



FIL

THE DAIRY FARMER

FARM INNOVATION / HYGIENE/ ANIMAL HEALTH / MARKERS / NUTRITION

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SUMMER 2009

BRIGHTER PROSPECTS FOR DAIRY AHEAD

Fonterra's significant increase in the season's payout early in November has bought much needed relief to farm budgets after a challenging winter and tight cash flows for dairy farmers.

The boosted payout forecast from \$5.10/kgMS to \$6.05/kgMS also reinforces Rabobank's third quarter report on prospects for dairy commodity prices.

Co-author of the Rabobank report, analyst Hayley Moynihan notes that demand conditions have continued to improve through the season, with economic growth exceeding expectations in key economies in recent months. This has included a sharp jump in Chinese imports and Moynihan expects the market to continue to move in favour of sellers for the remainder of the season.

"However the rate of improvement is expected to be modest, with stockpiles to be cleared in the Northern Hemisphere remaining substantial," she says.

Hayley Moynihan cautions with prices rising the point has been reached where exporting is again worthwhile for Northern Hemisphere producers.

As counter intuitive as it may seem, the lower prices for milk in the Northern Hemisphere earlier this year have prompted some farmers to increase supply to maintain their income level on farm. Meantime Rabobank is expecting milk production to stagnate for the remainder of 2009.

Across the Atlantic in the United States US dairy farmers are doing it hard, with prices well short of variable on farm costs for much of this season. Wholesale culling of dairy cows has seen more than one hundred thousand head removed from the US national herd, and more farmers are continuing to exit with dairying being a loss making business for many.



On the demand side of the equation China continues to remain a major driver of export demand, with consumers opting for imported brands as a means of ensuring product safety. Chinese purchases of milk powder accounted for a massive 75% of the increase in whole milk powder trade growth for the second quarter of this year.

Hayley Moynihan notes a significant part of the traded market's growth in recent months has been the active restocking taking place by users of milk powder products. With credit uncertainty prevailing early in the year, dairy users ran down inventory to keep cash requirements to a minimum, and are now having to re-purchase to keep processing lines operational.

Rabobank is cautioning that with the influence of restocking waning, growth will remain gradual. However the spectre of growing stockpiles of EU and US dairy

products does appear to be declining as milk production growth remains low in both regions and the stock piles appear to be at their peak.

The paradox of higher international skim milk powder prices is that they become more attractive to the EU and USA producers to once again start exporting.

Meanwhile the influence of processors restocking their depleted inventory levels with powder could lead to some waning of the gain in price strength, as those pipelines once again become filled after the nervousness around global credit availability between businesses drops away.

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A WORD FROM FIL:

What a difference a few months makes!! It's definately a case of positive thinking now that the season is well under way and the prospects are looking good. The new dairy payout forecast can only help... particularly with getting some on-farm debt under control. The FIL factory has responded to extra demand and it is pleasing to see Iodoshield Active continue in its growth as an effective teat spray product. Product development moves into another phase with monitored field trials well under way. Thank you for your custom and support.

All the best for Christmas. May it be happy, productive and safe. WARWICK DOWSE - General Manager



Farming to Succeed

A programme by



Agriculture ITO
Industry Training Organisation

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FIL



BUILDING BRIDGES AT FIL

SIMON BRIDGES (FAR LEFT),
SHARING MORNING TEA
WITH FIL STAFF.

INNOVATION AND THE ABILITY TO “PUNCH ABOVE THEIR WEIGHT” WERE CHARACTERISTICS THAT STOOD OUT FOR TAURANGA MP SIMON BRIDGES WHEN HE RECENTLY VISITED A NUMBER OF BAY OF PLENTY EXPORTING BUSINESSES, INCLUDING FIL’S HEAD OFFICE AND PLANT AT MOUNT MAUNGANUI.

He was taking advantage of a two week parliamentary recess, and the chance to see what was happening beyond the capital back in his electorate of Tauranga City.

“It would be tempting to just kick back over the time we are out of Wellington, but I feel it is important to understand what makes these vital businesses tick, know the variety of businesses out there and hear what their concerns are,” he says.

While at FIL he was given a guided tour around the company’s head office and plant that has set industry benchmarks for sustainability and efficiency. He was particularly impressed by the highly effective use of natural lighting in both the office and factory complex that gives the building a sense of spaciousness and capacity.

“It really is a bit of a Tardis - the scale inside is certainly far greater than it appears from outside,” he said.

The MP also noted the efforts FIL has gone to install environmentally sustainable systems into the Portside Drive plant, including a 60,000 litre rain water storage system that harvests water off the roof area for use in processing.

“We have managed to cut back water usage by a massive 90% thanks to that system, which supplies the processing plant and office wash rooms,” said FIL

company director Arthur Jordan. He also demonstrated FIL’s waste oil boiler system which is used to provide heating for various chemical and manufacturing processes within the plant.

The input from staff into the plant’s design also reflected the longevity and passion of many of FIL’s staff who obviously took pride in their work environment, said Simon Bridges.

Arthur Jordan has noted that since completing an environmentally sustainable building more staff are also taking good work habits home, being more aware of energy use and conservation. The building includes full shower facilities and room for bike storage to encourage staff to bike to work.

Discussing the economic outlook with Bay of Plenty exporters, Simon Bridges acknowledged the impact the dollar was having on the country and that the challenge was to deal with its volatility as much as its strength.

It was appropriate that the meeting with exporters coincided with the announcement of a free trade deal with oil exporting nations including Bahrain and United Arab Emirates. These countries account for \$3.5 billion worth of export earnings, including primarily meat and dairy products.

Exporters at the meeting congratulated Simon Bridges and the government on their practical, approachable style that had proved popular with business people in the first 12 months of power.

HYGIENE ✓

FIL QUANTUM POWDER



IT’S ALL ABOUT MILK QUALITY.

Quantum Powder contains 780gm/kg of caustic alkali. It is the most powerful chlorinated alkali currently on the market, an amazing product when it comes to the removal of fat and protein from milking machines and milk silos.

Alkali detergents are a crucial component of the cleaning system. They typically contain caustic soda and other alkali materials, chlorine, surfactants and water conditioners. Always use hot water (80 °C) when alkali washing.

The caustic ingredients remove fat, whilst chlorine destroys protein deposits. The surfactants assist in dissolving and emulsifying soils, while the water conditioners ensure constant performance in mineralised water.

RECYCLE FOR MAXIMUM CONTACT

It is important to recycle the alkali wash - it is contact time with alkali that removes protein deposits.

When recycling, first pre-heat the plant with hot water, making sure to discard the first water to come through.

Once the water is hot enough start recycling, then add Quantum Powder, recycle for no more than 5 minutes or until the wash water temperature drops to around 60 °C, then discard. These instructions apply to both the milking machine and milk silo.

COLD-WATER RINSE TO COMPLETE

Once the alkali wash is complete, FIL recommend a cold-water rinse be put through the plant.

Following the rinse put an acid wash through in either hot or cold water. The best products to use for this are Quantum Blue, Quantum Gold or Jetset.

The acid wash will neutralise the alkali and leave the plant/silo in a sanitised state.

TWICE A WEEK FOR MAXIMUM HYGIENE

It is recommended to put a Quantum Powder wash through the plant at least twice weekly. Over the summer period, when thermophilic bacteria are more prevalent increasing the number of alkali washes per week, would be beneficial.

NEW VENTURE FOR JOINT TERRITORY MANAGER AND FIL.

THE WAIRARAPA IS PROBABLY BEST KNOWN FOR ITS QUALITY LAMB, BEEF AND MORE RECENTLY PINOT NOIR, BUT DAIRYING HAS BECOME AN INCREASINGLY PROMINENT PART OF THE REGION’S ATTRACTIVE FARMING LANDSCAPE.

To help meet the demand from dairy farmers in the province that covers such a diverse range of land uses, FIL has embarked on a unique partnership with tag company Allflex.

The two companies have appointed Mark McManaway as a shared Area Manager for the region to build the presence for both in the region.

“Appointing Mark gives both FIL and Allflex a good profile in the Wairarapa, he is well known and the McManaway family have been in the region for many years,” says FIL general manager Warwick Dowse. It is a first for both companies to share a territory manager. His work with Allflex will also see him covering the East Coast as far north as Gisborne.

Far from competing with one another, Mark says both companies share a history of New Zealand ownership and innovation. Allflex’s tag technology is now globally accepted and the company was established over 50 years ago based on similar ideals to FIL’s , to deliver innovative reliable products that New Zealand farmers need.

“Those synergies still exist today, and Mark brings an excellent level of local knowledge that will also see FIL products made more available to sheep and beef farmers as well,” says Warwick.

Having spent 20 years milking on a family property before moving into motorcycle sales, Mark is very familiar with FIL’s tail paint products.



MARK McMANAWAY
FIL AREA MANAGER,
WAIRARAPA

“What has impressed me however is the wide range of other products FIL has developed, even since we stopped milking. There is a real need to lift FIL’s presence in the region because there is so much potential here.”

He shares some family connection to Allflex, with his brother Shane being Australasian manager for the company.

Mark has been working initially with Clint Humphries who has been covering much of the Wairarapa in the past, along with the Manawatu and welcomes the extra help in the south east corner of the island.

Mark lives with his wife Maree on a lifestyle block between Greytown and Carterton.

DAIRYING BIG WINNER FROM SCIENCE AWARDS.

THREE SCIENTISTS WHOSE RESEARCH HAS FOCUSSED STRONGLY ON DAIRYING RELATED ISSUES TOOK OUT THE TOP PRIZES FOR WAIKATO’S ANNUAL KUDOS SCIENCE AWARDS THIS YEAR.

The Kudos awards have been running for three years now and were established to recognise the contribution Waikato based scientific research makes to New Zealand’s economy and productivity.

With a quarter of New Zealand’s research taking place in and around Hamilton, the Awards are now regarded as a means of recognising the most talented, progressive researchers the country has to offer.

The top Agricultural Science Award went to long time AgResearch soil scientist Dr Stewart Ledgard who was recognised for his research efforts around understanding nitrogen leaching and incorporating it into the Overseer nutrient modelling software. Overseer is now regarded as the benchmark for pastoral farming nutrient calculations and budgets.

While work has included an emphasis on the leaching behaviour of nitrogen, he has also been recognised for research into green house gas emissions. Livestock emissions account for around 45% of New Zealand’s green house gas contributions, and Dr Ledgard’s work has shown that reducing nitrogen leaching into water systems, also often decreases gas loss as nitrous oxide, a key contributor to global warming.

Now nitrogen pathways are understood, Dr Ledgard’s work has also included helping farmer groups put management practices and mitigation methods in place to reduce those losses. Work includes winter management, dietary changes, such as including maize silage into dairy cow diets, and work on nitrification inhibitors.

“Work around the country has found where nitrogen leaching has fallen by 20-50% using inhibitors, nitrous oxide losses have also dropped by as much as 50-60%,” he says.

ENTREPRENEUR CAPTURES INNOVATION

An entrepreneurial spirit and a sharp scientific mind saw Quantec CEO Dr Rod Claycomb awarded the Science Entrepreneur award at this year’s Kudos ceremony.

Currently with Quantec at Hamilton’s Waikato Innovation Park, Dr Claycomb and his partner, Dr Bragger, are commercialising their patented, naturally derived milk protein-based ingredient, IDP™ that has been proven to have anti-microbial and other immune defence properties.

“There is strong commercial potential to use our novel

ingredient as a non-antibiotic treatment for mastitis in cows as well as an ingredient in oral care and skin care products in humans. We’re still in the early stages, but excited to announce that we’re launching the product onto the US nutraceutical ingredient market this November,” say Dr Claycomb.

Dr Claycomb began his career at a US technology company DDx. His most significant entrepreneurial achievement while at DDx was developing a sensor to detect the mounting of cows while in heat which optically alerted farmers when this happened.

His idea was launched as a successful commercial product in 1999, known as ‘MountCount™’.

Dr Claycomb emigrated to New Zealand in 1999, where he began working for DEC International NZ. He was hired for his expertise and accomplishments in biosensor research and was leading the company’s R&D team. Within 18 months, the company spun off his milk sensor research unit into a new company, Sensortec, which is located at the Waikato Innovation Park.

As CEO of Sensortec, he took it from inception to 20+ employees including R&D, Marketing and Manufacturing and managing a \$1.5+ million annual budget.

One of Dr Claycomb’s greatest accomplishments while at Sensortec was leading the research, development and launch of the world’s first online somatic cell count sensor for the detection of mastitis in cows. This product - CellSense™ - is now sold in New Zealand, Australia and Europe.

MIGRANT SCIENTIST SEEKS SUSTAINABILITY

The winner of the Emerging Scientist category was Dr Pablo Gregorini, a research scientist originally from La Plata, the capital of Buenos Aires province of Argentina. Dr Gregorini is now living in New Zealand and working for Dairy NZ. His research work applies to the strategic grazing management of grazing cattle.

“Understanding the affects of the grazing process is necessary to help farmers control the nitrogen excretion of their cattle and therefore help to reduce greenhouse gases, such as methane. Controlling nitrogen also helps to reduce water contamination,” says Dr Gregorini.

Dr Gregorini’s research has contributed to developing a program giving New Zealand Dairy farmers new sustainable and profitable farming options.



DR STEWART LEDGARD - OUTSTANDING IN HIS FIELD.

His research into more effective use of nutrients in pasture supplies helped him clinch the award.

The Emerging Scientist Kudos Award recognises a major, recent contribution that advances a person’s emerging career in science.



BEEN THERE

MARK WITH CONFIDENCE

A highly visible red tracer dye.

FIL’s Been There is pH neutral and compatible with most New Zealand registered herbicides.

Available at your local rural retail stores now.

NEW RELEASE.

“BEEN THERE” - 1 LITRE TWIN CHAMBERED BOTTLE FEATURING A METERED DISPENSER.



In FIL’s quest to continuously improve products, Been There’s 1 litre bottle has been replaced by a twin chambered metered dispenser version.

“Been There” has been the market leading tracer dye in the FIL range of markers for many years, delivering outstanding visibility over challenging spray environments.

The formulation includes a dye that does away with the high acid level often common in markers. A high acid level can cause problems for spray equipment and the ability of sprays it is mixed with to perform to maximum specifications.

FEATURES AND BENEFITS:

- Dispenser assists with the measurement of Been There tracer dye, improving application accuracy.
- Dispenser chamber includes 20ml gradations, from 20ml - 100ml.
- Child resistant screw caps for added safety.

The 1 litre twin chamber bottle expands the FIL range of farmer and contractor friendly container sizes, also including 5L and 20L available at local rural retail stores.



MANY HAPPY RETURNS...

IF COWS ARE GOING TO RETURN TO OESTROUS FROM A PREVIOUS INSEMINATION OR NATURAL SERVICE - LET'S HOPE THERE AREN'T TOO MANY AND THEY ARE SPREAD OVER AN EXPECTED INTERVAL.

DAVID McDONNELL
BVSc MACVS



The intensity of recording heats is barely palpable once the 'flapsy hapsy' of dirty cows, artificial insemination, and non-cycling cow treatments have passed and service bulls are introduced. Using service bulls to tail off the mating period, together with an early scan to age the late pregnancies, has displaced the apparent 'old fashioned' need to record natural service matings accurately. Many farmers still do - owner operators particularly, but for the large herd situation it seems this task gets lost in completeness and accuracy as the season withers away.

The returns to service - whether they be a repeat artificial insemination (which will be recorded) or a natural mating are critical herd data to help with any analysis on the current mating as it is progressing or leading a fertility investigation for a veterinarian/consultant in poor performance. Unfortunately, when a veterinarian is consulted upon reproductive performance - it is many months after the event. No chance to utilise the tools the CSI team have at their disposal! All we have are reproductive records - anoestrous treatments, submission rates, non return rates, and return intervals. And also farm physical data - weather, grass growth, feed supply and milk production data for example.

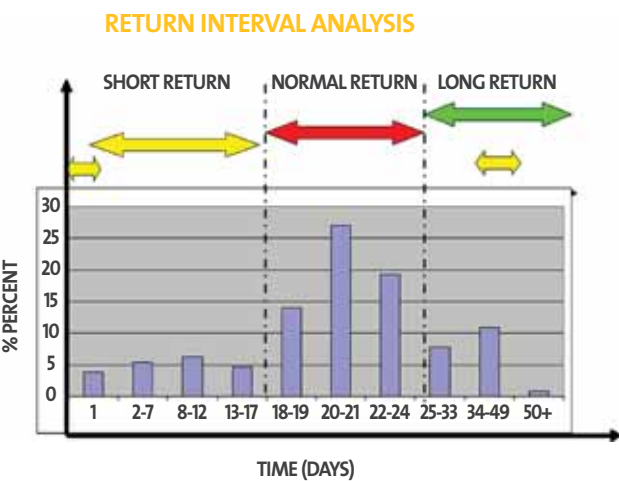
“But can’t you just blood test them”, is the exasperated reply from the farmer when he realises these records are incomplete, inaccurate or absent.

WHAT VALUE IS THERE IN RECORDING THE RETURNS TO SERVICE?

Firstly, you get a proxy measure for conception rate. This is the next most important driver for overall fertility behind submission. Secondly, in a fertility investigation, the interval or the time that a cow returns to service can help direct what areas of management to focus upon or ascertain likely causes of infertility. Return intervals can be used as an indicator of heat detection efficiency, problems related to conception failure (bull and/or technician), anoestrous, embryonic loss/abortion e.g. BVD/ Neospora or long returns related to infectious venereal disease e.g. Campylobacteriosis/Trichomoniasis.

A report can be generated easily by computer software from the animal database (cost effective for time) e.g. Mindapro® or manually. Your veterinarian/consultant or in-calf advisor can assist.

An example of the histogram is below:



You will note that a herd has a 'Normal Distribution' spread of returns from 1 day through to 50+ days after their first or second mating. The returns are grouped into 'short', 'normal' or 'long' returns. The main 'spike' of returns occurs 18-24 days after the previous mating - the 'normal' period (red). Provided this is not too high (bull infertility or technician error can be a problem) - these are 'happy returns'! Short returns may be from overzealous picking especially a day too early- so they are repeat inseminated a day apart. Or poor detection efficiency shown by having a lot of short returns (yellow) around 2-17 days or missed heats appearing at 34-49 days (yellow). The long returns (green) may allude to infectious problems that may prove difficult to diagnose without recency or anoestrous/phantom cows returning to heat after treatment and earlier blanket insemination.

Keep up the heat detection intensity - motivation of yourself and staff. Continue to touch up tail paint throughout the mating period.



Watch and record those second, third and fourth matings. This is valuable data that a pregnancy scan will not reveal. It does give insight and a scorecard on your heat detection efficiency. And remember an expected return interval pattern should look very similar to Mt Taranaki with Fanthom's Peak at its flank.



BOOSTER BLOCK BIG BOY BRINGS SCALE TO SUPPLEMENT.

FIL'S NEWLY FORMULATED MAGNUM BOOSTER BLOCK HAS WON OVER A THOUSAND FANS ON THE COOKSON FAMILY TRUST PROPERTY IN THE WAIKATO THIS SEASON.

The re-launched Booster Block Big Boy has been trialled on the Trust's 1100 cow property at Springdale, and proved popular over spring.

The 500kg block contains essential trace elements and boosted molasses content and comes with a pallet for easy movement around the farm.

Richard Cookson says it has provided a good indicator of what extra minerals his herd have needed over the winter-spring period.

Richard has a background in scientific research, and believes a lot can be learned about watching how cows consume supplements on offer, including the popular Booster Block.

“We had some smaller blocks placed at the cow shed exit and they almost demolished them in a very short time - we found while it was popular with all the herd as they exited the shed the block was more popular with some cows than others. To me it indicated some needed additional mineral supplementation.”

Supported by blood tests he made the decision to increase the level of meal feeding during milking despite the lower payout, supplementing with calcium and magnesium through the spring. A copper injection was administered and increasing the meal and molasses feeding also helped correct a selenium deficiency in the herd.

The Booster Block Magnum is also available in smaller 15kg blocks and Richard has also trialled these with his older calves this season.

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™ yeast feed additive.

With a reputation among calf rearers 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.

Proving as popular as the 500kg equivalent, they are also providing a useful mineral addition for calves and on small farms.

The Booster Blocks contain essential minerals calcium, selenium and magnesium often lacking early in lactation.

MATING WISH GRANTED FOR DAIRY FARMERS

THIS SPRING A SMALL NUMBER OF FARMERS HAVE FULFILLED SOMETHING THAT HAS BEEN TOP OF THEIR WISH LIST FOR YEARS - TO SELECT SEMEN AT MATING TIME THAT WILL DRAMATICALLY LIFT THE PROPORTION OF HEIFER CALVES.

The wish has been granted, thanks to an agreement between a US based company Sexing Technologies, AgResearch and the Waikato Innovation Park.

General manager of genetics at LIC Peter Gatley has welcomed the arrival of the technology here in New Zealand, after it being available overseas for almost a decade. New Zealand farmers have had access to sexed semen via overseas sires in the past, albeit at a high cost and for bulls that is not usually their first choice.

“The opportunity to select for heifer calves, and to have that semen from our very top sires is very exciting for the industry, and will bring opportunities we probably won’t fully realise until farmers start to use it for themselves,” says Peter Gatley.

The demand for sexed semen in New Zealand has not only been determined by lack of local sires however. Traditionally New Zealand dairy farms have had a surplus of heifers except for brief periods of strong industry growth

“In contrast in the US they only average two lactations per cow, so if half of the calves are bulls the herd can barely replace itself. Here we are averaging 4.9 lactations per cow.”

However as herds begin to peak in cow numbers and farmers seek greater production per cow, sexed semen can deliver productivity gains more rapidly, through

quicker genetic gain from high BW cows delivering heifer calves.

AgResearch section manager Dr Vish Vishwanath believes if the majority of farmers adopt the technology, benefits could flow to the end of the value chain including bull beef. Peter Gatley believes the technology could be used to generate extra heifer calves from cows with rare or valuable genotypes for specialty milk production in the future.

“Of course as soon as the industry enters another growth phase we will see demand lift. Also some farmers prefer to have all their heifer calves born within a short period as this makes calf rearing easier, and this could stimulate demand for sexed semen.”

The challenge in getting the technology into New Zealand until now has been to get the cost down to meet price levels farmers would find acceptable. Improvements in technology have resulted in improved conception rates and lower prices, with Peter Gatley estimating catalogue bull sexed semen to cost around \$60. Conception rates can be slightly lower than normal semen, by “a few percentage points” he says.

“There is the extra cost there to pay for the sophisticated technology behind this.”

The launch of sexed semen came later in the mating season, but gives the company the opportunity to establish farmer interest and collect more data on conception rate.

Sexing Technologies intends to set up a permanent lab at the Waikato Innovation Park and develop a long-term research and development partnership with AgResearch.

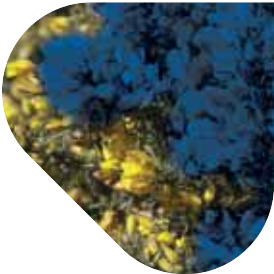
The technology separates X-bearing cells (heifers) and Y-bearing (bulls). The sperm is sorted by identifying

differences between the X and Y bearing sperm cells, with X-bearing cells containing around 3.8% more DNA than Y and this difference is used to sort X from Y bearing sperm.

Peter Gatley also sees advantages for farmers where sexed semen is combined with LIC’s fresh semen technology to make more straws available at higher conception rates.

Juan Moreno of Sexing Technologies USA says more than 10 million straws of sexed semen have been used by farmers around the world in the past two years.

Sexing Technologies also aims to make sexed semen available to horse breeders through a collaboration with EquiBreed NZ. It will be possible to select sex of a foal with over 90% accuracy using Sexing Technology’s service and insemination techniques developed at EquiBreed NZ. The same technology is also being applied to sheep, beef, pigs and deer.



CALF CLUB

A BURST OF SPRING WEATHER PROVED TO BE WELCOME AT CALF CLUBS AROUND THE COUNTRY THROUGH OCTOBER, INCLUDING AT MATAMATA PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE WAIKATO.

Like many areas spring had turned difficult in the Waikato later in October, but nevertheless children’s calves and lambs were turned out in fine form for the annual occasion.

FIL marketing assistant Tracy Frost had the opportunity to attend her first calf club day this year and found the Matamata event was an enjoyable welcome to this long time rural event.

“It was worth going just to see how pleased the kids were with themselves and the work they had put into their animals was really impressive,” says Tracy.

The Matamata Primary calf club had around 30 calves this year with children across all ages showing their efforts, including five year olds with calves towering above them. Tracy noted some friendly Jersey-Friesian rivalries, while the beef breed class bought a slightly more exotic look to some of the calves on show.

“It is awesome that calf clubs are still so popular when kids have so many other things on the go these days, even at Matamata Primary which is not only a school with rural children attending.”



WINNER OF MOST OBVIOUS PET AT THIS YEAR’S MATAMATA PRIMARY CALF CLUB DAY 10 YEAR OLD SOPHIE NICOLAS WITH HER CALF CHEEZY, FIL AREA MANAGER GREG DUNCAN AND FIL MARKETING ASSISTANT TRACY FROST.

FIL is a regular sponsor of calf clubs around the country and Tracy put together a Calf Club pack that includes a certificate, a Rubics cube, pen and pad for schools to award to prize winners. FIL area manager Greg Duncan says in his area there are 10 trophies that have been donated to rural schools by FIL area managers over the years, including one at Matamata Primary from him.

This year’s trophy winner at Matamata was Sophie Nicolas who was awarded Most Obvious Pet.

DONE THAT

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A highly visible blue tracer dye alternative for users who are colour blind.

FIL’s Done That is pH neutral and compatible with most New Zealand registered herbicides.

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MAINLAND VIEWS



BIG COUNTRY IDEAL FOR BIG HERDS.

THE WIDE OPEN COUNTRY OF THE MANIOTOTO NORTH WEST OF DUNEDIN IS LAND MORE ACCUSTOMED TO MERINOS THAN MILKERS, BUT THINGS HAVE CHANGED IN RECENT YEARS.

FIL clients Dan and Bridget Odlum made the move to the region to share-milk for Hubbard Farms' Maniototo Dairy Partnership four seasons ago, to a 400ha property near the Taieri River at Patearoa. The 1500 cow job is one of several large scale corporate operations in a region that ranks among the more isolated dairying areas of the country but is now home to around 10,000 cows.

Dan admits on first coming to check out the farm he did wonder how the family would manage with the relative isolation after the easy access to services at the Ashburton property they farmed upon.

The town of Ranfurly is 37km away, while Alexandra the main supply town is 120km down Highway 85 on roads that can be an icy challenge in winter.

However with their love of horse riding and motorbikes and a desire to get ahead, the family has thrived in the wide open spaces.

The common perception of land around the region is that it is thin and dry, says Dan. However thanks to border dyke irrigation that started in the seventies, the country has built up good topsoil levels and is now benefiting from more water efficient large scale centre pivot irrigators.



SEASONAL CONTRASTS IN THE MANIOTOTO

Water supply is from the Great Moss Swamp, a dammed swamp that feeds the Westside-Maniototo Irrigation scheme.

While this winter was relatively mild, they can be harsh dropping down as cold as minus 10°C. Curling competitions on Idaburn dam to the north are not uncommon when conditions are right.

Dan says the country represents some of the cheaper conversion land in New Zealand, with much of the most desirable country already in cows, or as sheep farms already set up for conversion.

The property they share-milk on is supported by a 340ha runoff for running young stock and wintering cows on.

Winter was dry this year ensuring high feed utilisation and most farms had kale left over when calving started.

There has only been around 25mm of rain since May, and such conditions made calving an easy run.

Spring growth is slow to begin, with growth ramping up after October 20th. This year irrigation has just managed to keep up with the dry conditions, keeping the growth curve steady until the cooler weather kicks in from April.

“You can get down to zero growth over winter, and supplements are a necessity.”

Location means staffing is the big issue for farms in the region, but Dan hopes as properties become more established a pool of labour will follow this growth, and this season sees a greater number of locals seeking work.

To help lift the appeal of the job they started on once a day milking this year, with 1050 cows going through the dairy in the morning, and 400 once a day in the evening. Twice a day is underway now, but Dan aims to return to once a day just before Christmas.

For a couple who came south from the well serviced region of eastern Waikato and mid-Canterbury, the Odlums feel there is plenty of opportunity in the Maniototo's wide open spaces, but for now are consolidating on a property they have done much to improve.

“It is one of those places when you first get here you wonder what you have come to, but after three years we are more than happy to call it home,” says Dan.

CANTERBURY IRRIGATORS IN COMPLIANCE SPOTLIGHT.

FARMERS IN THE SELWYN CATCHMENT ON THE CANTERBURY PLAINS ARE FINDING THEMSELVES IN THE SPOTLIGHT AS THE FIRST IN THE COUNTRY TO HAVE TO INSTALL WATER METERS AND DATA LOGGERS OVER THE COMING MONTHS, IF NOT ALREADY INSTALLED.

Environment Canterbury is making it compulsory for the 850 consent holders in the catchment to ensure better monitoring of water take and draw down of the area's water resources.

The Selwyn catchment is an easily identified defined area with a history of growing demand and pressure on water take between users. It is likely the outcome of the compliance requirement will see other regions follow as farming faces greater pressure to account for use of the resource and develop more efficient systems for allocation.

The regulations require all farmers in the catchment to have an Environment Canterbury approved water meter and data logger capable of holding information for the whole season.

Despite coming at a time when budgets are tight, one water technology expert has been pleasantly surprised at the enthusiasm with which dairy farmers have embraced the technology, and see it as far more a management tool than a compliance headache.

“Farmers have been quick to realise the energy and water saving benefits that will come

from understanding their water use patterns better,” says Andrew Neill, general manager for Watermetrics, water meter specialists. His company is part of an alliance known as Hydrocom that brings water management and technology specialist together, based in Ashburton.

Hydrocom takes irrigation expertise literally from the ground (or river) to the grass and is one of only two companies to gain Ecan “preferred provider” status for water meters in the Selwyn catchment.

Farmers can build up a history of water meter data that is then transmitted to the farm's PC, then up to the web for compliance monitoring, with Aquaflex telemetry technology. Coupling temperature and rainfall figures alongside provides a good foundation for making future irrigation decisions.

Linking sensors to transmitting telemetry equipment enables office based, web sourced access to that data. It opens up a pathway for better analysis and understanding of how much and when to apply irrigation water. For example with data from a La Nina season, and knowledge another is coming from agencies like NIWA, that history can be invaluable for

holding off irrigation or starting sooner.

“At those critical shoulder periods where peer pressure will often determine when you start and when you stop irrigating, the hard data will back your decision, not what your neighbours are doing,” says Andrew.

The immediate feedback coming from key sensors like the Aquaflex moisture probe can mean the difference between countering an oncoming dry spell, and pushing pastures into moisture stress.

“The data's immediacy makes a lot of difference, compared to static moisture probes which may only be read every 7-14 days. Seven days on stony Lismore soil with a strong nor-wester is a long time to not have the latest moisture information.”

Andrew has numerous examples of operators who have made savings that have paid back their systems in less than two years by installing effective meters and telemetry equipment.

Once data is logged and downloaded at the end of the season, farmers can create their own compliance report, and fulfil their consent obligations.

SEASONAL CLIMATE OUTLOOK

NOVEMBER 2009 - JANUARY 2010

MODERATE EL NIÑO CONDITIONS, BUT MUTED INFLUENCE ON NEW ZEALAND IN THE COMING SEASON

An El Niño is now at moderate strength across the equatorial Pacific, and is likely to persist through summer. It is not expected to have a strong influence on New Zealand climate in the coming 3 months, according to the latest outlook from NIWA's National Climate Centre.

The Centre says rainfall is likely to be in the normal range in many regions, but normal or below normal conditions are likely for the north and east of the North Island, averaged over the November-December-January season as a whole.

Temperatures for the coming 3-month period (November, December, and January combined) are likely to be near average for the North Island and Nelson/Marlborough, but are likely to be in the average or below average ranges for the rest of the South Island.

River flows and soil moisture are likely to be normal or below normal in all regions.

OVERALL PICTURE

TEMPERATURE:

Air temperatures are likely to be near average over the North Island and northern South Island, and average or below average over the rest of the South Island. Sea surface temperatures near New Zealand are expected to be somewhat below average during November-January.

RAINFALL, SOIL MOISTURE, AND STREAM FLOWS:

Rainfall is likely to be normal or below normal in the north and east of the North Island, and near normal elsewhere. Rivers flows and soil moisture are likely to be normal or below normal in all regions.

REGIONAL PREDICTIONS FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS:

NORTHLAND, AUCKLAND, WAIKATO, BAY OF PLENTY:

Temperatures are likely to be in the near average category. Seasonal (3-month) rainfall totals, soil moisture levels and stream flows are expected to be in the 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	20%	20%	20%	20%
NEAR AVERAGE	50%	40%	40%	40%
BELOW AVERAGE	30%	40%	40%	40%

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

Seasonal temperatures are projected to be in the near average category. Three-month rainfall totals, soil moisture levels and stream flows, are expected to be near 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	20%	20%	20%	20%
NEAR AVERAGE	50%	50%	50%	50%
BELOW AVERAGE	30%	30%	30%	30%

GISBORNE, HAWKE'S BAY, WAIRARAPA:

Three-month temperatures are likely to be in the near average category. Seasonal rainfall totals, soil moisture levels, and stream flows are expected to be in the 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	20%	20%	20%	20%
NEAR AVERAGE	50%	40%	40%	40%
BELOW AVERAGE	30%	40%	40%	40%

NELSON, MARLBOROUGH, BULLER:

Temperatures are likely to be in the near average category. November-January rainfall, soil moisture levels and stream 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	20%	20%	20%	20%
NEAR AVERAGE	50%	50%	50%	50%
BELOW AVERAGE	30%	30%	30%	30%

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

Temperatures are likely to be in the below average category. Seasonal rainfall, soil moisture levels and stream flows are projected 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	20%	30%	30%	30%
NEAR AVERAGE	30%	50%	50%	50%
BELOW AVERAGE	50%	20%	20%	20%

COASTAL CANTERBURY, EAST OTAGO:

Temperatures are equally likely to be in the near average or below average categories. Seasonal rainfall is expected to be in the normal range, while soil moisture levels and stream flows are likely to be normal or below normal overall.

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	20%	20%	20%	20%
NEAR AVERAGE	40%	50%	40%	40%
BELOW AVERAGE	40%	30%	40%	40%

BACKGROUND

A moderate El Niño is present in the equatorial Pacific Ocean, and is expected to persist through to the autumn of 2010. Most of the El Niño forecast models predict El Niño persisting to the end of summer, with some strengthening a little between now and the end of the year.

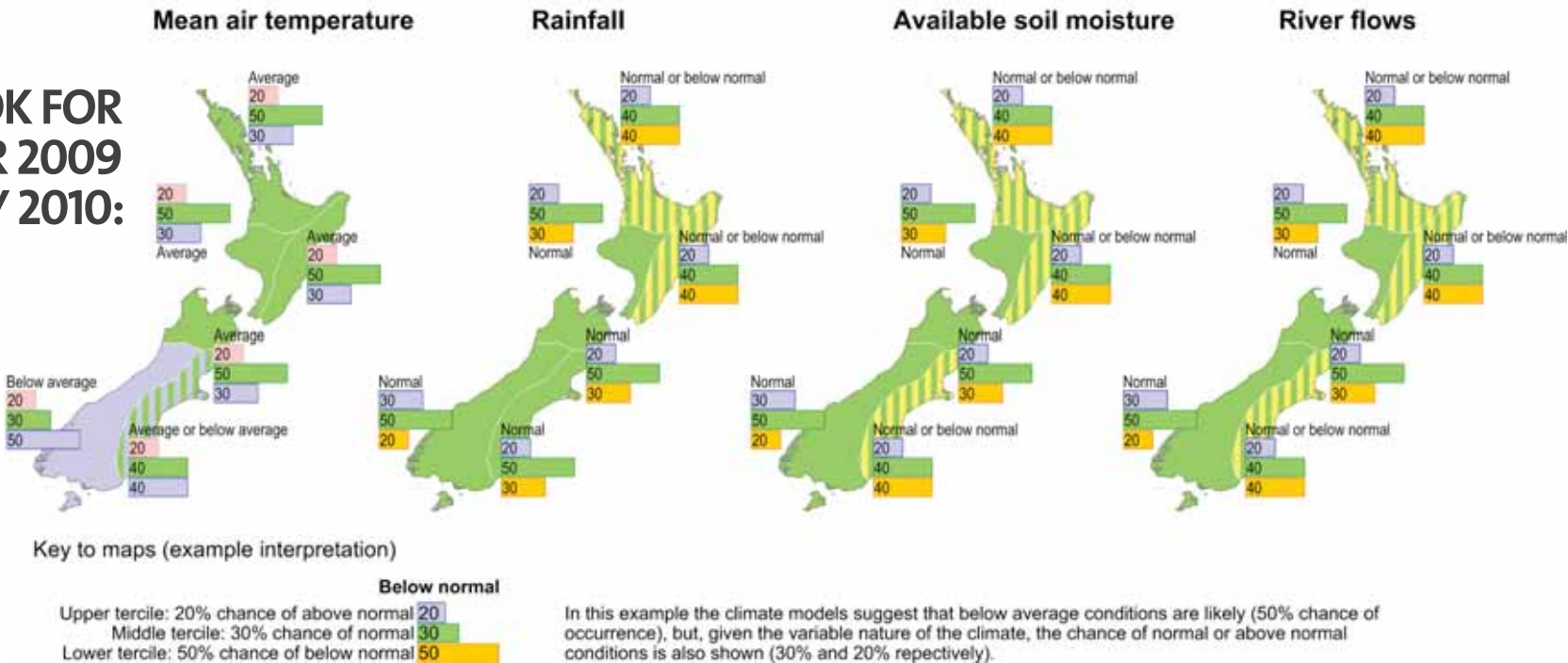
El Niño events can lead to dry conditions in eastern parts of New Zealand over the spring and summer seasons. Consistent with this picture, the latest guidance suggests that November 2009-January 2010 rainfall is likely to be in the normal or below normal range for the north and east of the North Island.

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OUTLOOK FOR NOVEMBER 2009 - JANUARY 2010:



FIL SUPPORTS FUTURE LEADERS IN FARMING TO SUCCEED.

YOUNG AGRICULTURAL TRAINEES KEEN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO CREATE, BUILD AND GROW AS INDIVIDUALS THROUGH BUSINESS AND PERSONAL SUCCESS HAVE EVEN GREATER OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO NEXT AUTUMN.

Thanks to a new sponsorship agreement between FIL and Agriculture ITO, now 25 trainees from the North and South Islands will be able to participate in the Farming to Succeed programme.

Farming to Succeed has a seven year history as the “Future Farmer” programme, introducing young, motivated agricultural trainees to those in the industry who have succeeded in different areas of agribusiness.

FIL’s decision to take on the role as key sponsor was based on the success course organiser Grant Taylor has enjoyed over those years giving young people an insight to what the future could hold if they remain focussed and motivated in their chosen agricultural career.

Grant is himself an example of someone who started out share milking who now oversees a large dairy operation in the South Island, an Australian farm business and a new dairy venture in Northland, all from his Waikato home base.

“I have based the programme on the simple concept of taking an acorn and growing it into an oak, and FIL itself

is a great example of just that,” says Grant.

Starting as a small company, focussed on providing quality products to farmers, today it is a multi million dollar business that continues to be owned by its founders and develops quality products farmers need.

Grant says the biggest obstacle to young people succeeding in agriculture is often their mindset, particularly around the amount of money required to build a farm or agribusiness venture.

“We aim to help their personal development around goal setting - making the right steps along the way, and introducing them to people who have done the hard yards, and now have businesses they can work on, rather than in.”

The course is an intensive five day programme and participants visit a variety of successful agribusiness ventures that include dairy farm operations, a bull beef unit, horticultural operations and discussions with rural bankers on finance. Participants are also required to develop clear goals and targets for what they want to achieve, on both a personal and professional level.

Justin Blakie of Agriculture ITO says support from FIL means the course can almost be doubled in size, open to 25 candidates from each island. However, the emphasis on the personal contact Grant develops with trainees will remain.

There will also now be one day events offered for past attendees on the courses to revisit the goals and plans they set, inspired by guest speakers and motivators.

“We are also hoping the founding sponsor, the C. Alma Baker Trust can continue on as a foundation sponsor - without its support this programme would not have been able to develop into what it is today,” says Justin.

FIL managing director Arthur Jordan is excited by the prospect of sponsoring a programme that brings a very agriculture-specific focus to its content, while also emphasising the value of personal development and growth.

“We know that the future of the agricultural industry lies with people who can lead, who are motivated and focussed and Farming to Succeed will help develop those who have that potential,” says Arthur.

US GROWTH A PLUS FOR FIL EXPORTS

FIL’S BEACH HEAD IN THE EASTERN UNITED STATES IS ENJOYING RAPID GROWTH DESPITE TOUGH TIMES IN THE FARMING SECTOR THERE AND HAS EVEN MANAGED TO PICK UP A REGIONAL BUSINESS AWARD IN RECENT MONTHS.

FIL Agritech is a wholly owned subsidiary of FIL New Zealand and is based in the district of Homer, three hours northwest of New York city and is the key distributor for FIL product in the United States.

“It is a regional business award we picked up for the Best of Homer from the United States Commerce Association. The judges have recognised the overall improvement within the business. One of the things that caught their attention was the sheer amount of product we are shipping in, indicating excellent sell through,” says FIL Agritech’s general manager Timothy Duff.

The small team headed up by Tim have worked hard over the past three years to lift FIL’s product profile through internet sales and supporting re-sellers around the country. While stocking FIL products, FIL Agritech are also an outlet for other non-competing New Zealand sourced products, including Jobe trough valves and Peach Teats for calf feeding.

The on line business has proven a big growth area for the company. “Many of our customers live no where near a store, and our freight included prices make internet purchasing very appealing.”

One of his most remote customers is a dairy farm operation in the middle of Nevada.

Tail paint forms a big part of the FIL products Tim sells, with mating contractors being key customers.

“They will come into a dairy unit and run the whole mating programme, marking, mating and recording.” New York State is one of the three big dairy areas of the country, 3rd in rank to California and Wisconsin.

FIL General Manager Warwick Dowse says FIL Agritech has shown very strong growth in recent years under Tim’s guidance.



ACCESSIBLE EXPERTISE

FIL customers can draw on a wealth of hands-on experience from a team willing to share it. Our Area Managers are on-hand to offer advice on milk quality and technical information regarding our products. With 14 Area Managers around the country, this expertise is accessible to all our customers.



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