

More grass & less stress from light rate Liming



Wayne and Kathleen Cederman's 70ha farm at Otorohanga sometimes has to take a back seat to Wayne's other job as the owner of Chaffey's Panelbeaters just outside the north King Country town. So getting things right and achieving good results with limited hours in the day has meant going back to basics for the beef farmer who sells to local trade.

"When we came here 4 years ago it was a sea of mud," Wayne says, "It had been a dairy farm and out of the 70ha I only had about 24ha that hadn't been chewed up." Initially putting urea on, Wayne says the pasture "just didn't respond".

"I got the local fertiliser agent out to do some soil tests. That showed it was lacking in potash and a few other things, but mostly, it was lacking in lime," he explains. Wayne used lime on his smaller properties previously because "I remember as a kid there was always lots of grass around and I've talked to a lot of older farmers who tell me all they used to use was super and lime."

Since taking over the farm, which is a combination of flat and rolling to medium hill country, Wayne has put on around 220 tonne of lime. "We put it on at a tonne to the acre," Wayne says. "I generally just look at the paddocks and go by what I see. The ones that have been limed are just a mass of clover and beautiful green grass. The ones that haven't are a different

colour and have buttercup and a bit of moss."

Growing good strong cattle translates to money in the bank for Wayne, who buys in yearlings and weaners, "if they're priced right", moving them through to 18 months. Wayne targets white face, Angus, Murray Grey and a few exotics. "The Murray Grey are good because the meat is marbled and that's what they like at the supermarkets." Buying when he sells, the farm has to be able to cope with 125 SU at any one time but generally carries around 170 SU.



Applying lime bi-annually at Christmas and autumn, Wayne's baleage harvest has increased. "The first year we got 56 bales out of three flat paddocks. This year we're up to 72."

With the clover blossoming and good growth, the cattle graze the paddocks evenly. "I remember when we first came here the cows would pull the grass right out of the ground because it was all just

sitting on top. Now when I'm fencing I see a lot of worms and the roots will be 200-250mm deep. The pasture is a lot stronger. Even my neighbour wanted to know why I was greener than him in the drought," Wayne laughs.

With no bloat problems and not having to buy in supplementary feed, outside costs are lessened and Wayne says he has far happier, healthier cows.

"I don't use dogs, I can go out there and just call them, it's all very stress free." Lessening the stress is also helped by knowing he can grow the cattle well on good pasture.

"I see what some farmers pay for their stock and the small margins they have. I'm able to target the lighter stock with bigger frames knowing I'll be able to finish them easily because I've got such good grass and with the amount of supplementary feed we make, I can really pump it into them."

Wayne says the farm has had 10 tonne of potash super applied on the hills and 10 per cent potash on the flats. "We did two applications of the 10 per cent potash when it got shut up for silage," he says. "Last year we put on a light dressing of urea in early spring just to give some of the paddocks that were lacking a catch-up, but I try not to use it if I don't have to."

He says some people have suggested the

farm is in such good condition he should put it back into dairy. "Dairying is seven days a week," he laughs. "I've got a boat in the shed so if I want to go fishing I can without having to worry about coming home to milk cows."

Being able to come home at the end of a hard day at work and get out on the farm is still special for him he says. "This farm has turned around since we've been here. The colour of the grass has changed, the growth has really improved and the cattle are doing really well. I'm quite happy to say it's been turned around because we've been using lime. It might be old fashioned knowledge, but it works."



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