

Medium (variable) input system

Kahikatea Dairy

John and Colleen Neustroski

Farm Details 169 ha milking platform

57 ha run off close by used for - youngstock (weaning till start May as R2)
- silage for milking platform

95 ha run off at Dipton for wintering (R2 May to calving, MA Cows dry off to calving returning in 2 weekly calving date mobs)

Located in Centre Bush area Braxton and Pukemutu soils

	2012-13	2013-14
Cow Numbers	597 wintered	590 wintered
	581 peak milk	572 peak milk
Production	254,910 kg/ms	271,000kg/ms
	439 kg/ms/cow	474kg/ms/cow
	1506kg/ms/hectare	1603kg/ms/ha
Stocking Rate	3.43	3.38
Silage bought in from run off	466 kg/DM	375 kg/DM
PKE	73 kgDM/cow	156 kgDM/cow
Molasses fed in shed	70 kgDM/cow	130 kgDM/cow

Breed Crossbred cows BW140 PW187 RA 94%

Fertiliser Soil test levels

pH 5.9 - 6.5

P 19 - 35

Capital fertiliser applied per Ravensdown recommendations

Nitrogen Between 180 and 200 units per year

Staff Contract milker plus one permanent and one relief milker
(Farm owners do calf rearing, manage youngstock, shift early and late cows at wintering etc)

Why use this input system and what makes it work?

Requirements:

- Regular monitoring of grass growth, and feeding of quality pasture; knowing and planning before any surplus or shortfall effects production
- Higher stocking rate suited to smaller crossbreds but still needs careful and focused management to limit pasture damage during wet periods
- Cash flow planning and regular updating based on current seasons payout and production
- Not pushing for a high peak production but a long shoulder right through to dry off (we feel this gives us a higher in calf rate as well)
- Owning our own run off blocks provides flexibility to juggle feed where necessary and ensures cows are well set up condition wise before calving, also total control of feed quality and feeding levels
- Inputs allow us to control loss of body weight better between calving and mating and at other low pasture growth phases
- Not making any silage on dairy platform has allowed us to do a lot of pasture renewal more so in higher payout years
- Aerate one third of the farm each year to minimise compaction
- Molasses in shed is great but not compulsory for cow flow during higher stress periods
- Flexibility to drop cow numbers if payout drops or PKE is not available at a beneficial price or in times of variable grass growth rates
- Make sure everyone involved in the business is on the same wavelength and changes in direction are well communicated to ensure a positive work environment

Where can we improve our operation in the future?

- Not feed PKE in trollies out in the paddock to stop pasture damage
- Perhaps a feed pad system to limit silage and PKE wastage
- Always want to limit cow wastage, eg empties

It is all about profitability for us; based on efficient utilisation of pasture grown and tweaked to match the grass growth patterns and payout season by season.

We have never wanted to have any dependency on bought in feed; it is our aim to always be in charge of our own destiny.