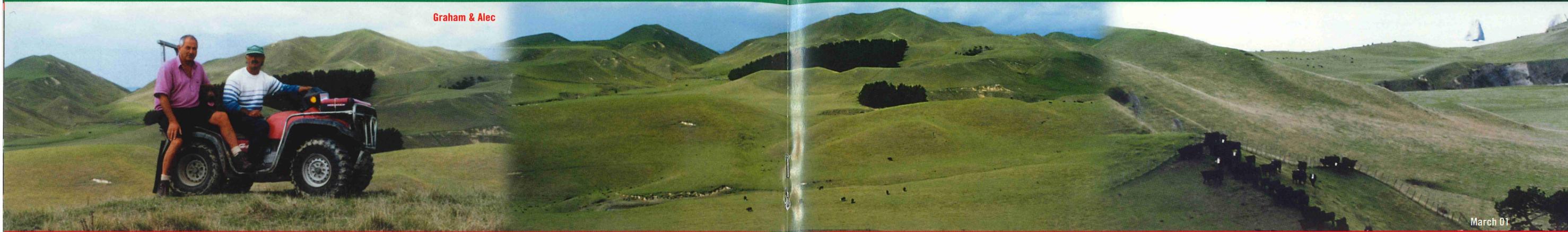


Summerlee Station

Graham Twist & Alec Tuanui
5000 Acres - 700 forestry, 3500
effective - Cape Kidnappers

Graham & Alec



Summerlee Estate Ltd. was purchased 6 years ago by Robert Fisher of Wellington who asked Graham to oversee and develop the property. With a little arm twisting Alec was persuaded to be Manager and arrived in a drought with few stock proof fences and very little water. Fortunately he was so busy he didn't have time to regret his move. Although they both have different roles in the running of the farm, Graham as overseer and Alec as manager, they both agree that a strong friendship and similar farming ethics have helped turn Summerlee around for the better. It is no surprise then, that they both agree that they are Hatuma advocates, and that dicalcic phosphate has been a very important element to the station's progress.

Graham recalls first using dicalcic phosphate in 1967 on his 2250 acre farm in the Dannevirke area and continually used Hatuma products until he sold the property in 1984 and moved back to Wellington.

The first year, water and fencing were priorities with a fertiliser programme kicking in from year 2. Graham's past experience on various properties with dicalcic phosphate allowed him to be confident in its ability to breathe life back into the farm. "The first four years we groundspread 900 acres of No.14S at 4cwt, but now it's cut down to 3cwt, with a greater area being topdressed. The sheer cost effectiveness of the dicalcic phosphate is one in itself," says Graham.

"The stock performance was very poor when we first arrived," recalls Alec. "There was no grass anywhere due to the drought and the ewes were in very light condition. We farm for a summer dry here, and a wet summer is a real bonus. Thanks to the dicalcic the country hangs on a lot longer now and recovers quickly after rain, far quicker than the portion that at this stage has not received dicalcic. Our aim was to get quality stock before pushing the stock numbers up. Since the dicalcic program has started, we have gone from producing all store stock, to finishing stock, and in fact, we will be buying in stock to finish for the spring market.

You can hit a paddock hard and its recovery is so much quicker with clover that is good and healthy. Originally when we arrived there used to be some clover, but there was no guts to any of it. The dicalcic has made a huge difference in our weaning paddocks. Stock can be moved off two weeks before weaning and the feed normally just bolts away, whereas before the dicalcic days a month's shut up was required. Also, on our northerly faces there is now good quality clover, when originally it was small and there was very little feed value. The fertilised paddocks certainly hold on longer and recover quicker," states Alec.

"With the younger stock predominately grazing the dicalcic pastures, the stock health has definitely improved and Alec's handpiece has that unused look," says Graham. "The stock are utilising the pasture more now that the grass has become more palatable, even the ratstail disappeared after a couple of years. For example, in one paddock, an area the spreading truck couldn't get to, looks like there is plenty of feed but the stock rarely graze it. The cows have to be pushed to clean it up.

Graham is also quick to recognise that the station's success has a lot to do with his manager. "Alec is a fabulous stockman (Chatham Islands trained), a very natural farmer and one of the criterias of taking on Summerlee was that I could appoint Alec as we had worked together before. Stockwise he can preempt what needs doing prior to the visual effect on the stock. Alec and shepherd Bret Wilson do the stock and the bulk of the fencing. Chris Pell, a local contractor, maintains the 18km of roads, dams, cropping and forestry. In the 13 years Alec and I have worked together, we have only had two arguments," he laughs, "both breed related, one on a model of a four wheeler and the other, terminal sire rams."

Summerlee Station is also very much into chasing the tourist dollar. These include the Overland Gannet Safaris (which run 5 four wheel drive buses), and walking tours from the upgraded shearers quarters situated 9km into the station.

The Summerlee Homestead has received massive alterations and refurbishment, landscaped with pool and Astroturf tennis court. It is now renown as an exclusive retreat, which is often booked 12 months in advance.

Feb 01

Overland Gannet Safaris

Summerlee Homestead

