

Backtrack Dairies – Weekly Summary

Week ending Saturday 16th January 2016

Backtrack Dairies

Two farming systems. One biological (Whakapono) and one conventional (Waiora).

Summary

- High per cow and per ha production maintained above 2.0 kg MS/cow and 6.0 kg/ha on Whakapono while Waiora dropped below these levels for the first time despite receiving quality feed
- Another 11 mm rain has meant the irrigation could keep up well including K line with soil moisture levels around optimum.
- 28 beef calves sold
- Parry (consultant) visited – advice - maintain present management for two more rounds at present 24 day rotation and try to flat line production for next six weeks. Dont try to extend round and use this period to tidy up rougher pastures with mower topping to waste rougher pastures or mowing in front better quality ones. Last chance to do this and only four paddocks on each farm to mow.

Need to operate at lower covers and farm growth rate not cover so in other words be more proactive taking out silage to increase SR/demand on rest of farm meaning less need for topping.

Production

Whakapono production is ahead of Waiora in per cow and per ha/day probably due to better quality pasture available overall. Grain/PKE mix maintained at 1kg /cow/day.

Both farms have dropped to per cow levels of 2.02 KgMS and 1.91 KgMS respectively but have done well to stay so high for so long considering the massive covers (if they are accurate) that we have carried through probably because intakes are still high and cows have not be forced into the heavy base in our pastures which will contain a fair amount of dead material even in topped paddocks. This may come back to haunt us as we attempt to extend the round in late Feb/March.

Was possibly an opportunity to take some poorer quality paddocks out as silage on both farms but erred on the side of caution and chose to top and extend the round by a couple of days for Whakapono and the second herd who have been on 22 day rotation compared to 24 days for first herd on Waiora.

- **Pastures**

Covers on Whakapono have dropped back markedly 150 to 2635 on a 22 day round while Waiora has gained 50 to 2898 on a 24 day round but wonder about accuracy of previous pasture walk with Whakapono showing a big increase last week only to lose it this week.

Growth rates (46 Whakapono / 61 Waiora kgDM/ha/day) appear below demand but defy what we see in pregrazings and residuals and production especially on Whakapono so can only assume quality is superior there with lower covers. Some paddocks that were topped

have seeded again which is annoying so will have to deal with them later when full staff return from holiday.

Whakapono feed wedge looks like there may be a deficit looming in a week or ten days but Most other cows in the district tend to be doing around 1.8kgMS/cow/day but with 10% more cows so about the same per ha and still feeding 1-2 kg grain or PKE and are quite tight for feed.

Both farms seem to be reading 300-400 kgDM/ha higher than normal with the stemmy base holding up the platometer.

Demand at 3.3 cows x 20 kgDM/cow /day = 66 so should be maintaining cover.

Meanwhile Grain/PKE is still going in at 1kg

- **Mating**

Finished first three weeks Friday with submission rates of 84% on Whakapono and 82% on Waiora including culls cycling but not mated for obvious reasons.

Vet checked on Monday allowing a full cycle time of 24 days for some cows and not surprisingly half the cows coming up each day were new ones including October calvers.

Intervention at this point is to metri-check everything not cycled including late calvers (excluding obvious culls) and PG the lot bringing forward cows due to cycle in the next ten days then repeating this 10 days later to catch the remaining cows that haven't cycled by then. PG is cheap at \$6/cow and less invasive than other intervention.

Whakapono had 47 non-cyclers out of 475 cows eligible (18 culls and 9 late calvers) to cycle, with one needing a metri-cure for infection so 91% cycled naturally.

Waiora had 85 non-cyclers out of 653 cows eligible, (31 culls and two late calvers) and no metri-cure needed so 87% cycled naturally.

We have seen this trend over the last two seasons with Whakapono being 3 – 4% ahead of Waiora on submission rates and ending up 2% ahead on conception rates after 10 weeks mating.

From here we will carry on with AI for another three weeks (seven weeks total then the last three weeks with Friesian bulls (14 purchased 500kg minimum) which arrived late today.

Detection is myself mostly or our 2IC sitting up on a big tennis umpires chair at Whakapono in the morning and Waiora at night by tail painting and picking out cows for seven weeks.

A bit of a prison sentence really but worthwhile financially and ensures consistency for the trial.

Second round of PG done on Friday December 4th 10 days after the first one and at the end of the 5th week of AI

Whakapono had 9 cows remaining to be mated

Waiora had 26 cows remaining to be mated

Finished six weeks of mating Thursday Dec 10 so will watch returns closely for when we can put bulls out

At present getting around 7 cows per day on Whakapono and 10 on Waiora which also includes the culls which I decided to mate to short gestation Hereford to give me an option to sell as suckler cows to one of our graziers but also to take the pressure off the bulls

Finished Seven weeks of AI last Thursday and not that impressed with returns still coming in at similar numbers as above each day which hopefully are mostly returned from PGs three weeks ago.

Will do one more week of AI to make sure these PG returns are covered and most culls are mated to Hereford so calves are not kept.

Bulls taken out on 10th January so just over ten weeks mating

They will go next week to the works while Jersey bulls taken out of heifers last week are sold to another farmer to use next year as two year olds.

- **Fertiliser**

Finished second round of fert with both spring recommendations including nitrogen and potassium.

Waiora - Pdks >20 Olsen P received 500 kg/ha Serp super

< 20 Olsen P received 600 kg/ha Serp super

+ 20 kg Sulphur gain pure

+ 1 kg Selenium

Sustain urea 50 kg/ha (23 N)

Muriate of Potash 50 kg/ha (25 K)

Pdks > 6 will receive 100 kg/ha KCl

< 6 will receive 150 kg/ha KCl over next two months

Decided to split this application with N to prevent luxury uptake by plant and causing pasture quality and animal health problems.

Spend to date \$419 incl next two rounds N+K

Should be two more rounds of Urea or SOA after this in late summer/autumn

Whakapono - a general application over whole farm as we wait for soil tests to recommend different levels of nutrients for each paddock especially Ca/Mg needed as Ca still low and Mg levels too high. All other nutrients are good.

DAP 75 kg/ha

SOA 25 kg/ha

KSO4 25 kg/ha

Sulphur 10 kg/ha

Sel 1kg/ha

N P K S

19 15 12 10

Cost \$120/ha

Fertiliser spend to date \$205/ha

NB: both farms on same fert budget from now on, aim \$600/ha incl. N

Next round of fert on Waiora at 100 kg/ha Sustain Urea /MOP 50:50 mix is being applied now over December includes N (23kg/ha) and K (25kg/ha) again for conventional farm as per last recommendation .Expect three more rounds of N after this,

Next fertiliser for Whakapono is another similar DAP SOA mix similar to the above with 20 units of N while we have started to apply Ca/Mg needs of Whakapono from Neal Kinsey 's recommendation including varying rates of Aglime and dolomite depending on individual paddocks needs at 12 m spread but will be all on before Christmas.

Silage paddocks also received extra N and K

Cost of the next application \$138 /ha plus the lime dolomite at average of \$200 /ha
Total spend to date \$543/ha so still have room in budget for more autumn fert.
Waiora will continue with Sustain urea /MOP mix giving 23 units of N and 25 units of K over
December so not hugely different then
All fert was applied pre Christmas so will look to next round late Jan/early Feb

- **Irrigation**

7 mm rain this week and cooler temperatures have helped get moisture levels back to normal with irrigators going full time. We cleaned out the sprinklers on the corner arms which were blocked and being robbed when the end gun is on and showing up quite badly in corners.

River was below minimum flow for two days so used stored water

Have 10 days stored water left but can purchase more at current price (8c/m³)

Works out at about \$1000 /day for this farm

- **Animal Health**

Minimal mastitis on both units cell count Waiora 125000 0 cases

Whakapono 100000 0 cases

Lameness Waiora 3 cases

Whakapono 0 cases

Penicillin mobs Waiora 12 and Whakapono 8 cows

- **Management**

Continue current management of 24 day round. More attention to grazing residuals and need to control pastures without restricting intakes. This may mean topping after cows in poorer quality pdks (ie: give cows the choice) or mowing in front better quality ones.

Still 127 heifer calves on farm plus 23 beef calves

Backtrack Dairies	3/1/16		10/1/16	
	Whakapono	Waiora	Whakapono	Waiora
Farm grazing ha	155	210	155	210
Cows in Milk	495	670	492	669
Ave. Pasture Cover	2802	2852	2635	2898
Ave. Pasture Growth	86	73	47	61
Area Grazed	5.75	8.22	6.74	9.18
Grazing Interval	23	22	23	23
Pasture Intake (est kgDM/cow)	16	22	24	30
Grass Silage Fed (kgDM/cow)	0	0	0	0
Grain/PKE Fed (kgDM/cow)	1	1	1	1
Total Fed KgDM/cow	17	23	25	31
Milk Solids (Kg/cow/day)	2.11	2.10	2.02	1.91
MS/ha/day	6.58	6.43	6.46	5.80
Nitrogen applied (kg N/ha)	0	0	0	0
Rainfall (mm for week)	21	21	11	11
Irrigation applied	15683	19955	44889	65916
Soil Temperature at 9am	18	16	17	16
Soil Moisture (between 65-76%)	68	75	71	77
Totals To Date				
Milk Solids to factory	139829	189437	146838	197967
Milk Solids inclu calf milk	144932	198761	151941	207291
MS/ha	910	904	955	944
Nitrogen applied (kg N/ha)	52	73	52	73
Supplements Fed (kg/cow)	590	627	597	634
Deaths	10	14	10	14
Culls	28	47	31	48

Feed Wedges

