Newsletter 71 13 June 2012

Chisel ploughs

Read Soils > Cultivation and you'll buy a chisel plough. Every pasture and cropping farm should have one.
Prices vary from $4,120 for a 7 tyne Stump Jump Berends one, or other brands from $10,000 to $20,000 each. Visit Berends on site C 64 at the Fieldays this week or ph 09-262-0404 in Auckland. Email David Gock <davidgock@xtra.co.nz>
Mention GrazingInfo or Vaughan Jones for a discount. David offered me commision today at the Fieldays, but I declined and asked him to give the discount to GrazingInfo subscribers to which he agreed.

http://johnberendsimplements.com.au/products/pdf/?cat=36 and click Stump Jump Chisel Plough for thorough cultivation. It has long tynes that bring up the high mineral subsoil to give the topsoil more body and to grow more clover. See Animal Health > Bloat. Short tynes won't give the benefits of chisel ploughing that I write about. If you have or buy a short tynes one, get a price of long ones made by your nearest engineering company and one from a small town. We get things, including roofing, done by a company in Te Awamutu at a lower price than Hamilton and about half the price from Auckland. Te Awamutu is only half an hour away from us and treat like a friend, not a number.

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Vaughan Jones
GrazingInfo Ltd

THANKS
Thank you to those who email us kind comments after receiving our newsletters, like this one

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"Every thing is going well on the farm at the moment. Please keep writing the newsletters. They are about the only thing I read at the moment that relates to what is happening on our farm."

PASTURE ANALYSES

Some have not been sending enough ryegrass to do all the tests needed by Hill Laboratories. Please send at least 200 grams, which is a large, heaped double handful from about 30 takes across the paddock, away from high fertility areas. Testing for aluminium is a separate test which needs a bit more grass.

A subscriber asked why I suggest testing for aluminium. Aluminium toxicity loses farmers a lot of money as it causes more ryegrass pulling than any other factor. However, Black Beetle and previous soil pests are blamed. Light volcanic soils and others with high aluminium levels suffer more costly ryegrass pulling than soils with lower aluminium levels. Light volcanic soils can have a pH of 6.1 and a low ryegrass calcium level of 0.5% instead of 0.8%. Walton, central Waikato area, has suffered this for 50 years that I know of, i.e., hard pans, lack of clover and earthworms, low boron and magnesium, poor pasture growth and worst of all, ryegrass pulling because they don't apply lime-plus. Pulling occurred for so long most farmers don't even notice the small pulled ryegrass plants, if they do, they think it's standard. I repeatedly ask farmers if ryegrass pulling is a problem and they say "No." I then get down and show them they often have close to 20 per square metre. Some is because pasture has been sown too thickly (more than 25 kg of mix per hectare), which I proved and wrote about in 1960. DairyNZ showed it in 2011.

I see ryegrass pulling in photos some are now sending me because of distance or lack of time to visit them.

Because the pH is OK according to the establishment but not according to me, farmers then don't solve the problem with lime-plus.

Remember; what you see is better than any test figures, so if your soil is soft and crumbly with no hardpan, then aluminium is not likely to be a problem, so don't order it. For pasture going to Hill Labs write "as done by Vaughan Jones, but no aluminium".

However, if most pasture levels are optimum as per the spreadsheet Pasture Tissue Analysis, but you have ample earthworms and hard soils, especially a hard pan down about 10 to 15 cm, you are likely to have excess aluminium that lime-plus (lime with it synergisms, read Elements > Calcium) will correct.

In the last three and a half years I've done hundreds of lime-plus recommendations and had to do only three with P fertiliser (Gafsa), because the pasture P figures showed adequate, but locked P and very low Ca. B, Co and Se were low partly because of low Ca. All have had good responses, but not all deficient elements will increase to optimum after only one application. It took Fernyhoughs three applications totalling eight tonnes per hectare to get to the stage in the photo in Elements > Calcium.

One farmer who had very deficient soils felt magnesium had not risen enough. Instead of reading Elements > Magnesium, he applied the much more costly (in the North Island) dolomite. MAF 60 years ago, and two of my trials described in Magnesium, showed that the same cost serpentine achieved better results.

NO SPRAYING

Please don't spray your new pastures for weeds. I never have, and always had the best pastures in the area because we fed them fully with lime-plus and proper fertilisers. If weed seedlings are thick, apply more lime-plus, and/or if looking yellow apply the best N (Ammo or a better liquid one if there is - do comparative trials). Do this as soon as yellowing starts, and again as yellowing starts about six weeks later, until the clovers are working.

FIELDAYS

NZ Agricultural Fieldays 13 to 16 June at Mystery Creek near Hamilton. See Free Items or

Events for accommodation and other details.

FERTILISERS

There are now many products sold as fertilisers, which in the true sense of the word, are not. Their analyses show that they are not fertilisers and will not grow more pasture than those that get the most deficient minerals, based on pasture analyses.

As a consultant I make a point of checking all the products I can. Three Probitas users I visited showed no benefits and my visit to Ewan (Probitas developer) Campbell's Waihi farm showed hard soils and sick earthworms. My trials showed that it was not worth the cost of about $400 a tonne, by a long way. Its main content is serpentine worth about $220 a tonne. I've used serpentine every year on all our farms and sections so got no financial benefit from Probitas, but did slightly on the park next to our home which has not had anything since taken out of farming in 1970.

The Dairyman July 2007 News

Probitas guilty of misleading public

A FERTILISER sold under the brand name Probitas did not offer the benefits claimed. The company, Probitas Ltd, has been fined $200,000 and man who sold it $60,000, in the Tauranga District Court for misleading the public. They have also been ordered to pay $12,499 in costs.

Ewan Campbell was found guilty of five charges and Probitas Ltd of 11 charges of breaching the Fair Trading Act by misrepresenting the effectiveness of Probitas. The representations were made in brochures, on a promotional CD and in person.

The Commission is now considering civil action to recover customers' losses.

Campbell, a farmer from Waihi, formulated and sold the Probitas fertiliser nationwide. Probitas comprises natural ingredients, including sea clays, soft shell-based lime, paramagnetic rock and iron sand. Farmers and horticulturists paid $300 - $350/tonne for Probitas, which, Campbell told them, would activate the electrical and magnetic processes in the soil.

An expert witness said there was no scientific basis supporting the way Probitas was supposed to work.

Commerce Commission chairwoman Paula Rebstock said the fertiliser industry is a vital part of the New Zealand economy, with farmers spending $1 billion annually. Fertiliser is generally the most expensive single item on a farmer's budget, costing most between $20,000-$40,000 yearly.

"It is crucial that farmers can trust the claims made about fertiliser. It is a major cost in their business, and they need to know they are getting what they are promised," Ms Rebstock said.

She said that because Probitas does not work as a fertiliser, farmers using it will have lost productivity.

"The Commission's experts estimate that this productivity loss would have been up to 5% in the first year, and the effects will compound over future years," said Ms Rebstock.

"Farmers will not be able to put their losses right by switching fertilisers. They will need to apply more fertiliser than usual to counteract the effects of using Probitas."

The use of Probitas is estimated to have cost the national farming industry $5 million in lost productivity in the first year of use alone.

Ms Rebstock said the claims made about Probitas were hard for ordinary farmers to assess.

"Mr Campbell used scientific language and gave customers a CD packed with complicated explanations of how Probitas was supposed to work," said Ms Rebstock.

Farmers may have lost productivity.

"It is not reasonable to expect all farmers to have the expertise to assess these claims themselves, so it is crucial that representations of this nature are accurate and can be substantiated."

In his judgement, Judge J. R. Callander concluded: "While no farmer actually complained of deception, the representations and conduct were clearly deceptive and misleading. The real science shows that farmers were clearly taken in and misinformed by the representations and this, ultimately, would have been to their detriment."

Agrissentials is now being looked into by the Commerce Commission for selling Rok Solid as a fertiliser. I've seen farms using it and have figures that are 600 kg of MS per hectare per annum for three years in a row from users who then contacted me. It is about $400 per tonne for contents worth about $60.

While on costs, liquid seaweed and fish products such as Maxicrop, Response, etc., cost about $3,000 a tonne for the solids, which is what you'll be buying, because the rest is water.

An interesting point about Rok Solid is that farmers often ask them where the 'Rok' comes from and tell me, if up north, they answer, "From down south". If down south, they answer, "From up North"!

I don't plan to buy and check any because six users have lost thousands of dollars trying it, each for three years. Their milk production and pasture analyses reveal it is useless.

When sales people talk about the "Paramagnetic energy level stimulating the multiplication of the soil biology," suspect a lack of useful facts.

If the soil lacks the main basic elements, so is hard and/or has a hard pan without earthworms, its biology (whatever that means) will not exist to be stimulated.

Remember that there are people galore after your money, from bank managers to investors

and sales people. With fake fertiliser companies leading, followed by the fertiliser companies and consultants who ignore lime and it synergisms which sets soils up for the other essential elements.

Waikato Times of 14 May 2012
A company selling ground volcanic rock as fertiliser is being investigated by the Commerce Commission under the Fair Trading Act.
Agrissentials, owned by former Tauranga vegetable grower John Morris, sells its Rok Solid fertiliser for $400 a tonne to farmers throughout New Zealand.
Its main ingredient is ground basalt rock to which is added fish, seaweed and other sources of phosphate, potassium, selenium, cobalt and boron.
Not any rock will do, according to Morris. "Before we mine it we analyse the paramagnetic energy level. This stimulates the multiplication of the soil biology."
Commerce Commission spokeswoman Allanah Kalafatelis said an investigation was started earlier this year after a complaint was received from a user of the fertiliser.
"We don't expect it to be a short investigation because of the science involved. There's a small number of experts we can go to," she said.
Morris said the commission had written to him in January, saying it was following up comments about the fertiliser made in a newspaper article.
He had asked who had complained but the commission would not give any names.
"They told me it was not one of the two big fertiliser companies. I think it was probably my old friend Doug Edmeades."
Edmeades, a Waikato soil scientist who has publicly accused Agrissentials of using "scare tactics" to promote its products, said he was not the complainant and was not involved in the investigation.
He has said in a newsletter to his clients that because Rok Solid's chief component was silica it was unlikely to have any effect on pastoral soils. He put its value, after allowing for the added nutrients, at $60 a tonne, assuming they are plant-available.
Morris said he started Agrissentials 18 years ago after finding his conventionally fertilised plants were not growing to their potential. "I looked for where the best soils were on the planet and found they were where the ice glaciers had rubbed the rock, leaving metres of dust behind.
"I felt I couldn't go wrong doing what Mother Nature had done for millions of years."
[YEAH, LOOK AT AFRICA AND AUSTRALASIA BEFORE LIME AND FERTILISERS. VJ]
His website has a report from Northland soil scientist Andreas Kumann on soil tests from dairy farms using Rok Solid.
The site also features botanist David Bellamy talking about farmers who are returning to the "essentials" of agriculture.
Morris said he felt confident the Commerce Commission would find he was not doing anything wrong.

DAIRY FARMERS, INCREASE YOUR PROFIT AND ENJOY YOUR FARMING
If all grazing dairy farmers reduced their costs by milking the optimum number of cows, using the 'Dairy cow numbers for maximum profit' Excel spreadsheet to calculate the exact numbers to milk, so bought less feed and urea, total production would decrease but profits would increase. Fonterra's payout would then increase, because they would not have surplus milk that reduces the auction prices on all milk.
Smith brothers in Vancouver Island, Canada, paid for me to go to their 600 cow dairy farm which had a 12 a side herringbone (swing over) because they were going bankrupt. Brad Cowan in the USA, who I had helped recommended me. They had pasture enough for 300, so had to buy enough for the other 300. They sold 300, reduced their mortgage and reduced one staff member. Their profit returned and they farmed happily there after.
There are thousands in New Zealand in the same boat, i.e., milking too many cows, buying

too expensive supplements (making more effluent per hectare*) thus losing money. The coming lower milk payout will increase the cost problem of buying milk production.
It is a pity that LIC, DairyNZ, etc., are not honest with dairy farmers and use my figures from 1989 or the Ruakura ones from October 1991 which stated that if most stocking rates were decreased, production per cow would increase by even greater amounts than those I have used in my spreadsheet "Dairy cow numbers for max profit." This year (at last) Lincoln has said the same. I sent them my spreadsheets
You should all be using the spreadsheet now to work out how many cows to milk next season for maximum profit. About 90% of dairy farmers are overstocked. Getting it right could earn you up to $10,000 more per hundred cows, reduce pugging and weeds, and make yours and your family's life more pleasant.

* About three decades ago I warned farmers reading The Dairyman for which I wrote, that all farmers must control effluent management and all pollution to avoid rules being applied to all dairy farmers. This has now happened around Lake Taupo and in Southland, and the Greenies have said dairy farmers should be charged to spread their effluent on the land!

I like solutions. Avoiding over-stocking, applying lime-plus and reducing P, K and urea are some. All will increase your profit and that of New Zealand.
Every one of you know that sustainable farming is essential, but some spoil it for all.

Vaughan Jones
GrazingInfo Ltd

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