



Birdsall

Max and Viv

Hillview – 424 acres, Omakere – Central Hawke's Bay



Max and Viv are third generation farmers on "Hillview", after Max's grandfather first started farming the original 296 acres in the early 1900's. Max went into partnership with his father in 1965 and took over the original block in 1972, increasing the acreage to 424 acres in 1976.

"Although phosphate had been applied regularly at quite high levels, Dept. of Ag soil tests taken in 1966 tested only medium to low. This indicated to me that the phosphate was not being taken up into the soil so the change to dicalcic phosphate was made. A regrassing programme was put into place with a paddock going down each year with 1-tonne lime and 4cwt. of dicalcic at sowing.

After more soil tests in the late 70's and early 80's, trace elements were included in the mixes, but since the mid 80's just dicalcic mixes have been used. In spring the flats and

selected paddocks for finishing the lambs get an application of hay mix/dairy blend and cropfine lime, with the main application going on in the autumn. The preferred mix for the rest of the property is 250kgs dicalcic 10%S and 370kgs cropfine lime per hectare (No.14s blend).

We run 1150 -1200 coopworth ewes, 450 hoggets and purchase 50 Friesian bull calves each spring, with the bulls being killed February to May. The average lambing percentage for the last five years has been 134%.

A monitored drenching programme is in place to keep drenching to a minimum. The dicalcic works in well with stock health and we are pleased with the results. You can apply products that give quick growth, but it's what the stock do with it that's important. Also you have to think of the return you're going to get compared with the costs.



"I have always looked at dicalcic as being a midline between organics and conventional methods. Because it's a natural product, you can put it on and feel assured you are not going to run into any trouble, unlike some fertilisers with their toxins and other associated problems."

If you want to make money on a small property, you need to make sure that you can finish the stock yourself. We can normally do this quite easily.

By scanning the ewes and having the singles separate, more lambs are being killed before Christmas, averaging 16-17kg. There isn't normally a problem getting the ewes to clean up the pasture either, but if required the neighbours cows are used.

The Omakere district is well known for producing quality wool. In 1991, the Hillview clip won the Wool Board North Island Owner Classer Crossbred Clip award.

Max is also currently the President of the Central Hawke's Bay Farmers Veterinary Club Inc., and as such works closely with Vet Services Hawke's Bay.

These photographs show the Birdsall family's commitment to the local community.

The Omakere School property was donated by Max's Grandfather in 1912, and land for the Omakere Rural Fire Brigade was donated by Max and Viv 2 years ago.

