



The Bull Sheet

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A word from Tom

Volume 2, Issue 5 Nov 2010

Hi Everyone,

Newsletter Spotlight

I have had a busy couple of months with most of September being spent in Australia. Recent rains meant some challenges in getting around the place on some properties but it was a pleasure to see the abundance of wild life thriving after a decade or more of below average rainfalls.

In this issue:
Dealing with a tough spring
Crossing fences with pivots and lateral irrigation

Most of my time was spent surveying new projects, I have had a mountain of design as well as ongoing projects to keep on top of. It is really exciting to see the range and scope of some of the developments that are being undertaken. As always I had a great time meeting new clients and catching up with old friends.



Tom Chisholm
B.Agr

One area we are working on a lot at the moment is system design in more fragile environments. I am excited about the prospect of working in areas where we can maintain or improve existing production levels while conserving native flora and fauna. It is pleasing to see that there is a greater understanding from government bodies that set stocking is not a sustainable practice and native pastures need a break from grazing pressure to survive and flourish.

Australian Schedule for November & December:
NSW
Monday 29th Nov—Friday 3rd Dec
Vic
Monday 6th Dec—Friday 10th Dec
If you are not already booked in let me know and I will fit you in.

It is my opinion that, with the right management systems in place, these environments can be rehabilitated and enhanced with grazing animals as a tool. Grazing and conservation can be complementary rather than in competition for areas.

The late winter and spring have been challenging in a lot of areas for varying reasons. Locally, in the Manawatu, I have never seen our lawn as wet after a combination of rain and grey days. Storms and flooding created challenging ground conditions and plenty of cleanup work. I kept my hand in at putting milking cups on with a few afternoon milkings for my dairy farming brother in law, Scott, as he caught up on clearing fallen trees off tracks and other jobs after the floods.

Later in the newsletter I will take a look at a couple of issues likely to have arisen as a result of the season we have had to date.

I have been doing a fair bit of irrigation work lately and one of the issues that constantly crops up is the best way of dealing with crossing fences. I have included some notes on runners for pivots and laterals later in the newsletter.

I have two weeks scheduled in Australia to keep on top of a few projects before Christmas. I will be in NSW for the week starting November 29th and Vic from Dec 6th. If you want a visit let me know and I will try and fit you in. I have not finalised my calendar for the trip so can fit a few extra jobs in.

I will talk to you next month.

Tom

Tom Chisholm

Dealing with a tough Spring

The spring months can often challenge the best pasture managers. Weather conditions can vary a great deal from day to day and you can make a decision based on an increasing rate of pasture growth in the morning that has to be reversed by lunch time day because a cold from has come in stopping growth in its tracks. **The extreme conditions we have had in New Zealand this spring will have made it all that much more difficult with spring failing to really fire in September and October.**

The wet conditions and low growth rates will have caused pasture damage and a lack of growth in animals, you may also still have low pasture covers now. I will have a look at both these issues.

Pasture damage:

Many of you will have residual bare patches in your pastures from the winter and early spring. **Provided you still have reasonable soil moisture, now is a great time to get out and spread some seed around to try and fill these in for the Autumn without spending too much money.**

Get hold of something quick establishing with big seed to power it out of the ground. I used to use Tama Italian ryegrass, it has a monster seed and bolts out of the ground. It does not have to hang around forever, but you want the bare ground filled. As the filler plants die out the pasture will fill in around it. Maybe add in some clover or chicory into the mix as well.

Spread your mix before the animals head in to graze and you will get a bit of trampling. **A small c-dax type spreader on the back of a quad bike is perfect for this job.** If you are in a Technograzing system the stock rod is a great tool to hold animals in an area for a few minutes to get a bit of treading action.

With a bit of luck you will be back in action in a few months and will avoid having a big bare patch that has been filled with weeds.

Poor Pasture covers and animal below target weights:

If you are lagging way behind your target animal weights and your pasture covers are still low then you have to look at your options. If you don't you may get into the Autumn and find you have a heap of animals that don't make acceptable weights.

By now you should be powering weight on all your stock at a great rate, if you are not then you are missing out on your prime weight gain period for the year. It is getting to the point where you have to get on with things or you will be feeding a lot of animals just to keep them standing still. **The only real influence you can have is to reduce feed demand.** If you are a dairy farmer you will probably have been using supplement to address this issue and be in a better position with your pastures. Non dairy farmers will likely not have had that option economically.

If you are under pressure with a feed shortage then you may just need to bite the bullet and sell some animals. You may have something that is ready for slaughter or alternatively some of your tail enders may have good value in the store markets. It may only be 10% of your numbers but that could make a big difference in weight gains for those animals remaining.

My preference is to get rid of a few tail enders if the store market is strong. They are likely to be hard to feed to finish in a compressed season and they may have been poor to feed converters to be at the tail end of mobs now. Provided they look reasonable then they may have good store value.

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

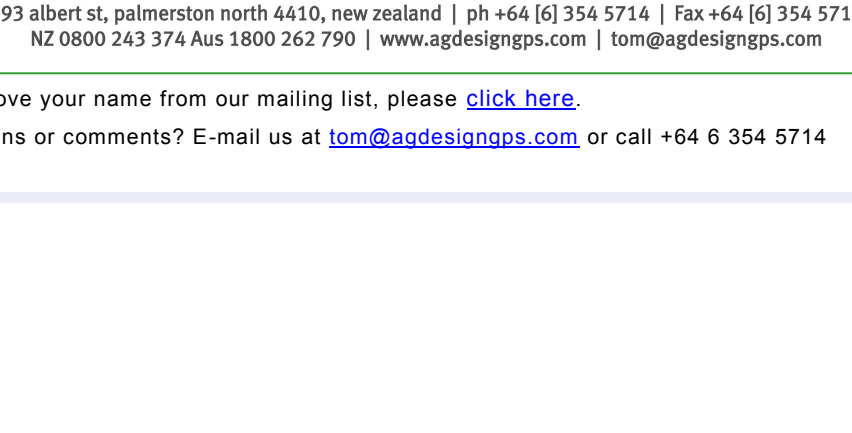
Crossing fences with pivots and lateral irrigation

Installing an irrigation system creates secondary issues with other farm infrastructure.

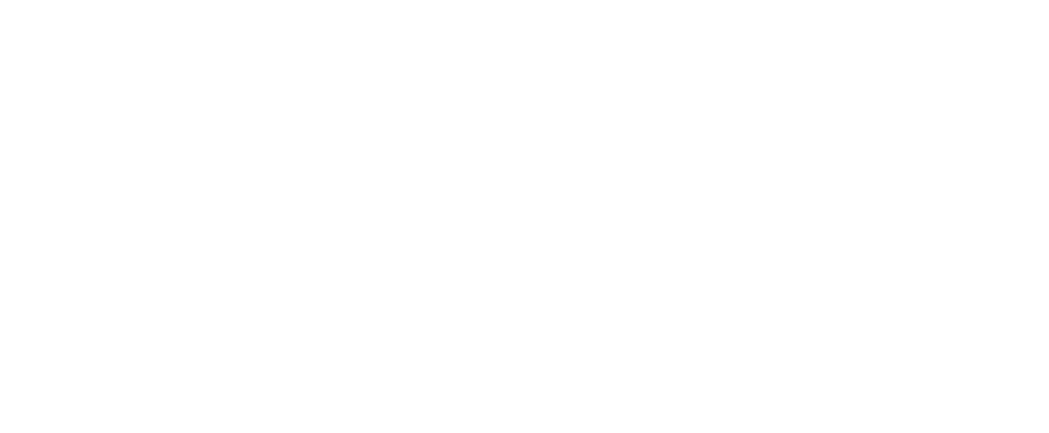
I have seen some incredibly complex engineering solutions to getting through a fence. **Individual gates in eight wire post and baton fences with triggered latches is a pretty expensive option and can be like building a dam made of pumice.** You have a lot of potential leaks to keep on top of.

Electric fencing with springs in the wires and runners on the pivot wheels are a great solution, provided you get the fencing design and construction right and have well designed runners on the machine.

The below diagrams illustrate a couple of styles of fence crossing "runners" on pivot and lateral move irrigators and the reasons for my preferred design.



In the example above the fence to be driven is caught by the fence runners. The forward motion of the machine and direction of tyre rotation ensure this. **Problems occur when the wheels are moving off the fence. If the rear tyre catches a wire on the tread it can ride up with the tyre until it gets caught by the runner.** At this point the wire is caught in a V between the tyre and runner if the machine continues it will likely break the wire. The runners will also be less effective in collecting the wires than if they were extended further.



In the second example there is a much reduced risk of catching wires. Much of the time the wire is guided by the runners. The wire is guided on and off the tyres at gentle angles. **As the machine moves off the wire it is much less likely to catch before the runners do their job and guide the wire from the tyre.** This setup will also be more forgiving with sharper angle crossings of fences.

In addition to having your runners right you need to have fences and crossings designed to work with your machine for low maintenance irrigation.

If you are planning on installing irrigation systems call Agdesign today. We can help you with planning and installation of your infrastructure and assist you in having all your development work done before the irrigator is running. You can concentrate on