

Berwick Leader

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 31, 2005

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Milko back in fashion



Betty Funston recalls the good old days of bottled milk.

Pictures: IAN COOK, N09BL322

Dimity Barber

DROUGHT-stricken farmers have revived the milkman in a bid to get people to buy Australian produce.

The traditional door-to-door service died out in the early 1980s when government regulations allowed supermarkets to price the milko out of the market.

But Aussie Farmers Direct is bringing it back to homes in Berwick and Narre Warren in a more modern guise.

Spokesman Graham Adams said refrigerated vans and portable coolers would replace the horse, cart and billy-can. And eggs, bread, orange juice and other local produce would be added to the home-delivery menu.

"Consumers often assume milk, bread and eggs are Australian-owned, but that's not the case," Mr Adams said. "Most companies have been bought out by overseas interests. We will be sourcing all our products directly from Victorian farmers."

"The money stays in Australia to help local farmers who have been through five tough years of drought. This is all about farmers cutting out the middle man."

The last Berwick milkman was Allan Funston, who worked for Sunny Brae Dairy. His widow, Betty, said he used to deliver the milk on a cart pulled by a chestnut mare called Queenie.

"There was no way to refrigerate milk back then, so Allan delivered twice a day," she said. "He ladled it straight from a large hand can into people's own billy-cans."

In 1948 Sunny Brae bought out rival Forbes and enjoyed a monopoly around Berwick. In 1951 the Funstons traded

Queenie for a green and white Vanguard ute to speed up delivery.

"Eventually we got the first electric delivery truck in Victoria," Mrs Funston said.

But things turned sour in the early 1980s.

"By then carton milk had become more popular and people began to buy their milk from the supermarket. It wasn't necessary to home deliver after that."

Mrs Funston, who still lives in Berwick, said the modern milkman would be popular with families.

But she said she wouldn't be signing up herself.

"I don't use a lot of milk these days and it's just as easy for me to nip down to the shops."

Contact Aussie Farmers Direct on 1300 363 105.



Graham Adams, above, delivers to Maree, Chloe and Ethan; Berwick milkman Allan Funston and son Adrian in 1952, below.



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