

Jackson

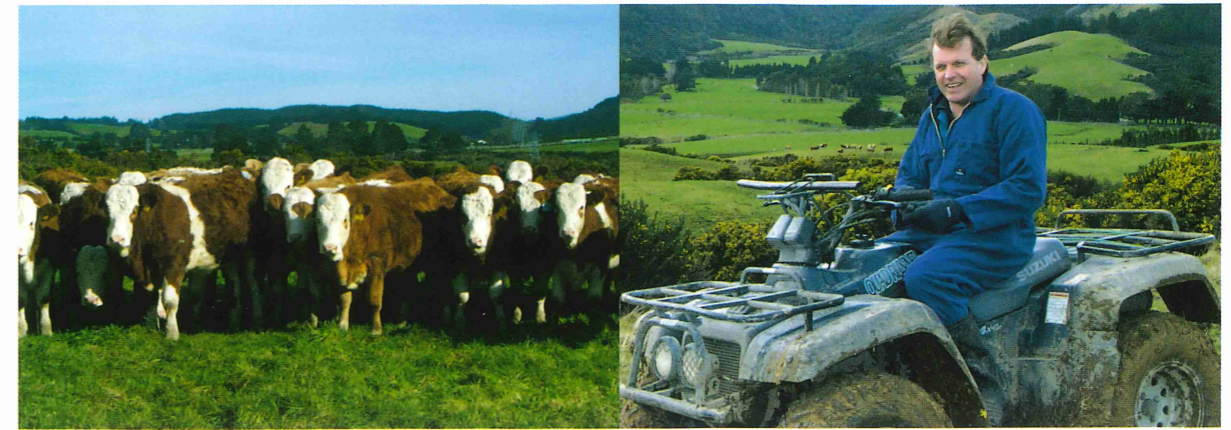
John

MARCHANT SIMMENTALS, 121HA – KAITOKI / UPPER HUTT

"We first bought 20 hectares here in 1995 and purchased the remaining 100 or so soon after," recalls John. "Naturally, fertiliser was one of the first things I wanted to put on the farm, but I was after a product that wasn't going to be acidic, as I'd always thought, *why put an acidic product onto an acid producing soil?* Also, because we're tucked right in under the ranges, it's not uncommon for the farm to get three metres of rainfall a year. If we were to put on superphosphate, it would be washed away very quickly due to its water-solubility. So it came down to the question, *where did I want my fertiliser? On the land or in the creek?*

I began learning about Hatuma's dicalcic phosphate after reading previous testimonials in a *Hatuma Update*. It sounded like a natural choice with its non water-soluble nature and balanced pH of 6.5. I began using it in 1996, after consulting with my local representative, John Vaughan.

Growth and fertility go hand in hand. Without the fertile soil, there's no growth – it's impossible. When we first arrived, large areas of the farm had no clover with the dominant species being Yorkshire Fog and browntop,



which wasn't unusual considering the pastures here are at least 30 years old. Some paddocks had a history of huge amounts of urea being used and nothing would grow any more due to an exhausted soil. Without re-sowing, and through the use of dicalcic over a couple of years, the clover finally started coming back by itself, and it's been steadily improving ever since – to the point where last year every paddock on the farm just exploded with clover.

When I started seeing loads of earthworm casts a couple of years back, I knew I'd finally won the battle of getting the soil back to a healthy state. I've always believed clover and earthworms are your cheapest form of fertiliser and the dicalcic encourages both, keeping them sustainable.

Fertility of the soil and weight gain go hand in hand. I farm grass and monitor it regularly by keeping track of what the cows and pasture are like. If the cows aren't happy, I move them. If they aren't eating, then they're not putting on weight, so again they're moved. In the first year or so, there would be some paddocks that the cattle would only be in for half an hour before they were standing back at the gate wanting to be shifted. Now, they stay in these paddocks and enjoy it because the grass has become palatable.

I believe there are only two things you can play with: pasture and genetics. When I first arrived the stock had a lot of foot-rot problems, but not any more. Bone in the cattle is far better now and I only drench the calves mainly for peace of mind.

Stock units don't mean a heck of a lot to me. You can only stock by how fertile your soil is. As a maximum, I'd be pushing 100 cows on this place. At the Martinborough sales, the bottom/culls topped the sale, while they came second at the Masterton sale. The bulls are capable of getting 600kg of growth in 9 months. The achievable average weaning weight for 200 days is in excess of 400kg.

We have 57 cows, 30 heifers (9 months rising), 12 rising 2yr. olds, 16 rising 1yr. old bulls, 2 rising 2yr. old bulls. Some bulls were doing 4kg a day in the months of October – November. Getting the paddocks working and with high production is proof of the capabilities of Hatuma's dicalcic, and it's all been turned around on original pastures.

Neighbours have seen the changes in this place compared to how it used to be. A lot of people have now changed their fertiliser programme because of the results we've got from the dicalcic on this farm," says John.



John and Hatuma representative, John Vaughan