



NEW ZEALAND
GRAZING
COMPANY LIMITED

GROWER NEWS



The NZ Grazing team at our national conference 2019.

WINTER | ISSUE 4

The smarter way to grow profitable heifers.

SPECIALISATION – BEING THE EXPERT

By Ian Wickham – Chairman of the Board

In our previous newsletter, I commented about systemisation and how this benefits the service we provide to you.

Specialisation takes place when an individual, firm or country produces a narrow range of goods or services and over time develops a greater degree of efficiency in producing the goods and services that are native to their part of the world, they then trade for other goods and services.

History has demonstrated, that specialisation and trade are the basis of the relatively high standard of living that most of the world's population now enjoys. Starting small and local, it expanded with 'The Silk Road' with exotic goods flowing from Asia to Europe. Both origin and destination countries and cities (such as Venice) prospered. The new world was discovered, shipping routes were established and trade expanded around the world to the current volume, only a century ago would have been unimaginable.

The benefits of specialisation and trade have not always been obvious. As an example, in China during the Cultural Revolution (a period of isolationism), farmers were ordered by their government to diversify from cropping and instead produce iron in a small smelter at home for their local industry. The result was large quantities of unusable low quality iron and a shortage of rice, leading to tens of millions of people starving.

Due to Specialisation and trade, it makes no sense for us to try and build our own TV sets or motor cars in New Zealand any more than it does for a citizen of Seoul to milk a cow or rear a heifer on the deck of his apartment.

At New Zealand Grazing Company, we are the people who made a specialisation of helping people grow great heifers on pasture,

which in turn has helped New Zealand supply international markets with pasture-based high quality dairy products, worth in the region of \$20 billion per year.

There is no other organisation or entity that comes anywhere close to the focus we have in the specialisation of helping people grow heifers from Northland to Southland. It's all we do! There are others who offer some parts of what it takes to achieve successful herd entry for replacement heifers. Some offer a blank contract format, others a weigh service, a recording service, or a commission agency as an adjunct to a consultancy or veterinary service. Some simply offer a recipe that one could follow and hope it works.

The only entity New Zealand Grazing Company has to compete with is itself – and we do! That's how we keep improving our service to the owners and growers that leaves others trying.

NZ Grazing – the
smarter way to
grow profitable
heifers!



NITRATE POISONING

Dairy NZ

- Nitrate poisoning is caused by high nitrate levels in feed and it usually occurs in autumn and winter, particularly during a flush of growth after a dry period.
- Nitrate levels build up in herbage when nitrate is taken up by the plant faster than it can be converted into protein.
- Nitrate converts to nitrite in the rumen, and then binds to haemoglobin in the blood, stopping the haemoglobin from carrying oxygen.
- Death can occur rapidly due to lack of oxygen.
- Nitrate levels in forages can be tested and critical levels are shown in Table 1. Units vary between laboratories and can be expressed as a percentage or ppm of either 'nitrate' or 'nitrate-nitrogen' as a proportion of forage dry matter.
- Toxicity risk progressively increases where the nitrate-N level is greater than 0.22% or 2200 mg/kg (or ppm), or 1% nitrate.
- Cases of poisoning have been reported on the 3rd or 4th break of a paddock after no sign of trouble on the earlier breaks, so check after each new break not just the first break of a paddock.
- Acute nitrate poisoning symptoms will show within an hour or two of eating nitrates. Monitor stock and call a veterinarian at the first sign of trouble.
- Feed risk crop late in afternoon as sunshine will reduce nitrate levels.
- Wilting high nitrate pasture before grazing will not reduce nitrate levels. Making silage will not drop nitrate levels, but may be a way to manage high nitrate pasture that needs to be grazed.
- Don't let animals graze kale, rape or ryegrass too hard: the plant parts closest to the soil (stem) contain the highest concentration of nitrate.

RISK FACTORS

- Animals under some sort of physiological stress – for example, if they are sick, hungry, pregnant or lactating.
- Hungry animals eating high rates of nitrate quickly.
- Nitrate accumulation is higher in young plant growth (physiologically immature plants).
- Stressed plants have higher nitrate levels.
- Conditions that reduce the rate of photosynthesis e.g. lack of sunshine (cloudy) or cold conditions (below 12°C).
- Using high levels of nitrogen fertiliser late in the season can predispose plants to nitrate accumulation, particularly if grazing soon after application and before full dry matter response. Be aware that you can get high nitrate levels without using N fertiliser.

REDUCING RISK

- Forage samples can be tested via your vet or soil test lab (results back next day).
- Avoid putting hungry stock onto risk feed; give them some safe feed such as hay or silage first.
- Check the animals 1-2 hours after you put them on a new break.

SYMPTOMS

- Staggering (like they are drunk) due to lack of oxygen to the brain.
- Muscle tremors.
- Rapid fast breathing (basically a reflex to try and get more oxygen).
- Cows may salivate and froth at the mouth.
- Bluish/chocolate brown colour of the mucous membranes.
- Recumbent animals can be large numbers, death can occur quickly.
- Eventual death through suffocation.
- A cow can consume a toxic amount of nitrate in one hour, and will start to show signs very soon after.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE SYMPTOMS

- Call the vet immediately and outline how many animals are affected. The vet will get extra help if the outbreak is severe.
- Remove animals that can walk out of the paddock.
- When the vet arrives, they will start treating cows that are down, and move on to those less affected.
- The treatment is to inject methylene blue intravenously (into a vein).

NITRATE-N (%)	NITRATE-N (MG/KG DM, OR, PPM)	NITRATE (%)	RECOMMENDATIONS
Below 0.10	Below 1000	Below 0.44	Safe to feed under all conditions.
0.15 - 0.20	1000 - 1500	0.44 - 0.66	Safe to feed to non-pregnant animals.
0.15 - 0.20	1500 - 2000	0.66 - 0.88	Safe to feed if limited to 50% of the total DM ration
0.20 - 0.35	2000 - 3500	0.88 - 1.54	Feeds should be limited to be 35-40% of the total DM ration. Feeds over 2000ppm nitrate-N should not be fed to pregnant animals.
0.35 - 0.40	3500 - 4000	1.54 - 1.76	Feeds should be limited to 25% of Total DM in the ration. DO NOT FEED to pregnant animals.
Above 0.40	Above 4000	Above 1.76	DO NOT FEED. Feeds containing these levels are potentially toxic.

<https://www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/cow-health/nitrate-poisoning/>

NEW SOUTH ISLAND SERVICE MANAGER

By Michelle Cleaver

Michelle has been heavily involved with dairy farming right from her childhood, spending most of her holidays on farms. Throughout high school and university she relief milked for various enterprises, and worked for what was then MAF blood testing cattle for Brucellosis. She graduated in 1995, and since then has been employed in various veterinary roles - from field veterinarian for MAF Quality Management to mixed practice specialising in large animal medicine, predominantly based in Southland.

During this time she married a sharemilker and has two teenage daughters. When they parted ways in 2008 she took over the lease on their 100Ha runoff just out of Gore, and has grazed cattle for clients since. Michelle is also passionate about horses which resulted in meeting her husband, who now manages the farm.

Over the years Michelle has also enjoyed non-veterinary roles. She is competent at artificial insemination and did three runs for Ambreed during and between pregnancies. Whilst sharemilking she managed the animal health, breeding and youngstock aspects of the business.

She also spent four years teaching Rural Animal Technician students part-time at the Southern Institute of Technology.

Michelle would tell you it was the desire to try something different (that did not involve the demands of providing after hours emergency cover) which resulted in her applying for the New Zealand Grazing Company role of Service Manager. She is enjoying working with farmers throughout Southland and Otago, using her experience and knowledge to get the best possible results.

GROWER PERFORMANCE

As a grower with our company, we know you appreciate the comprehensive monitoring and report systems we have to help you achieve consistently acceptable growth, health and reproductive performance in the animals we supply from our owner clients.

The fact that you use these to fine tune your farm and stock management to be both productive and profitable is one of the ways that our service benefits both yourself and our clients and also our company reputation for being the best and most consistent grazing company in the world.

New Zealand grazing is sometimes asked if we can share the current performance of other Growers so that you may have a comparison of how you are doing.

At the risk of being far too philosophical, because we all do so well with the results we consistently achieve, we find the best comparison we have is with OURSELVES. We just want to be better than we have been previously. By having previous records, this is more possible than it used to be.

However, in the REAL world we know that managing animals on pasture in New Zealand has a very real challenge that those farmers who have the luxury of stored feed always available. (Here I am referring to countries where grain production is the main activity, and there is choice as to what type of livestock, and how much grain is fed.)



We welcome Michelle to the NZG team

2018B – HOW ARE WE GOING?



AVERAGE WEIGHT	270 KG
AVERAGE DAILY GAIN	0.59 KG/DAY
AVERAGE OVER TARGET	15 KG

Current Growth in Taranaki Manawatu



AVERAGE WEIGHT	256 KG
AVERAGE DAILY GAIN	0.609 KG/DAY
AVERAGE OVER TARGET	5 KG

Current Growth all North Island



AVERAGE WEIGHT	236 KG
AVERAGE DAILY GAIN	0.516 KG/DAY
AVERAGE OVER TARGET	2 KG

Current Growth all South Island

During the past few months some provinces (particularly Waikato) have faced lower pasture growth and we really appreciate the effort and feed resources that individual growers have applied to keep the stock headed in the right direction.

Although we respect the privacy of all our clients, we have decided that we can share some statistical current performance figures that you can have a look at and relate to, from your own perspective.



NEW ROAD SIGNS

As you might have seen on our NZ Grazing Facebook page it's been a busy few months with new the new road signs appearing over the North Island. Below is the map that shows where you can spot our new signs.



ALISTAIR'S HINT OF THE DAY

ALISTAIR SMITH, SERVICE MANAGER, NORTHERN WAIKATO



“ YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER
TO KEEP FEEDING YOUR ANIMALS
MORE FEED - THE BIGGER THEY
GROW THE MORE THEY NEED ”

GROWER NEWS



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