



The Hull family, from left, Becca, Shirley and Neal. They rear an average of 1100 calves using a floor area of 2000m².

Rearers rewarded for thorough monitoring

Natalie Campbell

Monitoring individual calves not just mobs is the key to success in calf rearing according to a large scale Pahiatua rearer.

The Hull family last year reared 1024 Friesian bull calves and annually target about 1200 head on their Tararua property. That number suits their land and business.

Running the 1012ha property and business is Neal and Shirley Hull and their son Simon (and wife Lisa) and daughter Becca.

The business comprises calf rearing, bull beef, breeding ewes, beef cows, finishing hoggets and grazing dairy heifers and cows on leased and family owned properties.

The family rarely top a 3% death rate in the calves and have had less than 2% in the past.

"Deaths are a huge cost and it needs spreading across all calves and it needs to be taken off your margin," says Neal.

"I hate waste and that's why we monitor. If you have animals going forward you are making progress."

The key to top monitoring is to check individual animals, not just the mob. And even though it sounds time consuming he says low death rates are a great dividend.

The calf deaths they have had are generally through a lack of colostrum and the odd fatality from misadventure.

He says each calf is an investment that they strive to earn a return from.

They target a margin of \$100/head and budget on

rearing costs of about \$150/head. This covers everything except the calf price.

Their budgeting is precise with costs being calculated down to the smaller amounts such as the kg of pellets/calf rather than tonnage.

They know how much it costs for each calf a day. Although to keep a competitive edge Neal wouldn't divulge these figures.

He says there are plenty of areas to trim to save costs, which are easy to identify with experience.

"This helps create a change in thinking for what inputs the calves receive.

"We never just fire stuff at calves and hope they do all right, it's measured.

"We put a budget together each year and try not to blow it," says Neal.

When selecting calves he looks for sound calf weight, good bone structure and five white points.

The Hulls prefer straight Friesian calves steering away from the crossbred calves because their end market prefers that breed and they have better weight gains.

"All calf rearers are trying to make a margin and they are getting squeezed all the time."

"The price for a four-day-old calf is high and there are a lot of rearers who are making a pittance," he says.

However a thriving lifestyle block population means some smaller landholders, who have wages to survive off, are paying anything for a calf and hiking up prices for commercial rearers.

• Continued on p64.

Harvey Farms TOP QUALITY & PERFORMANCE. TOPCALF!



TopCalf Cereal

Protein	18%
U.D.P	9%
Fibre	12% (max)
EST Energy	13.0 MJ/kg
Crude fat	5.0% (max)

TopCalf 20

Protein	20%
U.D.P	8%
Fibre	7% (max)
EST Energy	12.6 MJ/kg
Crude fat	5.0% (max)

TopCalf 16

Protein	16%
U.D.P	6.5%
Fibre	7% (max)
EST Energy	12.5 MJ/kg
Crude fat	5.0% (max)

TopCalf Finisher

Protein	14.5%
Fibre	10% (max)
EST Energy	12.4 MJ/kg
Crude fat	5.3% (max)



For further information
ask your nearest
merchant or call



0800 650 505

FOR ALL YOUR CALVING REQUIREMENTS GET ON THE MOVE TO RD1



Official Supplier of
NZAgbiz
LIMITED

Fonterra | Animal
Nutrition

RD1

LOW PRICES
GREAT SERVICE

Customer Support Centre 0800 731 266 South Island Stores 0800 272 932

WWW.RD1.COM