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**Section A:**

**Guideline  
Fundamentals**

## 2.0 Guidelines Instigation

The Victorian dairy industry today has:

- Ongoing deregulation
- A trend of dairies to increase in size
- Production intensifying
- Increased supplementary feeding
- An increased interest in the use of feedpads.

In the Goulburn Broken Catchment, Australia's largest dairying region, the number of feedpads, the number of applications for these feedpads and general interest in feedpads and the related supplementary feeding systems has increased significantly in recent times.

This has resulted in the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA) facilitating the preparation of this set of guidelines for the planning, siting, sizing and construction of pads and their related feeding systems in the Goulburn Broken Catchment. It is critical to prevent potential adverse impacts on the environment and especially on waterways.

In relation to the establishment, operation, management and maintenance of a feedpad, the dairy industry currently faces problems such as;

- Existing information is not comprehensive and is difficult to follow.
- Where regulations have been enforced, feedpads have come under the purview of:
  - Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots (DAEM, 1995)
  - Local council requirements for permits to undertake earthworks
- Intensive animal regulations have been gained from existing intensive animal codes of practice which are not always applicable to a dairy farm such as the:
  - Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots (DAEM, 1995)

- Draft Code of Practice Piggeries (DNRE 1992)
- Broiler Code of Practice

- ***There is NO existing document*** to provide practical, rational, responsible and comprehensive guidance to those considering some form of dairy management system incorporating a pad.

## 3.0 Guideline Aims

The aim of these Guidelines is;

*“To provide a rational process to assist consultants, farmers and regulatory authorities in the planning, development, construction and management of dairy feedpad systems to ensure a balance between dairy production, livestock health, environmental protection, sustainability and minimal impacts on neighbours.”*

The challenge is to try and keep it simple whilst providing adequate detail.

The Guidelines aim to;

- Provide background information for those considering a feedpad such as the benefits, required management changes, options etc.
- Provide practical information on a range of aspects relating to various feedpads.
- Provide a rational process for those who have decided to proceed with a feedpad to help ensure a quicker and less difficult process.
- Promote the establishment and management of feedpad systems that are best management practice and are environmentally responsible.
- Help prevent potential adverse impacts waterways by affirming that any waste generated should stay on farm.
- Assist those implementing or managing a feedpad to meet their legal and social responsibilities thereby upholding the high regard the community currently has of the dairy industry.
- Provide avenues to access further information and assistance.

## 4.0 Guideline Feedpad Principles

In relation to feedpad operation, these Guidelines are based on the following fundamental principles:

- No excessive amount of nutrients, salts, chemicals, odour, debris, noise, pests, insects, microbial pathogens or oxygen demanding organic matter should leave the farm, contaminate soil or air or adversely influence the farm environment.
- No contaminated surface runoff or effluent should leave the farm.
- No discharge should give rise to material detriment to any person (i.e. interfere with the normal use and enjoyment of life and property to an extent which is more than of a trivial or minor nature).
- A feedpad should not be so aesthetically unacceptable as to reduce the value of surrounding property.
- A feedpad should provide an environment that is conducive to the maintenance of animal health and the avoidance of animal stress.
- It is recommended that a feedpad be located at least 300m from any neighbouring residence.

## 5.0 Guideline Limitations

### 5.1 Guideline Parameters

It should be noted that:

- The document seeks to foster sustainable development.
- The document also seeks equity and consistency in the approach taken by planning authorities in dealing with extensive and intensive agricultural

enterprises. It is recognised that the beef industry, pig industry and poultry industry would expect this outcome.

- A landholder has the right to establish a feedpad where the feedpad will meet regulatory requirements and accepted industry standards.
- Dairying has become more than simply grazing and is approaching 'industry' status and therefore a dairy farmer, as a member of society, has a responsibility to comply with regulations, laws and policies - and to be fair, even some of those regulations imposed on other 'industries'.
- A dairy farmer is a custodian of the land and a steward of the environment.
- Due to the large variation in feedpads and the variability between dairy farms and their management, this document cannot offer a step-by-step set of instructions on how to build a feedpad however, information on certain aspects of construction are provided, especially in the appendices.
- These are best management practice Guidelines and therefore provide a standard to aim for and as such the guidelines do not form a statutory document, as would a code of practice. It is envisaged that a code of practice will be developed based on these Guidelines at a later date and in the interim the Guidelines will be reviewed regularly.
- These best management practice Guidelines apply to the Goulburn Broken Catchment only.

### 5.2 Special Water Supply Catchments

Very few areas in the Goulburn Broken Catchment constitute a 'special water supply catchment area' (refer to Appendix A). If a feedpad is being considered for a special water supply catchment area or an area that could be sensitive to disturbance of the catchment or pollution of the water, reference should be made to Appendix A.

### 5.3 Feedpads of less than 50 Head or more than 5,000 Head

If a feedpad of less than 50 head or more than 5,000 head is being considered, reference should be made to Appendix B.

Very large feedpads of greater than 5,000 head will have additional requirements to those outlined in these Guidelines and will need a works approval from the EPA. In these cases reference should be made to Appendix B.

## 6.0 Definitions

### 6.1 Feedpad

*“A feedpad is part of dairy farm that is utilised for the supplementary feeding of livestock on an area of land that is formed, surfaced or stocked at a rate that precludes vegetation.”*

The feedpad is generally a confined, yarded or laneway area in which feed and/or water can be provided. Dairy cattle are held or mechanically fed for the purpose of milk production or animal husbandry. The feedpad can also offer protection from adverse environmental impacts such as wet, cold or hot conditions.

For the purpose of these Guidelines, the term ‘feedpad’ will incorporate not only the pad, but also the associated dairy supplementary feeding system incorporating all of the factors relating to the use of the feedpad including feed, feed storage, laneways, waste removal/storage/reuse and the management of the system be this a ‘feedpad’, ‘loafing pad’ or a calving pad’.

To delineate between the many various types of feedpads, a list of the different types of pads referred to in these Guidelines is provided in Appendix C.

### 6.2 Pad

A ‘pad’ is an area of land that is formed, surfaced or stocked at a rate that precludes vegetation on a dairy farm. The pad is the actual formed, surfaced or stocked area. The pad is typically raised-up to assist drainage and to provide a dry surface and facilitates purchase for cow hooves.

### 6.3 Loafing Pad

As part of the overall management of a dairy farm, it can be beneficial to have a loafing pad or loafing area for the livestock, in addition to the area where they are fed, where fed livestock can ruminate, especially when the livestock are to be contained for more than 10 hours a day. Stock will most likely lie down in a loafing pad. A loafing pad can be utilised in conjunction with a feedpad.

### 6.4 Calving Pad

A separate area for calving is often used on dairy farms to provide a warmer, dryer option to the paddock and to facilitate round the clock access for the care of newborn and young calves. A calving pad can incorporate subsurface drainage and is typically covered with some absorbent organic form of bedding, commonly such as rice hulls, straw or sawdust.

### 6.5 Cattle Feedlots (Beef)

The Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots (DAEM, 1995) contains a definition of cattle feedlots and this is provided in full in Appendix D. The main distinction between a cattle feedlot and a dairy feedpad is that, as per the definition in the Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots (DAEM, 1995),

*“A cattle feedlot does not include any area in which cattle are penned or enclosed for the provision of supplementary rations for cattle which have daily access to pasture.”*

As per this definition, if the dairy cattle on a feedpad do not have daily access to pasture, the feedpad is considered to be a feedlot. In this case the feedpad must come under the purview of The Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots (DAEM, 1995). The exception to this is the case of a free-stall barn as described below.

### 6.6 Free-Stall Barn

A free-stall barn is a partially or fully enclosed structure in which dairy cattle can be housed and in which feed and/or water is often provided.

A free-stall barn is often used to house dairy cattle for extended periods and can therefore incorporate

a loafing area or areas for cattle to lie down. For the purpose of these Guidelines, the term 'feedpad' will incorporate a free-stall barn, even where the cattle do not have daily access to pasture, providing;

- The facility is fully roofed (with the exception of the loafing area)
- The cattle are milked in a separate facility at least daily

- The surface is cleaned at least daily
- Manure and bedding is exported regularly from the facility and is not stock piled on site.

Where these provisions are not met, the free-stall barn must come under the purview of The Victorian Code for Cattle Feedlots (DAEM, 1995).