

DAIRY ADVISORS TRAIN UP ON ROBOTICS

Twelve dairy extension officers across Australia have been involved in a series of training workshops to start gaining the skills they'll need to work with the local industry as farmers start adopting automatic milking systems (AMS).

An initiative of DPI Victoria (Dairy Services Branch), the training involved advisers from all dairying regions and AMS researchers from FutureDairy and DairyNZ.

Dr Kendra Kerrisk, who leads FutureDairy's AMS program, said the dairy advisors were all relatively new to automatic milking but each brought valuable skills to the team.

The group included people with expertise in ag economics, effluent management, engineering, milk harvesting, pasture management, energy efficiency, social research and whole farm systems.

"It's been fabulous to bring such diverse skills together and has allowed FutureDairy to collaborate on automatic milking," Dr Kerrisk said.

The training program has involved visits to automatic milking farms in Australia and New Zealand and a series of workshops run by Sean Kenny from the DPI.

Australia now has 14 automatic milking farms and overseas experience shows that the technology is initially adopted slowly followed by a period of rapid uptake.

"The workshops were developed to improve the industry's preparedness and to have people in the regions who can support farmers considering AMS and in the first 12 months after installation. That first year can be a challenging time as the farming system is adapted to maximise the value from automatic milking," she said.

Dr Kerrisk said the workshops were considered a pilot to see if this approach could provide training for advisors from a variety of backgrounds and regions.

"It's been highly productive and successful. Participants have shown enormous enthusiasm and developed a good understanding of both automatic milking technology and how the farming system is adjusted to make the most of the technology," Dr Kerrisk said.

AMS-trained dairy advisors include:

Barry Bradshaw, DPI Vic, Ellinbank

Callum Eastwood, University of Melbourne

Chris Haynes, TIAR, University of Tasmania, Burnie

John Lucey, Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia, Manjimup

Ray Johnston, NSW DPI, Taree;

Sean Kenny, DPI Vic, Warnambool

Darold Klindworth, DPI Vic, Ellinbank

Penny McArdle, DPI Vic, Mt Gambier

Ray Murphy, Agri-Science Queensland, Toowoomba

Phil Shannon, DPI Vic, Cobram

Trevor Simkin, TIAR, University of Tasmania, Burnie

Warwick Waters, Waters Consulting, Toowoomba, Qld

Dairy farmers interested in knowing more about AMS have the opportunity in July to visit FutureDairy's Camden farm and hear the experiences of three Australian AMS farmers at the Dairy Research Foundation symposium to be held on 6, 7 July. Registrations Esther Price Promotions ph 1800 177 636; 08 9525 9222 or email donna@estherprice.com.au.

More information: Kendra Kerrisk email: kendra.kerrisk@sydney.edu.au ph 0428 101 372



Twelve dairy extension officers across Australia have started training to gain skills to support the local industry as farmers start adopting automatic milking systems (AMS).