

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS AND LEARN

Once in a generation the New Zealand Grassland Association Conference is held in your region. An important part of the programme are two half-day field days where the gathering of farmers, consultants and scientists visit local farms to observe what is going on and offer suggestions.

This year there is a sheep and beef field day on the afternoon of Tuesday 5th November and a dairy field day on the afternoon of Wednesday 6th November both starting at 1 pm. For the first time the Grassland Association is allowing farmers who drive to the field days to attend for no cost.

A common feature of both farms is the large investment that is being made to be able to adapt to future industry challenges.

At both field days the presenters will nearly all be farmers who are doing what they talk about.

Mt Pleasant, an inland rolling to hilly North Otago sheep and beef farm of 880 ha, owned by Rogan and Michelle Borrie and managed by Paul Murcott and Kate McGregor are the hosts on Tuesday afternoon.

This property which has nearly doubled stock numbers in the last seven years will be the focus for three important future topics which will be discussed in turn by groups of 50 to 60 people at each stop:

- Parasite resistance is one of those issues that seems to have been around for a long time but that is now coming to a head. Local vet Dave Robertson will talk about control measures that apply to this and other farms with Q and A to follow.
- With beef cow numbers still falling and slaughtering bobby calves in doubt for the future, the system that Mt Pleasant uses where beef bred calves are accessed from Rogan's dairy farm is one that will have a lot of relevance to beef finishers. Rogan himself will speak to that topic.
- Sheep farming is going through a cyclical downturn for returns and it is a good time to question whether there are changes in land use that need to be considered for the future. Kate McGregor will lead a discussion on this topic as it relates to Mt Pleasant which will also include the progress of the current development programme.

Sometimes dairy farming can be a bit one size fits all but this never could be said about the dairy operation that is owned and managed by Russell and Cathy and sons Henry and James Hurst. The Hurst family were one of the dairying pioneers on the Waitaki Plains and the current owners have continued a history of innovation as can be seen below:

- The centre piece of the current massive investment in the dairy operation is the new 90 bail rotary shed that in its first season. It is a sight to behold. Henry Hurst will give the whys and wherefores of the construction and operation of the shed.
- Innovations and management changes will be the topic of the second session and will include Russell talking about his long term nurse cow operation (an alternative to bobby calves), running polled cows and grazing wethers on the border dyke races plus growing gorse for shelter.
- Halters around the necks of dairy cows, a recent innovation to improve grazing management and cow welfare, are not used on these farms but Will Bole from Challenge Farms will present on how they are being used to advantage on their properties.
- Irrigation is the key to dairying on the Waitaki Plains and the well known and experienced Chris Dennison will talk about the progress from border dyke to centre pivot irrigation over time. James Hurst will also present on the establishment of walnut trees on the farm.

The Hurst farm is located at 140 King Rd (off Wilsons Rd). The Fonterra supply number is 36218.

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"Fuelled by science, tempered by experience"