

# Colostrum critical in first hours

**D**airy farmers Andrew and Sonya Aitken fill a contact for town supply so about 100 cows are winter milked. With another 300 calving in the spring 400 cows are milked in the main season.

When all 400 cows are in they are milked in two herds.

Winter cows are dried off February/March and spring herd starts to dry off in May. A truckload is sent to Middlemarch every week where they stay until August.

A few extra cows are mated because of the higher empty rates in recent years.

When the cows are springing up they are drafted out (every week-two weeks) and trucked from Middlemarch back to Maungatua.

They calve about 10 days after they arrive. Cows scanned as carrying twins are left a Maungatua.

During calving the cows and newborn calves are watched closely.

"Main thing to worry about is making sure the calf gets a feed off the mother within six hours of being born."

If the weather comes up rough during calving the cows can be bought into a small well-sheltered paddock and a calving shed overnight.

Calves are taken off the mothers within 24 hours. They aim to follow the experts' recommendations that calves should get 2L of colostrum in the first two-four hours of their lives and 4L in the first 12 hours.

They are given two feeds of milk, about 4-5L/day.

Heifer calves are retained to be reared and bobby calves are selling for about \$150 each this year.

Usually winter calves are sought after but they haven't been this year even though calf prices have been higher. All winter bulls are reared.

Colostrum milk is separated and stored in its own vat. When the vat level gets low about mid-June milk is run-off at milking time before it goes into the main vat where it is chilled.

As lower order sharemilkers 23% of the milk is theirs plus once the town milk contract is filled it is paid for at a lower price.

With calf numbers low during the winter the milk is carried in 20 litre containers. As more calves arrive Sonya will use a 200l tank on a trailer that tows behind the four-wheel motor-bike.

Calves are fed pellets and they also nibble away on straw, which activates their rumen. They also have access to water. The straw is changed regularly and the pens sprayed with disinfectant.

As the calves grow older the straw is increased and they are fed pellets ad lib outside. A woolshed on the Maungatua farm makes an ideal shelter for the calves and does away with the need for calf covers.

So far they have avoided major animal health problems and disease outbreaks. For



Andrew and wife Sonya Aitken rear calves on a twice a day system until about week nine using milk from their dairy herd.

the odd animal that does get sick they use a hospital pen. Off-colour calves are isolated. Sometimes a vet is called, maybe twice a year.

Cows are not vaccinated for rotavirus as the home herd is closed and they are careful where they buy animals from.

If the calves are big and strong by week nine they go on to once a day milk feeding and put outside on to grass. At about 12 weeks the milk feed stops but calves continue to be fed straw and pellets.

After they are weaned the calves are trucked to the run-off at Middlemarch where they stay with the heifers.

The calves are given an oral drench and a copper pellet plus a B12 jab before they leave Outram. Later on they will get another pour-on plus the compulsory jab for leptospirosis.

Sonya and Andrew will bring their cows back to the dairy farm to calve or lease them out.

While Andrew sometimes misses the social aspect of working as a mechanic it isn't all hard work and no play. If the calf and silage seasons are over and it's a good day he can

take off fishing until milking at 3pm.

Sonya is in the Otago hockey side and Andrew plays club rugby. Last year there wasn't the time for sport as there was only Sonya and Andrew milking. Sonya was milking twice a day in a 30-a-side herring-bone plus feeding the calves.

This year they have a worker, Edwin Ingle, who has taken the pressure off. Andrew's sister Jacqui Aitken, who works for Wrightson, does relief milking in the weekends.

Sonya also handles the accounts and Andrew keeps an eye on the calves which are recorded.

Whether they go 50:50 sharemilking or into an equity partnership will depend on the opportunities around.

More money can be made from sharemilking but it may mean forking out \$400,000 for more cows and risk not getting a contract.

If they can get into an equity partnership it would mean not having to put up such a high stake and earning a salary as a manager. It could be a good way to make a start and still be able to keep building the herd up.

# Effects of forestry downturn to last for 30 years

In the domestic log market pruned log prices appear to be holding, but are under pressure.

In some areas and particularly in the North Island there are plenty of logs on offer, but prices are still unsustainably high.

The same also applies to unpruned grades, where a move to alternative land use options is boosting harvesting levels and large areas of land are being lost to forestry.

In some cases immature stands of pruned trees are being cut, realising only a fraction of their mature value.

However southern North Island areas affected by windthrow from last year's storms are now short of logs. Pulp log supplies are also in oversupply in most areas.

Only roundwood prices are showing any strength.

The Agri-Fax Log Price Index, which measures movements in the whole forest (delivered to wharf or mill basis) has fallen quite significantly to just over \$67 per tonne. This was mainly due to lower export returns and no compensatory gains from any other area.

Although this downturn is the deepest and most prolonged for many decades, it will surely pass, but its effects will be felt for 30 years at least. The precipitous fall in planting and the widespread removal of immature stands will cause a huge supply gap when this missing generation of trees would have reached maturity.

As expected export log prices in \$US terms have eased over the past month, with the trend set to continue into June and beyond. This has flowed through into the wharf gate \$NZ prices, but the effect has been softened a little by a weaker Kiwi and lower shipping rates.

Exporters have their fingers crossed that exchange rates and shipping costs continue to move in their favour.

In Korea CIF prices in \$US terms have eased steadily and are down \$5 to \$5/jas metre. This ends an eight month winning streak that saw prices inch back towards respectability from record lows in August last year. Stocks are still too high and demand is not strong.

With other markets Chinese prices are inevitably influenced by trends in Korea and so are also under pressure, although demand is still stronger than in Korea.

Japan is also not immune to the Korean factor, even though their log specifications demand a higher quality log.

Average prices are down about \$NZ1/jas metre for A grade. Very few J grade logs are being exported at present. Volumes remain low.

Low prices and very high shipping costs have ruled out any shipments to India in recent months, but if the easing in shipping and exchange rates continues, then exports will resume quite quickly.

In price terms the US lumber market is holding, but this is at the expense of volumes, which continue to decline.

Prices in the Australian structural lumber market are also holding despite a modest increase in volumes. However a slowing Australian construction sector suggests that this may not last.

# Vaccinations remove scours

Lisa Crisp likes to give her calves the best possible start in life and regular changes of bedding, disinfectant spraying and shed maintenance all play a part.

It was, however, hugely frustrating when rotavirus scours swept through the young animals. The outbreak left 18 potentially valuable replacements dead and many others suffering long-term effects from the disease.

Lisa and her husband Dean are 50:50 sharemilkers of 400 Friesians at Te Kohanga, Pukekohe.

Calf scours had always been a problem on the property. In their first season they had a few losses. She says the outbreak kept them frantically busy, treating the sick calves with electrolytes and being on constant watch for new cases.

This time a lab analysis revealed the cause as rotavirus, and their veterinarian recommended vaccination of the pregnant cows with Rotavec®.

The results, says Lisa, have been excellent. "We didn't have one case of scours last year."

**PROFESSIONAL HARVESTING SYSTEMS**

*The Way of the Future...*

**INTEGRATED HARVESTING AND MARKETING SOLUTIONS**

Marketing ~ Domestic and export log sales  
Tree removal ~ Resource consents ~ Land clearing  
Forest management ~ Woodlot Harvesting  
Harvesting management ~ Harvest planning and roading  
*FREE estimates and market advice for mature woodlots*

Please contact us:

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 6 Hall Rd<br>PO Box 148<br>Ngongotaha | Office: (07) 357 2344<br>Fax: (07) 357 5939 |
|---------------------------------------|---|

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Greg Bell<br>027 497 6203<br>greg.bell@pshs.co.nz | Craig Peters<br>027 241 4700<br>craig.peters@pshs.co.nz | Tony Williams<br>027 283 5933<br>tony.williams@pshs.co.nz |
|---|---|---|

**FORESTRY OWNERS... ARE YOU THINKING OF HARVESTING?**

We at **ABLE TASMAN FORESTRY SERVICES LTD**

can offer you a complete range of professional harvest & marketing solutions

We have markets for:  
**RADIATA** (Managed & unmanaged stands)  
**EUCALYPTUS** - All species all age groups  
**CYPRESS** - MACKO CARPA - Of various species  
**REDWOODS**, CEDARS, POPLARS

Our options include:  
 A Managed Harvest & Sale on a commission basis.  
 \$\$\$ Lump sum outright purchase \$\$\$  
 OR  
 A competitive stumpage outright contract.

**YOU CHOOSE**

We are a 100% wholly NZ owned & operated Company.  
 For an obligation FREE assessment call us.

**ABLE TASMAN FORESTRY SERVICES**

Please phone on Toll FREE  
**0800 655 657**