Options for Feeding in Wet Conditions

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Aim of Feeding Strategies in Wet Conditions

- *To provide herd feed requirements through effective use of available pasture, fodder and grain.*
- *To minimise damage to pastures as much as is practicable.*
- *To reduce wastage of feed as much as possible.*

Pasture Grazing Strategies in Wet Conditions

Still allow cows to graze paddocks but:

- Offer a larger area per day (increases speed of grazing rotation)
- Graze 2/3rd of the 24 hr allocation in the day and 1/3rd in the night
- Provide two or three moves per day, offering a fresh strip. More work.
- Offer the herd a higher dry matter per hectare than normal, over 3,000 kg DM/ha (more feed per bite and less pugging damage). More pasture left behind.
- Offer herd the whole 24 hr allocation at once ie day and night feed with no strip fence.

Or

ON/Off graze:

- Graze an area for 2 to 4 hrs with herd then move or stand off in a drier or higher place where supplements can be fed.
- Cows can eat 3 to 4 kg DM/hr if pasture is greater than 2,500 kg DM/ha.
- In New Zealand to allow dry cows 3 hours grazing per day on daily shift.

Options for Feeding Hay or Silage in Wet Conditions

If feeding silage, hay or some other fodder:

- ❑ Forage fed out on ground, under fence lines – 30 to 50% wastage
- ❑ Fed out in semi permanent hard surface, gravel Tracks or laneway hard surface areas without roof coverage eg feedpads or concrete laneways – 10 to 30% wastage
- ❑ Fed in permanent or well constructed concreted feed pads or covered feed barns – >5 to 10% wastage.
- ❑ Hay rings work well and have only 10% waste but bog up paddock at 20 % less waste than paddock feeding, hay rings pay for themselves after 20 hay rolls fed.

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Options for Feeding Grain or Pellets in Wet Conditions

If feeding grain:

- Grain is fed on ground under a hot wire, fence line or on hay – 30 to 50% wastage.
- Grain fed at the dairy or in troughs on a feed pad – 5 to 10% wastage

❑ Use troughs or steel purlins for feeding grain of pellets reduces waste

❑ A lick feeder is the best option and has least wastage

❑ . Feed in a shed or sheltered feed pad but these facilities are expensive.

❑ Important you must have a fibre source to prevent acidosis.

❑ **Must Transition onto grain and off grain**

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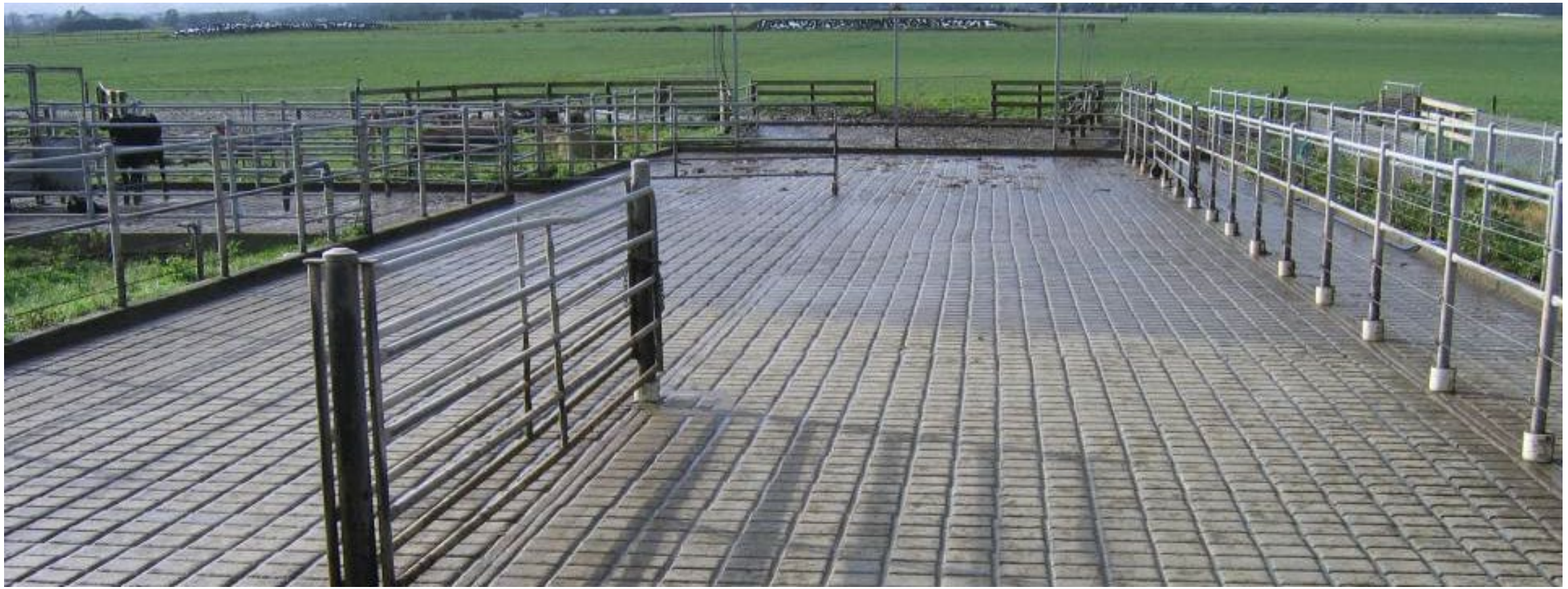
Ideas for stand off areas - Dairy Cow yard



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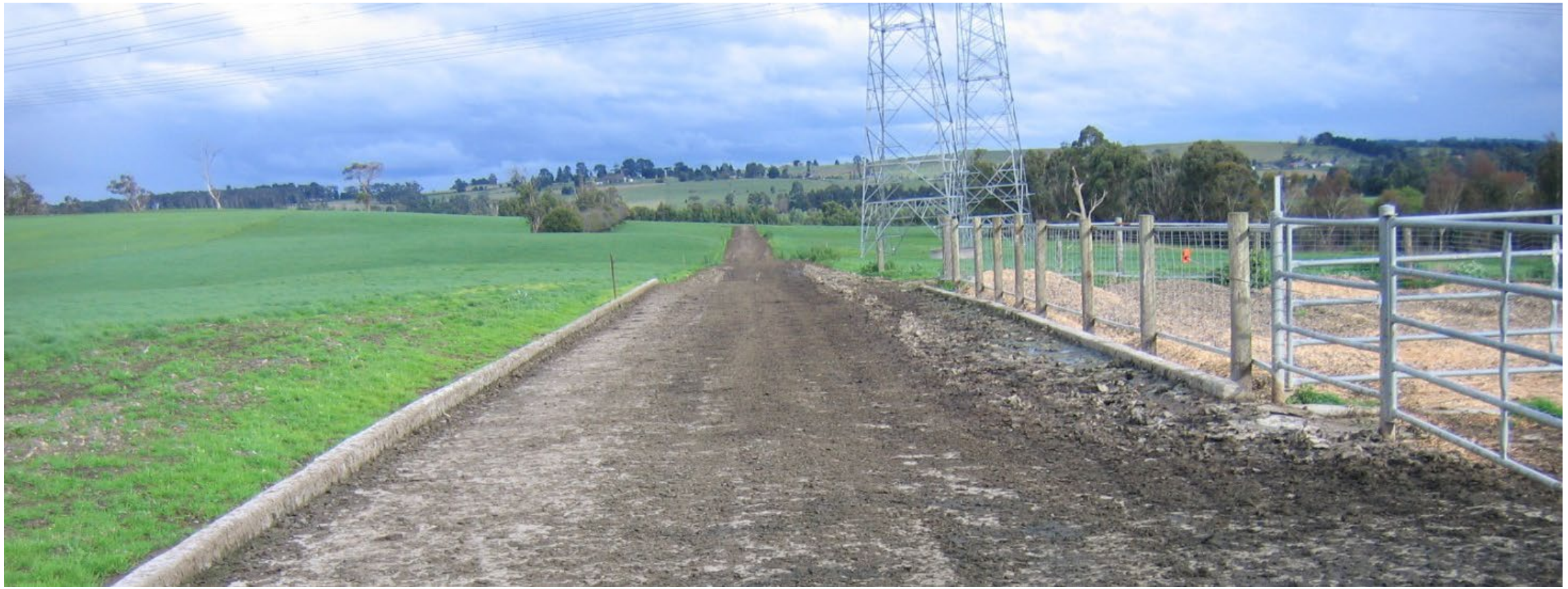
Ideas for stand off areas – concrete laneway on a dairy farm



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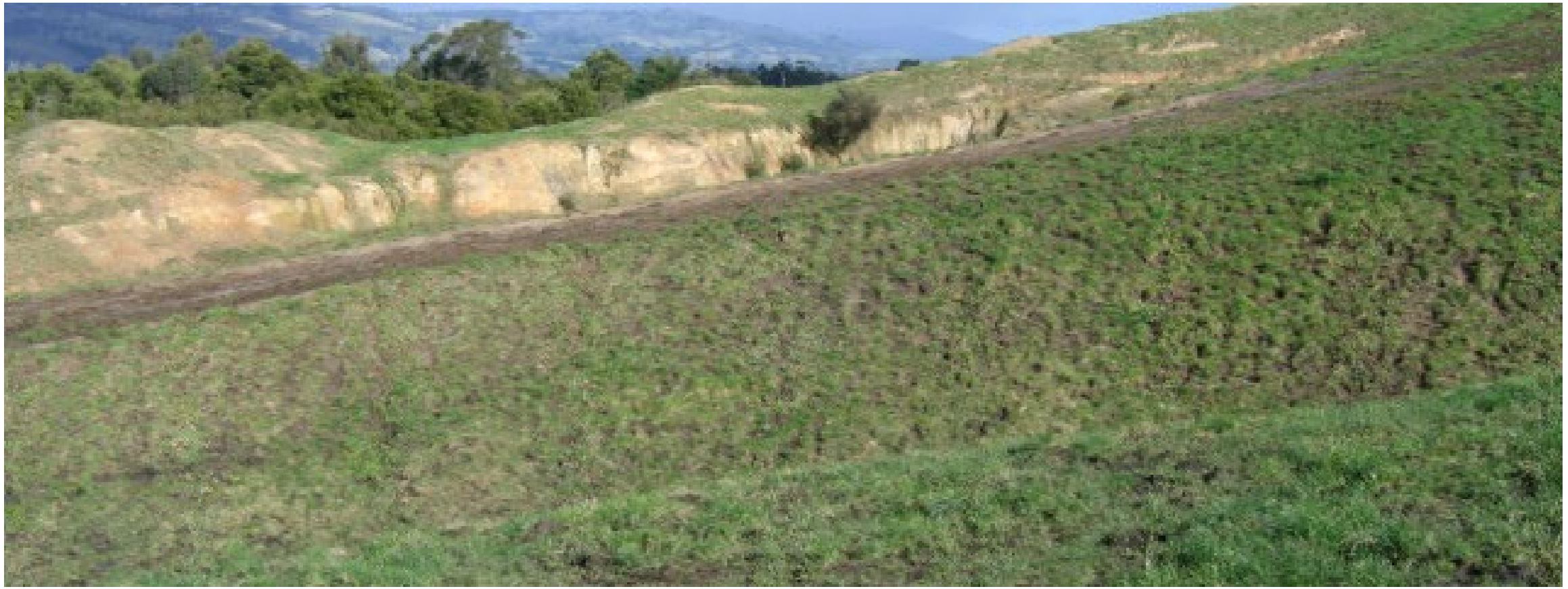
Ideas for stand off areas – Old quarry site



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In Summary

- You need to feed your herd in the best way you can to provide the required amounts of energy, protein and fibre which is appropriate for their stage of lactation and growth. Where possible, if these feeds are consumed more efficiently and with reduced wastage then lower quantities can be fed to give the desired result. Forages fed on hard easy to clean surfaces will help reduce wastage and animal health issues.
- Whatever grazing method is used over this time, the aim should be to reduce the amount of pasture damage “pugging” as much as possible. As research has shown that pugging can reduce pasture utilisation by 40 to 60 per cent and set back pasture re-growth over the following spring to early summer by 20 to 80 per cent.

Sources of Information

Feed Wastage Information: https://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/feed-and-nutrition/feeding-the-herd/dairy-cow-nutrition/feed-wastage#.YNlMQfkzbIU

Managing in Wet Conditions: https://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/land-water-and-climate/extreme-weather/managing-in-wet-conditions#.YNlO7PkzbIU

On-Off Grazing to prevent pugging: https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/dairy/managing-wet-soils/onoff-grazing-to-prevent-pugging

Managing Wet Soils: https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/dairy/managing-wet-soils

Grazing management to reduce soil damage: https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/dairy/managing-wet-soils/grazing-management-to-reduce-soil-damage

Feedpads and stand-off areas: https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/dairy/managing-wet-soils/feedpads-and-standoff-areas

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