

PURPOSE OF YOUR ROLE

I manage all aspects of the dairy enterprise. That means managing all the systems in a dairy operation including pastures, feeding, milking, breeding, and staffing. I also manage the education aspects. We have full time students here at the College as well as school visits, vet students and also community and industry events.

How does that help build stronger primary industries?

Our role, as part of Tocal College, is to train students in the practical aspects of working on a dairy farm. As a state government site, we are also involved in industry engagement including research and field days and we trial and implement innovative farm practices and technology.



A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR ROLE

I usually arrive as the morning milking is finishing, so I check in on how that went and if there were any issues that need to be sorted. There will usually be some calves to feed or cows ready for artificial insemination. Then the rest of the day could be various things from setting grazing allocations for the cows or perhaps mustering a group of heifers for vaccination or drenching. Some days I might be teaching a class, giving a school group a farm tour or I may have a group of farmers coming on to the farm.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES THAT ARE USEFUL IN THIS ROLE?

- If you want to work with animals, you've got to care for the animals. You're responsible for them and you are responsible for good animal welfare outcomes.
- On a dairy, you are working with big animals and you really have to stay fairly calm and be prepared to work with the animals. If you are calm they usually will be too.
- You also need to be flexible, plans may need to change through the day and you have to be able to accommodate that.



TRAINING / EDUCATION

You can be trained on the job, I started my training at about two or three years old! I now have a Diploma in Agriculture and a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment for the education side of this role. Some of my staff have a Certificate III and IV in Agriculture but you can be employed as a milker without any qualifications - combining a Dairy Traineeship with on the job training is a great option.

Quote

'Good animal welfare outcomes equal good production outcomes, if you don't get animal welfare right you will never get the best production out of your cows.'

WHAT IMPACT DO YOU SEE TECHNOLOGY HAVING IN THIS FIELD IN THE NEXT 20 YEARS?

Technology is going to continue to play a huge role in all aspects of dairy farming. We're in a unique position on dairy farms because we can use all the copping, pasture and irrigation technology as well as technology improving animal welfare. For example all of our cows have collars that help us to monitor them for illness or stress as well as reproduction timing, we inseminate the cows with sexed semen to favour female calves and we control the centre pivot irrigators from our phone. There will be a lot more technology around the genetics of dairy herds in the future.



I actually really enjoy dairy farming. I enjoy working with the cattle but I also love running the system and making sure all the pieces fit together.

I enjoy working with a great team of people, the students and the involvement with the broader dairy industry.



The 3.30am starts don't work well with the others aspects of my role as Manager but early mornings are part of dairying and you get used to them.

DOES CREATIVITY PLAY A PART IN THIS ROLE?

Farming is a dynamic system so you do need to be thinking about better ways to do things. Being creative and being able to adapt to different scenarios each day is an important part of the role.



Staff Profile

BACKGROUND

I grew up on the lower Macleay Valley, near Smithtown. I'm a fifth-generation dairy farmer, my family have been in dairy farming for a long time.

My whole career has been in dairy farming. I ran my own dairy for about 12 years and then I managed some other larger dairies as well.

I came to Tocal nearly ten years ago, I started doing farm skill training in tractor operations, chainsaw and quad bikes. I coordinated the dairy trainee program here at Tocal for a few years and then switched over into this role managing the dairy enterprise full time. I have been in this role for the last three years.

What advice do you have for young people who are interested in this sort of work?

I believe it's a really dynamic interesting industry to get involved in. Technology is changing rapidly, there's so many progressive farmers out there, there's some great groups you can join and speak with other farmers. If



you are interested in dairy farming study agriculture at school and perhaps try to come to a farm like ours and have a chat to the manager and staff about their roles.

