

Piquet Hill

DAIRY SIRES

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BRED FOR FARMERS BY FARMERS

NEWSLETTER MAY 2014

After a prolonged drought we have finally had some rain to green the pastures again. With continued dry summers over the last 5 years, as farmers, we have to adapt our farming policy to suit these changing conditions. We have implemented a cattle-trading policy; all cattle over two years old are sold by the end of December and all excess lambs by mid February. This is critical to surviving these tough summers. We have also placed more emphasis on maintaining ewe condition and lamb growth in the first ninety days post birth. We have come to the conclusion that simplicity is the key. Flexibility with limited stock classes is the order of the day.

In December we were rapt to complete the purchase of Piquet Hill; encompassing the land, Stud and bull business. It has been a long-term goal of ours to carry on the family business and continue to build on what Peter started nearly fifty years ago.

As many of us throughout the North Island know, the summer was very dry. This was extremely pronounced on the west coast stretching from Dargiville to Kawhia. For us it has hammered home the importance of a farming system that is suited to your environment. In our case, early dry spells make forward planning and selling of stock at predetermined times imperative, as the old saying goes a bird in the hand is better than two in the bush. The saving grace for most farmers is that they have had places to sell their store livestock.

The condition of ewes was good up until two weeks prior to mating but unfortunately condition scores dropped significantly from that point onwards. This will reflect in scanning percentages we are sure. The country is green again but it always amazes us how long it takes for livestock to recover from a drought; weight gains don't start for at least a month after it breaks. Most dairy farmers have had to increase supplement throughout the summer to get cows to milk through but this has been justified by the high payout.

It was interesting travelling through the southern part of the South Island a month ago seeing the change in land use and how rapidly this has taken place. It wasn't that long ago that there

were over one hundred sheep farms between Mosburn and Gore. It would be safe to say that you can almost count them on one hand now; a staggering transformation.

Going forward; the biggest challenge for the dairy industry will be environmental sustainability in the face of stiff opposition from critics. The other observation that was made whilst travelling throughout the country is the new reliance on the dairy industry from beef fatteners. Traditional beef herds have been slashed to minimalistic levels and the vacated space has been filled with dairy cross bull steers and heifers. The unpredictable seasons have caused sheep and beef farmers to move to more flexible farming systems, encompassing the purchasing of dairy



cross trading stock. The upside of this is that there will be a growing demand for quality beef cross calves in the future.

Our bulls for the coming season are having a good autumn and have recovered from a growth check resulting from the prolonged dry spell. Strategic uses of nitrogen and supplement have certainly helped in this critical period before winter.

We are making it a priority this year to visit and meet clients throughout the autumn and winter. It has been interesting seeing our bulls performing in such a diverse range of properties throughout the north island. If we haven't got in contact yet and you would like to see us, don't hesitate to give us a call and we can arrange a visit. Alternatively you are always welcome to stop in at any stage; we would love to show you around.

We will again be at the Fieldays in June; it would be great for you to drop in and catch up. We are keen to hear what's happening on your farm and discuss your Bull needs for 2014. Here's to a mild and productive winter.

Kind Regards
Tom and William Jackson

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THE FIELDAYS,
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11 - 14 June 2014

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