

Newsletter 77 8 October 2012.

Taranaki Testimonial, Grazing rounds, Sheep, Ryegrass varieties growth, Lime+©, Dairying, Lepto.

Joe, a Taranaki sharemilker subscriber in winter of 2012 emailed that he had done pasture analyses and found Ca to be 0.4% instead of 0.8%, so knew that lime was needed, also because there were no earthworms.

Joe visited a local farmer whose farm looked well. He had applied two tonnes of ordinary plain lime per hectare, and then three tonnes of Rorisons Lime+© (lime plus deficient elements) and no N. There was an abundance of grass on the farm and the cows were in great condition, with only 4 non-cyclers after 4 weeks AB, while he had CIDRed 20% of his herd and still had a huge return rate.

Joe was impressed with the farm, which had previously used a system similar to his current one, which required more and more urea and PKE every year, to grow less and less grass, while suffering higher empty rates and decreasing pasture and milk production. The quantity and size of the clovers Joe saw were impressive, but the best was seeing how relaxed the sharemilker was and how much time (and money) he had, without spending all day feeding out, spreading urea, treating sick cows and trying to find grass for the cows to eat.

Joe said that their farm consultant is a big fan of urea, so recommended 100 kg in August, another 65 kg at the start of October and every 6 weeks for the rest of the season, costing \$600 per hectare spread, which would buy 5 tonnes of Lime+© with six deficient elements, per hectare spread.

Joe suggested a faster grazing round, "So the cows would get even higher quality pasture and not graze it so short."

My comments on grazing round speeds -

The correct round length and correct liming of deficient elements mixed into agricultural lime that Rorisons RMD and a few other lime quarries do, and if necessary, followed by correct fertilising a few months later, all help. High nitrates are a costly negative, and low calcium, without its synergisms, make it worse. Read Elements > Calcium and the other mineral chapters including Manganese, which causes stress in animals and the farmers trying to manage them.

If you don't read all the Elements chapters, you'll join the number of farmers who lose a lot production and money, just because they don't apply deficient elements and don't feed Solminix in the drinking water. These two things make such a difference.

Overseas visitors always ask me why New Zealand cows and sheep scour so much. Reasons are; excess nitrates caused by lack of calcium, wrong fertilising, topping (clipping in USA) so there is no roughage for ruminants, a lack of selenium and, to a lesser degree, a lack of the nine important minerals that are in Solminix (Read Minerals) and in no other soluble mineral mix I know about.

The low calcium levels in soils (measured accurately only in pastures) cause low organic matter or humus (Read Elements > Calcium > Japanese for details in it), and then causes low cobalt and low vitamin B12, both of which are common in soils lacking Lime+©.

Sheep

I have noticed a lot fewer, if any, dags in other countries, where they graze longer pastures which are mixed (not mono-culture of just ryegrass), and most have far better soils with fewer mineral deficiencies than in New Zealand. Some feed concentrates containing the deficient minerals, and fibre.

Sheep scour a lot more on very short over-lush (high nitrate) pasture that causes more dags and soiled tails, so results in more fly strikes. The concerns that the greenies and some animal rights people have over dagging, whether right or wrong, have to be considered. Improving pasture quality helps, saving farmer work.

I hope you sheep farmers have all read the Sheep chapter and the Beef Profiting one to see what Lime+© can do, even for ducks, and what Solminix can do for cattle and calves, in several parts of GrazingInfo.

Because lambs drink so little, it is not easy to get Solminix into them, but you may be able to by spraying Solminix on to pastures from now on, while there is less rain to wash it away, and when a profit can be made if you catch the Christmas lamb market.

Having your lambs sold by the first week of November earns a lot more, so it could be worthwhile trying spraying Solminix on to lamb pastures until then. Do a control to convince yourself and see the photographic differences in calves in many parts of GrazingInfo.

All farmers must learn to look at the whole picture - only about 10% do.

This coming season is going to be harder than the many that have already been hard. Suggestions have already been in newsletters and more will be in future ones.

I wrote about 30 years ago that if all farmers farmed correctly in every way, which most do and in most cases is very easy, farmers would not have the regulations imposed on them because of the few bad farmers. They cause regulations that are always much harsher than necessary, so force rules and costs that can be unreasonable to all.

Farmers should also start resisting unreasonable requirements such as paying for the use of water from bores they have drilled on their own farms. If charged, then the councils should pay for the bores.

Best ryegrasses - for how long?

Some of you will be buying new pasture seeds for oversowing now, and I hope, to do comparative trials of new varieties on your farm, in preparation for new grass sowings next autumn. Below is the latest information, courtesy of Speciality Seeds, stephen@specseed.co.nz www.specseed.co.nz

The new varieties may not last on some farms under some management which is why you should never do what we did, which was to sow our second farm, bought in 1984 growing maize, to Matua Prairie grass and Kopu clover, which we all now know don't last, so luckily we had added ryegrass and other clovers. I should have billed Grasslands for the loss.

Typically, the ryegrass trials don't measure palatability or milk production, which we know Bealey NEA2 exceeds at by two litres per cow per day over most, and up to double that over AR37 endophyte ryegrasses. This is because NEA2 endophyte insect protection is liked by animals, so AR37 is left 20 cm long while grazing Bealey NEA2 to the ground in the same paddock.

Trojan NEA2 is a diploid so is not quite as palatable as Bealey NEA2 tetraploid, but beats all AR37s by a long way.

Extra pasture growth in spring can be a cost if it has to be conserved, while the extra growth of Bealey NEA2 in winter and summer make it worth more.

I hope you all try no more than one, or only a part of a paddock, of Ultra AR1 and let us know how its milk production compares with Bealey NEA2 and Trojan NEA2. AR1 is not as good as NEA2 or at insect control, but it was promoted excessively by the establishment.

Trials measuring milk somatic cell counts showed that they increased after grazing Yatsyn (a high endophyte ryegrass) and decreased on other ryegrasses. AR37s could do the same. Please check and let us know.

I notice that the Ammo ryegrasses from UK have not been compared. I believe that they are slower growing in winter, when pasture is most profitable. Please tell me what you who try it think of it. Farmer trials and more valuable than company ones.

Lawn grass seed

I've tried many new lawn grasses for decades, and a few years ago discovered Colosseum which we believe is the best by a long way, partly because it is the only ryegrass that we know of that stools (Spreads slightly horizontally. Read Gardens > Lawns.) It is also a New Zealand one so copes better with our damp weather.

The only branches of PGG that have Colosseum in stock are Hamilton (only 20 kg left now) and Christchurch, so if you want some to oversow your lawn, get some now.

Don't listen to their sales talk that mixes are better. One in a mix they promote is Arena, that was superseded by Colosseum. I've had difficulty over two weeks getting any Colosseum. I believe they are low in stocks of it and have surpluses of older ones, so mix them in.

PGG Wrightsons recommend sowing lawn seed at 5 kg per 10 m² which is 500 kg (half a tonne) per hectare. Are they crazy, or selling it!? I did a trial and a lot of the seeds were touching each other! A fifth that rate would be plenty, as long as the seedbed is fine and rolled in firmly as shown in Cultivation.

Some subscribers have asked about Internal parasites

This can be read about in Calves, Animal Health > Symptoms & Causes, and Minerals because Solminix has eliminated them and even external lice - provided pasture are tops and growing on correctly limed and fertilised soils.

With lambs, internal parasites are a problem, while with calves and cows getting Solminix they are not. Calves grazing and fed Solminix soluble minerals left more pasture behind than the control, needed less or no treatment for parasites, and grew faster because of its nine minerals.

Lime+© responses

I have seen and heard of excellent responses from Lime+©. I'm compiling some in the Trials chapter.

Have any of you not had a substantial increase in pasture growth? If so please let me know, and if possible email photos to us. Thanks.

Over the last few weeks too many farmers have told me that they can't afford lime or pasture seeds to oversow.

I know as well as anyone about how broke farmers are, but if you can't afford to feed your land, it might pay to sell some so you can.

I know of some who have had to sell a quarter or half their farms. Do this before you lose it to bankruptcy, so end up with nothing and a debt around your neck.

Dairying

When I first went to USA in 1980 there were very few using controlled grazing.

Indiana, USA had 800,000 cows and 25,000 dairy farms in 1950. Now there are 100,000 on 5,000 confinement dairy farms which is the wrong thing to do. USA confinement dairy cow numbers have dropped from 12 million in 1970 to about 8 million now. Milk production per cow has nearly doubled, thanks to forced feeding.

Dairy farmer numbers have dropped from 330,000 in 1980 to 50,000 now.

You'll know the New Zealand figures.

Leptospirosis

The Waikato Hospital had an increase in the number of lepto cases during the 2012 winter, and warns all to be careful. Read our Human Health > Leptospirosis chapter, and encourage others to join GrazingInfo and to read it.

It is serious. One in the Waikato hospital had his brain affected.

Emails to subscribers

I'm now replying to three month old emails that were not urgent. Every day I have to sort emails for urgency. Answers to some include -

Increased pugging of pastures after applying lime-plus does occur, because the top does become softer, and hardpans usually disappear, partly because of increased earthworm activity. However, soils and pastures improve so much that they recover more quickly, and grow a lot more dry matter than lime-hungry soils. Read Elements > Calcium. The alternative is tight hard soils that don't absorb rain, because lacking Ca causes hard pans to form, which cause drying out much more than in paddocks fed with lime and the deficient elements.

The dry-period benefits from Lime+© giving extra clover and growth, at a value of 40 cents per kg of dry matter, make it highly profitable, so much so that, when deficient, borrowing at 6% to apply it is profitable, but don't tell the bank it's for lime and fertiliser, just for fertiliser, because even some banks have been hooked by the fertiliser companies and by hooked advisers.

Also, most importantly, earthworms increase and eat weed seeds lying on the surface, so weeds decrease, animals eat more of the Lime+© fed weeds, because they become more palatable, clovers grow across the gaps so increase in pastures, and pastures and animals do better in every way.

What has Lime+© done to your clovers, pastures, earthworms, thatch volume and to facial eczema spore counts?

There are 25 more pages itching to get into the newsletters to you.

Vaughan Jones
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