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Newsletter 114

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Thank goodness for the normal autumn weather at last.

Drought

Most media have again, as in the past, published photos and gloomy examples of bad farmers over-stocked and doing the wrong things, for example not growing a summer forage crop, and having cows spread out on bare brown paddocks, walking all day trying to get enough pasture. This wastes more energy than animals gain when there is nothing there to eat, and ruins the pastures. They should be fenced into a poor area (which can be oversown to improve it after rain) to lie down and rest, under trees if hot. Some keep them in the yard (on concrete) which I don't like, with the sprinkler on, which is not all positive, because some get chills.

I'm pleased that some of you have decided to sow a summer forage crop in late spring for summer feeding.

Dairy farmers

Entering your figures into the spreadsheet 'Dairy cow numbers for max profit' tells you how many to milk for maximum profit, and not suffer severely in droughts. Ruakura AgResearch checked this spreadsheet in Oct 1991 and stated that the production per cow would increase by even more than what I've used. Lincoln in January 2013 nearly a decade after being given it and the others, approved the spreadsheet and recommended the principle of correct stocking rates for maximum profit, but did nothing more, because no one paid them to 'help farmers, which is their job'. Use it in April or May every year by estimating your production then, so you can correct your cow numbers sooner rather than later. Most have too many cows, and then have to buy feed, which is unprofitable even at $8.60 for milk. Many dairy farmers who have reduced cow numbers and stopped buying feed have increased profits.

Costs

Some dairy farmers who have stopped growing maize silage have increased their profit. Some have then made more pasture silage, which costs less and has a higher feed value. Some have grown forage crops.

Forage crops

Turnips can yield 12 tonnes of DM/ha at a much lower growing cost, and no harvesting and feeding costs, and over a shorter period than growing maize silage, some of which yields not much more than 12 tonnes/ha. As an incorrect comparison, some maize seed promoters and some of our so called researchers used the figure of 5 tonnes/ha for turnips, to make them look bad. Ruakura's reason for being against summer forage cropping was the turnips they grew on the farm near Tramway Road, Hamilton, which yielded only 5 tonnes per hectare, which is less than half what good farmers get. I have a photo of it and a staff member, with the Ruakura buildings in the background. Cultivation was by shallow rotary hoeing instead of deep chisel ploughing, not enough lime was applied, and seeding was too thick, giving small bulbs. Drainage was poor.

In the 1990s, based on the above, Ruakura, LIC and MAF rubbished summer forage crops. An LIC consultant, who was also an excellent dairy farmer, was reprimanded for recommending summer forage crops, and for doing and recommending pasture analyses, so resigned. To convince LIC about the uselessness of soil tests, the consultant got some completely raw peat Olsen P tested. It was 60, which is very high.

Why does some low fertility peat have high percentage readings? Because soil analyses are done by drying, measuring and weighing. Raw peat is very light (you can blow it off your hand), so its low P level gives a high percentage. Many peat farmers have suffered high costs of wrong fertilisers based on soil analyses. Read Elements > Phosphorus and also Soils > Peat, for more on this.

I've kept promoting summer forage crops, and the best farmers have kept growing Chicory, Pasja, Turnips and mixes, mostly very successfully. There'll be more details next month. You have plenty of time to research the best forage crop for your farm, but beware of sales people's figures, and a lot of research figures are influenced by companies paying them.

Which paddocks

Meanwhile you should decide which paddocks to use, so you can drain them correctly now, to winter on them, and use them as sacrifice paddocks, which will increase their fertility and kill the slugs, etc., and save damaging good paddocks. As soon as possible, do a ryegrass analysis, then apply about 5 tonnes/ha of LimeMagPlus (unless recently done) to correct its levels and keep it sweet, even when pugged. This will help the earthworms survive, and make it a better paddock to cultivate, because LimeMagPlus will make the soil easier to chisel plough and break up more evenly, rather than in big hard lumps, so achieve a better seedbed, which will then need less seed per hectare.

Cultivating a paddock allows drains to have their banks pulled off (See Soils > Drainage page 1 for a photo of what I did in 1955), and paddocks to be shaped to improve natural drainage, by filling in hollows with soil from the knobs, which makes fertilising, silage and hay harvesting easier, and silage of better quality if no soil is included from machinery scalping rough parts.

Glyphosate

Monsanto said 30years ago that Roundup became completely dead and inert once it was applied, but knew then that this was not correct. It is in maize after sprayed pasture, which cows are allowed to graze, so gets into milk. Its use is a worry world-wide, accentuated by so many using it. Glyphosate is the world's top selling weed killer. Significant levels have been detected in air and water samples from two USA farming states, found by their government scientists.

"It is there, in significant levels consistently," said Paul Capel, environmental chemist and head of the agricultural chemicals team at the USA Geological Survey Office, part of the USA Department of the Interior.

"Glyphosate, the key ingredient in Roundup herbicide, was found in every stream sample examined in Mississippi in a two-year period and in most air samples.

"So people are being exposed to it through inhalation," said Capel.

It is a lazy farmers' way. Animals can do a better job.

All cattle farmers

A chapter worth reading by all farmers is called 'Milk - Increase Profit & Quality' in Dairying > Milk. It shows how most can increase their dairy farm profit substantially and improve their farm, and make people and cows on the farm happier and kinder to each other. Beef farmers should read the techniques used, and dairy farmers should read the farming principles in Beef Profiting.

Updated Chapters & Spreadsheets

By looking at their dates in Chapters in your computer you can see the new ones, and which have been updated. Reading these is important, because we are all learning all the time. As in other industries, the readers who become the leaders do well. This is the case now in farming, more than ever.

Human Health

There are now 40 Human Health chapters helping us with our health, which is the most important thing each of us has. Do you know that 25% of New Zealanders are gluten intolerant. Read about it and see how to detect it accurately in minutes. Acid reflux is a problem for some who take one of the dozen medicines, when eating acid fruit and/or drinking honey water (both pH 5) before lying down can prevent it nicely. Read about it.

Do you know that shingles, a hardly heard about disease, has lately increased so much that a vaccine is made. We hope to have a chapter on it finished soon. Watch for it in Human Health.

GrazingInfo chapters include causes and preventions, which most medical systems ignore because their money making business is in 'treating'. Please read Selenium in Human Health Minerals.

We hope that you all get the Dr Mercola's newsletter. He must be the best doctor in the world. His

newsletter today is about Alzheimer's disease, which is increasing. Click http://www.mercola.com

Do a ryegrass leaf analysis as soon as possible

Your land is costly. If your pastures are not fed correctly you will not be making the profit possible. I've farmed, so know how expenses have to be watched. However, even with New Zealand's high interest rates, it is still profitable to borrow to buy deficient minerals, based on pasture minerals analyses, to make your land return a higher profit. Most subscribers have joined to get better fertiliser recommendations than they were getting from fertiliser companies and commercial consultants on commissions.

Before doing a pasture analysis, read the updated Sampling & Reading Plant Analyses chapter in Pastures, and look at the Pasture Mineral Analysis spreadsheet from Free Items. As you know, fertilising (includes liming) is your highest annual cost, so needs to be researched thoroughly and correct.

Send ryegrass leaves and stems only, in a new or used A4 envelope to Hill Laboratories, 1 Clyde St, Hamilton 3218.

Write on the A4 envelope your name and address with post code, and category - Grass, Ryegrass (or Kikuyu or Cocksfoot, etc), paddock number and or name, please analyse as recommended by Vaughan Jones and copy him.

More on magnesium

Dairy farmers and those with calving cows, including beef herds, should remember to order Hi-Mag Solminix and to start adding it to your dispenser at least a month before calving, and to change back after cows are healthy on good clover based pastures so don't need it. Hi-Mag has more magnesium and less salt. Too much salt must not be fed a month before calving, because of the risk of oedema (build up of fluid in the body). All know the need for ample magnesium, which has increased milk production, as shown in the Magnesium chapter in Soils and Animals > Minerals. Liming and fertilising pastures and crops with serpentine, and feeding Solminix, provide magnesium naturally daily, which animals need because bodies don't store it, like they store copper in the liver.

The same applies to humans, so take some daily, in one Good Health Magnesium Ultra tablet that we take by dissolving it in water and take a sip several times a day. One whole tablet gave a subscriber diarrhoea, so he then took half a tablet twice a day and had no problem. We grow 9 of our vegetables and freeze some. Grown in correctly fertilised soils (See Gardens and Lawns > Vegetables & Fruit Trees) for the fertiliser and LimeMagPlus mixes.

Autumn fertilising

We are at last keeping on time with Lime Nutrient Planners and Phosphorus Nutrient Planner suggested orders for subscribers, partly thanks to more farmers having learned how to do their own, and having us check them in the Nutrient Planner spreadsheets. Once learned, it's a five minute job for man and wife.

Thanks to the rain at last, pasture analysis should be possible in a few weeks. To make it easier for us to check your recommendations, we suggest you download the Pasture Analysis Records spreadsheet and type the Hills laboratory figures into it exactly as in it, e.g., 0.12 and don't type the %. It is automatic. Then compare your results with the optimums on the left. For your information you can copy and paste the figures into the Pasture Minerals Analysis spreadsheet, which shows the effects of very low and very high.

Finally, download the Lime Nutrient Planner or the Phosphorus Nutrient Planner (depending on your calcium and phosphate levels) and fill in the yellow cells, which help make it easier than it first looks. Then send it to us to check. We will make any changes necessary and give the reasons why.

Improving pastures

Some pastures could now be over-grazed and weedy.

Oversow the seed three or four days before grazing to let them start germinating in the moist pasture, then graze it really short, and put the cows back in again to get it as short as possible and trampled to kill insects like slugs. If possible spread effluent, and harrow it, all to reduce the old pasture

from suppressing the new.

Complete names please

The reason we email subscribers by their surnames as well, for example 'Hi Joe Blogg' is because we have many with the same Christian names. Please always add your surname, even if I know you.

Milk

The higher payouts world-wide will increase milk production in many countries, which could then reduce prices a little within a year or more.

Fonterra

Fonterra teaching the Chinese low cost milk production will make them tell Fonterra that their price for milk is too high. In New Zealand, land costs are about half the cost of milk production. In China the government owns all the land, so it is cheap. They will then know what it costs to produce their milk on cheap land and expect to buy ours at their cost.

I wonder why Fonterra is forming a separate company to own their Chinese dairies? So they can sell it? In the opinion of many of us, Fonterra does nothing of any sense!

Fonterra has had a 53% drop in interim six month net profit, from $459 million down to $217 million, so, while the milk price is a boon for farmers now, will the cooperative's loss affect it?

The 2013/14 increased milk production was at the same rate as the last two years (See the graph in Dairying > Milk > Milk - Increase profit & quality, but caused overloads on processing. Is it because Fonterra has spent millions developing overseas production, and not enough in NZ?

Manager Theo Spierings said that volatility in the dairy industry was "a fact of life". It is his job to control it, like the NZ Dairy Board did for 100 years extremely successfully, with no major yearly payout fluctuations and a corrected payout of about NZ$14 per kg of milk solids in the mid 1950s. Costs then were half what they are now, which allowed us on our 40 ha farm milking 60 cows (NZ average then) to buy a new home for us, and then one for a sharemilker, and 20, then 30 hectares from neighbours over eight years, all out of income, without borrowing a cent.

This was when the NZ Dairy Board marketed the world's best quality pasture-fed milk as it should be sold, not by auction. What worries some is that there are now dozens of middlemen making profits out of selling your milk in New Zealand, and exported as New Zealand formula.

Broadband speed

What is yours? This measures it quickly. http://speedtest.worldnet.co.nz

In Auckland and Pukekohe many have only 4 Mbps. Ours here in Hamilton used to be 6 Mbps and is now 13 Mbps, but only after threatening to sue Telecom for charging us more than the value they gave. We got a $300 credit. They control the output for each of us at their exchange. We pay $40 a month for Broadband. Two neighbours paying $80 get 20 Mbps.

GrazingInfo

As the unpaid manager of New Zealand's largest advisory service and non-commercial GrazingInfo we promote proven ideas and proven solutions, by using low-cost natural profitable methods. LimeMagPlus with soil improving calcium, serpentine, slow release OrganiBOR boron makes the bad acid loving minerals unavailable and the good neutral loving ones available. This shows in our nine vegetables which have no heavy metals and in milk from farmers doing every thing correctly. Our non-toxic safe reactive phosphates with other deficient minerals, based on accurate pasture mineral analyses from your farm, help neutralise and improve your acid soils. Both increase earthworms that eliminate facial eczema naturally. Read it all. Some subscribers, by doing so over a decade, have netted millions of dollars in total. The solution is in your computer. If necessary learn how to use it. I **started** writing GrazingInfo and the 50 spreadsheets when 60 years old.

Best wishes to those wrecked by bad weather, from all of us at GrazingInfo.

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