

## Future Dairy Farm Systems Project – NARF (Dargaville)

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

The NARF farm has been significantly affected with flood damage from cyclone Gabrielle. Below is some commentary on the flood impact and management steps we have taken to minimise the impact on the farms and the study.

### **CURRENT MANAGEMENT**

- The farm team have done a great job in minimising the disruption. A flooded cow shed meant cows missed milking for 48 hours. We are currently milking cows once-a-day to maintain body condition while cows graze pasture that is suboptimal.
- The individual trial farm structure has been disbanded for at least a few weeks while the farm gets back on its feet, at this stage we are planning to have the individual farms restarted at least by April. The main objective is to ensure that there is minimal effect on next season. Fortunately, we have around three quarters of this season behind us so have a good understanding of what the full season would have looked like if this flood event had not occurred.
- The water has receded, however much of the farm was inundated for 3 or more days resulting in significant pasture damage on around 60% of the farm. Kikuyu and white clover are showing signs of life in these areas, however ryegrass, tall fescue and cocksfoot pastures have proved less resilient with total death in many areas.
- As the water has receded, we have got straight in and mown off silted pasture. In some cases where silt was minimal we have grazed first before mowing.
- We are currently under-sowing the tall fescue and cocksfoot pastures that were badly affected on the Alternative Pastures farm. This is happening as soon as soil conditions are OK, trying to get these up and running asap and beat any weed flush.
- We are also under-sowing some of the badly affected kikuyu pastures with Italian ryegrass as is our normal regime during autumn. We don't normally start this under-sowing until late March, however we saw an opportunity to get these seeds in the ground while the kikuyu has been 'flood shocked'. Time will tell as to whether the kikuyu is suppressed enough to not outcompete the seedlings.
- Cows have been receiving some pasture with PKE and baleage as needed. Plenty of baleage on hand. Thankful to our neighbour who has donated some paddocks for us to use during this time.

For photos and further commentary of the NARF farm during the last week see our facebook page – search NDDT.