



BestFarms EMS Still Applies Two Years On

In 2004, Ian Noakes attended a BestFarms two day workshop to develop an Environmental Management System (EMS) for the established dairy farm that he and his family operate near Karridale. Two years on, Ian took some time out of his busy schedule to tell BestFarms Facilitator Kathe Purvis exactly how the system still applied.

As part of the BestFarms process, Ian initially developed a Farm Action Plan focused on five main environmental issues that he had identified on his property, which included nutrient uptake, soil acidity and protecting remnant bush and waterways.

Each BestFarm participant is assigned a Facilitator, who provides practical assistance and guides landholders through the process and documentation. Ian worked with Facilitator Christine Kershaw and Kay Lehman, from Lower Blackwood Landcare to ensure that his planned actions would help address his identified issues. Christine and Kay also helped Ian with some water quality and soil monitoring.



Photo left: *Ian Noakes discusses his EMS with Kay Lehman, Lower Blackwood Landcare Officer and BestFarms Facilitator Christine Kershaw*

After two years of implementing BestFarms EMS, Ian reflected on how applicable the system had been in the long term on his property.

Although keeping up to date with the paperwork can sometimes be a challenge, Ian has been implementing actions almost daily on the farm to help minimise their environmental impacts.

Many of the actions that the Noakes are implementing through their EMS process are in various stages of development, with monitoring actions planned to ensure that they are effective in the long term.

In order to address his first priority issue, maximising the uptake of nutrient inputs on farm, Ian has a tailored fertility programme over the last two years, linked to ongoing soil improvement.

The programme also addresses the issue of soil acidity and involves activities such as applying fertiliser in small, regular quantities to minimise nutrient leaching.

Water efficiency in the dairy industry is an issue and one that Ian is tackling through his EMS. The Noakes are installing a water efficient effluent system as part of the new dairy complex being built on the property. It will allow the re-use of dairy water via a reticulated system applied rotationally across the farm. Irrigation practices have also been refined with the help of a farm consultant, allowing Ian to grow more feed grass using less water by adopting a method of more frequent watering in much lower volumes.

Other actions, such as fencing to protect biodiversity on the property and minimisation and management of chemical use to prevent contamination of soils and water, are being implemented on ground.

Actions such as these not only help to improve the environmental aspects and sustainability of the farm, but help to improve Ian's productivity and efficiency. Through the BestFarm EMS, Ian is able to document all his actions and monitor and review their success.

“The BestFarms process is not a threat to current farm practices. It is a chance to fine tune and to keep up with modern farming practices.”



Photo above: *Ian samples creekline water quality with the help of local landcare officer Kay Lehman and Facilitator Christine Kershaw.*

Ian sees BestFarms as a useful tool in keeping up with modern farming practices and applies actions from the workshop process within his ongoing farm management.

All the best to Ian with his system in the future.
Contact BestFarms' on (08) 9765 1555