

Grass drives SA winners

By ALISHA FOGDEN

GLENCOE, South Australia dairyfarmers, Matt Seeliger and Kate Holberton, took the South-East South Australian award in the prestigious 2007 Dairy Business

ness of the Year Award. The young couple run a 260-cow herd on 100 hectares of irrigated pasture and Mr Seeliger attributed their business success to "growing a lot of grass".

The figures for 2005/06, on which the competition results were based, showed a harvested pasture figure of 10.7 tonnes of dry matter (DM) a hectare, while their purchased forage cost were kept to an impressive low of \$110 a tonne DM.

"We use a fair bit of fertiliser in our irrigation and it helps us to grow a fair bit of grass," Mr Seeliger said.

The business had an 18% operating profit margin and a 6.5% return on assets.

Mr Seeliger said they currently milk in a 14-a-side swingover herring-bone, but he is always looking to



Matt Seeliger and Kate Holberton are congratulated by Simon Billings from Elanco Animal Health after winning the South Australian section of the 2007 Dairy Business of the Year.

cut time spent in the dairy. "We hope to further increase our herd size and build a new fully-automated 50-unit rotary dairy," he said.

"We have one full-time worker and employ casuals to help with milking, but we hope the new dairy will help reduce total work time."

But the efficiency of the enterprise was clear in the overall profit figures of \$1379 a hectare for the 2005-06 season, which Mr Seeliger attributes to their good grazing rotation system.

The cows normally get a fresh 'break' of grass after every milking and with leaf emergence rates at 17 days in winter that means about a 34-to-35-day rotation.

In summer that is back to about 12 days when the leaf emergence rate reduces to five or six days.

In the competition year the farm produced 1550kg milk solids a hectare, with each cow averaging 571kg MS which was at the upper end of the range of figures for the competition.

Mr Seeliger said the results had shown a slight lift in per hectare production, possibly due to gradually increasing herd numbers.

"Our milk production per hectare in also definitely up (21,487 litres/ha and 7917 litres/cow) probably due to increased stocking rates," he said.

One of five regional award winners, the couple were delighted with their award.

"It was good, we were presented with the trophy and prize money (\$1200), which we will look to put back into our management account," Mr Seeliger said. **D**

KEY POINTS

MATT SEELIGER AND KATE HOLBERTON
Glencoe, SA
Dairy Business of Year Awards
South-east South Australia winner

Key performance indicators for award year (2005-06)

Effective milking area (ha):	100
Cows:	260
Production (kg MS/ha):	1550
Production (kg MS/cow):	571
Return on assets:	6.5%
Operating profit margin:	18%
Cost/kg milk solids:	\$3.48
Pasture harvest (tonne DM/ha):	10.7
Labour efficiency (cows/labour unit):	84
Core per cow costs:	\$416

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