

# Doc and Marion Harty

In conjunction with Peter and Catherine Harty

Pourerere Station Central Hawke's Bay  
860 HA  
No.9S (0:3:0:6) @ 370kg/ha



Doc and Marion Harty have been running Pourerere Station, situated on the picturesque coast of Central Hawke's Bay, since 1989. Five years ago they decided to change their topdressing programme to help their operation run more efficiently. It ended up being a decision that would not only prove to be very beneficial for their farm management, but for the farm itself.

"I always wanted to get more lime on this place, and for a few years we tried 2cwt of super and 3cwt of lime in a separate brew, but it seemed silly doing two flights to do the same job. I took note of the reports from other farmers in the area who said Hatuma dicalcic responded very well out here, and I'd always been impressed with the pasture on a neighbouring station who'd been using dicalcic for years, so we switched to the dicalcic and lime as a No.9S blend (60% dicalcic sulphur / 40% Cropfine lime). I also really liked the idea of the balance we'd get from using the dicalcic and Cropfine mixed together as a combined package. Now, since using the No.9S, the topdressing has become a lot simpler to apply and a lot more effective.



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► About 12-18 months after the first application we noticed the clover across the farm really started to lift, especially on the hills, and the stock began grazing the pasture evenly. The health in the stock improved too; everything bloomed a bit better. I only top the flat paddocks now because of cosmetic reasons, whereas before I was topping it to get rid of the rank grass. The cattle, even the younger ones, will clean up every little pocket and graze it evenly. This is very noticeable in the hill paddocks, which used to be the rough old dinosaurs that we could never clean up. Now it's very easy because the stock chew through everything.

Over the past few years our returns have been very good. The lambing percentage has increased up to 120%, which is ample for around here. The big single lambs on the coast are important; we rely on the summer growth and clover to get them up, then they're gone. We fatten about 3200 lambs, including the cull ewe lambs. I usually carry about 1300 to 1500 ewe hoggets over the winter and the surplus are sold either through private tender or the store market, usually as breeding. The tail-end mob isn't as big as it used to be, and even those that are in there are still healthy looking. The ewes are milking better too;



## 'Since using the No.9S the stock have no problems going into the paddocks and eating what's there'

Doc Harty

it's become very easy to get a 16kg lamb away compared to the old fashioned 14kg. We've dropped the numbers in both the ewes and cattle, but we're now producing bigger weights in both, and that was my aim – less stock, but more kilograms of meat.

The stock health has improved. I don't seem to get many calving problems anymore, with only two unavoidable deaths this year. During the pinch times the stock clean up the rubbish they never used to touch, so they're using one hundred percent of the feed available. The harder country is cleaner and producing a lot higher quality feed; we don't have to have standing hay, but the stock seem to do well with what's there. They graze everything evenly now and it doesn't go straight through them. I've always believed if you put the right nutrients in the ground, then you get the feed quality right up – it's not how much grass is grown, it's what's in it that's most important. That's what always attracted me to the dicalcic and lime; you're putting everything in the ground that's required by the animal. We don't add any extra trace elements in with the No.9S, because there is nothing happening on the farm to tell me we are deficient in anything. I've taken copper samples occasionally from the cattle and they've been fine, so everything is obviously working. I don't see the point in spending money on something that isn't needed.

The farm also holds on. I've always said I'm sure the dicalcic and lime responds really well to wet areas, and we've had a couple of wet summers to prove it. A while back I tested some of the older paddocks that hadn't seen phosphate for twenty odd years, and their P levels were still right up. That showed me I had to put on a product that was going to be utilised. My biggest concern with superphosphate was the phosphate soil retention, but the dicalcic breaks down better and doesn't get locked up in the soil. I'm happy with the way things are going so I haven't considered soil tests much. The occasional tests I have done to target certain areas have shown good results in general.

I apply an annual dressing of DAP or Cropmaster 15 on the flats at 75kg/ha just to try and get a spring boost. But that's typical of nitrogen-based fertilisers; it's on, used and then it's gone. Then you're back to basics. By using the dicalcic and lime as a base, I think you can get a good seasonal growth returns without knocking your pasture around. That's the main thing, if you're going to milk it with the high analysis products you've got to keep the other products going in to condition the soil to keep it working, and that's what the dicalcic and lime blends do. I might use a little bit of nitrogen, but only as a tool, and only if I'm absolutely desperate for feed; I certainly don't want to get into the position where I'd have to rely on it for breeding stock. The No.9S promotes clover and that gives me a

great source of natural nitrogen.

Since using the No.9S I've noticed a large improvement in earthworm numbers. The dung is breaking down quicker, and I don't have to harrow anymore. Even during the dry spells it's amazing how they continue to break down. In fact the whole soil structure is more friable, it works easier, and the flats have better drainage.

On the hills the clover has really kicked in. We have plenty of it on our northerly faces and it stays for the twelve months of the year. It's an amazing sight at certain times of the year on some of the hard spurs; the seeding clover is like a green carpet. Even on the shady and sheltered areas, they're not just being used as stock camps anymore; they're grazing it all out well. The stock happily mow down the browntop, and the ratstail is controlled better. The regrowth has good coverage; there isn't a patch here, or a patch there like we used to get due to the urine spots. The colouring is now more even."

This year the wool buyers for the North Island Perendale Breeders group submitted a sample of wool from Pourerere Station's annual hogget clip, which went on to win the major award. "I first entered in 1999, and have had a few second and thirds in that time, so it was good to finally crack it."

"The dicalcic and lime has made farming easier. I used to watch the stock and they'd tell you if they were happy in a paddock or not. There were times I'd put them in one with plenty of feed, but they'd walk round and round the fence line instead. I couldn't work it out, so I'd take that mob out and stick another in to see what would happen. But it was the same thing. Since using the No.9S the stock have no problems going into the paddocks and eating what's there. That certainly helps with stock management; I can now confidently put them in a paddock and plan for how long they are going to be in there for, knowing they're doing what they're meant to be – eating feed and getting fat."

