

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 commentary on current management including steps taken to get the farmlet study up and running.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT

- All cows continue to be in one herd, rotating around the three farmlets as we recover from the flood. We aim to have herds back on their respective farmlets by 1st May to set up for the trial recommencing on 1st June.
- Pasture growth has slowed down over the last fortnight due to dry conditions and cooler weather. Paddocks that are in the rotation have averaged 41 kg DM/ha, which might normally be OK, however with 25% of the farm still out of the rotation (due to flood damage) pasture covers have not been increasing.
- We have sent off most of the cull cows as calculations have shown the supplement required to feed these makes it no longer economic to milk these culls. However, it is clearly economic to keep milking cows that are being retained for next season.
- Cows are producing 1.04 kg MS/cow/day. Condition score is 4.2, showing a slow improvement. We have been feeding around 3 kg DM/cow/day of PKE and 6 kg DM of baleage. With the culls now gone we can now decrease the baleage fed.
- Kikuyu paddocks have bounced back after the flood. We are gradually mulching and under-sowing these with Italian ryegrass behind the cows. With the dry weather we have reduced the area being mulched each week to avoid mulching ourselves into a feed deficit.
- Paddocks sown 6 weeks ago into perennial ryegrass are now ready for their first graze, while paddocks sown into fescue and cocksfoot at the same time are at least two weeks off grazing. These new pastures need a drink. Where possible we have been applying effluent to these new pastures.
- The whole farm has now been sprayed for army caterpillar after an outbreak occurred a few weeks ago.
- Recent facial eczema spore counts were relatively low (average 20,000). We continue with zinc in the troughs.

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