

New Zealand

RED DEVON

Cattle Breeders Association

Newsletter  February 2022

Hello all

Well into a busy new year and I hope that it is treating you well. I think we are all thankful for the recent rain! There are many topics to cover in this newsletter, so read on.

Dirk Sieling, Vice President
Ohuka Polled Devon Stud

Dirk's tips for grass management

New Zealand is fortunate in having one of the best grass growing climates in the world, providing it with the opportunity to produce the fully grass-fed beef (and milk) that discerning affluent consumers increasingly favour. Strategic grazing management coupled with the optimum stock numbers will see a year-round adequate supply of grass, including farm made supplements.

Our devons are ideally suited for this purpose, especially in the hilly country most of us farm. At Ohuka we are not “regenerative” farmers but our system looks like one. Fertiliser is restricted to replace the nutrients that leave the farm in the form of produce, because if we didn't replace it we would be mining our soils in the long term. Liming our soils assists with releasing nutrients that would otherwise be locked up. Nitrogen use is minimal as it is predominantly used to fill in the occasional gap in feed that occurs. Two light dressings in late autumn and late winter on the easier country usually suffices.

Back to grass management. *The key to optimal management is paddock size controlling rotation.* The smaller you can afford to make your paddocks the better your feed control. On dairy farms cattle get a fresh paddock every 12 or 24 hours, this optimizes their production and provides an even and consistent grass supply. Break feeding of course has the same effect. The paddocks recover much more quickly after a short sharp grazing and quality is maintained. Quality of feed through a cow's mouth is the key to both milk and meat production and shorter grass has much higher nutritional value than rank grass.

Daily shifts don't usually occur in our beef herds, but even a new paddock every 3 days is very useful. We fence our paddocks small and utilize 1 trough for 2 paddocks by placing them under the two wire electric fences, with a length of half inch poly pipe threaded on the bottom wire where it crosses the trough. We also place the troughs in such a manner that break feeding is easiest. We are autumn calving but similar principles to the ones that follow can be applied to spring calving herds.

Our calves are weaned about November 1. Immediately the cows are put back in the paddock they just came from and the calves in an adjoining paddock, close to their mums to minimize stress. Once the cows have thoroughly cleaned up their paddock they get moved to the paddock the calves were in after having moved them to the next fresh paddock. So the calves get the best pickings and the cows clean up the left overs. After a few weeks the calves can be moved further from the cows

without fuss. Devon cows are such good do-ers they will gain liveweight while cleaning up paddocks, don't be frightened to make them graze a paddock down to golf course length after weaning, it's essential to prevent them from getting too fat, risking calving problems. The paddocks that were grazed very short during the summer will produce the best quality grass with the autumn rains and importantly this quality will persist right into late winter.

The cows when calving in the autumn will go on to quality feed once calved. Their demand for quality feed rises as milk production increases, which is usually 6 to 8 weeks after calving. During the late winter and early spring, grass is supplemented with silage or quality hay, which also helps their digestion when spring feed is very lush. The silage and hay is made from surplus grass in late spring and early summer.

When there is plenty of feed some hill country paddocks are skipped from grazing, allowing them to reseed naturally. We rotate skipped paddocks around the farm and make sure to graze them down hard afterwards to allow the seed to germinate. Some recent scientific work has found that paddocks on a farm that had not been renovated for 3 to 5 decades did not contain ryegrass plants older than 6 years, showing the power of natural reseeding.

For extra feed during the winter annual ryegrass can be drilled or broadcast. We do this by using a cheap electric spinner mounted to the back of the ATV. With careful management annuals can reseed themselves for a few years. When establishing or renovating paddocks we use a mixture of grasses and clovers and always include plantain, which hangs in well during dry spells and grows during our winters. We also include chicory in our better paddocks and broadcast it in spring over those haypaddocks that had a preponderance of annual rye grass. The chicory takes over when the summer heat kills the annuals.

There are other ways to farm successfully, but this is how we do it at Ohuka Polled Devon stud, assisted by our mild climate.

2022 AGM date and location

As flagged in the previous newsletter the AGM is set for the 21st of May at the Te Pahu Hall, in the Waikato. There will be an associated farm visit to Monte Pahu stud on the same day.

Next farm visit this month in Hawkes Bay

You have previously received an invite to the next farm visit, being hosted by Heughan and Carol Gordon, Millstone Stud located at Waipukurau, Hawkes Bay. This will be held on February 19. In case you didn't get to open the attachment, the details are as follows:

MILLSTONE STUD OPEN DAY 19 FEB

Come to 368 Boyle Rd , Ashley Clinton Waipukurau from 10.30am to view 28 heifers 95 cows and calves. A lunch of burgers will be provided and viewing will carry on into the afternoon with 30 15mth bulls and wrap with a farm overview and Happy Hour! New member Jeremy Stead has offered a cottage nearby for accommodation. Contact Heughan.

RSVP by 14 Feb to hcgordon@xtra.co.nz

Breeding stock offered

There are almost always stock available, and many transactions get completed before they get advertised anywhere. So if you are interested, put the word out about what you want and email Danielle to amplify your message on the website. If you have stock, we're going to make an effort

to keep the website page current with only recent listings of stock that are available for sale. More details on that under marketing.

In our last newsletter there was news of the Abba Farms herd coming available for purchase, and that herd has now been rehomed. However, there are two and three year old bulls, and R2 heifers run with bull listed on the site as well right now. The remainder of the Manawa Toru herd is now for sale due to the owners heading back to the US. Pictures below to pique your interest, go to the website for the detailed information. I have heard talk of both interest in cows and cows coming available, so I think there are some matches ready to go, you just need to speak up!

Marketing

Despite a shortage of commercial bulls last season, some of our members did not sell everything they had on offer. Although through advertising we encourage dairy farmers to visit our website, many of them will still use stock agents or look on Trademe to source their bulls. Make sure you let your local stock agents know what you have for sale and use Trademe.



Ohuka Polled Devon stud sent a shipment of bulls to the South Island as a result of a Trademe enquiry. The purchaser has reported back that they are the best and most docile bulls he has ever used and has pre-booked all of Ohuka's spare bulls for next spring.

Transactions of the registered Red Devon stock are clearly driven by our dedicated breeders operating an understated network. Association expenditure on marketing last year was a modest total, just under a few thousand, and many transactions were based on word of mouth contact between breeders.

In response to the information members shared, we have identified two paths to improve efforts to complete sales: refresh checks for the website listings and members only alerts of stock for sale.

- Refresh checks on the website will give viewers confidence the information they see is relevant. The last date of update will be noted on the website pages for cattle sales and updated at least monthly to ensure the data is current. This means that if you list on the website, you will be prompted to update regularly. That may sound onerous but it is really just an email or text check in, to which you need only reply 'no change'.

- Since we know most transactions do not reach the advertising stage, it is important that the informal member's network get the all the data about what is available for trade. The suggestion is to email members the stock available information monthly after update. If you do not want to receive these emails, we can arrange an opt out list so you will not receive them, advise Danielle via email or phone.

We will also be looking for ways to direct more interested eyes to the website, so let us know if you have any ideas. One suggestion was to have an ongoing trademe advert, but there is a challenge in getting the proper regional setting. Let us know if you have any other ideas.

The Council continues to support the market by sharing data on pricing, anonymously. Recent reported transactions this month include mature cows at an average of \$1850 per animal. If you trade stock, please report your transaction values. Contact Dirk, Danielle, or any member of the Council, details for communication on the last page of this newsletter.

Priorton Magnate semen

Council wants to know if anyone is interested in the semen from Priorton Magnate. There is a storage cost to retaining these straws and the Council prefers not to bear the costs as straws have not been purchased in the last several years, due to low motility. We would prefer to make these straws available to anyone who would use them rather than destroy them. The recommendation is to use 2 straws per insemin for better results. Contact us prior to March 1 if you want these.

COUNCIL:

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Members List

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Important Dates to Remember

30 th April	Membership Subscriptions Invoiced
21 May 2022	AGM Te Pahu Hall
30 th June	ADL's sent out
30 th July	ADL's must be Returned (no Cow Credits for ADL's returned after the 15 th August)
10 th August	Calf Entries sent out
30 th September	Annual animal pre-list dam fees invoiced
31 st December	Balance Date; end of financial year
31 st January	Calf entry sheets cut off
2 nd of every month	Group Run Cut off for the performance recording reports

www.reddevoncattle.co.nz