

THE HISTORY OF DAIRYING FROM 1974-2013



1. Landslide Dalrymple Rd on Eungella side of Watt's Road ca.1990 a milk tanker was pulled through a muddy new track, made by dozer over bank, by winch attached to a 'skidder' tractor
2. Illawarra dairy cow herd first grazing of tropical pasture on Herron's property late 1960s
3. Older style walk through dairy bails on Herron's property ca.1980s
- milked 6 at a time x 100 cows = 2.5hrs milking time
4. New herringbone style dairy on Herron's property January 1985 - 90 degree style, 10 a side swing-over (20 lined up 10 sets of cups), milked about 110 cows per hour
5. Milk trucks (Jordan Bros) at road wash out in Netherdale ca.1990, pumping milk between trucks.

In 1974 Artificial breeding (AI) for dairy cows was introduced, meaning access to worldwide bovine genetics. In July of the same year came the introduction of Bulk Milk. Farmers were required to upgrade their dairy buildings, purchase refrigerated bulk milk vats and improve their farm access roads to an all-weather standard, at considerable expense. The days of lifting (40kg+ full) and washing up to 20 milk cans on a daily basis, became a distant memory. The introduction of bulk milk in 1974 and negotiability of milk quotas in the 1990s saw a steady decline in farmer numbers as farms were amalgamated.

In 1989, Tropical Cyclone Aivu dumped heavy overnight rain on Eungella causing

the Range road to collapse and wash away in many places. No milk was transported for 10 days. It took 12 months to reconstruct the Eungella Range with severe vehicle movement restrictions during that period.

The dairy cattle breeds had changed over this period from Jersey, Australian Illawarra Shorthorn and Ayrshire to predominantly Friesians and now a Jersey/Friesian cross.

Late 1999-2000 saw the deregulation of the Dairy industry - meaning a discontinuation of regulated sourcing and pricing of milk. This meant that Eungella farms now had to compete with large scale operations nation-wide.

Lower milk prices for farmers have seen the number of dairy farms in the region further decline. There were up to 60 dairies in the late 1940s, shifting to 30 more efficient dairies by 1978. In 2013, the number has dwindled to only 3 functioning dairy farms. Many farmers have turned their hand to beef production or simply walked away. The future of dairying in Eungella remains uncertain, with falling milk prices and increasing pressure from consumer-driven supermarkets.

Step Back in Time *gathering Eungella's past*

Images were contributed to the "Step Back in Time - Gathering Eungella's past" project by past and present residents.

Visit www.history.eungella.com.au for more information.