

Supplement Use in a Variable Climate Project – NARF (Dargaville)

This project compares three farms with different supplement use on production, profit and environmental impact. The three farm systems are:

1. **Pasture Only Farm** - No imported supplement - 2.7 cows/ha
2. **PKE Only Farm** – PKE used to fill feed gaps within milk FEI limits – 3.1 cows/ha
3. **PKE Plus Farm** - PKE used until milk FEI limit and then other supplements added – 3.1 cows/ha

This project is funded by DairyNZ, MPI (Sustainable Farming Fund) and Hine Rangi Trust.

25 th March 2020	Pasture Only Farm	PKE Only Farm	PKE Plus Farm
Farm Area (ha)	28	28	28
Average Pasture Cover (kg DM/ha)	1639	1536	1488
Pasture Growth (kg DM/ha/day)	13		
Rotation Length (days)	31	31	26
Cows in milk/cows calved	63/77	40/89	78/89
Production/cow/day (kg MS)	0.84	0.97	1.15
Production/ha/day (kg MS)	1.88	2.41	3.20
Production/ha season to date (kg MS)	770	1,081	1,172
Supplement Fed (kg DM/cow/day)	3.3 Silage	2.5 PKE 2.3 Silage	3.4 PKE 1.9 Silage 2.8 DDG
Supplement Fed 19/20 season (kg DM/cow)	404 Silage	830 PKE 183 Silage	856 PKE 154 DDG 251 Silage
Average Body Condition Score	Milkers 4.0	Milkers 4.3 Dries 3.9	Milkers 4.1
Empty Rate	6%	6%	7%
Worry Score (1 = Low, 10 = High)	7	8	5
Nitrogen – Season to Date (kg N/ha)	139	140	142
Milk FEI	A	B	B
Rainfall (mm last 2 weeks)	12 mm		

CURRENT MANAGEMENT

- Average pasture covers have not changed much in the last month. A few showers have the kikuyu showing a bit of growth, however more rain is needed to get pasture cover lifting
- The PKE Only farm ran out of baleage earlier this week. With no improvement in pasture cover and milk FEI pushing on the red zone, the decision was made to dry off 40% of the cows so the remainder can be milked on. Cows dried off were low production cows and heifers. These will be grazed behind the milking herd so there is an increased pasture allowance for the milkers
- The Pasture Only farm has only 50 silage bales left. The decision was made to stop feeding this to preserve these bales for winter/spring supplementation. Around 20% of the herd will be dried off (low producers) which will increase pasture allowance to the remaining milkers, compensating for the drop in silage feeding

- Average body condition score has slightly improved on all farms. At this stage we are confident we can get all cows to 5+ by calving, as long as it rains by May
- The PKE Plus herd will keep milking all cows. DDG will be dropped back slightly as grazing residuals have started to lift slightly
- 10% of each farmlet has been sprayed out for re-grassing into alternative species. This will reduce pasture availability in 4 weeks time. Trusting we will have adequate pasture by then
- Mulching and sowing of Italian ryegrass on kikuyu dominant paddocks will begin in the next few days

For more information including past updates and field day handouts, go to www.nddt.nz

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