

Feb-Mar 2024

Inside Dairy

Your levy in action

Managing uncertainty

Farmers share their tactics



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DairyNZ 



Over the fence...

While it might be a bit late for New Year wishes, I hope your festive break was relaxing and enjoyable, and that you're all feeling re-energised as we move further into 2024.

So far, this season has emphasised the change and volatility our sector faces, with the forecast milk price fluctuating significantly in a relatively short space of time as market demand lifts, alongside Government changes that influence our sector.

While change can be challenging, it can also create opportunities for growth. Our sector has a proud history of sharing knowledge, and we can learn from others who've already been through similar times. In this issue of *Inside Dairy*, we talk to a small group of farmers from around the country who tell us how they look beyond a single season to proactively manage uncertainty, and what's important to their success.

DairyNZ's world-leading scientists, economists and modellers continue to develop solutions to the challenges facing farmers – including changing regulations and consumer expectations. This work includes Low N Systems and Less Methane research programmes. The former aims to help farmers significantly reduce nitrogen losses, and the latter focuses on developing mitigation solutions farmers can use to reduce on-farm emissions, while maintaining productivity and profitability.

Outside our research, we've continued to strongly advocate for policies that are informed by science and make sense on-farm. We had some positive progress during the coalition Government's first 100 days in office, and there is a genuine willingness from them to work with the sector and farmers.

As 2024 progresses, DairyNZ is committed to working with you to ensure dairying and its people continue to thrive. We're firmly focused on achieving the best outcomes for the sector – and for the rest of New Zealand.

As always, I'm keen to hear your feedback or views on DairyNZ and its work, so please email me anytime at campbell.parker@ceo.dairynz.co.nz

Nga mihi,

Campbell Parker
DairyNZ chief executive

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On the cover:

Amy Padilla, who contract-milks in Taranaki with her husband James, features in this issue alongside other farmers outlining how they manage the 'known' while factoring in the unexpected.



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Inside Dairy is the official magazine of DairyNZ Ltd. It is circulated among all New Zealand dairy farmers, and sector organisations and professionals.



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Planning through uncertainty

How are farmers managing their business and workforce planning in a constantly-changing landscape? We talk to farmers on three farms nationwide, including James and Amy Padilla (left), at the vat with farm manager Charlie and farm assistant Danny.



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Choose your best sires with NZAEL

We outline how NZAEL's Breeding Worth Index can play a key role in helping you lift the value of your herd over time.



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Testing the FVI at scale in the Waikato

Did the Forage Validation Index validation trial predictions match actual performance?



We appreciate your feedback

Email insidedairy@dairynz.co.nz or call us on 0800 4 DairyNZ (0800 4 324 7969).



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DairyNZ Budget Case Studies farmers Don and Kirsten Watson.

Top operators share 2023/24 budgets

Dairy farmers across New Zealand have shared their financial budgets and farm stories for the 2023/24 season.

The 15 businesses profiled range from owner-operators and owners with contract milkers through to herd-owning sharemilkers. They're a mix of low- and high-input farms, autumn and split calving farms, and one organic farm.

Each farm has provided mid-season updates through January. To find out how the season is going for these farms and what budget revision and updates have been made to manage the rest of the season, visit dairynz.co.nz/budgetcasestudies

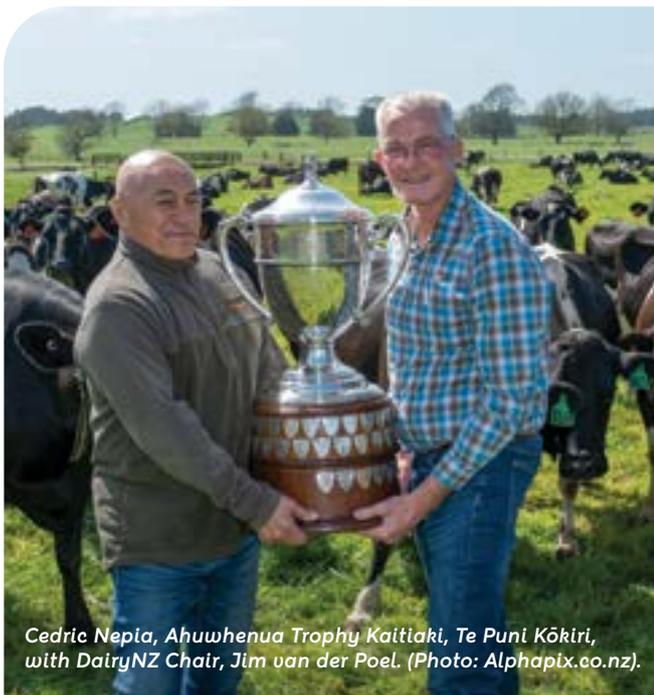
Driving better conception-based fertility decisions

Understanding your animals' potential fertility and reproductive performance is now easier with a new conception-based fertility estimated breeding value (EBV) recently introduced by New Zealand Animal Evaluation Limited (NZAEL).

The new EBV represents an animal's ability to breed replacement heifers that conceive early in the mating period. It also provides a better predictor of whether a cow will be culled for Fertility failure than the current Fertility EBV.

Accurate fertility information is critical to progressing genetic gain. This move is an example of the continual improvement NZAEL is making to the animal evaluation system in New Zealand, to give farmers the tools they need to drive genetic gain in dairy herds.

For more information, visit dairynz.co.nz/NZAEL-updates



Cedric Nepia, Ahuwhenua Trophy Kaitiaki, Te Puni Kōkiri, with DairyNZ Chair, Jim van der Poel. (Photo: Alphapix.co.nz).

Celebrating Ahuwhenua Trophy excellence

The 2024 finalists for the Ahuwhenua Trophy competition, which celebrates excellence in Māori farming, are set to be announced this month. Finalist judging and public field days take place in March and April.

The competition has a legacy that's almost a century long. Both the Ahuwhenua Trophy and the Ahuwhenua Young Māori Farmer Award recognise the value Māori add to dairying in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The winners will be announced at the awards dinner being held on Friday, 17 May, 2024. Find out more at ahuwhenuatrophy.maori.nz



FREE short courses for everyone

From farm assistants to business owners, Dairy Training has a course for you and your team. Our tutors are experienced farmers who offer farmer learners practical knowledge and real-world insights.

| Course | Experienced farm assistants | Assistant managers | Managers | Potential business owners | Business owners |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Progression management Grow your people, technology, and financial skills in your current role. | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Business by the Numbers Focus on end-to-end budgeting, and cashflow planning and monitoring (for all budgeting levels). | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Write a Business Plan Clarify what you want to get out of dairy farming and walk away with a business plan. | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Contract milking Build your understanding of contracts and financial skills to give yourself the best chance of success in contract milking. | | | | ✓ | ✓ |

Courses start in February throughout the country.
 Find out more and enrol now at dairytraining.co.nz

Dairy training
 By DairyNZ

PEOPLE EXPO

Creating great workplaces

Expo events in demand

After first-rate feedback from farmers last year, People Expo events are back in 2024 with a stellar lineup of speakers set to go, including leading economist Shamubeel Eaqub.



Perfect balance of information, presentation and thought-provoking topics.

That's one farmer's feedback from last year, and now DairyNZ and Dairy Women's Network are teaming up to deliver another round of People Expo events in 2024. Under the spotlight this time: creating a workplace where people understand their role, know their purpose, feel valued, enjoy working together – and want to stay.

To help you tackle the big issues around recruiting, employing and retaining people on-farm, our events will feature thought leaders from within and beyond the sector – and are a carefully-designed fun and enjoyable format. Aimed at farm employers, managers, rural professionals and aspiring leaders, each People Expo also connects farmers and experts so they can share knowledge and ideas.

Register now

for 2024



Each People Expo event is free.

Register online at dairynz.co.nz/peopleexpo

- Whangārei | Wednesday, 13 March.
- Invercargill | Tuesday, 19 March.
- Pahiatua | Tuesday, 26 March.
- Rotorua | Wednesday, 27 March.

2024 lineup

Shamubeel Eaqub: "It is never going to be easier to find staff than it is right now."

That was leading economist Shamubeel Eaqub's message in his thought-provoking presentation to farmers at last year's events. This time around, he'll speak to global, national and regional economic and workforce changes, and outline why farm businesses must act differently and look in new places to stay successful.



Dairy farmers Sue and David Fish

will focus on the ethos of teamwork and how they empower their team to deliver results and efficiencies for the farm through training and creating a workplace that promotes work-life balance. Their family-owned-and-operated Waikato dairy farm business – Westmorland Estate – includes three farms. Their motto: *Together WE succeed.*



MyFarm Investment's chief commercial officer Chris Parsons

will share his story of teamwork and leadership from his days in the NZ Defence Force. His time there included special forces missions (for which he was decorated three times) and he also led multiple organisational transformations. More recently, Chris was CEO of NZ Rural Leaders and, in a volunteer capacity, part of a small virtual team that successfully helped evacuate 563 Afghans to New Zealand in the aftermath of the Taliban takeover.



Delivered in partnership with



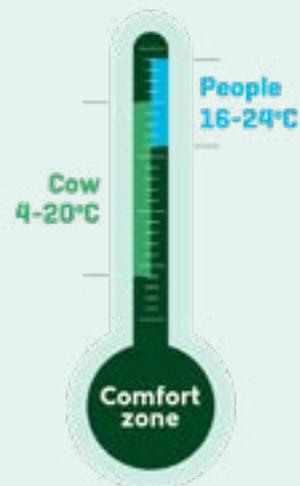
Keeping cows cool

Cows are more sensitive to heat than us – so if you're hot, they're hotter. Temps get high enough right across NZ to cause heat stress in cows during summer. Here's how you can help them cope.

Whether you want to make small or big changes, managing heat stress effectively will improve animal wellbeing and help prevent a drop in milk production. Autumn can still throw in some hot days, so keep an eye on the weather and your cows.

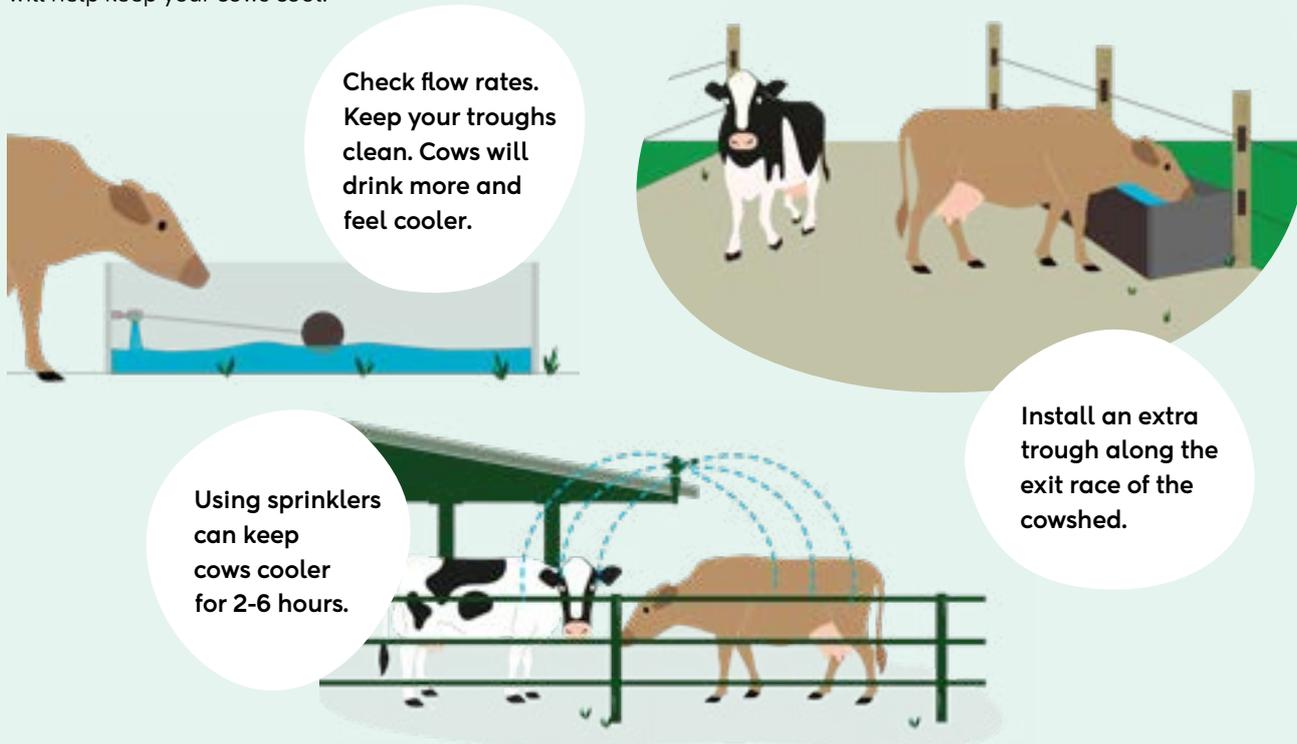
You'll also need to make sure you and your team keep cool and sun-safe, too. Drink plenty of water throughout the day, wear hats, sunglasses and sunscreen and take regular breaks out of the sun.

Check out the tips below, and get more tips and info at dairynz.co.nz/heatstress



What you can do now

Here are some short-term actions which will help keep your cows cool:



Planning for next summer

Were your short-term actions enough to keep your cows cool? If not, here are some long-term actions to consider:

- Develop a tree-planting plan to increase shade. You might be able to achieve multiple outcomes,

including biodiversity and carbon capture.

- Install a sprinkler system or fans at the cow shed. Keeping the shed cool will improve the comfort of your cows and people.

- Use flexible milking routines to reduce the number of afternoon milkings. For information on the potential trade-offs of this approach, see dairynz.co.nz/flexible-milking

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Be aware of what's coming, but always look to your values: they will never change.



Planning through uncertainty

We talk to farmers from across the country who tell us how they look beyond a single season, to proactively manage uncertainty.

Dairy farmers have it all thrown at them; sector regulations, staffing woes, a changing climate, inflation and a fluctuating milk price, to mention only a few challenges. What makes a good strategy in highly uncertain environments? Effective and agile business planning is vital to any farm's ongoing success. That planning should also factor in workforce needs, so our sector and its farmers recruit the right people from a variety of backgrounds – and make dairying attractive enough for them to want to stay.

It's also important to have the right tools, information and resources to help you plan and pivot (see page 12). *Inside Dairy* talked to farmers in Northland, Taranaki and Southland to get their take on managing the known while factoring in the unexpected.

Planning takes vision

Northland dairy farmer and chairman for Dairy Holdings Greg Gent says good business planning starts with a vision.



It's your north star, where you'd like to end up. As simple as that. Whether it's a corporation or a family. You've got to agree what that looks like.

Visions have to be measurable, motivating and simple, he says, and they need to be broken down into manageable segments.

"If you're starting off as a 20-year-old and your vision is to buy a farm, that alone can be daunting. Break it down into bite sizes, so you stay motivated," says Greg. "Perhaps aim for being a contract milker by a set date. Spend more time on the steps towards the vision, rather than the actual vision itself. Boards that get themselves into trouble often can't agree on a vision, but once that is clarified, everything falls into place."

Greg says that when he first joined boards, it was standard to plan 10 years in advance, but that changed over the decades.

"These days I'm nervous to go out longer than five years. Think of the world 10 years ago, would you have predicted where we are today? Five years gives you a fighting chance."

Getting multiple parties to align on a business direction is not always smooth sailing, either.

"With Dairy Holdings as an example, there are two families and the Canadian pension fund. We [the board] spend a lot of time on what their expectations are. We have to deliver and they hold us accountable. If it's a family business, you just stay sitting in a room until you agree."



Outside facilitation can be helpful for family and bigger businesses, says Greg.

"It de-personalises it and takes away some of the presence of the majority shareholder or the CEO."

Meanwhile, Southland herd-owning sharemilkers Steve and Tracy Henderson say since they signed the dotted line for a lease-to-buy agreement in 2023, a vision and long-term business planning is more important than ever before.

Tracy says their vision and values act as a backbone for any weighty decisions.

"Is it our values? Is it our purpose? If the answer is yes, then it could work."

The Hendersons are focused on continuous improvement for themselves, their business and their farm team.

"We exist to grow and improve people. It's our core purpose. If they [new staff] don't want to learn to grow, that would be a drafting gate," Steve says.

He says they will help staff grow, even if it's in areas like human resources or financial literacy, as long as there is growth.



Greg Gent says business planning visions have to be measurable, motivating and simple.

The Hendersons' accountant Kylie Davidson and ex-banker Malcolm Scott now form a strategic team that help them put a realistic lens on the 'good-to-haves' and the 'want-to-haves', says Tracy.

Back in the North Island, Taranaki contract milkers James and Amy Padilla say business planning happens casually over mealtimes, or whenever they run a farm errand together.

"We talk about the farm, finances, our budget, production and how we can save more," Amy says.

They also value their annual meeting with their accountant, Ken Vazey of Schurr and Ireland, saying it keeps them focused on reaching their goal of financial freedom easier and faster, with retirement an ever-present consideration.

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We try to budget for a lower milk payout. If we get more then it's surplus.



Amy and James Padilla are selective about what farms they contract milk on, only selecting farms that are 'flood safe', with enough drainage and resources to help them ride out weather extremes.

Navigating the unknown

All three farm households say uncertainty is ever present.

Greg says a lack of clarity in the environmental space creates sector uncertainty.

"There's conflicting science, and different interpretations by regional councils."

Another challenge is that farming is moving into the administration space.

"Farmers are doers. There's a cultural non-fit. It's easier for big corporations, they simply recruit what they need. Smaller enterprises stretch themselves to develop admin skills, or pay consultants to do it," he says.

To pull back situations beyond his control, like inflation or a milk price drop, Greg looks through them.

"We don't change things year-on-year as a result of the milk price. We budget a couple of years out. Look through cycles, otherwise you're in a boom bust mentality around costs. It's not good for business or staff."

Tracy and Steve take some of the unknowns out of an uncertain business environment by what they call 'hedging'.

"We've hedged through milk futures for the last four years. We decided to hedge because we were growing and buying a farm and it was a risky time. Milk futures makes it easier for the bank to recognise that we can stick to our budget. It makes budgeting for the rest of the season simple," Tracy says.

"Over the years that we've hedged, we've lost some and we've won some, but we've been able to meet commitments and not be at the mercy of the milk price."

For the Padilla family, war, inflation, the milk price and weather all bring uncertainty.

James says to regain control they "tighten belts at the beginning of the season".

"We try to budget for a lower milk payout. If we get more, then it's surplus. We also limit the budget as much as we can, but still maintain farm productivity."

Amy adds that 10 years ago, neither wet nor dry events were as extreme as they are now, so climate and weather extremes are a worry.

For this reason, James is selective about what farms they contract milk on, only selecting farms that are 'flood safe'.

To add more certainty to weather events, the Padillas make sure their farm has enough drainage. They also ensure it has sufficient resources as a closed unit, so it's 'food secure' in the event of weather extremes.



Look through cycles, otherwise you're in a boom bust mentality around costs. It's not good for business or staff.



The Hendersons believe business planning is more important than ever before.



To regain control, James and wife Amy tighten their belts at the beginning of the season.

Amy and James hit the books. The couple works with a rural coach to help them sort their workforce planning.



The right people, the right place

Amy Padilla says they're working with a rural coach to help them sort their workforce planning, especially given additional requirements that crept up in recent times as a result of immigration policies.

For example, the couple needs to be accredited employers to recruit farm team members from overseas when they have gaps. And the pay threshold for international workers is now higher than what many locals are paid for entry level roles, says Amy.

Her advice for young staff in particular is that they have to be happy in the dairy sector, because dairy farming is not for the faint-hearted. "You have to be adaptable and teachable."

James adds that it's important to make friends among farmers, neighbours, contractors and tractor drivers. "They're friends, not enemies, and they'll help you in tough times."

Meanwhile, Greg says to retain staff he tries to be an employer of choice.

"It isn't just about money. Treat people as you want to be treated. Match people to roles. That matters a lot. Some people aren't suitable for some things," he says.



It isn't just about money. Treat people as you want to be treated. Match people to roles.



Greg Gent (with Craig Pullar) says retaining staff being an employer of choice. He likes to make sure staff are not on-farm after 5pm.

"We have some rules. We don't like staff on the farm after 5pm in the afternoon, for example, because most of them have kids and wives or partners. And they want a life," Greg says.

Steve and Tracy Henderson's message to staff is that reputation is key.

"You're always working for a reference or next opportunity, not a wage. The minute you get into your wage mindset, you don't think about progression," they say.

The Hendersons take on more people than they need. All of them work the same hours, which means their team always has some flexibility in their day-to-day work patterns.

A team member who has a personal matter to attend to can also be away for a short stint when needed.

There's no hierarchy in the team; and any team member can do any job, says Tracy.

Steve's philosophy on managing uncertainty well summarises the attitudes of all three sets of farmers:

"Don't get too hung up on what may or may not happen in ten years' time. Be aware of what's coming, but always look to your values: they will never change."



Get the tools, do the planning

Check out these useful resources to help you with your business planning.

Access business templates

Use a range of financial templates, covering personal cash budgets, quick budgets, annual budgets, and monthly cashflow budgets for comprehensive financial planning.

Visit dairynz.co.nz/business/budgeting

Dairy Training Limited (DTL) courses

Upskill for business ownership with practical courses from DairyNZ-affiliated DTL, like Write a Business Plan and Business by the Numbers. Gain confidence in achieving long-term goals and effectively managing farm finances.

Visit dairytraining.co.nz

Higher learning opportunities

Pursue degree/diploma courses at Lincoln, Massey, and Waikato universities for advanced strategic farm-system business planning.

DairyBase benchmarks

Power up your decision-making with DairyBase's expert analysis and access robust benchmark information from over 20% of New Zealand farms. Identify opportunities for improvement and enhance your farm system's performance.

Visit dairynz.co.nz/DairyBase

Learn from DairyNZ's Case Study farms

Our Case Study farmers share their DairyBase and Whole Farm Assessment insights online at dairynz.co.nz/budgetcasesstudies – these will help you to gain perspective on both physical and financial analyses and learn from farmers' strategic business plans.

DairyNZ's Mark and Measure

This is a comprehensive course for farming success and financial freedom. Dive into your personalised DairyBase financial profitability analysis, explore farm performance, equity growth, and the six components of financial freedom. You'll get the skills to align your business with future goals for lasting success.

Visit dairynz.co.nz/mark-and-measure

Your bank's financial skills workshops

Check in with your bank; for example, Rabobank offers financial skills workshops for rural communities, catering to both clients and non-clients.

Succession planning with Rural Coach

Rural Coach's experienced team can provide skilled support in navigating crucial discussions about your farm's future.

Visit ruralcoach.co.nz

N loss: how much plantain?

Many farmers are working to reduce N loss. Mixing plantain into pastures is one way of doing this – but how effective is it at low proportions? DairyNZ investigates.

A 2020 Forages for Reduced Nitrate Leaching (FRNL) programme trial indicated when plantain was less than 30% of cows' diets, urinary nitrogen wasn't significantly different from perennial ryegrass/clover pasture. That led to people thinking that over 30% plantain in pasture is needed to make a difference to N loss.

New data

Recent Massey and Lincoln University farmlet trials show that when N loss is measured in a farm system, Ecotain plantain's effectiveness in reducing N losses increases in line with its proportion in pasture. Linear reductions in N leaching have been measured with plantain levels between 15% and 50%. Modelling plantain in OverseerFM also results in linear reductions to N loss at plantain levels between 0-60% of the diet.

The new farmlet trials and modelling are part of the Plantain Potency and Practice programme – a joint research initiative funded by DairyNZ, Ministry for Primary Industries, Fonterra and PGG Wrightson Seeds, and delivered by Lincoln University, Massey University, AgResearch, Lincoln Agritech Ltd, Plant & Food Research and Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research.



Plantain can take six months after broadcasting to be visible, so don't assume it's failed if it's not visible shortly after sowing.



Plantain's lifespan is shorter than perennial ryegrass or white clover.

Plantain persistence

DairyNZ is often asked about plantain's persistence.

Plantain's lifespan is shorter than perennial ryegrass or white clover. Plantain reaches peak abundance in pastures 12 to 18 months after sowing. If it's not over- or under-sown, it usually declines after two to three years in pastures.

Plantain programme partner farms have found regular broadcasting of Ecotain plantain with fertiliser can maintain adequate levels in pastures. Using coated seed helps spread the seed. Plantain can take six months after broadcasting to be visible, so don't assume it's failed if it's not visible shortly after sowing.

Farmers are also combatting broadleaf weeds in plantain pastures by using several strategies. This includes having clean paddocks before establishing plantain. There are now herbicide options for control of broadleaf weeds in plantain mixed pasture swards. Controlling weeds on a three-year cycle and topping up plantain with broadcasting, also help limit weeds.

Myth

You need to have at least 30% plantain in pasture to reduce nitrogen (N) loss, and it doesn't persist well.



BUSTED

Plantain is effective at reducing N loss even at low proportions in pasture. Although it doesn't typically persist as long as other perennial pasture species, there are strategies to maintain adequate levels in mixed swards.

Choose your best sires with NZAEL

Find out how you can make better breeding decisions for improved profitability and enhanced sustainability on your farm, using NZAEL's Breeding Worth Index.



Breeding Worth (BW) is an index that can play a key role in helping you lift the value of your herd over time.

BW uses estimated breeding values and economic values to rank cows and bulls on their ability to breed profitable, efficient replacements. New Zealand Animal Evaluation Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of DairyNZ, calculates and delivers bull BW (see trait examples diagram below, bottom right).

We've also outlined below some of NZAEL's very useful BW bull selection tools (available through DairyNZ's website) which you can use to select the right sires for your herd.

How BW works

As the industry-good organisation for genetic evaluation, NZAEL delivers independent Animal Evaluation (AE) information. AE assesses an animal's performance and genetic potential for production traits (liveweight, milk volume, milkfat protein and milkfat yield) and robustness

traits (somatic cell score, fertility, gestation length, functional survival, body condition score and udder overall). NZAEL performs an independent evaluation for each animal to create a farmer guide which transparently ranks bulls. This provides farmers with a like-for-like comparison, so they can make the best breeding decisions for their herd.

Keeping BW robust

A big part of NZAEL's role is to provide an independent AE system that farmers can trust and that delivers genetic gains. NZAEL is working to improve industry data standards, which will increase accuracy of data collected from both farmers and breeding companies. The more accurate the data, the faster the rates of genetic gain in the dairy herd.

NZAEL works continuously to improve BW and reflect traits that New Zealand farmers find important. This includes developing new Breeding Worth or Breeding Value traits and improving data capture, input, and modelling in the AE system.

Top tools

RAS list

Select bulls based on NZAEL's Ranking of Active Sires (RAS list). Released monthly, it details top-ranking dairy sires according to their Breeding Worth (BW). See dairynz.co.nz/RAS

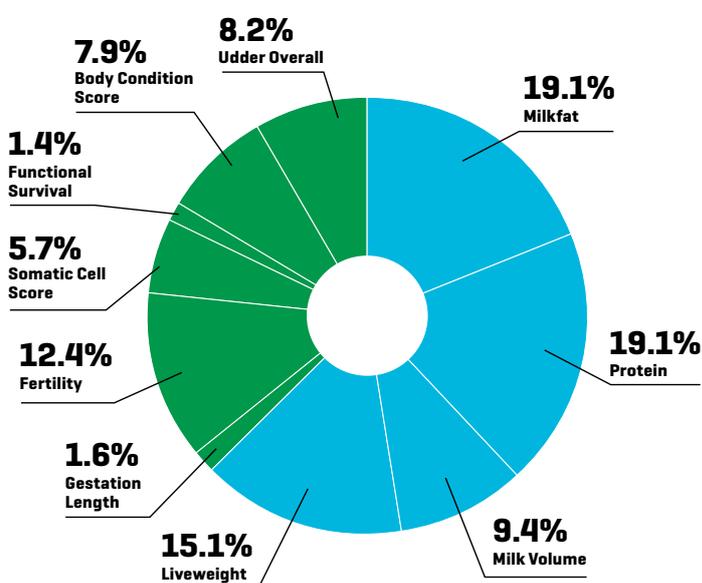
Bull Search

Use this tool to find the best bulls for you. View, filter and compare active sires to create a bull team that meets your breeding goals. See dairynz.co.nz/bull-search

Bull Team Builder

Select bulls from the RAS list or the Bull Search tool and see how your bull team ranks against national benchmarks. Sort bulls based on traits and remove animals which don't meet your criteria. See dairynz.co.nz/bull-team

FIGURE 1. Effective emphasis of traits in the BW Index.





Exploring N loss mitigations



The DairyNZ-led Low N Systems research programme is investigating how combining complementary mitigation strategies can help farmers significantly reduce nitrogen (N) losses.

Programme manager Dr Claire Phyn says DairyNZ has a range of initiatives underway to support farmers so they can lower their environmental footprint and meet regional targets around freshwater quality and ecosystem health.

“There are various N mitigation options available, but not all are complementary when stacked together in a farm system,” says Claire. “Selecting mitigations to significantly reduce N losses can be challenging when farmers are also trying to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ensure farm profitability and resilience.

“Under the Low N Systems programme, we’re investigating ways to combine different mitigation options to achieve significant N loss reductions, while maintaining farm business viability.”

A farmlet trial is underway at Lincoln University Research Dairy Farm (LURDF), combining mitigations that target different aspects of the N cycle. These include lowering N fertiliser use, using diverse pastures that include plantain

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Selecting mitigations to significantly reduce N losses can be challenging when farmers are also trying to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ensure farm profitability and resilience.

and Italian ryegrass, and wintering cows on pasture and baleage instead of crops.

The programme is also working with 38 partner farms in Waikato and Canterbury to understand how farm management practices affect bulk milk urea concentrations over the season.

“We’re aiming to develop a milk-based indicator tool that farmers can use to track and manage their herd’s dietary nitrogen surplus,” says Claire. “That’ll help them identify when they could apply tactical mitigations to reduce the risk of higher urinary N loading onto soils at critical times of the year.

“We’re exploring how grazing management, supplement and fertiliser use and other management decisions are linked with dietary nitrogen and change bulk milk urea.”

Learn more about reducing N loss at dairynz.co.nz/low-N

Research funders and delivery partners

Low N Systems is funded by DairyNZ and the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment with additional co-funding and in-kind support from Fonterra and CRV. DairyNZ, Lincoln University, Fonterra, AgResearch and AbacusBio are collaborating to deliver the research programme.

Dollars and dealbreakers

Workshops now available nationwide have helped would-be contract milkers understand what's involved in negotiating an agreement and whether it's a financially viable switch.

Before deciding on a job, Kate Maddy and David Quigley ask for five to seven years' worth of farm operation and production information.

"It's not just about the premium either," say first-time contract milkers, Kate Maddy and David Quigley. Originally from the UK and Ireland, the South Canterbury couple attended contract milking training workshops in Dunsandel in 2022, before switching from previous roles in farm management.

For them, dairy farming is not about making loads of money, it's about wanting to do a good job while caring for their people, animals and the environment – but they want to ensure that approach is sustainable in the long term.

Kate and David took on their first contract milking job in June 2023, moving to a 386ha farm located 10 minutes out of Ashburton. In their first season, they peak-milked 1370 cows, are managing a farm team of five, and hope to achieve 600,000kg MS in their first year.

A calculated risk

Learning how to use the Contract Milker Premium Calculator at the workshops made a big difference to their decision-making, says Kate. "It literally meant we could assess any jobs we were looking at or got offered, which helped us pick what jobs suited us."

"A big thing I see a lot on Facebook is people asking, 'what

rate should I be on?'," adds David. "But we learned that's irrelevant. We all want money, but with the tools that Paul Bird [from DairyNZ] gave us at the workshop, we were able to work out the finance, work out the figures, but also see what job was sustainable."

Based on the principles of successful contract milking (see diagram below), the workshops also lifted the veil on what other factors should be considered before signing an agreement, says David.

"You have to think about what you'll have to pay for, at what cost, what risks are yours within the farm, and what drops out of the bottom of that. Things like better labour budgets, which can have a positive knock-on effect through less team turnover."

Data and due diligence

Kate and David say they asked prospective farm employers to provide five to seven years' worth of farm operation and production information, rather than just a couple.

"You need to be aware of what else was being done on-farm by the previous milker to achieve that," says David. "You also need to know what the stock numbers were, and how much supplement was fed/bought in – that can really affect your

Principles for successful contract milking

1
\$

Financially viable for the contract milker and farm owner.

2

Contract milker and farm owner understand and accept each other's goals and farm philosophies.

Contract milker and farm owner have clarity of what is expected of each other.

3

4
✓

Contract milker has the skillset to run the farm.

Contract milker and farm owner have a win-win attitude.

5
📢



production. Know the history of the farm and what it can do.

“For example, you could have a bad spring in your first season and be kicking yourself that you’re not doing a good job: but you can go back and see ‘oh, well, four springs ago they had similar issues, and this is how they did then.’”

The couple also vet any farmer they want to work for or with, before deciding on applying for any role.

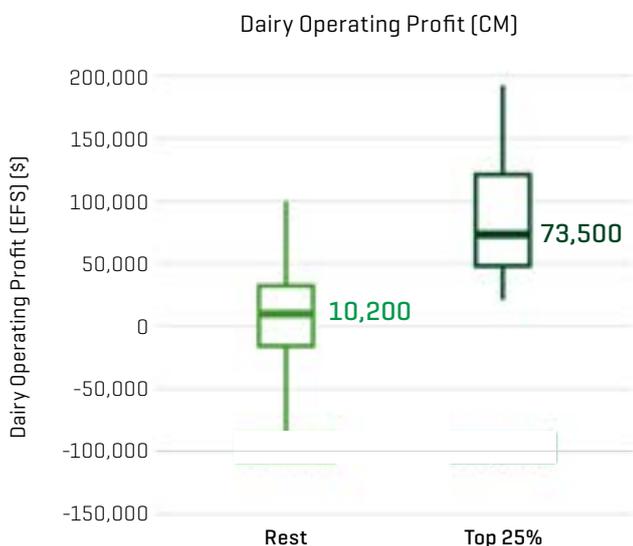
“We want to find out how they are as an operator before we even think about whether we want to be in a contract milking partnership with them,” explains David. “They’ll reference-check you: so do your reference-checking on them. A lot of people don’t think to do that step, but it’s really important.”

What’s in it for me?

DairyNZ project lead for the workshops, Paul Bird, says participants’ feedback (see feature box, right) suggests that most found them really valuable, especially around what might affect their potential premium.

DairyNZ recently completed an analysis of the operating profit of contract milkers using DairyBase data (see Figure 1 below). Operating profit represents farm profit received before tax, after you’ve paid yourself. The analysis found that of the majority of CMs (the light green box), half were working for not much more (\$10,200) or less, than a manager would get paid. This indicates the importance of applying successful contract milking principles to achieve your financial goals.

FIGURE 1. Three-year average Dairy Operating Profit average for the top 25% and bottom 75% of contract milkers [CM] from 297 farms across New Zealand, 2020 to 2022
[source: dairynz.co.nz/business/dairybase].



Workshop feedback

“One of the highlights was going through the Fed Farmers’ contract milking template page by page. There were quite a few things that hadn’t crossed my mind. The DairyNZ calculator was great too.”

Jake Coy,
Ealing, South Canterbury

“This is our first season contract milking. The workshops really gave us an advantage for when we sat down with the farm owner, [as we’d] learned how to work out our budget and costs so we’d be making a decent profit.”

Sarah and Ryan Fletcher,
Carew, Mid Canterbury

“It was great, learning alongside other contractors and rural professionals. The course contents are just right for someone who is thinking of getting into contract milking for the first time.”

Amy Padilla,
Hawera, South Taranaki

“I’d been thinking about switching from farm managing to contract milking. The workshops showed me that there wasn’t enough premium in it for me. So I decided to go into an equity partnership instead and build my own business that way.”

Jack Symes,
Leeston, Canterbury

2024 courses

Sign up now for one of these free contract milking courses in February/March 2024:

- Whangārei (13 Feb, 27 Feb, 12 Mar and 26 Mar).
- Gore (13 Feb, 27 Feb, 12 Mar and 26 Mar).
- Feilding (12 March, 26 March, 9 April, 23 April).
- Ashburton (22 March, 5 April, 19 April, 3 May).

Register online at dairytraining.co.nz/courses

Snapped!

Surfing for Farmers



DairyNZ is one of many organisations supporting Surfing for Farmers*. This initiative has really taken off in the 27 locations nationwide, attracting hundreds of farmers and encouraging them to get off the farm and have fun. Here are some of our sector's finest getting amongst it over the summer. Find out more at surfingforfarmers.com

**SURFING
FOR
FARMERS**



Dean doesn't do dunks,
he gets on board.

Northland farmers fan out for session instructions.



Photo credit Austen Pope

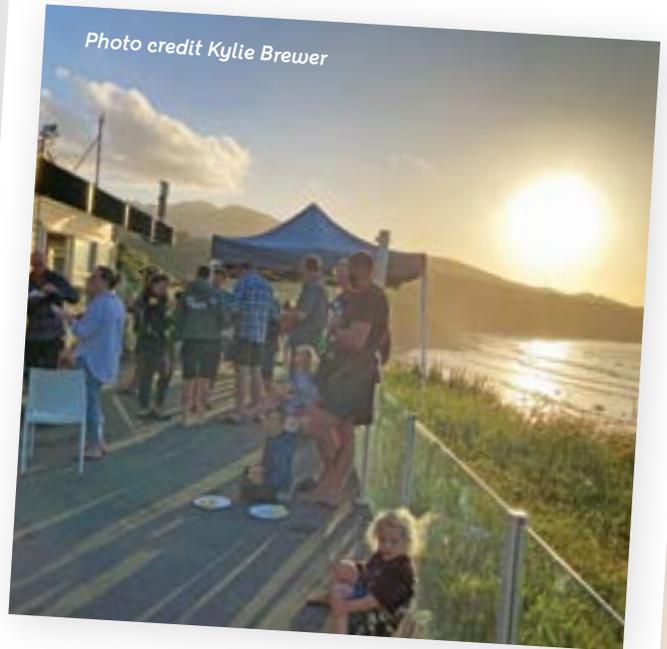


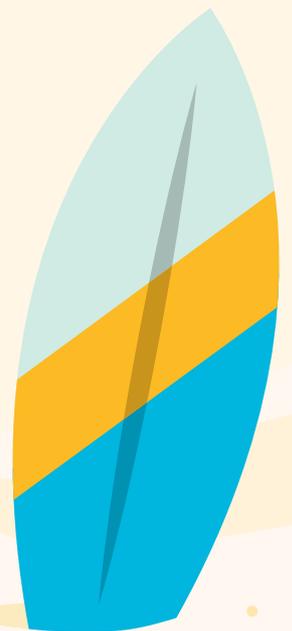
Photo credit Kylie Brewer

Swapping yarns as the surf sun sets.



Photo credit Alex Perrott

These farmers are ready to hit the waves!



*As one of 10 grassroots partners, DairyNZ is currently supporting Surfing for Farmers in eight regions – Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, Lower North Island, West Coast, Canterbury and Southland. Premium sponsors for Surfing for Farmers are Fonterra, Beef + Lamb NZ, Jarden, Ballance, Bayleys and Rabobank.



Longer lactations: more efficient?

The EL team (L-R): Paul Edwards, Chris Glassey, Emma Rauhala, Yesica Lopez-Moreno and Lydia Farrell.

A DairyNZ study is trialling the performance of an extended lactation system with 24-month calving intervals in NZ's pasture-based systems, to improve labour efficiencies.

The pilot study, with two farmlets at Scott Farm near Newstead, Hamilton, has been underway since June 2023. It's part of DairyNZ's Frontier Farms project, which is focused on farm systems solutions to keep NZ dairy competitive in the next decade (see *Inside Dairy*, April/May 2023).

Project and science lead, Paul Edwards, says some of the ideas being explored are new, and some are old approaches now relevant because of new technology or a shift in goals.

"The one we're working on now, extended lactation – or EL – aims to flatten seasonal workload peaks at calving to improve labour efficiency and flexibility," explains Paul. "That goal was set by a group of farmers and rural professionals in a co-design workshop, to address a competitive risk around labour availability and suitability.



"They identified EL as a promising option and subsequent modelling has suggested a similar level of profit could be achieved with EL in some regions compared with 12-month calving intervals. As a bonus, an EL system could halve the number of bobby calves annually."



...subsequent modelling has suggested a similar level of profit could be achieved with EL in some regions compared with 12-month calving intervals.

Paul says EL was modelled with either 18- or 24-month calving intervals and with half the herd calving each cycle (to minimise peak workload at calving/mating).

"The 24-month system was most promising. It was predicted to be more profitable for Northland, comparable for Waikato, but less profitable in the South Island relative

to a 12-month system. The 18-month system had high supplement feed costs after autumn calving and lower profit across the four regions tested. However, there was limited real-world data to support some of our assumptions, so the main purpose of the pilot study is to test the viability of the most promising system."

Taupō dairy farmer Kylie Leonard says efficiency gains through EL could be a game-changer.

"Wow that would be amazing. It'd lighten the load for our team and for us. It's really good use of the Levy too, with DairyNZ having a go at this for us."

Results and live updates

A summary report of first-season results is planned for July 2024. In the meantime, you can view near-real-time information as it rolls out. Just click on the link provided near the top of this webpage – dairynz.co.nz/frontier-farms

About the EL study

- Farmlet 1 (control) – normal 12-month calving interval – 2.8 cows/ha.
- Farmlet 2 (EL) – 24-month calving interval, half the herd calving each year – 2.8 cows/ha.

Extended lactation has implications for the herd age structure, so the EL herd has an average age of 5.3 years, with 33% heifers in the half of the herd that calves (average 17% for the farmlet), compared with 4.7 years and 21% in the control farmlet.

The pilot study, funded by DairyNZ, will quantify differences in milk production, animal performance, body condition score (BCS), liveweight, pasture harvested, and supplement and fertiliser use to enable an estimate of profitability.

Results to-date

A snapshot of the milk production and Body Condition Score results to the week ending 20 December is presented in Figures 1(a), (b) and (c) below. Over this period, (since 1 June) an additional 169kg DM/cow of supplementary feed was used in the EL farmlet. Both farmlets have had 97kg N/ha applied to date.

Planned start of mating was delayed from 28 September (control) to 16 October (EL) to offset the increased feed requirement from milking half the herd through winter. Three-week submission rates were 86% (control) and 98% (EL). The 6-week in-calf rate was 79% for the control farmlet

but it's not yet available for EL, due to the delayed mating.

Note that the herds started in a 'steady-state' where the EL farmlet had older cows and half of cows in-milk. Starting average pasture cover (APC) was the same, despite the EL farmlet having higher feed demand with winter milking. Building covers in autumn for greater APC at the start of the season would be desirable for the EL farmlet. Further, cows that started in-milk in the EL farmlet had failed to get pregnant the previous spring, rather than deliberately not mated, which could affect the reproductive comparison for this season.

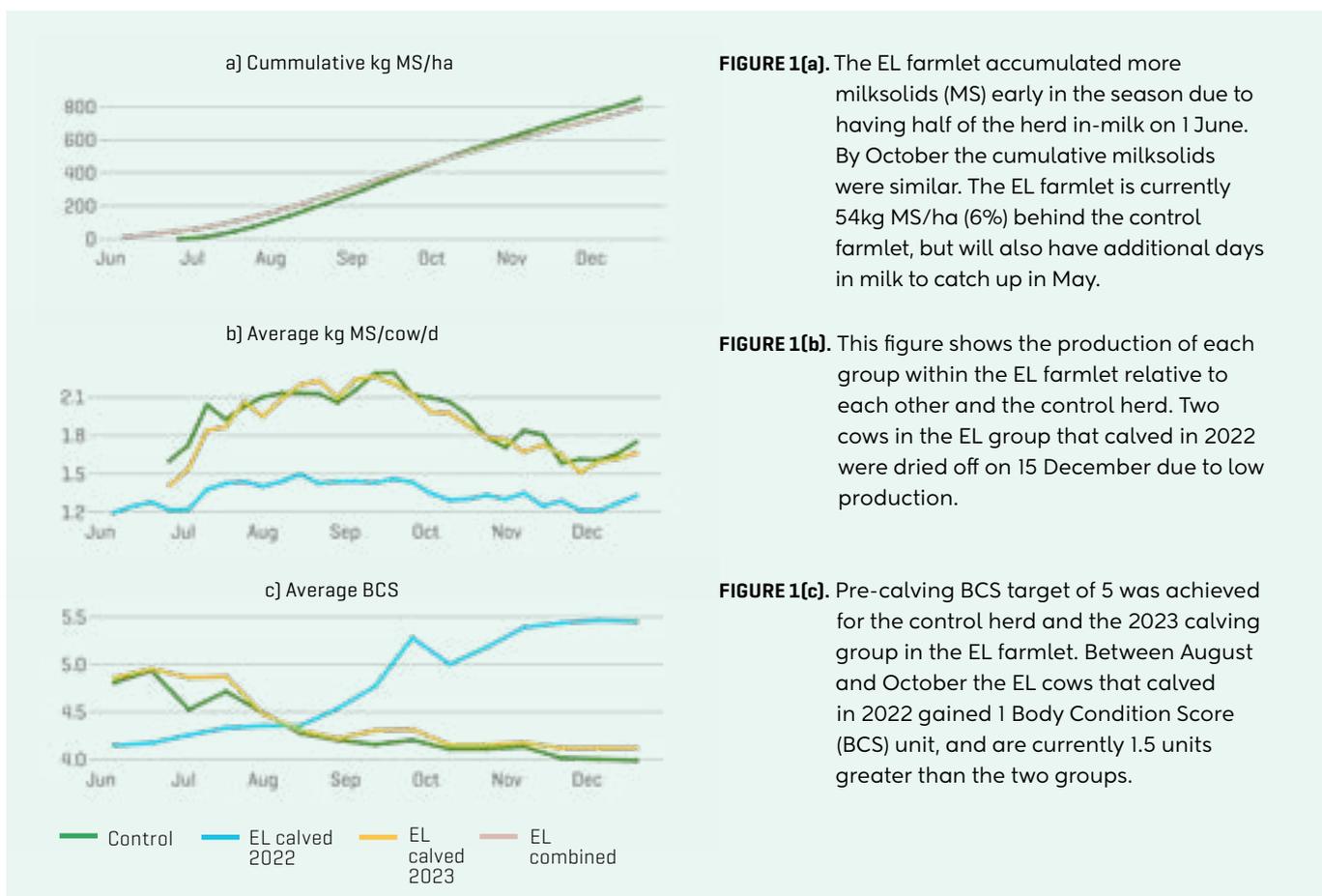


FIGURE 1(a). The EL farmlet accumulated more milksolids (MS) early in the season due to having half of the herd in-milk on 1 June. By October the cumulative milksolids were similar. The EL farmlet is currently 54kg MS/ha (6%) behind the control farmlet, but will also have additional days in milk to catch up in May.

FIGURE 1(b). This figure shows the production of each group within the EL farmlet relative to each other and the control herd. Two cows in the EL group that calved in 2022 were dried off on 15 December due to low production.

FIGURE 1(c). Pre-calving BCS target of 5 was achieved for the control herd and the 2023 calving group in the EL farmlet. Between August and October the EL cows that calved in 2022 gained 1 Body Condition Score (BCS) unit, and are currently 1.5 units greater than the two groups.

Seasonal toolbox

Key DairyNZ tools and resources for farmers, designed with the latest research and technology.



Heifer development plan

Rearing heifers that meet their liveweight targets can improve farm productivity and profitability.

Focus on weight-for-age targets, rather than a particular pattern of growth, and feed availability when developing a growth rate plan.

To meet targets, heifers need to grow at appropriate rates over two years. The heifer development plan tool will help achieve this by creating a plan for target weights, feeding levels and animal health requirements.

dairynz.co.nz/hdp

Autumn pasture management

Good grazing management through early autumn is about maximising pasture growth and use, and balancing pasture recovery after any dry summer conditions. Key to achieving this is leaving consistent post-grazing residuals and graze pastures at the 2.5- to 3-leaf stage.

Visit our website for all the details on this and more, including rotation length, body condition score strategies to assist with feed management, tips for pasture renewal and pests to look out for in autumn, and a feed budget to identify any shortage in home grown feed.

dairynz.co.nz/autumn



Milking time planner

Thinking about trying 3-in-2 or 10-in-7?

The milking time planner tool estimates the effect of different flexible milking times on milking intervals, weekly schedules and production.

dairynz.co.nz/time-planner



Winter grazing plan

Planning is crucial for setting up for a successful winter.

A winter grazing plan creates clear wintering expectations for everyone on the farm, identifies areas for improvement, and is a useful reference to what you're doing around wintering practices that others can follow.

The winter grazing plan template helps you develop a simple effective paddock plan for any break-fed wintering system. Plus, it helps you identify and plan for environmental and animal welfare risks.

dairynz.co.nz/winter-plans



Employee performance review template

Employee performance reviews are usually done once or twice a year. They're a chance for both you and your employee to reflect on their progress so far.

The performance review template helps you prepare ahead of the review with your employee. Use it to make performance notes on what's going well, what could be improved, and to identify achievements, focus areas and goals.

dairynz.co.nz/performance-review

Contract grazing information

What makes a successful heifer grazing contract? Having clear expectations with your grazier and working with them on how stock will be managed if or when plans change.

This webpage includes information on what it takes to form a successful partnership with your grazier.

dairynz.co.nz/contract-grazing



WAIKATO



Project partners are combining a traditional western and Mātauranga Raukawa/Māori approach to improving the Whakauru Stream's water quality. (Photo: Michael Bradley)

Partnering to improve waterways

DairyNZ, Iwi and Waikato farmers are coming together to improve waterway health through a new science partnership.

The organisations will be focusing on the Whakauru Stream (a tributary of the Pōkaiwhenua Stream, near Arapuni in Waikato). It's a DairyNZ and Raukawa Charitable Trust collaboration, which will combine western science and a Mātauranga Raukawa/Māori approach. The aim is to build people's understanding of how to improve ecological health in waterways.

DairyNZ water quality scientist and general manager, sustainable dairy, Dr David Burger, says the partnership also includes the local community and its farmers.

"We're pleased to be working together with the Raukawa Charitable Trust and the Pōkaiwhenua Catchment Group to help native species thrive in the Whakauru Stream," says David.

The partnership will see more than 15,000 new plants line the stream's banks following planned community and Iwi planting days and pest and weed control efforts. On-farm strategies to improve waterway health will also be trialled and shared amongst farmers.

The stream has good existing numbers of native eels (tuna), freshwater crayfish (kōura) and many more species. A catchment water quality assessment is being undertaken, and water quality and health (hauora) will then be tracked over time.

The work is part of a wider three-year Sustainable Catchments programme launched in May 2023, which is funded by the Ministry for the Environment's Jobs for Nature programme.

The Sustainable Catchments programme is trialling how practical tools and on-farm changes (such as developing

wetlands) can help improve water quality. It focuses on three priority catchments – Pōkaiwhenua (Waikato), Waimea (Southland), and the South Canterbury region. These catchments have higher nitrogen (N) concentrations and lower ecosystem health scores than other areas.

Raukawa Charitable Trust Tāhuhu Rangapū (CEO) Maria Te Kanawa says her organisation is committed to its responsibilities as kaitiaki (guardians) of the South Waikato region.

"We have a key role to play in the revitalisation and restoration of the wider Pōkaiwhenua catchment. We are pleased to be partnering with DairyNZ and local farmers as we collectively work towards healthier waterways in this catchment – and ensure the long-term needs of the community and the environment are met."

The Pōkaiwhenua work is expected to be completed by June 2025.



More than 15,000 plants will line the Whakauru Stream's banks once all the work's been done.

Century of farmer-led research

This year, Northland Agricultural Research Farm (NARF) celebrates 100 years of community ownership and on-the-ground research that continues to help farmers in the region.

NARF was set up in 1924 to conduct research of value to northern dairy farmers, and is run by a dedicated group of volunteers who manage the farm business and staff.

Farm Systems research

Northland Dairy Development Trust, which was established in 2007, designs and oversees NARF's farm trials and seeks funding (e.g., from MPI, DairyNZ and the Hine Rangī Trust).

The 84ha can be split into three 27ha farmlets with individual milk vats with each farm being run as an independent enterprise. This scale and flexibility make it possible to collect robust data for measuring differences in milk production and composition, pasture effects and most importantly, the relative profitability of different farm systems.

Trials are designed around farmer needs, with recent projects based around farmers' wanting to reduce reliance on imported feeds, particularly PKE. This trial compared production and profit of a pasture-only system, with systems using cropping, PKE and other supplements. These trials allowed researchers to calculate the marginal cost of extra milk produced from these extra inputs, over a range of seasons, with different prices and climatic conditions.

Climate change research

The current Future Farm Systems trial was set up in response to farmer concerns about climate change. The most profitable and resilient farm system from the previous imported feed trials was set up as the control farmlet.

In response to declining ryegrass performance and survival, farmers are trying alternative pasture species, and so the second farmlet was set up with 75% sown in these species. The third farmlet was set up to achieve the 2050 GHG Emissions targets indicated by the previous Government.

Up to 10 committee members travel fortnightly from around Northland to meetings to discuss farm management. Decisions are made by the farmers under the guidance of the NDDT science manager, who ensures research protocols are followed.

Farmer engagement remains high through regular trial updates and field days. Sharemilker and committee member Brad Allan is one of them.

"I look forward to interacting each fortnight with experienced farmers and consultants. The research farm really makes me think about my own operation and where I can make gains."

As NARF chair Kerry Chestnut says: "The key to successful research is to make sure it addresses farmer concerns and is relevant to as many of us as possible."

Find out more at dairynz.co.nz/northland and nddt.nz

[Story supplied by Kim Robinson, AgFirst agribusiness consultant director.]



Chair Kerry Chestnut (left) discusses farm management with sharemilking committee members Brad Allan and Jason Hodgson.



Testing the Forage Value Index at scale in the Waikato



Dr Wendy Griffiths
Senior scientist
DairyNZ

The FVI validation trial was established in the Waikato to evaluate the FVI at farmlet scale. Data was collected to determine whether the physical and financial performance of farmlets with higher- or lower-FVI cultivars was as predicted by the FVI. Here's what was found.

Key Messages

- DairyNZ ran a four-year farm systems trial at Scott Farm in the Waikato, looking to validate the FVI through differences in dry matter (DM) yield, milk production, and farm profitability between higher- and lower-FVI diploid ryegrass cultivars with the same AR37 endophyte. The DairyNZ FVI modelling projected a \$300-\$400/ha difference between treatments.
- The results of the validation trial showed that the predicted milksolids production and operating profit expected from ryegrass DM yield measured at the plot scale was not able to be captured in this single farmlet scale trial.
- Until the predicted economic differences among cultivars listed in the FVI can be demonstrated, the FVI economic rankings will not be published. Measured yield differences from NFVT plot trials will continue to be supplied to farmers (see pbra.co.nz/trial-data/forage-grasses).
- Selecting the right cultivar for each farm is important. DairyNZ acknowledges that plant breeding is a complex process and has provided NZ farmers with a range of high-performing cultivars. Substantial progress has been made with novel endophytes, ploidy options, yields and changing of heading date. Farmers can have confidence in these advances and should continue to ensure they select high-yielding cultivars with the endophyte, ploidy and heading date that suits their farm system.

In 2012, the FVI was launched in partnership with the Plant Breeding and Research Association (PBRA). The FVI categorises cultivars into star-rating groups in the four dairy regions: upper and lower North Island, and upper and lower South Island. Those with a higher star rating were predicted to deliver greater economic benefits for dairy farmers.

A cultivar's FVI rating is derived from dry matter (DM) yield performance data in replicated plots from the National Forage Variety Trials (NFVTs) run by PBRA, and the modelled (using Farmax) economic value for yield. Since 2012, other traits, such as metabolisable energy (ME), and persistence, have been included.

Validation trial

In 2015, a farmlet-system comparison trial was designed to validate the FVI rankings under realistic farm management conditions on DairyNZ's Scott farm in the Waikato. Sowing of pastures began in 2016, with five farmlets containing higher-FVI (4- and 5-star) cultivars, and five farmlets with lower-FVI (1- and 2-star) cultivars chosen from the 2015 FVI. All cultivars were diploids, contained the endophyte AR37 and were sown with white clover.

The endophyte AR37 was chosen due to the Waikato location, and a need to provide greater protection against damage from Black Beetle. This trial design meant we could test the yield benefits of higher-FVI pastures without endophyte or ploidy confounding the trial results.

Between 2018 and 2022, data on farmlet performance (e.g., milk and pasture production, silage harvested, imported supplementary feed) was collected to determine the physical and financial benefits of the higher and lower-FVI cultivars. Poor-performing pastures in both treatments were renovated (full or partial) as required to maintain the plant population.

To ensure the trial was robust, representatives from the PBRA along with national and international science experts were involved in the planning and implementation phases. Four Waikato dairy farmers regularly engaged with the project to ensure tactical and strategic management decisions, e.g., shortening winter round lengths, aligned with best practices on-farm.

Predicted benefit from higher-FVI cultivars

Pasture growth data collected between 2012/13 to 2014/15 from a DairyNZ ryegrass cultivar plot trial on Scott Farm (Waikato) was used to model farm performance with higher- and lower-FVI pastures. The model predicted that a farm sown with higher-FVI pastures would generate \$300-400/ha per year additional operating profit compared with lower-FVI pastures.

The difference in profit would be explained by:

Dry matter yield – The data predicted that pastures containing higher-FVI cultivars would have a greater total DM yield and different seasonal growth, i.e., greater growth rates in winter and early spring and autumn, and lower growth rates in late spring, compared with lower-FVI cultivars (*Figure 1a*).

Supplementary feeds – The predicted better match between pasture demand and supply would reduce the need for imported supplementary feed (-500kg DM/ha) during winter/early spring and autumn and reduce the need to make and feed silage (-600kg DM/ha).

Milk production – The predicted greater pasture supply in early spring and autumn would result in greater milk production in the higher-FVI treatment (+39 kg MS/ha per year, *Figure 1b*).

FIGURE 1a. Predicted monthly pasture growth.

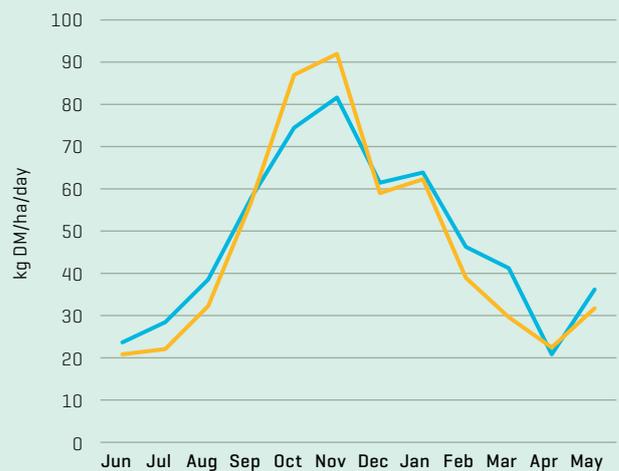
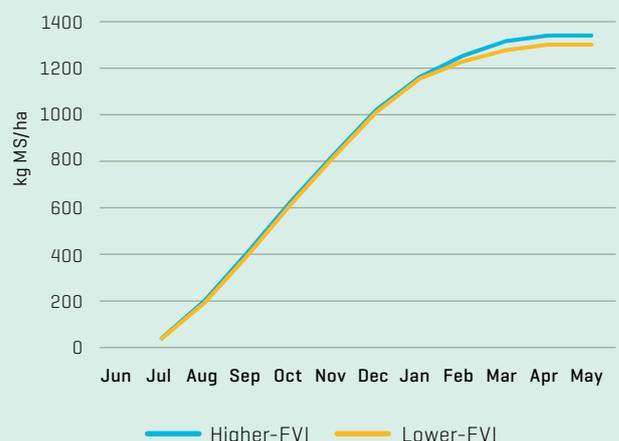


FIGURE 1b. Predicted cumulative milksolids.



What did we find?

Relative differences in profit (calculated from milk revenue less costs associated with supplementary feed and silage making, and pasture renovation), for farmlets with higher-FVI pastures compared with lower-FVI pastures are presented in *Table 1* below. In no year was there a significant difference in profit between the higher- and lower-FVI cultivars.

TABLE 1. Annual profit advantage to higher-FVI cultivars.

| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Mean advantage to higher FVI |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------------------------------|
| Profit (\$/ha) | -192 | -36 | -219 | 73 | -93 |

To understand why the relative profit differed from predictions, an in-depth review of farmlet performance was undertaken, and several areas were explored. The results from three of these investigations are:



Cows grazing during an extended dry summer-autumn in March 2020.

TABLE 2. Predicted and actual annual totals of offered silage, imported supplement offered and back-calculated pasture eaten based on cow energetic requirements for the four years of the trial.

| | Predicted | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Mean |
|--|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| Higher FVI | | | | | | |
| Silage offered (kg DM/ha) | 0 | 504 | 936 | 1214 | 236 | 723 |
| Imported supplement offered (kg DM/ha) | 1300 | 2201 | 3110 | 1839 | 4656 | 2952 |
| Pasture eaten (t DM/ha) | 14.5* | 15.4 | 15.1 | 17.2 | 14.5 | 15.6 |
| Lower FVI | | | | | | |
| Silage offered (kg DM/ha) | 600 | 751 | 1079 | 1042 | 399 | 818 |
| Imported supplement offered (kg DM/ha) | 1800 | 1824 | 3056 | 1820 | 5031 | 2933 |
| Pasture eaten (t DM/ha) | 13.3* | 15.8 | 15.2 | 17.4 | 14.3 | 15.7 |

*based on 95% utilisation

1. Summer-autumn dry

Pasture growth rates between January and March were less than expected in all four years due to warmer and drier-than-average summer-autumns. Rainfall in January and February was approximately 50% of the 30-year average.

This reduced the opportunity for the late-heading, higher-FVI cultivars, bred for superior summer-autumn growth, to achieve their potential. With a pasture deficit for all farmlets in autumn each year, cows in all farmlets were dried off at a similar time, and thus the predicted extra milksolids production from more days in milk and the subsequent milk revenue for the higher-FVI farmlets did not occur.

To determine if the dry autumn weather was the primary cause of the less-than-predicted profit, we re-ran the FVI model, reducing the value of autumn pasture to reflect the dry conditions. The predicted profit difference between treatments was only reduced by 25%. This indicated that the dry autumn conditions and lack of autumn pasture growth were important factors but did not fully account for the less-than-predicted profit difference in the higher-FVI treatment.

2. Pasture growth and supplementary feed

While autumns were dry, conditions for ryegrass growth were good in winter and early spring, and these were seasons when the yield advantage was expected to favour the higher-FVI treatment.

Measured feed inputs (supplementary feed eaten) and outputs (animal energy requirements, and silage harvested) were used to estimate pasture eaten. Across the four years, the relative difference between the higher and lower farmlets in annual imported supplements, silage offered and pasture eaten was not in the range expected from modelling (*Table 2*).



Pasture, maize silage and grass silage prepared for drying, before being assessed for forage quality.

3. Cultivar choice

As the FVI has been updated annually since 2015 with new data, there are now higher-ranked cultivars on the FVI than when the trial began. The higher-FVI cultivars used in the trial are ranked 3-Star in the 2023 FVI. We checked that the higher and lower cultivars selected in 2015 still maintain a relative difference in the Upper North Island index today. An analysis with the 2023 FVI values indicated the predicted performance gap between the higher-and lower-FVI cultivars used in the trial remained greater than \$300-400/ha.

What's next for the FVI

- The results of the validation trial showed that the predicted milksolids production and operating profit expected from ryegrass DM yield measured at the plot scale was not able to be captured in this single farmlet scale trial.
- DairyNZ and PBRA are committed to working together to understand the root causes of these results.
- Until the predicted economic differences among cultivars listed in the FVI can be demonstrated, the FVI economic rankings will not be published. Measured yield differences from NFVT plot trials will continue to be supplied to farmers (see pbra.co.nz/trial-data/forage-grasses).

Acknowledgements

DairyNZ conducted this research under the Forage Value Supporting Science research programme, funded by the DairyNZ Levy.

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Northland

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| Senior extension partner | Mike Bramley | 027 486 4344 |
| Extension partner | Stephen Ball | 027 807 9686 |

Waikato North

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| Regional leader | Brigitte Meier | 027 448 3050 |
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Waikato South

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Bay of Plenty

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| Extension partner | Graeme McKenzie | 027 808 1067 |

Taranaki

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
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| Regional partner | Gill Haenga | 027 1800 3605 |
| Regional partner | John Baylis | 027 210 2137 |
| Extension partner | Ashley Primrose | 021 246 5663 |
| Extension partner | Talissa Squire | 027 1800 3499 |
| Extension partner | Katie Starsmore | 027 1800 3707 |
| Extension Partner | Leah Prankerd | 027 328 7019 |

Lower North Island

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Regional leader | Mark Laurence | 027 704 5562 |
| Senior extension partner | Janine Swansson | 027 381 2025 |
| Extension partner | Brianna Hull | 021 244 3428 |
| Extension partner | Tegan Pope | 027 808 3411 |

Upper South Island

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Regional leader | Anna Hall | 027 411 5663 |
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| Senior extension partner | Mark Shadwick | 021 287 7057 |
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Southland/South Otago

| | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Regional leader | Guy Michaels | 021 302 034 |
| Regional partner | Stuart Evans | 027 393 0114 |
| Regional partner | Darren Smith | 027 1800 4717 |
| Senior extension partner | Nathan Nelson | 021 225 6931 |
| Extension partner | Gareth Baynham | 027 808 9425 |
| Extension partner | Chris Wratt | 022 850 1166 |
| Extension Partner | Ian Butler | 027 1800 1981 |

DairyNZ directors

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Jim van der Poel (Chair) | 021 848 484 |
| Tracy Brown | 027 291 1716 |
| Margaret Devlin | 021 328 200 |
| Cameron Henderson | 021 113 8895 |
| Chris Lewis | 027 289 8942 |
| Mary-Anne Macleod | 021 923 332 |
| Jacqueline Rowarth | 027 694 4334 |
| Mark Todd | 021 271 1328 |

PEOPLE EXPO

Creating great
workplaces

People Expos are back this March

If you're a dairy farmer that employs or manages people, join us at one of the People Expo symposiums for the opportunity to hear from thought leaders on what's needed to help tackle the big issues in employing and keeping people on dairy farms.

You'll gain insights from experts, have the opportunity to connect with other farmers facing the same challenges, and come away armed with inspiration and practical tips to put in action for your farm team.

It's free to attend, but registration is essential. Lunch is provided.

13 March | Whangārei, Northland

19 March | Invercargill, Southland

26 March | Pahiatua, Manawatū-Whanganui

27 March | Rotorua, Bay of Plenty

[Register here](https://dairynz.co.nz/peopleexpo)

[dairynz.co.nz/
peopleexpo](https://dairynz.co.nz/peopleexpo)



For more information including the line-up of guest speakers, see page 4 in this issue of *Inside Dairy*.

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**DAIRY WOMEN'S
NETWORK**
success through inspiration