

Effluent management rewarded

Key points

- Works funding announced
- Eight dairy producers rewarded
- Applicants share in \$37,000

MOUNT Jagged dairyfarmer Ben McHugh (pictured) was one of eight successful South Australian dairy producers to share in \$37,000 of funding as part of the 2008 round of the On-ground Works program.

Funded by the National Landcare Program and DairySA, the scheme awarded applicants who had implemented on-ground works relating to best-management practices for effluent management.

A third generation dairyfarmer, Mr McHugh's old dairy effluent management system consisted of a single pond that was compliant with EPA regulations.

But a recent increase in cow numbers to 230 meant that the current system was no longer as efficient as it could be.

"If you wish to move forward in agriculture you need to be proactive," Mr McHugh said.

"We wanted to make sure we were up to date with current standards and to do something before it became an issue."

Utilising support from the program's technical officer Michael O'Keefe, Mr McHugh put in a trafficable solids trap and a second effluent pond to assist in separating liquids



from solids.

The effluent from the dairy shed and yard gravitates into the trafficable solids trap and then into the pond system.

Solids are removed from the trap using a front-end loader and spread over the lighter sandy soils on the property.

"We wanted to have a more effective system that would allow us to utilise the nutrients that are in the effluent," Mr McHugh said. "The significant increased cost of fertiliser has also been a great incentive to do something. Once we start to apply effluent as a fertiliser we

will then soil-test that area and adjust fertiliser applications accordingly."

This system allows effluent to be recycled from the second pond for yard washing, as well as being applied to the irrigation paddocks during the relevant months.

"We were applying effluent over a small area which resulted in a nutrient build up in the soil, and the cows weren't eating the pasture," Mr McHugh said.

"In consultation with Michael O'Keefe we have been able to apply the effluent over a larger

area therefore using the nutrients more effectively."

Mr McHugh intends to install a floodwash tank to store recycled effluent for the yard wash.

Recycling of effluent water will result in a freshwater saving of 1095 kilolitres a year.

"We are currently using bore water at the dairy, and recycling of the effluent for yard wash just gives us another option," Mr McHugh said. "You need to be more water-conscious these days."

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