



## Dairy Discussion Group Coordinators

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*This Agriculture Note provides some direction, guidance and hints for the dairy discussion group coordinators. Coordinating the group, sourcing speakers and the running of group days and meetings can be very rewarding if the resources are highlighted for you.*

As a discussion group coordinator you should firstly familiarise yourself with the Agriculture Notes:

AG0864: Dairy Farmer Discussion Groups

AG0865: Forming a Dairy Discussion Group

AG0759: Dairy Discussion Group Meetings

### Purpose of the group

Without getting too technical, the primary purpose of the group is to provide a forum suitable for learning to take place. Farmers learn from seeing, listening and most importantly doing. By providing a place for farmers to openly discuss farming issues, it is more conducive for farmers to think and gain ideas on a particular issue.

Long term or ongoing groups will also provide a great social network. This network is valuable for sounding out ideas and enables farmers to get off their own farm and explore.

### Administration

The general administrative tasks of the discussion group coordinator are to provide notice of upcoming meetings. There may be flyers to be sent out, speakers to organise, refreshments, venue hire, planning meetings and minute taking.

Taking minutes is not necessary but helps provide a good record of upcoming farm days and who will be responsible for organising each task or activity.

Although flyers are not necessary to inform members of meetings (i.e. could use the telephone, fax or email) they are a useful visual reminder for members to put in their diaries or on a notice board.

### Running Meetings and on farm days

A checklist of a few tasks for before, during and after a meeting is below:

#### Before

- Book venue
- Book speaker
- Ensure venue is a safe venue
- Purchase tea, coffee, biscuits, cups, sugar, milk
- Organise urn & extension lead
- Organise whiteboard, overhead projector and screen etc
- Organise pens and pencils and spare paper/notepads
- Provide butchers paper and markers
- Photocopy any handouts or notes
- Send flyer (specifying whether farmers are required to bring their own chairs or not) and any special instructions, map to venue, contact number
- Advertise group meeting day in local paper if desired or required
- Organise an antibacterial footbath to be provided on the on farm days

#### During

- Find out what the group goals are for the day
- Encourage all members to participate
- Allow plenty of time for questions
- Provide a reasonably informal or comfortable environment
- Ensure group has met its objectives

#### After

- Organise next day including topic, venue/farm, speaker etc
- Help host clean up
- Document outcomes and send out to group members
- Encourage new members to join and participate in group activities.

## Resources for group coordinators

### *Sourcing Speakers*

If you know of an 'expert' that you would like to invite to speak to the group, first make sure the members want to hear from this speaker. If the group members are happy with their choice of speaker, contact that speaker directly.

If you know of a topic you want a speaker for but do not know where to find someone, try looking up the Discussion Group Resources database on the Target 10 website <http://www.target10.com/> under Discussion Groups. The database lists some of the many speakers. Search by organisation, topic or location.

### *Getting in touch with other group coordinators*

The Target 10 website also provides a forum for discussion group coordinators to ask questions and seek advice from other coordinators.

### *Using the Internet or 'web'*

Also located on this Target 10 website is 'What's On' – where all the dates for industry wide field days are logged. Using this information will ensure that your day will not clash with another when planning your next group meeting.

Another useful site is Dairyweb. Both the Target 10 website and Dairyweb provide useful links to other dairy sites.

## Venues, Liability & insurance

Farms are the most likely venues for your group meetings. Ensure that the farm has a minimum of Public Liability Insurance cover to \$5 million before holding any event there. This provides a safeguard to the host farmer as well

as assurance to group members that safety is taken seriously on that farm.

The coordinator or host farmer should also consider use of a footbath or a clean boot policy to minimise disease risk.

If the group runs activities such as a field day then you may wish to become incorporated and insure the group against negligence claims.

## Privacy of Members

The Privacy Act 2001 ensures that group member information is not used in a manner other than that which it was collected for. If unsure of the details of the Act visit the site <http://www.privacy.gov.au/>

## Management of the group

The discussion group itself will not require much management once set up. It is advisable to have at least one planning meeting per year to set the topics the group is interested in. In addition to a planning meeting it is advisable to have one point during the year to check how the group is travelling. This could be at the end of another group meeting or at a specially organised social event.

## Further Information

Further information is available in the Agriculture Notes:

AG0864: Dairy Farmer Discussion Groups

AG0865: Forming a Dairy Discussion Group

AG0759: Running Dairy Discussion Group Meetings

Or ring the Customer Information Centre on 136 186 or Target 10 Website <http://www.target10.com/>

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