

Newsletter 104

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4 November 2013

Hi all,

Thank you to the 20% of subscribers who have paid your current subscription fee. Please ignore reminders to others subscribers in future newsletters. For \$57.50 including GST, sending accounts even by email would cost more than it would earn. We have not taken a cent out of it since starting five years ago, but have to pay costs. The aim is a non-profit service to farmers, but we are losing money.

We are in a position of having to increase our annual subscriptions from January 2014 to \$115 including GST for the newsletter and access to InfoGrazing Chapters, and \$345 including GST for spreadsheets. As subscriptions are for 12 months, paying now will get you through to the end of 2014.

Calves

Are you feeding your calves bought feed of any sort? I hope not, because it is a cost and when you have ample pasture, you should not waste money buying feed. Also, concentrates satisfy them more than pasture does, so they end up eating less pasture. Eating more pasture increases the size of their rumen for their life. Supplying minerals (Solminix has not been beaten in comparisons) adds to their speed of growth, size and health. See Pukeroro cows in GrazingInfo.

Salt

Some ask why I add salt to most lime and fertiliser mixes. They have not read Salt. Please read the farming one and the human one.

A subscriber emailed recently that he had areas that were brown and not growing, so applied all the usual, Ca, N, P, K, etc., with no success. In desperation he applied salt, which fixed it. It could have been high in K, which salt counters. An old time, good scientist at Massey University, Dr Max Turner, found in the 1970s that soils, pastures and especially animals, did better when some K was replaced with salt. Both have chloride.

Salt increases the pH, which adds to how useless pH is for calculating lime requirements.

Like most things, too much salt kills good soil microbes and bacteria, pastures, poultry and sheep. Kill too many bacteria and plants will die. Excess salt in soils makes them hard and makes the uptake of moisture near impossible by effected plants.

Beef and sheep meat producers

Some of you envy dairy farmers and many have changed, but changing to dairying now could cost a large beef farm \$10,000,000 for shed, shares, races, fencing, power and tanker track to the centre of the farm to save cows walking long distances, water, effluent system, DairyNZ fee of about \$10,000 (for no return) and staff houses.

To succeed at beef farming, all beef and sheep farmers need to combine, as do all freezing works. This won't be easy, and has failed for 100 years, but when the chips are down, finding solutions becomes easier.

Meat companies need a constant supply of beef and lamb, not affected by the time of the year, the season or pasture growth, as happens now. When farmers have plenty of pasture, they hold their animals to use it. The local freezing works suffers.

To achieve this, meat companies need to operate as one and pay more when meat is needed, and less when there is a surplus.

Bureaucrats

Bureaucrats are ruining our lovely country. The Waikato Regional Council, other councils and the government, are drawing up water rules whereby dairy farmers have to record their washing and cooling water used, even if from a bore on their own farm, which I believe is their water. If the water was being drawn from a nearby river, not their own bore, then there is obviously a need to control it. Controls on farmers by townie bureaucrats are getting out of hand.

At the same time, the Hamilton City Council takes billions of litres from our Waikato River and pays nothing. They waste at least 10% of it in leaks (next to our property alone, three million litres a year ran to waste for about 30 years, and now another one million litres a year can be seen leaking nearby). There have been bigger ones. Getting staff to do anything about leaks makes them almost blame me, when it is their water on their waste land. On top of this, the sand in Hamilton water causes thousands of toilet cisterns in Hamilton to dribble water day and night, because a grain of sand in a valve stops it closing completely.

A Council water official denied the sand is from their pipes, and told me that it must be entering our pipes on our property, which shows the complete ignorance of some bureaucrats, who blame anyone rather than fix their problem. We and others have chosen to pay \$400 to get sand filters installed.

Waikato River

Waikato farmers, having done correct things and now the Waikato River continues to get cleaner, except for mercury and algae, which comes from Kinleith's paper mill and the deep geothermal power generating bores near Taupo. Why are they not fined and made to stop?

The algae increase that farmers are now being blamed for is from the stagnant water in nine Taupo hydros with no aerating, as is installed at most hydro outlets in most other countries. One in Australia was sprayed up and created a small rain forest around it. South Africa and Canada have good aerating systems. South Africa has a system that when there is surplus water, the hydro pumps it back up into the hydro dam, so all is used with none running to waste.

Apologies for going on about the above, but farmers should get Federated Farmers to correct the many rules made by townie bureaucrats that are penalising and costing farmer members, while Hamilton townies have polluted their lake that we used to swim in. Dogs are now warned to not drink it and it is getting worse, exponentially. It's mercury level is now 33 ppm. Three is too high. No one is doing anything about it and my letters and phone calls get ignored.

Lake Rotoroa is the filthiest in the Waikato. The water is toxic from urban pollution. A Waikato Regional Council bureaucrat told me that Hamilton should have many catchment/sediment ponds around the lake, like farmers are made to. But these authorities do nothing about this.

LimeMagPlus & Fertiliser sources

Some of you know how Lynda Kamphuis at Eureka buys LimeMagPlus and Gafsa mixed fertiliser each in one tonne bags and sells small amounts to gardeners, small farmers and those wanting to do LimeMagPlus trials on their farms. These have improved whole farms, lawns, gardens and pasture yields by about 150%. We'd like people in all areas of NZ doing the same, please, as a service to locals. I can design the LimeMagPlus to suit your area at no charge. Covered storage for a one tonne bag and a ryegrass tissue analysis may be needed to calculate the mix for your area.

You can add a margin. Please contact Jane Cullinane - jane@grazinginfo.com See top of page 1.

Another source of income and help to farmers is breeding Calignosa and Longa earthworms. We can sell you a hundred to get started, \$23 including GST, and within a few months you'll have thousands to sell to others. They can easily be couriered in ice cream cartons with small holes in the lid.

Higher milk production

Most milking cows should lie down from about three to four hours after milking, then graze again later, not walk around all day trying to get full, which can take more energy than they gain, as happens a lot these days. Fully feeding cows is seldom done now, so over-grazing is common, with the resultant reduced pasture growth. If they have grazed the paddock short by lunch time, give them another paddock. If you are short of pasture in the Waikato this spring, you are dreadfully overstocked.

Beef and cows

Correctly stocked farms make much more profit than over-stocked ones, where animals spend more time seeking pasture than they gain, damage the pasture, and increase the weeds and the drought effects.

It costs \$1,500 to keep a milking cow for a year. A farmer reduced his 440 cows by 40 and increased his profit by \$60,000, producing more milk and making a record profit in this last drought season. He applied LimeMagPlus twice in October 2012, and grew 150% more pasture - his findings. Weeds and cow stress decreased, so he, his staff and animals were all happier.

Dairy cow abuse

Why has this increased?

We had one case only in 1979. I saw our 29% sharemilker driving the cows into the herringbone with an alkathene pipe and told him firmly that if he did that again, he'd be down the road.

In January, he and his wife asked us to milk while they went to a friend's wedding. Within a few rounds, Auriel and I looked at each other and said that they were not going to milk our cows again. The next morning, we got up early and when the sharemilkers came to milk, we were well through and told them that they were not going to milk our cows again. There were bad mastitis cases, and damaged cows.

The sharemilkers' president came and saw things, and agreed, so the sharemilkers had to leave.

Cow abuse can be caused from cows getting electric shocks, so then they are difficult to handle (not in this case), and manganese-stressed cows or milkers (see Manganese). This could have been a contributor, because the water had higher levels than it should. It may be an idea to get your house and farm water tested at Hill Laboratories, Hamilton. www.hill-labs.co.nz or mail@hill-labs.co.nz

Mineral deficiency could have also contributed, but we fed salt and other minerals via the water and developed Solminix a few years later, which has calmed the cows for many users.

Staff

Employing staff can be a nightmare. Mature staff with good references are usually the best. Check with all their previous employers, or you could regret it. A few phone calls could save you much grief and cost later on. If you are not keen on doing it yourself, a chatty friend or relative can help you out.

If you advertise, set out clearly what you want. We advertised - 'Wanted 50% sharemilker. Must improve farm.' Only one applied. I checked his references and the farm he was on previously, and gave him the job. He was excellent for 12 years and then bought his own farm. He didn't get out of the herringbone pit and didn't strong eye them, so the cows came in eagerly. He was an animal person - slow and gentle. He loved the cows and they loved him. Read Dairying > Milking. Machinery people are in more of a hurry and less tolerant of animals.

Best wishes,

Vaughan Jones
GrazingInfo Ltd