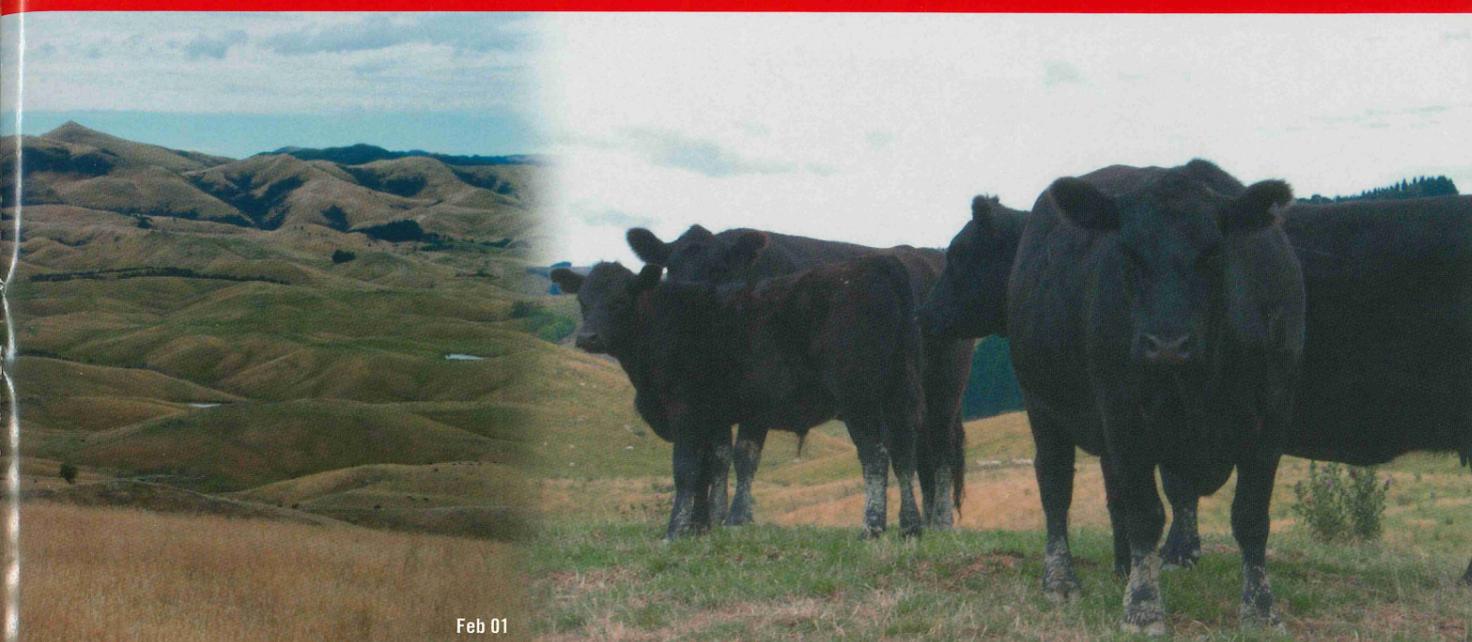


Tim & Peg James

1000 Acres, sheep and beef
Southern Hawke's Bay



Feb 01

Tim and Peg James farm 1,000 acres at Motea, Southern Hawke's Bay. Their property is a classic example of natural farming. Known throughout Hatuma Lime Company as one of the original users of dicalcic phosphate, their farming principles have stood the test of time, and to this day they are achieving results on their farm that are still giving them recognition as one of the best finishers of stock in that area.

"In the earlier years we were experimenting with different fertilisers," recalls Tim. "One day though during the 60's, I talked to Joe Topp at Hatuma and he told me about a new product called dicalcic phosphate. I decided to give it a try, and I've continued to use it ever since at 2cwt. per acre every year."

"Originally the farm was scrub country made up with manuka mostly, and it required a lot of clearing by different workers – we even named our paddocks after the men that helped clear them! Once we finished though, we made sure we had left a certain amount of manuka around the farm as shelter for the stock, but since we started using the dicalcic, it became very palatable and the stock ended up eating most of it," says Peg.

"The dicalcic seems to sweeten the grass and you don't have to force the stock to eat it. We make sure that we don't overstock and it doesn't concern us when we've got long looking grass as we know that it'll come in handy during the winter, when the stock will eat it all then."

"We never have a problem fattening our stock. For the last few years we have been buying in lighter stock, fattening them, and then selling them on," says Tim. "One particular time I went to a sale during a drought and everyone was selling, but I was buying. One guy mentioned, "well you're lucky, you've got plenty of water." But I knew that luck had nothing to do with it, as I still had plenty of good grass available.

We've never had facial eczema on the farm, the stock haven't had staggers for a number of years and there's never been a case of bloat either. Sometimes we've looked at the amount of clover that we have on the farm and have wondered about bloat, but it's never happened. Also, we only drench when we think the stock need it, which isn't very often at all.

All our pastures have been in for about 20 years except one paddock that was last sown in 1948. Year in and year out, the clover just keeps coming on."

The real "jewel in the crown" on this property, though, is their main dam. It was built in the mid 1950's because the property doesn't have any natural springs. It was so big when Tim was building it, that a couple of local farmers were worried that in a flood it would burst its banks and take out the only road in the area.

Tim doubts that the water level of the dam would have dropped a metre since it was built all those years ago, even though it's been the farm's main water supply.

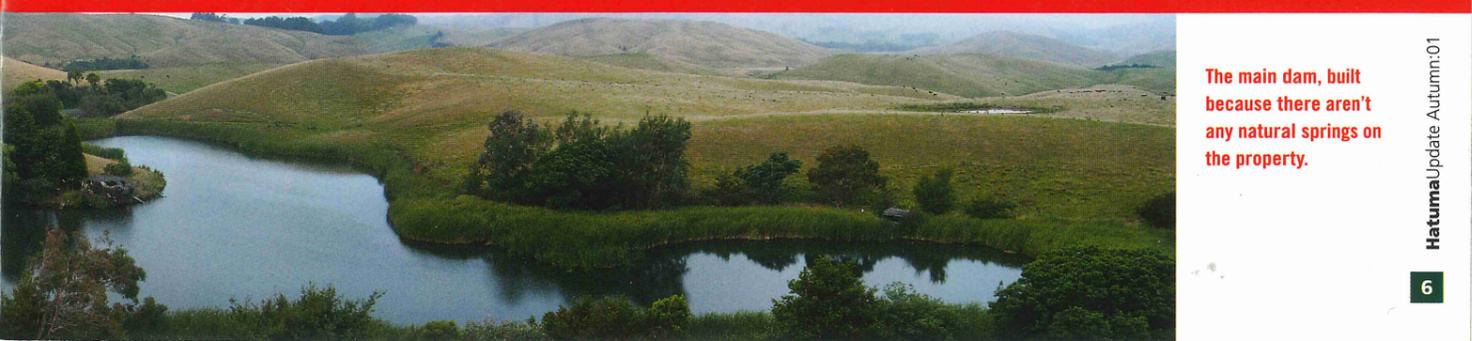
Part of this dam is fenced off, but the stock still have open access right to the waters edge, and despite this, the water is clear and clean. It is also a very popular place for a few local duck shooters during the season, and for the eel contractor that frequently gets up to a tonne of eels out of it every three years.

But perhaps the most unique feature of this asset is the fact that rainbow trout and perch were released into its clear depths some years ago after a breeder brought them down to the local show. After doubting their ability to survive the trip back up north, the breeder decided to release the fish into the James's dam. Although Tim and Peg doubt whether the trout were able to breed, the perch still continue to grow in numbers to this day.

"Every now and then we catch one, and there is always enough to feed everyone," Tim says with a grin.

Tim and Peg have also fenced off a 10 acre block that contains the last of the native trees and bush on the farm. There is a large mixture of plants in there, including some totara, rimu, rata and kahikatea.

"We decided to preserve this area because we were concerned about the native greenery disappearing," says Peg, "and we do try and plant more in this block when we can. It is now under a trust, so even if the farm ever gets sold, the block stays on."



The main dam, built because there aren't any natural springs on the property.