

Govt wants Fonterra farmers to support DIRA reforms. **PAGE 4**

DAIRY NEWS



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PAGES 14-17

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APRIL 10, 2012 **ISSUE 266** // www.dairynews.co.nz



IN SEARCH OF MORE MILK

Fonterra eyes 30 farms, 1 billion litres of milk in China by 2018.

PAGE 3

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DAIRY NEWS

Big plans for China



Rain grows grass but dampens maize crop. **PG.07**



Getting your calves to play ball. **PG.31**



New dairy with all bells and whistles. **PG.37**

NEWS 3-17
OPINION 18-19
AGRIBUSINESS 20-22
MANAGEMENT 23-26
ANIMAL HEALTH 27-31
MATING MANAGEMENT 32-36
MACHINERY & PRODUCTS 37-41

SUDESH KISSUN

FONTERRA SAYS it plans to operate up to 30 Chinese farms by 2018, producing 1 billion litres of milk for consumer and food service products for the growing market.

The limited New Zealand milk supply is prompting a search for milk pools overseas to meet global demand.

The co-op, which this week opens its third Chinese farm in Yutian Province, will run some farms with partners, but will control the farms' management. It is also looking at processing milk with Chinese partners.

“We want to step up pace and invest in more Chinese farms.” - Theo Spierings

Fonterra chief executive Theo Spierings says the co-op is targeting China as part of a 'strategy refresh' and wants hubs of four to five farms in main provinces. The farms will be close to major cities.

“China is a continent and each region is basically a country,” he told *Dairy News*. “We have a reputation in China for producing safe and high quality milk. We'll use Chinese milk to build and grow consumer positions and deliver our food service potential.”

Spierings and Fonterra chairman Henry van der Heyden will be in Yutian on April 12 to open the 40ha farm. Fonterra's three Chinese farms produce 170m L of milk annually. Spierings wants milk production in China to grow to 500m L by 2015 and 1 billion L by 2018.

Spierings says by 2020 demand for dairy in China will grow 7% while its milk supply will grow by only 4%. While New Zealand sells 20% of its milk to China, demand will grow for more milk imports into China.

Spierings wants Fonterra to take a share of increased imports and local milk production in the country. “We want to step up the pace and invest in more Chinese farms.”

New Zealand milk will continue to be used for



Dreaming big... Fonterra wants 30 farms like this in China by 2018.

paediatric and nutrition products and infant formula for Chinese consumers. Fonterra also has a growing number of New Zealand customers exporting infant formula to China.

Fonterra has four business units in China: ingredients, food service, consumer and nutritional products. Spierings says a high quality milk supply will allow close integration with these business units.

“We see potential to significantly grow milk volumes outside of New Zealand by developing a high quality local milk supply and integrating it more closely with our business in China.”

“Our pilot dairy farms in China are producing some of the highest quality milk in the country and we are looking to accelerate the development of a quality milk supply in China and integrate that with our businesses there.”

TAPPING INTO GLOBAL MILK SUPPLY

FONTERRA SAYS it will maintain a strong milk supply position in Latin America.

The co-op's joint venture partner with Nestle – Dairy Partners Americas – collects 3 billion L of milk from Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Bermuda and Ecuador. DPA runs 13 factories in these countries.

Theo Spierings says it's a different model from the Chinese.

“We don't own farms but we ensure

quality milk is collected.”

In ASEAN markets the co-op will try to grow its brands business with milk collected from its farmer shareholders in New Zealand.

The co-op is wants to set up milk pools in India with partners.

In 2010 it agreed with Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative and Global Dairy Health to look at a pilot farm.

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DIRA rift develops

PETER BURKE

THE GOVERNMENT says Fonterra farmers are unreasonable in their demands on the DIRA Bill before Parliament.

Primary Industries Minister David Carter says Fonterra shareholders must remember the company was put into "a very privileged position" with the original legislation of 2001.

"The pricing of milk by Fonterra has ramifications right throughout our primary industries," he told *Dairy News*. "It is critical it gets that price as accurate as possible and therefore I see no reason why Fonterra would be concerned about a regime that delivers transparency."

Fonterra Shareholders Council

chairman Simon Couper described the bill as "the sort of the thing that New Zealand hasn't seen since the 1970s and that no one would risk investing in the industry with the level of intervention the bill contains." Fonterra shareholders are refusing to support the bill in its current form.

Carter is surprised by the council's reaction and says Couper has it all wrong.

"My office and MAF have spent a good deal of time explaining to Mr Couper what was in the legislation and his comments suggest he doesn't fully understand the legislation.

"The comments I've seen suggest he's particularly critical of the milk price oversight regime and yet I've seen Sir Henry [van der Heyden] as chair of Fonterra saying he can live with it."

This, he says, suggests Fonterra and the Shareholders Council have a different view of the DIRA Bill.

Carter says the differences within the industry make it more difficult for the minister responsible for the bill shepherding it through parliament.

Once the bill has had its first reading it will be referred to the primary production select committee which could report back by the middle of the year. It could pass into law later in the year.

Carter says he expects submissions to the select committee, but says while there may be some changes, he doesn't expect to see the overall thrust of the DIRA Bill changed. He also warned of a risk that if people "push too hard" on the bill it will not get the support of Parliament and will lapse. That could kill off the opportunity for TAF to take

place. But Carter says he's still confident of support to pass the legislation.

Simon Couper



BILL TO OVERSEE MILK PRICE

THE NEW bill details proposals to oversee Fonterra's farmgate milk price setting and ensure a more transparent and efficient dairy market.

It embeds Fonterra's current milk price governance amendments in legislation, requires the co-op to publicly disclose information on its milk price setting, and introduce an annual milk price monitoring regime under the Commerce Commission.

Because of Fonterra's dominance in the New Zealand market, the price it pays its farmers for milk at the farm gate effectively becomes the default price all dairy processors must pay to attract supply, says Primary Industries Minister David Carter.

"The bill will oversee how Fonterra sets the price it pays its farmers, thereby ensuring a competitive and innovative dairy industry."

Labour voices concern

THE LABOUR Party opposes the DIRA Bill, its spokesperson Damien O'Connor saying there are too many unanswered questions about the contents of the legislation.

O'Connor told *Dairy News* that given this, it was "inappropriate" for Labour to support the bill. Neither is the party impressed that the Fonterra Shareholders Council does not support the bill.

"We are wary of possible implications of the bill coupled with the fact that the Government is shortening up the time-frame for sub-

missions by two months which means they have to be in by June. This is an outrageous undermining of the parliamentary process."

O'Connor says Labour concerns over the bill include "that it effectively allows foreigners to own shares in Fonterra and the implications of this under a new structure. We have concerns about the ability of Fonterra to extend the percentage of units available without recourse to Parliament."

Given the nature of the DIRA Bill, O'Connor says it's important every farmer makes a submission.

"But the reality of the situation is that farmers are busy coming to the end of the season, and with the shortened time-frame the Government and Fonterra have effectively undermined the ability of many farmers to have their say."

It's odd that Fonterra and its Shareholders Council are on opposing sides over the DIRA Bill, he says. But the council is obliged to scrutinise all the actions and management of the board and company.

"This is a healthy tension and I'd be concerned if they agreed on everything," he says.

'Fish hooks need fixing'

FEDERATED FARMERS will represent farmers in the select committee process of the DIRA Bill, says dairy chairperson Willy Leferink.

Robust discussion will arise, "not a surprise, given it's arguably the most significant economic legislation to come before this Parliament," Leferink says.

"In many ways, we'll be discovering key information as the select committee process unfolds."

The bill's passage through Parliament has been fast-tracked to allow Fonterra to launch TAF (trading among farmers) later this year. Leferink refers to "big fishhooks we want to see resolved."

"Farmers like me voted for the principle of a shareholders fund, but that was two years ago and was based on a concept. We also

thought it was tied to the cooperative's constitution and not the DIRA itself.

"Federated Farmers strongly believes farmer-shareholders must have a clear understanding of the value proposition involved.

"Over the next few months, Federated Farmers will work hard in the time allotted to consult our members and prepare high quality submissions.

"We need to reiterate that farmer-shareholders are the real stakeholders here. Legislation must not lead Fonterra's capital restructure and its shareholders must be left to determine the process without interference," Leferink says.



Willy Leferink

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Putting our faith in TAF

I'VE SEEN a few milestones in dairy history and been privileged to be part of some. What I've learnt over the years is that given a choice – even a tough one – farmers will listen, argue, mull over the options and then make the choice they think is best for their cooperative.

While we've been accused of being a bit lead-footed, especially on the big decisions, history has shown we've invariably made the right call.

Which is why the rumblings over TAF (trading among farmers) are surprising. We've already agreed to it with a record turnout covering 80% of milksolids and turned in a 'yes' vote of 89.85%. That's the best I can recall during my years in industry politics.

We all know approval wasn't handed over lightly. It came after much debate and a clear message to Fonterra's board



COMMENT
JOHN STOREY

that ownership of the cooperative would never leave farmers' hands. Sure the board stumbled in 2007, but not for long.

They got the message. There is nothing in TAF today that puts ownership at risk for the sake of a stable capital structure. If there is, the due diligence process will find it. So we need to maintain the courage of our convictions. We said yes. Let's trust the board to get on with it.

There are plenty of examples of farmers making a tough call and trusting their leaders to make it happen. It's

"It's abundantly clear there is nothing on the table which would compromise farmer ownership of our cooperative."

hard to believe, for example, that just 16 years ago we had the New Zealand Dairy Board, with US\$1.2 billion in assets, not one percent of which was owned by farmers. Co-ops had put up all the money but ownership stayed with the Government.

I remember as chairman of New Zealand Dairy Group doing the rounds of farmer meetings and sessions with co-op chairs talking about the need for ownership of those assets to be transferred to the balance sheets of the 12 co-ops operating in New Zealand. Many were not convinced. The Dairy Board did a good job. Why did we need to change?

But farmers became convinced this was as

much about accountability and transparency as it was about ownership, so amending legislation was passed, with their support and just in the nick of time, with all the signs of the times pointing to the board losing statutory support. In short, deregulation was on the cards.

Once again, I saw farmers making tough but brave calls. The 12 co-ops began consolidating, farmers voting for mergers with an 'industry good' attitude. Where past mergers had been all about the money, these were all about the industry getting in shape for ultimate deregulation.

Of course the biggest, bravest call was the vote to form Fonterra – and

what a long road it was to that place. It's hard to believe we looked at no fewer than 32 different options for a dairy industry structure to take us beyond deregulation.

Even then we recognised capital structure was a weakness. We knew it wasn't sustainable to have redemption risk and to have money flowing in and out of the balance sheet as farmers shared up or cashed up. But to be honest, we set aside the problem of permanent capital in favour of getting Fonterra formed. But we knew it would never go away.

After considering 32 options for the industry's future structure (who would have known we could find so many?) the industry determined that the single integrated company looked the best. I read endless articles by commentators who doubted the indus-

try would ever make the change – especially as the merger discussions to create one company looked more like two parties arguing over a hostile takeover. Well, we proved them wrong.

Once again, farmers were smart enough to put aside old co-op rivalries and take the brave step to an historic merger which saw Fonterra's creation and ushered in deregulation. Just as importantly, they were smart enough to put their faith in co-op democracy.

In all my years in the industry, including those as a director and chairman, I have never met a director hell-bent on doing the worst for the cooperative. No farmer would vote in such a director for a start, or ratify the appointment of an external director with Machiavellian tendencies. Nor have I met a director who didn't underestimate

the need to retain farmer trust.

Boards are created through democratic processes by farmers who put their faith in those directors. Proposals such as TAF, taken by those boards to farmers, also rise and fall by democratic process. Farmers say 'yes' or they say 'no'. As we saw in 2007 when the first round of capital structure discussion took place, the 'no' can be resounding. But with TAF 89.95% said a resounding 'yes'.

It's abundantly clear there is nothing on the table which would compromise farmer ownership of our cooperative. We've shown our faith in TAF, just as we showed it countless times before in the industry. Now it's time to put our trust in the board to get on with it.

• John Storey is former chairman of New Zealand Dairy Group. He lives in Te Awamutu.

Share trading a step closer

FONTERRA HAS welcomed the introduction of the Dairy Industry Restructuring Amendment Bill that will help pave the way for the introduction of Trading Among Farmers (TAF).

The DIRA Bill contains proposed legislative changes necessary for the launch of TAF.

Fonterra chairman Henry van der Heyden says some technical changes sought by the co-op had been made.

"It's nearly there – but there are some further refinements we will discuss with the Government and other

party members during the select committee process. We want to ensure the law changes allow TAF to operate effectively after its scheduled November 2012 launch."

But the Fonterra board and Shareholder Council still have to complete their due diligence process and ensure the pre-conditions on which farmers voted can all be met – including 100% farmer control and ownership.

The Amendment Bill also provides for the Commerce Commission to review and report on Fonterra's farm

gate milk price setting.

Van der Heyden says the co-op will always set the milk price. "We have said right from the start we don't think this proposed oversight is necessary, but we can live with it.

"Fonterra supports transparency of our farmgate milk price and we have made public our farmgate milk price manual and more detailed analysis every year in our milk price statement."

The Government has confirmed potential changes to the raw milk regulations are still being considered and

an announcement on these is expected shortly.

"It's been a good process and the Government has given the co-op and our farmers ample opportunity to make our position clear, particularly on the raw milk regulations," says van der Heyden.



Henry van der Heyden



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Rain grows grass, hits maize harvest

PETER BURKE

DESPITE THE bumper season, some dairy farmers may be heading into winter with a feed deficit, says DairyNZ farm systems specialist Chris Glassey.

Though rain has produced great grass growth, continuing wet weather has severely affected supplement crops such as maize silage, he says. The main problem with maize is a slow 'dry down'. To harvest maize the threshold is 30% dry matter or higher.

"The dry matter percentage is increasing but

through to spring. Planting grass after mid-April does not produce good results. While the grass may establish, farmers would be severely compromised on any yield from the new pasture."

Along with wet weather, maize silage crops in Northland and Taranaki have been hit by floods and wind, respectively.

In Taranaki wind has wiped out some crops and badly damaged others, leaving yields well down. This means some supplements will have to be moved around the regions to make up for deficits, Glassey says.

Along with wet weather, maize silage crops in Northland and Taranaki have been hit by floods and wind, respectively.

the process is slower than normal. As well, if there is lower dry matter content there is also a lower nutritive value in the maize silage. There is more water in the crop and the overall yield is lower."

Glassey says the problem of a late maize harvest is the difficulty of getting maize paddocks planted back in grass, of particular concern to farmers whose maize paddocks are part of their milking platform.

"If that's the case, this may impact feed supplies

Many farmers have lots of pasture silage and there's no shortage of this nationwide. Some have taken four cuts and many have 100% more pasture silage stored than in past seasons. This will help make up for lower yields of maize silage, but it's not all good news.

"Though we had a lot of surplus grass conserved into silage, in some cases there are question marks about the quality. When there's a lot of rain there have been delays in get-

ting that silage harvested and those delays tend to reduce the quality.... Some of it may not be as good for producing milk as they think."

Think about acquir-

ing alternative feeds such as PKE while prices are still reasonable, Glassey advises. But he notes that in the past month prices for PKE have risen by up to 7%.



Good grass growth has boosted pasture silage production but maize crop is under strain from excessive rain.



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CONTRACTORS FEEL THE PINCH

RURAL CONTRACTORS say they are about three weeks behind schedule in harvesting due to the weather.

Rural Contractors Association president John Hughes says the delays are "doing a lot of guys heads in" as they try get the crops harvested.

Hughes agrees with Glassey the moisture content is a big problem and yields and quality will be down on some farms.

Autumn's early arrival is compounding the problem. "There is simply not enough daylight to get all the work done," he says.

Hughes says he's never experienced a season like this one. He says in Southland where he lives, autumn conditions have prevailed there for a month. And though he's confident all crops will be harvested, question marks hang over yield and quality.



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Amy Adams, new Environment Minister.

Water, RMA reform big tasks for new minister

PETER BURKE

THE NEW Environment Minister Amy Adams believes water will be her new portfolio's biggest

single issue – one on which both sides in the water debate must retreat from extreme positions on how water is used.

Adams was appointed last week by Prime Min-

ster John Key following the resignation of the former minister, Nick Smith.

She says she is focused on our need to use natural resources and take advan-

tage of the fact New Zealand has a great wealth of fresh water.

“We shouldn’t be shy about making good use of that and taking advantage of it. Having said that, it’s not an open ticket do whatever we like without thought for the consequences,” she told *Dairy News*.

“But I also believe people shouldn’t be afraid of the debate about using more water and irrigating more land and getting more productivity from it.”

The 40-year-old lawyer and mother of two children farms in partnership with husband Don at Aylesbury, mid-Canterbury. They run a 242ha sheep and cropping operation.

Adams, originally from Auckland, graduated in law from Canterbury University. She was a partner in the law firm Mortlock McCormick before becoming an MP.

In the cabinet reshuffle she retains her communications and information technology portfolio but relinquishes internal affairs to Chris Tremain. Tim Groser will handle climate change issues.

Adams says she is excited to be dealing with some of the biggest and most important issues

facing the country. Her immediate focus will be to see a bill on New Zealand’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) pass through Parliament, and less immediately she will deal with a report from the Land and Water Forum, due shortly, and reforms of the Resource Management Act (RMA).

The RMA is topical for farmers and the wider community, she says. The RMA framework has commendable goals but frustrates people by the complexity and cost of getting a decision, notwithstanding the decision may be acceptable.

“We [need to] significantly decrease the time and cost of going through the process without taking away from the robustness and appropriateness of decisions. It’s easy to say ‘reform the RMA’, but it is hard to do. Some will see that as an invasion of their rights to be heard. It needs a fine balance.”

Being both a lawyer and farmer will give her an advantage, she says, though she concedes some people will see this as a negative. She hopes to give people the message farmers are the ‘original environmentalists’ who have looked after their land for centuries so future generations can farm.



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Carter given big workload

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES Minister David Carter’s workload has got bigger in the cabinet reshuffle caused by Nick Smith’s resignation.

As the new Local Government Minister, Carter faces the challenge of seeing through the reforms recently approved by cabinet. He will work with the local government sector to get legislation into Parliament promptly to effect “substantial changes to the purpose, governance and the ability of councils to streamline their activities.”

“Farmers argue to me that they pay rates that don’t in any way equate to the services delivered by their local councils. I agree with that and think reforms can bring significant benefits to rural areas,” he says.

Carter favours communities having greater say in determining the best form of local and regional government, hinting as Smith did a few weeks ago that more unitary authorities may pop up.

Carter will co-labour with the new Environment Minister, Amy Adams. He lives in her electorate, Selwyn, and has known her since she entered politics in 2008. Synergies abound in the primary industries, local government and environment portfolios on which the two will work.



'Aim for high value market'

ANDREW SWALLOW

NEW ZEALAND'S dairy industry needs to build on its first-mover advantage in China and elsewhere by adding more value, says a leading economist.

"We're going to have to protect our market position by repitching our product; we've got to play in the high price bracket," ANZ's Cameron Bagrie told *Dairy News* after speaking at the Irrigation New Zealand conference last week.

Bagrie presented five options for New Zealand to address what he says is an excessive net debt

at 72% of GDP.

"That's how much we owe as a nation... We're still running a current account deficit of 4% of GDP so we're still heading further into the red. It's a structural noose," he told the 420 delegates.

He warned it's "going to take a long, long time to address" and unless dealt with, we can kiss good-bye to our farms and other assets.

"If we continue to run a current account deficit of 4% of GDP the farms are going to go. We either have to borrow more money or sell off assets. That's it."

The good news is New Zealand's wealth of natu-

"If we continue to run a current account deficit of 4% of GDP the farms are going to go. We either have to borrow more money or sell off assets. That's it." - Cameron Bagrie

ral resource capital, the highest in the world outside of the oil producing nations.

"Australia is the lucky country, but not as lucky as we are. They've got \$39,000 of natural capital per capita to our \$52,000. It's a pretty sizeable gap."

New Zealand does even better in renewable resources, he points out.

"In a world of increasing pressure on resources,

being strong in the renewable capital list is where you want to be. That alone isn't going to guarantee success... but it does give a good head start."

What's needed is a period of what he labelled "grumpy growth."

"We're at the hard yards stage... This is the most important period in



Cameron Bagrie

New Zealand's economic history for probably 50 years."

Bagrie reckons there's

a 10-year opportunity to turn things around. "If we don't get it sorted while the demographics are favourable, then we're toast."

Free trade agreements have laid the foundation to build on our renewable resource advantage.

"We have FTA's in place with 29% of the world's population and under negotiation with another 26-27%. That's a statistic I don't think any other country in the world is close to."

But New Zealand hasn't a hope of feeding 55% of the world and with countries such as Belarus start-

ing to compete in bulk milk powder exports, "where we need to aim is the high value end."

Doing so will help address the one OECD lifestyle ranking where New Zealand scores badly - income per capita. "If we don't have the income to support the feel good stuff, then ultimately we're on borrowed time."

• More stories from the Irrigation NZ Conference in next week's Rural News.

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GOOD MIX OF ATTENDEES

DAIRY FARMERS were few among the conference's 420 delegates, but one who attended was John Wright, Fairlie.

He has three pivots and three rotor-rainers on his 1900-cow unit, the pivots all having variable rate applicators tuned to soil-type following electro-magnetic mapping of paddocks by Landcare.

"I'm here because I'm interested in irrigation!" he told *Dairy News*.

"We've got plenty of water in New Zealand but we've got to use it wisely. We're still talking about the same things we were at the last conference [two years ago] and the conference before that. It takes a long time to get the wheels moving."

David Hislop, Hawarden, sensed a change in attitude towards irrigation, judging by the number of service providers present and tone of the conference.

"There aren't a lot of actual irrigators here: plenty of service providers and people who want



David Hislop

to get involved with irrigation but not so many farmers."

Hislop's 1050-cow, 500ha self-contained operation is fully irrigated with pivots and laterals. Talk of nutrient limits

at the conference was "a bit of a worry."

"What are the limits and where's the science going to come from. We've got to make sure there's good science behind it because we don't want to be hamstrung."

The conference was a good opportunity to network with people, particularly on the equipment side, he added.

Irrigation New Zealand chief executive Andrew Curtis said he was "very pleased" with the 420 attendance, "especially considering what's happened at some of the other conferences." "Coming to Timaru was a risk, because it's just that little bit more difficult to get to, but it's been really great."

He didn't have a breakdown of delegates but said there was "a good mix of scheme operators, leading farmers, industry people and regulatory types."

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*Applies to genuine retail prices locally displayed or quoted on same stocked items. Requires proof of price displayed or quoted that is no more than 7 days old. Offer excludes products and services provided on behalf of third parties.

Landcorp profit soars

LANDCORP FARMING made a net profit of \$11 million in the six months to December 31, 2011, and expects to reach at least \$20 million for the full year.

Favourable weather and buoyant prices contributed to the result, up from \$3.2m in the same period in 2010.

The state farmer's dairy revenue was up 2.5% to \$53m on 5% growth of milk production.

But chairman Jim Sutton says the outlook is clouded by uncertainties in the global economy and demand for commodities, including milk, meat and wool.

"New Zealand's agricultural production has particular exposure to consumer demand levels in Europe, where issues of debt and financial stability have yet to be resolved."

Current conditions give a sound

basis for the company to prepare for uncertainties, Sutton says. "We will continue to look past year-to-year fluctuations in climatic conditions, product pricing and exchange rates. We will own, manage, invest and produce with a medium and longer term view."

In the reported half year Landcorp's farm product revenues increased 14% to \$104 million compared with the same period in 2010.

Livestock revenues were up 27% and meat prices were at historically strong levels, the company says. Dairy herds entered the season in excellent condition and grass growth remained favorable in most regions.

Total expenses for the half year rose to \$87m (2010-11: \$80.5m). Cost pressures remain high, particularly on fertiliser, fuel and other basic inputs.



Brendon Stent talks about the 2004 floods at Moutoa Farms last month.

Bumper year for SOE's dairies

SUDESH KISSUN

LIKE MOST dairy farmers, state-owned Landcorp is also on track for bumper production this season. The SOE expects to produce 13 million kgMS in 2011-12 on its 43 farms.

Landcorp senior farm business manager Mark Julian last month told a field day at its Moutoa Farms, Manawatu, that it's been a fantastic season.

Apart from its one 4500-cow West Coast farm, which endured a tough winter and spring, all farms were benefiting from good grass growth.

"It's been a great year and our farms are doing well," he says.

Landcorp, which also runs large sheep and beef farms, has been increasing its dairying portfolio. Ten years ago, it was producing 6mkgMS. Dairying now contributes 50% of EBIT while making up only 30% of assets. "It's a cash cow for Landcorp," Julian says.

Moutoa's nine farms are among Landcorp's best performing dairy units. The farms will produce 1.9mkgMS this season at an average of 404kgMS/cow.

Moutoa was badly affected during Manawatu's major floods in 2004. 4500 cows were then being milked at Moutoa but after the floods only 300 winter milkers remained.

The other cows belonging to sharemilkers on each farm were mixed and distributed around the country. The last of the cows did not return until 12 months later.

Faced with potential income losses, the individual sharemilkers pooled their resources to form a company granted an eight-year milking contract at Moutoa by Landcorp.

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New rule will bring 'poverty'

PAM TIPA

SOME SOUTHLAND farmers will be "condemned to poverty" because of dairy conversions now requiring resource consent, says Southland's Federated Farmers vice-president Russell McPherson.

Conversions will become a lot harder, he says, with some farms with the wrong type of soil being turned down under the new interim rule from Environment Southland which takes effect on April 14.

Some farmers may miss out on the opportunity to realise the full value of their land, he says, affecting the tradition of intergenerational farming in Southland.

He also believes it may bring a new era of intervention and, although existing dairy farms do not have to apply for resource consent, he fears it will "spill over" to when those farms need to apply for new consents.

McPherson leads a group of 90 farmers who last week attended the Environment Southland meeting that approved the new transitional policy.

Farmers planning dairy conversions will need to apply for resource con-

sent including providing a farm management plan, with soil assessment, a nutrient management plan and a winter grazing plan. The council says it will have the scope to decline consent if the risk to the environment is too great.

McPherson claims some aspects of the new rule are "great for dairy farmers who have already converted".

"They have already got the land with consents," he told *Dairy News*. "We are already at the pinnacle of land use. We are generating the most income anyone can..."

"What the Federation is saying - dairy farmers have grasped this - is that it's the people who haven't got the consent to milk or convert their farm who are going to miss out.

"For some reason sheep farmers have not woken up that this policy is going to affect sheep farmers and non-dairy farmers more harshly than dairy farmers."

He says sheep farmers who want to convert but do not get consent will miss

out collectively on "millions" in capital gain, affecting retirement and the ability to pass on the farm to the next generation.

"Science is showing us that farmers are doing a very good job and our water quality is actually improving," McPherson says

"In the last 10 years we have doubled our cow numbers yet our water quality is improving. Why, then, would you as a council want to steal from farmers their property rights?"

"Basically the council wants to control people.... They think they know better."

Dairy farmers must deal with Environment Southland on a regular basis and fear "this interim process will splash over into renewing consents."

He says Fish and Game and DOC will have to get involved and farmers will have to "horse trade" to get consents.

Environment Southland chairman Ali Timms said the new rule will provide a valuable tool for anyone wanting to convert a property to establish the level of risk involved and its possible impact on the environment. "It's all about due diligence which is an important part of any land use change on a property."



Russell McPherson

Feds executives split

A STOUGH has erupted in Southland's Federated Farmers executive over the president breaking ranks to speak in favour of the Environment Southland interim transitional rule requiring dairy conversions to gain resource consent.

Vice-president Russell McPherson says the executive is "looking at all options" after president Hugh Gardyne, he claims, broke an agreement he made with them to speak to the council meeting last week as an individual rather than as the Federated Farmers president.

McPherson claims Gardyne was introduced as an individual but signed a statement he gave to the councillors as Southland president, Federated Farmers.

But Gardyne says there were two drafts, one with his name and his Federated Farmers' title and another just with his name. He said he made it clear to the meeting that McPherson was the spokesman for Federated Farmers on this issue and that

he (Gardyne) was speaking as an individual.

"I took that unilateral action, it was a conscience thing, I did it on principle ... and we are just working through issues now," Gardyne says.

But McPherson says though Gardyne had a right to voice his opinion as an individual, he (McPherson) believed he had used his title breaking "all protocol and rules and we are really disappointed". They were looking at what action would be taken over this "breaking of unity of purpose".

But Gardyne says the executive was arguing about that "when the issue is actually the interim policy and the guts of it about wintering cows and inappropriate nutrient use".

Gardyne says as president he had left the dairy section people to look after the issue and "they failed me".

"I don't think the Feds executive appreciated that this policy was coming in."

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Dairymen are 'playing ball' with effluent

THE NEW dairy effluent code has been universally accepted by the dairy industry, says DairyNZ project manager dairy effluent, Dr Theresa Wilson.

She disputes a *Dairy News* report last month that councils, farmers and effluent service industry are not respecting – or are refusing to ‘play ball’ with – the farm dairy effluent (FDE) Design Standards and Code.

“DairyNZ has been heartened by the positive response to the initiative shown by the dairy industry and effluent service industry to establish the standard and back it with training and an accreditation programme,” says Wilson.

The standards and code of practice have formed the basis of the new effluent system design industry training course run by Fertiliser and Lime Research Centre at Massey University.

They also underpin the accred-

“Regulation is not the only way of getting people to design systems by the code to meet the standards.”

itation scheme launched in February under which accredited companies – so far Waterforce, AgFirst, Hi-Tech Enviro Solutions, Opus International and Environmental Technologies – sign a declaration they will design to meet the code and standard.

Wilson is playing down calls for the code and standards to be enforced in legislation.

“Regulation is not the only way of getting people to design systems by the code to meet the standards. Farmers must be convinced first of the value of this process rather than be forced into it.

“We believe the standard and code are strong enough to stand on their merits, given the feedback

we’ve had from farmers since their launch. Voluntary uptake is working.”

DairyNZ has held 40 field days attended by 2000 farmers and industry providers.

Regional council staff helped develop the standards and code and say they support the nationwide approach taken with the code and accreditation, says Wilson.

“Far from being a code of disrespect those involved in driving the code... are being seen in a better light for raising standards within the industry.”



Theresa Wilson

“It is inaccurate to paint a scenario of the typical dairy farmer refusing to pay for a system that meets the code and standard. Farmers are realising the benefits of [the] system.... They speak to us at length at field days and expos.”

IN BRIEF

Henry planning busy life

FONTERRA OUTGOING chairman Henry van der Heyden is securing directorships as he prepares to leave the co-op board late 2012 after eight years as chair.

Van der Heyden has been appointed a director of Tainui Group Holdings, replacing chairman John Spencer who steps down on June 30.

Rabobank announced last week van der Heyden was joining its Australia and New Zealand boards, saying he is among New Zealand's most respected and experienced business leaders – passionate about food and agriculture which are at the core of Rabobank's agri banking operations here.

Tainui Group says it can lean on van der Heyden for his considerable experience.

He is on the boards of Auckland International Airport, Rabobank, Elevation Capital Management, Pascaro Investments and Manuka.

Fertiliser, nutrition role

BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS has appointed Willie Thomson as general manager group sales and strategy, responsible for Ballance and Altum brands and customer services. He retains responsibility for strategy development.

Thomson succeeds Graeme Smith, general manager sales and marketing, who on May 1 becomes chief executive of animal nutrient maker SealesWinslow.

Ballance chief executive Larry Bilodeau says Thomson's background in the industry and leadership in Altum make him a natural in the role.

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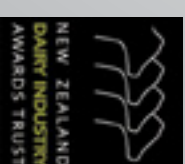
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First equity farm manager winner

THE 2012 West Coast Top of the South Dairy Industry Awards has produced the first equity farm managers to win one of the country's regional competitions.

The region's premier Sharemilker/Equity Farmer of the Year title went to Paul and Debra

Magner, who say it is an advantage to have access to owners with a broad range of knowledge and skills.

The West Coast Top of the South Farm Manager of the Year, James Deans, and Dairy Trainee of the Year, Michael Shearer, were also announced at an

awards dinner at Shantytown, Greymouth.

The Magners have been equity managers eight years for Cranley Farms, chaired by former Westland Milk Products chairman Ian Robb. The property is 574ha and milks 1470 cows.

The couple won

\$14,000 in cash and prizes. They are the oldest winners, experienced in geology, rural banking and farm consulting before dairying. They worked for one year on wages before entering the equity partnership.

"A strength for us is being able to grow the

business by land development. This has enabled us to grow our equity at a faster rate than an established farm."

Their goal is to increase their equity position to be majority shareholders and to maximise the production and potential of the developing farm.

Magners entered the dairy awards for the first time to learn and for the challenge. "We thought it would be good to enter as part of a process to review the business, as we had reached the end of a development phase."

The runner-up in the West Coast Top of the South Sharemilker/Equity Farmer of the Year contest was Nelson equity farm managers Steve and Kerry Semmens, who won \$8100 in cash and prizes.

The Dairy Industry Awards are sponsored by Westpac, DairyNZ, Ecolab,



Paul and Debra Magner.

Federated Farmers, Fonterra, Honda Motorcycles NZ, LIC, Meridian Energy, Ravensdown, RD1 and AgITO.

Dobson contract milker James Deans won the 2012 West Coast Top of the South Farm Manager of the Year contest, collecting \$8950 in cash and prizes. It was his first time in the contest. "This is my second year contract milking and I was looking for constructive criticism about my farming skills."

Aged 27, he has been in the industry 10 years, progressing from farmhand to his current position. He aims to own stock and land within five to 10 years.

"My strengths are in pasture management and communication with my farm owner. I believe good residuals and good pasture are essential to great production, and that you need trust and confidence in the farm owner and in each other's capabilities."

SHAREMILKER/EQUITY FARMER MERIT AWARDS:

- Seales Winslow Limited Pride and Presentation Award – Peter & Paula Simons.
- DairyNZ Human Resources Award – Paul & Debra Magner.
- Ecolab Farm Dairy Hygiene Award – Glen & Gemma Harris.
- Federated Farmers of New Zealand Leadership Award – Steve & Kerry Semmens.
- Honda Farm Safety and Health Award – Glen & Gemma Harris.
- LIC Recording and Productivity Award – Steve & Kerry Semmens.
- Meridian Energy Farm Environment Award – Tom & Abby Murton.

- Ravensdown Pasture Performance Award – Steve & Kerry Semmens.
- Westpac Business Performance Award – Paul & Debra Magner.

FARM MANAGER MERIT AWARDS:

- Gordon Handy Limited Pride and Presentation Award – Nathan Keoghan.
- DairyNZ Human Resource Management Award – James Deans.
- RD1 Farm Management Award – James Deans.
- Westpac Financial Planning and Management Award – Hayden George.

DAIRY TRAINEE MERIT AWARD:

- AgITO Farming Knowledge Merit Award – Rochelle Roberts.



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Great teamwork helps farms clinch regional honours

MUCH LIKE the region's Crusaders, the big winners in last night's 2012 Canterbury North Otago Dairy Industry Awards have built strong teams to achieve goals and succeed.

The Canterbury North Otago Sharemilker/Equity Farmers of the Year, Enda and Sarah Hawe, Farm Manager of the Year, Mick O'Connor, and Dairy Trainee of the Year, Nathan Christian, were announced at an awards dinner at Hotel Ashburton.

Enda and Sarah Hawe say their main asset is the team surrounding them. "Our personal and business relationship with our staff and farm owners makes focusing on excellent performance a reality. We make sure we catch up with each other outside of farming circles also."



Mick O'Connor

Mick O'Connor says his strong team takes a sense of pride in the farm. "As a team, we have put massive amounts of work into getting the farm to a presentable level and this is a strength from which we take great heart, knowing every staff member feels a sense of pride in the farm."

The Ashburton farms owned by Richard and Jan Johnson and Ben and Shannon Johnson are also celebrating, as the Hawes and Nathan Christian are sharemilking and assisting on their farms.

The Hawes won

\$19,000 in cash and prizes. They lower-order share-milk 1400 cows on 370ha for the Johnsons. They have a 50% sharemilking position for the new season beginning June 1.

"This new position will help us achieve our goal of owning a farm in Canterbury milking 500 cows within 10 years."

It was the third time the couple had entered the awards – seen as a great way to obtain free business advice "and to benchmark with the best dairy farmers in Canterbury and North Otago."

The runners-up in the sharemilker/equity farmer contest were Hayden and Robyn Williams. The 50% Oamaru sharemilkers won \$8000 in cash and prizes. Third place went to Waiau equity farm managers James and Belinda

McCone, who won \$5700 in prizes.

It was the first time Canterbury North Otago Farm Manager of the Year, Mick O'Connor, had entered the awards. "I entered to gain more knowledge and improve our business whilst pushing ourselves outside our comfort zone."

O'Connor (31) is contract milking 840 cows on 255ha at Rakaia for Dairy Holdings. He won \$9950 in cash and prizes. He has been in the industry 10 years and his passion for the industry is reflected in his personal and financial business goals. His short term goal is to achieve budget and be the top financially productive farm per hectare within Dairy Holdings. Longer term goals are to grow his asset base and go 50%

sharemilking.

Rakaia farm manager Athol New was second in the region's farm manager contest winning \$5125. Third place went to Ashburton farm managers Jason and Paula Strawbridge and they won \$3125.

After three years at Lincoln University to gain his Bachelor of Commerce in Agriculture, 2012 Canterbury North Otago Dairy Trainee of the Year, Nathan Christian (22) wants to progress his dairy career. He works as an assistant on an 800-cow 224ha farm owned by the Johnsons. His prize was



Enda and Sarah Hawe.

\$6100 in cash and prizes. He competed in this year's Coast to Coast multisport event

"I see entering the dairy awards as a great opportunity to mix with future leaders of the industry and

to network."

Christian is keen short term to manage a large scale farm then progress into sharemilking. "Longer term my goal is a significant share in a farm by age 30."

SHAREMILKER/EQUITY FARMER MERIT AWARDS:

- NZDIA Canterbury North Otago First Time Entrant Award – Koji & Joei Wada.
- Plucks Engineering Ltd Effluent Management Award – Enda & Sarah Hawe.
- Riverside Veterinary Services Ltd Animal Health Award – Earl & Melissa McSweeney.
- DairyNZ Human Resources Award – James & Belinda McCone.
- Ecolab Farm Dairy Hygiene Award – Boyd & Annette Slemint.
- Federated Farmers of New Zealand Leadership Award – Earl and Melissa McSweeney.
- Honda Farm Safety and Health Award – James & Belinda McCone.
- LIC Recording and Productivity Award – Enda & Sarah Hawe.
- Meridian Energy Farm Environment Award

– Enda & Sarah Hawe.

- Ravensdown Pasture Performance Award – Enda & Sarah Hawe.
- Westpac Business Performance Award – Hayden & Robyn Williams.

FARM MANAGER MERIT AWARDS:

- TH Enterprises Ltd Outstanding Progression Award – Robert Holt & Stephanie MacFarlane.
- NZDIA Canterbury North Otago Pride & Presentation Award – Mick O'Connor.
- DairyNZ Human Resource Management Award – Mick O'Connor.
- RD1 Farm Management Award – Athol New.
- Westpac Financial Planning and Management Award – Jason & Paula Strawbridge.

DAIRY TRAINEE MERIT AWARD:

- AgITO Farming Knowledge Merit Award – Nathan Christian.

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Pursuant to section 4 of the Commodity Levies Act 1990 and section 13 of the Commodity Levies (Milk Solids) Order 2009, and following a resolution of the board of DairyNZ Incorporated made pursuant to its rules, I hereby notify that the annual milk solids levy remains at 3.6c/kg milk solids plus GST. This notice of the levy applies for the 2012/2013 dairy year from 1 June 2012 to 31 May 2013.

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Otago judges give winning advice

ENTERING THE Otago Dairy Industry Awards three times has set James and Helen Hartshorne on a pathway to success – with the couple claiming the region's top prize, the 2012 Otago Sharemilker/Equity Farmer of the Year.

“The judging feedback showed us that although we were competent at run-

ning the practical side of our farm, we would gain huge benefit from a better understanding of and an ability to analyse the financial and business side of our operation,” the Hartshornes said.

“And as a result of contacts made through our judging panels we secured our first 50:50 sharemil-



James Hartshorne



Gareth Dawson

ing job.” The couple won \$16,600 in cash and prizes at the awards held at Balclutha Memorial Hall. The 2012 Otago Farm Managers of the Year, Gareth and Angela Dawson, and 2012 Otago Dairy Trainee of the Year, Richard Lang, were also announced.

James and Helen Hartshorne are in their

SHAREMILKER/EQUITY FARMER MERIT AWARDS:

- Shand Thomson Encouragement Award – Todd McCammon and Holly Rolston.
- Clutha Vets Animal Husbandry Award – Robert and Fleur Scurr.
- DairyNZ Human Resources Award – Peter and Christine Johnstone.
- Ecolab Farm Dairy Hygiene Award – Shaun Thomas.
- Federated Farmers of New Zealand Leadership Award – Shaun Thomas.
- Honda Farm Safety and Health Award – James and Helen Hartshorne.
- LIC Recording and Productivity Award – Robert and Fleur Scurr.
- Meridian Energy Farm Environment Award – James and Helen Hartshorne.
- Ravensdown Pasture Performance Award – James and Helen Hartshorne.
- Westpac Business Performance Award – James and Helen Hartshorne.

FARM MANAGER MERIT AWARDS:

- Galloway Cook Allan Encouragement Award – Thomas Hewitt.
- Crombie Lockwood Best First Time Entrant Award – Anthony Bishell.
- DairyNZ Human Resource Management Award – Gareth & Angela Dawson.
- RDI Farm Management Award – Gareth & Angela Dawson.
- Westpac Financial Planning and Management Award – Gareth & Angela Dawson.

DAIRY TRAINEE MERIT AWARD:

- AglTO Farming Knowledge Merit Award – Tanya Shailer

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third season 50% sharemilking 540 cows for Hennie Amtink on 175ha at Tapanui.

“We are both from the United Kingdom where we studied agriculture. We travelled to New Zealand in 2000 and, other than holidays, have never left. We know if we had stayed in the UK we would never have had opportunity to achieve our goal of owning cows and running our own farming business. This drives us to continue doing the best we can.

“We also believe that the fact farming is a career for both of us means we can be 100% support for each other both practically on the farm and at home.”

Balclutha 50% sharemilker Shaun Thomas placed second in the sharemilker/equity farmer contest, winning \$8250 in prizes. Third place went to Tapanui 50% sharemilkers Peter and Christine Johnstone, who won \$4130 in prizes.

Clinton farm managers Gareth and Angela Dawson claimed the 2012 Otago Farm Manager of the Year title, winning \$11,000 in cash and prizes. The couple, runners-up last year, manage a 560-cow 186ha property owned by Ian Roy.

They say their business strengths are good pro-

cedures and diversity of work. “Our farming goal is to progress through the industry and one day become farm owners.”

The Dawsons entered the awards for a second time to network, raise their profile and analyse their achievements.

Tapanui farm manager Anthony Bishell was second in the farm manager contest, winning \$4700 in prizes. He won the region's dairy trainee title in 2009.

The 2012 Otago Dairy Trainee of the Year, Richard Lang, is working in good company. Lang, aged (28) is an assistant on the 600-cow Stirling farm run by former Otago and New Zealand dairy trainee winner Blake Korteweg.

He won \$6000 in cash and prizes and is in his first season in the dairy industry after eight years shepherding on sheep and cattle farms. “I entered to meet people in the industry, build confidence and to get my name out there for opportunities.”

His goals include progressing to 50% sharemilking within seven years.

Tapanui herd manager Thomas Jaeger (27) placed second in the dairy trainee contest, winning \$725 in prizes, and Clinton herd manager Ben Sanders (24) was third winning \$400.

Move to Southland pays dividends

THE BIG winners at the 2012 Southland Dairy Industry Awards are newcomers to the province, who share common interests and business strengths.

Winton 50% sharemilkers Billy and Sharn Roskam won the Southland Sharemilker/Equity Farmer of the Year title and Edendale contract milkers Hannes and Lyzanne du Plessis won the Southland Farm Manager of the Year contest.

The 2012 Southland Dairy Industry Awards were held at Ascot Park Hotel in Invercargill. The other major winner was Robert Ankerson who won the 2012 Southland Dairy Trainee of the Year title.

Both the Roskams and du Plessis' came to Southland to further their dairy farming careers, and say their teamwork is a key to their farm business success.

"Our strengths and weaknesses

align to cover all areas of the business, so we are able to cover each other's weaknesses. With the combination of a theory and practical background to farming we are able to combine our ideas into workable practice with sound science behind it," Billy and Sharn Roskam say.

"Our teamwork as a couple gives us tremendous strength to overcome all situations or challenges that come our way. Our understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses gives us confidence in our ability as individuals and as

a team," Hannes and Lyzanne du Plessis say.

Originally from the Waikato, Billy and Sharn Roskam are 50% sharemilking 910 cows for John, Yvonne and Richard Evans. They won \$17,400 in cash and prizes.

The couple, both aged 30, aim to

fully a herd in one year and to strengthen their financial position. "Our ultimate goal is farm ownership so our kids have a place to call home for many years. We love being part of the dairy industry, especially the ability to grow our business while growing our family."

Second place in the Southland Sharemilker/Equity Farmer of the Year contest went to Winton 50% sharemilkers Toni and Vicki Miles. They won \$12,650 in cash and prizes. Wyndham 50% sharemilkers Yuri and Michelle Faria placed third, winning \$5850 in prizes.

The 2012 Southland Farm Managers of the Year, Hannes and Lyzanne du Plessis, were attracted to the region by relatives, 2010 New Zealand Sharemilkers of the Year and awards convenors Stefan and Annalize du Plessis.

They won \$12,000 in cash and prizes.

The couple came to New Zealand from South Africa in 2003, originally farming in Waikato, before moving last year to Southland and the 650-cow contract milking position for Edendale Pastoral last year.

The du Plessis' goals are to increase their equity, develop relationships with industry leaders, be 50% sharemilking or in an equity partnership by 2015 and own a farm by 2020.

"Entering the awards helps us to rub shoulders with peers in the industry and

has helped us to lift the standard of our business. We better understand the industry and take a more realistic view of what it will take to achieve our goals and be successful."

Entering the dairy industry awards has helped 2012 Southland Dairy Trainee of the Year, Robert Ankerson, progress his dairy farming career.

After entering last year's dairy industry awards he met his current employers, Martin and Kim Axtens, and took an assistant position with them on a 920-cow Winton farm.

Billy and Sharn Roskam



Hannes du Plessis

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RUMINATING



MILKING IT...

Timekeepers get a bonus

PUNCTUALITY IS said to have improved in a Northland school thanks to Fonterra.

This is the unexpected spin-off from the co-op's introduction last month of free milk to low-decile schools in the Tai Tokerau region.

Since the milk regime started, children are arriving at school on time. The milk is handed out at 9am for pupils to sip while they work on their literacy programme.

Latecomers miss out.



Laughs from meat

PAK N'SAVE's recent 'stick man' television ad promoting a 'meat week' fell short of light-hearted for the 'fun police', hard-line vegans and similar dour folks.

The ad contrived to warn vegetarians to "look away now". At which the naysayers were not amused and – as they do – bellyached loudly about the message.

Good on Pak N'Save for not following standard procedure – apologising and placating. Instead they ran a revised ad: 'Meat week – now with vegetarian sausages'.

Then followed news reports of 'studies' showing that low iron counts in humans tend to lead to low sense of humour.

Hobbit not a great punt – yet

OFFICIAL FIGURES on the earnings of our film industry suggest the \$34 million the Government promised Warner Bros in return for keeping The Hobbit here hasn't yet generated a great return on the investment.

The 2010 handout seemed good at the time and, to be fair, was forced on the Government by union militancy.

But the figures for 2010-11, presumably including cash for making the Hobbit, show filmmakers earned \$387 million from North America, including sales, production and post-production work.

If the Government were to fund the dairy industry thus, based on the \$11.6b it generates, it would have paid out \$1.04 billion.

'Quick, leave the milk and run'

THE HIGH price of milk in supermarkets is giving rise to milk thefts. Police say thieves who stole 600 2L bottles of milk – the second case of milk theft in a week – are working to order.

Thieves stole milk, cream and other dairy products from a storage property on Totara Street, Mt Maunganui, on three occasions this month. They used a truck, trailer or utility vehicle for the job.

Meanwhile a Christchurch police sting last week, where a constable hid for hours in a pile of leaves, has nabbed two alleged long-time milk thieves. The police arrested two men, aged 40 and 45, at 5.20am in Sir William Pickering Dr, Russley. They allegedly were toting 16 L of the precious fluid.

The police set up the operation after milk vendor Stewart Taylor reported two men had for two years been stealing milk from various drop-off points on his run.

DAIRY NEWS

EDITORIAL

Adams fits the water bill

THE ELEVATION of Amy Adams to Minister for the Environment is seen by the pundits as an inspired choice.

Nick Smith was passionate, experienced and knowledgeable, but Adams looks very much 'fit for purpose' in this challenging portfolio.

The management and allocation of New Zealand's fresh water is contentious, emotive and political. Many hold extreme views on this, some tempered by the Land and Water Forum process. But even if there is agreement around the LAWf table, as seen in the past few weeks, rogue environmental groups have been quick to pick on dairy farmers – and quietly forget the damage district councils have caused by neglecting to deal with outdated sewerage systems.

We need a strong, independent and intelligent minister; Adams fills the bill. She will have her work cut out, but by all accounts she is no slug and is up to the challenge. She has told *Dairy News* those with extreme positions must be prepared to compromise.

Complementing her personal strengths are law and farming. The latter she understands and has a stake in, as a lawyer she's used to reasoned rather than emotive argument, and by birth she is an Aucklander so is aware of urban concerns.

Her promotion to the environment role raises the question whether Nick Smith will come back into cabinet after his ACC indiscretions.

The rumour in Wellington is he will be back. A major cabinet reshuffle will occur when the present Speaker of the House, Lockwood Smith, is formally appointed High Commissioner to London. A vacancy will then arise and Smith could be back.

There is speculation David Carter will be the new speaker, paving the way for Nathan Guy to take over the primary industries portfolio.

But though rumours in Wellington are a certainty, their accuracy is not. – *Peter Burke*

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Co-op shares for 30 pieces of silver

TAF IS coming down to the wire as evidenced by articles in *Dairy News* March 13.

I have been silent recently about media releases as we wanted to honour a request from Theo Spierings to "keep it in the family." Obviously that message did not get through to your correspondents.

In Mark Townshend's article, if he had been asked to write that Fonterra should not be a co-op then his article would have filled the bill. At a recent meeting in Christchurch, Henry van der Heyden apologised for the "board of Fonterra getting it all wrong in 2007" when they advocated splitting our co-op in two with one side 'floated'. Townshend was a part of the strategy then, so I guess the apology applies to him, so why should we listen to him now? He envisages if TAF is a reality there is considerable upside in the value of shares in Fonterra.

In the same issue of *Dairy News* a London commentator suggests that a doubling of share value is likely. If so then Fonterra will be inundated next February with requests for cessation of supply. This in effect is suppliers 'flight'. In Canterbury there is more potential for this as we have the alternative of Westland and Synlait. Take the potential of this to affect the Darfield development and redemption fades in insignificance as far as risks are concerned. A true co-op cannot operate under a



COMMENT
EDDIE GLASS

volatile share price and in fact a stable share price is essential, allowing the co-op to perform against what it was put there to do in the first place.

Townshend's catchcry is shareholder wealth. A strong milk price gives us just that as the good milk price is transferred to the value of our farms. Leaving a little on the table means detracting from 100% ownership and control, something all board members subscribe to. If shareholders wealth is of such importance then Fonterra does not have to deliver a milk price, they just have to say they will match Westland Co-op. Where have we heard this before? In dairy processing we already have the models Townshend aspires to and what have they achieved thus far?

In New Zealand we don't have to supply a co-op. But if you do there are some requirements. All suppliers have to be treated equally over time. No co-op in history has survived more than five years when it has meddled with trying to elevate the value of its shares. As share value increases suppliers will look to get their hands on the cash. At the moment the only way to

do this is to change their milk processor. Fonterra will be the only institution that pays its suppliers handsomely to depart.

If we are to deliver larger dividends we can only do this by keeping our stainless steel full and we have to encourage new suppliers to come our way. This is done by giving up

to five years to buy the newly valued shares and even to encourage contract milk and, as the going gets tougher, no share requirement at all. And so our co-op is history. Is this what we want? The only mum-and-pop investors I want in Fonterra are those who start their day at an ungodly hour to milk

their cows and supply our co-op. They once were 'peasants' but now they have affluence everyone wants a part of the action.

David Gasguoine says the Shareholders Council has consulted and listened to us. When was this? They couldn't because they were gagged by the board with a confidential-

ity agreement. We are all out of step but him. We never stood for elections; please read the results of the latest elections.

I extend a warm welcome to you all in the debate on TAF. Isn't it great that we can have this debate because we are all passionate about Fonterra and the great things it has

done for dairy farmers. It is great that you help me sharpen my arguments and I thank you for that. I just want to prepare my 'if only's.' I am worried that Sir Henry will deliver our co-op to its crucifixion at the hands of the NZX and all I can do is watch to see what they will do with their 30 pieces of silver.

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ONLINE POLL

Do you think the dairy industry has too many annual conferences?

- Yes
- No



Have your say at: www.dairynews.co.nz

Experts lined up for DairyNZ forum

EXPERTS WILL share their insights at the second DairyNZ Farmers' Forum at Hamilton on May 23-24.

DairyNZ chief executive Dr Tim Mackle says the event is to impart to dairy farmers the knowledge, information and tools they need to succeed in the next decade. The speakers will be key leaders, industry advisors, research scientists and agribusiness professionals.

The global and national scene will be tackled on the first day, Mackle says. "Farmers will hear how the landscape is shifting and how to prepare for these events to remain competitive."

DairyNZ chairman John Luxton will open the forum, followed by Minis-



Tim Mackle



David Carter

ter for Primary Industries David Carter. Participants will be invited to submit questions to Carter when they register.

Fonterra CEO Theo Spierings will speak on Fonterra responses to challenges and opportunities, ANZ-National Bank chief economist Cameron Bagrie on economics affecting dairy farmers, and Jamie Tuuta, Maori trustee and former chair of

Parininihi ki Waitotara, on the resurgence of Maori agri-business and opportunities to work together.

On the first day participants can attend two of four workshops:

Andrew Watters, MyFarm, will speak on how outside investors view the industry, and author Martin Hawes will speak on financial planning. Other workshops will cover dairy farm busi-

ness governance and developing human capability. Mackle will outline DairyNZ's development of dairying curriculum material for schools, and will report results from surveys of public perception of dairying.

On the second day (theme 'Your farm, your future') participants can select from four workshops.

A plenary-session panel of leading farmers will hold forth, and a 'myth busting' session will close the event, addressing facts and fallacies and what science is telling us.

Registration is free to levy-paying farmers and their staff. Others pay \$175 for both days or \$100 for one day.

www.dairynz.co.nz



Clinton Beuvink with Nosh's own-brand milk that goes on sale next week.

Nosh's latest move in milk price war

A BOUTIQUE supermarket chain behind the \$1/L milk campaign is introducing its own-brand label. But the Nosh Essentials milk will retail at \$2.49 per 2L when it hits the shelves next week.

Nosh, with six food stores, has signed Green Valley to bottle milk under the Nosh Essentials label.

Nosh director Clinton Beuvink says its \$1/L campaign has been costly. But consumers will accept the Nosh milk more affordable than other brands, he says.

"Green Valley milk is a quality product. The company is recognised as having leading dairy farms with the highest quality milk. It has a fresh-from-farm approach and a supplier mid-way between our Auckland and Hamilton food stores.

"It has been a costly exercise for us but

worth it now we have achieved our goal of a sustained reduction in price."

Beuvink points out Nosh Essentials milk will retail at "about half the price of branded milk advertised by a big supermarket chain."

Green Valley produces a range of milk, including organic, and is based in Mangatawhiri just south of the Bombay Hills. It is the largest privately owned organic dairy farm in New Zealand, managed by dairy industry identity Corrie den Haring, said to be pleased to support Nosh in its venture.

Nosh in early February reduced the price of milk to \$2 per 2L in its six food stores.

It extended its discount offer to March. It says it has sold hundreds of thousands of bottles at \$2.



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450 ltr	710 dia x 2010 high	2 x 3kW
450 ltr	810 dia x 1600 high	2 x 3kW
500 ltr	915 dia x 1400 high	2 x 3kW
600 ltr	810 dia x 1900 high	3 x 3kW
600 ltr	915 dia x 1500 high	3 x 3kW
700 ltr	810 dia x 2200 high	3 x 3kW
700 ltr	915 dia x 1700 high	3 x 3kW
800 ltr	915 dia x 1900 high	3 x 3kW
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Renew more pasture to lift profits - report

PAM TIPA

LIFTING PASTURE
renewal rates to 12% per

annum on dairy farms would boost the value of dairy products by \$43 million-\$165 million in a year. The current renewal rate

is about 6.6%.

That's the claim of a Business and Economic Research Ltd (BERL) report - *Analysis of the*

Value of Pasture Renewal to the New Zealand Economy - commissioned by the Pasture Renewal Charitable Trust.

The big variation in predicted production lift is based on variations in response, and the BERL research modeled for a 7% and 27% response, BERL economist Kel Sanderson told a Hamilton audience last month.

The lift in dairy farmgate value could increase from 6-25% if pasture renewal is sustained continuously, he said. Taken across all sectors of pasture-based products, the average increase would be 18% or \$19 billion if recommended pasture renewal levels were met.

The dairy sector contributed \$11.6 billion to the New Zealand economy in the 2010-11 production season, or 72% of all farmgate value, the report also found. (Sheep products \$3b; beef \$1.2b) Total GDP contribution of dairy to the New Zealand economy was \$15.9 billion and for all pasture-based products it was \$25.5 billion or 12.2% of GDP - compared to 9% for



2011 BERL report launch Hamilton; L-R: Tim Mackle Dairy NZ CEO, Bruce Wills President Federated Farmers, Murray Willocks PRCT chairman, Kel Sanderson BERL doirector, Sam Robinson AgResearch chairman, and Tony Schischka, policy analyst MAF.

tourism.

Sanderson says during the study he also looked at the milk solids averages from 1964 to 2010 which showed periods of strong growth were always

boosted the average MS/per cow to about 390 today rather than the present 340, boosting farmgate value by \$2.5billion annually.

The 2011 Analysis was

not investing as much as it should to maintain quality and productivity of pastures. But decisions as to where to invest were best made by individual farmers.

In response to the report Federated Farmers says pasture renewal epitomises doing the basics better.

"Instead of using fertiliser to squeeze more production out of tired pasture, fertiliser use is more effective if applied to renewed pasture," says president Bruce Wills. "Farmers plan for fertiliser but it's no panacea if your pasture is getting beyond its use-by date."

"What's more, renewed pasture helps to retain and maximise fertiliser where it's being targeted. There's an important financial and environmental dimension here as under-utilised fertiliser potentially becomes a run-off issue."

"Instead of using fertiliser to squeeze more production out of tired pasture, fertiliser use is more effective if applied to renewed pasture. Farmers plan for fertiliser but it's no panacea if your pasture is getting beyond its use-by date." - Bruce Wills

knocked back by drought.

"We suspect if we had more continuous pasture renewal we could reduce the setbacks due to drought," he said. He looked at a scenario whereby pasture renewal had halved the effects of drought in that time. That scenario would have

an update of a 2009 report, also commissioned by the Pasture Renewal Charitable Trust. The trust was set up by several companies to educate the agricultural sector on the benefits of pasture renewal and to undertake research.

Chairman Murray Willocks says New Zealand is

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IN BRIEF

Fieldays targets exports

INDEPENDENT NATIONAL Fieldays Society company, New Zealand Agribusiness Centre (NZABC) recently acquired NZ Agritech Inc, a group of kiwi agricultural exporters set up in 1994 to assist its members to achieve export growth.

A significant role of NZ Agritech was arranging group participation in major agricultural shows internationally; NZABC will continue to build on NZ Agritech's progress and aims to bridge the gap for exporters even further.

As part of National Fieldays Society and responsible for the international exhibition area and business visitor lounge at the Fieldays event, NZABC is perfectly aligned to be able to work with both New Zealand exporters and overseas customers year round, it says.

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Tax changes affect succession planning

CHARLES RAU

A CHANGE TO the taxation of livestock will close a tax 'loophole' or 'unintended subsidy' enjoyed by farmers. The changes – signalled in last year's budget and announced recently by Revenue Minister Peter Dunne – affects farmers' ability to exit the livestock valuation method known as the 'herd scheme.'

A farmer's base stock is like capital plant that produces offspring for sale. Recognising that base stock are not held for sale but for production, the herd scheme treats a farmer's base stock as capital items so that changes in the value of base stock from year to year do not affect taxable income. On sale, changes between herd scheme values and sale price is brought to taxable income.

A farmer's base stock is like capital plant that produces offspring for sale.

Farmers can elect alternative valuation methods such as valuing their stock at cost, otherwise known as national standard cost (NSC) – a national average cost per class of livestock published by the Government so that farmers do not have to calculate their own costs of production. Under the NSC method, changes in the value of base stock affect taxable income, even when that base stock is not sold.

Until now, farmers could change from the herd scheme to NSC by electing two income years in advance to do so. Because farmers have up to one year post balance date to file their tax returns, in effect little time elapsed between making the election and it becoming effective. If farmers timed their exit from the herd scheme at a time of high livestock values, in effect they could get a tax free write up in livestock values and a tax deductible write down in livestock values. This was relatively uncommon in

the drystock industry but the Inland Revenue was concerned it was becoming more prevalent in the dairy industry with its greater volatility in prices. With the current high prices for all livestock the Government has decided to act now.

The change removes the ability of a farmer to exit the herd scheme, effective August 18, 2011. Any elections filed to exit the herd scheme after that date become ineffective. To stop farmers manufacturing a change in ownership of the business in order to exit the herd scheme, there will be a rule forcing 'associated persons' to adopt the vendor's herd scheme election and base livestock numbers unless a complete change in ownership has occurred.

What this rule means is that the next generation of farm owners will

parents will need to have a financial interest in the farm, often via a partnership or trust. Under the new rules, if the next generation does not want to

be forced into the herd scheme, the only interest the parents can have in the farm will be via loans, not a trust or partnership or other economic owner-

ship. This affects succession planning.

www.bdo.co.nz

• Charles Rau is a partner with BDO, specialising in tax and agriculture.

Charles Rau



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Stopping the march of armyworms

DAIRYNZ IS warning Northland farmers the 'armyworm' population may explode because of recent flooding.

Regional leader Tafi Manjala says farmers need to deal with the caterpillar pest quickly to curb its spread.

"Pastures recently flooded are at high risk as the eggs get washed to the flooded areas and caterpillars hatch just in time to attack the re-sown new grass.

"If you have an armyworm infestation we advise you to contact your merchant or spray contractor for advice on what to spray. Check your new pasture now and if you have an infestation, hit them hard and fast. Sprays with the active ingredient

"Check your new pastures now and if you have an infestation, hit them hard and fast."

chlorpyrifos or diazinon are registered for use in pasture."

The name armyworm comes from the way the caterpillars 'march' across a field eating all suitable plant material in their path. Colours vary. Caterpillars grow to 50mm long. Populations decline as winter starts.

In summer the eggs hatch within a week and the caterpillars take 3-4 weeks to fully develop. The pupal stage lasts about two weeks and the female moth begins laying eggs about four days after

it emerges from the pupa.

Last month dairy farms in Hikurangi, Mangakahia, Tangiteroria and Tangiwhare were flooded.

DairyNZ tells farmers to prioritise for successful flood recovery. With farm assessment and the clean-up complete, it advises affected farmers to assess feed deficit caused by the flood and determine how they will fill the gap.

"This will help identify how much feed will be required against what feed is available," says Manjala.

"Be realistic about how many cows can be fed

and at what cost. Options include increasing feed supply through nitrogen application at 30kgN/ha on non-flooded pasture, feeding supplement or reducing demand by culling, milking once-a-day or grazing-off other stock classes.

"Farmers should avoid grazing heavy silted pasture as silt can stop rumen function. Dry cows can manage on light silting. If silting is less than 50mm deep grass will grow through it. Grass survival will be more variable and grass flattened by silt is best left to rot.

"If you have paddocks still under water in cool conditions at the end of the week this may mean little or no pasture produc-



A flooded Northland farm last month (above) and armyworm set to invade farms in the region (left).

tion can be expected until regrassing in autumn."

DairyNZ says some Northland maize crops due for harvest have been flooded.

"We are advising farmers to check their local harvester to see if heavy equipment can get onto

sodden paddocks and whether their crop is harvestable," says Manjala.

"When maize crops have been flooded above cob level there is a risk of high levels of fusarium fungus contamination of the cob. We advise against feeding silage or grain

from these crops. Cut your losses now and seek alternative feed.

"Giving stock access to unharvested crops with a high degree of cobbing can risk acidosis. Don't let them adlib feed. Use the crop as a small proportion of the total diet."

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Knowing business key to profit

ANDREW SWALLOW

IT DOESN'T matter what level of input you use, understanding the profit drivers of your system is the key to top performance.

That's the headline message to take home from the result of this year's Westland Milk Products-Dairy NZ Dairy-Base Profit Challenge, says local consulting officer, Ross Bishop.

"When you look at the DairyBase figures, there's as significant a range in profit in system 5 (high input) farms as there is in low input, and between systems," he told *Dairy News* in the wake of the field day on the winner's property, Gunsight Farms, Ikamatua.

"Some farms achieve high levels of profit regardless of the system they're in. That says to me if you're the manager of a farm that's generating high levels of profit you must understand the weaknesses and opportunities of the system you are in."

And so it is with winner Andrew Mirfin, says Bishop.

"He has a good relationship with his businesses, and understands the business, and knows what's needed to make the business profitable. For example, at the field day he was asked what he would do next year in light of more uncertain [milk] prices. He'd already worked out he'd reduce cow numbers and reduce overall cow costs."

Mirfin confirmed that to *Dairy News*. "If it was \$5 something we'd probably sell cows and run things a bit differently. We're sort of waiting now to hear what they're going to say."

That said, he says they try not to change the system too much year to year, which was how the 2010/11 figures, on which the competition was based, came out so good.

"We didn't know the payout was going to be what it was before Christmas, when it got so dry. We just took a punt on the grain use."

That grain – wheat – was forward purchased at good prices too. It's fed in-shed "with a bit of soya and molasses", plus self-made silage in the paddock. "We make all our own balage and rear all our own young stock."

Retaining control of such operations is important in achieving top performance, he believes.

"Especially with growing young stock. There are not a lot of graziers who feed them like you would yourself. We've learnt that lesson the hard way."

A 750m pivot irrigator means he's now also in control of grass growth, though it only went in last autumn so wasn't a factor in the competition winning figures.

"We expect to use it about two months a year. We are in one of the driest parts of the coast."

He says steadily increasing milk solids/ha requires improving conversion efficiency of grass eaten, which in turn he says requires running more, smaller cows/ha. "We were running straight Freisians but we've been putting Jerseys across them for the last four years."

Nitrogen use, at 275kg/ha/year, is well above the DairyBase average but it's applied little and often, with covers checked weekly with the plate meter as the farm is one of five West Coast moni-

tor farms.

"Payout is the main [profit] driver but we also grow plenty of grass and we convert it pretty well. Our soils are good and we've invested quite a bit in fertility and regrassing over the years."

Bishop says while Gunsight was out front on

profit, it didn't top all categories the competition was judged on, such as nutrient use efficiency and reproductive performance. But it was within the top four in these areas which meant its weighted average was sufficient to win.

Bishop says the main

objectives of the Profit Challenge are to identify and reward high performance farms and showcase opportunities to increase production and profit on the West Coast.

It's the second year the competition's been run with a \$5000 prize to the overall winner.



Andrew Mirfin addresses farmers during the field day.

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GREAT OUTCOME

AT LEAST 120 dairy farmers and rural professionals turned out for the field day late last month, an outstanding attendance and double the expected number, said Westland Milk Products chief executive Rod Quin.

"It is a credit to Andrew Mirfin and his team to be awarded the DairyBase Profit Challenge accolade, and that is reflected in today's impressive turnout..."

"Field days are an invaluable tool for farmers seeking information on how to further farm profitability and production."

Profits key driver in breeding goals

GARETH GILLAT

A HIGH value herd shouldn't be the only goal for sharemilkers, say the Northland Sharemilker of The Year winners Miles Harrison and Lucy Heffernan.

The couple milk 240 cows on a 93ha farm for owner Catherine Young, of Wellsford. They won the Honda Farm

Safety and Health Award, Meridian Energy Farm Environment Award and LIC Recording and Productivity Award. The LIC award is notable, as this year is the first in which the couple have had to rapidly expand their herd.

From 2008 to 2011 Harrison and Heffernan had a lower order sharemilker contract and owned few cows. They then needed to expand that number dramatically after 2010 when they landed a 50/50 contract to milk at least 200 cows for Young.

While that level of growth over the short time might have been too heavy a financial burden for some, the couple managed it by making pragmatic decisions on their herd make up. Instead of looking at breeding worth and production worth the couple bought unrecorded cows with high production figures.

"We looked at how much cows

were producing and the systems they were in to make sure they would work in conjunction with our own," says Harrison.

While some might have considered it a gamble it paid off: the herd produced 77,000kgMS last season.

While they tried to keep herd growth costs down they also looked to stock trading as a means to clear their debt faster.

"If what you're doing isn't more profitable than just leaving it in the bank then there isn't really a point in doing it." - Miles Harrison

Extensive use of beef cattle straws and trading of the progeny of late cows enabled them to start immediately paying off the cost of buying young stock, rather than waiting for final milk payouts.

"We want to pay down debt as

quickly as possible," says Heffernan.

Harrison says it is part of their focus on return on equity and return

Harrison says they had a wide calving period and an empty rate higher than ideal.

They are also taking steps to prevent a repeat of this season's wider calving date too with the use of cidrs and aggressive culling. The couple used CIDRS this season to get cows to cycle earlier, took a record of what cows required cidrs and plan to cull them out of the herd in the upcoming season.

Harrison and Heffernan have big plans after acquiring a small property nearby. They plan to move from spring calving to split calving and completely pay off their herd in three years.



Lucy Heffernan and Miles Harrison.

FARM BREAKDOWN

Effective area: 98ha.

Soil types: silt loam, clay.

Cows: 240.

Calving: spring.

Location: Wellsford, Northland.



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Low antibodies still a problem

RICK BAYNE

SOME 40% cent of calves born on dairy farms in Western Victoria suffer a lack of antibodies to fight disease and almost 10% have no antibodies at all, a study has found. It says the problem could be substantially eased if farmers started feeding their calves colostrum twice a day.

The study, by The Vet Group with funding from WestVic Dairy, tested blood protein levels from 1000 calves on 100 farms to determine their level of antibodies.

With an estimate of almost 45,000 replacement heifers expected to have low antibody levels in the Western District, reducing the problem could save the dairy industry \$15-\$20 million annually.

The Vet Group veterinarian Zoe Vogels, who did the study, says the results show farmers should "assume none from mum" and always give extra colostrum.

Vogels says calves are born without antibodies to fight disease and need to absorb the antibodies present in first-milking colostrum.

Those with low antibodies face an increased risk of dying.

"A lot of calves left to drink colostrum from their dams will have no antibodies at all," Vogels says.

"For whatever reason, poor mothering, poor calf vitality, they do not drink enough or indeed any colostrum. All calves should be hand fed an extra feed or two of first-milking colostrum in their first day of life."

While most calves in the district are hand fed extra colostrum, the survey has shown that collecting calves from the calving area at least twice a day to give them colostrum will improve calf antibody levels even further.

"The ability of a calf to absorb colostrum

antibodies across the intestine decreases pretty quickly once they're born. They'll be able to get the most from the colostrum you give them if you give it earlier."

The amount of antibodies a calf needs in its blood is about equal to its body weight in grams.

The survey found that calf breed was related to antibody levels. Compared to Holstein Friesian calves, Jersey calves and Jersey crosses were half as



Zoe Vogels

likely to have low antibody levels, and dairy-beef crossbreds were three times as likely to have no antibodies.

Compared to heifer calves, bull calves were twice as likely to have no antibodies.

"People purchasing and rearing dairy-beef crossbreds and bull calves should be aware of their increased risk of disease and death and need to take action to minimise the risk of disease through best-practice housing, nutrition and treatment protocols," Vogels says.

"During the survey we found low antibody levels on a farm did not necessarily mean sick or dead calves.

"Some of the herds with poorer antibody transfer did not report a problem and, conversely, some herds with the better results had quite significant calf disease.

"This illustrates the fact calf health is a fine balance: colostrum management, housing, nutrition and treatment protocols all play a vital role," Vogels says.

As part of the survey, a financial spreadsheet is being developed to help assess the cost of

inadequate antibody transfer in dairy calves in the cost of disease, death and lost production.

The study was partly funded through WestVic

Dairy's Small Grants Programme.

About 40% of calves in Western Victoria suffer from a lack of antibodies to fight disease.




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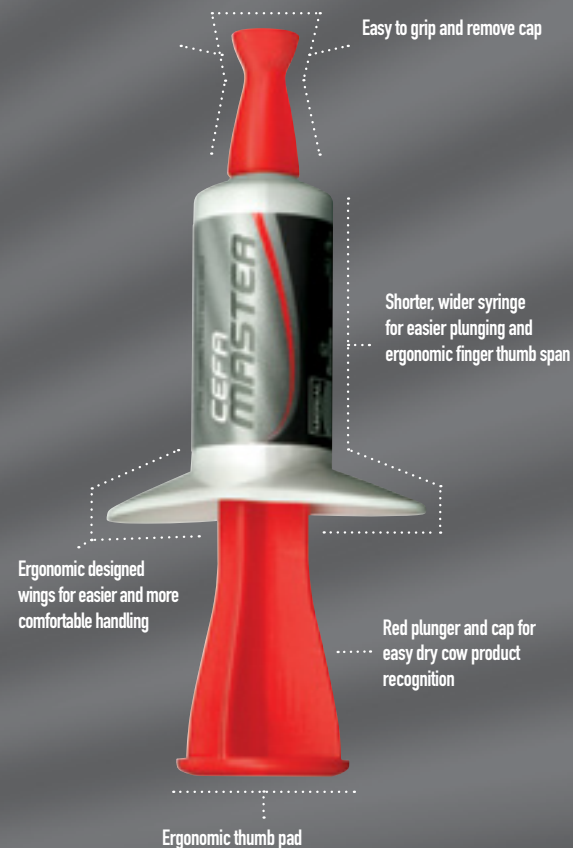
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1. McDougall S (2010). A randomised, non-inferiority trial of a new cephalonium dry-cow therapy: NZVJ 58(1), 45-58

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Water trough treatment is one way to protect the animal's liver against sporidesmin.

'FE can be treated'

THE LIVER disease facial eczema (FE) comes in erratic annual and monthly cycles during the summer and autumn months.

Moist humid weather and paddocks containing increasing volumes of dead or dying grass litter provide the perfect condi-

tions for the fungus *Pithomyces chartarum* to grow and for animals to develop FE. No cure exists but practical management help avert and minimise the risk.

FE occurs when ruminants eat pasture containing spores from the fungus *Pithomyces chartarum*.

These spores contain sporidesmin, a mycotoxin that once in the blood stream reach the liver and cause inflammation of the bile ducts.

Andrew Oakley, AgResearch technical manager, says farmers should liver damage will occur from continual exposure to low pasture spore counts or from a single high spore count.

"The myth is that an animal only has FE when you see them seeking shade or you start to see lesions on their ears and nose etc. But only about 10% of affected animals show clinical (skin peeling) signs. For every clinical case there will be 10-35 cows with sub-clinical FE."

AgResearch data suggests survival to second lactation in younger cattle is lowered by 10%, milk yields decrease and mean body condition score can drop by up to 23%.

Oakley says although you can't see the physical symptoms the disease may be impacting stock. "While the liver has some capacity to heal and regenerate, there is often long term compromise to its function, affecting performance of affected animals for the rest of their life."

The key to preventing FE is a management plan. Oakley says farmers are aware of the damage FE can cause and treat at a certain time of year regardless of the challenge.

"However, on a seasonal risk basis, it is important to monitor pasture or faecal spore counts on the farm to know when to start a prevention plan.... Choose an option that will ensure stock are adequately protected."

There are several solutions on the market:

Zinc boluses

Zinc dosing has been the predominant treatment to protect the liver against sporidesmin. A product developed in the 1990s by scientists at AgResearch is The Time Capsule, a well-recognised

brand and proven intraruminal bolus. The Time Capsule releases an even dose of zinc oxide daily over a four-week period for cows and six weeks for sheep. For 15 years the Time Capsule has consistently proven to be reliable at minimising or eliminating the effects of facial eczema. It is technology farmers can rely on with a bolus available for different weight ranges so animals get the correct daily dose relative to their live-weight.

Pasture sprays

Fungicides control development of spores in pasture, most using the active ingredient Carben-dazim, which prevents spores germinating. It may not kill all the fungal colonies that produce the spores, especially if the pasture counts are high (it is recommended to spray when pasture spore counts are under 20,000). Carben-dazim is a vermicide but at the recommended use rate for FE spores it may reduce the worm populations important for healthy soils and FE control, which they do by removing the dead material from the base of the pasture sward – the very material *pithomyces chartarum* spores grow on. Use of carbendazim is banned in some countries because of its toxic environmental risks, e.g. Australia and many European countries.

Water trough treatment

Adding zinc sulphate to the water reticulation system is a recognised preventative option. Caution is required because large variations may occur in the concentration of zinc in the water throughout the day and therefore in the doses received by individual animals. Cattle may not always consume sufficient water (and therefore zinc) to be adequately protected at all times of exposure to FE spores. It may be advisable to check the serum zinc levels in a representative sample of cows to confirm adequate protection.

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1. Shoop WL. et.al. International Journal for Parasitology. 1996 Vol 26, no. 11. 1227-1235

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Minimise your losses by knowing more about Johne's Disease

KAYLENE LARKING

DAIRY FARMERS will benefit from knowing more about Johne's Disease (paratuberculosis), a wasting disease affecting cattle, sheep and deer. No cure is known and clinically affected animals die. The disease affects production, by causing reduction in body weight, lower milk yield and losses at calving.

What should a farmer know about Johne's Disease?

The bacterium *Mycobacterium avium paratuberculosis* (MAP) causes Johne's Disease. Infection is spread primarily by contaminated faeces, also occurring in the uterus or via colostrum and milk fed to calves.

Calves and young stock are the most susceptible. Control should be aimed at limiting exposure of these animals to MAP. Once infected, an animal may appear healthy all its life, but a few will develop clinical disease as adults and become sick and die – usually one-five years after infection.

It is not fully understood why some animals develop clinical disease and others do not, but the level of exposure to MAP is critical and animal genetics, strain of MAP and stress triggering the onset of clinical disease are all thought to be factors.

As the disease progresses, an animal will normally shed increasing numbers of MAP in faeces, so animals in the late stages of the disease are the major source of infection. Late stage animals are often known as 'super shedders', releasing up to 10 million bacteria in every gramme of faeces.

The signs of clinical disease are diarrhoea and wasting. Clinical animals will eventually die from dehydration and severe malnutrition unless culled.

The intestines of diseased animals are swollen and corrugated. Lesions may also be found in lymph nodes and elsewhere in the body.

MAP in faeces of infected animals contaminate pastures and act as a source of infection for other animals on the property.

Exposure to sunlight will kill MAP on pasture, with contamination largely gone in three months. However, pockets of MAP may survive for up to 18 months in wet and shaded areas.

Many wildlife species – rabbits, hares and hedgehogs – have been shown infected with MAP but their

calves through the faecal-oral route. The organism is swallowed in manure-contaminated milk, water or feed, or direct ingestion of faeces. MAP is also shed directly into the colostrum and milk of infected dams in later stages of the disease providing a significant route of exposure for calves.

There is no vaccine registered for use in cattle in New Zealand. Control is by preventing exposure in young stock.

How can a farmer know if Johne's disease is present in his/her herd?

Adult cattle scouring or continuing to lose weight, even with adequate nutrition, possibly signals Johne's. Disease may be the cause. Always work with a veterinarian to confirm the diagnosis.

Testing is of little value in younger animals but blood, milk or faecal testing can be used to determine the presence of MAP in adult animals. The disease is most effectively detected in clinical animals or post mortem. None of the tests are 100% accurate and may not always be needed depending on what you want to achieve in your herd. Veterinarians will be able to advise which tests are most suitable for diagnosing the disease.

What to do if concerned about Johne's Disease.

Eradication is not feasible but risk management can minimise the infection rate. The following as controls can help reduce the impact of Johne's on high risk farms with advanced MAP infection (high test positive herds):

- Know the status of the herd by using tests to identify positive cows and 'super shedders'.
- Manage test-positive cows to minimise the spread of infection. Best not to breed from high test-positive cows, and to isolate them from young cattle.

• *Kaylene Larking is Johne's Disease Research Consortium manager. Source: DairyNZ Technical Series April 2012.*

It is not fully understandable why some animals develop clinical disease and others do not.

role as a spreader of MAP to domestic animals is unclear.

Why be concerned?

Johne's Disease has effects on animal welfare and animal productivity. If unmanaged, the level of infection within a herd may increase.

It has been widely suggested MAP may have a role in the human disorder Crohn's Disease, a chronic degenerative disease of the human bowel not fully understood and with no known cause or no cure. Its symptoms resemble those seen in Johne's Disease in animals. While evidence of an association is increasing, no research has proven that MAP causes Crohn's Disease.

MAP is reportedly widespread in New Zealand – believed to infect at least 60% of dairy farm animals – but the level of clinical disease continues to remain low in the majority of herds. Disease prevalence is reported higher in the South Island than the North. Jersey cows appear to be more susceptible to the disease than Holstein-Friesians.

The onset of clinical signs increases in times of stress, e.g. calving, drought and poor nutrition.

Most MAP transmission occurs from adult infected animals to young



Calves and young stock are the most susceptible.

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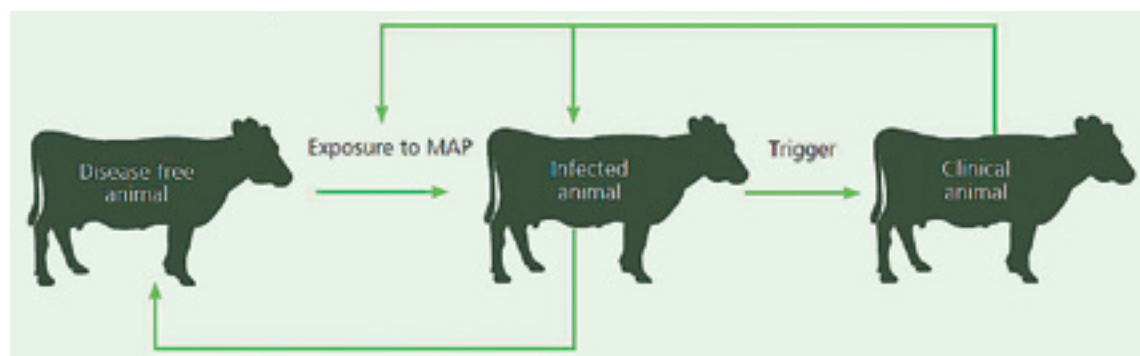


Figure 1: How Johne's Disease spreads.

Be ready for NAIT

DAIRY FARMERS are urged to prepare early for the start-up of NAIT, especially if planning stock movements during winter. The recently adopted NAIT legislation puts new obligations on farmers from July 1.

After this date, all cattle being moved must wear a NAIT approved electronic tag. Anyone in charge of animals and their movement must be registered with NAIT.

DairyNZ policy manager Elizabeth Dixon encourages farmers to prepare early.

“We’re conscious that dairy farmers are busy people, and while we know a lot of dairy farmers are already ahead of the game with tags in place, we’re keen to make sure no one is caught out by the introduction of the new obli-

gations in July. NAIT is already open for registrations and it’s a good opportunity to beat the rush.



NAIT comes into effect on July 1.

“We also want farmers to be thinking ahead. If farmers plan to send cattle

out for winter grazing for example, it might be easier and more comfortable for their stock to be tagged before they leave the

to put tags in.”

DairyNZ has supported the animal tracing legislation on the proviso it does not become too costly or

advantages for the reputation and protection of New Zealand’s dairy industry from a robust traceability regime. The integrity of our biosecurity system is crucial and NAIT is a major safeguard.

“Consumers [world-wide] want to know more about the source of their food. Lifetime traceability of animals is a key part of addressing this desire for more information. Given the New Zealand dairy industry is such a major exporter, it is essential we keep up with our major competitors in this field [via] traceability.”

Farmers can register for NAIT at www.nait.co.nz or by phoning the NAIT organisation at 0800 624 843. Alternatively dairy farmers can phone 0800 4 DairyNZ.

High empty rate on focus farm agenda

A FOCUS farm will be launched next week in Northland, allowing the region’s dairy farmers to track its progress over three years.

The 106ha (effective) Okaihau farm has been volunteered by Alistair and Lyn Candy for the project involving data and feedback on management decisions via email updates and field days.

Dairy farmers are invited to the farm’s launch on April 19.

DairyNZ’s Northland regional leader Tafi Manjala says farmers can adapt ideas from the focus farm to their own business.

“We’re going to demonstrate how to take a common problem – such as a high empty rate – break it down into simple parts and come up with a plan to fix it. We want farmers to come along to field days and be part of the process.”

The Candys are milking 310 Jersey cows, calving from mid-July, and are on track this season to produce 750kgMS/ha and 260kgMS/cow.

Like many Northland farmers, the Candys have faced their fair share of challenges over the last few seasons, says Manjala.

“The dry weather reduced milk production, despite more feed bought in. The result has been a tough couple of years financially and cows were thinner with a poor calving spread. Addressing herd reproduction and setting the platform for next season is the main focus this season.”

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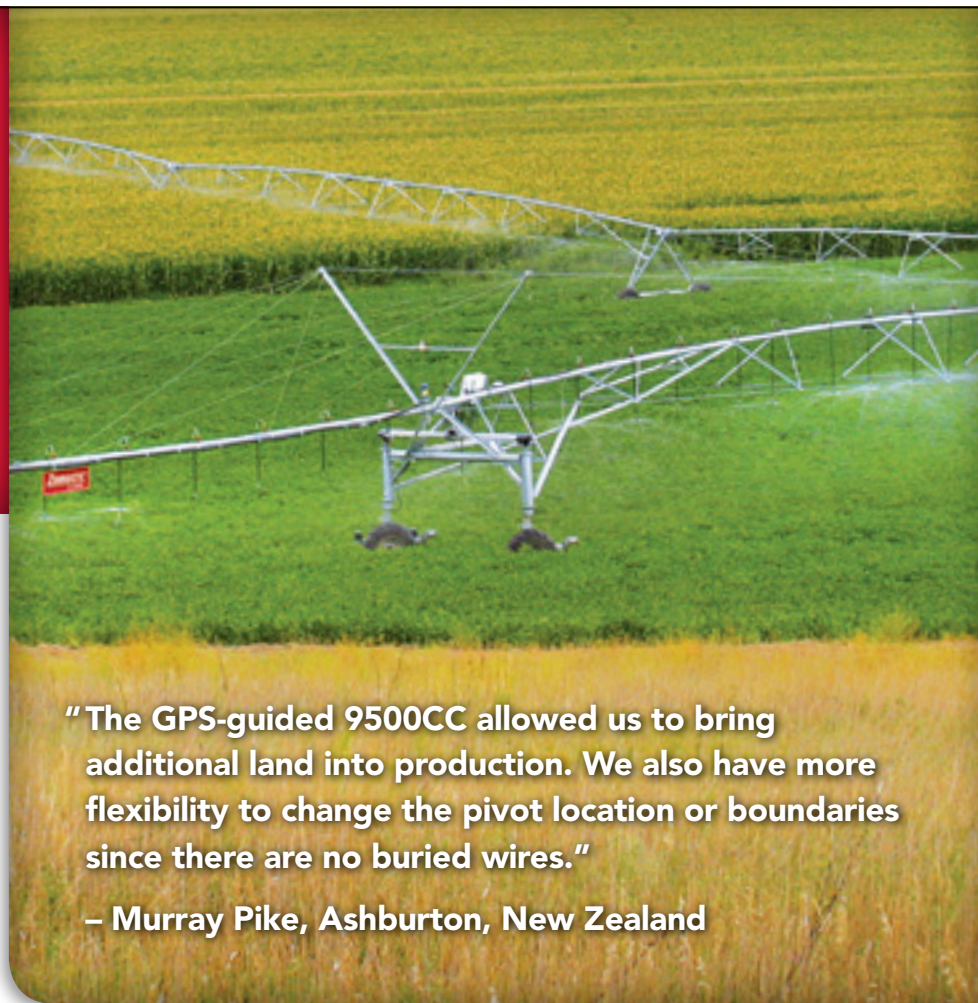
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Jason and Abby Burleigh have found a way to keep their calves entertained.



The ball's in their court

RICK BAYNE

WHEN AUSTRALIAN farmers Jason and Abby Burleigh built a new calf shed with an automatic feeder, nutrition and comfort weren't the only things on their minds. They also wanted to keep their calves entertained.

A stand-up swinging ball system has done that on their farm at Nullawarre, south-west Victoria, introducing a new play option for the 70 calves they rear each year.

Children enjoy playing with toys, so why not calves? was the question addressed by Jason's invention; his contented calves testify to its success.

"They play with it all the time. We wanted something to address boredom and to stop them sucking other calves and this works really well. They run into it, butt their heads against it, suck on the chains, push it around and generally have a good time."

The Burleighs initially added a beach ball on the floor of the calves' shed but while the calves enjoyed it they found it became too dirty.

The home-made swinging apparatus has overcome that problem and proven equally popular with the calves. Next they will add a length of soft hose suitable for sucking.

The Burleighs hope their playpen idea will inspire other farmers to install similar items for their calves.

"It isn't something we had seen before. A vet who saw it mentioned it to someone in the UK and now they've put in something similar. It's good for the calves so it's good for the farm."

The shed was purpose-built in 2009 for the calves and an automatic feeding system. While the feeding system was installed partly as a management tool and to save labour, the main priority for Jason and Abby was the health and wellbeing of their calves. It has kept calves and farmers out of the weather and the stock quickly adjust to the routine.

"After about the third feed they know what to do and go alone. But we haven't saved time. We probably spend as much time monitoring the results and cleaning the shed as we used to do feeding them in the paddock.

"But it's a lot better for us and the calves

in this environment. We can be here on a wet and cold day and still have the same shaded environment."

The Burleighs have been able to increase their calf numbers from about 50 to 70 thanks to the system, which replaced the traditional feed trail behind the motorbike.

"We often say on a wet day 'do you want to jump on the bike and go out and feed the calves?'" Burleigh joked.

The results have been positive. "The calves are a lot quieter and more content. Some people said because we weren't handling them as much they might become a bit feral, but it's exactly the opposite. The contact we have with them is all positive. We never hear them bellow."

Burleigh says the calves are more friendly and approachable, proven as they quietly mill around anyone entering the shed.

The regular feeding has also resulted in healthier calves and a close to zero mortality rate. "Studies say you should feed them colostrum twice a day at the start so we do that at the start.

"With the automatic system they eat when they need it and we can monitor it and make sure they are getting enough. We automatically know if we've got a sick calf."

The computer system gives the Burleighs piece of mind that all calves are being properly fed. Set amounts of milk and grain are fed to each. They average 3.5L of milk up to seven days and up to a peak of 5L from seven to 40 days. They are weaned off at about 12 weeks.

"We always feed whole milk, never powdered," Burleigh says. "We find that is more consistent."

The farm raises mostly Friesians and normally uses artificial insemination.

While most calf-rearing sheds are converted from other previous uses, the Burleighs designed their shed from scratch with calf comfort and convenience in mind. One automatic feeder holds milk, the other grain.

The shed is divided into mirrored halves, and is hosed down twice a day. The floor features scoria underneath with drain pipes with railway lines over the top. This allows the Burleighs to bring in a front loader for cleaning without having to remove the scoria. Burleigh says the A\$50,000 investment had been worth it.

Calf season for the Burleighs usually runs from mid-March.

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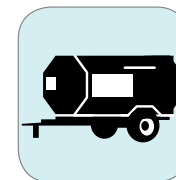
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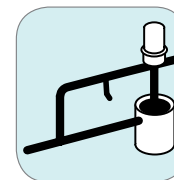
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AGVANCE



LIC breeders to celebrate gains

FARMER 'ROYALTY' will gather this month to acknowledge LIC's best breeding brains and bulls.

The April 17 event will be the annual LIC Breeders' Day, hosting about 100 breeders from from Hikurangi, Northland, to Otautau, Southland.

The breeders will have contributed dairy bull calves to LIC.

Initially the bull calves will have been hand-picked by LIC on the basis of ancestry records or DNA profiles.

Since then, the bull calves have gone on to produce semen resulting in some of the dairy industry's most highly efficient daughters, known for their volumes of high-quality

milk, and good temperament, health, fertility, and longevity.

The key is 'genetic gain.'

Research by Bill Montgomerie, New Zealand Animal Evaluation, shows genetic gain in the national dairy herd has over 10 years resulted in 60% of the produc-

tion gains made on dairy farms. LIC bulls have contributed \$16 billion to the dairy industry for 46 years, LIC says.

So Breeders' Day is about the achievements of each team and the individual bulls in those teams, as well as the people."

"Nearly all farmers are constantly trying to improve the quality of their animals through better breeding."

"That's why top breeders of dairy bull calves are so important to LIC, and why we acknowledge the work they do and celebrate the animals they're producing for the industry," says Mike Wilson, LIC Premier Sires product manager. Semen from Premier Sires bulls is artificially inseminated in 2.5 million dairy cows each year.

"To get a bull in a Premier Sires team is often the pinnacle of these people's careers.

To breed an elite bull is a long process, Wilson says. "Nearly all farmers are constantly trying to improve the quality of their animals through better breeding."

On Breeders' Day the visiting farmers will eat lunch and see a parade of bulls at the Newstead Bull Farm, adjacent to LIC headquarters.

They will receive a certificate and framed photograph and hear about advances in artificial breeding.

One of the bulls at LIC's Newstead bull farm.



Mike Wilson

SPEAKER LIST

Mike Wilson, premier sires manager; Stuart Bay, chairman, LIC; Simon Worth, bull acquisition manager; David Hale, bull farms manager; Malcolm Ellis, bull acquisition manager; Richard Spelman, general manager R&D; Peter Gatley, general manager genetics.

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— Aaron Berry; Berran Holsteins, Peel Forest, Canterbury

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Getting the plan right

SOUND PLANNING and simple strategies will help dairy farmers achieve their objectives on calving patterns, and get good quality heifer replacements, says CRV AmBreed.

A common intervention strategy used to affect fertility is to synchronise non-cycling cows, but some myths persist about how this works and what a farmer can expect from the strategy, the company says.

“Trials with improved heat detection aids such as Estroprotect heat detectors demonstrate that more cows than previously thought show up on heat before fixed time insemination. This means that with synchronisation it still pays to monitor those treated animals and identify those cycling early.

“Intervention will not reduce empty rates but will get your cows into milk earlier.... If you are using intervention, you need to get your programme started early rather than waiting to identify non-cyclers during the mating period.

“Pre-mating heats are essential to ensure the cows that need to be treated can be programmed for fixed time insemination as close

to start of mating as possible.”

Success or failure of an intervention programme will not be measured on empty rates but on the percentage of cows pregnant after six weeks of mating. Farmers need to work with their vet on these programmes, “but make sure your CRV AmBreed field consultant is aware of your plans so you have heat detectors on hand and your AI Technician is organised ahead of time,” the company suggests.

Cows that have a shorter gestation period will be in calf for less time and in milk for a longer time. It can be a useful strategy to condense calving, particularly if as a result of recent droughts you find your calving pattern is stretching out.

By measuring this trait in bulls we give farmers another tool to compact the calving period, giving cows a longer time to recover relative to the ideal mating period window.

This increases the chances of the cow getting back in calf to AI.

As a result of NZAEL's work on developing a genetic evaluation of calving difficulty, they have now established gestation length as an

MAKE AI A SUCCESS

- Ensure staff are competent in identifying bulling cows.
- Store strong chemicals away from the working area (i.e. xyliz, chloride or lime).
- Farmer should fill out the mating docket book prior to the AI technician's arrival.
- Provide a clean, sheltered area away from sunlight and rain for the technician to load pistolettes, especially if working in open cattle yards.
- No smoking around loading area or the technician.
- Farm personnel must attend while AI technician is working (an OSH requirement). AI tank should be protected from shed cleaning procedures and kept dry and cool
- Stand cows quietly while waiting for the technician. Don't bring cows into the shed with motorbike or dog as this causes cows to stress and will result in lower conception rates
- After AI, allow cows to make their way from the shed at their own pace, back to the paddock.
- Tail paint or place heat detectors after the AI technician has visited.
- Supply a bucket of warm water and brush to allow the technician to clean up. This reduces the chances of spreading disease.

official BV.

CRV AmBreed says it offers a good variety of bulls known to have

shorter gestation length. Using short gestation sires is another tool in the mating management toolkit.

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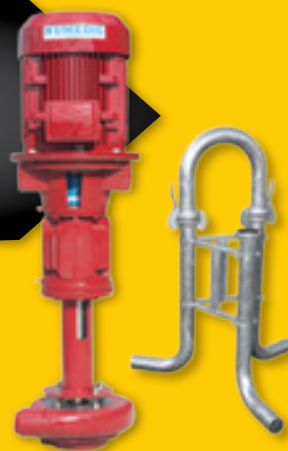


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DCT for cure and prevention

ERIC HILLERTON

DRY COW treatment (DCT) is the infusion of each quarter of the mammary gland (through the teat canal and into the teat sinus) with an antibiotic preparation immediately after the last milking of the lactation. Usually it is formulated to persist three-seven weeks. Infusion of antibiotic preparations into heifers before calving is also considered DCT.

Why was it developed?

Antibiotic treatment of bacterial mastitis in cattle first became available 65 years ago. Soon after penicillin was obtainable, Jim Pearson in Northern Ireland used a solution as a prophylactic (preventive) treatment for summer mastitis, a severe suppurative condition mostly seen in dry cows at pasture during summer in northern Europe. He was able to reduce the incidence of summer mastitis from 10% to less than 1%. Control was achieved but the preparations only provided 14-18 days of protection.

The need for a longer-acting product was obvious because new infections occur at a much higher rate during the dry period than in lactation. Some 48% of cows were found infected in the dry period, most in the first three weeks, and half of the infections persisted into the next lactation. Most were *Staphylococcus aureus* and non-agalactiae streptococcal infections and 50-80% of all UK cows were found infected.

A New Zealand survey at that time found 52-60% of cows infected with subclinical mastitis. DCT was further developed since the risk of contaminating milk with antibiotic was minimal, treatment costs could be reduced and expensive diagnostic services could be avoided.

Oliver and others found they could eliminate 90% of streptococcal and 50% of staphylococcal infections using experimental penicillin-streptomycin mixes, or sodium cloxacillin.

Beecham Laboratories then produced a slow-release formulation of the relatively insoluble salt 1% benzathine cloxacillin in an oil base, which they claimed was active for the first 21 days of the dry period.

This preparation reduced the number of infected quarters by at least 80%.

They reported 90% efficacy in preventing new infections by *Staphylococcus aureus* in the dry period but only 58% efficacy in the prevention of new streptococcal infections. Many other studies subsequently reported similar results, e.g. for use of 500mg benzathine cloxacillin from Australia and from the US.

What is DCT today?

Dry cow therapy is predominantly applied as a blanket treatment of all quarters of all cows dried off and intended to remain in the herd, and has been part of SAMM recommendations since 1995.

A number of products based on long-acting penicillin or cephalonium groups are available in New Zealand by prescription from veterinarians.

While these products vary in their persistence and thus the duration of protection against new infections, they vary little in their efficacy in curing existing infections. All avail-

original product, benzathine cloxacillin.

Many dry cow trials have been conducted using a wide variety of antibiotic preparations. These are difficult to compare and, not surprisingly, occasional reports of ineffectiveness have appeared.

The first of these from Bratlie has been widely quoted. Field studies are difficult to design; most have some faults and a number have given perverse results. Difficulties arise in field studies from limited sampling and bacteriology (suggested earlier by Morris to be a key limiting factor),

or because the formulations and doses of antimicrobials may not be administered accurately. In the Bratlie studies, quarters were incorrectly assumed to be independent and the control group had a different proportion of infections to the treatment groups.

The overwhelming majority of trials with DCT indicate that the rate of elimination of infection over the dry period is at least 50% and in some instances

may be as high as 90%, compared with an average background of 10% spontaneous elimination in untreated quarters.

Prevention

In 1975, at the beginning of a now-polarised international debate on DCT, Prof. Funke of Sweden said that "prophylaxis is the most important part of mastitis control...". Overall, mastitis control strategies have been successful, and DCT in particular.

Using the relationship defined by Eberhardt and others between bulk milk cell count and infection rate, it can be shown that the prevalence of mastitis in good-to-average herds in many countries has been reduced about six-fold to fewer than 10% of cows infected. Historically, studies on the prevention of new infections in the dry period are fewer than studies of cure rates, because negative control groups are essential to demonstrate effectiveness, and large numbers of uninfected cows are needed.

Early studies on prophylaxis in herds with a high prevalence of infection may also have been affected by variation amongst cows in susceptibility to infection in that cows that are less susceptible (and so uninfected) may add bias to the negative group. Untreated control groups in commercial farm studies are rare as few farmers want an untreated group when they expect good success from DCT, and the herds used were small, making it hard to find sufficient uninfected cows to give a viable trial design.

• Eric Hillerton is DairyNZ's chief scientist. Article sourced from DairyNZ Technical Series April issue.

KEEPING INFECTIONS AWAY

Dry cow treatment is an infusion of antibiotic into the mammary gland after the last milking of a lactation.

- Effective in curing existing infections.
- Effective in preventing new infections – most occur just after dry-off or just before calving.
- Must always be used on all quarters of the cow.
- Low cell-count cows, and those with no other history of mastitis, can be protected by using an internal teat sealant at dry-off.
- Teat sealant may protect the udder for a few months but will not cure infections so is not for high cell-count cows.
- Organic producers may be able to use teat sealants depending on which standards are in use.

able products are active against staphylococci and streptococci but not against Gram negative bacteria e.g. *Escherichia coli*, *Klebsiella* species or *Pseudomonads*.

Why do we use DCT?

Therapy

A mastitis control scheme that included recommendations to use DCT on all cows in the herd was first proposed by Dodd and Neave on the basis that the prevalence of infection is a product of the rate of new infections and the duration of existing infections.

Field studies in the UK showed that, irrespective of treatment of clinical cases, new infections were occurring at a rate of two infections/cow/year and that 70% of infections survived longer than 12 months.

The rate of new infection could be reduced by limiting exposure to bacteria through improved hygiene, treatment of clinical cases in lactating cows and better machine milking technology.

Treatment of clinical cases during lactation often resulted in good clinical cure but poor bacteriological cure, but treatment of sub-clinical mastitis is not practical or economically justified.

Dry cow treatment achieved significantly higher rates of bacteriological cure.

Efficacy varies with the type and dose of antibiotic used. Storper and Ziv showed that effective cure rates (number of eliminated infections less number of new infections) varied from 80-88% (between herd variability). This is similar to other reports using persistent formulations of the



Eric Hillerton

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Australian farmers have been urged to act now to prevent milk fever in cows during calving.

Oz farmers told to act on milk fever

AUSTRALIAN DAIRY farmers have been told to act now to prevent milk fever in cows due to calve in the coming months.

Dr Barry Zimmermann,

who manages Dairy Australia's InCalf program, says every dairy farmer's dream is to eliminate milk fever from the herd.

"Milk fever is a nutri-

tional disease so it can be prevented, but the trick is in the timing. It's too late once the cows have calved. The key to preventing milk fever is suitable nutrition

in the three weeks leading up to calving."

During this time cows need to receive a diet with the right amount of energy, protein, fibre, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus and trace elements, and the correct DCAD (difference between cations (sodium and potassium) and anions (chloride and sulphur)) level in diets.

"It's quite a fine balance," Zimmermann says. "To achieve the correct balance you need to have all components of the pre-calving diet tested for calcium, magnesium, phosphorus and DCAD levels.

"Even if you use a commercially prepared transition ration, you'll need to consider the impact of other components of the springer diet, such as pasture and hay."

Feeds which carry a high risk of milk fever

include pasture treated with effluent, high potassium molasses, legume pastures and concentrates or grain with added sodium bicarbonate.

"The benefits of preventing milk fever are far reaching so it may be worth working with a nutritionist to achieve the correct balance in the springer diet."

The most obvious benefit is not having the stress and cost of dealing with downer cows but the less visible benefits affect the bottom line and animal welfare.

"For every clinical case of milk fever you see, up to eight other cows may be affected in some way. Preventing milk fever also improves milk production, herd fertility, herd health and animal welfare."

InCalf transition feeding workshops are being held around the country.

'Transition feeding can lift returns'

HELP IS at hand for Australian dairy farmers and their staff preparing springer cows for the coming lactation and joining period.

Dairy Australia's InCalf program has produced the booklet *Springers: repro ready* to help farmers' improve herd fertility. And they offer to train advisors to dairy farmers such as nutritionists, vets, feed company staff, farm consultants and factory field officers.

Management in the three weeks leading up to calving has a major impact on the herd's production and fertility and on dairy business profit.

Costing about A\$20-60/cow, a transition feeding programme can return up to A\$200/cow.

Dr Barry Zimmermann, who manages Dairy Australia's InCalf programme, says transition from a dry, heavily pregnant cow to early lactation involves major metabolic changes, and feeding a transition diet for three weeks before calving can make a big difference.

The transition diet may include a commercially prepared lead feed.

Springers: repro ready outlines the important management steps to ensure you make the most of the effort and money spent on a transition programme.

"This pays for itself in saved treatment costs, increased milk production and improved herd fertility. But many farmers tell us the benefit they value most is reduced stress levels by not having to treat sick and downer cows during the busy period of early lactation," he says.

The booklet is available from service providers or at www.dairyaustralia.com.au/farm/fertility

ONE THING YOU CAN AGREE ON



Bells, whistles ring good change

TONY HOPKINSON

ALL THE bells and whistles are sounding at Malcolm and Jenny Gerring's Waihi farm since the commissioning of their new dairy – the work of Waikato Dairy Builders.

"We started doing our homework at the 2010 National Fielddays and when we began milking in February 2011 everything fell into place," says Gerring.

They have owned the farm since 1979 and the herd is at present being contract milked by their son Anthony and his fiancée Sandra. It is 11oha (eff.) rolling-to-hilly country, well subdivided and milking 285 cross bred cows. Last season – with the change of shed – they produced 119,600kgMS. "This season's production is up but not as much as some."

Annual rainfall is 1800-2000mm and the area gets short, heavy downpours. "We cope with the heavy rain because the soil type is Waihi Ash – very forgiving."

The property is self contained with all young stock on the farm; it is all grass with no cropping. They feed PKE to the herd with mobile troughs year round except for winter when feeding from troughs causes too much pasture damage. They use Pasture Mag fertiliser from Ballance.

"Following the 2010 Fielddays Jim Harris and his partner Chris Pickin of Waikato Dairy Builders were first out of the blocks and we have worked well together to get the job done."

It was decided to build a 30-aside herringbone dairy with a round yard and a Waikato Milking Systems milking plant on a new site a short distance from the old 18-aside dairy shed. Gerring had his own digger and in October 2010 started the earthworks including a large cutting to link up with the old race system.

"It was suggested we build the shed without an

outside wall, but knowing the area and the winds that blow here this idea took me a while to get used to."

Gerring says in practice the lack of a wall has not even been noticed; the stock are quiet and cow flow excellent. Many small

all the bigger 'heaps', and large volumes of water from jets under the gates direct yard cleanings to a central sump, then to a holding pond and out to a travelling irrigator. Sometimes two sweeps of the yard are needed but no hosing down.

The changeover to the new dairy was in February 2011 and was straightforward. Before the change they had let the cows walk through the new dairy with the gates all open, to break the ice.

"The main difference at the first milkings was the animals getting used to the new noises and being in different parts of the shed than they were used to."

In the old shed, milking time could be up to 2hr 30min.; now in the spring milking time is down to 1hr 30min.

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Malcolm Gerring



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features contribute to the facility. One is a simple pipe attached to the pit wall that makes it easy for milkers to step up to check cows' identification tags, and a simple pulley system either side for drafting off cows for AB, etc.

"The Eziflo gates are fantastic and can be opened or shut from anywhere in the pit length."

It is a simple procedure to follow the last cow of the row being let out to close the gate behind her. There is no need for any extra walking to physically close or open gates.

Other features include an AB race where the inseminating can be done from the outside, solar panels to reduce water heating costs and a yard washing system that automatically cleans the yard following milking.

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Remote draft easy as txt

FARMERS CAN now remotely set up the drafting of cows for next milking from any location with cellphone coverage, and in the time taken to send a text.

This is a feature of the new LIC Protrack Drafter released this month. It works on Apple iPhone, iPod Touch and iPad devices.

Says LIC general man-

ager farm systems, Rob Ford, "Farmers enter the cow numbers into their device and the direction they want to draft them, then once they get back within range of their shed

Nick Vollebregt



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Murray Fox

it will sync with the Pro-track Drafter system. Milking will take place, as normal, and Protrack Drafter will draft those cows out, as instructed." This identifies cows by

the yard, and see one that needs drafting." Murray Fox, Gordon-ton, also took part in a trial and liked the revamped milking screen for use in the pit.

"It shows you all the information you want at milking: which cows have been drafted, which cows are due and total cow numbers, and it pops up as a notice when a cow goes through the gate."

identifying their EID tag as they leave the shed after milking; then it drafts them as instructed, automatically. "It's a simple, low-cost, extra pair of hands, at a moderate price," Ford says.

Nick and Wendy Vollebregt took part in a trial last year on their Kiwitahi farm.

"We installed the original Protrack Drafter in 2011.... The new features make it user friendly and the mobile application is good.... It's handy for when I have all the cows in

"It shows you all the information you want at milking: which cows have been drafted, which cows are due and total cow numbers, and it pops up as a notice when a cow goes through the gate.

"They've made it so you can name draft schedules, like AI cows, and they've added in a place for you to enter notes, which is a great idea. I can remind myself about things to do tomorrow or when the vet is coming."

www.youaskedforit.co.nz

Matched pair in Italian's power train

CAREFUL PAIRING of engine and transmission is a key feature of Power Farming's medium-power offering from SAME-Deutz Fahr.

This company's the SAME Silver Continuo has CVT gearbox developed and made by SDF specifically to match its own group's Deutz Tier III engine, a 4-cyl. turbo, the New Zealand distributor says. It can run on 100% bio-diesel.

Says national product manager Ken Bill, "This is a day-to-day utility tractor - flexible and with transmission suited to repetitive tasks such as feed loading that demand a smooth transition between forward and reverse, and within a speed band."

Electronically controlled power lifting at the rear eases the driver's task, so does the variable transmission, Bill says.

The transmission delivers power in a stepless gradient as ground speed rises, matching load and

ground conditions. It has two ranges: heavy duty and normal. Set to heavy and the tractor can operate in a band of ground speed from 1km/h to 24km/h; normal range takes that up to 40km/h.

Driving the Continuo is as simple as a car thanks to the electronic systems handling engine speed and power delivery (no programming); in manual mode the throttle reverts to a straight accelerator.

A third driving mode (PTO) is chosen automatically with activation of the PTO, ensuring a constant

PTO speed is maintained regardless of terrain and conditions, the foot throttle adjusting for forward



speed while engine speed remains steady. The operating speed can then be stored and de-activated by push-button.

TO PAGE 41 >>

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Mobile weighing suits remote sites

A NEW mobile weighing platform with three-way drafting, built for bigger farms or where properties are some distance from each other, is new from Permbrand S.I. Ltd.

“Being able to use the scales at different locations is a cost saving to farm owners,” said manager of Permbrand S. I. Ltd, Steve Waters.

Built on a tandem axle trailer, the platform is raised and locked for travelling, then lowered for use. An electro/hydraulic mechanism performs the raising and lowering.

When positioned and lowered it sits on the ground and can be used at the end of a race or gateway, with railings and panels to direct the stock after weighing.

The mobile platform has Gallagher Weigh Scales sitting on the



weigh cells, with an EID reader panel.

Figures recorded can be downloaded to home computers for storage.

“With weighing to check on growth rates or to draft stock for

selling, accurate figures are paramount.” The animal enters the platform, the rear gate shuts, the weight is recorded and the three-way gate system changes according to the weight options already programmed. The gates are oper-

ated by air rams from a portable air compressor.

All panels and floor mesh are galvanised and the mesh allows any foreign material to fall through. www.permbrand.co.nz Tel: 03 347 3171

Many strands to life on family farm

TONY HOPKINSON

A LOT of the Mathers farm at Waihi is devoted to rearing and finishing beef, managed by co-owner Margaret, a fan of Taragate products.

“We’ve used Taragate for as long as I can remember. The multi-strand gate is ideal, especially easier for a woman to use.”

Gary Mathers has lived all his life on the farm and Margaret is a third-generation member of a Waihi family that own farms on Mathers Road ten minutes from Waihi.

One dairy unit share milked by a family member has 380 cross bred cows and the second with 200 cross bred cows



is milked by employed staff.

Gary runs a contracting business doing full cultivation for crops including planting and maize harvesting for silage. He also does silage and hay and hedge cutting. This business is run by Gary with

TO PAGE 41 >>

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info@milkhub.co.nz

Dairy day out

TONY HOPKINSON

DAIRY FARMERS'

gear was to the fore at a recent Giltrap Agrizone 'drive and try' field day at the Piarere, south of Cambridge, property of Brian and Joan Woods.

Fronting the lineup were Case IH tractors plus machines from Kuhn, Lely, Paddon, Sylvan, Hubbards, Hardi Sprayers, James Engineering, Hustler and Duncan Ag – all agency products.

Woods' farm had paddocks recently made available by the harvesting of maize for silage.

New Case IH models displayed included a Maxxum 125 ROPS tractor.

Said principal Andrew

Giltrap, "We see this series more for the dairy farmer as it has all the qualities they need and the improved access that comes with a ROPS model."

The tractor has a 6-cyl. 125hp engine driving through 16x16 transmission with power shift. Hydraulics centres on three double-acting remotes with plenty of grunt via 80L/min pump.

Dairy farmers especially during the winter feeding out season – shifting stock and collecting calves – need plenty of room for quick access/exit, especially when wearing wet-weather gear. So the ROPS version is seen as ideal.

Features include hand

transmission levers and it has ample power to drive bigger feed-out and mixer wagons common on dairy farms. The PTO is 2-speed.

The tractor can be supplied with a front loader of the buyer's choice; various wheel options are available.

Tel. 07 827 7159

www.caseih.co.nz



Andrew Giltrap

Italian's power train

» FROM PAGE 39

The transmission's 'power zero' function averts the need to use the braking system when having to stop on slopes. A proportionally engaged PTO system also ensures the transmission is protected from sudden load peaks. Four PTO speeds are on offer with that proportional control.

The hydraulic system has two valves with fully programmable flow rates for multiple implement use. The system also delivers energy savings of up to 2kw, thanks to flow sensing solenoid valves that determine whether hydraulic oil flow is required, and diverting unneeded oil back into the transmission.

Cab location slightly forward of the rear axle and a short bonnet give good visibility, and rear vision to the drawbar is on a more user-friendly angle than most brands, Power Farming says. Turning circle is 3.55m.

Tel. 07 902 2200

www.same-tractors.com

Many strands

» FROM PAGE 40

help from family members. They have a beef farm of 10oha. All their farms are rolling to hilly.

Margaret rears 200 calves from April to Christmas with the early calves bought at the Tuakau sale and some sourced locally. All are reared to finishing. "Rearing your own stock means they are quieter and easier to handle."

The stock are frequently shifted to maintain growth rates and maximise the use of grass. With the shifts and the need to sub-divide breaks,

and to move the stock, Margaret uses the Taragate reels, standards and tape. "We use 20mm tape and find that best for the stock to see but not be spooked."

She uses this width tape in her two and three strand Taragates and finds them easy to use rather than wrestling with heavier wire versions or steel/wooden gates not swung properly.

"The gates have to be at least two strands especially when the calves are younger."

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ON ITS way to Beijing – overland – Land Rover’s one-millionth Discovery is tackling all sorts of weather and terrain on this 13-country, 50-day, 12,865km promo tour.

The ‘Journey of Discovery’ trip that began at Birmingham, UK, ends at one of this maker’s fastest growing markets, China. Four Land Rover Experience experts are aboard.

The expedition aims to raise £1million for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Four Land Rover Discoverys are making the trip, ending at the Beijing motor show on April 23.



The challenge recalls ‘The First Overland Expedition’ of 1955, in which Series 1 Land Rovers set out from Birmingham to Beijing.

That expedition had to divert

to Singapore, but in the spirit of the original challenge the Discovery will be crossing many of Land Rover’s major markets including the UK, Russia and China.

Land Rover introduced its original Discovery 23 years ago, the third model to sit between the Range Rover and the Defender. It has won 200 awards worldwide.



Chips can save diesel

BERNARD LILBURN

TUNING CHIPS from New Zealand owned company ECU Chips are said to boost the power of diesel and petrol engines with electronic fuel injection.

The company’s website says, for example, that a chip fitted to this writer’s 3.2L diesel powered vehicle would boost its power output from the maker’s 147kW and 450Nm torque to 185kW and 505 Nm torque. And fuel use would drop, the company claims.

Mostly it talks about the Toyota Hilux, publishing happy customers’ testimonies. But remember the Hilux is now the lowest-powered ute on the mainstream New Zealand market.

The chip works by ‘remapping’ the vehicle computer, mostly, I suspect, by increasing the rail pressures in new common rail engines or the turbo boost in others.

The ECU unit allows adjustable power and speed range settings with a small screwdriver. There is lots of information on how the unit enhances engine performance, determined by the number of ‘clicks’ you wind on the adjustable unit attached to your firewall.

This writer’s vehicle has a chip fitted, set at with one click short of maximum power and speed.

The old adage ‘no poke without smoke’ applies, and users will notice more black smoke, which is unburnt fuel.

Conversely, on an older model, with an older version of the engine (129kW), a Steinbauer chip fitted to that vehicle gave a power boost to 150kW, and the fuel consumption fell a lot compared to the standard tuning – and without the smoke. I can’t say the same of the ECU unit.

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NZ Patent No 521150 & 544190,
550635, 545042 International
Patents 2003267874, 03748807.9
Further patents pending

“We’ve learned more about mastitis in the past two springs than in the previous ten years.”

When James Machin took over as herd manager on a South Otago property in March 2010, he knew his work was cut out for him. The previous sharemilker hadn’t been aggressive enough with early detection and treatment of mastitis cases, and the BTSCC’s were up around 380,000.

James attacked the problem in the spring of 2010, but the bulk tank cell count was 800,000 at the first pick-up. Challenges with the treatment used and environmental conditions just weren’t bringing the problem under control.

At a dry period seminar hosted by Clutha Vets, James heard about whole-herd treatment with Cepravin®. The turnaround has been stunning. By late October 2011 the cell counts were around 100,000. Milk production was up 23 per cent on last season.

Says James, “I’ve learned more about mastitis in the past two springs than in the previous ten years! We’ll definitely be sticking with the Cepravin – there’s no question about it.”

Boosting your dairy profits could be as simple as re-thinking how you manage mastitis. See the gains other farmers have achieved at www.milkingit.co.nz



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