

## 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

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26 <sup>th</sup> February 2020	Pasture Only Farm	PKE Only Farm	PKE Plus Farm
Farm Area (ha)	28	28	28
Average Pasture Cover (kg DM/ha)	1650	1544	1568
Pasture Growth (kg DM/ha/day)	11		
Rotation Length (days)	29	29	31
Cows in milk/cows calved	65/77	75/89	87/89
Production/cow/day (kg MS)	0.86	1.05	1.12
Production/ha/day (kg MS)	2.04	3.04	3.49
Production/ha season to date (kg MS)	721	1,011	1,086
Supplement Fed (kg DM/cow/day)	3.2 Silage	3.0 PKE 2.0 Silage	3.1 PKE 1.8 Silage 2.1 DDG
Supplement Fed 19/20 season (kg DM/cow)	326 Silage	777 PKE 123 Silage	773 PKE 89 DDG 204 Silage
Average Body Condition Score	4.0	4.0	4.0
Empty Rate	6%	6%	7%
Worry Score (1 = Low, 10 = High)	7	6	3
Nitrogen – Season to Date (kg N/ha)	139	140	142
Milk FEI	A	B/C	B
Rainfall (mm last 2 weeks)	0 mm		

### **CURRENT MANAGEMENT**

- Another fortnight with no rain. Kikuyu pastures are green which is helping feed cows at present. Most pasture growth is kikuyu and some paspalum.
- All herds are now on OAD milking. The Pasture Only and PKE Only herds went on once-a-day (OAD) milking a month ago and production is gradually still dropping due to low feeding. The PKE Plus farm went on OAD 14 days ago and production has dropped 0.2kgMS/c/d but some of this may have occurred anyway.
- BCS is holding at 4.0 average but all herds have 25% of cows at 3.5BCS. We will look at drying off these cows in 14 days time if there is no improvement in feed or BCS.
- The Pasture Only Farm has 21 bales available for autumn, and 50 to keep for winter. We have decided not to dip into our winter feed as this farm can not buy other feed in for winter and spring. Last spring we ran out of silage in September and had to cull 10% of the herd. This cost the farm dearly.

- At current feeding levels the Pasture Only farm has 30 days of silage left. The PKE herds both have around 40 days of silage left. We have decided to get rid of the last of the culls in the Pasture Only and PKE Only herds, and half of the culls in the PKE Plus herd. This will keep the remaining cows fed better while keeping the silage feeding the same per day.
- Cricket baiting has occurred over the whole farm, trying to avoid additional pressure on the already stressed pasture.
- Facial eczema spores are very low at present. We expect these to rise in the autumn with rain. We have plenty of kikuyu on this farm so will not start zinc treatment until mid March. If we were a ryegrass farm we would start low dosing now.
- Young stock are being monitored closely at grazing
- 10% of each farmlot will be sprayed out after rain and regressed into alternative species in the next month. These will mostly be fescue, clover, and some cocksfoot on the lighter soils. More details to follow.

***For more information including past updates and field day handouts, go to [www.nddt.nz](http://www.nddt.nz)***

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