



The Bull Sheet

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A word from Tom

Hi Everyone,

Winter is nearly over and the days are getting longer at last. I have been keeping out of trouble with a new work project and learning how to drive new design software.

The new work project has been a bit of a labour of love to date. Lots of work for no returns so far but we have been doing a huge amount of work developing new systems to get things underway. I am sure there will be a good payback down the track. I should be able to give you all the details in a month or two.

The new project has also given me a push to move across to new design software. Our software upgrade will see us move from using up to four programs for a project down to one. SDR map has been our main design tool that interfaces with our GPS gear. It has given us great service but is no longer supported and has limitations with modern computers and operating systems. One of the great features of our new software is that it will fully import your old SDR map files so there is only a couple of minutes work to take your old files and upload them.

It is great to see a Manawatu man featuring in the All Blacks. Aaron Cruden looks set to make his run on debut against the Wallabies in Sydney in a couple of weeks. Manawatu are having their ups and downs in the provincial championship, a win over Canterbury for a second year running was about ten minutes out of the teams grasp. We are destined for the bottom half of the competition but I think the support and the way the team have played over the last couple of years justify their position in the competition.

I am heading off to Australia with work for a few weeks from early September. If I have not already contacted you and you need a visit please let me know and I will see where I can fit you in. My rough schedule is in the right hand column.

Talk to you next month,

Tom Chisholm

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Newsletter Spotlight

In this issue:

Early spring pasture management: Often the key to profitability.



Tom Chisholm
B.Agr

Australian Schedule for September:

Western Vic/SE South Australia

Monday 6th Sept—
Friday 10th Sept

NSW (Young)

Monday 13th Sept—
Friday 17th Sept

NSW (Scone-Armidale)

Monday 20th Sept—
Friday 24th Sept

If you are not already booked in let me know and I will see where I can fit you in somewhere.

Early spring pasture management: Often the key to profitability.

Winter is coming to a close and spring is around the corner. During my time managing the bull finishing farm late August was always our targeted date to get to with our winter rotation. With our relatively long 80 day rotation from the 1st of June we could carry a very high stocking rate on maintenance. That meant that in an “average” year we were budgeting to have an **increase in grass growth in late August** that would let us start to **increase the area allocation per shift, reducing the rest period for pastures and increasing animal intakes.**

While a Dairy farm or Breeding property have specific dates animals require an increase in intakes due to calving or lambing, a finishing property has the luxury of choosing when to increase pasture allowances as pasture growth dictates. **August and September were the months that set up our production potential for the seasons production.** How critical this time of year is will depend on your climate and production system. If you grow most of your pasture in spring then your animals should be doing most of their production in spring if possible.

Having a well designed grazing system gives you plenty of control but it is at this time of year you make decisions that can earn you plenty or cost you plenty. Winter is all about being efficient. You want to maximise pasture utilisation and animal efficiency. If you have had things right through the winter your animals will be very settled and you will have established routines that have given you great control over pasture intakes and animal behaviour. This routine or habit will have served you well until this point but **you are now entering into a period of rapid change.** The temptation is to try and continue this period of highly efficient consumption and pasture use.

When spring growth kicks in you have to change your grazing management to fit the pasture growth. If you are too fast or too soon speeding up you will suppress growth by keeping covers too short. If you are too slow you will be missing out on potential production and run the risk of losing pasture quality if pasture covers get too long. You also run the risk of missing out on pasture growth.

At this time of year it is about knowing the timing of what is happening. You don't necessarily need to get into detailed feed budgets. Select a representative monitor mob and pick number of days in front of you, say 14 days. **Go and measure the cover in front of you every day or so, even if it just against marks on your gumboots.** This will give you an idea of the rate things are changing as the days get longer and warmer. It will help you make the call to speed up your rotation or not.

If you have a very high stocking rate you can be conservative and let the pasture get going by speeding up slowly. If you have a low to moderate stocking rate you will want to be more aggressive.

If you want grazing management advice specific to your property and management system call Agdesign.



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