



GARDINER FOUNDATION



FACULTY OF  
VETERINARY  
SCIENCE



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### ***New dairy project invests in future vet-power***

Cows in Victoria will receive treatment through a new initiative which is putting new advanced — and possibly some animal health solutions – into the hands of three vets.

The \$1.4 million program, which was launched today at DemoDairy in southwest Victoria, is a collaboration between The University of Melbourne, Dairy Australia, the Gardiner Foundation and three Victorian veterinary clinics – Maffra Veterinary Centre, The Veterinary Group Timboon and the Warrnambool Veterinary Clinic.

Within the next three years the vets will acquire advanced skills as they research some of the most pressing animal health issues facing farmers including fertility and mastitis and calf rearing. The program will provide practical, advanced dairy training for three graduate veterinarians at three established dairy practices for three years. As well as working in local veterinary practices, the dairy residents will conduct important, farm-based clinical research in the field, develop their clinical and extension skills, create an animal health database and teach current veterinary students the latest techniques in dairy practice.

The three vets are Lauren Clyne, Rebecca Dickinson and Gemma Chuck. Lauren, who comes from a dairy background, will be assigned to the Maffra vet clinic, while Rebecca will work at Warrnambool and Gemma, who is from a large animal practice in Northern Queensland will be based at Timboon.

Cow health and production was changing rapidly, making veterinary input in to industry practice more essential than ever - whether via on-farm research into cow health and production or the training of veterinarians in the latest whole-herd management techniques.

Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science at the University of Melbourne Professor Ken Hinchcliff said a gradual decline in the number of experienced dairy veterinarians in local practices had made the timing of such an initiative crucial. It is hoped that the program will go some way in addressing the shortage in the short-term, as well as developing leaders in dairy veterinary practice in the long-term.

"The University of Melbourne's Faculty of Veterinary Science is committed to the dairy industry - not just via our world-class training of graduate veterinarians, but also in ensuring that our programs are developing leaders in the profession and conducting practical research aimed at enhancing knowledge and improving animal health," Professor Hinchcliff said. He added that "This initiative is based on the "Maffra Model" of training, developed at the University over 30 years ago."

Dairy Australia's Animal Performance Manager Dr Mick Blake said the demand for dairy vets was not being met. "People with the desired skills are choosing to work in other fields – possibly because dairy is perceived to not offer the opportunity to acquire further research skills," Dr Blake said.

The vets will also help bridge information gaps between farmers and the important findings from successful Dairy Australia project such as InCalf and Countdown Downunder and initiatives for enhanced calf management.

"This project recognises that veterinary input to the dairy industry is becoming more sophisticated. There is a need for on-farm research into cow and calf health and production and training programs need to adapt to these changing needs," Dr Blake said.

Paul Ford, CEO of the Gardiner Foundation, said "This is an important initiative for Victoria, and addresses one of five priority issues identified by State and Federal Governments". He added "There is increasing demand to improve production efficiency as well as more emphasis on biosecurity and animal health, both by Australian authorities and overseas markets".

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