

Ian & Mary Paton

COLONSAY, OTAMAURI - 238 HECTARES



Colonsay started regular aerial topdressing with 2-3cwt per acre of superphosphate way back in the 1950's, when the old Tiger Moths started to pioneer the spreading of fertiliser. From that time, right through to 1967, the farm never had less than the old 2-3cwt per acre. A lot of it was special mixes with cobalt as one of the special additives.

In 1967, when we took over the running of Colonsay with my brother Peter, we had a problem with pastures turning white during the winter months and the stock suffering in health.

In spite of all the superphosphate that had gone on the farm during the past 17 years, the Olsen P levels were extremely low and it was felt that a change in policy was necessary. We set about applying one tonne per acre of lime over the whole farm during the following 3 years. We also changed to applying dicalcic phosphate at 300kg per hectare annually for a start, before dropping it back to a regular 200-300kg per year.

Within 3 years the farm changed dramatically...

- There was a big change in the appearance of the pastures. They were green all through the winter and much more responsive to growth.
- There was a big improvement in the earthworm activity on the farm, which led to a better breakdown of cowpats and drainage.
- We noticed that the animals grazed the pastures much more evenly as the grass had a sweeter flavour with more guts in it. Even the cows eat the thistles when they have been in the paddocks long enough.
- The stock health has improved dramatically. We are running no less stock but finish all our own stock to very good weights. That is July/August born lambs at 15kg plus carcase weight average by mid October, and 17-19kg lambs from January onwards.
- In the pre-dicalcic days, grass staggers was a real problem. Nowadays, we hardly see any of it. We do not take any precautions with our cows for any staggers or bloat, as this has become a thing of the past.
- We used to dag up to 90% of our ewes before shearing. These days, 10-15% would be all we have to do. This shows both the effect of the improved fertilising and selection for worm resistance must be achieving results.
- This farm had a tendency to grow rye-grass very well at the expense of the clover. Since we have been using dicalcic there has been a much better balance of pasture, which has a greater ability to withstand a drought for longer periods.
- This year, 25% of the prime 90-day-old lambs were sent to the works straight off their mothers, without any drenching, at an average of 17.9kg with an average yield from live-weight to carcass weight of 49%.



Ian with Hatuma Sales Manager Bill Nicholson



"We can say that the use of Hatuma's dicalcic phosphate has been one of our turning points of our farming career. It has helped us to achieve a constant growth during the year and to level out the spring flush to give a steady growth through a dry summer.

The farm winters over 3500 stock units on 230 effective hectares and it has been no problem for us to winter all our stock through the most demanding Hawke's Bay winter or drought - thanks to the sustainability of dicalcic phosphate giving the pasture life and guts."