



**Graham and Wendy Sperling,
LEONGATHA SOUTH
Victoria**

FEED PAD SOLVES THE PROBLEM OF WET PADDOCKS

Graham Sperling had seen the Waste-Not Fair Go dairy feed pad equipment and concept at the Poowong Dairy Expo about seven or eight years ago, but it wasn't until they experienced some really wet winters on the Leongatha South dairy farm that he runs with his wife Wendy that he became serious about installing one.

Graham is a third generation farmer on this property, and came back to the farm in 1988.

They have 220 acres, plus a leased run-off block, and are currently milking 180 cows on an 18 swing-over shed with automatic cluster removers. Both he and Wendy do the milking, and they spend about 2½ hours in the shed at peak time.

"We usually milk over 220 cows – it's been another wet year this year," said Graham. The herd is mainly Holsteins but Graham says that there will be some Aussie Reds coming in next year. "Purely because of

availability, he added. "It will be interesting to see how they go."

In May 2011, they went ahead with installing the Waste-Not feed pad with 45 cow spaces down each side.

The Waste-Not feed panels which constitute the feed pad are constructed with individual feeding spaces, between hi-tensile steel arches, acting as voluntary head bails, so that uneaten feed falls back into the feeder. Importantly, it largely eliminates bossing and bullying. Each animal gets its fair ration, and trampling or soiling of feed is minimal.

Each side of the Sperling's feed pad holds the equivalent of three sides at the milking shed, and that gives the cows 20 to 30 minutes of eating time, each milking.

LOTS OF HAY BUT WINTER CONDITIONS

"The main reason that we decided to go with the feed pad was because of the

winter conditions and because we had lots of hay", explained Graham. "We make all our own hay and silage off our place, using contractors. It is mainly ryegrass and clover."

The Waste-Not feeders are designed to ensure that all the feed is contained in the unit and eating takes place within the feeder. A skirt eliminates valuable feed being blown away by wind or trampled into the mud or dust. The stock have access to all the valuable protein which enhances production, and many farmers claim feed savings of up to 30 or 40%.

Graham agrees with how important that is; "At the end of the day, the biggest benefit is the saving in time, plus all the feed gets cleaned up. They would just leave the old

WASTE-NOT
STOCKFEEDERS

www.wastenot.com.au

Better feeding, higher production.



stuff if it was in the paddock. We've been using up old hay and didn't need to buy any in. It's all really been budget stuff."

He fills up the feed pad every three days; "We put in five bales of hay each time - if they don't clean it up we top up to suit."

The installation of the Waste-Not feed pad has been good for the Sperling's paddocks in inclement times. Using the feed pad as an extra management tool on the farm means that they can relieve the pressure on the paddocks.

"During the wet conditions we saved paddocks through not cutting them up," explained Graham. "This system saves time after milking. We are renovating paddocks at the moment - we couldn't get onto them last year.

COWS ADAPT EASILY

"There was no problem in getting the cows used to the system - we didn't experience any drop in the production, even with the very wet year. This year we'll buy in better quality hay to see if we get an improvement in production and solids.

"This system works really well for springing cows, we lead feed them. They go onto the feed pad without milking. Then we bring them up after calving, the cows and calves and cut the calves out."

The capability to fine-tune the feeding regimen for the cows is one of the features of the Waste-Not Fair Go Dairy Feed Pad system. It arises from the ability to control the intake in each cow quite accurately.

Instead of silage or hay feeding being an all-or-nothing decision, the feed pad enables farmers to select a quality and intake to boost or to balance the rest of the ration, grain or pasture.

Feeding the same feed twice daily and refilling the feed pad as required, keeps the diet much less variable. In addition, if more intake is needed as pasture declines, or in wet conditions, cows can also be granted extended access to the feed pad - all afternoon or even overnight, to allow cows to fill up on whatever it contains.

Many farmers claim that it has the ability to lift the 'tail' out of the herd production, and that the two and three year olds

produce more as a percentage of the herd. Previously bullied cows have the security of knowing that they will get something at the feed pad, especially if they find themselves in the last batches through.

Graham and Wendy's cows are averaging 18.5 litres a day at the moment. Since the installation of the feed pad they have maintained the same in-bail feeding of around 1500kg per cow per year.



WASTE-NOT STOCKFEEDERS

122 Nelson Street, Maryborough, Victoria 3465
Freecall: 1800 808 685 **Fax:** 03 5460 5411
 Contact Terry Allan on 0417 569 691



Better feeding, higher production.

www.wastenot.com.au