



EASTBOURNE DAIRY FARM LIMITED

VOSM WINTER/SPRING 2016 UPDATE

Ben Worker & Penny Timmer-Arends



Winter

Following on from a fantastic autumn, the cows were in good condition at dry-off in late May. Unfortunately due to a poor crop yield at one grazier, and problems with another grazier, we were forced to change our wintering plans around. As a result one mob of 80 cows calved down at a lower body condition score than we would have liked. This year we've got Farm Consultant Jack Ballam on to it early, and will be meeting with our winter grazier in November to agree on numbers, crop required, and mob sizes. This should prevent the same problem from occurring next year.

Spring

Luckily this spring has been one for the record books with grass growth in September higher than we've ever had at any point during the last two seasons!

Ben had the mower on in August topping paddocks behind the cows. Because of this our cows are in very good condition heading in to mating. Jack said the first-calvers looked 'stunning' when he came for a catch up in late September.



While the extra grass has not translated directly to increase production due to a slower calving spread Eastbourne has been able to save money on bought in supplements. We've also fed out



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fewer bales, and calf mortality was extremely low. As the ground was dry enough to get a bulky on to apply fertiliser in September the farm saved close to \$5000 on helicopter sowing costs alone. Farming is much more enjoyable when the sun is shining.

Our challenge now is to utilise the extra growth without losing pasture quality in the next round. We have paddocks locked up for balage & are pre-mowing 50% of the farm to keep the crown of the grass low. The aim is to have high quality feed for the cows during AB mating in November & December.

Calves

During mating 2015 Eastbourne used Hereford semen over the cows with lower genetic merit to add an income stream for beef calves, and increase genetic gain by only mating top cows to dairy semen. We also used Murray Grey bulls over the heifers, and Angus over the later calving cows. We were able to sell around 90 beef calves at an average price of \$90, compared to \$40 as a bobby calf.



Despite having less cows' in-calf to dairy semen, we had a bumper crop of heifer calves this year. This was partly due to a good ratio of heifers to bulls but also lower mortality from the great spring weather. There was only a single day in September when a cold, wet southerly came through & the newborn calves were hypothermic. This was the sole opportunity I had to try out my new calf warmer. I saved three calves by giving them warm milk, popping a jacket on them, and placing them in the warmer box.

Calving is largely over as I write this, with only 30 cows left to go! Most of the calves are outside drinking on the big feeder now with half of them down at the runoff; their new home for the next 22 months. Our focus is now turning to mating, and setting ourselves up for a tighter calving next season.



Production

As mentioned above, with the slower calving spread and the additional calves being reared, our production for the start of the season is behind our target of 235,000kgMS by 5.3%. We are confident that this lost production will be made in the coming months, as we continue to grow quality grass and build the cows to their milking peak.

