

focus farm field day

Increasing their future options

By Geoff Adams

Of all farm inputs and expenditures, water is the one to watch for Kyabram 'focus farmers' Peter and Susan Wearden, who are moving their business to the next level.

Some time ago the Weardens decided they should lift production and scale on their 84 ha property to give themselves the best options in the future.

To shift up a gear they have increased their herd size, bought an out-block into production and engaged a full-time employee.

"Susan and I sat down and thought about what we would do with the business," Mr Wearden said.

"We thought, let's expand it a bit, milk more cows, grow more feed to give us more options.

"It can be expensive. You head into town and come back with some fencing. That's two grand.

"We were going okay with our budget, but at the end of the day, the water price just kept going up."

However, despite the expenses, according to the figures outlined at the field day, the farm is going okay.

Field day facilitator Cameron Smith said the farm had experienced a good, profitable year.

Between 2013-14 and 2014-15, total milk solids increased from 157 644 kg to 181 683 kg, with water use increasing from 831 ML to

about 1000 ML, and total feed tonnage moving from 2007 to 2374.

While costs have increased, the farm's operating surplus has also increased and some upgrades (including lasering an out-block) have been accomplished out of cash flow.

The farm's progress was outlined at an open day last week organised as part of Murray Dairy's Farm Focus program.

Asked about the program for next year, Mr and Mrs Wearden said they were planning on putting more ground under automatic irrigation (about 50 ha of permanent pasture is already done), and introducing automatic drafting in the 30-unit swing-over dairy.

"We drafted 168 cows the other day and it wasn't much fun," he said.

They are planning to increase the herd from 250 cows to 350 or 400 but the dairy may require some upgrading.

They would also like to build a feed pad to better manage wet and dry conditions, and buy more water but plans have been delayed due to the high price.

"We had an agreement to buy more, but it fell through," Mrs Wearden said at the field day.

A nearby out-block has been lasered and sown with annual rye-grass and shaf-tal, although there is no drinking water connected,



Chilly . . . A well-stoked fire warmed (from left) Jo Doolan and Simon Doolan from Kyabram, Shyamal Das from Coprice and David Usher from Tongala.

so the herd has to be brought back after the morning feed. They are waiting on approval for the location of under-road pipes and a pump station.

Advanced Ag agronomist Luke Nagle described the FertSmart program applied to the farm, which involved regular soil testing and enabled a targeted applica-

tion of fertilisers.

Phosphorous levels varied, which meant on some paddocks, no super was applied.

"The most deficient was calcium levels which is probably typical of farms in the area," Mr Wearden said.

About 30 farmers, as well as advisers and consultants, attended the field day.



Interested . . . Farmers Kelvin Bruce and Lindsay Hamilton were among the crowd at the field day.



Expansion . . . Farmer Peter Wearden outlines the development of the 70 ha out-block down the road from the main farm.

Industry leading finance just got a whole lot better

0%*
P.A.

ON ALL 6M & 6R CAB TRACTORS IN STOCK. FROM 105HP TO 190HP

MUST END 30TH JUNE.

LIMITED TIME

ONLY AT HAEUSLER'S.

*Conditions apply. Finance available through John Deere Financial Limited to approved commercial applicants only. Repayments calculated on a 48 month term with 30% deposit and GST back. Fees and charges apply. If not amended or withdrawn earlier, the promotion expires on 30/06/2015.

www.haeuslers.com.au

Shepparton Echuca Mildura Sea Lake

Haeusler's
50 YEARS... ALWAYS GROWING

SHEPPARTON Ph: (03) 5820 9700

ECHUCA Ph: (03) 5481 3800

JOHN DEERE