

# NSW dairy farm takes home fifth Milk Quality Award

Staying up-to-date with best practice for mastitis prevention and treatment is continuing to pay dividends for NSW dairy farmers James, Peter, Cheryl and Katrina Neal.

The Oxley Island dairy farmers, based near Taree, have just taken home their fifth consecutive Milk Quality Award, placing them within the top 100 farmers nationwide for milk quality.

Attributing their ongoing success to sound management and strict controls, James believes milk quality is essential to the industry's social license to operate.

'It's great to be recognised for supplying high quality milk to consumers year after year,' James said.

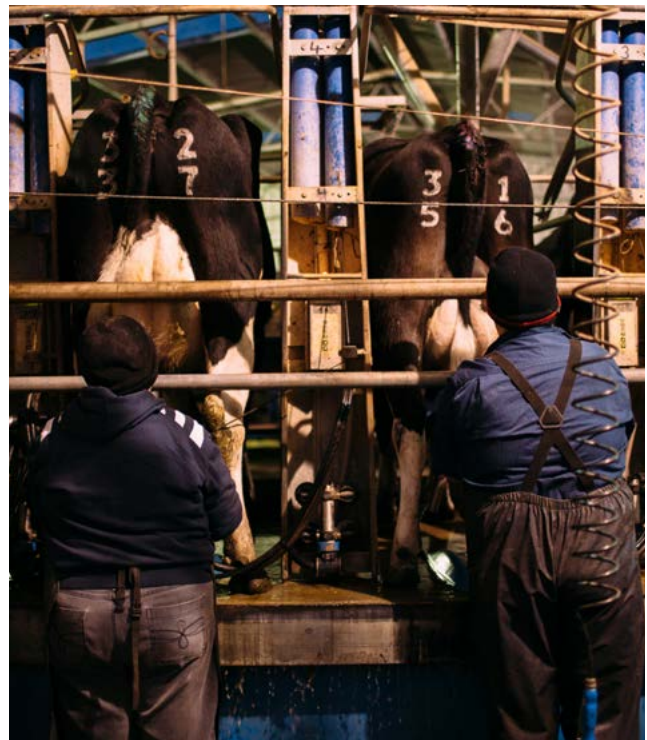
'It's so important for the industry's reputation that dairy farmers produce good quality milk.'

As a supplier of Norco, James achieves a consistently low annual bulk milk cell count (BMCC), which ranges between 67 to 77 over the past 5 years.

This has seen his milk selected by Norco to be exported to key export markets such as China, where an emphasis is placed on premium dairy products and where quality is essential to extend shelf life.

The farm is located on a floodplain, partly below sea level, which presents a unique range of issues requiring ongoing attention when milking a 700-cow mixed herd of Holsteins, Jerseys, Aussie Reds and crossbreds.

**Determined to maintain high milk quality, James pays close attention to maintaining his farm infrastructure and has implemented a stringent system of mastitis controls.**



'Muddy udders produce mastitis, and we get an average of 1,100mm of rain per year, as well as extensive flooding events,' James said.

To reduce the impact of mud, gravel laneways and a network of farm drains are well maintained.

To limit plugging of paddocks during extreme wet periods, which creates mud, Peter has implemented a series of laser scraped drains in each paddock to reduce the build-up of water, while minimising the depth of the drains. To keep udders clean, drains are also fenced off during wet periods.

For James, monthly herd recording is seen as critical to identifying cows with elevated BMCC.

Monthly herd recording is conducted through herd management information service Dairy Express to maintain a low BMCC.

James can access the Dairy Express MISDI website within 24 hours of herd recording to generate production indexes and monitor his herd data using scatter graphs which show each test in a number of scenarios, including cell counts.

A weighted average report also shows the impact of each cow's cell count history on the herd's average cell count. Rapid mastitis testing is then used to identify the problem quarter.

'The quicker you can identify the cows with mastitis, the better the chance they can be cured,' James said.

To limit mastitis at calving, which generally occurs during wetter conditions, blanket antibiotic treatment and teat sealing is used. The washing of teats is minimised to prevent bacteria from entering the teat end.

## For James, upskilling his farm team to prevent mastitis and achieve a low cell count is a crucial part of maintaining high milk quality.

Recognising the importance of staff training, James ensures his farm stays up-to-date with the latest information and encourages his staff to attend Cups On Cups Off training as part of Dairy Australia's Countdown program.

'Cups On Cups Off courses give our staff a basic understanding of the important things to look for in the herd and dairy for mastitis management,' James said.

As well as attending training, James ensures Countdown resources such as the Countdown Farm Guidelines are kept on hand for his team to refer to.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Dairy farmers can access a range of resources to improve milk quality and prevent mastitis from Dairy Australia at: [dairyaustralia.com.au/mastitis](https://dairyaustralia.com.au/mastitis).

More information on Cups On Cups Off courses can be found by contacting Dairy Australia's Regional Development Programs in each dairy region.