



Booster Block

A block for all feed options

With drier weather predicted for parts of the country this summer, farmers wanting to provide a high energy, cost effective supplement for their grazers, milkers and beef cattle should look no further than FiL's Booster Block range.

Now well established in the supplement market, more farmers are recognising the huge value feeding Booster Blocks can offer their stock. Rather than providing a high amount of one energy type, the blocks offer a wide spectrum of energy sources and mineral supplements invaluable to stock not getting it all from their feed.

The standard Booster Block in the yellow carton came out on the market in March, and was enthusiastically received by farmers experiencing one of the driest autumns for years throughout the country. The standard block provides stock with good levels of magnesium, calcium, iodine and other trace elements.

Molasses forms the base for all blocks, and stock will literally eat the whole block, box and all, thanks to the edible packaging they come in. The standard block has proved particularly successful with dairy grazers and lifestyle block owners who only have a smaller number of stock to look after and want a simple, cost effective way to keep them healthy.

Farmers needing copper supplements for their livestock have an effective, low cost solution in FiL's latest product the Booster Block Plus, in the blue carton. With the addition of copper to the popular stock block, livestock have the full range of trace elements available to them, including manganese, zinc,

iodine, and cobalt.

The Booster Block Plus will appeal to farmers on copper deficient country such as the Central North Island. This critical mineral is easily ingested along with the variety of other minerals provided in the standard block, without the need for yarding or drenching.

The standard Booster Block, like the Booster Block Plus comes in 20kg blocks and is ideally suited for small grazing blocks and smaller mobs. For best results, one Booster Block should be fed a fortnight to 10 cattle or thirty sheep. Typically the blocks will increase stock demand for water, so access to good supply should be ensured.

The Booster Block Big Boy is the behemoth 614kg brother of the smaller blocks,

providing a long term, movable solution for stock requiring on-going mineral supplementation.

Coming with its own pallet for ease of moving between paddocks and breaks, the Big Boy is rapidly gaining popularity on large dairy stock units. Interest has been particularly strong from large scale beef farmers who have seen similar blocks on properties overseas.

The block can play a key role in helping supplement beef cattle post-calving and get them cycling well for mating through spring.

The late Jim Sadler, FiL's Former Technical Manager,

played a central role in developing the Booster Block range. He brought with him a huge amount of technical expertise, coupled with a good knowledge of what would work on the farm.

He saw the Booster Block range having a nutritional role to play three times of the year:

- Animals grazed on stubble feed, like maize or barley stubble, benefit from the block increasing their ability to convert the high cellulose content into energy.
- Prior to mating, the block provides valuable iodine sources which helps increase cycling and aids in foetal development.
- Cow lactation is boosted with the Booster Block range providing minerals, particularly magnesium.



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Big Boy tops with Brian's herd

FOR Brian Johnson of Mangapiko, near Te Awamutu, FIL's Booster Block Plus Big Boy is the ideal way to ensure his cows get the minerals they need.

Brian adopts a low cost philosophy to dairying, and his shed is not set up for drenching. The Big Boy has proven an effective way for his 170 Jerseys to get their assortment of trace elements and minerals on a daily basis.

"I started off using the small blocks when they first came out, and after getting through about 32 of them, Dave Hewson the FIL rep told me to give the Big Boy block a try," says Brian.

Before starting with the Booster Blocks Brian had used salt blocks but they were less than ideal when the weather turned wet.

"You would find they would melt down in the rain, leaving a whole heap of salt crystals all over the paddock and not much else." Having been a long time user of FIL products, he decided to give the Booster Blocks a try and now they are an integral part of his herd's diet from winter to post-mating.

Dave Hewson says the huge amount of work that went into developing the Booster Block has paid off. Not only do the blocks hold up well under wet conditions, the edible packaging of the smaller blocks leaves no mess blowing around paddocks and yards.

Brian says he started off at calving time with the super sized block and transferred it around the paddocks, before leaving it in the race for four weeks

for the cows to lick going to and from milking.

"I think if I had left it in the paddocks for the whole time it would be well gone, they love it that much!"

The Big Boy ranks high on his herd's list for taste, with many often stopping for a lick even before going into a lush paddock of young grass.

For Brian the vital time to use the block is from winter through mating when cold conditions can sweep quickly through the southern Waikato. Despite a good start to spring, like many farmers he found October difficult.

"Conditions have got better through November, but while mating was slow to start the cows seem to be holding well. It is hard to say it is just the block helping that, but we certainly are not getting many returns."

With the good copper levels in the block, cows appear to take even turns at having their lick before returning to grazing. The keenest ones have even tried to bite chunks out of the block, and Dave Hewson likens the appeal to human's love of chocolate.

For Brian, the decision to try FIL's latest product release was a natural one.

"They are great products, do a good job and I have never had any problems with them."

Brian's relationship extends beyond the farm gate to involvement with Dave Hewson at the Pirongia Rugby club. He plays either first five or full back, and has done for years. FIL have sponsored the club for the last 10 years, and Brian's family have been



Brian Johnson (left) with FIL rep Dave Hewson on Brian's farm near Te Awamutu.

involved with the club for much of its 129 year history. Brian has taken over the family farm from his parents and continues to run it as Mangapiko Jersey Stud.

Dave says since Brian's success with the super sized block he has had strong interest from other farmers in the area about using them too.

Cows wise to water quality

JUST checking the ball cock before locking the cows up for the evening may not be enough if farmers want to maximise milk over the early summer months. Recent research completed at the Dexcel research dairy in Ruakura with Dunedin company Abacus Biotech has revealed that when it comes to water, quality is just as important as quantity.

Funded by MAF's Sustainable Farming Fund and Tatua Dairy Company, the trial research was based around eight dairy farms in the Tatua region of eastern Waikato, along with four sheep and beef units in the lower North Island and four in Otago.

The aim of the work was to come up with some practical, affordable guidelines for helping farmers to maintain or improve production through good water quality management.

Researcher Neville Jopson says the first part of

the research was to establish the level of bacteria present in cattle water troughs, and how bacteria populations behaved over the year.

"We started off by looking at the numbers of aerobic bacteria in trough water and trough sediment. A lot of these bacteria are not harmful, but they can be used to see where and when conditions suit bacterial population. If you look in water troughs the level of microbes in the water are strongly related to level in the sediment layer of that trough."

The sediment acts as a huge reserve for re-infection of bacteria to the incoming trough water. Whilst settled, the rate of re-infection of trough water is slowed, but once stirred up, as happens when the trough is refilling, the fresh water entering is also contaminated.

"The second thing that affects the level of bacteria is the time of the year."

By measuring bacteria levels in the trough water for nine months of lactation, the researchers found bacteria numbers tended to peak quickly from August to October, and decline again through summer. The rate of increase was significant, with levels in October measured 3.5 times greater than in August, says Neville Jopson. Similar responses occur in the trough sediment.

He suspects the reason bacteria numbers decline is because the level of ultra violet radiation from sunlight is more prevalent as the sun moves higher in the sky entering summer.

"As long as the water is clear, then the UV will penetrate down to the bottom of the trough."

The best advice he can give is to ensure troughs are clean before the start of calving.

"I know how much farmers hate cleaning troughs, so if they were only going to do it once a year, then this would be the time to do it."

The results of this survey were a springboard to the company's experiment with cows at the Dexcel trial farm in Ruakura. Here seven cows were put into each of four groups to be exposed to drinking water "spiked" with different levels of dung.

The extensive experiment ran over two weeks and the cows' level of water, feed intake and milk production were all monitored.

The control herd had filtered bore water with no dung. A cow can average 70 litres of water a day. Based on this intake, the group on the lowest amount of dung ingested 10g/day, to 40g/day equivalent at the highest contamination.

"This is really a small amount of dung, only enough to discolour the water and typical of what you might get on any dairy farm," says Neville Jopson.

The cows were housed inside over two weeks for the trial. Freezing the dung used in the spiking of troughs prevented the cows being infected with any pathogens, but still had the desired effect of altering the water's palatability.

Measuring water intake revealed some interesting changes in behaviour. Cows with the lowest level

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Dispenser good for economics and environment

With the hotter months of summer upon us the need to ensure the right amount of detergent goes into the plant for a complete wash is more important than ever. Just as importantly, health and safety regulations mean farmers must take more responsibility for ensuring staff are not exposed



Erin Bay of Bay Farms, Te Aroha, with the FIL detergent dispenser

or harmed by the powerful chemicals used on a daily basis to clean the silo and plant. FIL have the solution that has been proven on one of the Waikato's largest farms.

FIL rep for Morrinsville-Te Aroha, Stuart Carter, says a large operation like Bay Farms near Te Aroha milking 1250 cows, could get through anything up to six drums of acid detergent a year. This made the massive 80 bail rotary shed a good choice to put in one of FIL's new detergent dispensers.

FIL have teamed up with The Dairy Shed to provide clients with a fool proof, accurate acid detergent dispenser that is good for the bottom line, safety and the environment.

"In a plant the size of the Bay's it is easy for detergent to be lost through waste and spillage. The dispenser is a way to precisely control the amount going into the wash process, and this is important when you have a number of staff who all carry out the job."

Stuart says this is aided by a very simple operation, requiring only the push of a button,

and a switch to toggle between plant and silo. The dispenser operates off single phase power.

Dispenser designer Grant Ferrier says he focussed on a dispenser that was simple and did not require an operating vacuum to work, unlike others on the market. His company provides full installation and service, along with an annual inspection. At present there is only an acid wash dispenser available, with Grant working on a combined acid-alkaline dispenser for silos and dairies.

Erin Bay, of Bay Farms, says the dispenser has simplified the process of measuring out acid, and keeps the operation simple and safe.

FIL Sales Manager Phil Wicks says interest has been strong in the dispensers from large clients in the South Island particularly who are keen to control wastage and costs.

The dispensers are available from local FIL reps and sell at \$700 for a single head dispenser and \$849 for the twin head suitable for larger operations drawing from separate container for silo and plant.

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of dung taint dropped their water intake by 3%, ranging through to 18% decline for the highest contamination. After four days the cows adjusted to the contamination and intake levelled off across all taint concentrations.

"That's an average decline in water consumption of around 20%, for levels of contamination that we would expect to find in some troughs on a typical dairy farm," says Neville Jopson.

Milk production also followed the decline in water intake, although it's decline was more variable than the decline in water intake. Over the first four days of tainted water, average milk volume within a group dropped by as much as 11 percent.

Neville Jopson says individual cows can be very sensitive to water taint, with one cow dropping to only 4 litres a day of water intake for the first two days and another breaking out and drinking from another cow's water supply.

"In presenting these results, we've had one person joke perhaps you are better to have poor water across all your farm, rather than in just one paddock, if their consumption levels out after a period. But you get variations in water quality even within one trough in one paddock."

This is due to the trough re-filling, churning up bacteria from the sediment meaning those cows first in get relatively good quality water and will take up more, compared to later ones adverse to the tainted water.

"The aim should be for good water everywhere," says Jopson.

The trials have highlighted how something as simple as clean troughs can have a significant impact on cow consumption and production.

"The issue of water palatability is a big one, given the industry is driven by water, and all the different sorts of things we are now adding to it. It is also something that can be fixed quite simply on many farms without any huge outlays."

FARM FEATURE

Bay Farms set to sail into future

LARGE scale dairying brings plenty of opportunities, but also requires a clear vision to keep costs in line and per cow production up. For the Bay family of Manawaru, East Waikato, the other challenge is to provide a sound platform to make it a successful intergenerational business.

So far the family are passing with flying colours. Bay Farms represents the work of three generations with a deep commitment to the dairy industry. David Bay was a former deputy chairman of the New Zealand Dairy Board and his son Stuart is current chairman of Livestock Improvement Corporation. Keeping it in the family for the latest generation is Stuart and Beth's eldest son Erin. He is in turn assisted by his brother Daryl who has just completed postgraduate study in the US.

Milking 1250 cows this season on 340 hectares, Erin attributes a big part of the farm's success to an excellent team of five full time staff. With three years behind him on the family farm, he has also looked to farm consultant and former sharemilker of the year Andrew Archer as a mentor and guide.

"Andrew has been involved here for four years prior to my return home, and has played a huge part in getting a direction and base from which we can progress in the future," explains Erin. Andrew says getting a unit this scale moving in the right direction takes time, and right now is at a point of development "where Erin can take it in whatever direction he wishes."

Consolidating a strong staff team and getting the sophisticated 80 bale rotary operating in tune has been the major pre-occupation for the past year. The dairy has been fitted with automated meal dispensers that drop molasses and a mix of copra and barley feed into bins. Present feed amounts are set to 1.5kg per cow per day. Erin says the copra provides almost a mega-joule per kg more than more popular palm kernel. "We also wanted something with greater palatability while we were getting the system bedded in," says Erin.

The business has recently installed LIC's Protrack system, bringing with it far greater flexibility when

allocating cows to available pasture. The system enables the number of cows milked to be identified easily, and paddocks allocated according to mob size during milking.

"We are really only just beginning to realise Protrack's full potential, which is considerable. The process of herd testing is simplified, with a portable monitor being set up in the middle of the shed to identify numbers easily. Cows can be easily drafted off, just by entering their number into the system, and they are pulled out automatically," says Erin.

Longer term, he believes the farm is set up to go a number of ways. The option of 365 day year round milking is one of those. Summer production is aided with an extensive irrigation system drawing from the Waihou river to feed into Bosch lateral irrigators and two large centre pivot irrigators.

Meantime the business enjoys a good relationship with FIL, using a wide range of the detergents, teat sprays and animal treatments. "We appreciate Stuart Carter's input and prompt service, he does a great job." Stu Carter says he looks forward to seeing how the business develops in the coming years.



Erin Bay and brother Daryl Bay on their Manawaru farm.

Waikato contractor leaves his mark with Been There



Cambrilea Weedspraying operators David Clark and Steve Gibbs on the job with Been There, near Cambridge

Stunning views and crystal clear mornings make great office space for Cambridge spray contractor Charlie Lea and his crew out on the job throughout the Waikato.

Charlie started Cambrilea Weedspraying almost eight years ago with an old Land Cruiser and himself. Today he employs 12 staff and operates four HiLux

spray units covering the Kaimais to the coast over at Raglan. It is a lot of country with plenty of farms in between. Charlie has deliberately focussed on doing what he does well, sticking to mainly thistle and gorse control, with much of it done on the steeper sheep and beef and dairy country.

“I realised early on that farms were only going to get bigger, and the one job farmers really don’t like doing is weed spraying. Since then we have grown at a rate of about half a ute every year.” Work also includes contract drain and riparian spraying for Environment Waikato.

Farmers are increasingly aware of the environmental restrictions on spraying, with more loath to use aerial spraying. Charlie says they prefer to have his utes on the ground with three men spot spraying.

He says blanket aerial approaches do not always get into all the gullies and sidelings that act as nurseries for gorse and thistles.

“You do tend to get damage on the stands of native bush with aerial too, which farmers don’t want these days, whereas spot spraying is very precise and minimises damage and wastage.”

To keep the job even more efficient, and customers happy, Charlie uses hundreds of litres every year of Been There, FiL’s spray marker. Being compatible

with all herbicides makes it the ideal marker to go into the spray tanks where either Tordon Gold is used for thistle control, GrazOn or Answer for gorse.

Covering over 5000 hectares a year for over 100 clients often on difficult country means Charlie’s crew need a marker that is bright and effective to minimise wastage and time.

“The red is extremely effective at highlighting where we have been, and there are no problems with mixing and dilution, it goes through the guns well and there is no clogging.”

“Being water resistant is a huge plus too, especially on big jobs where we may be returning. You obviously need to know where you were the day before.”

The teams at Cambrilea Weedspraying work in three off utes designed by Charlie and foreman Doug Hjorth, but built and kitted out by Bertolini. Over the years he has modified the utes themselves to suit the business, including putting rear lights on the deck rather than under to enable the trucks to get up and down extremely steep country. To keep his crews happy a set of weatherproof speakers are mounted on the roof of each unit.

Longer term he sees plenty of potential for the business, particularly on the larger steeper dairy units in the South Waikato.

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Thermodurics

summer loving bugs

Summer not only brings the promise of a well earned break on a beach somewhere, but every year for some dairy farmers it also brings the headache of thermoduric grades. It is bad enough getting the call when you are still on the farm working, worse when it comes from your staff and you are trying to enjoy your break away from farm worries.

Of all the bacteria that can plague a farm milk plant, thermoduric are the most hardy, by their very name they are heat resistant, and guaranteed to stick around despite your best efforts if certain areas of the plant are not examined closely.

They can survive pasteurisation, making them a high risk bug for affecting milk quality down the processing line.

Just to make themselves even more durable, there are two types – hygiene type and environmental type. Environmental thermodurics are less common, usually caused by feeding poor quality silage and indicated on the milk docket as “spores”.

Competition is intense in the bacteria world, but killing off the majority of bugs with hot water washes just makes life that much easier for thermodurics. The main causes are old protein build up, often accompanying perished rubberware. Just to make the bug that much more challenging, it will not always be accompanied with any smell because it is often from accumulations of aged deposits, not fresh. To add to it all, testing for thermodurics takes several days to culture, so getting one is often a guarantee you will get at least one more.

Working with your FiL rep before the hot summer period arrives will help find those problem areas before they arise, while a check of your wash down programme will identify any procedures you or staff need to tighten up on.

Thermos Fail to Get a Grip on Dean's Team

TAKING on a 680 cow sharemilking job that included a dairy with a history of thermoduric grades was just one of the challenges facing Dean Petersen and his team near Opotiki this season. Dean and his wife Sharyn own a 200 cow property in the district and took on the nearby 680 cow job knowing there was plenty of work in front of them to bring things up to scratch. The first issue to deal with before kicking off the milking season was an on-going history of thermoduric grades in the big 50 aside loop line herringbone.

"The previous sharemilker was having to take the milk line down regularly to clean it out. There was no way I wanted to do this, and we had a chat with Allan Clarke the local FiL rep who offered to come and help us out."

With Allan's help Dean quickly found the shed was very low on flow through the jetters, lagging at only 1.2 to 1.5 litres a minute, far below the recommended minimum of 3 litres a minute.

"I have been told that this is one of the longest 75 mm loop lines you can get and problems can arise because unlike a straight line shed the jetters are further apart, which can slow the water flow between them."

The problem ended up having to be fixed by replacing the jetters, despite them only being a year old. This combined with a comprehensive wash down programme using FiL Quantum products means Dean and his team are enjoying a grade free season so far, with none of the hassles of taking the plant apart to avoid them.

Dean says he has enjoyed an excellent relationship with Allan from FiL as his new hygiene supplier. Other products he uses includes the foam marker for drafting cows, Ultracare Iodoshield teat spray and Graderite for removing mould from the walls. His herd manager Toots Wharepapa owns a Harley Davidson, as does Allan. Dean says the conversation often revolves around bikes as much as farming!

With a hot Eastern Bay summer looming, Dean aims to take the line down once to check for build up before things heat up. Dean says he has an excellent crew of three working with him, and had hoped to get a bit more time off this season, but there has been plenty to do with the new job. He is very happy however that chasing thermodurics won't be one of them!



From left to right – Dean Petersen with Tahī Goddard, Garney Morunga and Toots Wharepapa at their Opotiki farm.

Key areas for Thermoduric problems over summer

- **Milk lines:** Water accumulators and air injectors can affect cleaning performance if not adjusted properly.
- **Rubberware:** Split liners can cause recurring problems, also cone seals in milk lines and diaphragms and unions – any rubber component that has milk contact.
- **Silos:** Again, any rubber contact including door seals, best removed during cleaning when possible, donuts, elbows on entry pipes. Look for a bluish rainbow haze on the stainless surface to indicate a lack of wash/contact time.
- **Test Buckets:** A smorgasbord for bacteria, and best avoided altogether if possible, rubber seals, hoses and nipple must be thoroughly cleaned each time after use.
- **Jetters:** Often end jetters can block with pieces of broken plastic and debris, slowing flow rates below the required 3litres per minute per jetter.
- **Plate Coolers:** These are often the last place checked because of difficulties in realigning plates and seals, but can hide malingering and on going thermo problems.

FiL provide effective, proven products to help combat thermoduric grades.

High strength chlorinated alkali detergents/sanitiser are crucial to maintaining plant cleanliness over hot summer months. The FiL Quantum Powder is proven as an effective thermoduric solution and should be used in conjunction with an effective acid sanitiser, and a wash programme developed on the advice of the FiL rep.

Routine inspections of the plant are also very important, start as you mean to go on – establish a routine at the start of lactation and follow it on for the whole season, ensure all staff are up on what that inspection involves and what to look for. Make a set day each month ie the first Monday of the month, as inspection day, looking down milk lines, checking rubber ware, tightening seals, timing jetter flows etc.

FiL reps are trained to know what to do to help clients identify problems quickly and effectively – be sure to call on their help if milk quality issues have become a headache – their "extra set of eyes" and vast experience will help take a load of bacteria worries off your mind this summer.



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Power on with the Power Tool Centre

IN a power tool market awash with cheap house brands of dubious quality, it pays to shop around if you are on the look out for something that will last longer than just the next fix up session.

Fortunately there is one retailer that still puts quality and service first, knowing that their customers value both. The Power Tool Centre is that place, offering farmers, tradesmen and serious DIYers tools that are just that, and not toys. Powertool Centres exist all over the country, with 18 stores stretching from Whangarei to Timaru.

Technical expertise is assured at the Power Tool Centre due to all shops being members of the Comtool Trading Society Ltd, formed in the 1980s by a group of retailers seeing the benefits in collective purchasing and shared knowledge.

Powertool Centre stores employ staff based on

their individual technical knowledge, able to offer the right technical advice to customers and offer a quality repair service.

Jason Rive is a director of Contractors, Renovation and Builders Ltd in the Bay of Plenty. He says the Powertool Centre is the place for farmers and tradesmen to go for quality gear.

"I learnt my lesson a couple of years back when I bought a budget power tool and within hours of buying it, it was thrown into the site skip! Anyone requiring more than a tool just to hang a couple of pictures a year or for odd jobs around the house will soon find these cheap brands are just a false economy." He says a quality brand is essential in order to buy true durability, reliability and service, and the Powertool Centre is the place for that.

At Powertool Centres you won't find gardening gear, paint and wallpaper – it is simple and straightforward, if you want the best, go to those who only offer the best, The Powertool Centre.

Audit gives FiL big tick

A RECENT health and safety audit for FIL sees the company aiming to be the first dairy hygiene manufacturer in the country to achieve a demanding certification. Known as PRINCE accreditation the certificate will be proof of FIL's aims to achieve excellence in all areas of managing health, safety and environment.

"It is a matter of considerable pride and hard work that we will achieve this, and it is made all the more special by the fact we will be the first dairy hygiene manufacturer to do so in New Zealand," says FIL general manager Gavin Cherrie.

The PRINCE scheme has been developed by the New Zealand Chemical Industry Council (NZCIC). The council's technical manager Bill Birch says completing a PRINCE certification scheme shows the company takes safety, health and environment protection seriously.

The audit process to achieve the certification is arduous, with trained inspectors examining all areas of a company's resource management, health, employment and safety management over three days, says Bill Birch.

"There are up to 800 items to be checked, and while not all will be applicable to a company like FIL, much of it will be. Inspectors will interview staff at all levels and complete a very integrated health and safety assessment."

Bill Birch says the PRINCE accreditation provides assurance to clients and the industry that a company meets or exceeds the national and international safety, health and environmental requirements laid down in legislation.

"The companies going through the accreditation process realise their responsibilities and obligations to people, property and environment."

He says there is also the provision for dairy farmers to gain certification through a "mini" audit, to ensure they maintain safe standards and comply with similar regulations to larger companies.

FIL general manager Gavin Cherrie says the auditing process has proved invaluable to ascertain what areas need improvement and these are well on the way to being addressed.

"We recognised that there were some flaws in a 20 year old site, and an assessment would give us a chance to learn and include our findings in the design for our new premises in Portside Drive."

"We have actually learnt we were a lot further ahead than we realised with our existing site complying, and this has proved very exciting. It means we are going to go into our new site well up on best practice in all areas of our operations." Gavin is confident the full accreditation will be received by the end of 2005.

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Forecasting Climate the odds on getting it right

FiL is working with NIWA to bring its farmer clients the climate predictions for the next few months through summer. As an introduction NIWA have also outlined some of the science that goes into trying to second guess mother nature.

The climate varies on different time scales in both predictable and unpredictable ways. We know, for example, that summer is warmer than winter, and that every few years, when there's an El Niño, there's a higher risk of drought on the east coast of New Zealand.

However, a large part of day-to-day weather is random, and because of this there is also a random component to climate variations (climate can be thought of as the combined effect of weather over longer time periods).

Climate scientists around the world are working on ways of coping with all this uncertainty. But the science of climate forecasting has got a long way to go before it gets as reliable as, for example, weather forecasts for the next day or two.

Historical climate

Historical climate patterns of the past 20 or more years are good indicators of climate for the next few months. They tell us the ways the climate for any season or month is most likely to behave, and how often there might be unusual or extreme variations.

Historical climate observations also tell us about the most likely impacts of systematic climate variations (such as El Niño), and how these impacts vary across New Zealand.

By studying past climate, then, we begin to understand the range of variability that is possible. Like many natural phenomena, aspects of climate, such as rainfall amounts or mean temperatures, occur in a range of 'sizes' – there are high, medium, and low values. A common practice in climate forecasting is to predict which of these ranges future climate conditions will fall into.

Sorting the records

These high, medium, and low ranges of values are often referred to as terciles. Suppose, for example, your average summer rainfall is 100 mm. If you looked at your historical summer records, you would typically find that one-third of years recorded

less than about 80 mm, one-third were 'normal' (80 to 115 mm), and the remaining third were 'wet years', with more than about 115 mm rainfall. So, if you were taking a punt on the coming summer, and had no other knowledge except your historical rainfall records, you would assume that there was about a 33% chance each of summer being wet, dry, or normal.

NIWA outlook maps

The climate outlook maps show NIWA's prediction of the rainfall, air temperature, soil moisture levels, and river flows for November to January. Remember that a prediction for above average temperatures, for example, does not mean that the temperature will be above average every day. It means that the average of all the temperature observations over the period is likely to be higher than the historical average.

The maps show the predicted conditions, including the probabilities of those conditions occurring in the tercile ranges of historical observations. For example, air temperatures in the southwest of the North Island are predicted to be above average, with a given chance of 60% that this will occur. By climate forecasting standards, this is a fairly confident prediction, but there is always a possibility of something unexpected happening. The chance of cool conditions in that region over the next three months is assessed to be just 10%.

A final tip

A climate forecast can suggest that a season is likely to be, for example, wetter than average, but it cannot give the timing and size of rainfall events that might be needed to break a drought. In the case of breaking a drought, the immediate weather may be more important than the climate of the next three months. But the probabilities associated with the climate expectations can help plan responses that will, in the end, protect against, or make the most of, the weather. It's all about playing the odds to the best advantage.

Next issue:

What goes into climate forecasting. The process, the models, and the head-scratching. If you are interested in more about the climate and NIWA, check out the website:

www.niwa.co.nz



Inspiring Colleague Missed by All

A laconic sense of humour, a passion for science and an awesome intellect were just some of the strengths behind FiL's late technical manager Jim Sadler. Jim succumbed to cancer on October 9th.

"He certainly leaves some big boots to fill," says general manager Gavin Cherrie. Jim had been instrumental in many of the company's new innovative products in recent years. These include many that FiL's clients take for granted with respect to their effectiveness and reliability. Jim was heavily involved in developing the company's flagship products, including the Quantum range of detergents, Bloateze, and the latest release, the Booster Block.

"Jim was someone who would put the science ahead of all else, and these products and some of the new ones we plan to release in the next 12 months are a legacy to his brilliance," says Gavin. He also had a great appreciation that a good product did not stop at the lab. He had gone to great lengths to develop systems to ensure the product's good chemistry was followed through with sound procedure and quality assurance.

"He had a real insight into the whole process, and remarkably for someone with such technical knowledge, was able to translate that into language that was easy to understand."

Gavin recalls Jim spending hours in the car in a paddock observing stock behaviour around his newly developed Booster Blocks. The blocks have proved something of a breakthrough in the supplement market with their edible packaging, and Jim's ability to overcome the inherent difficulties in moulding molasses in to a regular shaped block, says Gavin.

FiL business development manager Trevor Gulliver says Jim's passing has been difficult for all the company, but his fastidious record keeping means it has been possible to stay on track with product plans.

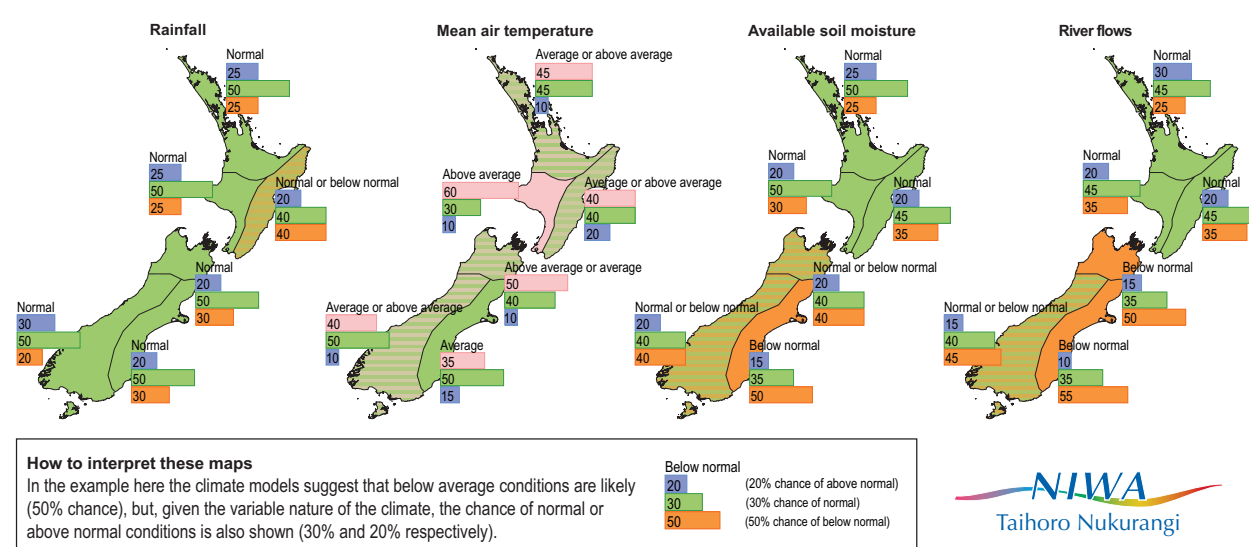
"He had developed complex systems to drive the company's sales forecasting and purchasing, this took a considerable amount of time and energy to do accurately."

His interests extended beyond the lab, with a voracious appetite for books, often ploughing through six a week. He had a strong interest in maritime history, and particularly Lord Nelson.

"He was recreating Nelson's ship victory as a full model in his garage, and the detail was absolutely incredible. If the kitset designers had taken a shortcut, Jim would not accept that, and go and make the changes to the boat design so it was correct," says Gavin Cherrie. "He was not building a replica, he was building an exact replica."

Trevor Gulliver says Jim was an inspiration to all who worked with him and is sadly missed, but fondly remembered by his many friends and colleagues at FiL.

NIWA's forecast for November–January 2006



The many faces of FiL

Racing rep enjoys dairy world

FOR a regular dose of adrenaline FiL's Te Awamutu-Otorohanga rep heads north to Pukekohe racetrack in his family HSV Clubsport.

He and his daughter, 17 year old Ashleigh get to race the car along with other members of the HSV club four or five times a year.

Dave says for sheer excitement it is hard to beat and he is achieving doing times of 1 minute 10 seconds, comparing very favourably with the true professionals achieving 1m5s.

"It is pretty intensive, there is no insurance when you are on the track, so you have to stay alert to things."

Back home, it is flexibility and a good team that have kept Dave Hewson with the company for 14 years, making him the company's longest serving area manager. Dave says the job's appeal lies in his ability to operate almost as his own boss in a region with some of the most productive dairy farms in the country.

Knowing he is selling the highest quality products in a great team environment makes the job that much easier, says Dave.

The job comes after time spent selling cars, then dairy hygiene and milking machines. He was then a prison officer at nearby Waikeria for a year.

"This was a good experience, but a year was probably long enough!" As a child he had always wanted to be on a farm, and while not owning one, he spends almost as much time on them as if he were dairying. Te Awamutu has long been a traditional dairying area, and the biggest change Dave has seen over the last 14 years is the massive consolidation of dairy units.

"You see a lot more syndicates operating and a lot of neighbours who have bought out neighbours, with some sizeable herds now." The intensity of the business has increased he says, with fewer farmers able to "cruise along" compared to earlier days. Over the years Dave has built some great relationships with clients, and continues to still have a few from his very early days. FiL's Bay of Plenty rep Allan Clarke was one of those clients who has jumped over to the other side of the dairying fence.

Dave says the FiL range is an easy one to support enthusiastically, with good science behind the products, much which came from the company's late technical manager Jim Sadler, whose death leaves some big boots to fill.

"I think one of the best developments the company has come up with has been the Quantum Range, the blue and gold acid products were fantastic when they first come out, and still are." The company manages to bring out new products regularly, keeping the job interesting and challenging. The latest was the Booster Block which fits well with clients on smaller lifestyle blocks prevalent in the area. Dave says he is looking forward to some intensive marketing and exciting developments in the new year.

With a steady client base in the region, his biggest aim is to try and increase those numbers over the

next year. Meantime, more of his visits are spent training up young staff on the big dairy units and it is time well spent.

"I find that if you spend the time with these people when they are new to the industry it is surprising how many come back to you a few years later as clients, either as contract milkers or sharemilkers."

He has found the FiL Dairy Hygiene Handbook has been well received by staff keen to get a grip on problems relating to hygiene and milk quality.

Living in Te Awamutu suits Dave and his family well, with its excellent facilities and proximity to the rest of the country.

For more relaxing past time than HSV racing, Dave enjoys fishing with son Ben (14) who is about to do his diving course so he can join Dad this summer.



Your FiL Farm Service Team have got the country covered.

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

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