

Future Dairy Farm Systems Project – NARF (Dargaville)

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

1. **Baseline (Current) Farm** – Kikuyu & ryegrass based pastures with up to 190 kg N/ha/annum, 3.1 cows/ha
2. **Alternative Pasture Farm** – Tall fescue & cocksfoot based pastures, up to 190 kg N/ha, 3.1 cows/ha
3. **Low Emissions Farm** – Kikuyu & ryegrass based pastures, designed to reduce methane emissions by 25% and nitrous oxide by 50%, no nitrogen applied, 2.3 cows/ha

This project is funded by DairyNZ, MPI (Sustainable Food & Fibre Futures) and Hine Rangī Trust.

Update 2 nd April 2026	Baseline Farm	Alternative Pasture Farm	Low Emissions Farm
Average Pasture Cover	1,899	1,719	1,982
% farm out for regrassing	9%	12%	9%
Pasture Growth (kg DM/ha/d, last 2 weeks)*	41	32	43
Rotation Length (days, last 10 days)	34	34	37
Cows in Milk/Total Cows	81/81	82/82	64/64
SCC (000's)	95	90	144
Production/cow/day (kg MS/cow)	1.35	1.26	1.38
Production/ha/day (kg MS/ha)	3.92	3.71	3.20
Production/cow, season to date (kg MS/cow)	403	388	402
Production/ha, season to date (kg MS/ha)	1,194	1,143	939
Supplement Offered Milkers (kg DM/cow/day)	3.3 PKE 3.7 Baleage	3.3 PKE 7.3 Baleage	4.2 PKE 4.7 Baleage
Purchased Supp Fed, season to date (kg DM/c)	PKE 700 Purch bale 24	PKE 647	PKE 379
Homegrown Silage Fed to date (kg DM/cow)	67	130	177
Homegrown Silage on hand (kg DM/cow)	266	225	325
Average Body Condition Score (Milkers)	4.0	4.0	4.0
Nitrogen to date – 2025/26 Season (kg N/ha)	170	164	0
Managers Worry Score (1 = Low, 10 = High)	3	4	2
Rainfall (last two weeks)	117		

*Pasture growth rates are calculated using uncalibrated platometer readings

CURRENT MANAGEMENT

- Rain last week has boosted pasture growth, however pasture covers have not lifted due to mulching kikuyu.
- All kikuyu paddocks are being mulched and under-sown with Italian ryegrass as they are grazed. We are now around halfway through and should be completed before the end of April.
- We will slow down the round to >40 days to stretch out the remaining un-mulched paddocks and allow time for the mulched paddocks to recover before we need them. This will require more supplement for the next couple of weeks.
- Cows continue to milk pretty well, no talk yet about taking culls out or drying any off.