

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.

Update 3 rd September 2026	Baseline Farm	EL TAD Farm	EL OAD Farm
Average Pasture Cover (kg DM/ha)	2,334	2,352	2,326
Pasture Growth (kg DM/ha/d, last 2 weeks)*	41	45	43
Rotation Length last 10 days (days)	42	41	44
Cows into vat/Total Cows	69/80	76/82	68/81
Average Body Condition Score (EL = Extended Lactation, NC = New Calvers)	4.7 Milkers	4.7 EL Milkers 4.6 New Milkers	5.0 EL Milkers 4.7 New Milkers
SCC last 10 days ('000)	118	156	122
Litres/cow/day (average of farm)	22.9	18.5	13.8
Kg MS/cow/day	2.10	1.93	1.46
Kg MS/cow, season to date	57	96	75
Kg MS/ha, season to date	169	284	221
Supplement offered (kgDM/c/d)	Nil	Nil	Nil
Purch Supp Fed, season to date (kg DM/c)	PKE 271 Baleage 61	PKE 353 Baleage 125	PKE 334 Baleage 125
Managers Worry Score (1 = Low, 10 = High)	3	2	3
Rainfall (last two weeks)	29 mm		

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

CURRENT MANAGEMENT

- Pasture growth and covers have lifted in the last week. It seems we are past balance date where pasture growth matches demand. Pre-graze pasture covers are around 3,000 kg DM/ha and rising.
- We have identified 3 – 4 paddocks on each farm (around 15% of the farm) to drop out for silage and likely will add a few more paddocks next week, effectively speeding the round up to keep pre-graze covers in the target zone.
- Supplement feeding stopped a few days ago on all farms and is unlikely to restart for some time, weather permitting.
- Cows are milking well on the Baseline and EL TAD farms. Especially pleased how the extended lactation twice-a-day cows have held on through winter. Extended lactation once-a-day cows have dropped, with around 10% of them now <1.0 kg MS/day. Cow condition is also holding well, especially on the once-a-day farm.
- Nitrogen will continue behind the cows at 70 kg/ha urea. We debated reducing it further, however we have chosen to drive as much pasture growth as possible for silage conservation due to the threat of a dry summer. The drop in the price of nitrogen also helped this decision.