

Cream rises to the top at South Australian Dairy Awards as young farmer crowned



Mannum dairy farmer Narelle Zanker receiving her Young Farmer of the Year award from Opposition Primary Industries spokesperson Nicola Centofanti. Picture by Paula Thompson

Mannum producer Narelle Zanker has been named the Young Farmer of the Year for the dairy industry.

It was awarded at the 2025 [South Australian Dairy Awards Gala](#) held at Adelaide Oval on Friday night and hosted by the Dairy Industry Association of Australia's South Australian branch.

Set against the theme of "A Dairy Wonderland", the event brought together more than 300 farmers, processors and industry leaders for a night of celebration and recognition.

The awards recognise the best of South Australia's dairy industry, from innovative farming practices and sustainable leadership to strong processor relationships and the rising stars shaping the future.

[SA Dairyfarmer's Association](#) chief executive officer Andrew Curtis said the Young Farmer of the Year award celebrated rising stars in the sector.

"It recognises passion, dedication and leadership in the dairy industry's next generation," he said.

Mr Curtis said [Ms Zanker wore many hats](#), from herd health management to staff leadership, all while helping run her family's dairy farm in Mannum alongside her husband and parents.

Ms Zanker studied primary school teaching at university and worked as a teacher for four years, including teaching agriculture at Murray Bridge and in the Riverland.

In 2022, she returned home to work with her parents Geoff and Heather Simons.

Today, along with her husband Joel Zanker, she recently celebrated the first anniversary of Dairy Adventures, which offers an insight into their working dairy farm at Mannum.

Their interactive experiences include bottle-feeding calves, watching milking and hearing stories about farm life.

The agritourism initiative connects school groups, aged care residents and corporate visitors to the realities of dairy farming.

"Her passion for education has turned into something remarkable," Mr Curtis said.

With a background as an agriculture teacher, Ms Zanker ensures every visitor experience is safe, fun, and educational - helping to bridge the gap between paddock and plate, while inspiring future generations and building public appreciation for dairy.

"She has worked closely with industry and SADA to ensure the experiences are safe and biosecure," Mr Curtis said.

Ms Zanker said she loved sharing her passion for the dairy industry with the wider public.

By [Paula Thompson](#) | August 19 2025 | Stock Journal