



Jamberoo dairy - providing clean milk and water

By Sarina Locke from Canberra 2600
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A highly efficient dairy in the Illawarra is the NSW Primary producer winner in the Landcare awards.

10 years ago, when other small dairies were selling up during deregulation, the Clover Hill Dairy farm at Jamberoo decided to get big.

Lynne Strong's family dairy now produces 4.7 million litres of milk a year, on two separate farms.

On one, in the hills, surrounded by rainforest, they've intensified production, to graze just half of the 100 hectare farm.

On a drive around the farm I learn many neighbours sold their dairies at Jamberoo to try irrigating from the Murray at Finley in southern NSW.

But of course, the drought arrived, and the irrigators' allocation was reduced.

Here at Jamberoo near the South Coast, the land might be expensive, and the terrain treacherous for tractors, but it certainly isn't dry.

"We can get rainfall events, like 10 inches in one day... so it's very focussed on the one in two years events, because they're the ones that do the damage."

The Clover Hill Dairy farm is surrounded by rainforest, in a dairy centric rural residential subdivision.

Landscape and waterways are important for the cows but also for the wider catchment.

The Strong's Clover Hill dairy is one of the most water efficient dairies in Australia.

They produce an average of 125,000 litres of milk to every Megalitre of water, compared to a national average of just 3500 litres of milk to the Megalitre of water.

They collect the effluent and water in the dairy and reuse it on the farm.

"We're running a series of trials with our Bush Regeneration officer and Landcare Illawarra... on plants that will mop up the nutrients."

She says kikuyu (introduced grass) is particularly good at mopping up nutrients.

They've gone from producing 800,000 litres of milk to 4.7 million litres a year. At 55 cents a litre contract - it's \$2.58 million a year enterprise.

The Strongs also now milk three times a day, 3.30am, 12noon and 7pm, which has increased each cow's milk production by 20 per cent and at the same time dropped methane emissions by 25 per cent .

When they expanded they needed to bring the residents along with the ride to protect the environment, so they formed a local Landcare group.

It helps them deal with issues as they arise, with cows and cars sharing roads, and intensive farming with lifestyle blocks sharing the bush and waterways.

Finding environment funding

Clover Hill Dairies has received some help, forming partnerships with the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority, Landcare Illawarra, Small Farms Network and the National Heritage Trust Envirofund.

The Archy Bull prize



Lynne Strong on Clover Hill Dairy, NSW Finalist in National Landcare awards 2010, Jamberoo NSW (Sarina Locke)

Photo Gallery

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Audio

Lynne Strong at Clover Hill Dairy, NSW Primary Producer Landcare award winners, talks to Sarina Locke

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Lynne Strong hasn't stopped at home hoping the consumer will understand the work that goes into producing milk.

With LandLearn NSW there are a series of youtube videos showing the consumer around their farm and the environment work.

This year, they've also launched the "Archy Bull Prize", a rural modification of the famous portrait prize.

For Archy bull, students in Western Sydney will use art to learn about difficulties facing modern agriculture, by painting life size fibre glass cows.

"Wonderful, assessable productive learning tools and building relationships with the future generation of consumers.

"They appreciate where their food comes from and they can see that agriculture is a wise user of our natural resources.

"We will be competing with those future consumers for those natural resources, we will be competing with those future consumers for our work force and they are going to be the people making decisions of primary producers of the future."

As a measure of their success, the Strongys have employed four young people who've been part of their schools program.

"So it is really important for us to build those relationships."

The National awards will be announced on Thursday night 24th June, 2010 at Parliament House.

You can vote in the People's Choice awards online.



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