



20th and 21st October 2026 Meeting

Jet Park Hotel Auckland Airport

Day 1.

Time	Topic	Speaker
8.30am	<i>Coffee, Meet and Greet</i>	
9am	Practical use of GenAI: Insights from dairy farmers and rural professionals	Rachel Durie
10am	Practical dietary strategies for prevention of hypocalcaemia	Dr Jose Santos
10.45am	<i>Morning Tea</i>	
11.15am	TBC	Dr Elliot Block
12am	TBC	Dr Sue Macky
12.45pm	<i>Lunch</i>	
1.30pm	A practical approach of early nutrition in calves – linking the science with the reality	Leanne Blakelock
2.30pm	Not all yeast is created equal - understanding yeasts and yeast-based products in ruminant nutrition	Dr Elliot Block
3.15pm	<i>Afternoon Tea</i>	
3.45pm	Effect of Trace Mineral Sources on Performance in Dairy Cows	Dr Jose Santos
4.45pm	Panel	Alun to Chair
5.15pm	<i>Finish and Close</i>	
7pm	Dinner – at your own expense at ***TBC***	

Bios

Elliot Block

Elliot Block is an animal nutritionist and physiologist whose 46-year career spans academia and industry. He was Professor of Animal Science at McGill University in Montreal from 1980 to 1999, where he also directed the Cattle Teaching and Research Complex and served as Associate Director of the McGill Nutrition and Food Science Centre in the Faculty of Medicine. He joined Arm & Hammer Animal Nutrition in 1999, becoming Research Fellow and Director of Technology, and led the company's global research and new product development across dairy, beef, poultry, swine, aquaculture and companion animals until his retirement in March 2026.

He is best known internationally for developing the dietary cation-anion difference (DCAD) concept and its practical application in transition cow nutrition, work that has become standard practice in dairy herds worldwide.

José Eduardo P. Santos

José E. P. Santos is a Research Foundation Professor in the Department of Animal Sciences at the University of Florida. He received his DVM degree from São Paulo State University (Brazil), completed the MS and PhD degrees at the University of Arizona, a clinical residency in Dairy Production Medicine at the University of California Davis, and a sabbatical at the University of Sydney (Australia). Before joining the University of Florida, José was a professor in the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of California Davis with clinical and research responsibilities.

José has been the major professor of 41 graduate students and he has hosted 12 post-doctorates and sabbatical visitors, and another 132 visiting students. He has published 316 manuscripts in the peer-reviewed scientific literature, 16 book chapters, and has given more than 450 presentations in technical and scientific meetings and received over \$17 million in research funds.

José is a Fellow of the American Association for Advancement of Science, Fellow of the American Dairy Science Association, and he has been awarded the Young Scientist Award, the Physiology Award, the Extension Award, and the Applied Dairy Nutrition Award all from the American Dairy Science Association, among other awards from the University of California Davis and the University of Florida.

José's research seeks to develop technologies that enhance efficiency of dairy production, in particular improvements in peripartum health and reproduction. The research is highly integrative, combining components of basic cellular biology, whole animal physiology, and applied interventions that are adopted by dairy producers worldwide.

Sue Macky

Arguably New Zealand's most experienced practical dairy cow nutritionist, Sue has worked for most of her life with dairy cows and dairy farmers throughout the world, both as a clinical veterinarian and as a consultant in the areas of dairy cow feeding, management and welfare. She has worked with farmers and presented at conferences and seminars in most parts of the world.

Moving from clinical practice to consultancy in the late 1980s, Sue was an early leader in developing transition cow programmes, and the application of 'cow comfort' principles to dairy cow facilities and management, being awarded the Alan Leslie Medal for services to NZ livestock production in the 1980s. In the 1990s, she returned to the US and Europe to further her studies in the management and feeding of high production cows, and to work for a major international nutritional group.

Sue has a profound understanding of the cow and passion for her work; she maintains a practical interest in dairy farming and genetics, owning dairy cows and grazing dairy replacements on her dry-stock farm. She has particular expertise in adapting the principles of Total Mixed Rations (TMR) to pasture-based systems, and is committed to helping her clients increase their farm's profitability by getting the basics right – heifer growth, cow condition and cow health. Sue believes in optimising cow performance without compromising cow welfare.

Rachel Durie

Rachel Durie is a Senior Consultant with Perrin Ag. Growing up on a dairy farm and now contract milking with her partner in the Waikato, she brings practical, on-farm experience to her advisory work. Rachel works with a wide range of farming businesses, from owner-operators to Māori agribusinesses, supporting both day-to-day operations and longer-term planning. Her work spans systems, people, and performance, alongside environmental and compliance support, with a focus on turning complex information into practical decisions.

More recently, Rachel has focused on the application of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), exploring how tools like ChatGPT can be practically used on farm to support decision-making, reduce workload, and lift performance.

LeAnne Blakelock

LeAnne Blakelock is a Taranaki dairy farmer, calf rearer and the creator of Calf Chronicles, an online platform focused on practical, science-informed calf rearing.

Each season, LeAnne applies a highly measured approach to early-life nutrition and calf management, using growth, health and farm performance data to test whether accepted practices are actually delivering the outcomes farmers expect. Her particular interest is in the first weeks of life, when decisions around colostrum, milk intake, feeding systems, hygiene and the transition to solid feed can have lasting consequences.

LeAnne's work sits at the intersection of research and everyday farming. She is interested not only in what the science says should work, but what happens when those recommendations meet real calves, real people, imperfect information and commercial farm constraints.

Her presentation will explore precision early nutrition in calves, the data emerging from the farm, common pitfalls, and the practical details that can determine whether a sound nutritional strategy succeeds or fails.