

EXPORT ORDER CARRIES HOPES FOR FUTURE

FIL is a step closer to securing future export orders with China this year after the delivery of an initial container load of nutritional blocks in July. The order was a small one, but General Manger Warwick Dowse hopes it signals the start of an export relationship to a country that has a surging growth for dairy supply products and is intent on increasing its dairy herd numbers and milk quality levels.

“This order is headed to China’s fourth largest state owned dairy organisation, and is very much a trial opportunity to introduce the Chinese to quality FIL products,” says Warwick.

The expected increase in demand for dairy products means the country is also looking to increase its own capacity for production. Between 1978 and 2005 alone the Chinese dairy industry experienced an annual increase in cow numbers of 25% a year. Estimates put current cow numbers at around 14 million.

At the same time annual growth in consumption has jumped on average 20% per year, to 23kg milk solids per head. Over 80% of the farms however consist of only between 1-5 cows, but greater pressure to lift milk quality standards is seeing more pressure to milk larger herds through intensive farm type systems.

“There is also the influence of Kiwis that are over there helping set up dairy units on a large scale. They are demanding better quality products to use in dairy herds water supply and milking equipment and we are in a position to meet that.”

Meanwhile the recent food scares will work in favour not only for New Zealand farmers, with Fonterra anticipating sales of 160,000t to China this year. New Zealand owned companies like FIL are also well positioned with the knowledge and technology to supply high quality hygiene, nutrition and animal health products to this growing market.



THE CONTAINER BOUND FOR CHINA IS PACKED AT FIL’S TAURANGA HEAD OFFICE BY FORKLIFT OPERATOR TERRY BURKE, WITH HELP FROM MAL THOMPSON, WARWICK DOWSE AND BULIVOU MATAI.

Key products Warwick would like to see penetrate the Chinese market include the recently released Booster Block Magnum, Tailpaint and Iodoshield Active. The antibacterial nature of Iodoshield Active has seen it attract significant interest from FIL’s export markets.

“When I first went to China in 2001 it was very hard to find dairy products on the shop shelf. Today though, there is a whole generation growing up with dairy, the choice is huge and the Chinese are earning more money to spend on dairy food,” says Warwick.

The hopes for China are only one plank of FIL’s growing export ambitions. At present export sales form 12% of the company’s gross sales, but growth in South America, the United Kingdom and the United States all underscore strong growth in coming years.

The decision to invest heavily in a head office and factory location in the Bay of Plenty means the company has plenty of capacity to push further into overseas markets; at the same time produce high quality products for New Zealand customers.

“New Zealand farmers have really paved the way for us in some respects - they are regarded as the best in the business by their colleagues overseas, and we get to share some credit by association there,” says Warwick.

WHAT’S INSIDE:

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A WORD FROM FIL:

Its that time again... calving, feed budgets, machine start-ups and some trepidation for the season ahead. It’s tempting to delve into negative thoughts about the industry; however we are a resilient bunch and lets remember that our ‘industry’ is a benchmark for the rest of the world. Yes it will be a difficult season and it will affect all of us. But that’s what we will deal with and get on with, doing the job regardless of the climate... weather and economy.

FIL’s standards in product service and quality will not drop and the work in new product development continues at a strong pace. This is a good industry to work in where farmers rely on us in making their job easier.

WARWICK DOWSE - General Manager



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 “Bound to Succeed”

STAFF PROFILE: BRETT ROBSON

WITH FIL POISED TO TAKE ON MORE OVERSEAS MARKETS ITS CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER BRETT ROBSON IS WELL POSITIONED TO LEND AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE TO THE COMPANY’S PLANS.

Brett’s position reflects the company’s bid to grow through a more corporate structure, without losing a reputation for its high level of personal service to Kiwi farmers here at home.

Brett comes to the position after a decade working overseas. His most recent appointment had been in Kuala Lumpur, a challenging part of the world to work and live in, with a giant media conglomerate.

He says he welcomes the opportunity to work in a smaller but growing company just beginning to recognise its full potential, in his home town.

The ex-Tauranga Boys student says after talking to company director Arthur Jordan, he was convinced the company had excellent focus and a clear strategy for growth.

A full re-branding exercise was taking place at that time and FIL was well on its way with construction of corporate headquarters and plant. A raft of new product releases revealed an innovative, forward thinking company.

“FIL had grown so fast it had got to the point where the move was essential. Along with that was someone to oversee the financial side of the growing business.”

Now the rebranding exercise is complete, FIL has been awarded a supreme Sustainable Business Award and the future looks bright.

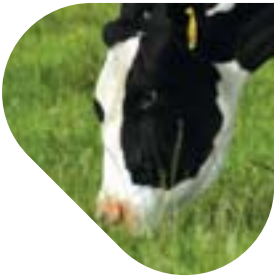
Brett says the biggest issues ahead for FIL are all positive and are led by the need to manage the growth constructively.

“Exporting holds real opportunities, but the challenge is not to forget about the customers who made FIL what it is, here at home in New Zealand.”



The company’s commitment to “walk the talk” when it comes to environmental commitment is admirable and sets an industry benchmark in a sector where many companies only pay lip service to their commitment.

“It is good to be with a company that recognises its place in the wider community and has made a real effort with its new building to deal with environmental challenges.”



BLOATEZE / BLOATEZE DFA + TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

Treat frothy bloat in cattle with confidence using FIL’s Bloateze or Bloateze DFA. Both are suitable for drenching, pasture spraying and trough treatment offering convenience and results.

Dos-a-tron approved Bloateze DFA is specifically designed for use via in-line dispensing systems without causing damage to alkathene piping.

Available at your local rural retail stores or contact your FIL Area Manager now.



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FARM INNOVATION / HYGIENE / ANIMAL HEALTH / MARKERS / NUTRITION

MAKING YOUR JOB EASIER

GUIDELINES AND SUPPORT FOR EFFECTIVE BLOAT CONTROL



FIL PROVIDES COST EFFECTIVE OPTIONS AND SUPPORT THIS SPRING TO DELIVER PEACE OF MIND FOR DAIRY FARMERS IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE LOST PRODUCTION THROUGH BLOAT.

BLOATEZE - is a high strength alcohol ethoxylate bloat remedy. It’s active in the animal’s rumen for up to 48 hours, therefore well suited for trough treatment. It also has a label claim for ‘once a day’ drenching.

BLOATEZE DFA - although suitable for drenching and pasture spraying, the main use for this product is water trough treatment through in-line dispensers.

PREPARATION IS KEY. HERE ARE A FEW HELPFUL TIPS:

DRENCHING - Good water quality protects the product’s efficacy and solubility. Add the bloat remedy to the water. Best practice is to fully dissolve the product by thorough mixing prior to drenching.

TROUGH TREATMENT - stock should not have access to untreated water sources. Commence trough treatment 3 weeks before the onset of bloat to achieve maximum effectiveness.

BE CAUTIOUS WITH ADDITIVES - The risk is that the mix may solidify particularly when adding

magnesium (due to it raising the temperature of the mix). Therefore, premix the magnesium, leave to hydrate and cool, before introducing it to the bloat remedy or with any other products to the mix.



TINY WASP DENTS WEEVIL NUMBERS

GREATER CLOVER GROWTH SIGNALS THE START OF SPRING, AND THE END OF WHAT FOR MANY DAIRY FARMERS HAS BEEN A LONG AND PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT WINTER, FROM AN ECONOMIC AND PHYSICAL VIEW. IN SOME AREAS THIS SPRING, CLOVER GROWTH WILL BE MORE PREVALENT THAN BEFORE, THANKS TO THE SUCCESS OF A TINY WASP THAT IS TAKING ITS TOLL ON ONE OF CLOVER’S GREATEST ENEMIES, THE CLOVER ROOT WEEVIL (CRW).



A CLOVER ROOT WEEVIL EYED UP BY THE MICROCTONUS AETHIOPOIDES WASP (LEFT). COURTESY AgRESEARCH.

MULTIMILLION DOLLAR PEST

After it was first discovered in the Waikato back in the mid nineties CRW laid many farms bare of clover, with the weevil attacking the clover leaf and its larvae eating the clover roots, nodules and stolons.

With some farms facing clover reductions of up to 100% many farmers faced the need for significant increases in fertiliser nitrogen to make up for the losses. Nationally the weevil was estimated to have an appetite for clover that would cost the country several hundred million dollars a year if nothing were done.

The CRW invasion prompted AgResearch scientists to scour the globe for a bio-control agent that could take on the voracious weevil. This ultimately saw a wasp hunt throughout Europe by AgResearch scientists. The serendipitous decision by one scientist to squeeze in a collecting trip to Ireland before heading home led to him capturing some tiny wasps in Irish dairy clover.

Back in New Zealand, scientists quickly learned that this wasp *Microctonus aethiopoides*, did not require a male wasp to mate. This eliminated the risk of the wasp mating across strains to produce unwanted hybrids. The wasp deals to CRW by laying its eggs inside the CRW.

This makes the CRW sterile breaking up its life cycle and also sees that adult destroyed by the wasp larvae breaking out of the adult CRW, like a scene from “Alien.”

RELEASE SUCCESSFUL

In addition to 22 mass releases at sites from Northland to Nelson, AgResearch has overseen the release of 2000 packets containing the tiny wasp direct to dairy and beef-sheep farmers.

Project leader for the CRW defensive is Dr Pip Gerard. Dr Gerard says this spring’s monitor count of wasp spread will be revealing after the knock back some wasp populations had, as a result of last year’s widespread drought.

“Farms in the Waikato in particular were hit hard. Little growth meant clover density was reduced, and with it the food source for the CRW, and therefore the wasp’s food source. However CRW is one of the first pests to return after drought and can quickly re-establish because it lays its eggs all year round. We know the wasp survived so we expect it to bounce back quickly too.”

The Hawke’s Bay has recorded particularly strong success, with hill country areas recording a distribution 60km from release point. This year has also seen the clover respond positively with as much as 25% more than a year earlier.

The discovery of the CRW in the upper South Island in 2006 has seen a successful release of the wasp there. The South Island assault is being led by Dr Craig Phillips and his team at Lincoln. He says the weevil is starting to be stalked by wasp populations as it spreads south.

“We have found the parasitoid wasp from the Nelson releases in neighbouring new weevil infestations in

Blenheim.” This is promising for the CRW’s spread further south is almost a given, with cold or latitude having little affect on its year round breeding ability. So far only very low numbers have been detected in South Canterbury and a single CRW in Southland.

NORTHLAND A CHALLENGE

Success in Northland has been more limited. Dr Gerard says this is thought to be due to the CRW being able to overwhelm wasps in summer unless they can lay more than one egg in them.

Dr Gerard says good clover management by farmers will help maintain wasp numbers. By trying to avoid over grazing and complete loss of clover at certain times of the year ensures a feed supply remains for the CRW. This ensures the wasp’s prey is available constantly, avoiding any checks in its population.

“Farmers who look after their clover levels will see much more success with the wasp as a biocontrol agent, they will always have that buffer there.”

Dr Gerard cautions that the wasp is no “silver bullet” but good pasture management can help ensure the little wasp continues to perform its multi million dollar task.

IODOSHIELD ACTIVE +

IODOSHIELD ACTIVE HAS BEEN ONE OF FIL’S MOST SUCCESSFUL PRODUCT LAUNCHES AND DEMAND CONTINUES TO GROW AS MORE FARMERS RECOGNISE THE ANTIBACTERIAL VALUE AND THE BENEFITS FROM THE INCLUSION OF MANUKA HONEY.

The success was founded on extensive field testing by FIL on dairy herds prior to launch. This included whole herd evaluations of teat condition, and a separate trial involving a 700 cow herd split into two. One herd was sprayed with a conventional iodine based spray, while the other had Iodoshield Active applied.

Carried out under veterinary supervision, the scoring included inspection for dryness, chapping and teat end damage. The cows treated with Iodoshield Active recorded a perfect “5”, against “3.5” for those treated with a conventional iodine spray.

IODOSHIELD ACTIVE FEATURES:

- A unique combination of Manuka honey and quality skin care components.
- A single mix formulation.
- Iodine base.
- Fully field trialled by New Zealand farmers.
- Available in 20, 100 and 200 litre containers.

IODOSHIELD ACTIVE BENEFITS:

- No extra emollient is required as an additive, keeping costs and mixing time down.

- Skin care ingredients improve teat condition and smoothness, while honey locks in moisture around teat surface ensuring excellent adherence and surface coverage.
- High quality iodine based teat sanitiser ensures a proven means of reducing bacteria infections and helps control somatic cell counts throughout the season.
- Results from field trials in difficult farming conditions across the country revealed superior healing ability and bacteria reduction.

Teat spray cost comparison using 200L buy price @ 1:5 dilution rate:					
	Teat Spray	Emollient	Water	Total ready for use Cost	
‘Other’ Teat Spray	5L cost \$32.50	1L cost \$10	24L	\$42.50	
Iodoshield Active Teat Spray	5L cost \$39.25	ZERO	25L	\$39.25	

Prices are indicative only and subject to variation PAGE 3

AIN'T NO SURE THING AS AN IMMACULATE CONCEPTION FOR DAIRY COWS - WITHOUT A SUBMISSION...

IT'S FAIR TO SAY ECONOMICS THIS SEASON AND POSSIBLY A COUPLE MORE WILL SHAKE OUT THE KEY DRIVERS FOR GETTING COWS PREGNANT.

DAVID McDONNELL
BVSc MACVS



The ability for a cow to be submitted for insemination (and conceiving) early in the mating period is well appreciated as a key to successful conversion of pasture to milk (through greater cow days in milk). This is measured by the In-Calf Rate (ICR). What we lose focus on, is that the in-calf rate of our herd is largely influenced by our ability to submit cows on heat.

In-Calf Rate (ICR) over a specified period is a result of combining our Submission Rate (SR) over a specified period and Conception Rate (CR) (see Figure 1). Note the Non Return Rate (NRR) is often a proxy measure for the CR as it is hard to make certain a true CR in the field.

FIGURE 1:

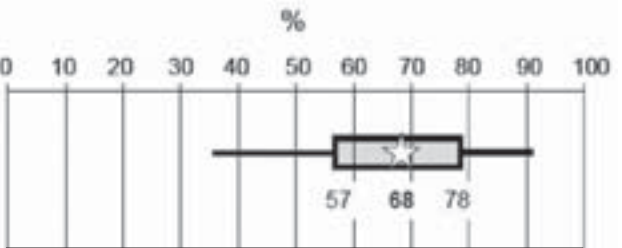
$$ICR = SR \times CR$$

Example:
 $ICR \geq 78\% \text{ (6 weeks)} = \geq 90\% \text{ SR (3 weeks)} \times \geq 60\% \text{ CR}$

The following illustration shows the sensitivity of In-Calf Rate by variations in the Submission Rate or Conception Rate. The Fertility Monitoring Report (Xu and Burton, 2003) found that the top quartile of farms achieved 3-week submission rates of 91% (on average) and first service conception rates of 62% (on average), compared with 67% and 43% respectively for the lowest quartile herds. Accordingly, a similar degree of variation was seen in the 6-week in-calf rate among the farms analysed (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2:

VARIATION IN OVERALL REPRODUCTIVE PERFORMANCE AMONG HERDS IN THE 2003 FERTILITY MONITORING REPORT (XU AND BURTON, 2003)



6-WEEK IN-CALF RATE (36-90%)

The point to note is the large variation of Submission Rate, in particular, between the top farmers and the bottom by some 24% in the first three weeks. Were they not being detected? Is that the reason for the poor Submission Rate? Or was it due to high levels of anoestrous in the herds? Accordingly, if they were observed as being 'in heat' why weren't they submitted at the correct time to conceive? That also had a huge variation. The ultimate result was a staggering 54% difference in 6 week in-calf rate!

If we examine the factors that influence cows cycling activity post calving (See Table 1).

TABLE 1:

- **CONDITION SCORE (PERI-CALVING)**
- **FEEDING LEVEL(PRE/POST CALVING)**
- **BREED(FRIESIAN/JERSEY)**
- **GENETIC(BW)**
- **AGE(2YR OR >10YR)**

These factors cannot be feasibly nor economically altered (if at all) when mating is imminent. Hormonal interventions could be employed instead to stimulate ovarian activity without the need for detection.

But Submission rate still requires cycling cows that are observed in heat to make up the in-calf rate. There is no significant extra cost to that- other than the time you have already paid for and perhaps some heat detection aids. This is a time to drive costs out of your system- back to basics of animal husbandry. Forget about chasing marginal gains in conception or submission with 'quick fix' remedies, but refocus on observation and submission of cows correctly in heat. Recording of premating heats into tools such as Mindpro® to track returns and level of anoestrous will highlight the need to intervene early. This is when the economic returns are greatest.

Heat detection is the most efficient when farmer observations are combined with heat detection aids. In NZ we are fortunate that pastured animals express natural behaviours more readily. The emerging challenges come from larger herd sizes, staff experience, higher cow:staff ratios, earlier/later milking start/finishes(in darkness) and OAD herds.

The result is the opportunity to detect a cow in standing heat is much reduced. A cow may be in heat anything from 4-30 hours (18 average). It is no wonder a cow with a short four hour heat is missed by observing once or twice daily. Consider three times daily checking with peak periods of observation around milking times/ shifting onto feed pads in the morning and afternoons and avoiding the middle of the day (lowest activity time).

Heat detection aids supplement, not replace observation - often combined, they can have efficiencies of <95%. Tail paint is the most cost effective - remember to reapply touch ups every 2-3 weeks. Holman et. al. (cited Williamson, 2005) reported that Heat mount indicators require a greater than 10% improvement in detection rate to be more effective than tail paint. Activity pedometers show comparative accuracy, but capital outlay may need to be carefully considered currently.

The submission of cows for insemination in a timely manner is a start for driving a good 6 week in-calf rate. Whole Farm Models at DairyNZ suggest an extra \$205 economic farm surplus (EFS) per hectare can be gained by increasing the six-week in-calf rate from the current industry level of 60% to the industry best-practice target of 78%. Most of this profit is generated from more milksolids from increased cow days in milk.

Perhaps this is the time to renew our energies in the husbandry aspects that need not cost too much cash. And maybe the perfect conception will follow.

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DETAIL & APPLICATOR REDUCE ID STRESS

THE COMBINATION OF FIL'S EASY CLEAN HIGH VISIBILITY DETAIL TAIL PAINT AND THE PRACTICALITY OF THE BACKPACK TAILPAINTER GIVES FARMERS THE BEST OF BOTH INNOVATIONS THIS SPRING.

When it was first launched two years ago large herd owners were quick to see the advantage of using the Backpack Tailpainter applicator for quick, safe and simple application of tail paint across large numbers of cows at spring time.

The Backpack Tailpainter can now accommodate FIL's highly visible, easily applied water based tail paint Detail. With its specially formulated bright five colour options Detail fits well into FIL's simple tail paint ID system, and will appeal to large herd owners wanting the ease of cleaning up with water based paint.

Trials in developing Detail indicated a 50% improvement in visibility with the paint's special dye formula, ensuring more accurate identification of cows in heat at this critical time of year.

"Accuracy at mating time has been identified as one of the key planks in achieving good submission rates. In large herds this is even more critical if you are relying on staff, and the Detail-Tailpainter combination keeps the job simple and application accurate," says FIL's business development manager Trevor Gulliver.

Detail is also available in 10 litre pails for refilling the 2 litre containers.



To access information on FIL's Mating Management system visit www.fil.co.nz, at the top of the homepage (beneath the FIL logo) click on MARKERS i.e. FARM INNOVATION / HYGIENE / ANIMAL HEALTH / MARKERS / NUTRITION, then identify the product i.e. Tell Tail or Detail and click on PRODUCT INFO relating to that product.

The Mating Management System is located beneath DIRECTIONS FOR USE.

BIG LICK FOR DAIRY HERD HEALTH

AFTER ITS SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH FOUR YEARS AGO, FIL HAS REFORMULATED ITS GROUND BREAKING STOCK LICK FOR EVEN GREATER NUTRITION AND MINERAL CONTENT. WITH THE OPTION OF A 15KG CUBE OR A BIG 500KG LICK, THE BOOSTER BLOCK MAGNUM WILL MEET CRITICAL SPRING MINERAL DEMANDS.

STOCK ENJOYING THE TASTY BOOSTER BLOCK MAGNUM 500KG BLOCK AND 15KG CUBE (PICTURED RIGHT)



The quality formulation was only finalised after intensive trial work and meets some demanding parameters from farmers, says FIL Business Development Manager Trevor Gulliver.

“The challenge was to come up with a formula that is consistent, remembering molasses is not an easy ingredient to blend. The Magnum had to deliver essential minerals, including calcium and magnesium throughout the blend. It also had to withstand being left in the paddock over adverse weather conditions, all the while remaining tasty and appealing to livestock.”

The block has been developed in close consultation with farmers nationally. Their feedback on stock uptake of different formulations was critical when deciding on a final blend. Farmer input also saw the addition of trace element selenium to the mix.

The Magnum Booster Blocks come in a compact 15kg cube, complete with edible wrapping. The cube profile ensures they will easily fit into conventional stock lick holders.

Dairy farmers also have the choice of a 500kg Magnum that comes with its own pallet. Easily moved, it is an ideal supplement in early lactation when both magnesium and calcium demands are at their greatest. Many farmers have found it works well when placed at the farm dairy exit, giving all cows the opportunity for a lick as they move out to their paddock.

The smaller 15kg blocks are ideally suited to young stock on run offs, easy to lift and convenient for stock left for periods between grazings with its edible wrapping ensures no waste around the run-off.

“One of the greatest challenges was to produce a blend that would allow the molasses to be released as an attractant to livestock. The results saw almost 100% uptake by livestock of the preferred formulation,” says Trevor Gulliver.

The final blend provides a smoother textured, tastier supplement providing an even delivery of key minerals throughout its lifetime.

While molasses forms a base component of the Magnum formula, FIL has called on its experience in the animal health field to include other high quality components. This includes Diamond V XP™ feed additive.

With a reputation among calf rearsers for enhancing rumen development, Diamond V XP™’s yeast cultures and bicarbonates provide a rich nutrient source for rumen micro-organisms, maximising digestive ability. Rumen performance is stimulated and feed conversion improved.

After a winter of minimal growth, the FIL Magnum block offers a supplement for grazing animals to help boost

production and performance coming in to the critical spring months.

“We have focussed on a product proven on farm, that contains very high quality ingredients, in a formulation stock find highly palatable,” says Trevor Gulliver.

BOOSTER BLOCK MAGNUM

EXCELLENCE IN NUTRITIONAL HEALTH

When mineral supplements, especially Magnesium or Calcium are required for grazing animals, it pays to invest in the finest tasting lick block for optimal intake.

FIL Booster Block Magnum is a carefully formulated block laced with molasses in edible packaging for ease of use.

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MAKING YOUR JOB EASIER



MAINLAND VIEWS



HIGH NOON FOR HOKONUI POSSUMS AND TB

SOUTHLAND'S HOKONUI HILLS FOR YEARS REPRESENTED THE LAST FRONTIER OF TB CONTROL IN THE SOUTHLAND REGION, THANKS TO SOME DIFFICULT COUNTRY AND A BAIT WISE, CUNNING POSSUM POPULATION.

Today the 9000ha forest is virtually possum free and sets a standard the Animal Health Board (AHB) would like to emulate around the rest of the country.

It has only been in the last four to five years that a focussed campaign using cutting edge pest control technology has managed to achieve exceptionally accurate possum kill rates, the result has quickly showed up in the region's Tb infection rates.

“We have seen the number of infected herds drop from around 30 to zero now, but this has only come about through excellent farmer buy in, the work of the regional council and some pretty smart technology,” says Southland Tb free committee chairman Mike O’Brien. For farmers on the productive dairy country bordering the Hokonuis this is welcome news.

Mike can recall local halls full of farmers facing huge problems over owning stock infected by Tb. This included sharemilkers between jobs who had suddenly found their key asset was infected with Tb, and only worth cull value.

The history of Tb in the Hokonui country goes back many years, and reflects much of the disease's history through the rest of New Zealand. The disease had entered from neighbouring ranges and an early possum cull using 1080 in the 70s did help nail infection rates.

“New Zealand got complacent about Tb around then and everyone sat on their hands for about 20 years until the early nineties,” says Mike. Meanwhile Tb infection spread exponentially through Southland peaking at 56 infected herds in the mid nineties.

The formation of the AHB put vector control (pests that carry the disease) as a priority and then the tide turned. However the Hokonui hills proved more difficult with trapping failing to achieve the necessary lower possum numbers.

AHB Regional Co-ordinator Owen Churchman says technology that allowed Tb strains to be typed identified the Hokonui strain as continually appearing. Meanwhile other areas' Tb types were declining and herds around the area continued to be affected. This was despite very low trap count levels of 2% residual that has since become the national standard.

A concerted vector control programme from 2000 - 2003 across a million hectares of Southland saw a dramatic decline in Tb, with the exception of the Hokonuis' fringes.

The earlier 1080 cull had killed some possums, but had made plenty bait wise and wary, too smart to be easily dealt to.

“It came to the crunch and we got a Landcare research project underway to determine the best way to get the remaining possum populations,” says Owen.

The research revealed the best tool was the one not used since the seventies in the Hokonuis - aerial 1080 drops. The latest terrain mapping techniques, including GPS locations for possum populations was coupled to a campaign to inform Southlanders about the critical need to rid the hills of Tb infected possums. This saw immense support from locals, farmers and iwi who all got behind the programme.

The key to the aerial drop's success was pre baiting with two drops of non toxic bait. The possums were fooled into accepting the bait, with the third feed being the deadly drop that finished them off. This was followed up with a thorough trap catch programme, and small pockets targeted by contractors



HOKONUI HILLS LANDSCAPE

putting a set number of traps in specific areas to clean up lingering numbers.

Further targeted ground control and control around the buffer zone beyond the hills saw infected herds numbers drop to only 5 the year after the campaign.

“The outcome was proof that a successful possum control operation in the Hokonui's would get on top of the Tb problem in an area very difficult to control in the past,” says Owen. However control will be required for some years yet.

Last year saw the last infected herd off the region's disease register.

The Hokonui experience proves a basis for national Tb eradication from the possum population, and this is a strategy proposed by the AHB.

“We still have to continue monitoring for proof of freedom which will take some time yet. The success has been hugely supported by farmers here in Southland who benefit directly from having Tb removed from the region, particularly as dairy farming grows here,” says Mike.



SEASONAL CLIMATE OUTLOOK

A PAUSE BEFORE EL NIÑO

The climate over the next three month period is expected to be typical of early spring right across New Zealand, according to the latest outlook from NIWA's National Climate Centre.

Following the third cold month in a row, the centre says temperatures for the coming season (August, September, and October combined) are likely to be about average. Rainfalls are also likely to be near normal in all regions.

Going along with the rainfall expectation, the centre says that near normal soil moisture levels and stream flows are also likely in all regions.

In the New Zealand region over the coming three months, mean sea level pressures are likely to transition towards El Niño-like conditions, with enhanced westerly winds at times.

OVERALL PICTURE

TEMPERATURE:
Air temperatures are expected to be near average in all regions. Sea surface temperatures near New Zealand are likely to be somewhat below average through August-October.

RAINFALL, SOIL MOISTURE, AND STREAM FLOWS:
Rainfall, soil moisture levels and stream flows are likely to be near normal in all regions.

REGIONAL PREDICTIONS FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS:

NORTHLAND, AUCKLAND, WAIKATO, BAY OF PLENTY:
Average temperatures are likely. Normal rainfall, soil moisture and stream flows are likely for the season as a whole.

Probabilities are assigned in three categories; above average, average, and below average. The full probability breakdown is:

	TEMPERATURE	RAINFALL	SOIL MOISTURE	STREAM FLOWS
ABOVE NORMAL	20%	30%	30%	30%
NORMAL	50%	50%	50%	50%
BELOW NORMAL	30%	20%	20%	20%

CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND, TARANAKI, WANGANUI, MANAWATU AND WELLINGTON:
Average temperatures are likely. Normal rainfall, soil moisture and stream flows are likely, averaged over August-October.

Probabilities are assigned in three categories; above average, average, and below average. The full probability breakdown is:

	TEMPERATURE	RAINFALL	SOIL MOISTURE	STREAM FLOWS
ABOVE NORMAL	20%	20%	20%	20%
NORMAL	50%	50%	50%	50%
BELOW NORMAL	30%	30%	30%	30%

GISBORNE, HAWKE'S BAY, WAIRARAPA:
Average temperatures are likely. Normal rainfall, soil moisture and stream flows are likely.

Probabilities are assigned in three categories; above average, average, and below average. The full probability breakdown is:

	TEMPERATURE	RAINFALL	SOIL MOISTURE	STREAM FLOWS
ABOVE NORMAL	30%	20%	20%	20%
NORMAL	50%	50%	50%	50%
BELOW NORMAL	20%	30%	30%	30%

NELSON, MARLBOROUGH, BULLER:
Average temperatures are likely. Normal rainfall, soil moisture and stream flows are likely for the season.

Probabilities are assigned in three categories; above average, average, and below average. The full probability breakdown is:

	TEMPERATURE	RAINFALL	SOIL MOISTURE	STREAM FLOWS
ABOVE NORMAL	25%	20%	20%	20%
NORMAL	50%	50%	50%	50%
BELOW NORMAL	25%	30%	30%	30%

WEST COAST, ALPS AND FOOTHILLS, INLAND OTAGO, SOUTHLAND:
Average temperatures are likely. Normal rainfall, soil moisture and stream flows are likely.

Probabilities are assigned in three categories; above average, average, and below average. The full probability breakdown is:

	TEMPERATURE	RAINFALL	SOIL MOISTURE	STREAM FLOWS
ABOVE NORMAL	20%	30%	30%	25%
NORMAL	50%	50%	50%	50%
BELOW NORMAL	30%	20%	20%	25%

COASTAL CANTERBURY, EAST OTAGO:
Average temperatures are likely. Normal rainfall, soil moisture and stream flows are likely.

Probabilities are assigned in three categories; above average, average, and below average. The full probability breakdown is:

	TEMPERATURE	RAINFALL	SOIL MOISTURE	STREAM FLOWS
ABOVE NORMAL	30%	25%	20%	20%
NORMAL	50%	50%	50%	50%
BELOW NORMAL	20%	25%	30%	30%

BACKGROUND

The equatorial Pacific ocean has moved into an El Niño state (with the atmosphere still to adjust), and El Niño conditions are likely to persist through the rest of 2009. Only weak impacts are expected over New Zealand in the coming three month season.

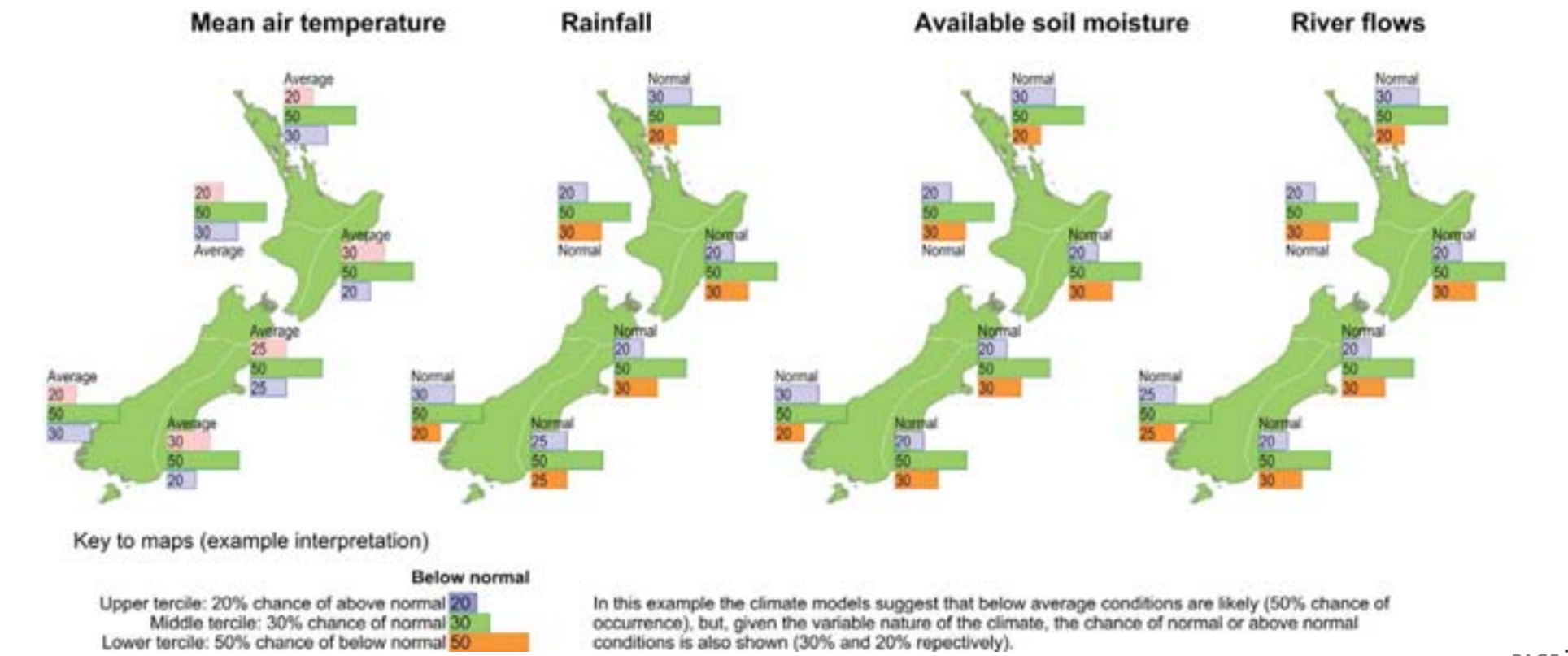
As the circulation near New Zealand begins to respond to El Niño conditions in the tropical Pacific, we would expect to see a shift to more frequent south-westerlies in the spring. Depending on the intensity of the El Niño, this would suggest a heightened risk of drought in northern and eastern regions over late spring and summer, following a good start to spring (with soil moisture levels likely to be near normal in all regions).

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OUTLOOK FOR AUGUST TO OCTOBER 2009:



SPOTLIGHT ON EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE

A STUDY INTO THE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES OF 33 DAIRY FARMERS PROVIDES FRESH INSIGHTS INTO WHAT MAKES A GOOD EMPLOYER AND THE BEST WAYS OF ATTRACTING AND RETAINING STAFF.

The study shows that the relationship between employer and employee is key to successful employment practices, says one of the authors, PGG Wrightson consultant Jeremy Neild. “Like any human relationship it depends on trust and good communication. It’s not just an economic transaction. The human factors are critical.”

The study was commissioned by DairyNZ and Agriculture ITO and was carried out by Neild and Dennis Radford of Agriculture Services Ltd. Interviews were held with employers and employees to identify what made for productive employment relationships on New Zealand dairy farms.

Productive employment relationships depend on several factors, Neild said. “You can sum up the main message of the report with three phrases - employers need to have the right attitudes, to recruit the right person and have the right strategies, training and workplace environment to achieve productivity.”

The ‘right attitude’ is about an employer wanting to employ people rather than a labour unit and having a positive attitude towards employing people, says the study.

“All our interviewees considered their reputation as a good employer was very important or critical to their business success and have a variety of strategies to ensure it was built and maintained.”

RECRUITMENT PROCESSES ARE ALSO CRITICAL

“The employers (in the study) identify the importance of being very focused about recruitment and selection,” Neild said.

The success or failure of staff appointments can be traced back to recruitment and selection procedures.

The third element in a successful employment relationship revolves around ‘doing the right thing’. The evidence from this study is that ‘doing the right thing’ relates very closely to seven drivers identified by the Department of Labour as key to improving workplace productivity:

- Showing effective leadership
- Having a productive workplace culture
- Using innovation and technology
- Investing in people and skills
- Organising work
- Networking and collaboration
- Measuring what matters

The study says that all of the farmer groups sampled were strong on at least five of these seven drivers, with technology being less significant “and few having formal measures around HR practice.”

The study concludes that “productive employment relations are built on a mixture of ‘soft’ interpersonal facts as well as good processes. While good processes

are important and can greatly assist in employment relationships, they do not substitute for the demonstration of a manager / employer who shows genuine interest and concern for their employees, provides good communication and expectations, ensures that the role fits the employee’s abilities and provides regular feedback and recognition.”

Neild said employment practices on New Zealand farms have to change with the times. The industry needs to recognise the strong links between effective employment relationships and farm productivity.

“I think it is fair to say that the industry hasn’t done a lot of work on the productivity metrics as far as labour productivity goes. We have good measures for cows and grass, growth rates and financials, particularly the dairy industry. We’ve got all that, but we’ve neglected the people.

“I suppose when we had smaller farms that were predominantly run by couples it was less important to measure. But now we’ve got much bigger farms with a high number of employed labour, it’s a really important issue.”

UDDERMARK

FOR YEARS DAIRY FARMERS HAVE STRUGGLED TO FIND A PAINT THAT WILL EFFECTIVELY MARK COWS TREATED WITH ANTIBIOTICS WHOSE MILK NEEDS TO BE KEPT OUT OF THE MILK SILO.



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