

Farm

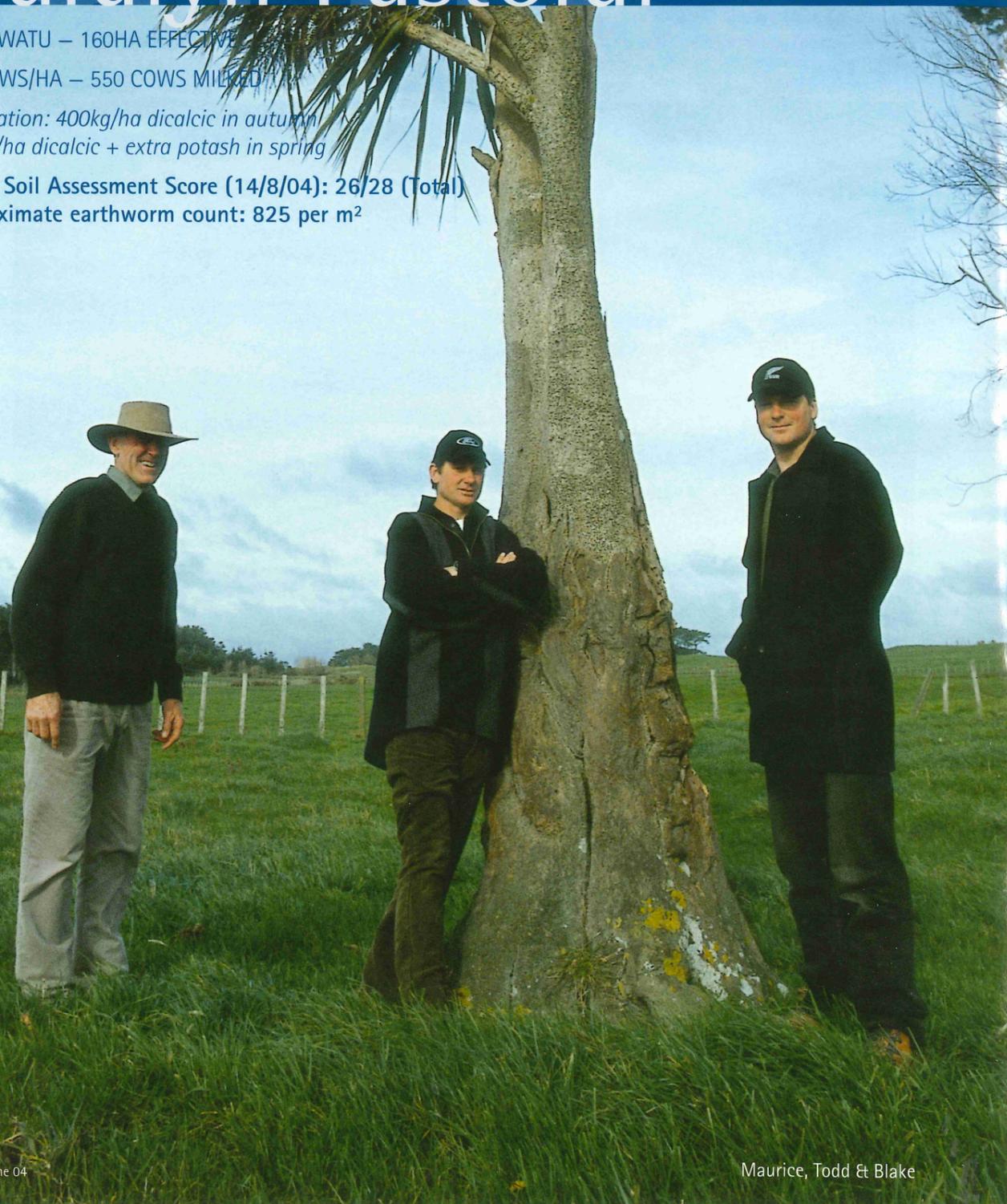
Duralyn Pastoral

MANAWATU – 160HA EFFECTIVE

3.5 COWS/HA – 550 COWS MILKED

Application: 400kg/ha dicalcic in autumn
400kg/ha dicalcic + extra potash in spring

Visual Soil Assessment Score (14/8/04): 26/28 (Total)
Approximate earthworm count: 825 per m²



Maurice, Todd & Blake



Farming for a better bottom line has always been a high priority for any Hatuma client. Doing the basics so well that extra costs become minimal – non-existent for some – is a huge advantage. The Gloyns at Rongotea are a perfect example of this.

However, beneath the surface it's obvious they're dairying for more than that. To be passionate about farming seems to be a prerequisite you must first possess, and it's something they certainly do. They know their trade. They're passionate about it. It's a family business fully within the sense, with 160 hectares supporting their individual families. It works well this way, making discussions over the table easy and natural, whether they be farming orientated, or rugby related.

"I first used Hatuma dicalcic about 35 years ago after talking to my old spreader operator, Wilbur Petty," recalls Maurice. "He was a great fan of it. He used to hand out information written by Mr. Joe Topp and even had 50:50 Lime and Super written on the side of his truck. But back then it was only something we were playing around with so we didn't give it a fair chance, and eventually we went back to using the old fertilisers.

However, we've always been open to something that would achieve better results, so fifteen years ago we returned to it, and we've been using it ever since. We came to realise dicalcic was not something you used and then expected the problems to be fixed straight away. You have to be consistent. It's a soil feeder, and it lets the soil feed the plant itself – too many farmers have been fooled into thinking they have to do that themselves. That turns farming into a hydroponics-type system. New Zealand's big advantage is the ability to transfer pasture to production, and that's being lost on many farms.

The key to our success is the clover in our pastures. We had soil scientist Graham Shepherd here and he was staggered with the amount we had. When we broke open the soil we could easily see the white clover

nodules on the roots."

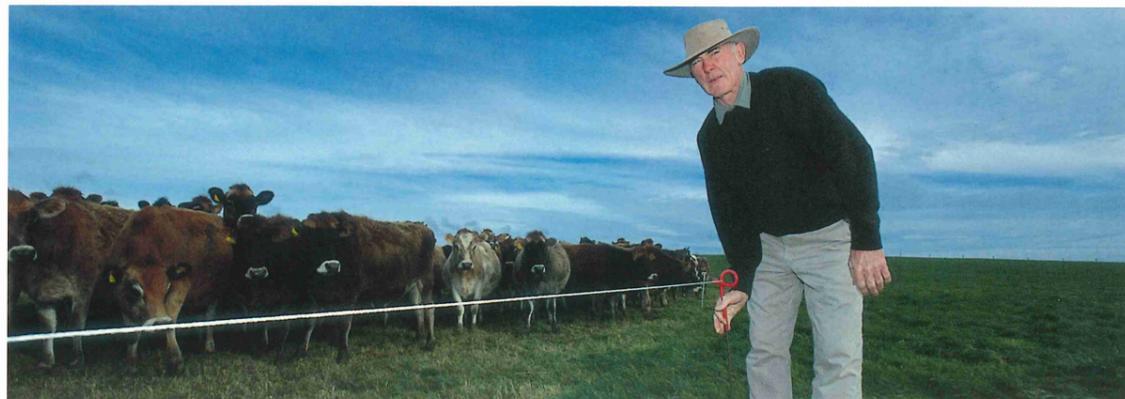
"A kilogram of clover is better than a kilogram of ryegrass," says Blake. "This area has natural brown top and fog growing through it. We used to have a problem with it, but not anymore. We have a fairly high stocking rate, which helps, and we're not afraid to clean a paddock out if we have to. We've also gone away from cropping, except for re-contouring purposes. Someone once asked me what crops we grew for summer. I told him clover."

"We don't use urea. We believe it makes the clover lazy," says Maurice. "Sir Bruce Levy got white clover established onto high country, which was marvelous. He said we wouldn't need nitrogen out of a bag if there was already clover to do the job for us. And he's right; we're seeing that here. We find clover brings dark-green ryegrass thanks to the free nitrogen it's fixing. If there are gaps in the pasture, the clover reseeds by itself and fills them in. We're not worried about Olsen P levels because herbage-tests show the plant is getting the perfect amount of nutrient, and that to us is the most important thing. We're the closest you can get to being organic without having the label; we want to be in sustainable agriculture."

"It takes about five years to get the full benefit from dicalcic," says Blake.

"But you'll get improvements before then – first thing you'll see is the stock starting to enjoy the pasture," says Todd. "You don't necessarily grow more grass with dicalcic but the cows eat more, and in the end, it's not how much grass you grow, it's how much gets converted to milk. The cows don't get bloat and we don't drench for it. Last time we lost a cow from bloat was a one-off three years ago. These days we're shocked if one shows any signs of it."

"We run a low-cost farming regime. The cost of producing each kg of milk solids is the most important part," says Maurice. "We don't have a feed-pad or bail-feeding system so our production is all from grass, grass silage and hay. We feed molasses if needed in springtime. We avoid following 'farming fashion' but are keen to take



advantage of new technologies whilst not throwing out the tried and true simple basics that have proven themselves year-in, year-out."

"In England, farmers are going broke," says Todd, who competed professionally in equestrian events during his time there. "I was told on average one farmer a week was ceasing dairy-farming in the Midlands. Their costs were too high; machinery, feed lots, you name it. I remember thinking if only they could see how New Zealand farms operate then they'd be much better off. But I came back after three years to find the same thing had already started here."

"Production has been going up each year, apart from last year's drought," says Blake. "Interestingly though, we can farm through a drought and still make a profit thanks to our costs in production coming down. It's more profitable to build a good fence at the top of the cliff than to use the ambulance at the bottom."

"After last year's drought, the place bounced back well once the first bit of rain came," says Todd. "Re-growth is good. We are currently running a rotation of 24 days on ryegrass based pastures, and 14-18 days on tall fescue based pastures, which covers about a third of the farm. We aim for 2700-2800DM/kg pre-grazing."

We no longer induce any cows. It's important for us to get our calving pattern as compact as possible, so we will use CIDRs if necessary. We've never had a problem with empties; they're normally around the 6-7% mark. We can live with that."

"We've seen a remarkable turnaround on health in the cows," says Maurice. "They're far more content and happy. And because the cows like the pasture, they harvest it for free. Farming has become less stressful." "The soil does the job twenty-four hours a day," says Blake. "We're very much earthworm farmers too. The more we see, the better we love it. On this sand country building up humus levels in the topsoil is crucial and worms are most important in achieving this."

"We believe dicalcic helps with keeping lameness to a minimum too," says Todd. "Our experience with horses and laminitis has shown that this tender-footed condition is caused by diets too high in protein, especially small ponies on rich spring/summer grass. We are sure the same thing applies to cows fed on high protein pastures boosted by large amounts of water-soluble fertilisers. We can take advantage of nature to make a profit because we're farming with it, not against it. That's a great position to be in, and dicalcic is a big part of that. It enhances it. We had our best production to date this year, 1050kg/ms/ha, and we've done it at a low cost on what many consider to be second-class land. The animal health benefits we get from dicalcic are enough to use it; but the added advantage of promoting clover growth makes it even more appealing."

"It's all about economics," concludes Maurice. "We're here to make a profit - not necessarily to be the highest producing farmers in the country. Dicalcic helps us to reach our goals."



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