



FIL

THE DAIRY FARMER

FARM INNOVATION / HYGIENE/ ANIMAL HEALTH / MARKERS / NUTRITION

MAKING YOUR JOB EASIER

AUTUMN 2011

Opportunities and challenges will abound over the coming three to five years as farmers and agribusinesses face greater volatility alongside higher price opportunities for global commodities.

ROLLER COASTER RIDE FOR COMMODITIES TO COME

A recent report by agribusiness lender Rabobank presents a roller coaster scenario for supply and prices globally, but also greater opportunities than ever before for farmers to make the most of the ride and come out on top. To do so, the report's authors are urging farmers to consider risk management options. They also maintain despite the opportunities for New Zealand and Australian farmers, many may not yet fully appreciate the scale and pace of the changes occurring.

Rapidly growing emerging economies are moving to larger scale production methods to feed their growing middle classes for more protein sourced products. With this the impact of growing demand for grain is destined to have important cross over effects on pastoral farmers here in New Zealand.

Rabobank is predicting a bumpy ride with on-going volatility not only in prices, but also in supply and demand of commodities, partly brought on by evolving food retail, food service industries, unilateral trade decisions and of course the weather.

New Zealand dairy farmers for example faced the prospect of possible commodity price surges resulting from the Russian fires in 2010, due to the resulting shortage of grain for Northern Hemisphere

herds the fires risked creating. Again, with the risk of drought reducing New Zealand's dairy production this year the global Dairy Trade (gDT) indicator surged upwards in early January as processors rushed to secure more commodity product fearing a shortage later in the season.

NZX analyst Susan Kilsby says the volatility of commodity prices is heightened by the relationship between grain, food and also fuel production.

“Oil hungry nations like the US produce large volumes of fuel as ethanol from grain, resulting in food and fuel competing for the same basic commodity further accentuating price swings,” she says.

The New Zealand Stock Exchange (NZX) has recently launched its Dairy Futures market offering the NZX Global Whole Milk Price (WMP) Futures. The futures

contracts are a means for processors and ultimately farmers to ease out or at least anticipate the troughs and peaks that are now such a part of commodity trading.

Dairy Futures are a binding contract to deliver a set quantity of product at a defined future date. In the case of the dairy futures market, anywhere from one month to 18 months in advance. For example a Global WMP contract is a commitment to buy or sell WMP at a fixed price for cash settlement at a future date.

However, rather than actually deliver a product, cash settlement is accepted in exchange for the futures instrument, a simpler process than trying to physically deliver the dairy product.

Launched last year the futures trade has found strong favour with dairy processors and suppliers globally. Fonterra welcomed the launch of the futures market and is keen to see it succeed. This commitment has also helped underpin the market and give participants confidence in its robustness, says Susan.

“With Fonterra already using hedging on its foreign exchange deals, having milk commodity prices also hedged will help it deliver more certain milk price information to farmers,” she says.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

2 **Plasback drum recovery on track**

3 **Dairy days to ease cash woes**

5 **Getting heads read on farm accidents**

8 **Fast, safe, gentle & complete milking**

A WORD FROM FIL:

The 2010-2011 season has thrown just about everything our way. Needless to say it looks like the season will be better than the predictions and most farms will milk through for as long as possible.

On behalf of the team at FIL and the new owners GEA Farm Technologies, I would like to thank all our customers both farmers and the rural distribution networks for your custom and support. I would also like to take this opportunity to personally thank our team and the staff at FIL for a tremendous season and their dedication to going that extra yard to get product out to the farmers when they needed it.

All the very best for the remainder of the season and we all look forward to launching some new products later this year.

WARWICK DOWSE - General Manager

Farming to Succeed

A programme by

Agriculture ITO
Industry Training Organisation

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FIL

END OF SEASON SHUTDOWN

FIL HAS SOME SIMPLE STEPS TO ENSURE YOUR PLANT SHUT DOWN THIS AUTUMN IS STRAIGHTFORWARD AND THOROUGH, AND WON'T GIVE YOU GRADING HEADACHES WHEN YOU START THE NEW SEASON.

FINAL WASH

Following the final milking of the season rinse the plant with ample cold water, then recycle a double strength chlorinated alkali wash for approximately 3 - 5 minutes. Discard when the water temperature reaches 55 - 60 degrees C. Follow this with an acid rinse. Leave the plant to drain before carrying out a full plant inspection.

PLANT INSPECTION

All joins and union seals should be opened and inspected for any sign of deterioration and replaced where necessary. Carefully inspect all other rubber components, throw out and replace any that look suspicious or are more than two years old. Last season's rubber ware has rough surfaces created from aging and these provide an excellent environment for bacteria to grow. Surface deposits can even allow bacteria to survive cleaning and sanitising. As well as harbouring bacteria, the rough surface of worn rubber parts makes it more difficult to clean clusters.

BULK MILK SILO

The bulk milk silo should be cleaned immediately after the last pick-up while the residues are still soft. Discard all the rubber ware and start the season with new door seals, replace the donut and valve seals - all of which are available from your dairy company.

NEW SEASON

It's also important to start the season with new milk liners. Using the old liners is likely to cause incomplete and uneven milking and possibly contribute to poor teat condition. Micro-cracks can harbour bacteria, which can also result in grading problems later on. Modern liners are a blend of rubber and synthetic material and much softer and more durable than the rubber ware we used some years ago. These liners are ideal when breaking in heifers.

TEST BUCKET

The test buckets can be a grade trap so be sure to clean thoroughly and replace the rubber tubing before the new season commences.

MILK QUALITY

Remember, it's all about milk quality, no compromise. In New Zealand, dairy hygiene requires a great deal of attention to detail as the milking machine cleaning systems have relatively short contact times. Once cows are being milked through the plant again, at least one hot water wash per day is essential to keep the plant hygiene at its highest level. Hot water and detergent are required from day one to melt the high fat content of colostrum milk. It's not advisable to start hot water washes the day before the tanker is due for the first pick up and a single bomb wash alone can't be expected to remove two weeks worth of high fat colostrum build up.

Finally, don't start sending milk for collection until you are sure that everything is thoroughly cleaned. There have been many cases where the first pick up has resulted in the only grade of the season because of a hasty start.

Contact your local FIL Area Manager for help and more information and start the new season problem free.

PLASBACK DRUM RECOVERY ON TRACK

THE FIRST DAIRY HYGIENE DRUM RECYCLING SCHEME OF ITS TYPE IN NEW ZEALAND IS NOW CELEBRATING 12 MONTHS OF OPERATION, WITH ALL PARTIES REMAINING FIRMLY COMMITTED TO THE PROGRAMME.

FIL, Ecolab and plastic recycler Agpac represent a unique industry union aiming to reduce the number of drums that end up in both council and farm landfills around New Zealand.

Agpac's product stewardship programme Plasback has been well established in collecting hundreds of tonnes of silage wrap from around the farming landscape over the past five years.

With the addition of a highly visible sticker on the FIL yellow drum, farmer awareness of the ability to have drums recycled and re-used will grow even quicker.

"The sticker just highlights the scheme, and will prompt farmers to let their reps know they have a drum for collection," says Plasback manager Chris Hartshorne.

He hopes to see the number of drums returned lift even quicker in coming weeks as the dairy season

winds down and farmers move to sort through what detergents remain on farm.

Chris reminds farmers the drums need to be in good condition and have not had any 'other' hazardous product in them. The label has to be removed, drum must be triple rinsed with the bungs intact.

THIS STICKER WILL APPEAR ON THE FOLLOWING FIL PRODUCTS: JETSET, QUANTUM BLUE, IODOSHIELD ACTIVE, ULTRACARE TEATSHIELD, BLOATEZE AND BLOATEZE DFA.



DAIRY DAYS TO EASE CASH WOES

THE LATEST ROUND OF DAIRY DAYS ORGANISED BY THE DAIRY WOMENS NETWORK (DWN) PROMISES TO INTRODUCE SOME VALUABLE NEW SKILLS THAT A VOLATILE DAIRY ENVIRONMENT HAS MADE MORE NECESSARY THAN EVER BEFORE.

The From Cashbook to Cashflow Dairy Days offer the opportunity for dairying women to get a handle on managing farm cash flows better, but they also highlight the growing value of the DWN in providing relevant, timely information to dairying women.

DWN chair Michelle Wilson of Tuatapere says previous Dairy Days have been widely welcomed through the many regions they have occurred in the past, and the success of this subject in last March's Dairy Days has prompted the network to bring them back and even increase the areas visited.



MICHELLE WILSON,
CHAIR OF DAIRY
WOMENS NETWORK

“Cashflow management is an aspect of farm operations that has become absolutely critical in recent years. A tightening of bank credit lines, the earlier lower payout and the impact of the weather mean the pressure is on to know what costs are being incurred when, and what is happening to your farm’s bottom line,” says Michelle.

Last March’s days were so well received the DWN has been able to secure funding from DairyNZ to double the number of venues this time around. Michelle says this means members in many smaller districts will get the opportunity to attend at the farm friendly times of between 10.00am and 2.00pm.

Speakers at the days will include agricultural consultants Rebecca Rowe in the North Island, while in the South Island Claire Harvey will be presenting.

DWN’s own research supports broader surveys that show few farmers run a cashflow budget, and that more financial planning was needed. Changes in dairy company payments, greater commodity price volatility and continuing extremes in weather patterns throughout the country had only made this need greater.

“If there is anything positive to come out of things like the lower payout and tight credit, it will be that more farmers are going to lift their game when it comes to cash management,” says Michelle.

From its beginnings 12 years ago with an e-digest on line forum for discussing problems and questions about farming, the DWN now boasts 3000 members from Bluff to Kaitia.

They are members who true to their gender, are highly capable and adept at multi-tasking. Michelle points to the demands on dairying women who are often expected to juggle family, farm work, administration, community work and marriage.

With the majority of members aged 30 plus, the network is aiming to get younger members on board from an industry highly dependent on young motivated people. A Facebook site is now running and DWN is working closely with Young Farmers to get younger dairying women engaged with the group.

Fashion designer Trelise Cooper is a guest speaker at this year’s conference and ticket sales will also target people in urban businesses, alongside dairying women.

“Past speakers have been impressed at the high calibre of the presentations and the delegates. The DWN conference is increasingly being recognised as a valuable part of many rural professionals’ calendar,” says Michelle.

To learn more about Dairy Days and the Dairy Womens Network, visit www.womenindairying.org.nz





A NEW WAY TO MAKE YOUR JOB EASIER?

QUANTUM XTREME is the latest addition to FIL’s range of hygiene products, made in New Zealand. This new product is a super strength liquid chlorinated alkaline detergent sanitiser - formulated for on-farm performance.

QUANTUM XTREME has a particularly high concentration of chlorine - a key aid for the removal of protein soil to help maintain your milk quality at peak levels.

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TDF-QX10311

JOB OPPORTUNITIES BRIGHT FOR DAIRY STAFF AND BOSSES

WHILE MANY CITY BASED EMPLOYEES WORK UNDER AN EVER PRESENT THREAT OF REDUNDANCY WITH AN ECONOMY STRUGGLING AGAINST RECESSION, DAIRY FARM STAFF ARE FACING A BUOYANT JOB MARKET THIS SEASON.



JOHN FEGAN,
DIRECTOR FEGAN AND CO.

Long time farm employment consultant John Fegan, director of Fegan and Co. in Cambridge says the opportunities and interest in employing staff are the best he has seen for at least four seasons, and he is confident it will continue to build.

“Over the past two seasons there has not been a lot of jobs coming up. Most people have pretty much been sitting tight where they are.”

However he is heartened by growing opportunities as payout prospects improve again, and more conversion properties begin to come off the drawing board and into reality.

The quality of those applying for new positions is also promising. One position John advertised for a larger 1300 cow operation, attracted 50 applicants and at least 10 of these were of an extremely high calibre.

His greatest concern is that if the number of conversions rumoured to come on stream over the next two seasons do become a reality, a real shortage may develop in dairying for good staff, particularly at mid-upper management levels.

Recent purchases of large tracts of dairy land by German corporates, and ongoing interest from Chinese investors in the North Island suggests absentee corporate ownership could dominate employment structures. This in turn requires good levels of skilled management staff in coming years.

“We also have the likes of the Superannuation Fund now entering the market to buy and run farms, putting further pressure on staff requirements.”

John says nowhere else is the changing face of dairy employment reflected more than in the share milking sector. Of all employment levels he believes share

milking is under the greatest pressure, with more than two operators for every job available this season.

Increasingly land ownership comprises equity partners seeking to take on board managers with equity also committed to the whole farm operation. This contrasts to an operator owning a business-within-a-business through his/her sharemilking operation on the farm.

For those unable to secure a share milking position, a change in perspective and attitude may be required to adjust to the changing ownership structures within dairying.

“Often you will go share milking because you want to be your own boss within someone else’s farm of course. Being an equity partner means you do have to take on board the views of others who are also partners in the business. This does not always suit those accustomed to share milking their own way.”

He is at pains to point out to anyone hesitant about becoming a managing equity partner instead of a sharemilker that there are real advantages.

“You get to draw a wage which reflects your skills and effort, and share in a dividend at the end of the season if there is one.”

He also has to convince many that it is far better to cede some control and be part of a large operation, than sole operator on a smaller farm business.

Business risk can also be reduced sharing equity in an equity partnership, against the increasingly volatile nature of livestock assets which are often driven by shorter term expectations.

As the industry re-surges and begins to grow again at a rate that exceeds the ability to staff it, John believes migrant staff will continue to play a vital role.

“Many of those that came in over two years ago are still here, we are seeing them getting their visas renewed.”


Meantime the churn rate that dairying has been infamous for in the past with staff starting a career and leaving disconsolate shortly afterwards has improved significantly in the past 10 years.

“Staff now have far better conditions, pay and time off – the industry has made genuine improvements. It used to be you would never put a young bloke on a large dairy unit. Today they have a great opportunity to be part of a team, and be exposed to all aspects, with prospects to rise through the ranks.”

FOUR KEY POINTS TO CHECK WHEN EMPLOYING NEW STAFF FOR NEXT SEASON:

1. Know who you are looking for: sit down well before advertising and write a clear job description to ensure you are clear in your own mind about who you want, and what you want them for. Avoid fishing expeditions to see what your efforts turn up.
2. Look for the negatives: if you don’t look for them you won’t find them, and will regret it later. Avoid taking all you see and are told at face value, be sure to verify all claims and experience.
3. You can’t learn with your mouth open: Employers tend to over talk in an interview, when they need to listen, and look for the subtleties that go with observing someone in an interview situation.
4. Check those referees: be sure to require a minimum of three referees. If two do not share the same views, go to the third and let the majority view rule.

For more information visit: www.fegan.co.nz



TROUGH BLOCK Box

TROUGH BLOCKS

PROVIDING DAIRY COWS WITH EASY ACCESS TO AMPLE CLEAN DRINKING WATER IS CRITICAL FOR LONG HOT SUMMER-AUTUMN DAYS.

During the summer period as the daily round is extended it doesn’t take long for slime and algae to build up in the water trough, particularly if there is little or no fresh water coming into the trough on a regular basis.

To assist in preventing this build up, particularly over the summer/autumn period, is the FIL Trough Block. These blocks are designed to control slime and algae, providing clean quality drinking water for the dairy cows over an extended period of time. FIL Trough Blocks can be used at any time of the year and are suitable for all water types.

FOR BEST RESULTS IT IS IMPORTANT TO FOLLOW THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS.

- The trough should be cleaned prior to treatment
- Place the block in the trough near the inlet valve
- One block will treat approximately 1000 litres of water
- Treat the trough every six weeks or when slime or algae begin to re-appear

Trough Block’s active ingredients are zinc sulphate, cobalt sulphate and copper sulphate.



Thanks to a new initiative supported through ACC, accident researchers from FarmSafe and AsureQuality have been specially trained in a new method of accident assessment to help farmers understand better how to avoid them in the future.

The Human Factors Analysis Tools (HFAT) pilot scheme has been adopted from industrial safety plans, and originates from the renowned Scottish research group the Keil Centre. There are 13 trained assessors around the country capable of using the system. HFAT has its

roots in industrial psychology and has enjoyed proven success in the chemical industry.

“HFAT aims to help practical people understand the human behaviour behind events,” says ACC’s workplace programme manager Peter Jones. Peter says often farmers are reluctant to talk about near misses on the farm for fear of prosecution, or a perceived loss of pride.

However the scheme has put a level of confidentiality between the farmers being assessed and ACC, removing any risk that ACC may seek prosecution for some failure around work place health and safety.

Northland farm safety advisor Robin Grieve is one FarmSafe consultant trained to run a HFAT accident assessment. Robin says the holistic approach to an accident review includes looking for antecedents - that is, what was happening prior to the accident event.

“We take them through a programme that questions about time pressure, tools used, hours worked and level of training for that specific job.”

One accident he examined involved a farm worker suffering a serious head injury from having the rear door on the silage wagon open, striking him and knocking him out.

HFAT research revealed the worker had felt under time pressure, and also had difficulties problem solving, using the rear door because the front discharge unit was broken and had not been fixed. From this the farm was able to put a safety policy into place that flagged repair issues and reduced time imperatives around feeding out.

Robin is keen to see greater maturity from farmers about post-accident behaviour and responses. He believes the confidentiality and follow up recommendations of the HFAT technique will encourage that.

“I assessed one incident which had happened a month earlier and the farmer had not even spoken about it with staff. To my mind it was a free hit reminder. It was not a major accident but was an opportunity to avoid one that could be much worse in the future simply by having that discussion and putting a plan in place.”

Such recommendations include having a problem of the month issue around safety, and getting staff to come up with suggestions on how to avoid it becoming a safety issue. ACC is creating a database of the assessed accidents, looking for commonalities and trends to help farmer education in future.

Peter Jones said research from HFAT has already revealed trends in cattle handling injuries, one of the top accident causes on farm. Incidents frequently involve cattle being forced into a space or area they did not want to be, and fighting back.

Simple patterns like that reinforce the need and importance of gentle handling and giving them time to settle down. ACC will be sharing the findings with farmers through its Fallen Farmer safety campaigns. “We would love for farmers to come to either us or AsureQuality to discuss their accident and how they could avoid them or their staff having another in the future,” says Robin.

To seek accident assessment contact:
FarmSafe 0800 545 747, or AsureQuality 0508 001 122.



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IMPACT RED SACHETS are part of FIL’s range of hygiene products, made in New Zealand. A REFORMULATED non-DG acidic detergent sanitiser designed to give you peace of mind when it comes to dosage, safety and efficiency in the farm dairy. **IMPACT RED** easy-tear pre-measured sachets reduce wastage and improve cost savings for you.

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FARM INNOVATION HYGIENE / ANIMAL HEALTH / MARKERS / NUTRITION



MAINLAND VIEWS



FARMING TO SUCCEED PROVIDES MAINLAND OPPORTUNITIES

SOUTH ISLAND FARM EMPLOYEES KEEN TO MAKE THEIR MARK IN THEIR INDUSTRY CAN LEARN FROM THOSE WHO ALREADY HAVE THIS AUTUMN.



GRANT TAYLOR
COURSE ORGANISER

Mid April will see 25 selected employees from the pastoral sector embark on a five day road trip on the South Island leg of the Farming to Succeed programme.

With FIL as key sponsor and run through Agriculture ITO, Farming to Succeed offers the selected applicants a unique opportunity to meet, question and learn from successful agribusiness operators who are prepared to share their stories with them.

Course organiser and mentor Grant Taylor says the impact of last year's course on its participants struck home to him when he recently organised a refresher day for them in Gore.

"We had 22 of the 25 turn up, and seven of them were from mid-Canterbury. They had driven six hours to get there, which was testimony to the value they had placed on their experience, and what they continued to get out of the course well after it was over."

The follow up day included a presentation from ex-rural banker and now personal development coach Simon Gibson. Simon helped those at the course profile themselves and learn how different personalities respond to situations and challenges.

Last year's trip saw the group visit Rakaia Dairies, the Five Star feed lot near Ashburton, South Pacific Seeds at Methven and FIL's South Island base in Timaru.

Grant, himself a successful farmer in both islands, is careful to focus on balance throughout the Farming to Succeed course. Participants have exposure to both dairy and other aspects of pastoral success stories, but also learn about the work-life balance successful operators have achieved in the course of their success.

"The true meaning of being successful cannot be plumped simply into the one category of having a lot of stuff. Those people we meet usually have made good choices with their life partners, and value health, family, friends and community as much as their material success."

While the farming sector has seen a volatile ride in returns and values over the past three years, Grant maintains the principles remain when it comes to working towards a goal of farm business ownership.

Advice comes on the course from rural professionals who deal daily with farming couples seeking to turn goals into realities. "There are still young share milkers and farmers out there building their equity and

growing their businesses, even through the difficult periods, and we want to provide those on the course with the inspiration and advice that ensures they too can achieve that."

Grant says the ability to contain everyone in one bus, and the calibre of the people who end up on the course, ensures a memorable experience.

"To be really successful in farming today you have to be as good with people as you are with stock and pasture management. Farming to Succeed provides a means to network with people in the industry - that is not only with your peers but also with possible mentors and even future employers."

FIL marketing manager Rosanne Obitz says the company has a proud tradition of fostering young successful farming people, and Farming to Succeed enforces that commitment.

"The future for the industry, and indeed for companies like FIL comes from committed young people and it is a course we are proud to be part of," says Rosanne.

To apply for selection to Farming To Succeed please visit: www.farming2succeed.co.nz



JOHAN WITH THE
FIL TRAPS AFTER
BEING DROPPED
IN BY ALPINE
CHOPPERS NEAR
LAKE HAUROKO.

STOATS DROP WITH FIL SPONSORSHIP

FIL'S SOUTHLAND AREA MANAGER MIKE BROOMHALL WENT TO GREAT LENGTHS TO LITERALLY WALK THE TALK WHEN COMMITTING TO HELPING CLEAN UP PESTS OUT OF PART OF FIORDLAND THIS SUMMER.

Mike is a dedicated outdoorsman, and it was his passion for the southern forest area that persuaded FIL to sponsor a pest control programme near New Zealand's deepest lake, Lake Hauroko. The Fiordland lake feeds the Wairaurahiri River, upon which Johan Groeters and Joyce Kolk run a jet boat operation, Wairaurahiri River Jet.

Recognising the value of the ecosystem to their business's success, the couple established a stoat and rat control programme around the lake region in 2006, giving visitors on the jet boat trip the opportunity to sponsor a trap to knock down pest populations. Prompted by Mike's enthusiasm, FIL opted to sponsor 10 traps at a value of \$225 each in the lake region. Mike spent a couple of days this summer checking, clearing and resetting the traps.

"All up we have caught a total of 14 stoats and nine rats in the past year, and indications are that in the established trapping grid the numbers of each are dropping every year," says Mike.

He reckons the 33km walk he went on that takes trampers out to the abandoned settlement of Port Craig is far enough for anyone on the wrong side of 100kg! Although, by the time he heads out again on the rigorous tramp he is pretty confident he may well be on the right side of that benchmark. He also welcomed the lift back that Johan offered him on the jet boat back up the river to get home without the same effort required.

The trapping area now comprises over 150 traps and the bush area is beginning the long slow process of building back bird populations. Mike recalls as a boy

visiting the area and hearing dozens of bird calls which today have faded to a few Tui and Bellbirds.

"Our hope is that by contributing to such a positive programme we will see those birds come back once the stoat numbers are nailed down in this area, and then we can start on the possums."

Johan is welcoming the diminished numbers of pests being caught in the traps, and total trap numbers have been boosted in recent months, as the number of pests caught decline. "We feel by offering the boat ride with a sponsored trap we are giving something back, people are not just being asked to send in a cheque for their efforts."

Mike is full of praise for Johan and Joyce who have taken such a responsible, holistic view of the environment they spend so much time introducing people to.

"For the price of a sponsored trap the jet boat trip is an exhilarating, memorable experience that outshines all the better known trips." Mike is recommending the trip to his larger farming clients in the region, and promoting the idea of sponsoring a trap to help preserve the area for future generations.

"Meanwhile FIL's sponsorship proves once again it is capable of walking the talk when it comes to supporting sustainable initiatives that protect and improve the environment," he says.

To learn more about the stoat trapping programme, visit: www.wjet.co.nz

SEASONAL CLIMATE OUTLOOK

FEBRUARY - APRIL 2011



WARMER THAN NORMAL CONDITIONS LIKELY TO CONTINUE INTO AUTUMN

The equatorial Pacific remains in a strong La Niña state, which is expected to persist into the start of autumn 2011, says the NIWA National Climate Centre. Beyond this time, there is disagreement between the forecast models as to whether La Niña will continue into winter at a weaker level, or whether a transition to neutral conditions will occur.

Early autumn temperatures (February to April) are likely to be above average in all regions, except in the east of the South Island where average or above average temperatures are equally likely.

Seasonal rainfall is likely to be normal or above normal in all North Island regions, and near normal in all South Island regions. Soil moisture levels and river flows during February - April are likely to be above normal in all North Island regions, normal or below normal on the east coast of the South Island, and near normal elsewhere in the South Island.

The seasonal outlook states that mean sea level pressures are likely to be below normal to the north of New Zealand, with weaker westerlies across the country.

Tropical cyclone activity is likely to be near- or above-normal this season (through to May 2011). The risk of an ex-tropical cyclone passing close to New Zealand is slightly above the long-term average. On average, at least one ex-tropical cyclone passes within 500km of New Zealand in 9 out of 10 cyclone seasons.

OVERALL PICTURE

TEMPERATURE:

On average for early autumn (February-April), temperatures are likely to be above average in all regions, except in the east of the South Island where average or above average temperatures are equally likely. Sea surface temperatures are presently slightly above normal around the North Island, and over the coming three months are expected to warm even further above the normal for this time of year.

RAINFALL, SOIL MOISTURE, AND RIVER FLOWS:

The National Climate Centre says that the expected lower pressures to the north of the country are likely to result in early autumn seasonal rainfall being normal or above normal across the North Island. Soil moisture levels and river flows are also likely to be above normal in all North Island regions. For the South Island, rainfall is likely to be near normal in all regions, whereas soil moisture levels and river flows are likely to be normal or below normal on the east coast of the South Island, and near normal elsewhere.

REGIONAL PREDICTIONS FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS:

NORTHLAND, AUCKLAND, WAIKATO, BAY OF PLENTY:

Temperatures are likely to be above average. Seasonal rainfall totals over February-April are equally likely to be near normal or above normal. Soil moisture levels and river flows are likely to be above normal. *Probabilities are assigned in three categories; above average, near average, and below average. The full probability breakdown is:*

	TEMPERATURE	RAINFALL	SOIL MOISTURE	STREAM FLOWS
ABOVE AVERAGE	55%	40%	45%	45%
NEAR AVERAGE	30%	40%	35%	35%
BELOW AVERAGE	15%	20%	20%	20%

CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND, TARANAKI, WANGANUI, MANAWATU AND WELLINGTON:

Temperatures are likely to be above average. Seasonal rainfall totals over February-April are equally likely to be either near normal or above normal, whereas soil moisture levels and river flows are likely to be above normal. *Probabilities are assigned in three categories; above average, near average, and below average. The full probability breakdown is:*

	TEMPERATURE	RAINFALL	SOIL MOISTURE	STREAM FLOWS
ABOVE AVERAGE	55%	40%	45%	45%
NEAR AVERAGE	30%	40%	35%	35%
BELOW AVERAGE	15%	20%	20%	20%

GISBORNE, HAWKE'S BAY, WAIRARAPA:

Temperatures are equally likely to be near average or above average. Seasonal rainfall totals are equally likely to be in the near normal or above normal range. Soil moisture levels and river flows are likely to be above normal. *Probabilities are assigned in three categories; above normal, near normal, and below normal. The full probability breakdown is:*

	TEMPERATURE	RAINFALL	SOIL MOISTURE	STREAM FLOWS
ABOVE AVERAGE	40%	40%	45%	45%
NEAR AVERAGE	40%	40%	35%	35%
BELOW AVERAGE	20%	20%	20%	20%

NELSON, MARLBOROUGH, BULLER:

Temperatures are likely to be in the above average range. Seasonal rainfall, soil moisture levels, and river flows are likely to be in the normal range. *Probabilities are assigned in three categories; above average, near average, and below average. The full probability breakdown is:*

	TEMPERATURE	RAINFALL	SOIL MOISTURE	STREAM FLOWS
ABOVE AVERAGE	50%	35%	35%	35%
NEAR AVERAGE	30%	45%	45%	45%
BELOW AVERAGE	20%	20%	20%	20%

WEST COAST, ALPS AND FOOTHILLS, INLAND OTAGO, SOUTHLAND:

Temperatures are very likely to be above average, for the three months as a whole. Seasonal rainfall, soil moisture levels, and river flows are likely to be in the normal range. *Probabilities are assigned in three categories; above average, near average, and below average. The full probability breakdown is:*

	TEMPERATURE	RAINFALL	SOIL MOISTURE	STREAM FLOWS
ABOVE AVERAGE	60%	20%	30%	30%
NEAR AVERAGE	30%	45%	40%	40%
BELOW AVERAGE	10%	35%	30%	30%

COASTAL CANTERBURY, EAST OTAGO:

Temperatures are equally likely to be in the near average or above average range. Seasonal rainfalls are likely to be near normal, whereas soil moisture levels and river flows are equally likely to be in the near normal or below normal range. *Probabilities are assigned in three categories; above average, near average, and below average. The full probability breakdown is:*

	TEMPERATURE	RAINFALL	SOIL MOISTURE	STREAM FLOWS
ABOVE AVERAGE	40%	30%	20%	20%
NEAR AVERAGE	40%	45%	40%	40%
BELOW AVERAGE	20%	25%	40%	40%

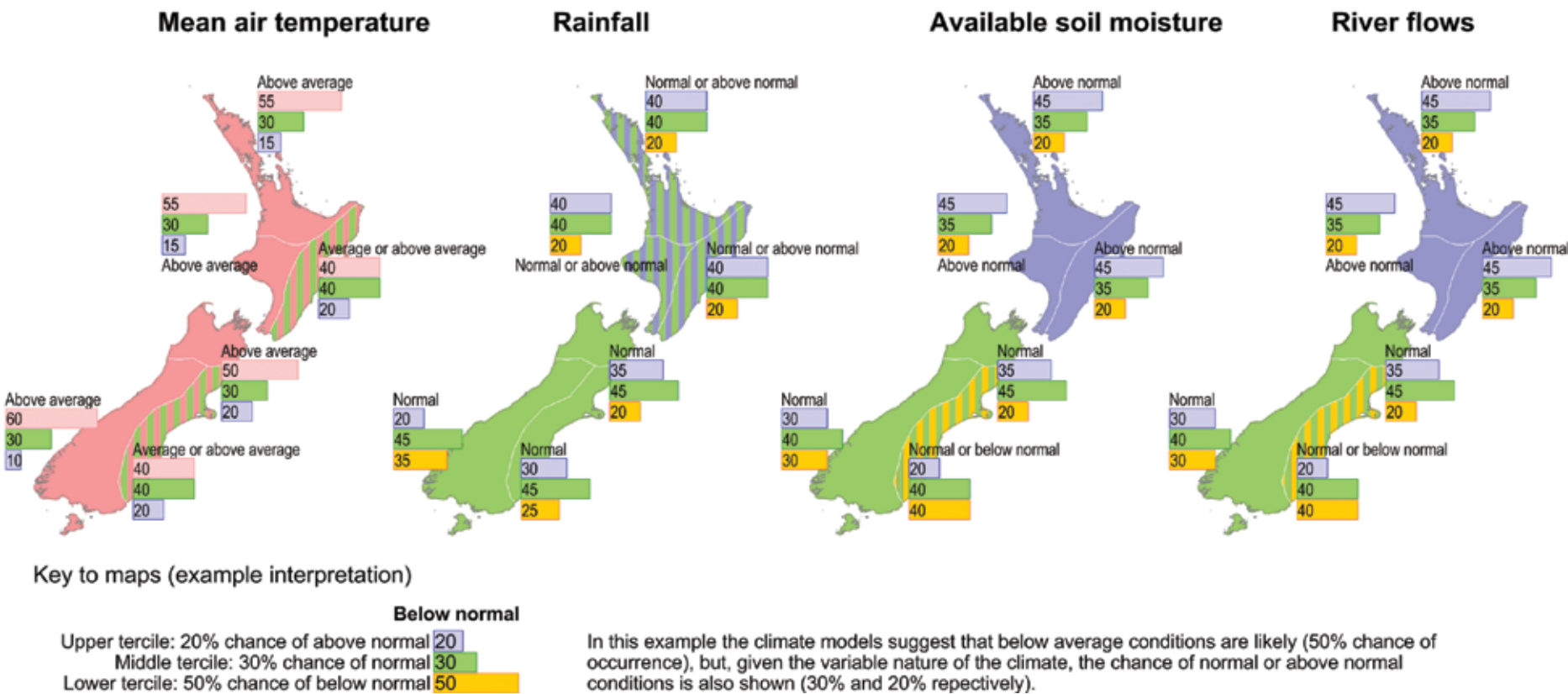
BACKGROUND

The tropical Pacific is in a strong La Niña state, which is likely to persist into early autumn 2011. Beyond that time, the evolution of the El Niño/La Niña cycle is uncertain. The present event has persisted since August 2010, and atmospheric indicators show this episode to be one of the strongest of the last 100 years. Previous very intense La Niña events occurred in 1975/76, 1971, and in 1917 (probably the strongest historically according to atmospheric indicators in the tropical Pacific).

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OUTLOOK FOR FEBRUARY 2011 - APRIL 2011:



GEA FARM TECHNOLOGIES SENIOR
TECHNICIAN JOHN SCOTT WITH
A CLUSTER IN THE COMPANY'S
DEMONSTRATION TRAILER.

FAST, SAFE, GENTLE & COMPLETE MILKING

IMAGINE TRYING TO GET YOUR SIZE 10 FOOT INTO
A SIZE 8 GUMBOOT BEFORE MILKING EVERY DAY,
OR A SIZE 8 INTO A SIZE 10 FOR THAT MATTER.



GEA Farm Technologies senior technician John Scott believes this is a pretty close comparison to what many farmers are expecting from their cows twice a day, every time the cups go on. "Often farmers are using the cup liners they have based on the reasoning these are what I have always used, so why change?" says John.

However GEA Farm Technologies WestfaliaSurge milking plant division have developed a more scientific, cow-friendly approach to determining what size liners are

ideal for a herd's average teat profile. "Our philosophy is about fast, safe, gentle and complete milking that leaves udders and teats in the best possible condition. Having the right liner fit is essential to achieve that. The liner is that first point of contact between the machine and the cow," says John.

Evidence supports the need for getting liners right. Vets report herds exhibiting teat end damage on as many as 66% of the cows. These lead to infections and

high Bulk Milk Somatic Cell Counts (BMSCC) and are often traced back to machine settings and liner types.

This is costing farmers. A herd with a BMSCC of 250,000 and a mastitis infection rate of 25% or more faces extra costs and losses of \$18,000 a year, compared to a herd with under 15% infection rate and a 150,000 BMSCC.

In an industry first, WestfaliaSurge has developed a programme to assess herd teat profiles and to calculate a liner that is best suited to 80% of that herd's cows.

GEA Farm Technologies can physically measure 10-20% of a herd's cows' teats for length, width and position using a specially developed measuring device. Entering the data into the WestfaliaSurge programme will deliver the best liner outcome for that particular herd.

John acknowledges it is virtually impossible to arrive at a "one size fits all" liner, but one fitting 80% of the herd will deliver improvements in milking performance, cow comfort and udder health.

"No liner is bad, it is simply a case of one liner is more suited to one herd than another."

The GEA Farm Technologies WestfaliaSurge programme is not exclusive to farmers with WestfaliaSurge cup shells. The company's newly developed range of KiwiChoice liners are suitable for all other milking equipment brands available and technicians will happily work with farmers to arrive at the best liner solution.

Liner type, whether rubber or silicon, can also be worth considering when investing in new liners. John advises that while silicon liners are higher cost than rubber ones, for some herds they offer greater milking comfort, being effective at a lower vacuum level than rubber liners.

"They will also deliver over twice the life expectancy of rubber liners, but you do have to allow for greater attention to hygiene; good alkaline washes are required to counter the greater fat absorbing ability of silicon liners. Your local FIL Area Manager can assist with this."

John cautions that even getting the right liners is no guarantee problems with cow comfort and milk out will be solved. "You do see a lot of farm dairies where cups are offset, and there is a lack of attention to cup-cow alignment which will drag cups to one side, reducing the effective, even milk out of the udder."

With more staff often being employed who have had little dairy experience, John is recommending farm owners spend the time at the start of the season showing staff correct milking techniques, and to consider aids like Dairy NZ's web based Milk Smart assessment programme.

GEA Farm Technologies WestfaliaSurge research has also highlighted the role teat stimulation can play in comfortable, fast milk let down in dairy cows. Technology has been developed by the company around this, with cup assemblies available that initially stimulate the teat at a vacuum level lower than milk out vacuum.

"This encourages the cow to release oxytocin, the milk let down hormone, boosting the initial milk let down and eliminating a flat spot that usually occurs between the cow's first and second let down phase. This keeps the flow even and continuous." Cup creep is eliminated, and along with that teat end damage.

John says understanding the science behind dairy cow milking helps farmers appreciate the complexities that go with harvesting milk fast, safely, gently and completely, recognising comfortable cows will ultimately remain healthy, productive cows.

For further information please call GEA Farm Technologies on Freephone 0800 657 555



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