

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 the flood impact and management we have taken to minimise the impact on the farms and the study.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT

- Approximately 90% of the NARF farm was flooded during cyclone Gabrielle. Around 60% of the farm had water sitting on it for 3 or more days resulting in plant death and a fine layer of silt on the plant material.
- Once the water had receded, we got straight in and mowed or mulched 74% of the farm to remove the dead and silted plant material, some of this was baled up to remove it from the paddocks. The kikuyu areas are coming back well, however most of the ryegrass, tall fescue and cocksfoot pastures have partially or totally died and are requiring resowing.
- As soon as soils were dry enough (two weeks ago), the worst affected paddocks were under-sown with new pasture. This seed has mainly struck well, however it would appreciate a drink of water now. We are spraying effluent on these paddocks where possible.
- The individual trial farm structure and data collection has been disbanded until late March to allow time for pastures to be resown and/or recover.
- When the flood occurred we moved cows on all farms onto once-a-day milking to minimise the impact on cow condition. Cow condition has held up well, with condition score currently averaging 4.14. Cows are currently producing 1.04 kg MS/cow/day.
- Cows are being fed around 10 kg DM pasture, 4.5 kg DM PKE and 2.5 kg DM baleage. We are thankful to our neighbours who have continued to donate paddocks for us to graze while the farm recovers.

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