

Jeff, Christine & Sam Brownlie

710 Hectares, sheep and beef
Karamu, Wairoa

“It was actually our tennis court that first got us thinking about what could be happening underneath the soil. When we marked our tennis court out with the lime-based white wash, we soon noticed that the earthworms only seemed to be where the markings were. On the days when we had a frost, everywhere would be iced over except the line marks on the tennis court. They remained virtually untouched by the frost, and we came to understand that this was because the earthworms were more active in those areas and they were giving the soil a micro-climate, which allowed the grass to grow better. We were then convinced to use lime on the farm.”

“Back in the seventies, I started using it with the mix of dicalcic phosphate and compared to other fertilisers I had been using, the health of the soil became so much better,” says Jeff. “Without having to over-sow, the clover came back by itself, and since then the increase of clover growth on all areas of the farm has been phenomenal. On the southerly country the moss is disappearing and the drainage on the farm has definitely improved.

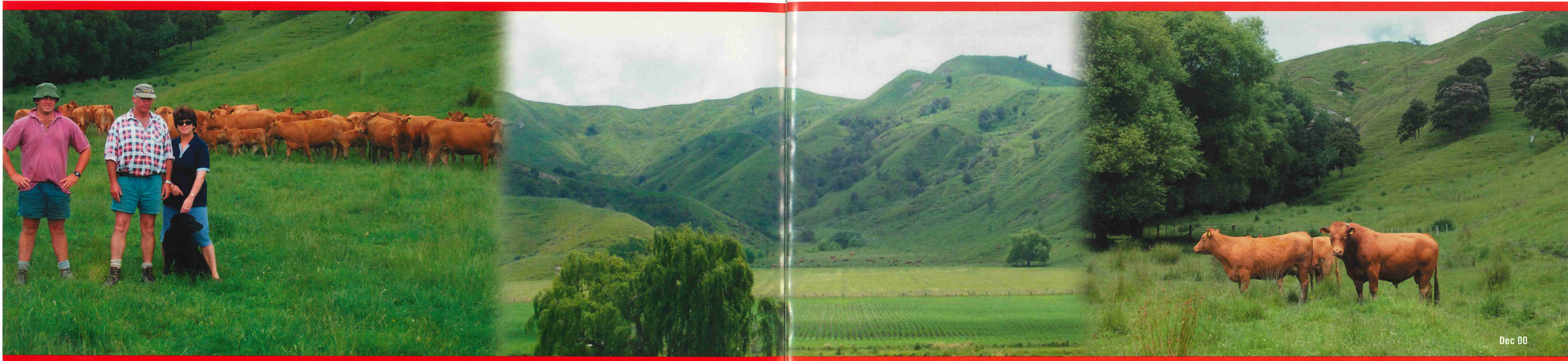
We’ve been applying 200-250kg per hectare of dicalcic phosphate 10% sulphur, adding additional cropfine lime as required, apart from on a small area of terraces that are getting 400-500kg of the No.14S mix. The rushes and ratstail on the terrace country are now slowly disappearing because they are being eaten by

the stock as they become more palatable. The ryegrass and clover is becoming more dominant, consequently smothering the weeds, and we have plenty of clover from the bottom of the northerly faces, all the way up to the top.

I used to dag 70% of the ewes, but now only about 15% of the ewes need dagging. I haven’t lost any cattle with bloat since using dicalcic phosphate and we have stopped injecting the ewes for copper, as we don’t get swayback in the lambs as we used to. I only copper the cows and stud bulls for peace of mind. I also haven’t had magnesium problems in the cows since using the dicalcic. All lambs and cattle are finished here on the property (lambs average 17kg).

The new block is coming in really well without over sowing as the paddocks were rank looking, but now they are a really nice green. There seems to be less regrowth after the scrub has been cut, and the browntop is disappearing as well.

We have found that the farm is improving each year. The stock are grazing all paddocks evenly now, which is a big thing for Wairoa country and there is less hay fed to the stud bulls as there used to be. To me this shows that there must be more ‘guts’ in the grass,” says Jeff. “No soil test will ever be able to show these positive effects that the dicalcic phosphate has had on our farm.”



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