go we just spoke about the the dairy upgrade, it used to only be a 10 a side dairy, so now we've gone up to a 15 a side are parallel stall gate system with cup removers - it's a very functional good modern dairy. We've also recently upgraded our irrigation system that as you can see here we've got two centre pivots in this section here and another centre pivot just over the other side of the lane there so we can irrigate about 40 hectares under this centre pivot irrigation. And while ever we can use this pivot irrigation we can just keep the moisture profile in the soil optimum at all times, so it's it's a brilliant thing for being able to grow as much pasture as we need.

[06:09] Down on the flats down the bottom here we do have travelling irrigators down there and we do also have another section at the back of the farm where we can irrigate with travelling irrigators. So we would call our milking platform - where the milking cows graze - about 140 hectares and we can irrigate about 70 of those hectares. So the next phase of our plan here for improvements would be we want to try and get another centre pivot on the back part of the farm so we can basically irrigate another 40 hectares under a centre pivot irrigation which would really drought proof the farm. And that's something that I think in these days of climate variability and climate change we need to really make sure that we can do all that we can do to have a strategy for drought and to efficiently and easily produce enough fodder that the cows require.