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Summary only

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH PRODUCTIVITY ON
A DAIRY FARM

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Over the seasons 1974-5 to 1976-7 annual milkfat production on a 93 ha farm (86 effective ha) rose from 40 200 kg (150 kg/cow, 470 kg/ha) to 47 700 kg (189 kg/cow, 550 kg/ha). This has been achieved without buying in feed and with all young replacement stock reared on the property. The fertilizer application is 500 kg/ha of potassic superphosphate per annum. Although no nitrogenous fertilizer has been applied in the last two years, its use is considered in the event of feed shortages occurring.

A change in feeding management has taken place over these years and is probably the main factor in the production increase. The aim now is to feed leafy pasture to cows as they require it. The surplus and rough feed are made into silage. This is a key factor which keeps the pastures leafy and provides supplementary feed for the autumn. The improved growth of grass in the autumn has allowed a bigger area of grass to be grazed in the winter. This policy has led to better conditioned cows.

Rearing better grown replacement stock is considered important in maintaining increased per-cow production. A condensed calving is also very important to maximizing per-cow production. This is done through careful mating management and induction of late cows to calve by late September.

Bloat control and the use of magnesium supplement in the spring both pose the same problem of when to commence treatment and when to cease. Mastitis is another problem which is costly to treat. About 20% of the herd had clinical mastitis during the year despite blanket dry cow treatment. The other main problem is the occurrence of cows which turn up barren in the autumn after appearing to be in calf earlier. Last year 20 of these occurred. This was a problem as culling on production had already taken place and only 5 or 6 additional empties were anticipated.

The farm is managed on a 50:50 sharemilking basis and two labour units are employed on the farm. Close contact is maintained with the Advisory Services Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Communication between all groups has been an important factor in achieving this increased production.