MilkMaP
Milk Management and Profitability

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Pasture Quality Trend (September 2018)

The dry winter has continued into a dry spring with the odd small southerly shower in between. This has been fantastic for cow performance and we have seen better than normal production which BCS holding on very well and cycling activity is looking excellent.

Soil temperatures have remained lower than normal as by this time last season we would have had 3 weeks where soil temperature was above 10 degrees, while we have only just hit that now. On average we are about 0.8-1 degrees slower this season currently. Soil moisture is starting to drop, and most farms have completed a round with the irrigation. Be careful of how much you put on in a single application as the bore water will cool the soil rapidly and you will lower potential growth.

Dry Matter (DM) (%)

DM has persisted to stay high, between 18 and 22%, where we would usually see it dropping below 16% by now and be recommending pre-graze mowing to get some of the water out. Now the only benefit from mowing will be to tidy up some of the rough residuals from the 1st round. The higher DM% will be why cows on some farms are content, with BCS and milk production looking very good despite the plate meter saying the cows have much less in front on them.

Crude Protein (CP) (%)

Protein levels in the pasture (and milk urea levels) have been much lower across the board for most farms this season. This is likely due to the slow start our soil temperature has had and I would expect this to pick up soon, especially if N and S has been applied during the 1st round behind the cows. We have had great success with additional protein supplementation through the 1st round to combat the extremely low protein test. Most farms MU's will be above 20 now and despite being lower than normal, protein should not be deficient any more. The lower protein valves (and high DM%) through the 2nd round will have kept a cap on how loose the manure could have been.

Neutral Detergent Fibre (NDF) (%)

NDF has been low, and still dropping as we head into the pasture's rapid vegetative growth state. This will allow cows to consume more kgDM and increase their energy intake each day. This combined with favourable weather and utilisation has resulted in production being better than normal for most farms. All other things being equal, if you are not ahead of last season, give us a bell and we can steer you back on track for mating.

With the low NDF coming into the diet the risk of low rumen pH and sub-clinical acidosis increases, this will reduce the population of the acetate producing microbes in the rumen and will reduce the fat test of your milk. As fat is worth so much now it is in your interest to protect this (without sacrificing total kgMS production). Loose bubbly manure is a key sign that your cows could do with some additional fibre, this is best supplied as cereal straw in the lane or paddock.

Metabolisable Energy (MJME/kg DM)

The ME for most pastures have been increasing rapidly as the NDF falls. As NDF drops, the pasture digestibility increases which in turn increases the energy (ME) that the microbes can extract from each kgDM. This is the main way that ME has increased, but it also has not had long spells of cloudy or drizzly weather which has resulted in plants being able to convert a lot more sugar (carbohydrates) than normal.

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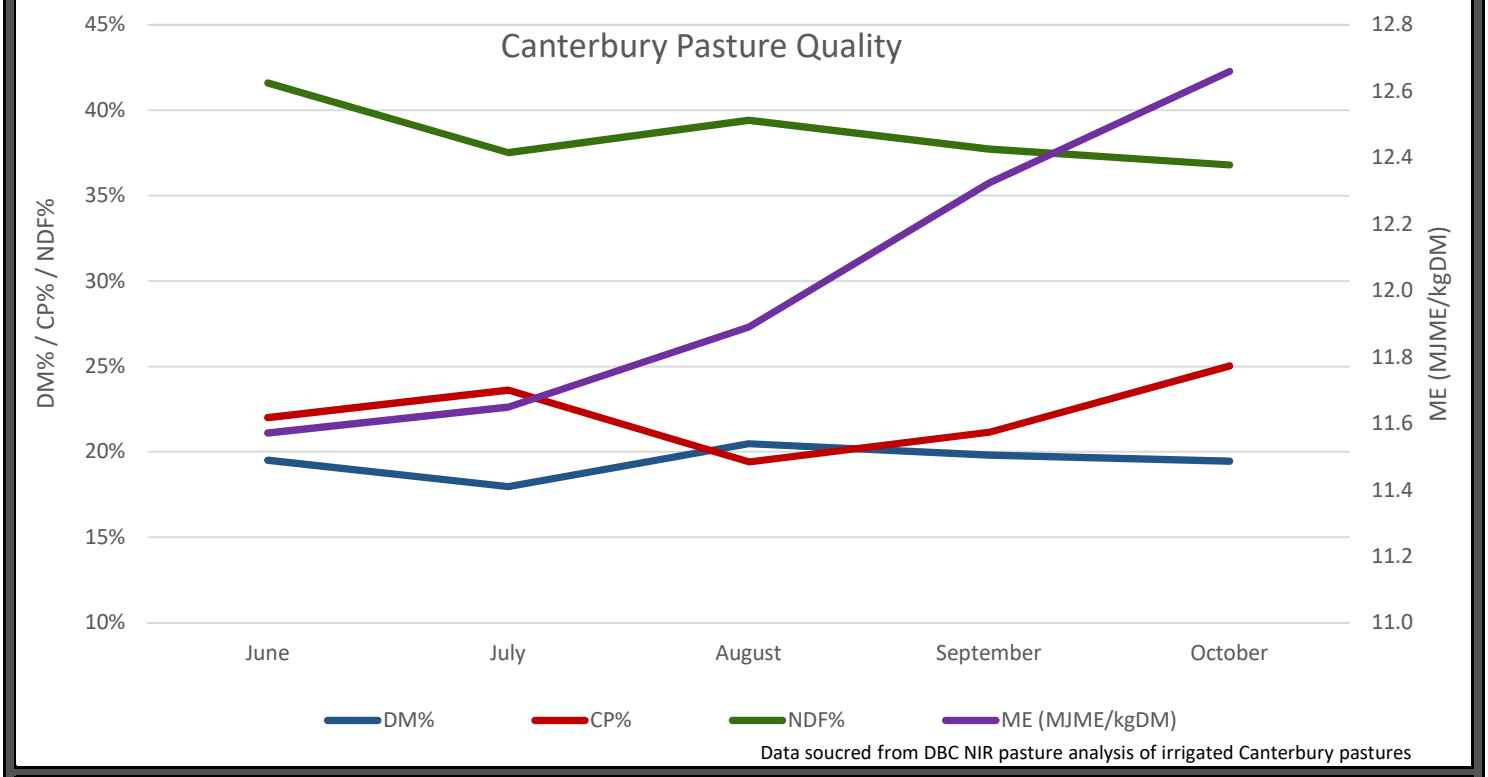
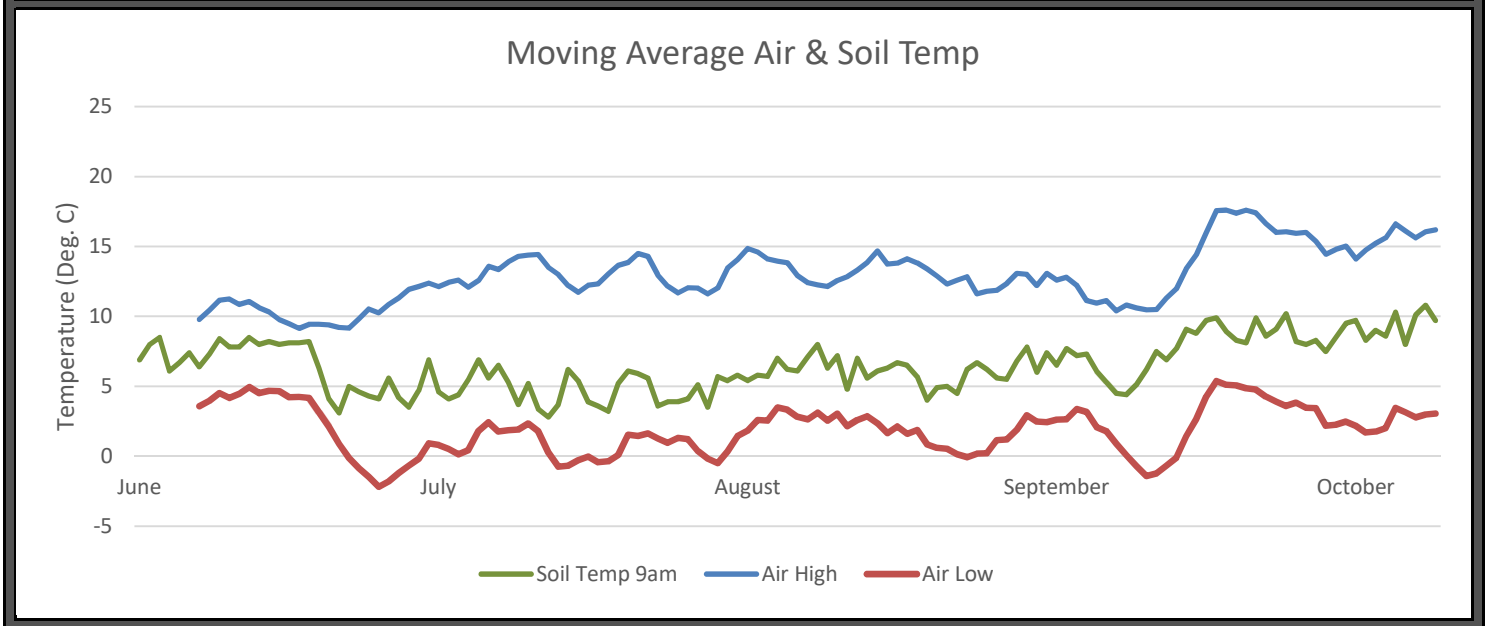
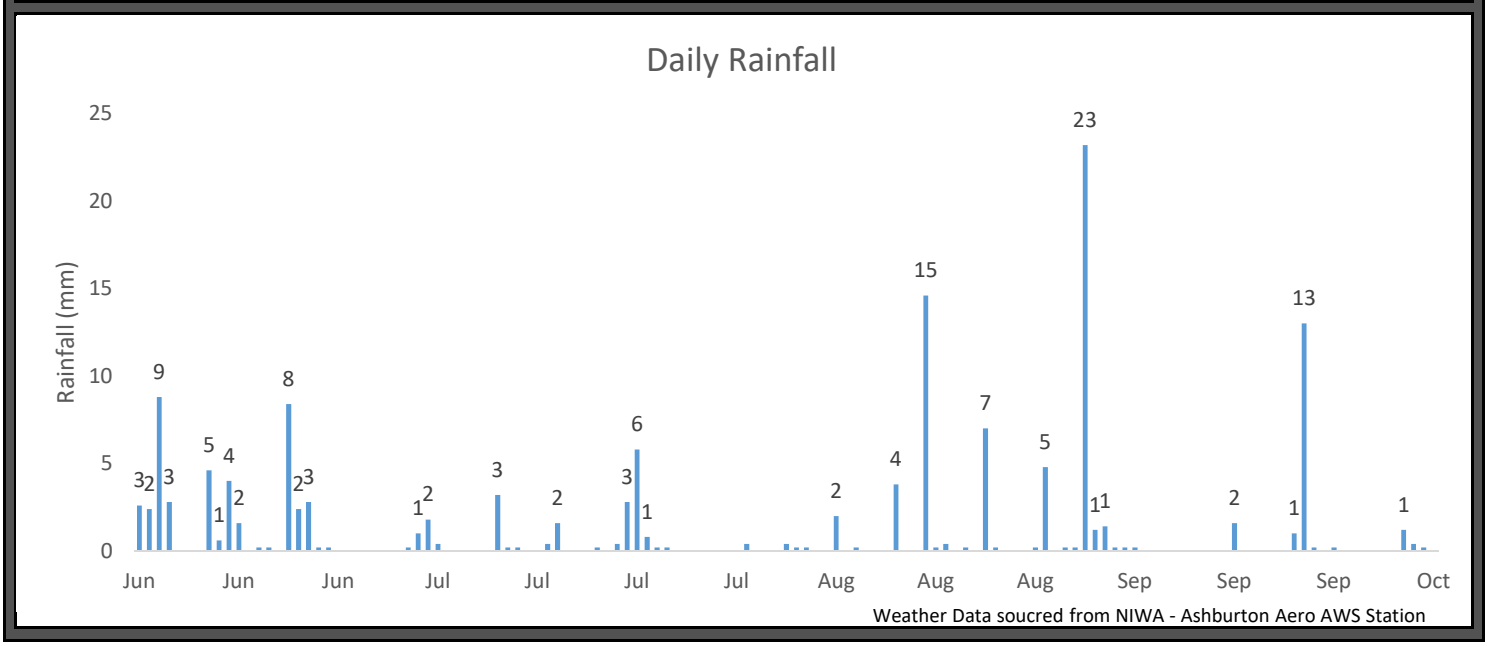
Monthly Pasture Report



Data soucred from DBC NIR pasture analysis of irrigated Canterbury pastures





Weather Data soucred from NIWA - Ashburton Aero AWS Station