

Can you please email us suggestions on how to get more subscribers to read and join grazinginfo.com?

If each existing subscriber had found one new subscriber last year, we would not have had to increase the annual fee. Can you help?

28th February Seminar/Field Day report

Subscribers came from Hikurangi and Dannevirke.

There were questions galore. Answers included -

1. Plantain and/or chicory oversown into all your paddocks are drought savers and profit makers. After over-sowing them, after rains are falling regularly, DON'T graze them low until they have established their deep roots, or they can die. This was shown at the field day. Once established, they seem to cope with overgrazing which, all should know, reduces the production of all grazed plants. Trampling them after sowing improves germination and kills slugs, which reduces their eating seedlings and pastures. Pastures benefit from short grazing each spring, and again as close to mid March as possible, depending on rain. These short grazings reduce thatch, without overgrazing problems.

2. The finely ground soft lime from Rorisons that many farmers buy, and is carted from Aria to Auckland and/or southern Hawkes Bay, costs more than local lime, but you get faster results from it, because it is finely ground. Rorisons do not sell 'fine lime' to leave coarser lime for farmers to buy, and their serpentine can be mixed in with anything else required to make LimeMagPlus. Read Minerals > Calcium and see how some coarse lime was still sitting in the soil 20 cm down, not available and not dissolved, eight years after being applied, and wouldn't be available for decades. That particular company grinds finely now, but doesn't mix in calcium synergisms. Dolomite is too expensive in the North Island because shipping and cartage from the South Island make the cost prohibitive. Read Minerals > Magnesium, which has trials on different soil types, all showing that serpentine is better than dolomite - by cost, production, soil and animal health. The minerals in serpentine are deficient in 95% of New Zealand soils. It achieves so much more pasture growth, weed reduction, soil and animal health, that even borrowing to apply it is profitable, because it returns income higher than the interest rate, whereas many other purchases on today's farms don't. See Gardening > Vegetables for what serpentine does to plants health-wise.

3. Time your calving, lambing, buying and selling correctly, and buy and sell ahead of the national price increases and decreases. For instance, selling beef in October is better than November, when everyone else is, so prices drop. Look at spreading calving and lambing to supply the local market over a longer period. Most lamb bought now is not lamb, so is tough, and we change to beef and ham. Most chicken is too toxic.

4. Avoid summer drought effects. Dry summers make forage crops essential to keep cows milking well, so thank goodness the establishment (Ruakura, MAF, AgResearch, Dexcel) has stopped their previous rubbishing of summer forage crops. Prior to their deceiving the value of growing your own forage crops, most dairy farmers grew them. Typically the establishment, which now includes DairyNZ, use their so called science to prove they are right, but I know that once they grew a five tonnes of dry matter per hectare turnip crop when the NZ average was ten tonnes, and the best farmers had been getting 12 tonnes regularly for ages. An ex Ruakura member and I inspected their crop decades ago. It was in a partly wet paddock with no drains, was rotary hoed for cultivation, and was very low in calcium. It should have had 5 tonnes per hectare of LimeMagPlus chisel ploughed in, and one tonne per hectare of Gafsa chisel ploughed in after it.

5. Reduce tractor work. It takes your time, can damage backs and costs a lot with today's tractor prices and running costs, which includes staff time. Contractors are often more profitable, but book them early to get them on time. If you are a 'tractor' person, budget before buying, or do contracting to justify the large gear. I was, and had two of the then largest Fergies on our 87 ha, and employed drivers to do contracting breaking in vast areas of Manuka covered peat on Woodlands Road. We made all our

equipment except the tractors and the rotary hoe.

6. Growing maize for silage is costly, and takes paddocks out of use for too long. I started discouraging maize silage growing in 1960, and one farmer I convinced last year is delighted now. That, applying eight tonnes of LimeMagPlus per hectare, stopping feeding PKE and grain, and reducing cow numbers has increased his annual profit by \$100,000.

Growing maize for grain has been a problem for decades, because the USA 50% subsidised grain keeps the price of ours down.

7. Spreadsheets. Some would like to just type in their pasture analysis figures and automatically see the lime or phosphorus recommendations pop up, but that is impossible and always will be - that is, to be accurate. Some in the past have developed software to try to achieve this, but they were highly inaccurate, so didn't work in the long run, and didn't last long before they were taken off the market.

An example of why computers can't think for themselves and give answers, is because with farming there are so many variables, from location, soil type, soil pollution, fertility, levels of other minerals and their synergistic and antagonistic effects - and of course, the farmers financial situation. There are often mistakes in pasture analysis figures because of soil pollution. This has to be allowed for. Farm incomes affect the amount applied, as do times of year. Once learned, the exact answers can be obtained in ten minutes. Fine tuning is important and we are prepared to do this after you have entered your pasture analysis figures into a Pasture Minerals Records spreadsheet, and emailed it to us with your suggested application of LimeMagPlus Nutrient Planner if Ca is below 0.7%, or Phosphorus Nutrient Planner if your P is below 0.35%. The optimums are Ca 0.8% and P 0.39%.

8. Use the current payout to reduce mortgages, buy more land, reduce costs. It could be lower next year.

9. Possible cost savings include, reducing tractor use, not growing costly maize for silage, making more pasture silage, but not if you can graze it, even if long. Silage and hay of all types cost more and reduce feed value, so it may pay to graze pasture that is longer than optimum. See the new 'Droughts' chapter, due in a few weeks. It will be announced in the next newsletter.

10. Don't be a guinea-pig. Some subscribers have tried Humates, Abron, DENZ, Response, Maxicrop, etc., and 'seen no response' so gave up. Ask us first, and we'll give information on most products, many being sold as "fertilisers" when they are not. A subscriber questioned my criticism of humates and despite my request for it, has been unable to give information to prove that it was of value, or evidence of any repeated successes. The Response (a brand like MaxiCrop) agent in Northland repeatedly spread Response for three years and lost his farm. DENZ is being promoted beyond its real value. As with many others, it is miles too costly for what it does, and contains mercury, one of man's worst poisons.

Many know that most humates are just soil with a few additives with wild claims that no one knows about and few believe. One claimed that theirs contained 73% clay, 24% sand and 3% silt, equals 100%, with additives, so there would not be room for any additives.

The cost for humic acid granules is generally \$4 - \$5 kg and one farmer mixed it with a lime applications around 6 kg per ha, which is minimal. They claimed "the granules dissolve when they hit soil moisture and spread over the fertiliser." One claimed their 'fertiliser' gave a 12 times increase over conventional fertilisers, which is ridiculous.

11. We encouraged speed reading through all chapters so all learn where to find things. A lack of reading by 90% of subscribers is the main reason for subscribers asking questions by email and phone, 90% of which are in grazinginfo.com

A chapter on Speed Reading is coming shortly.

To see the farm we visited at the end of the Seminar, Google for 250 Greenhill Road, Hamilton 3281. It has poplars correctly spaced to give moving shade, so cows get up and graze again. The trees keep the wind up high for cow comfort and less pasture drying out. Every second tree can be harvested and regrow.

Facial eczema

Why have farmers not learned and used the facial eczema control system in GrazingInfo? Look at

the date in this testimonial - 1989.

From Tony & Gwen Ashford, Ngatea, Waikato, NZ.

“We met Vaughan Jones at a discussion group in 1989 when our farming had gone a little off the rails. Our peat was dead, and we’d had bad spring and facial eczema. We had many cows suffer red udders and facial eczema every spring, and low selenium scours, but got none within two years of doing what Vaughan recommended. His recommendations included ceasing blanket weed and facial eczema spore spraying by helicopter, and changing from 30% potassic super (0-6-15-8) to a good reactive phosphate, no potassium, with the necessary trace elements based on pasture tissue analyses, and dispensing Solminix soluble minerals through a new on-line dispenser to the drinking water. Our stressed cows that made milking unpleasant calmed down and we never looked back. After three years our same number of cows could not fit in the yard because they had got bigger, and milk production had increased by 22% from the same number of 150 cows, with no animal health problems and no milk fevers. Thank you, Vaughan.”



First photo after 3 tonnes/ha LimeMagPlus - thatch and no earthworms.



Second photo after 6 tonnes/ha LimeMagPlus - no thatch and you can see earthworm casts - which means no facial eczema spores.

Why haven't more farmers learned about lime with its synergisms and free facial eczema control? Read [Animal Health > Facial Eczema](#) and [> Spring Eczema](#).

Pasture seeding rates

These have been much too high for 70 years, wasting farmers' money and increasing poor establishment and ryegrass pulling later, even if adequately limed, because overcrowded plants, are unable to grow strong deep roots. See them in Droughts in a few weeks time.

New low cost Pastures & Oversowing

This mix is for fertile soils based on Pasture Analyses, correct liming and correct grazing. We recommend these rates based on success and experience.

kg per hectare

12 Bealey NEA2 endophyte protected ryegrass = 100 seeds per m².

3 best Cocksfoot (Orchard grass) for your area. Not for sheep.

0.2 best Timothy for your area.

0.5 Kotare large leaf white clover = 70 seeds/m².

0.5 Weka medium leaf white clover = 70 seeds/m².

0.25 Tahora 2 white clover, the highest N producer. = 80 seeds/m².

0.25 best red clover for your area, but not if K is above optimum, because high K kills red clover, and then white clover.

0.25 Plantain - Tonic for cattle (Lancelot for sheep).

0.25 Chicory - best one for your area.

0.5 Massey Basyn Velvet Grass on poor or steep areas and for less bloat.

18 kg per hectare.

At the Field Day, several mentioned about how pleased they were with Bealey NEA2, but if grazing is not going to be controlled, to prevent overgrazing, sow Trojan NEA2.

Don't buy Kopu 1 or 2 white clover because it doesn't last because it is bred from an annual white clover, and should never have been produced by Grasslands.

For successful new pastures the most important things are chisel ploughing deeply (See > Cultivation) and rolling several times to get a firm, damp seed bed, with good soil contact around the seeds, especially if dry. Rain at the right time reduces the need for more than one rolling.

Southland

In the past, I have believed the 'establishment' who still say that the south of the South Island doesn't need endophyte ryegrasses, but a Gore farmer told me recently that clover root weevil was very bad on his farm and he is waiting for the parasite that attacks it. However, the best prevention is feeding pastures perfectly. This also reduces weeds, even buttercup. See the Drought chapter coming.

Large dung beetles

These are currently being checked for suitability in New Zealand. In my opinion, they should not be allowed into the country. Earthworms improve soils and its structure, and decrease facial eczema. Beetles will reduce earthworms' feed supply, and soils will become worse.

Are those who are making the decision practical farming people, with full experience in all aspects?

If farmers don't speak out, wrong decisions will be made and we'll end up with another imported disaster.

Best wishes,

Vaughan Jones
GrazingInfo Ltd

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