



FiL Rewards its loyal farmer customers!

At FiL we want to give our loyal farmer customers the rewards they deserve for choosing us every time for all their dairy hygiene and animal health requirements. This season we are taking that a step further, with the FiL Rewards programme.

With the FiL Rewards loyalty scheme you will be recognised for what you are – a valued customer who we want to keep returning for our great products. In turn you will earn points on every purchase that you can put towards either high quality products for the farm, household or leisure items or a variety of vouchers and gifts.

Effective from April 1, farmer customers can register for the FiL Rewards programme on our internet site at www.fil.co.nz. Having completed this simple registration form on-line, every purchase of FiL products made through our area managers will earn points towards reward products of your choice.

The FiL Rewards

programme has been designed to be simple and easy to check and redeem from the farm office. You do not even need a membership card as you will be able check and redeem your points at any time through the website.

There is a huge range of reward products, depending on the size of your purchases and the number of Rewards points accrued. These range from discount vouchers through to exceptional products such as Toshiba laptop computers, and fishing gear from Fishing Merchants.

Having the Toshiba brand on board with their range of quality computers puts the stamp of quality on a rewards scheme that will offer something across all sizes of farm operations.

There is no time limit on the purchases, and the more purchases you make throughout the year, of course, the greater the amount of points you will earn. Unlike previous promotions we have offered only at the beginning of the season, FiL Rewards will operate throughout the year. However it will pay to line up all your season's purchases at once to take full advantage of your opportunities to earn the most as bundled purchases will be rewarded with bonus points.

Your FiL area manager will be able to tell you of any bonus points available at any time whether at the start of the season or throughout the year.

If you choose to order and pick up your FiL supplies through your rural retailer you can still be in for the rewards programme. All you need to do is notify your FiL rep about the purchase, or register it on-line by recording the receipt number.

FiL national sales manager Phil Wicks says the scheme is a first for a dairy hygiene company.

"We know that by the time you have made all your dairy and animal health purchases for the year, you

have accounted for a large part of your year's expenses. At FiL we feel farmers should be rewarded for sticking with us for all their needs. As farm sizes increase, many farmers will be looking at reaping significant points, and therefore rewards, for their loyalty."

Phil says FiL are working hard to sign up other recognised quality brands to the Rewards programme and many more will be in place for the start of the programme in April. "We are committed to offering a cross section of Rewards appropriate to the farm, as well as to general household and leisure activities."



KEY POINTS

- Rewards available to all FiL customers
- Simple on-line registration process
- Rewards points available on all purchases made throughout the year
- Seasonal and product specific bonus points
- High quality rewards for farm, household and leisure goods
- Redemption of points available at different levels
- Simple automated on-line redemption

Inside

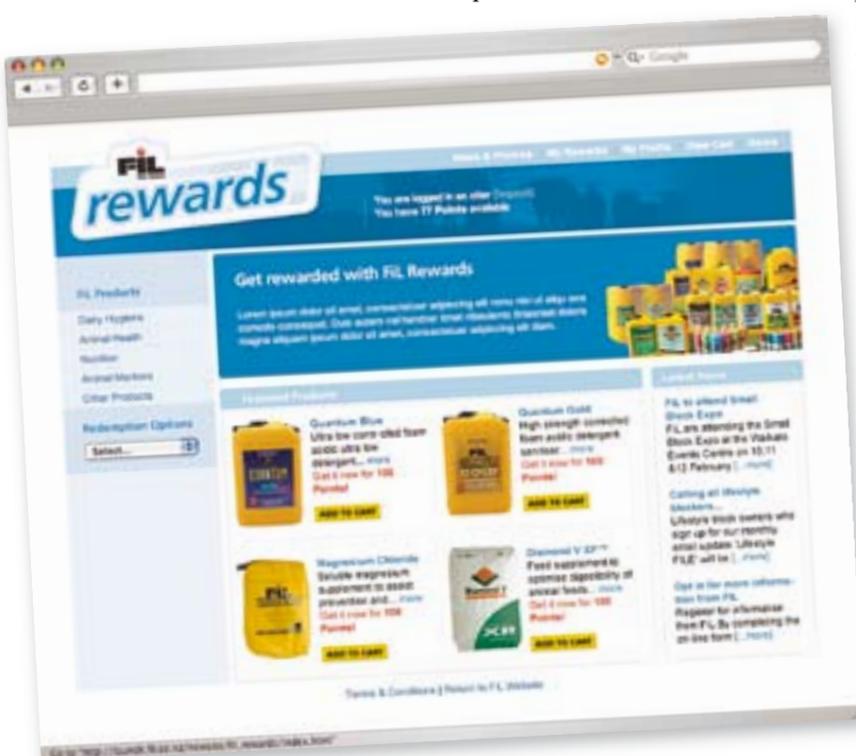
Special Features:

- **FiL Rewards Partners - just the beginning**
Page 2
- **Uddermark hits the spot for ID**
Page 3
- **Graderite: more uses than meets the eye**
Page 4
- **Genetics unlock Somatic Cell Links**
Page 4

Also:

- **Safety Focus on the Farm**
Page 5
- **Farmers Early Lactation Handy Pack**
Page 6
- **Teat Care Range Hits Somatics Head - on**
Page 6
- **Climate Outlooks**
Page 7
- **Southern Team enjoy the Big Island**
Page 8

Visit: www.fil.co.nz



Fishing Merchants on line for Rewards

Being based in the fish mecca of Coromandel is the ideal spot to be for FiL Rewards partner Gary Mitchell and the partners of Fishing Merchants.

The Fishing Merchants Team are establishing an on line fishing shop that delivers every piece of salt and fresh water equipment the most avid fisherman could want.

Having fished fresh and salt water for 30 years, and living in a remote area Gary saw a gap in the growing e-commerce market for a premium fishing gear site that would provide a quality range of equipment to keen fishermen around the world.

"Also being involved in fishing retail has given the

partners of Fishing Merchants a good idea about what fishing people want. We want to cover every form of fishing, and expect reasonable enquiry from overseas, particularly for some of the premium New Zealand made rods, such as CD Sports and Kilwell Sports." says Gary

FiL customers keen to cash in their Rewards points on fishing gear can be assured of some excellent deals, says Gary. He knows the huge interest dairy farmers have in fishing.

"These guys are immensely keen on fishing, and we will certainly be tailoring some specials around

their needs in salt, fresh and game."

Gary says people are getting keener on using lighter gear, to keep the fun in catching fish.

"There is very little skill in hauling in a snapper on 40 pound line, people are preferring to use 3-10kg gear, playing the fish a bit more requiring a bit more skill and having some fun."

With the internet site up and running before winter, Gary is confident there will be plenty of dairy farmers making good use of it getting their gear up to scratch for those mid winter fishing expeditions.

FiL customers throughout the country can redeem their Reward Points with Fishing Merchants, browse the site and make their choices in their own time.

Toshiba teams up with FiL

FiL clients taking advantage of our new Rewards scheme will have the opportunity to access the very latest in laptop and digital technology with Rewards partner Toshiba.

The company is at the leading edge of laptop design and innovation and was responsible for the very first laptop, in 1985.

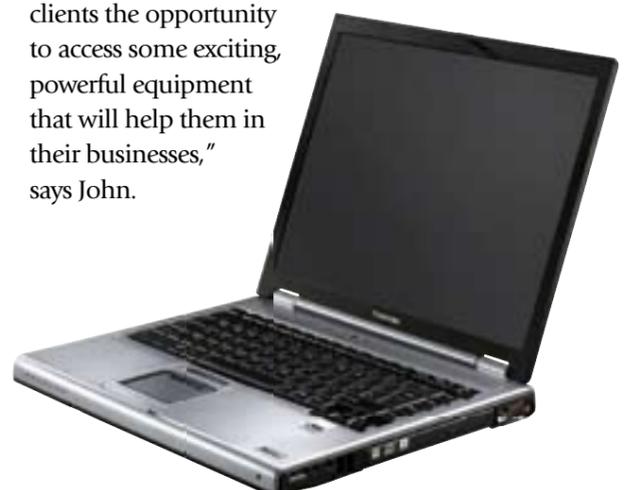
Every year since the company has had at least one major technological development that has kept it at the forefront of the industry.

John Grigson of Toshiba says the company welcomes the opportunity to team up with FiL on the Rewards programme.

"At Toshiba we are aware of the huge leaps in technology dairy farmers have made over the years as herds have expanded. Our laptop technology is ideally suited to storing, managing and presenting the numerous amounts of data a dairy farm can generate these days, from herd details through to grazing management and farm maps."

The company spends up to US\$2.5 billion a year on research and development, with the focus on development of truly mobile technology that allows unheard of flexibility in managing and doing business.

"Toshiba, like FiL is an innovative forward looking company and we welcome the opportunity to partner with a like minded company, giving farmer clients the opportunity to access some exciting, powerful equipment that will help them in their businesses," says John.



Your FiL Farm Service Team have got the country covered.

Hard work, proven expertise and unbeatable service throughout New Zealand from a 100% New Zealand owned company. Our experienced and highly focussed team pride themselves on delivering service above and

beyond expectations and helping the farmers they serve achieve real results.

Call our hotline now and we'll put you in touch with your local FiL team member.



1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Northland/ Helensville Ph: 0508 434 569	Mark Mohring Hamilton/North Waikato/Pukekohe Ngatea/Coromandel Ph: 07 824 6502 Mob: 0274 721 502	Stuart Carter Morrinsville/ Te Aroha/Paeroa Ph: 07 888 5331 Mob: 0274 490 843	Dave Hewson Te Awamutu/ Otorohanga Ph: 07 871 3506 Mob: 0274 991 674	Allan Clarke Bay of Plenty Ph: 07 544 3720 Mob: 0274 730 572	Phil Gulliver North Taranaki Ph: 06 755 3995 Mob: 0274 721 506	Clinton Humphrey Southern North Island Ph: 06 354 4178 Mob: 0274 721 507
8	9	11	12	14	15	
Daryl Hill Northern South Island Ph: 03 525 9191 Mob: 0274 721 503	Peter Dodds Southern South Island Ph: 03 488 4572 Mob: 0274 721 504	Gavin Dunn Rotorua/ Reporoa/Tokoroa/ Putaruru Ph: 07 333 2119 Mob: 0274 798 470	John Atkin South Taranaki/ Wanganui Ph: 06 278 1450 Mob: 0274 828 535	Greg Duncan Cambridge/ Matamata Ph: 07 823 5195 Mob: 025 721 505	Bruce Smith Central South Island Ph: 03 693 7440 Mob: 0274 993 783	



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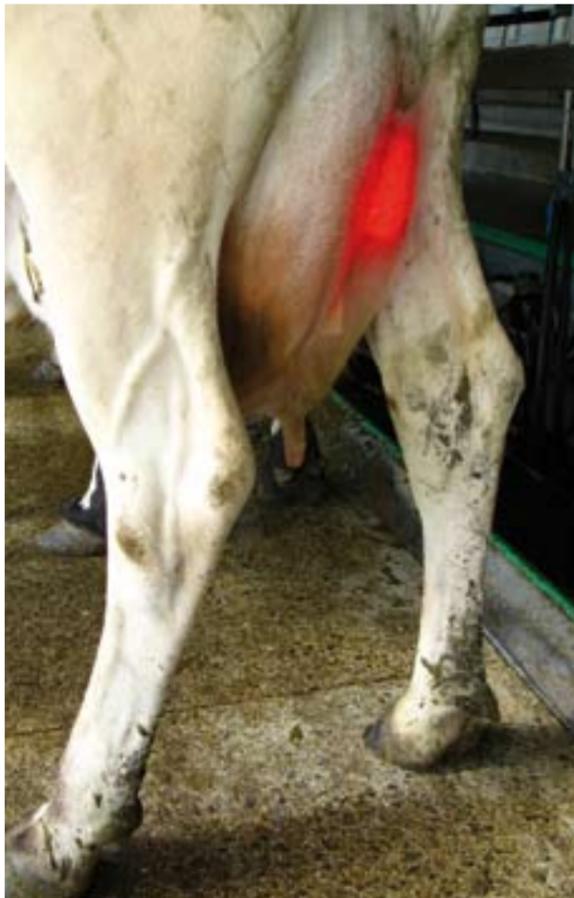


Uddermark hits spot for ID

Quality penalties for putting penicillin milk into the silo for supply, mean many different methods for identifying treated cows have been tried over the years.

The most common, but not always most successful is a squirt of standard aerosol paint on the udder, only to have it fade quicker than it should, and risk a quality milk supply record.

With a history of listening to farmers' problems, FiL have developed the solution. Launched this autumn, Uddermark is a specially formulated aerosol spray applicator udder ID paint for indicating when milk is under the with holding period, and when it is clear for supply again.



The paint comes in a six pack of 250ml cans, three of fluorescent red and three of fluorescent green. The cans feature a 360 degree valve, offering spraying ability from all angles in the dairy shed environment.

FiL's business development manager Trevor Gulliver says Uddermark is an exciting breakthrough for farmers desperate for an effective udder ID paint.

"The penalties for getting the wrong milk in the silo are huge today, and with larger farms involving more staff, you need a failsafe way to ID those cows," he says. Often red leg bands have been used, but these can be tricky to put on and often end up covered in muck.

The red should be applied when the milk is under the with holding period. It can then be oversprayed with the distinctive green when the milk is clear to go into the vat for supply.

With farmers firmly in mind, FiL have spent much time trialling the paint on farm. Without fail, all the farmers involved reported the paint is easy to apply, only takes minutes to dry and is easily seen from a distance.

With the paint needing to stay on the cow for at least five days, Uddermark more than meets the task.

Trevor Gulliver says standard aerosol paints not only don't last as long as they are not formulated for application to the udder, but they also come in the wrong sized can.

"Who hasn't been into a farm dairy and almost broken their neck on the spray can lying on the step down into the dairy pit? We have opted for a 250ml can that fits neatly into your overall pocket. A better paint formulation means you don't need to use as much of it either."

Retailing in handy six packs with three each of red and green, Trevor Gulliver is confident Kiwi dairy farmers are going to welcome the arrival of Uddermark in the farm dairy.

Farmers give Uddermark thumbs up

FiL spends significant time testing all its new products in the field, and Uddermark was no exception.

All the farmers who trialled Uddermark were impressed with its ability to stand out in all conditions, and to stay on for longer.

Warren and Lynette Watson farm near Opotiki in Eastern Bay of Plenty, sharemilking 580 cows. Warren says the high visibility of Uddermark was its strongest feature, and not having to repaint each day was a bonus.

"It would be the only paint I have used that actually stays bright the whole time it is on," says Warren. The paint was easily seen from a distance, and would stay on the udder for 14 days without fading, he says.

Ian Brown also farms near Opotiki and milking 1200 cows means he needs a paint that lasts yet is still affordable. Ian says he needs a paint to stay on the cow for 6-10 days, and Uddermark easily achieved that, averaging 14 days.

"It is easy to apply and a good amount of paint comes out when you put it on," says Ian.

Regulator rewards with primo maize silage

Opotiki farmer Warren Watson was bowled over with the quality of his maize silage crop last season, and he puts a lot of that down to using FiL's Regulator.

The chemical preservative protects the freshness and palatability of silage, reducing the number of microbial populations that cause aerobic spoilage.

Warren grew and stacked 18 hectare of maize silage last season, and plans to make the same this year. He says he was amazed at the consistent quality of the stack when he opened it up for his herd of 580 cows last spring.

"There was no layer of old stuff on the top, it was all usable and very even right through from the middle to the top, we never wasted a bit of it," he says.

This came during a season which was one of the most challenging for maize growers everywhere, with long dry periods affecting crop growth and ear formation.

Warren uses maize silage to boost spring production and this year, like most farmers throughout the North Island, anticipates yields to be up 20 percent on last year.

"We are hoping for a crop that averages around 25 kg of dry matter a hectare this year," he says.

The special formulation of Regulator ensures the valuable protein content of maize is maintained, along with energy levels and stack life.

"Last year the harvester's dispenser broke down so we had to put the Regulator on by hand through the silage, and then put a bag full over the top of it. It worked out pretty cheap really, I think we used nine bags for the 18 hectares we put away."

Good management goes hand in hand with the use of Regulator. Warren ensured the stack was tightly sealed with plenty of tyres, and well covered. Keeping the stack closed for at least two weeks ensures Regulator has enough time to work effectively as the stack ferments.

"I can honestly say, it works very well, and we will definitely be using it again this year."



Opotiki farmer Warren Watson in front of last year's maize silage stack with his two daughters Grace and Alice.

Graderite - more uses than meets the eye

With the possibility of thermoduric grades always hovering right through to drying off, FiL have the answer to preventing grade problems in late lactation.

Graderite is a stalwart of FiL's product range, offering 20 years of proven reliability as a tried and trusted high strength chlorinated purging agent.

FiL's Trevor Gulliver says Graderite's success for such a long time lies in its ability to break down protein on milk contact surfaces, whether it is stainless steel or rubberware. Protein is the food source for heat loving thermoduric bacteria, which can be a problematic cause of grades through the hot summer-autumn months, he says.

Being heat resistant, thermoduric bacteria can survive pasteurisation. They thrive in the farm dairy plant environment where the hot water kills off any competing bugs allowing the thermoduric bacteria to flourish, particularly in the milk line, silo and receiving can.

The problem is compounded by the test for thermodurics which taking several days to run, means the odds of grading more than once before discovering and fixing the problem are high.

"We recommend that any farmer who is using our Quantum XL alkali detergent add in Graderite at this time of year when the risk of thermodurics through protein build up is high," says Trevor.

Typical signs of protein build up are a "rainbow" colouration on the surface of stainless steel plant.

With the end of the season approaching, FiL also recommend Graderite as the ideal shut down cleaner.

What many farmers may not know is the properties that make Graderite so effective at preventing grades also make it an ideal moss and algae killer around the farm dairy and buildings.

Sodium hypochlorite is the active ingredient, killing moss quickly, and inhibiting grow back. Graderite is best mixed in a 3:1 dilution rate applied with a back pack sprayer then left for a few minutes to take full effect before hosing off.

Genetics unlock somatic cell links

A history of selecting for cows with high production traits has led the Livestock Improvement Corporation and the dairy industry to also recognise the impact this has on somatic cell counts.

Bill Montgomerie from the dairy industry's Animal Evaluation system says 40 years of effective breeding schemes has shown some important production aspects in dairy cows can be slightly antagonistic in their effect on aspects like somatic cell count (SCC) levels, mastitis and reproductive ability.

"It is really only a small effect but if you do not account for it in the Breeding Worth (BW) index you would see an increase in the number of highly productive cows with increased incidences of mastitis and reproductive problems."

Isolating which bulls carry undesirable traits like high somatic cell counts is a relatively simple exercise done by analysing their daughters' SCC records. Overseas statistics have proven bulls transmitting high SCC levels also transmit higher mastitis incidences.

Bill Montgomerie says the national herds' SCC average hit an all time low in 1999/2000 season, at 193,000. This was a significant drop from the 1989/90 average of 358,000, but post 2000 it started to creep up again.. The average for the 2004-2005 season was 229,000.

"What we were able to establish is some of the bulls through that period were bulls capable of transmitting that higher SCC level."

The situation was exacerbated by management practices at the time that were connected to how SCC levels were graded, and has since been adjusted.

Bill Montgomerie says the genetic evaluation techniques are well understood today although fertility and reproductive genetic identification can prove trickier.

Somatic cell traits are regarded as highly heritable, broadly around .2, and production ability at .3. Reproduction is significantly less so, at less than .05.

He is optimistic that with even greater genetic mapping New Zealand breeding scientists may soon be able to see the future potential of their sire bulls, without having to wait to see how their daughters perform first.

"If we can get enough information at the DNA level from the yearling bulls it might be possible to show which yearling bulls are the best prospects and use them more extensively without waiting for the progeny test on the daughters. Progeny testing normally delays extensive use of a bull until he is five years old.."

He says retrospective tests on the bull's daughters would be undertaken to check that DNA-based predictions were working satisfactorily.



FiL
New Zealand

Get it right with Graderite

With the possibility of thermoduric grades always hovering right through to dry off, introduce Graderite with your usual alkali detergent to ensure thermodurics have no where to go.

Graderite breaks down protein on milk contact surfaces, whether its on stainless or rubber making it a reliable purging agent for warm summer - autumn months and the ideal shut down cleaner.

Phone your FiL Area Manager for more information.

Also available to all FiL customers, The FiL Dairy Hygiene Handbook. Please phone your Area Manager to order your copy.

POISON
FiL
Graderite
NON FOAMING PURGING AGENT

FiL
New Zealand

HOTLINE : 0508 434 569
NETLINE : www.fil.co.nz

Safety Focus on the Farm

FiL continues its commitment to on-farm safety with the release of an emergency preparedness programme for farmers this autumn.

General manager Gavin Cherie says interest is strong from farmer clients who have larger herds to manage, invariably involving multiple staff around the farm dairy. "As part of our commitment to our clients to provide more technical support, and not only products, our area managers will be taking them through a preparedness checklist and emergency response presentation."

Gavin says corporate responsibility plays a big part in FiL's safety focus.

"We want our clients to be completely safe when around our products, and as knowledgeable as possible about what to do should something go wrong."

A farm emergency checklist guides FiL clients through a number of topics relating to farm staff and management's ability to respond to a chemical emergency, fire or natural disaster.

Things as simple as having a list of all important

phone numbers including doctors, hospitals and emergency services are asked. The ability of the farm site to handle chemical spills is also queried, along with the presence and testing of fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and eye baths.

"These are all things that farmers have to think about more closely, given the greater complexity of chemicals on farm, and the number of people potentially exposed to them," says Gavin Cherie.

A presentation offered by FiL area managers centres around five key areas of chemical and hazardous substance management.

The first area is avoidance, including tips on correct storage of chemicals and training of staff in safely handling them.

"FiL have all our product Safety Data Sheets on line, so precautions required for each product's can easily be looked up in the event of an emergency, or the SDS can be printed and kept on file," says Gavin.

The second area, minimising risk, is as simple as good housekeeping and keeping things tidy. Segregation of incompatible chemicals is also

reinforced, says Gavin Cherie.

The content of an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) is the third area. FiL have adhesive copies of Emergency Response Plans that can be affixed to the dairy wall and be used for staff training. It provides clear, defined actions for the identification, control, containment and clean-up in the event of a hazardous substances spill.

The fourth area, post emergency planning focuses on cleaning up and disposing of materials, along with business continuity and how the farm would continue to operate if a crucial building was taken out, such as the dairy. The importance of learning from incidents is also stressed.

"Finally we provide some good sources on where to go for more information. The NZ Safety site (www.nzsafty.co.nz) in particular has is very good information on selection of personal protective equipment," says Gavin.

While emergencies are not things farmers want to spend a lot of time thinking about, taking time out to have a plan now will reduce the probability of things going wrong and ensure the business can continue to operate successfully, regardless of what happens, he says.

FiL seeks real solutions to farm problems

With a history of innovation and leading edge products, FiL prides itself on finding solutions to farmers' problems. In fact several of the company's products have come from talking directly to farmers about things they need, but no one has been providing.

"A typical example is the tail paint applicator we developed over 10 years ago," says Trevor Gulliver, FiL's business development manager.

"I happened to be talking one day to a farmer in the Waikato who was tail painting his cows at the time. He was balancing a one litre pot of paint in one hand, a paint brush in the other as he climbed up the railings and he said "surely you guys could come up with something that is better than this?"

Working with FiL director Dave Hancox they came up with the simple solution of putting "a brush on a bottle". The FiL Tailpaint Applicator was born and to this day the design remains unchanged. In a tribute to its practicality Kiwi farmers have made it one of the company's most popular products.

Trevor says FiL is working on an exciting prototype that combines some of the applicator design with a new concept which will be revealed in the new dairying season.

"It is always a case of picking what farmers will want next, and coming up with a marketable, cost effective product they will want to buy."

As FiL continues to focus on delivering products that make farms more profitable, Trevor Gulliver is keen to hear from any farmers about problems they have that FiL may be able to come up with a practical, affordable solution to.

FiL
New Zealand

BOOSTER BLOCK
THE NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENT FOR GRAZING ANIMALS

Give Stock a Boost!

FiL BOOSTER BLOCK is a great tasting molasses-based supplement for grazing animals to assist with the balance of their nutritional needs. FiL BOOSTER BLOCK provides a healthy nutrition supplement with the appealing sweet taste of molasses. All the essential trace elements required and usually gained from higher quality grazing have been added with boosted levels of magnesium, calcium, and iron. Give your stock a boost with FiL BOOSTER BLOCK.

BOOSTER BLOCK is part of FiL's extensive range of farming products

FiL
New Zealand

HOTLINE : 0508 434 569
NETLINE : www.fil.co.nz

Farmer's Early Lactation Handy pack relieves spring pressure



Essentials packed into one handy container, ready for the busy season. When the rush of calving descends FiL wants its clients to be as prepared as possible – days are suddenly several hours too short and the pressure is really on.

To make the job simpler FiL have put together the farmer's Early Lactation Handy Pack. It is an assortment of quality FiL products that most farmers will be reaching for at some time over the calving period.

FiL is also positive once the rush is over most farmers will be only too happy to fill the handy fish bin which the products come in with something more edible after a day in the boat off the farm!

The products cover all the critical areas of hygiene and health that crop up over those busy spring months, on the farm and in the dairy.

There is a container of FiL SA33 general purpose antiseptic that is as effective in cleaning surfaces as it is for initial first aid, with its strong germ killing properties ideal for cleaning up in the dairy or even at home.

A handy 500ml spray bottle of FiL Stock Iodine will prove invaluable for spraying calf navels to prevent infection, or to spray onto cuts and grazes on cows in the dairy.

There is also a can of the hugely popular FiL

Foam Mark, the coloured foam marker for use as temporary animal marker to identify animals that need drafting out for treatment or examination.

To help get and keep teats in top condition at the start of the season there is also a pack of FiL's Emollient Salve. With its waterproof lubricant and emollient barrier to protect cracked and chapped teats, the salve is simply a "must have" for the season's start.

With its handy Flexipack packaging, the salve is easily hung in the dairy for application post-milking. Its superior healing qualities also mean it does wonders for hands punished in those early weeks of calving!

For identifying cows that are receiving on-going treatment for mastitis farmers will also get a six pack of FiL's latest paint product Uddermark. With its unique florescent paint properties Uddermark provides longer lasting, vivid, identification of cows that have been treated with antibiotics - ensuring they are not going to end up contaminating supplied milk early in the season.

The handy 250ml spray can fits easily into an overall pocket so it doesn't roll around on the farm dairy floor. With its 360 degree valve the spray can come from any angle guaranteeing good coverage and the paint will last at least 14 days. There are two colours - bright red for 'stop' and bright green for 'go', and the six pack of Uddermark is an invaluable part of the Farmers Pack.



Teat care range hits somatics head on

Teat damage and infection is not always top of farmers' minds at the end of lactation, but what happens here can affect somatic cell counts and clinical infections in the new season.

With FiL's quality range of iodine and chlorhexidine based teat sprays, farmers can be sure the options are covered for complete herd teat care this season.

Ultracare Teatshield is FiL's chlorhexidine based teat spray that represents the ultimate in teat care formulation and technology. For farmers preferring iodine based sprays FiL have Ultracare Iodoshield.

Both products have been developed with the needs of Kiwi dairy cows and their owners in mind, including the addition of high quality emollients and conditioners to ensure top quality teat condition.

FiL's Southern North Island rep Clint Humphrey says his sales are split pretty much one third Ultracare Teatshield to two thirds Ultracare Iodoshield. While Ultracare Iodoshield is cheaper, Clint says price does not always dictate farmer's decision to opt for the iodine based spray.

"I have a number of large clients who have opted for the Ultracare Teatshield because they have automated teat spray systems and the greater viscosity of the Ultracare Teatshield is more suited to these systems."

Clint says generally the automated systems will use greater quantities of teat spray as the cows pass through them. However because of its increased viscosity Ultracare Teatshield requires less volume to stick and spread across the teat surface.

Other farmers may choose Ultracare Teatshield because they may experience some irritation to iodine based teatsprays, says Clint.

"What I have found though, is whatever choice you make, different herds can respond differently to spray, and spray is not the only thing that will affect somatics and mastitis."

He has a client near Levin who has an average cell count of only 36,000, and a large number of cows with cell counts under 5,000, including a 10 year old.

Clint attributes this not only to a thorough programme of spraying with FiL's Ultracare Iodoshield, but excellent management, clean races and a good eye for potential problems.

"Teat spraying is a bit like putting good oil into a car engine. It doesn't matter how good that oil is, if the engine has had it things won't get better!"

If more advice on teat spraying and teat spray products is needed, be sure to contact your local FiL area manager.

Climate outlooks

Estimating the net impact of all the weather

There are some important differences between weather forecasts and climate outlooks.

Weather forecasts rely on mathematical models that track the temperature, water content, and movement of the atmosphere from initial measured conditions to likely new states over some hours or a few days later. The models are based on physical laws that govern the behaviour of air masses as conditions change hour by hour. The forecasts become less reliable as they extend out in time, and predictions beyond 5-6 days have to be treated with caution.

Forecasts of weather are usually expressed categorically – for example, there will be 20-30 mm of rain tomorrow afternoon.

Climate outlooks

Climate outlooks, on the other hand, deal with the much more slowly changing features of the earth's systems – such as changes in the seasons, the way the atmosphere behaves in our part of the world, and water temperatures across ocean surfaces. The seasonal or interannual evolution of these large scale phenomena forms the basis for climate prediction models.

Climate models also rely on observational evidence which shows, for example, that there are typically warmer than normal conditions over land in coastal New Zealand when the adjacent sea surface is warmer than normal.

In recent years the state of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) has become a useful tool in preparing New Zealand climate outlooks. We know, for example, that a weakening of the equatorial trade winds, associated with the El Niño phase of ENSO, usually brings stronger west to southwest winds over New Zealand. However, our climate outlooks also have to take into account observed concurrent phenomena that may not have any easily measured physical connection, such as the seeming link between Indian Ocean surface temperatures and aspects on New Zealand's climate. We call these links teleconnections.

The monthly round

Each month, NIWA and MetService climatologists and hydrologists meet to assess the current season's climate, with data from almost 300 climate stations around New Zealand and additional information from abroad. We then consider what the climate models are saying about how the climate might develop over the next three months or so. Output from more than 10 global climate models, run in various countries, is available to us, and models developed in New Zealand are added to the mix. Sometimes the models disagree in their predictions, and the reliability of each model has to be evaluated. Climate forecasting is an emerging science, and we will get better at it in the coming years.

Because there is uncertainty in what we understand about the climate and how we see it evolving, our outlooks are typically expressed using probabilities. That is, they estimate the 'odds' of particular conditions occurring, rather than making definite statements. For example "there is a 70% probability that Canterbury will be drier than normal during the coming summer" rather than "this summer will be dry in Canterbury". There's always a chance that unexpected weather will occur, and be significant enough to change the climate.

Horses for courses

It's important to use climate outlooks in the way that they are intended to be used. Outlooks are useful for predicting whether the coming autumn, for example, is likely to be warmer or wetter than last autumn or the historical average autumn. But climate outlooks cannot predict when current conditions might change abruptly, for example when a drought might end with substantial rain, or when a cold spring might become warm and sunny instead. That's weather forecasting territory.

Forecast for February to April

The forecast of conditions that are expected to occur, on average, for February to April, is shown below. The tercile probabilities shown on the maps indicate the likelihood or chance of the forecast conditions being near normal, or above or below normal respectively.

As shown in the maps, air temperatures are expected to be average or above average in all districts. Rainfall is expected to be near normal in most places, but normal or below normal in the southwest of the North Island and the east of the

South Island. Normal or below normal soil moisture levels and below normal stream flows are expected in the southwest of the North Island and the east of the South Island, with normal soil moisture and stream flow conditions elsewhere.

We expect westerly wind patterns over New Zealand during February-April to be weaker than normal.

For more information, email the National Climate Centre at ncc@niwa.co.nz, or contact Alan Porteous, an agricultural climatologist with NIWA, Wellington - a.porteous@niwa.co.nz

Timely advice for drying off

Farmwise consultant Paul Reidy has some timely advice for farmers looking to dry off their herds with minimum stress, somatics and loss of body condition.

In the last few days before the final milking, John advises not to tighten the herd up too much. If they are already averaging less than 10 litres a cow then once a day (OAD) is not necessary prior to drying off, despite this being a common belief.

"Simply keep feeding your cows as you were through to the final milking day, and keep plenty of water available," he says.

Tightening up the herd in the final few days of milking when they are already averaging less than 10 litres per cow per day creates significant under-feeding, increased stress and creating massive rises in the bulk milk somatic cell count (BMSCC).

Milk volumes plummet, and the BMSCC will blow out over 400,000 and grading will result. Feeding cows at maintenance levels is essential for 7-10 days after the final milking and antibiotic administration.

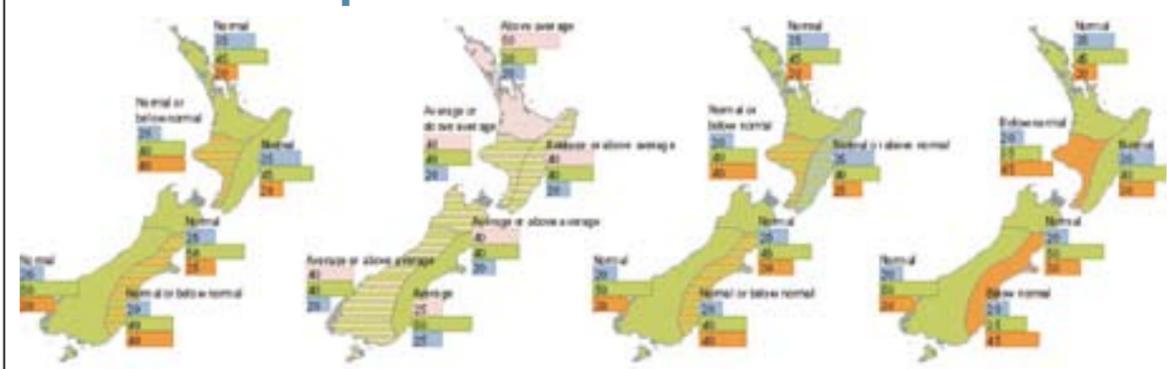
Skip a day milking will often be practiced when the herd is averaging more than 10 litres a cow per day at the late lactation stage. The practice causes massive increases in BMSCC, often over 400,000 and interferes with the formation of the natural keratin plug that helps the udder keep infections out over the dry period.

"Once the keratin plug has formed after drying off it is very rare for a cow to become infected with mastitis over the dry period," says Paul.

Selecting the optimum dry cow strategy that minimises the risk of Inhibitory Substance grading at next season's first pick up should include the following:

- The percent of herd to be treated with Dry Cow Treatment. The higher the percent, the greater the risk of contamination
- The length of the dry period. If the period is less than 60 days the risk increases
- Per cow milk yields at drying off. If yields are low, the risk increases.

NIWA Outlook Map 2006



How to interpret these maps

In the example here the climate models suggest that below average conditions are likely (50% chance), but, given the variable nature of the climate, the chance of normal or above normal conditions is also shown (30% and 20% respectively).

Below normal
50% (50% chance of below normal)
30% (30% chance of normal)
20% (20% chance of above normal)

NIWA
Taiboro Nukurangi

The many faces of **FIL**

Southern Team enjoy the big island



FIL have the South Island covered from Takaka to Bluff and this issue we take a look at the three area managers who make up the team there....

Smart farmers need smart servicing, and FiL's Southland-Otago area manager Peter Dodds likes to sort out his clients' business with single larger orders at the farm gate. Peter says this is appreciated by him, but also his farmer clients who like everyone else these days are short on time.

"Increasingly we are all having to look at how we can deliver in our jobs more effectively, and if I can individualise a farmers order, the majority are happy to buy in one bulk order. This leaves me to provide any service they need, rather than trundling up their drive to sell a couple of single products."

One of the services Peter has put greater emphasis on is getting staff on the many larger dairy units in his region fully educated in what dairy hygiene is all about. This has been made significantly easier with FiL's release of the Dairy Hygiene Handbook. "They are the ones doing the job, and there is a hell of a lot they need to know to do it properly every day. That is best achieved by learning it, and doing it themselves."

Peter has 11 years experience in the big territory, and he believes that counts in a part of the country where respect is hard won, but loyalty is very high. Six years ago the region enjoyed an explosion of dairying growth.

"It has stabilised since then, and what happens next will really depend on the payout and land prices over the next few years."

He laments the lack of contract and share milkers moving up the ladder in an industry where land prices are the biggest barrier to entry.

"You see a number of good operators come in, but leave and they take that experience out of the industry with them."

A self declared Southern Man whose family farmed on the Taieri, Peter has worked all his life in the region.

"Like most of the area managers, I enjoy the flexibility of the position, and the great relationships I have built up here over the years."

This year he plans to focus on working smarter, and getting more time to offer personalised service to his valued clients.

"I find by offering excellent service to my established base I tend to pick up more clients through word of mouth."

Husband and wife team build top of the South

Combining their skills and background to concentrate on building the FiL business in the top half of the South Island is paying off for Daryl and Susan Hill. Based out of Takaka, Daryl is a year into the position, and has appreciated the skills Susan has to make the territory run better.

"She is far better on the administration than I am, and that gives me time to spend on the road over what is a pretty big area. Stretching from Fox Glacier to Karamea through the Buller to the Lewis Pass and around to Kaikoura, Nelson and Marlborough, the region has plenty of challenge.

Susan's background in marketing and administration comes from time spent managing the FarmSafe office for Telford Polytech at Balclutha. She continues to assist organising FarmSafe courses in her spare time, and it brings some strong synergies to Daryl's work with FiL.



"We can introduce to farmers the requirements for chemical handling that have come in now, and get them trained up and certified, which is now a requirement."

After long time FiL area manager Ian Grooby left, Daryl has had big boots to fill. He says the West Coast has seen a lot of recent dairy expansion, and offers some big opportunities for FiL. His home region of Takaka is one of contrasts, with lifestyle blocks interspersed with large and small dairy units.

After years spent managing large herds in the South Island, Daryl has felt more than confident about promoting and standing behind FiL products. His experience with large herds and big dairies mean he is very familiar with the problems experienced when multiple staff are involved in dairy hygiene programmes.

Daryl and Susan's aims for the coming year include building their profile in the territory, and to also document their commitment to their valued clients. This means personalising their approach and implementing a mission statement.

"We are very motivated and excited to utilise the innovation, support and systems FiL have in place to enable us to grow our business and more importantly service our clients' needs, offering cost effective farming solutions," says Daryl.

Opportunities aplenty in open spaces of the Plains

Travelling around building up FiL's business through Canterbury, Bruce Smith can see plenty of opportunities through the region.

Bruce says the Plains are an interesting place, with a varying mix of sheep, cropping and dairy operations, and a place for all of FiL's products across all of them. After three years with a rural merchandiser he has had plenty of opportunity to be familiar with all the products, and is excited about the number of new ones being released this season.

Bruce is originally off a dairy farm in the South Waikato and milked cows after leaving school. After taking five years out of dairying to work in a dairy company store, he also gained his fitters and turner's certificate.

Returning to the cows and sharemilking in 1991 he headed to the wide open spaces of Ashburton and worked on a 1200 cow farm on the Ashburton coast.

Much of his time in the last 12 months has been spent building his profile in the region, and he has also actively been involved in the Allenton Senior rugby team, managing after coaching the under 17 team last year.

He sees three distinct areas through the Plains, each with their own issues.

"Culverden is pretty established, and looking good through summer. The mid-Canterbury area has issues with water and getting more of it, while further south in the Oamaru area, I think that area is really starting to come away with lots of potential."

He finds the majority of farms he visits already use FiL's tail paint, and plenty of farmers are surprised at just how many quality products FiL can supply.

Bruce believes FiL's Rewards programme will hold huge appeal to many of the larger dairy farmers in Canterbury.

"With many farmers already buying the tailpaint, I hope the rewards will encourage more to pick up on our other products."

He enjoys the continuing connection with dairying, getting alongside farmers and understanding their business better.

"You often get the chance to help out in other ways too, maybe hearing about someone who is looking for a job, and coming across someone looking for staff and being able to match them up, that sort of thing is rewarding too."

