

Animals in Extensive Production Systems

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Australian Dairy Farms



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In this section

You will learn about Australian dairy farms:

The people who own and work them

How do individual dairy farms differ?

- Cows – number, breed

- Seasonal production/ Calving patterns

- Types of dairy

People on dairy farms

- Owner-operators
- Share-farmers
 - varying arrangements
 - owner often owns land and fixed infrastructure +/- some or all of the cows
 - share-farmer often owns some of the machinery +/- some or all of the cows and provides labour
 - profits shared between owner and share-farmer
- Off-site owners (corporate or individuals) employing a manager/other staff

The cows on dairy farms

- av. herd size: 279 cows
- increasing numbers of large herds (>700 cows)
- herds may be cows of all the same breed, different breeds, cross-breeds
- stud animals v commercial milkers



Seasonality of production on dairy farms

- Varies with region

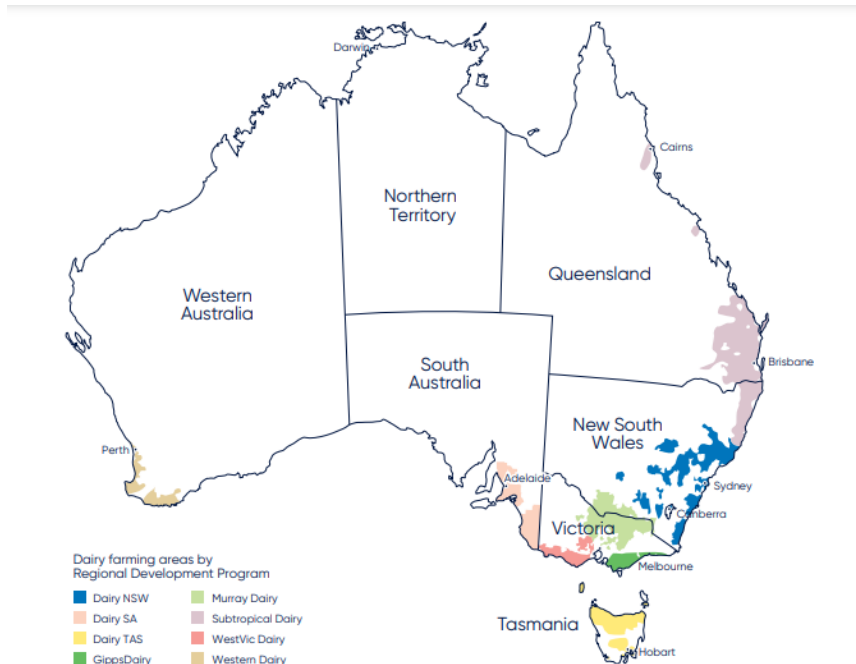
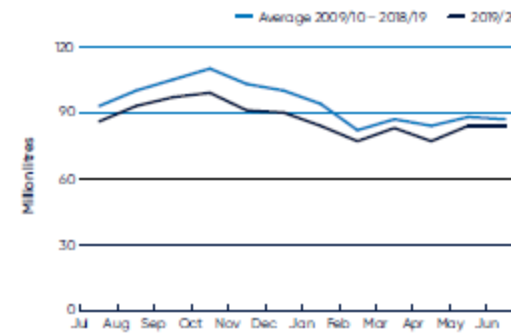
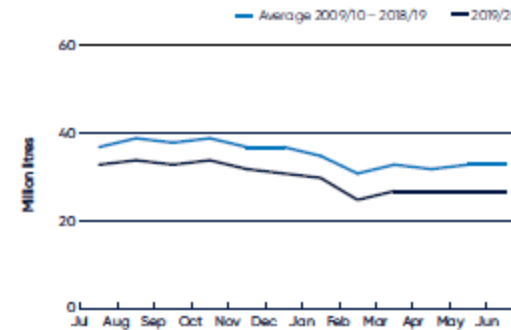


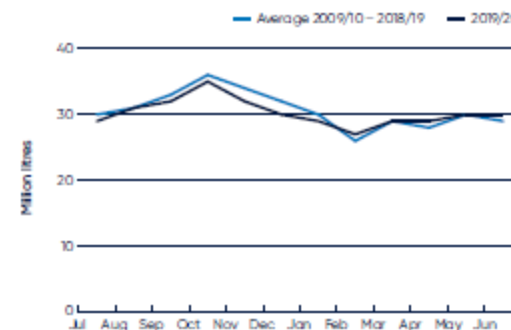
Figure A1 Seasonality of milk production in 2019/20
New South Wales



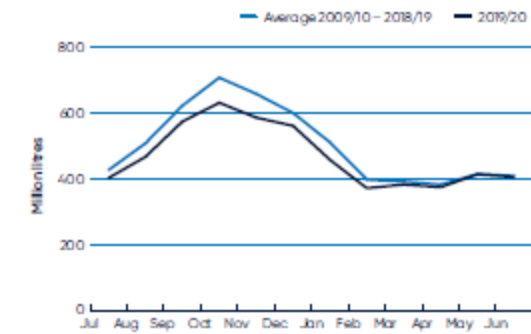
Queensland



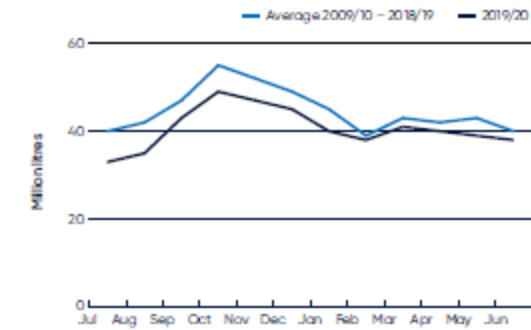
Western Australia



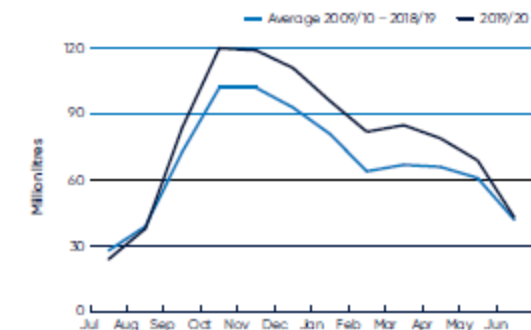
Victoria



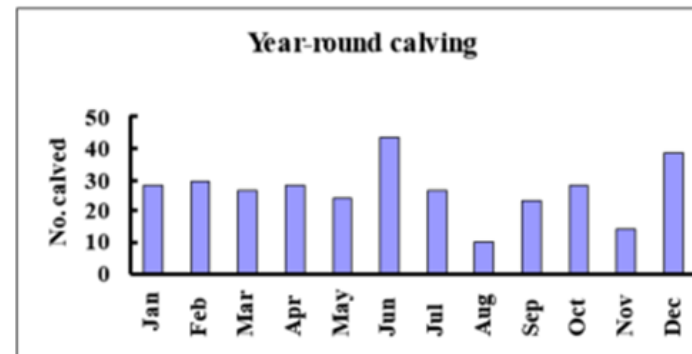
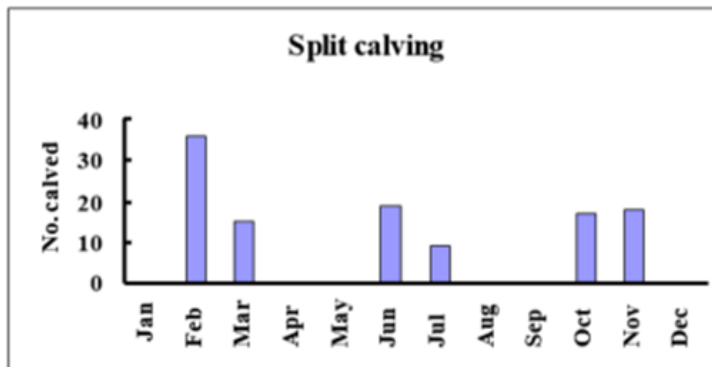
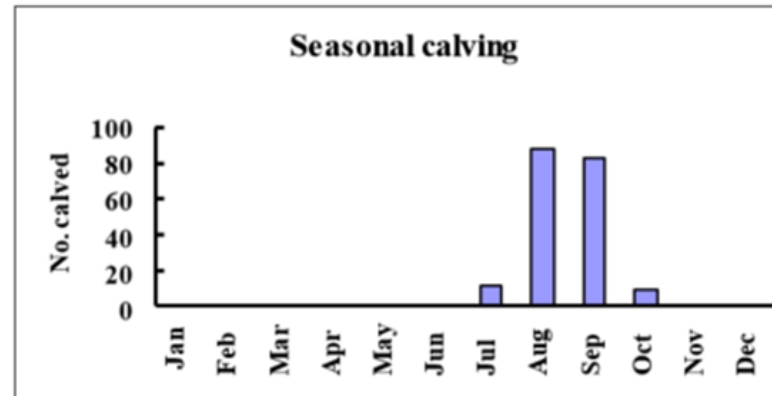
South Australia



Tasmania

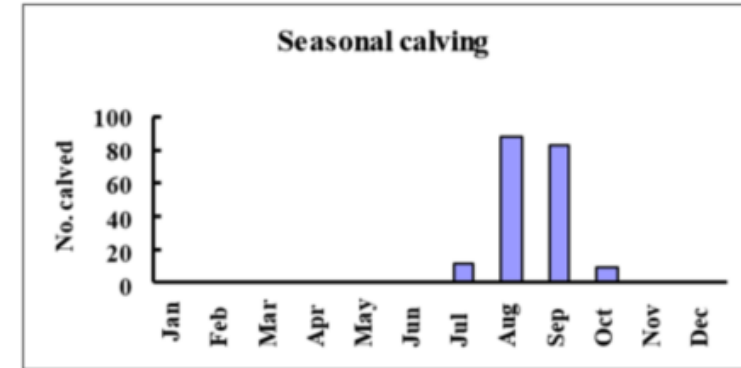


Types of calving pattern



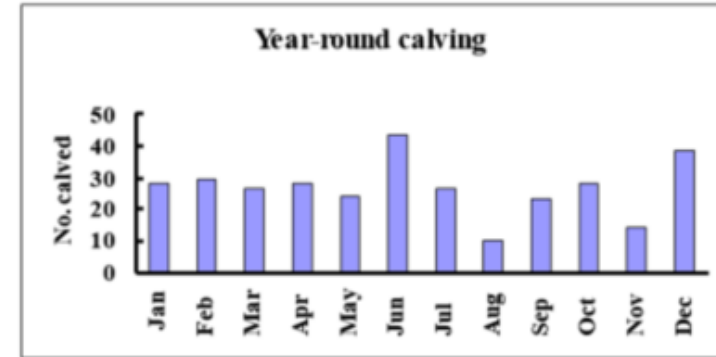
Seasonal Production Systems

- Seasonal calving- cows calve over restricted period
- Benefits
 - make use of available feed (grass growth)
 - utilise different prices throughout year
 - efficient utilisation of labour
- Disadvantages – what to do with a non-pregnant cow??
 - Cull cows
 - Carrying over dry cows
 - Milking stale cows over dry period
 - Genetic improvement of herd halted



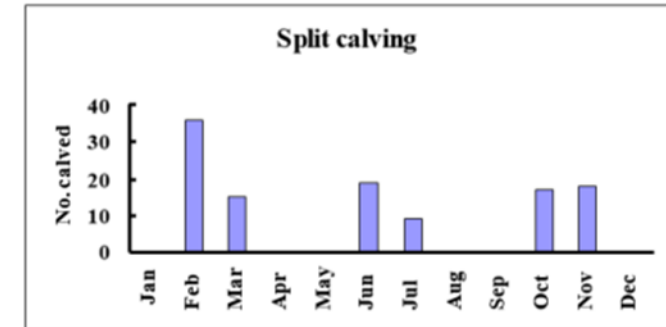
Year Round Production Systems

- Cows calve throughout the year
- Benefits:
 - Ensures year-round milk supply sought by some milk factories (particularly NSW/Qld) – most factories now require processing all year
- Disadvantages
 - prolonged inter-calving interval leads to reduced production (cow spends less time at peak)
 - reduced numbers calves / lifetime (less genetic gain)
 - Workload spread over whole year

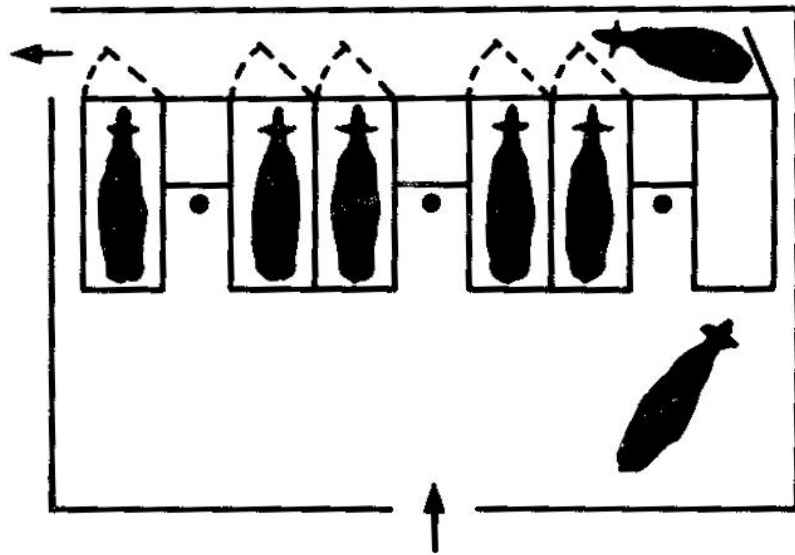


Split/ batch calving

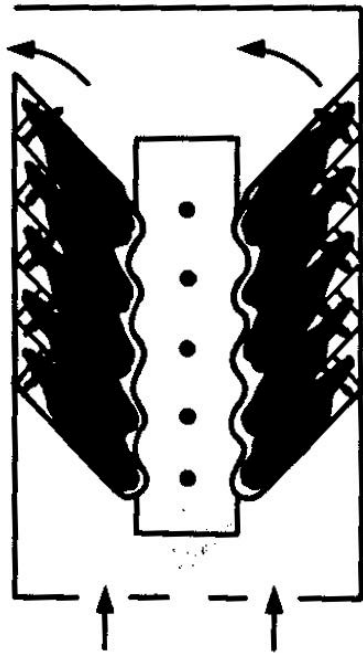
- Two (or more) calving periods (often Spring/Autumn)
 - Spring group often larger to maximise use of pasture availability
- Can bring benefits of year round milk payments
- Can allow “carrying over” cows who do not get in calf to next group
 - BUT, is this good practice?



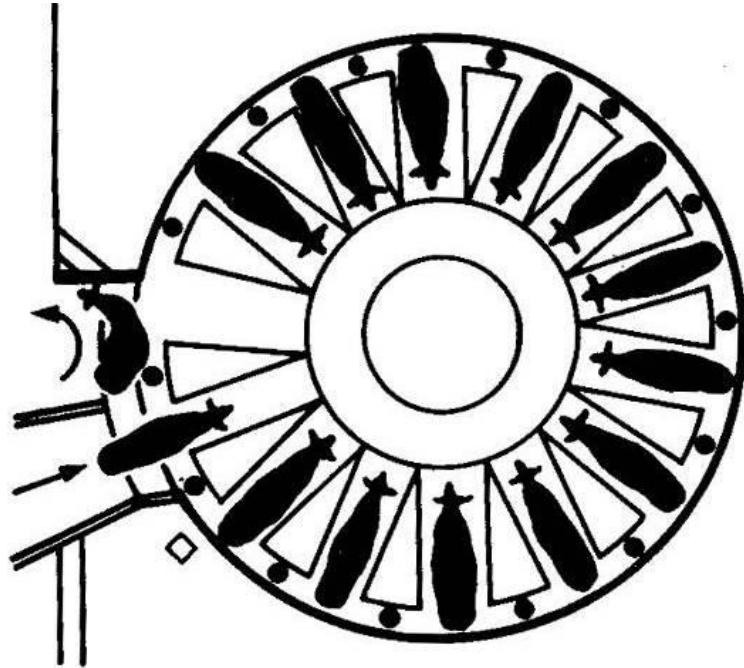
Dairies - Walk through dairy



Dairies - Herringbone dairy



Dairies - Rotary dairy





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