

DAIRY WOMENS NETWORK TRUST BOARD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 22 OCTOBER 2008



General Manager's Annual Review

The Network's purpose'to provide professional development opportunities for dairying women' continues to be the guiding force for activities delivered by the Network over the past year.

The Network continued to deliver it's many activities during the 2007-08 year whilst also focussing on developing a sustainable business infrastructure and growing the awareness of our brand amongst dairy women.

A significant element to the Network developing a sustainable business structure was the settling in to our centralised office here at AgResearch. We are very appreciative to AgResearch for the space we occupy in the Tower Block. From February 2008 we have been ensconced in our new offices and have benefited from more streamlined processes. It has been great for our visitors to travel through the gates of AgResearch, and also for our Dairy Days in April to be held here, on site.

Another significant focus for the year was growing our brand awareness. This involved a review of our marketing strategy and recommendations were presented to the Board in November 2007, for implementation in 2008. The review focussed on two areas – our participants and the Network sponsors. A rebranding exercise was undertaken to establish a new identity that allowed the network to stand out from a crowded marketplace whilst highlighting our organisation's unique features. This new identity – Dairy Women's Network - was released at conference in May by Willy and was received with enthusiasm. A new logo has been implemented through all aspects of the business. It was also agreed to offer a line of merchandising, broaden our offer of topics at our events to include women-based topics, and to have a presence at Fielddays.

The effective managing of the sponsors was another issue highlighted. Whilst we have improved our communications with our sponsors, there is scope to do more in this area. Also identified was the opportunity to offer additional sponsor-based events (partnered farm days).

Key Activities -

Dairy Days

These focussed learning events, specifically developed for dairy women on topics identified by dairy women were delivered during November 07 and April 08, to 550 participants. The November 07 day was entitled '*Understanding the On-farm Milk Production Factory*', and April 08 was '*Positive People Performance*'. These days are now delivered to eleven regions - five in the North Island and six in the South. Dairy Days will continue to be an important part of the Network's activity, providing the opportunity for women to learn from industry experts and their colleagues in a non threatening environment. Survey data continues to provide very positive feedback about these events.

Regional Groups

Regional Group Convenor (RGC) training was held in Hamilton earlier this year. The theme – '*Planning and Promoting a Successful Regional Event*' was attended by nineteen women from various regional groups throughout New Zealand. This time together was very valuable, and rated highly by those attending. The women left the session with the 'bones' of two or three events that could be held in their region. Also valued was the time convenors were able to mix with Network trustees and, of course, other convenors. The Network is maintaining contact with the RGC's post training to support them to achieve the outcomes identified. This role is capably executed by Michelle Wilson and is more formalised than previous years.

It has been exciting to see the growth and consolidation of groups. An example of this is the group on the West Coast of the South Island that held its inaugural meeting in June 2007. This group, under the capable convenor-ship of Sally Gallant, has had some fantastic meetings. We have 'teamed' up Sally with Michelle Wilson from Invercargill to provide support for this new group. Another meeting of notable success was held in Taranaki. This group of sixty-five enthusiastic women held a calf rearing workshop (July 2007), led by veterinarian Annie Tapper. There have been expressions of interest for other groups to start up at various locations not currently supported by the Network.

Conference

'Farming Forward... a Look Ahead' was the conference theme for 2008. Conference was held in Hamilton in May. This was organised by a talented group of Waikato women capably led by Lisa Lile. This was once again a very successful event, thoroughly enjoyed by the two hundred women attending. Linda McGinty (Manawatu) was the recipient of the 'Celebrate *You*' Award 2008. Survey data from participants indicated that women attending rated the conference highly for value, for time and money.

Web Site, Email Network and E-learning

The email network (Dairwn) continued to be monitored by a consultant, and appropriate responses posted to support best practice. This community has over five hundred members, and topics discussed are varied. There has been excellent discussion on the use of anti-biotic milk, and other issues like capital restructuring, Rotovirus, tenancy agreements – and the benefits of police vetting potential employees.

The web site continues to grow in the information available, and we encourage women to register for our events on-line. Web site sessions exceeded 8,600 for the first time in June 2007. This is an exciting area for future development.

The Network is excited about the development of an e-learning module and looks forward to it being live during 2008.

Leadership Development

It was great to work with Ecosynergy Group Ltd in the delivery of a digital story telling leadership workshop to dairy women. Eight women participated in this workshop and the stories, available on-line, tell it all. Hopefully there is the opportunity to deliver this again in 2009.

Personnel

The centralisation of our offices brought with it some changes in personnel. Towards the end of 2007 we sadly said farewell to Samantha Palmer and Chris Bristol. We welcomed Jillian O'Neill to the very part-time role of Marketing Manager. Jillian has worked enthusiastically with our sponsors, and has been instrumental in our re-branding and promotion of our events.

A significant change for the Network was the employment of an Office Manager. We welcomed Mary Gough to this role early in 2008. Mary has contributed hugely to the setting up of our office here at AgResearch. Mary's passion for and expertise in processes has given the Network the firm foundation essential to run any successful business.

I acknowledge the work of Cathy Seal who keeps our email community on-line.

I also acknowledge the contribution of our Regional Group Convenors. Your effective leadership at a regional level results in effective regional groups, creating the opportunity for like-minded dairy women to come together.

We have a great team working for the Network, and I am constantly inspired by your commitment and passion to deliver the very best. Thank you.

Lynda Clark

General Manager

Dairy Womens Network