



## Pasture Quality Trend (October – November 2018)

We have had a mixed bag of weather lately, we have had good warm days to pull up the soil temperature and then a big southerly that brought substantial rain to the region last week. Pasture growth rates have been very good, and quality has maintained well heading into show weekend.

Heading forward a major focus needs to be maintaining pasture quality as best you can. Hitting pasture residuals is key, so any residuals that will be over 1600 kgDM/ha need to be topped behind the cows, or the cows need to be sent back to clean up. The ideal situation is where cows hit target residual, but are not hungry before they come to milking. Mowing behind the cows is preferable now to mowing in front as it will not limit the selective ability by the cows to get a better diet and will not mean that pasture will respire after it is cut, lowering the sugar and ME of the pasture before it is consumed.

### Dry Matter (DM) (%)

DM has dropped to normal levels for this time of year, still no worry about low DM% causing intake issues. We can expect that DM% to rise above 20% with warm, dry weather as the seed head approaches.

### Crude Protein (CP) (%)

Protein has caught up to where it normally sits around this time of year too. Protein has not likely to have been limiting milk production over the last month or so, however as pasture is about to go reproductive, we can expect that some of the available protein will be locked up in the increasing lignin content of pasture. This may limit production through this seed head phase and if things are going very well for your herd (as it should be with the season we have had) then it would be worthwhile considering using a protein supplement to maintain production through this 4-6 week period so you can make the most of the quality that comes back into the pasture later in the season.

### Neutral Detergent Fibre (NDF) (%)

NDF has been very good, but we have started to see it creep up in the last week as the seed head has started to come through. Because of the high NDF, cows will fill up, and look content with less kg pasture consumed. Don't fall into the trap thinking they have enough energy, despite looking satisfied. Less kg pasture intake, of lower ME equals less energy in. With production being ahead of last season in many cases, cows may run into a situation where production and BCS mobilisation cannot keep up with the reduction in pasture quality and cows production and BCS crash.

Ensure that you have enough digestible energy in the diet to maintain the production that the cows want to do. Failing to do this will result in cows not having enough extra energy to partition towards mating, and those non-cyclers which will typically be the better producers will fail to get in calf.

### Metabolisable Energy (MJME/kg DM)

The ME has held well at higher levels that we have seen for a couple of seasons through spring. This will be from the fine days, and low fibre. ME will start to fall as NDF increases and the level of undegradable fibre in the pasture increases.