

Terpstra

Andre & Louise

DAIRY FARMING NATURALLY, 71HA – GALATEA
(65HA GRASS / 6HA TREES AND WETLAND)

Nestled under the western side of the Urewera Ranges, sits a small dairy farm operation where sustainability and high production easily co-exist. It has come from a passionate crusade by the owners, Andre and Louise Terpstra, to farm as naturally and economically as possible; something they have found to be an enlightening and satisfying experience.

"We used to apply DAP and sulphate of ammonia alternatively on our farm as well as superphosphate, plus extra lime and trace elements to help maintain an ideal pH and deal with the nutrient balance. In '96, though, we started using dicalcic phosphate, and since 2001 we've moved away from needing any superphosphate and 100 units of nitrogen," says Andre. "We've also cut back on the trace elements applied."

"We started with dicalcic because it encourages the humus to convey the nutrients naturally. From our

experiences, you do a soil test, chuck on the trace elements as recommended, take another test afterwards, only to find they've gone already. It's a waste of money. We're happier knowing the pasture is being fed naturally through the soil now, and that the cows are getting a nutritious feed from it.

We used to drench the cows for bloat all the time adding extra stress to the operation. As soon as we started using Hatuma products they stopped getting it. Initially we thought the cows were blowing up, but they'd go back down by themselves - now they don't even swell up. It makes farming more enjoyable not having to worry about them.

The grass has a constant growth right throughout the year. Even after an 80 – 90 day winter turnaround the regrowth comes back quickly with plenty of clover. It's so great that I find the extra SOA I'd anticipated to



Andre & Hatuma representative Peter Williams



One of the large ponds turned into a wildlife habitat

apply, is not needed - I'm pulling back on the SOA applications more and more each year. This year we're down to doing only a third of the farm at 100kg per hectare. *People put on nitrogen but they don't think first, "what would it be like if I didn't?" As soon as the rain and warmth comes, the regrowth here is great.* Since using the dicalcic the roots are more established and run deeper, supplying a generous amount of nutrients and eliminating the problem of pulling.

Some Galatea farms have a problem establishing clover, blaming it on the clover root weevil. I have clover to burn and often wonder, *where's the clover root weevil on my farm?* Even visiting contractors comment that this farm has the most clover in the district.

I used to have to harrow the farm due to the cowpats not breaking down and the yellow spots present. Now that the soil life has improved, that is an extra job that's been eliminated.

We grow all our own supplements. During spring last year we could only feed the cows 80% of their daily grass requirement, with small additional amounts of hay being fed out. Yet the stock did really well, milking 27 litres, with a high proportion of cows in calf. We were milking twice a day up until the 1st April, achieving 392 ms/kg per cow. We carry all stock except heifers from 1-2 years.

The cows graze the pasture very evenly. I used to resort to topping the farm often, but since the pasture has become more palatable the cows keep it clean and of high quality.

During the summer I like my paddocks to be clover dominant. Cows on clover can produce 20% more milk on a daily basis compared to straight grass. Late September, milk in the vat peaked at 4000 litres and didn't drop below 3000 litres until mid February after I culled half a dozen cows.

Hatuma is very cost effective. The issue is the amount of money being spent and how many cows you have in calf compared to other people's extra costs to do the same thing. We don't induce the cows any more or use CIDRs. Farmers are adding in lime flour, magnesium and salt into their supplementary feeds because of the lack of minerals in their nitrogen grown grass. But we believe we're getting the right nutrients already in our pasture, so we don't worry about these extra costs. Obviously the cost in fertiliser has come down as well. We spent \$32,000 on fertiliser last year, this year only \$18,000. My pasture is growing consistently over the year, compared to a nitrogen regime that has flushes and lags of growth, with extra costs of each new application. With the combination of irrigating for the last three years (over 44ha) and the continual use of Hatuma products, we have seen production go up a third," Andre concludes.

Perhaps the most rewarding, and biggest, project Andre and Louise have continued with over the last ten years, is going against the trend of maximising production through land use, and converting 10 acres of marginal land into wildlife habitat. It's an issue they believe holds great importance. A series of large ponds have been dug and vegetation planted, including flax, cabbage trees, kowhai, and pine, turning the area into a series of picturesque sanctuaries. And it's an ongoing process, confirming their commitment to maintaining a sustainable farming operation for future generations.

