



# TURNING PASTURE INTO PROFIT

Five years after the conclusion of an intensive lime programme Chris Adams of Kopaki in the King Country region is still counting his blessings.

The whole project started in 2010 after Chris had read an article about the benefits to pasture and stock when pH levels were increased up into the 6 plus range. At the time the levels on his 400 ha property were around 5.7.

“In the beginning it was very much ‘toe in the water’ stuff” said Chris.

“Also, although we were focusing on our bulls, most of the data available at that time only referenced lamb and ewe responses to lime trials”.

Chris started off spreading an 80ha section of the farm at a low rate 500kg/ha. As he recollects, part of the block was ground-spread and the other by plane.

“Then in the 2nd year we decided to get serious and go the whole hog”.

Going the whole hog saw Chris aerial spreading an additional 200 ha at a rate of 4 tonnes/ha. Then in the following year he covered the remainder of the property at the same 4-tonne/ha rate. Throughout the 3-year period he also kept an un-limed control block on the property.

“As I recall one of the early changes that we noticed was in the colour of the pasture which was greener than the control block. We also started to notice that the pasture in the limed blocks has been grazed much more evenly – right out to the fence lines - and an increase in clover content”.

Soil Scientist Paddy Shannon of Shannon Agricultural Consulting commented on the stock preference for limed over un-limed pasture.

“The grazing responses observed on Chris’s property are consistent with those from a number of other studies and suggest that stock find limed pasture to be more palatable than the un-limed alternative. It also suggests that stock in these limed blocks are increasing their dry matter consumption and this delivers obvious benefits for farmers”.

The third and final year of the trial coincided with the indication of a dry patch on the horizon and pH levels reaching 6.2. Chris made the decision to send his bulls off earlier than he usually would, and at this time, perhaps the most significant benefit of the liming programme, became apparent.

As shown in the following figures, the total killed-out kg/ha of stock from the limed 2 years trial block was almost double that of the un-limed control block.

## LIME TRIAL STOCK PERFORMANCE/HA

### - Limed 2 years

Stocking: 2.2 bulls/ha. All were drafted.  
Killed out at 285kg/head to give 627kg/ha.

### - Limed 1 year

Stocking: 2.0 bulls/ha. 90% were drafted.  
Killed out at 270kg/head to give 486kg/ha.

### - Un-limed control area

Stocking: 2.2 bulls/ha. 60% were drafted.  
Killed out at 265kg/head to give 318kg/ha.

Five years later, with his soil pH still in the optimum 6.2 range, Chris is still getting similar growth performance from his bulls. He is also now enjoying strong and fast weight gains from his lambs, as well as the ability to consistently draft stock off early and avoid drought related problems. Pasture density and clover content are excellent and stock health has greatly improved.

“Our liming programme continues to return real dividends for our business”, said Chris. “We now soil test on a regular basis to monitor our soil pH”.

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\*Links to relevant research available on our website.