



FMG'S CRITICAL ISSUES	
1	Split dry herd on body condition
2	Conduct a repair and maintenance audit
3	Cull empties and organise liver biopsies
4	Weigh a sample of mature cows and heifers



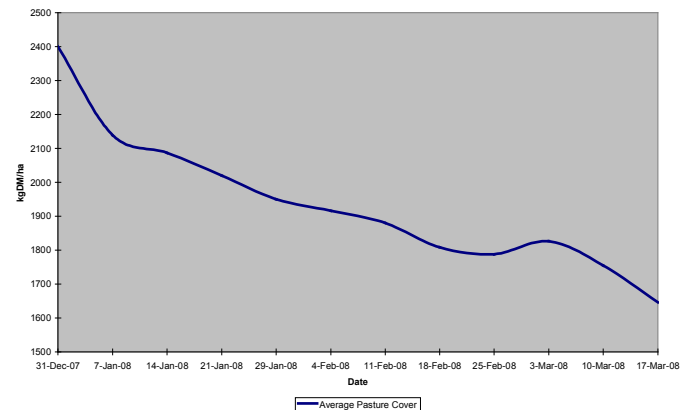
SUMMARY OF FARMING OPERATION DATA			
Pasture Information		Animal Production	
LER	30 days/leaf	Cows	480
Rotation Length	90 days	Litres/cow/day	5
Pasture Growth Rate	0kgDM/ha/day	MS/cow/day	0.37 kg
Average Pasture Cover	1646 kgDM/ha	MS/ha/day	0.48 kg
Soil Temperature	15.3°C	Cow intake	13 kgDM/cow/day
Rainfall (past 7 days)	0.2 mm	Supplement Fed	10 kgDM Silage
MOFC (\$/cow)	\$0.77	Body Condition Score	4.3

*Note this table is a summary of operation data over the past week. The last of the milking herd was dried off during this period, hence the low milk production.

TDDF Grazing and Animal KPI'S

Pasture Management

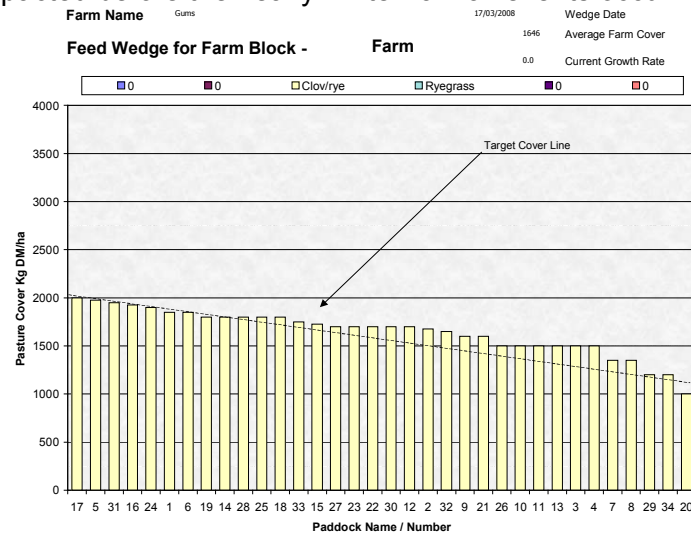
- Average pasture cover is continuing to decline. The below figure portrays the APC decline since the start of the New Year.
- The decline in APC is expected through the summer on dryland production systems. This farming system is unique in that all its feed grows in a 6-month period before having a prolonged dry spell. The FMG's decision to extend the rotation out to 90 days as soon as the grazing platform hit severe moisture stress and plant dormancy has meant that APC has not declined as sharply as it would have if continued on a 40 – 60 day rotation. Having a significant amount of silage as a supplement has allowed for the extension of the rotation.
- Pasture Renovation** – The TDDF under its VDL sharefarming agreement has the capital capacity to renovate 10% of the farm per year. 3 paddocks (10 – 12 ha each) will be renovated, using perennial ryegrass (the ryegrass cultivar has not been selected). These paddocks are close to the dairy, and have a lot of calving pressure over the past few years. Renovation will commence when the first rainfall events occur in autumn. Currently it is too dry to renovate giving the sown pasture no chance to germinate. At this stage the method of renovation has not been decided. There are generally 3 choices:
 - Cultivation;
 - Direct drill and spray; and



3. Direct drill and no spray.

The latter (direct drill and no spray) is the least preferred option, as existing plants will out perform new developing plants. Cultivation will only be used if seedbeds need levelling, otherwise the FMG will most likely adopt the direct drill and spray management technique. Cultivation exposes the soil to pugging damage if the soil has not settled and compacted before the heavy winter rainfall events occur.

- Pre grazing pasture covers are starting to decrease as APC declines. Rotation length will continue at 90 days until the grazing platform starts becoming productive. Currently the herd is leaving a post grazing residual of 1200kgDM/ha and the FMG do not want to push the herd any harder until they get split, as body condition could start to become compromised.



Animal and Financial Performance

- All cows are now dry.
- This Thursday cows will be split into 3 herds:
 - <BCS 4.0 (lighter);
 - >BCS 4.0 (heavier); and
 - Culls (empty cows).
 As depicted in last weeks walk notes, splitting on body condition allows us to strategically feed to improve weight gain. There are ~100 days till calving on July 1. Cows need to calve at a BCS of 5.0. A selection of cull cows will have a liver biopsy to determine any mineral deficiency in their system. This information will help in determining whether the herd requires any mineral supplementation.
- A selection of 20 mature cows and 20 heifers will be weighed to gather weight gain information over the season. It was stated in previous walk notes editions that a lot of energy in the diet of the heifers was going into growing the animal rather than body condition gain and milk production. The data collected hopefully will confirm some of those assumptions. By weighing a selection of the mature cows, data collected will allow us to understand average herd liveweight as well as the variation between heifers and mature cows.
- Over the coming week a repairs and maintenance audit will be completed. This time of year is great to prepare for the coming season, by identifying and fixing the areas that made the farm inefficient during lactation.

2007/08 Milk Production

Year	Milking Cows		Milksolids		
	No.	Per ha	Total	Per Cow	Per ha
2007/08 Actual	820*	2.2	182,860 kgMS	223 kgMS	498
2007/08 Budget	820	2.2	231,150 kgMS	282 kgMS	628

*Note initial budgets estimated peak cow numbers to be 950 cows but with a high incidence of cow wastage and numbers than budgeted numbers at the start of calving (991 cows compared with 1050) this figure was reset to 820 cows.

So why haven't we achieved our target?

- Underestimated the cow quality especially in respect to heifers.
- Animal health issues around lameness early in the season that affected peak milk production.

- The FMG set elevated production targets, which in hindsight may have been generous especially in the first year of the project.

Are the FMG disappointed?

- Definitely not because we know that we set elevated targets at the start of the season. We are disappointed with amount of cow wastage that has occurred in our first season and are looking at this issue profusely to develop best management strategies to help curb this problem. We see that there are plenty of opportunities around:

<i>Cow wastage</i>	<i>Heifers</i>	<i>Fertiliser Use</i>	<i>Lameness</i>	<i>Grazing Rotations</i>	<i>Pasture Quality</i>	<i>Labour Management</i>
<i>Cow Health</i>	<i>Supplementary Feeding</i>					

for this production system to produce more milk in a more profitable and sustainable manner.

THE NEXT WEEKLY TDDF FMG farm walk will be on Tuesday March 25 at 10:00am (Easter Tuesday). TDDF Farm Management Group – Basil Doonan (Davey & Maynard), Rob La Grange (TIAR), Chris Haynes (TIAR), and Justin McGowan and Nicki Devantier (TDDF Sharefarmers).

***“Next weeks farm walk will include a demonstration and BBQ from New Zealand company C-Dax on their new and revolutionary pasture measuring device.”
Log on to the TDDF events page (www.tddf.com.au/events) for more details***