

● News ● Business

The EXAMINER  (1)

Search...

# Cows unable to eat bushfire-affected paddocks

By CAITLIN JARVIS

Feb. 19, 2016, 2:34 p.m.

Tweet



COWS on a dairy operation at Mawbanna are unable to eat the grass due to a thick blanket of ash that has covered paddocks due to the state's largest bushfire burning in the area.

Dairy farmer Tim Hofing said the thick ash that had coated the ground for the past week and a half has stopped the cows from being able to eat the growing pasture.

"They don't want to eat it, they don't like any foreign objects, just like we do," he said.

In addition, two of Mr Hofing's cow herd became sick from exposure to smoke.

"We had smoke here every day, all day, for a week and a half.

"From my place you can see all across Mawbanna but for that week and a half we couldn't see anything," he said.

Compounding an already tough season, Mr Hofing has had to delve into his usual winter supply of fodder, which means he won't have that in reserve as the months get colder.

"It's all extra cost, which we didn't really want, but you can't do anything, you don't want your cows to starve."

The Mawbanna fire is now larger than any of the other fires burning across the state.

It has burned through 63,000 hectares and has a perimeter of more than 361 kilometres.

Mr Hofing said the season had been the worst he'd seen in his more than 25 years as a dairy farmer and said the weather had been the worst he'd seen in his 40 years living in Mawbanna.

"From October last year to last Monday we had 71mm of rain, that is unheard of, we usually look at a 1200 to 1400mm season," Mr Hofing said.

And to make matters worse, the farmer has also had to deal with two outbreaks of armyworm in his paddocks, after having it sprayed earlier in the season.