

Extended Lactation Farm Systems Project – NARF (Dargaville)

This project compares the impact on productivity, profitability, people and the environment on three farms:

1. **Baseline Farm** – Spring calving, twice-a-day milking, 3.0 cows/ha
2. **Extended Lactation TAD Farm** – 50% herd calving each year, full season twice-a-day milking, 3.0 cows/ha
3. **Extended Lactation OAD Farm** – 50% herd calving each year, full season once-a-day milking, 3.0 cows/ha

This project is funded by DairyNZ, MPI – PSGF & NDDT

Update 1 st October 2026	Baseline Farm	EL TAD Farm	EL OAD Farm
Average Pasture Cover (kg DM/ha)	2,351	2,301	2,409
Area shut for silage (%)	15%	8%	8%
Pasture Growth (kg DM/ha/d, last 2 weeks)*	77	68	80
Rotation (days) last 10 days (excl silage pdks)	22	22	23
Cows in milk /Total Cows	80/80	81/81	81/81
Average Body Condition Score (EL = Extended Lactation, NC = New Calvers)	4.15 NC Cows	4.9 EL Cows 4.2 NC Cows	5.0 EL Cows 4.3 NC Cows
SCC last 10 days ('000)	89	152	136
Litres/cow/day (average of farm)	22.3	17.1	13.0
Kg MS/cow/day – herd avg last 10 days	2.02	1.71	1.33
KgMS/c/d 21 st Sept - EL cows		1.52	1.19
KgMS/c/d 21 st Sept - New Calvers	2.10	2.05	1.67
Kg MS/ha/day	5.77	5.01	3.84
Kg MS/cow, season to date	112	143	110
Kg MS/ha, season to date	330	422	325
Supplement offered (kgDM/c/d)	Nil	Nil	Nil
Purch Supp Fed, season to date (kg DM/c)	PKE 280 Baleage 61	PKE 362 Baleage 128	PKE 343 Baleage 125
Silage bales on hand (made on farm)	23	25	29
Managers Worry Score (1 = Low, 10 = High)	2	2	2
Rainfall (last two weeks)	33 mm		

*Pasture growth rates are calculated using platometer readings in conjunction with Halter estimates

CURRENT MANAGEMENT

- Dry soil conditions have led to excellent pasture utilisation and quality and all herds continue to milk well without supplements
- We have harvested around 15% of each farm for silage and closed up a further 8-15% of the farms as surpluses continue. We continue to plate walk the farms each week and adjust Halter estimates as needed. We expect to drop more paddocks out over the next month.
- Mating started today. In preparation for automatic drafting we checked all EID tags yesterday and were disappointed to find 5% had fallen out in the 4 months since our last herd audit. The cost of missing drafting a cow is huge and we will be closely monitoring the drafting gate during mating.
- Cycling in our Baseline herd is above target with over 90% of cows having a heat pre-mating.
- Cow condition differences between treatments are starting to show up strongly. Carryover EL cows are putting weight on quickly with over 20% of these cows above BCS 5.0 now.

- Herd testing on 21st September showed a handful of cows starting to drop off in production, but at this stage we are only drying off cows below 0.5kgMS/day, (2 cows). This may change if we get under feed pressure going into summer.
- Nitrogen will continue behind the cows and harvester at 60 kg/ha Sustain to maximise pasture surplus and quality.
- Our Fulkerson kikuyu paddock is full of poa annua seedhead so we will graze this and top to reduce the competition for our seedlings.