

## Can we have 2025 back again please?



Green millet pasture



Creep feeding

What a start to the New Year! Smoke, wind, dust, fire, water shortages and that's just in our little valley, the less said about the big wide world the better.

So many people doing it tough at the moment, and we particularly think of our farmers fighting fires and also floods across the country, we have been spared the worst so far but it seems there are still some tough weeks ahead with what has been such extreme weather.

But we go on preparing for what we hope will be a year full of sharing and learning. Autumn is already looking very busy with new and old groups booked in. Let's hope we have green grass and happy plants again by then.

While you are spending time indoors, I recommend catching up with Australia's best rural podcast 'Salt of The Earth Farm Stories' and particularly episode 87 which turns the tables on host Darren and features highlights of many episodes, including those here at The Farm. Hotter than the Triple J 100 for the Australia Day weekend.

## From the Garden

We are quickly learning what veggies like the heat most and this classic combo of tomatoes, basil, beetroot and marigolds seem to thrive even when in the 40s.

Watermelons and cucumbers too, and of course those extra spicy chillies.



## Feathers Flying



Lots of babies in the shed and also in the house! Ducklings, guinea fowl keets and more chickens.

Sometimes they end up in the same brooder box, as the song goes 'one of these things is not like the other....' Serious Identity crisis to follow.

## What's New?

- What a wise decision not have groups visit in January, truly they would never have come back! Definitely no farm fun on these hot days when the animals would rather sit in the shade than walk over for pats. Plus it's given us time to focus on their care and getting them through this particularly tough season. Our news this edition is all about accessing and maximising feed and water.
- It starts with more pipes, tanks and pumps. With our expanding garden and so many young trees, we've been finding new ways to make our water reserves go the distance. Blow up rafts, dirty swimming and dam diving have been required to set up gravity 'quick fill' spots to allow us to use dam water for all outdoor use, the bonus is the built in cow fertiliser, the downside is if you are thirsty!
- Our summer pastures were amazing, particularly the Yeoman ripped paddocks that brought forth luminous green millet and deep feed turnips. A stripe of colour in an increasingly white landscape. We were thrilled how it hung on so long as the roots were deep and the moisture protected. We'll be doing lots more of that in the future. Deep ripping on the contour not ploughing, keeping soil layers together yet breaking down the organic matter for those microbes to munch.
- Another innovation for us this summer was 'creep feeding'. Not a reflection on our visitors (oops) but creating special gateways into the best of the pastures that allow only the calves to fit through. Enabling them to go back and forth to their Mums for milk drinks and also to the paddock for nutrients and rumen development as we work towards weaning. The cows get a rest, have a gossip under the trees, then go to the school gate to pick up their kids for the night. Win win win.

## Co-Farmer Club



We were the last stop for some very special visitors on the last leg of their amazing 18 month trip around Australia. Leonie and Darren made it back to Ballarat for Christmas but we loved having them 'park the van' for a few days and help with the endless watering and weeding at this time of year.

## Word from the Herd

We finally got to see our resident shearer show his latent skills in tidying up our rag tag crew of woollies. Even without the best equipment, they came out clean and cool, ready to brave the heat. Baaaaa Thanks Davo!



## Next Issue

With this weather, who knows!



A great way to stay up to date is to check out our Salt of the Earth Farm Stories on Spotify and Google. Or watch out for our Instagram stories!



The Farm Mudgegonga acknowledges and respects the connection Aboriginal people have to this land and their role in caring for and maintaining Country.