

Shelters allow 'maximum use'

Sue Russell

Going to a rural primary school in the Wairarapa gave David Beuth his first taste and passion for dairying.

"I helped one of the local guys milk and thought even then that working on the land and with cows was what I wanted to do."

That wish however was parked for a while when Beuth left school to go commercial crayfishing in Gisborne. His first job on a farm was in Carterton for a year in 1987, and then on to farm management for a further three years before heading off on his OE when he based himself in England for two years.

"When I got back from overseas I was a farm manager for another year before taking on a lower-order sharemilking position with 180 cows again in the Wairarapa. I was there for three years before getting a 50:50 job at Waihau Bay, on the East Cape, where we stayed for six years."

He describes his time on the East Cape as one of really knuckling down, making some serious money, and launching his and wife Clare's long-term farming career.

That hard work paid off because the next move was to farm ownership in the Mamaku district near Rotorua where the couple and their family are now in their 13th season.

Despite the unlucky connotations that can come with that number, this season is proving very successful and they are tracking four per cent above the previous year's production figures.

"We're at 640 metres altitude and this area gets a lot of heavy dews, even snow some times. So, we haven't been so badly affected as other places with the lack of rain, though for the last two months we are behind as it has got dry even for Mamaku."



Top: David and Clare Beuth with their children, Georgia and Adam, Above: David Beuth in one of the two HerdHomes® on the property.

Five years ago the Beuths decided to increase their farm's capacity by building two HerdHomes® on their farm. The benefits that have come from

being able to stand their cows off pasture have been immense, he says.

"I remember still that in our first year here, we

made a lot of mess because we weren't used to these soil conditions. Having the Herd Homes® has greatly changed our stock management systems and means we're making the maximum use of our farm, though there are still tweaks to be made."

The Beuths' aim is to produce 1400 kilograms of milksolids per hectare using a feeding system 3, grass supplemented with silage and some palm kernel from their 101-hectare (95ha effective) property.

A 24-a-side herringbone shed is running at peak capacity, which means that if they decided to increase the herd size by much, they would need to new shed.

The Beuths have two children – 14-year-old Georgia goes to Western Heights High School, in Rotorua, and Adam, aged 11, to the local Mamaku Primary School. Dave Beuth is in his third term as chair of the Mamaku Primary Board of Trustees.

"As for me I'm just the general dogsbody at school, like most parents of a rural-based school are," says Clare.

The Beuths have just taken on a full-time employee, Russell Smith, who was their relief-milker. David Beuth says it has been a big step employing someone to take on the day-to-day tasks.

"Our next step will be to employ a younger person, have a manager, and a 2IC."

Clare's history as a farm consultant for the New Zealand Dairy Board for a decade following a degree at Massey University has meant she has brought into her own set of skills and understandings into their farming business.

"For me living and working on a farm is ideal," she says.

"That whole thing about bringing children up with them not closed in, being outside and not hearing the neighbours is just wonderful."



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Farming pair look to

Sue Russell

In his near 40-year career in the dairying industry Gary Baylis has steadily gone about building capacity – from leaving school and milking 100 cows, through sharemilking and farm acquisition.

This year he and wife Helen took another significant step by acquiring their neighbouring farm and extending their total milking platform to 290 hectare at their base at Rahotu, in Taranaki. They already own two farms –150 hectares and 59ha..

They will take possession of the new farm in June. Gary Baylis describes it as very nice land, just needing some fertility and pasture improvement along with some re-fencing – unlike the other neighbouring property they bought in 2006.

"I sometimes joke that we have the driest soil type known to Man, and to help this situation we have rounded off some of the hills to try to create a more fertile environment. I didn't realise the hills would perform so badly."

He has also observed that many of the new grass species are nowhere near as hardy as the traditional species. Because the soil is so dry, it becomes very open; to alleviate this, he plans to broadcast chicory seed when he fertilises.

Until five or six years ago, the Baylis herd was

exclusively jersey; then they began cross-breeding.

"We decided to move away from pure jersey to be able to run a lower number of cows, and it is also a lot easier to rear cross-bred calves," says Gary Baylis.

Production has gone up every year since. Last season they produced 255,000 kilograms of milksolids; they expect to reach this season's target of 280,000kg.

The increased performance has been achieved partly through the introduction of palm kernel through summer, he says.

They have a lower-order sharemilker on their smaller farm, four kilometres away from home base where they employ Raymond Benjamin as a full-time farm hand.

"Both Helen and I work full-time on the farm until the end of AB," says Gary. "In fact, Helen spends more time in the shed than I do, as well as rearing the calves and driving the tractors."

Over the last five years or so Helen Baylis has also developed an interest in the use of homeopathic remedies to enhance animal health. This sprang from a course she did on Maori medicine.

"I just started to trial things and record results. We use both conventional treatments as well as homeopathic ones.

"I love to see our stock happy and healthy. They are like our family and I discovered that as their overall condition improved, they became a lot easier to work with. I also make a formula to put in the calf milk, which settles them down when they come off Mum."



Cows graze on some of the Baylis's 'rounded off' hills.