

Focus Farm Wilson & Sandra James Farm Walk Notes

Monday 7th Dec 2009

Mastitis Meeting - Farmer Input into SAMM Plan Review

Thursday 10th December

11.00 – 12.30 Lunch Provided Awakeri Events Centre

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Critical issues for the short term

1. Rain has fallen and provided an opportunity to set up for summer. Hold the round at 25 - 26 days until pasture cover increases to meet target of 2400 kg DM/ha. It will take 2 weeks of growth at 79 kg DM/ha/day to achieve this.
2. Feed the remaining 3 tonne of PKE over the next week. There are no plans to purchase any more in the short term.
3. Use herd test results this week to identify the most likely culls. The immediate need to reduce cow numbers has been eased by the rain, but the outlook for summer is still average to dry and pasture cover is below target, so be ready to cull if dry weather resumes.
4. Continue to spread nitrogen at 30 kg/ha – response rates going into summer are usually excellent. (Sometimes moisture can be limiting.)

Summary for Week

Average Pasture Cover	2110kg DM/ha (2010 kg DM/ha last week)
Pre-Graze Target	(26 day rd x 17 kg DM pasture/cow x 3.4 c/ha) +1650 = 3140 kg DM/ha APC = 750 + 1650 = 2400 kg DM/ha
Growth Rate to Meet Demand	58kg DM/ha/day
Average Growth Rate for Week	52 kg DM/ha/day (last week 27 kg DM/ha)
Cows Milked	437 cows
Mastitis	3 treated for mastitis; 0 lame cows
Calves	All off now 11 more sold and last 6 to grazing
Bulls	14 on farm - 6 in the herd; 8 lame or unsuitable
Rotation length for week	25.7 days for last week av. ha/day = 5.03 ha
Supplement	1.6 kg PKE/milking cow (5.0 PKE for the week)
Supplement Fed to Date	60t grass silage; 29t maize; 171.2 t PKE (wet tons); 2017 kg DM/ha; 586 kg DM/cow (peak cows milked 444)
Soil temperature	20.0°C (20.0°C last week)
Rainfall for week	35.5 mm
Nitrogen this week	3 T SustainGreen @ 80 kg/ha (46%) 37 kg N/ha
Nitrogen applied STD	132 kg N/ha Season to date compared to 175 kg N/ha STD last year
Production to 5 th December	STD 85,036 kg MS; 2008 95,297kg MS 659 kg MS/ha STD; 738 kg MS/STD 2008/09
Per Ha	5.0 kg MS/ha; 2008 5.4 kg MS/ha
Per cow	1.49 kg MS; 2008 1.60 kg MS
BMSCC	224,000 – 284,000
Cow condition score	4.2 average – see graph below

Management Plan

- The first significant rain for a number of weeks fell last week - 36 mm. For the first time in a long period, growth (52 kg DM/ha/day) is close to cow requirement (58 kg/ha/day) and is expected to be at or above this level for the next week.
- Beyond that growth rates will depend on follow-up rain
- The feed wedge shows last week's looming deficit is here with pre-graze covers likely to be 2700-2800 this week. Cows will not be sped up.
- There is about 3t of PKE on hand - enough to feed at a reduced rate of 1.0 kg/cow/day for the next week
- Average pasture cover increased 100 kg to 2110 kg DM/ha. APC is still low and it will require a growth rate of 79 kg/ha/day for 2 weeks to recover this without any allowance to further lengthen the rotation. (Target APC = 2400)
- Wilson is reluctant to cull cows this early. A "likely cull" list can be made up when results from the herd test today are available.
- There are 437 cows today compared to 423 on the same day last year.
- While it's tempting not to cull cows when grass is growing, the longer term view is that a cow that doesn't have to be fed from January to May (150 days) makes 2 tonnes dry matter available to be fed to remaining cows. At 25 cents/kg DM, one cow culled in December creates the equivalent of \$500 worth of purchased feed.
- Wilson's plan is to purchase another consignment of PKE only if the dry weather resumes. The grass silage won't be used – it will be saved to set up the autumn.
- The rotation length has eased out to 25-26 days and will be maintained at this until the cover increases to 2400. If cover rises above this, a decision will be made whether to lengthen the rotation further or harvest supplement. The key to increasing rotation length is to do it while growth rates exceed demand. There is little to be gained by increasing rotation length when growth rates are below demand – this will only result in underfeeding cows.
- Grazing residuals continue to be consistent at around 1500-1600
- Condition score has shown a steady recovery. Not many cows are under 3.5 now and the majority are 4.0 - 4.2 – i.e. good working condition.

Summer Nitrogen

The "More Summer Milk" trials in the Waikato in the 1990's showed that one of the most economic ways to provide feed for a dry summer was to apply N in late November or early December and use this feed either to establish a longer rotation going into summer or harvest a surplus for feeding in late summer/ autumn.

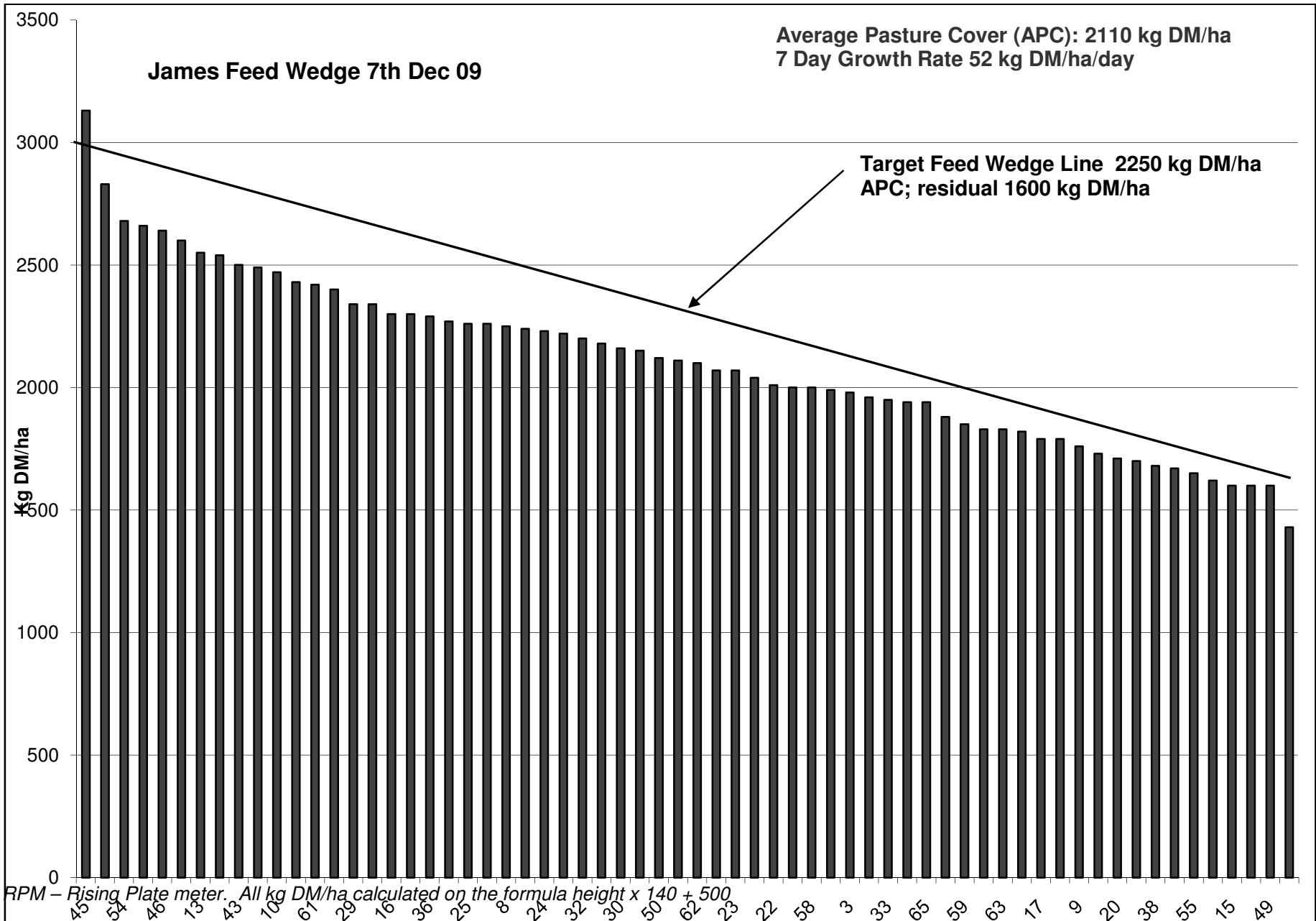
Nitrogen requires moisture to get a response. We had enough for a good response last week. Even dew can provide enough moisture to get urea to dissolve.

Mating Management

- 9 weeks of mating have passed and we are expect mating activity to settle down
- Bulls have been busy, but there are only 6 still working. There are 5 lame and 3 are causing management problems – holding up the herd, jumping fences etc.

Mating Management Reminders

- *If there is a strong need to cull cows before PD results are in (usually January at the earliest) it may be worthwhile to PD cows that are already on the "possible culls" list.*
- *Identify cows that are "not early" by PD – this may help with a decision on a cow that already has other reasons why she is being considered as a cull.*



Average Condition Score Milking Cows Spring 2009
31 Aug 3.51; 14 Sept CS 3.56; 9 Nov CS 4.10; 7 Dec CS 4.2

