



# **International Farm Management Association Hands-On Farm Reports October 2020**



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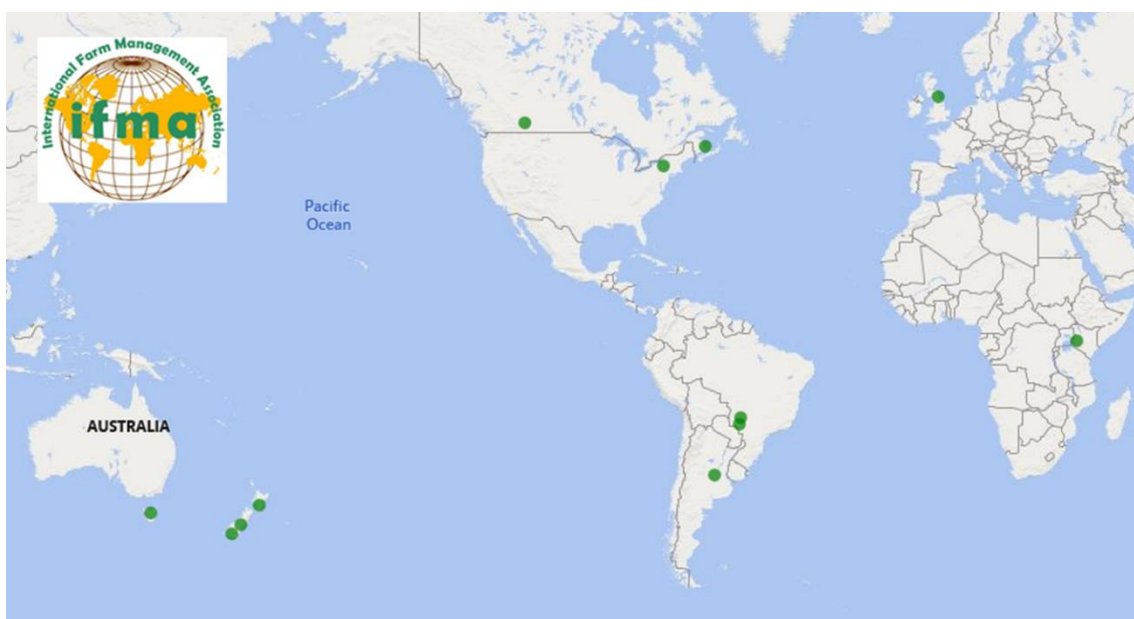
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## **IFMA 2020 Hands On farm Reports**

Amongst the incredibly positive feedback received with regard to IFMA country reports, there appears to be a genuine interest to know more of the practicalities and farming issues in the various countries that IFMA represent.

I therefore hope that you find our newly introduced IFMA 'Hands On' farm reports to be of great interest. We currently have 11 people reporting and I hope this number will increase so that more enterprise knowledge and management insight is put on the IFMA table.



I would like to thank all the contributors for agreeing to provide a management insight into their farming business. As the saying goes, 'If our foresight were as good as our hindsight, we would never make mistakes'. The practicality of being a 'Hands On' farmer is that management decisions have to be made on the day, often under pressure, without perfect knowledge and with many unknown variables waiting around the corner. It is easy for us all to report on decisions that go well; it is much harder to report on those that do not. If we are to learn from each other we need honesty, both in the decisions taken and in the reality of the outcomes.

I hope these reports allow new agricultural contacts to develop and find also that you find IFMA a friendly group of likeminded people. Whatever your agricultural background, I am sure that these reports will raise many questions and at the same time, provide 'spark' for new ideas. This is what I believe IFMA is all about.

**Trevor Atkinson – IFMA President**

## **International Farm Management Association (IFMA)**

IFMA is a society for people who are involved directly or indirectly in the agricultural process and who have an interest in the agriculture of parts of the world other than their own, exchange of knowledge and best practice.

This includes the whole spectrum of individual and corporate producers, farmers, managers, advisors, researchers, teachers, policy-makers, suppliers, farming and marketing organizations and agribusiness companies associated with agriculture, horticulture and rural enterprise.

IFMA has members in over 50 countries is organised and co-ordinated by a Council, with members drawn from around the world.

The objective of the Association is to further the knowledge and understanding of farming and farm business management and to exchange ideas and information about farm management theory and practice throughout the world.

- **IFMA International Congresses:**

These are organised every other year in countries around the world. They are organised locally, usually last for 6 days, which together with additional pre- and post-congress tours, provide not only an occasion to discuss farm management and agriculture in a global context, but also to learn a great deal about the host country's farming structure and its people. They are a totally unique experience.

### **The 2022 IFMA Congress which is the 23rd International Farm Management Conference will be hosted by the University of Copenhagen.**

- **19<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2022 - Pre tour** [http://ifma23.org/download/pretour\\_web.pdf](http://ifma23.org/download/pretour_web.pdf)

The pre congress tour covers Norway and Sweden starting in and arriving in Copenhagen ready for the Congress on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 2021 which is midsummer day.

- **25<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2022 – Next Gen Program**

This is a special programme which is being developed by the congress organisers for the next generation of farm managers and professionals and builds on the very successful one that took place in Tasmania in 2019.

- **26<sup>th</sup> June to the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 – Congress** <http://ifma23.org/index.html>

This will be the 23<sup>rd</sup> IFMA Congress whilst it follows a well proven format allowing delegates and speakers to exchange best practice its also allows the organisers to bring a flavour of the host country Agriculture management style and culture.

- **1<sup>st</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2022 – Post Congress Tour** [http://ifma23.org/files/20200409\\_Post-Congress\\_hjemmeside\\_compress.pdf](http://ifma23.org/files/20200409_Post-Congress_hjemmeside_compress.pdf)

The post congress will allow the participants to gain a full understanding of modern farming practices in Denmark whilst taking in the culture and history of the country

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**Note:**

All the authors of the reports are resident within the relevant Country and directly involved with Farm Management



**Argentina**

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### Farm Overview

Climate	Farm Area	Arable	Livestock	Soils
Rainfall 800-1000mm	Grassland 500ha Arable: 2500 ha	Wheat-Barley Soya- Corn Sorghum	800 head of cattle. Raising and rearing. All Aberdeen Angus	Class 1 ,2 and 3: 80%, Agriculture apitude, and then class 4, 5, 6 and 7, cattle raising and rearing apitude.

### Seasonal Challenges

We have had a great summer season in this region, with excellent yields of soy bean, corn and sorghum.

The first days of June we finished planting Wheat and Barley, with insufficient superficial soil moisture, they raised good at the beginning, but unfortunately we lost 60% of the area planted with Barley because of lack of rain and very cold weather.

Weed control in the arable crops this winter was successful, in part because of very dry and cold weather, but because the herbicides worked good too.

Last week, it rained finally, so we started to prepare for summer season.

Our plan for summer crops is ready and defined. We bought 85% of the inputs that we are going to need to produce summer crops. Most of this is financed to July 2021.

About livestock, summer was good, and we had enough food to face autumn months, but as winter was very dry, we had some trouble to face it. We sacrificed some wheat area to feed cows calving.

After the rain everything is coming to normal suddenly.

These days we are doing the insemination protocol at a fixed time.



## What's on My Plate

- Fertilizing with N, corn area
- Next week we start to plant corn
- Next month in October we start to plant soya and Sorghum
- Inseminating

## Looking Ahead

Our goal next year is to reach 1000 heads of cattle.

The next days a team of geologists will go to one of the farms to see if we have water capable of watering.

We are preparing to certificate one of the farms in Good Agricultural Practices, IRAM Standard.

## Key Activities Over Next 6 Months

People	Operational	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting used to work from home or have virtual meetings.</li> <li>• Writing health and safety protocols.</li> <li>• Some of them doing livestock training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corn planting</li> <li>• Soya and Sorghum planting October</li> <li>• Wheat and Barley Harvest in November and December- 50% of this production is Sold.</li> <li>• Insemination these days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning to buy a new Fumigator, with the weed seeker program.</li> </ul>

## Australia

**Hands-On Farmer:**

**Alastair Bowman**

**Tasmania**

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### Farm Overview

Climate	Farm Area	Arable	Livestock	Soils
<b>Average rainfall:</b> 1,100mm <b>Temp:</b> min 4 deg C max 24 deg C	<b>Total area:</b> 820 ha <b>Arable:</b> 633 ha <b>Forestry:</b> 187ha	25 ha of Spring oats 20 ha of Nui rye grass 30 ha of Industrial Hemp	<b>Sheep:</b> 2,485 ewes <b>Dairy:</b> 340 milkers <b>Cattle:</b> 70 Dairy x Beef	<b>Irrigation:</b> There are 2 pivots on the dairy land and 3 on the homeland.

### Seasonal Challenges

We had a relatively dry winter, recording 41mm for July and 49mm for August. It can be quite usual to get 150 mm for each month. The Autumn was wet at times, which made harvesting difficult, however grass growth was very good. If we get our normal wet Winter after a wet Autumn then it becomes really wet, which is hard on the animals as they are all outside. It also creates pasture damage from both water logging and pugging by cattle.

There has been the usual snow falls on the mountains which has delivered cold winds and frosts. The dry winters suit us here. The Easter side of Tasmania has had some substantial rainfalls which has been a big relief for them, as they have had a run of dry seasons. Much of the Australia continent has had good rainfall this year. We are told that the El nino weather pattern has been replaced by La nina which should bring higher rainfalls to Eastern Australia

### Dairy

Here on the farm the dairy cows are nearing the end of calving. The dryer conditions have suited them all. This week however there will have been 50-60mm making the ground very wet, Hopefully, it will be followed by wind to dry the surface out again





### Sheep

The ewes are nearing the end of lambing which has gone well. The usual number of deaths is always a concern; however, the weather has been good this year. The sheep are observed once a day, and



assistance is given where necessary. In our situation it is survival of the fittest. So many of the issues which occur at lambing are genetic. Here in Australia people select sires for low birth weights and rapid growth rates and for multiple birth rates. The percentage of lamb survival has the biggest effect on profitability. In our flat wet conditions 130% is a good result.

The ewes are set stocked at 12 – 16 / Ha depending on the performance of the pasture. They are put on pasture which has been set aside for 6 – 8 weeks to ensure they have enough nutrition.

### Cattle

We are currently running 60 dairy beef calves. Hereford or Angus, Friesian cross which were hand raised at the dairy. These are rotationally grazed where there is suitable grass. The intention is to sell them fat at 18 months of age, however the price for beef is very high at the moment. Due to herd rebuilding after the drought. So, they might be sold sooner rather than later.

### Cropping

This Spring the main focus will be on growing Industrial Hemp for seed production and food products. Last year's crop looked really good, but unfortunately heavy rain at the point of harvest meant we could only harvest 20%. This year the hemp will be on drained paddocks under a pivot irrigator.



There are 2 pivots on the dairy land and 3 on the homeland. There are also 4 moisture probes. 2 on the dairy and 2 on the homeland. The probes are 800mm deep with a sensor every 100mm. The metres are read from my mobile phone, showing a chart of the moisture movement. It has been really interesting to see the levels go up and down with rain, irrigation, and hot dry winds. The plan is to keep the moisture in the optimum range. I have learnt that we need to put more water on, more frequently during dry periods.

Nui rye grass will be harvested for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time this summer. Its performance has not been impressive, and the lambs have shown a dislike for it. There has been much research into growing

new varieties of rye grass and brassica's for cattle and sheep, both here and New Zealand which perform well, have good digestibility and are resistant to pests. However, it has become clear that the varieties which the pests dislike, are also disliked by the sheep and cattle. This can be very evident with milk output. I have been impressed with the performance of a rye grass called Mona.

Spring oats will be sown in November for making both silage and hay for the dairy cows. This will be sown in the paddock where last year's hemp crop was grown. It is still very wet and may be difficult to prepare for sowing because of the large amount of residue.

### What's on My Plate

We are using less N mainly urea, on the dairy pastures. We have switched to using a bio humic liquid fertiliser consists of urea, molasses, soluble boron, liquid humic acid, ecology activator-carbon derivative-sea minerals, cu fulvate, manganese fulvate, NKP, All mixed specifically for us, based on soil tests. Put on the dairy land as a capital application and then after every second grazing. Also mixed in are another 2 products. One has 3 strains of microbes in it, bacillus subtilis, bacillus thuringi and another. They all turn minerals into plant available form and encourage good fungi. The other product is another carbon product which is plant based and is close to what you would find in rotting matter which is what the bugs feed on. These are added at 1l / ha each.

The liquid fertiliser is put on at 75l / ha, plus another 75l / ha of water We are still putting on our DAP for phosphorus and SOP for potassium and sulphur instead of SOA The only N is 20kg in the liquid blend. So, we have gone from the typical 100kg/ha after every grazing which is what most high input dairies would use, down to 20kg/ha every 2<sup>nd</sup> grazing. We are going to adopt this practice across the whole farm this year.

Ph is monitored and we are now using granulate burnt lime at 250kg/ ha which would be equivalent to 2.5t of ground lime. It is not a long-term Ca fix but rather a Ph quick fix. It has a Ph of around 10. On our very acid soils we hope to lift the Ph by .5 in 6 weeks rather than 6 months. The other advantage is that it is spread using a farm spreader and the freight is far less.

The other product which our spreading contractor calls hippy fert., a form of humate, has been applied to the dairy land as an annual amendment. It will also be used on other paddocks across the farm, from this point forward. Fertiliser has often been applied at minimal levels rather than the optimum levels.

Effluent from the dairy is spread across the dairy land once per year and any surplus is taken to other paddocks on the farm, where it is thought to be most beneficial.

### Looking Ahead

We will not be importing large amounts of nutrients, we will be relying on the bacteria to convert it from atmospheric elements to plant availability, which is how it is done naturally albeit more slowly. The goal is to increase the bacterial population. The liquid fertiliser is to feed the bacteria not the plant. We put a small amount of N on to kick start the plant growth without causing any pollution of water ways. Because urea is such a volatile and soluble product, it is a difficult tool to use. We are still using granular fertiliser when sowing crops SOP or DAP. P can be easily locked up so there is a need for lots of bacteria and fungi to make it available to plants

Tasmania is now over 100 days free of Covid. Victoria is finally down to 20 /day having been up to 750 / day in a second wave. NSW is also down to single figures, and the other States are basically free apart from the International arrivals returning home, who are in lock down for 2 weeks. People are hoping they will be allowed to travel interstate soon.

The Gov't stimulus for unemployed and under employed will be dropped by \$300 this week. It will be of interest to see how this effects the economy. Some have not been looking for work, at a time when fruit and vegetable harvesters are getting desperate for workers.

### Key Activities Over Next 6 Months

People	Operational	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are fortunate that I have a cousin who runs a contracting business with large tractors and a range of machinery to choose from. He also has silage and hay making equipment and we employ him to do all our hay and silage making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lamb marking in 2 weeks' time, will be carried out by a contractor for the first time. It has become increasingly difficult to hire capable people for a short period. The lambs will be given a 6 in 1 clostridial vaccination and a fly repellent. If there is warm weather the flies will lay eggs around the tail. The next major event will be weaning the lambs at Xmas and shearing all the sheep, starting in the first week of January. The lambs are given a worm drench and another vaccination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prices for commodities are relatively stable. Wheat and barley have dropped \$50 / t in anticipation of a big Australian harvest and China reducing its purchases re politics. They are not happy with Australians speaking poorly about their Gov't</li> <li>We will not be sowing potatoes this year as we do not have any drained paddocks available. There were 4 Ha not harvested last Autumn, but we are hopeful they are still OK and can be harvested this Spring.</li> </ul>



## Brazil

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### Farm Overview

Climate	Farm Area	Arable	Livestock	Soils	Other
Rainfall: 1,300- 1,400mm	Total: 1,720ha Pasture: 685 ha Arable: 610 ha	Soybean Corn Sorghum	Calves Production Finishing Cattle Total herd: 800 animals	Oxisol with high level of argil	Soy and Cattle Lease Contract for third parties
Temperature Range: 14-35°C	Permanent Preservation Area: 425 ha (24.7%)				

### Seasonal Challenges

Each year is a new learning. In 2020, for example, we are going through the driest weather over the past few years with high temperatures, and long periods of no rain. This climate condition hindered our winter strategy for beef cattle.

We used to sow pasture after soy harvest, usually in March. But this year,



our plan didn't work so well because of the shortfall rain. As consequence, we had to sell 100calves before the ideal period. The positive side of this situation was that cattle prices reached their highest

levels in history, in real terms. This was due to the current livestock cycle, with increasing breeding cows retention, as well as the increasing Chinese demand for beef along with other Brazilian agricultural products.

The dry weather is severe and limits the fattening of cattle. Most of our beef production is grass-based. We still have some animals for sale. Heifers and cows that are being fattened up. Even with higher feeding expenses, it's still worth it because of the current high price.

The shortfall rain will delay the soy plantation this year and could reduce its production. It can also affect the cows pregnancy season that starts in October. We will need to take a look at this closely.

### What's on My Plate

- Budget plan for next cattle crop (profits and expenses)
- Preparing for breeding season (one of the most important time for us)
- Soil analysis to adjust pasture fertilizing
- Searching for new machinery to control weeds
- Calving season (another important time for us)

### Looking Ahead

We started a consulting program 4 years ago for getting knowledge about the performance of our activities. We wanted to learn about what were our expenses on feedstuff, labour, machinery, administrative costs etc. What are the production costs? So, now that we have all these numbers, we can plan and make better decisions (or at least make less mistakes while deciding on something).



As consequence, we are discussing the expansion of our business for the next years. We need more area to raise cattle, so we are looking for areas in order to do a lease contract for cattle.

We have an area in the farm that has been rented for soybean. But we intend to get this area back and start cropping by ourselves as well.

These are our long-term plans.



## Key Activities Over Next 6 Months

People	Operational	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff reviews and training</li><li>• New uniform for staff (with the farm brand, for marketing purposes)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Calves attention</li><li>• Pasture management</li><li>Administrative control (budgeted x done)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expansion plans</li><li>• Get knowledge to start soy production</li></ul>



## Brazil

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### Farm Overview

Climate	Farm Area	Arable	Livestock	Soils	Other
<b>Maracaju:</b> 20-30°C and 1,600mm rainfall  <b>Pantanal:</b> 22-32°C and 1,200mm rainfall	<b>Grassland:</b> 6,400 ha  <b>Arable:</b> 10,600 ha 2 crops per year soybean, corn, oats  <b>Permanent Preservation Area:</b> 3,200 ha	<b>2 crops per year:</b> Corn: 7,800 ha  Soybean: 10,100 ha  Oat: 450ha  <b>1 crop per year:</b> Sugar cane: 450 ha	<b>Total head:</b> 7,500  Nelore Breeding bulls  Commercial beef herd	<b>Maracaju:</b> high fertility soil  <b>Pantanal:</b> poor soils	Premium beef (sold to meat boutiques)

### Seasonal Challenges

This year the soybean and corn crops went extremely well, and price helped put our revenue up as well. Despite having more rain than expected during the soybean harvest, which caused some stress, it all worked out fine in the end.

In September, as we finished the corn harvest, the preparation for the soybean crop started. Desiccation, limestone and fertilizer applications are underway. Dryness is taking longer than expected, which is delaying the sowing.

For the cattle in our Pantanal farm, it was a tough year, as 2020 was one of the driest in history. We have been increasing the cow-calf herd on this farm, which has low carrying capacity due to the biome specific characteristics. With prolonged drought, the solution was to build a water reservoir.



Covid 19 didn't affect much the farm routine. We had to change some habits such as drinking "tereré"\* in groups and avoid many trucks at the grain warehouse area. We established social

distance and made the use of masks compulsory. In the city, where we have our administration office, it was a bit more severe and we adopted home office to minimize the risks.

\**Terere* is a herbal tea, drunk cold, almost daily. It is part of Mato Grosso do Sul and Paraguay culture.

### What's on My Plate

- Conducting a marketing campaign for semen sales
- Planning of new content for the company's social media
- Describing operational procedures
- Listing improvements for the operational structure to work better and coping with the regulations
- Taking a course on Management and Governance for Agribusiness in order to implement at the company
- Conducting cattle tracking through SISBOV (government traceability system)
- Developing a program with the next generation of employees for mindset development
- Planning a new variable remuneration program for staff
- Planning an expansion of our quality beef production (premium)

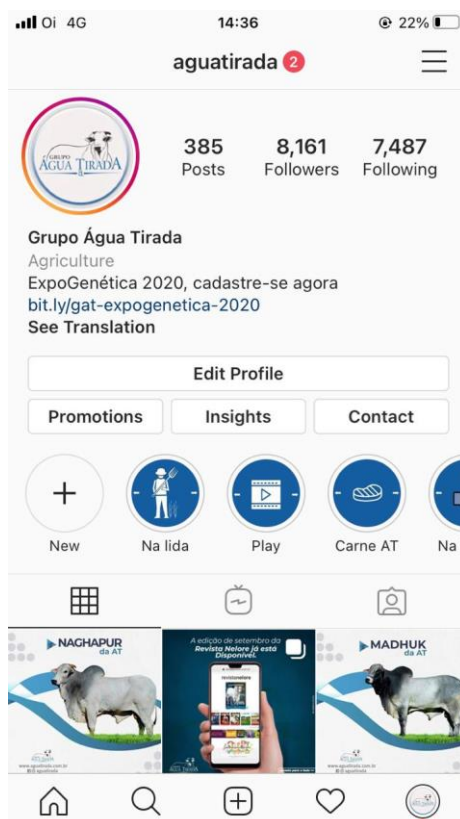
### Looking Ahead

Discuss the implementation of new technology for the semi-feedlot in order to have cattle individual data that will allow for screening potentially profitable animals for finishing in feedlots.

Discuss a technology project for the purebred animals.

Potentialize our reach through social media.

We understood that what have brought us here is not necessarily what is going to take us further. For that reason, the finance manager and I are studying to implement a plan, with the help of a consultant, for our management and governance improvement. Since I've just returned to the business and I'm the first of the next generation, that is a challenge the company is also facing. But we know that as soon as we go over it, the next years will be of great accomplishments.







## Key Activities Over Next 6 Months

People	Operational	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Training and leadership development</li><li>• Improve variable payment plan</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve crop planning</li><li>• Reduce the breeding season length</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve the planning, the financial health management, and the company professional structure</li></ul>



**Canada**

**Hands-On Farmer:**  
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### Farm Overview

Climate	Farm Area	Arable	Livestock	Soils
Average rainfall 885mm Average snowfall 285cm Temperature range: 30°C to -25°C	1600 acres (647 hectares)	Potatoes Sudan Sorghum Alfalfa	None	Sandy - Clay Loam

### Seasonal Challenges

Our family has been on this piece of land since the early 1800's. I'm the sixth generation to farm.

The 2020 growing season has had its share of challenges. There was significant rainfall prior to planting, but it let up right around the middle of May. That is when we typically start our planting, which made for a nice seed bed. The spring was warm and dry, but over the last number of years we have dealt with colder temperatures and wet soils.



We entered into a drought for the next 3 months of our growing season. This has been a trend in the last number of years with higher than normal temperatures and low rainfall. Irrigation is a hot button topic in the province of Prince Edward Island, and there is currently a moratorium on high capacity wells for the purpose of agricultural irrigation. As we are set to begin harvest, we have a lot of weather patterns moving up the coast of the Atlantic, which tend to carry a lot of rain and wind, which can make harvest difficult.

A little project we worked on at the farm this summer was building our own bulk box for hauling potatoes.

In the winter months we can have extreme weather with temperatures reaching minus 25°C plus a windchill and significant snowfall. As part of our contract with the buyer of our potatoes, we have to wash them before they are delivered which can prove difficult in these extreme temperatures. We have learned how to cope with these seasonal challenges, and we are always learning new tricks to make it easier.



### What's on My Plate

- Harvesting and storing the potato crop
- Getting ready for the annual food safety audit



- Soil sampling and preparing fall fertilizer applications
- Fall tillage for planting in the spring of 2021
- Getting the equipment ready to wash and ship out potatoes over the winter months
- Fertilizer recommendations for spring
- Industry meetings
- Management meetings to look at any changes we can make
- Yield and trial analysis to help make management decisions for next year's crop
- Equipment maintenance and repairs

### Looking Ahead

Once we have harvest and fall tillage complete, we will have some time to meet with our crop advisor to look at the trials completed this year and decide if it will fit into our general practices. We will also be looking forward to new ideas, products, and technology we would like to try out for next year. The potato marketing board here on PEI is very good for holding information sessions about things that are being done across the industry, and we try to attend all that we can.

### Key Activities Over Next 6 Months

People	Operational	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with the management team to look over the 2020 season and prepare for 2021</li> <li>• Have the entire farm team meet to review the goals set out for 2020 and set new goals for 2021</li> <li>• Staff party!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Harvest</li> <li>• Ship out the crop</li> <li>• Equipment maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review farm financials</li> <li>• Look at income and expense to make operational decisions for the next growing season</li> </ul>



## Canada

**Hands-On Farmer:**  
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### Farm Overview

Climate	Farm Area	Arable	Livestock	Soils	Other
Semi-arid; Average precipitation: 300mm Temperature range: 32°C to -33°C	5200 acres (2100 hectares)	Canola Wheat Barley Yellow Peas Lentils	Laying Hens	Brown and Dark Brown Chernozems	Boutique Cut Flowers

### Seasonal Challenges

After three to four years of drought conditions we weren't sure what this growing season would have in store, but I'm happy to report that timely spring rains allowed us to grow a better than average crop this year. Nothing out of the ordinary for pest and weed pressure, though my integrated management plan to stay on top of some agronomic challenges continues (wild oat resistance testing for example).



*Our Austenson feed barley yielded well (105bu/ac)*

The harvest season ran smoothly and expeditiously (5 weeks) which was a nice change from the last few harvest seasons that saw snow, untimely rain, and smoky conditions from forest fires on the west coast hamper progress. In addition, I was able to hire a great team of operators to help us harvest and bring the crop in. It's sure a nice change to have positive things to report! At the time of writing, central and northern Alberta are still harvesting and are

experiencing weather-related challenges due to excess moisture. Alberta is a vast province and while my pocket of the world is still trending quite dry, a few hours drive north, and those farmers have had triple the in-crop rainfall that we've had on already-saturated soils.

A major project for us between seeding and harvest was to convert our Seedmaster air drill (70-14) from 14-inch knife spacing to 12-inch spacing. After a number of dry years, we wanted to get back to smaller row spacing to better manage inter-row weeds via competition and canopy closure.

COVID-19 presented some challenges, including implementing workplace



*Two Case IH axial flow combines (9230 and 9240 models) with 40ft flex draper headers harvesting hard red spring wheat at sunset.*



*A harvest view looking south to the CP rail line (Canadian Pacific Railway) and the Bow River valley on the Siksika reserve.*

protocols and working with the “new normal” at grain elevators, banks, and other business partners. Much like what we’re seeing in other sectors, processes have been implemented to limit person to person contact when delivering grain for example, and for the most part this has gone well. Grain grading at point of sale is usually something you should be present for, but since our crop is of great quality this year, we’ve avoided having to dispute or challenge grades. Luckily, the impact felt on the grain sector in Canada was minimal and the flow of grain continues through our rail system and to our export partners. Now we look to our 2021 season.

### What’s on My Plate

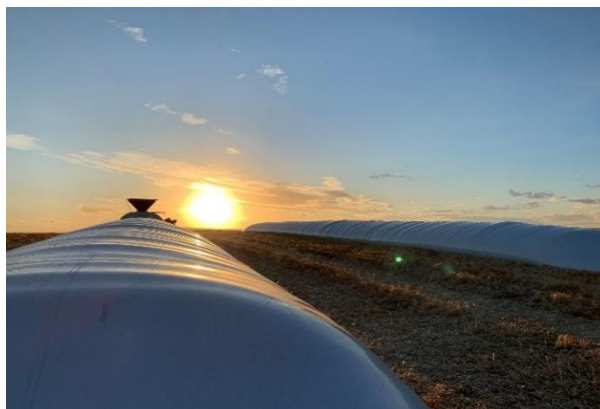
- Soil sampling and analyzing; making fertilizer plans for next year
- Fall spreading of ammonium sulphate fines
- Breaking newly acquired pasture and related preparation to allow seeding in 2021
- Year-end bookkeeping and financial analysis
- Analyzing cost per acre and yield data
- Booking and cleaning seed for 2021
- Cleaning up grain bags (temporary storage) and hauling grain to market

## Looking Ahead

I sit on a number of organizations provincially (Alberta Wheat Commission) and nationally (Cereals Canada), so the winter months include picking up where we left off on key files

We do our best strategic planning in all aspects of our business over the colder winter months

Forward contracting and marketing our grain for the 2021 season has already begun. I plan to seed a new crop in 2021; stay tuned for this exciting development!



*Two plastic grain bags at sunset (250ft); they will store grain until bin space becomes available in a couple of months. Bags are recycled.*

## Key Activities Over Next 6 Months

People	Operational	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management meetings to assess the current year and look ahead to next year</li> <li>• Take a break!!!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moving grain to market</li> <li>• Fall field work</li> <li>• Equipment maintenance</li> <li>• Accounting entries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yearly review of our business performance, current year and forecasting</li> </ul>



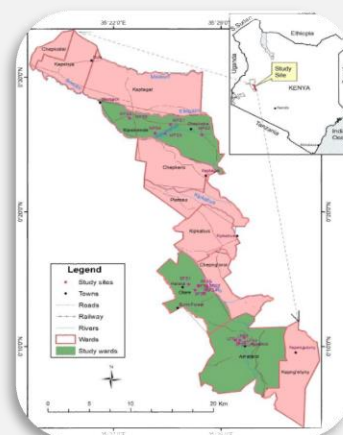
## Kenya

**Hands-On Farmer:**  
**Robert Rotich**

**Uasin Gishu County**  
**Kenya.**

**Contact:**

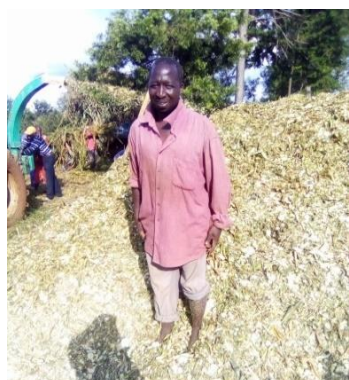
[robertrotich763@gmail.com](mailto:robertrotich763@gmail.com)



### Farm Overview

Climate	Farm Area	Arable	Livestock	Soils	Other
Rainfall: 900-1200mm  Temperature range 8.4°C-26.1°C	2 acres	1.5 acres	Dairy herd	Red loamy soils	Hire 2acre for silage

### Seasonal Challenges



This season we have experienced more rains compared to the previous year. This presented to us an opportunity to store water for use in the dry season.

The heavy rains affected harvesting of brachiaria and desmodium. One of my cows died from pneumonia due to the season's cold. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, more milk was consumed

on farm thus reducing the expected sales



### What's on My Plate

- Repair and Cleaning of feed store and zero grazing unit
- Harvesting and ensiling of maize in September



- Routine animal husbandry management-deworming,
- Spraying for-Tick control
- Hay baling-Brachiaria and desmodium
- Registration of dairy cows with the Kenya Stud Book

### Looking Ahead

- Looking into Livestock insurance
- Ensiling of more maize in October 2020
- Establishment of a Non-Residential farmers training centre



### Key Activities Over Next 6 Months

People	Operational	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train my farm hand on identification of sick cows</li> <li>• Medical certification for farm hands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work plans for maize establishment and silage harvest</li> <li>• Purchase Chaff cutter</li> <li>• Feed conservation from December To harvest desmodium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milk marketing and value addition of milk</li> <li>• Establish a fodder multiplication centre</li> </ul>



**New Zealand**

**Hands-On Farmer:**  
**Matt Carroll**

**Manawatu,  
 New Zealand**

**Contact:**  
[matthewescarroll@gmail.com](mailto:matthewescarroll@gmail.com)



### Farm Overview

Climate	Farm Area	Arable	Livestock	Soils
Rainfall 1200-1500mm annually Altitude 90-820m asl	1802 effective pastoral hectares 65 hectares of forestry 497 hectares of bush	Forage crops, 120 hectares spring sown, all fed in situ; regrassing in Autumn and Spring	Sheep, Beef, and Deer breeding and finishing Dairy, 2 split calving herds, one once-a-day milking	Free draining river flats, heavy clay, stoney soils, brown soils steep land soils and more.

### Seasonal Challenges

We came into the 2020 winter with low pasture covers, and low crop yields due to a very dry summer. Low rainfall during the winter has increased the utilisation of forage crops and with soil temperature hardly dropped below 10 degrees we achieved particularly good winter pasture growth rates. The dry does put us in a state of concern as we are 400mm behind our average annual rainfall.



Covid-19 did affect the throughput of the meat works, and now our seasonal staff availability as well as our markets. However, this is not a New Zealand specific issue.

The farm gate prices for prime beef (\$5.60/kg CW\*) and lamb (\$7.25/kg CW\*) are sitting right on and just below the five-year average, respectively. Our farm gate venison price (\$6.20/kg CW) have taken the biggest dive as this top end product's demand predominantly comes from the high-end restaurant trade. The wool price continues to be a disappointment. This year the wool check will not cover the cost of shearing.

Our scanning percentage in the ewes is down on last year by 13% to 160% showing the effect the dry had on the breeding flock. This is a trend across most dry areas in the country.



The dry summer lowered pasture growth rates on the dairy units. However, the milk price was at a level that meant that it was financially feasible to feed more supplement rather than dry cows off. Going forward the milk price is predicted to be \$5.90 - \$6.90/KG MS\* this is \$0.24-\$1.24 behind what the price finished at last season.

### What's on My Plate

- There are currently 4500 mixed age ewes lambing which is mostly looked after by our two block managers in change of the sheep country. Following this will be docking of all lambs. A pre-Christmas shear for half of the ewes and dagging and digging all sheep on the property.
- Across the 2 dairy units calving is almost finished for the spring herds. The autumn herds will be dried off around January then calve in March.
- There are 240 mixed age hinds that will begin fawning around the middle of November. We aim to have the majority of the 2019 born weaner stags sold prime prior to Christmas.
- Cultivation and drilling of new pasture out of forage crops and new forage crops for stock.
- I am heavily involved in our local catchment care group looking into water quality, biodiversity, and pest control. This is in the early stages and we are busy trying to gather funding and instigating regular water testing within our river's catchment.

### Looking Ahead

With the potential of another dry period we will be monitoring feed supply against demand with livestock growth rates to ensure targets are met. This is also done in conjunction with the prime and store livestock markets to ensure business income targets are met.

We have decided to add some additional summer feed crops for added feed security.

The newly released legislation on freshwater management will need to be understood and considered when looking forward for the business.





**Key Activities Over Next 6 Months**

People	Operational	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the seasonal labour shortage</li> <li>• Encourage all staff to be competent with the new farm management software. (FarmIQ)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lift the level of data recording to better understand the drivers in our business</li> <li>• Spring regressing and crop sowing</li> <li>• Grow and sell 2020 seasons lamb crop</li> <li>• Monitor breeding animals' condition to ensure a recovery from last year's dry.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the business within the new legislative requirements</li> <li>• Annual review of the business's farm environment plans and nutrient budgets.</li> <li>• Review of the farms health and safety policies.</li> <li>• Scenario modelling to ensure the most efficient use of pasture/feed is met.</li> </ul>



## New Zealand

**Hands-On Farmer:**  
**Tom Macfarlane**

**South Island,  
 New Zealand**

**Contact:**  
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### Farm Overview

Climate	Farm Area	Arable	Livestock	Soils
Balfour (Southland) – 250masl,  Temperate climate, 1200mm annual rainfall  Wet winters and often at a moisture deficit for a month somewhere in Jan, Feb, Mar.  South Canterbury – 200-300masl,  800mm annual rainfall, generally considered summer dry for 2-3 months	Balfour – 490ha total, 460 ha effective  Balfour contour – flat and rolling hill country. Some steeper parts but can get tractor over 95%  South Canterbury, Total 800ha, 650 ha effective grazing, 130ha of forestry  South Canterbury contour – 180 ha of flat land which is irrigated, rest rolling to steep hill country. Can get a tractor over 90% in some capacity.	Balfour - 75ha winter forage crops  15ha summer/autumn forage crops  South Canterbury – 85ha winter forage crop,  25ha summer/autumn forage crop	Balfour – 1300 stud breeding hinds, 500 R2 and R3 stud stags,  1200 MS R1 deer, 65 Angus Breeding cows and calves, 28 R1 heifer replacements  South Canterbury – 1450 breeding hinds wintered; 2300 breeding hinds mated with surplus sold as breeding stock. 3500 MS R1 deer wintered, 70 Sire stags, 200 Angus Breeding cows and calves, 190 R1 cattle inc replacement heifers, 50 ewes	Balfour - Heavy clay soils, underlying rotten rock which can be exposed on hills where shallower soil.  South Canterbury – 150ha alluvial river flats, (mostly irrigated),  Rest heavy clay from flat to steep hill.

### Seasonal Challenges

In South Canterbury we have had 2 autumn droughts in a row now, spanning January to May/June. The length of these has been the real challenge as by the time we have had enough rain the ground temperature has been too low to grow a significant amount of grass. Along with this we had an extremely slow spring in 2019, which meant coupled with the low grass covers going into winter we didn't make enough silage to get us through the autumn and winter. Therefore, we were required to buy in supplement and reduce stocking rate for the winter.

Following this we had a mild and very dry winter, which allowed us to sneak through with conservative feed levels and average stock performance due to good feed utilisation. The spring has started well with some well-timed and effective rainfall as well as good temperatures.

Good grass growth combined with the market signals to kill deer early for best price has meant that a feed surplus is rapidly growing. We will aim to build a little inventory in terms of supplement made as well as getting winter crops in early after a good fallow period to save on chemical costs.

In Balfour – Southland, we have had 2 slow wet springs in a row meaning early grass growth was slow and new grass and crops were in late. This flowed through to making less silage for feeding in the winter. The summer was cooler and wetter than usual, which was good for grass growth but not winter crop growth. Consequently, we had to purchase silage for the winter to help get us through. The winter in general was mild and drier than usual so like Canterbury feed utilisation was better than usual and stock performance good. Also, like Canterbury the spring has started well although wetter in Southland. Again, we will try and convert this surplus to better and cheaper crops as well as more supplement in reserve.

In South Canterbury, the irrigation storage lake owned by our community irrigation scheme is at 75% of capacity when we would expect it to be at 100% in late September. The water reserves in the soil are also very low with many of the natural springs and lowland creeks either dry or at a much lower flow than typical for this time of year. Although things can change very quickly it is something to be mindful of if we are to have restricted irrigation water and less reserves in the soil if a dry spell hits.

### What's on My Plate

- Preparing cropping and regrassing plans for the season so farm staff can implement.
- Making seasonal adjustments to the farming plan due to changing pricing signals to make sure income can be maximised.
- Pricing all inputs for the year to make sure we can stay within our tight budget constraints due to the temporary suppression of the Venison market.
- Strategic review of selling and marketing systems for the stud operation. Looking to have these in place for the upcoming selling season to combat a tough season in terms of cashflow for most commercial clients.
- Continuing to evaluate and tweak our farming system to become more resilient and profitable.

Applying for consent to farm for the South Canterbury farm. This is the regulation of environmental outputs. This is not a straightforward exercise given the ramifications in the ever-changing legislation and regulatory tools.

## Looking Ahead

Primary current focus is to get through an extremely challenging year without going backwards in terms of cash. On the flip side of this we are attempting to do that without having a flow on effect on the future production and cashflow of the businesses.

If we do have a better season the key is looking for smart opportunities to convert into quick cash to help get through the season. We need to do this while maintaining a low and controlled cost structure.

Longer term is settling to a system where we have the ability to take advantage of the good years and be resilient in the poor years. Growing the business (including secure staff), forming relationships, lowering debt levels and controlling input costs are all part of the equation.

## Key Activities Over Next 6 Months

People	Operational	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing reviews and training.</li> <li>• Ongoing rotation and recruitment of new staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Killing of yearling deer</li> <li>• Setting up pastures for fawning</li> <li>• Cropping/regrassing plan implementation</li> <li>• Supplement making</li> <li>• Sire stag sales</li> <li>• Assessing individual animals for breeding programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance of stock numbers and classes between species</li> <li>• Breeding programme planning</li> <li>• System analysis to be profitable</li> <li>• Obtaining consent to farm to secure future flexibility</li> <li>• Further cementing relationships for inputs and products</li> <li>• Growing business while venison market subdued</li> </ul>



## United Kingdom

**Hands-On Farmer:**

**Fraser Johnson**

Northumberland UK.

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### Farm Overview

Climate	Farm Area	Arable	Livestock	Soils	Other
Rainfall 600mm – 700mm Temperature range 2 -20 deg.C	Grassland: 500ha Arable: 1,800ha Woodland: 100ha	Wheat Oilseed Rape Barley Field Beans Small Scale Veg	Dairy Herd Suckler Cows Beef Turkeys Laying hens	Ex open cast Poorly structured soils	Farm Shop Open Cast Coal White Park Cattle Commercial grain store

### Seasonal Challenges

This year has given us many challenges on and off the fields. We had an exceptionally wet autumn and winter which meant we only drilled around half the winter cereal acreage and establishment of the oilseed rape was very poor.

The wet winter was followed by an extremely dry spring which soon turned the saturated soils very dry. We drilled spring malting barley and spring beans which have established well on land we min-tilled and drilled but land which we ploughed, dried out very quickly and establishment was varied. Land that we did not drill in the autumn and fallow land was established, using various methods, with a green cover crop to improve soil structure and fertility.



Rain finally came in early June which has saved the spring crop and given the grass a good boost of growth.

Disease pressure has been lower than a typical year due to the dry weather.



1<sup>st</sup> cut silage is carried out in last week of May. Yield was lower than a typical year, but we cut two extra fields to make up for the shortfall. We have made three cuts of silage with 3<sup>rd</sup> producing the most grass.

It was quite a slow start to harvest with some persistent showers in August but by mid-September



we had finished combining. Yields were average with the wheat yielding 8-9t/ha. Spring barley yielded well and passed for malting, but the winter oilseed rape was very poor.

Thankfully, the new drilling season is well underway. This year we purchased a new strip-till drill and have direct drilled the winter oilseed rape and winter wheat so far. The new drill has reduced our fuel and labour costs. We drilled fertiliser with the oilseed rape, and this has given the rape a huge boost allowing

it to grow away from common insect pests, so we have not needed to apply any insecticides.

Covid-19 will have given everyone similar challenges and we have had to change much of our working practice to reduce the risk. This has been more challenging than I expected as staff often use multiple machines each day therefore stressing the importance of sanitising cabs has been vital. The farm is on the urban fringe which has resulted in more fly tipping and public walking over private land during the Covid restrictions.

The dairy herd went out to grass at the end of May, currently giving about 28-32L/day. They will be housed at nights at the end of September and then inside 24hrs from early October. The milk price is approximately 28ppl. We are currently looking into to buying a raw milk vending machine to add value to our product by supplying the public directly with our milk.

Belted Galloway suckler herd have all calved with no issues. There are 4 heifers that will be registered as pedigrees and bred from. The rest will be fattened and sold through the Blagdon Farm Shop. The Galloway bull is with the cows at the moment but will be brought in soon and then used as a sweeper bull in the dairy.



The Blagdon Farm Shop briefly closed during the Covid restrictions then opened with a 'click and collect' system but is now fully opened whilst adhering to social distance regulations.

The turkeys arrived mid-September. This year we are rearing them in 3 different sized batches which should allow us to control their final weight so that we have a good range of sizes to sell through the farm shop. We are fattening more smaller sized birds this year as we think covid restrictions may still be in place preventing extended friends and families gathering for Christmas.

## What's on My Plate

- Finish drilling winter wheat before the weather turns wet.
- Harvest equipment to be checked and serviced before being stored for the winter.
- Learning best practice for new drill – starting to turn wet now which is not ideal drilling conditions.
- Decisions on the Countryside Stewardship Scheme options to be agreed
- Arla Garden quality assurance scheme for the Dairy Herd and youngstock to complete. This now covers animal welfare, carbon emissions, and environmental practice
- Veg to pick for the farm shop
- Decide on pre-emergence herbicide mixes
- Begin to prepare cattle sheds for livestock coming in for the winter

## Looking Ahead

As a business we are trying to improve our 'attention to detail'. This has meant closing down some of the marginal profit activities but also giving staff members more responsibilities to focus on key areas of their work.

We have had a big push to tidy up the farmyards and make them a more pleasant working environment. The farm is also investing in staff by enrolling them on training courses to improve their skills.

New Countryside Stewardship Scheme offers the chance to move away from 100% cash cropping allowing us to grow crops that will improve soil structure and fertility. This will also result in the reduction of inorganic fertilisers applied which will reduce our carbon footprint. NFU has set a target of being carbon neutral by 2040.

Risk management – crop marketing will be key for the 2021 harvest as there is likely to be a big crop drilled this autumn. We have forward sold a tonnage of wheat for Nov 21.

## Key Activities Over Next 6 Months

People	Operational	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff reviews and individual training and development programmes</li> <li>• Health and safety review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Machinery replacement policy to plan</li> <li>• Begin looking at staff requirements for turkey processing at Christmas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crop marketing for 2020 and 2021 harvest</li> <li>• Implement stewardship scheme to reduce inorganic fertiliser</li> </ul>



**United States of America**

**Hands-On Farmer:**  
**Emilie Mulligan**  
 Avon, NY, USA

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### Farm Overview

Climate	Farm Area	Arable	Livestock	Soils
4 seasons 35-40 inches rain	2,800 acres	Corn Alfalfa Wheat	1,200 heifers 1,600 cows (milking and dry)	Sandy loam

### Seasonal Challenges

We completed corn harvest on Friday and covered our bunk on Saturday. Corn harvest this year yielded great results leading to our largest corn silage pile ever (21,000 tons)! It is always a busy time as we are drilling wheat, triticale and cover crops (depending on the crop rotation) into the fields within a few days of chopping corn off of them. Our goal is to have cover crops planted on all land for the winter so that nothing is left bare. We have finished 4 cuttings of hay this summer with not great yields as there has been minimal rain to help our alfalfa grow. Although the summer wasn't ideal for growth of our alfalfa/grass, it provided ideal weather for corn growth, we had decent amount of rain this spring after corn was planted and then a very hot and dry summer. Now it is time to get manure spread on fields so we have plenty of storage for winter.



Although the summer wasn't ideal for growth of our alfalfa/grass, it provided ideal weather for corn growth, we had decent amount of rain this spring after corn was planted and then a very hot and dry summer. Now it is time to get manure spread on fields so we have plenty of storage for winter.

Fall provides "happy cow weather" and after such a hot summer it is nice to see our cows much more comfortable, eating more and starting to increase milk production. This winter we will work on plans to improve air flow and cow comfort for next summer including adding shade cloth to east facing walls and installing more fans along outside alleys.

## What's on My Plate

Transitioning in the fall through forage and weather changes always provides challenges in terms of cow health and reproduction. I am hoping to limit that as much as possible by working with my nutritionist and vet to be proactive and make changes to limit the stress on our animals.



I have been working to open our farm up to the public, prior to COVID with in person tours and now more so with Zoom tours, I am working to continue to do more virtual tours as well as expanding our reach with Facebook and Instagram pages. My goal is to provide a mix of cute calf pictures as well as information regarding how we care for our cows, land and the environment in order to provide a positive outlook of dairy to the public.

## Looking Ahead

This winter brings more time for us to continually train employees and ensure that protocols are being followed. We have a couple employees who will be leaving us this winter to move home to Mexico and so it will be key to find the correct people, either within the business or hiring new to take their spots. We are working on establishing a more thorough on-boarding process so as to ensure our employees are receiving adequate training and feedback when they join our team.

Winter is a great time to work with the shop team on barn projects, fixing anything that may be inhibiting cow comfort or efficient work by our employees will be included on the list. Gates, lights and stalls will all be fixed or replaced this winter as our goal is always to have things working as best as possible for a happier work environment for our team.

## Key Activities Over Next 6 Months

People	Operational	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training new employees to replace 2 mid-level employees who are leaving</li> <li>• A new part time feeder-continual training and protocol management for all feeders</li> <li>• Continual protocol management for lowering scc and improving milk quality as weather improves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empty manure pits as much as possible to maximize storage for the winter</li> <li>• Plan for winter weather and prepare buildings, equipment etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning for what is next as we continue internal herd growth and improve herd management on our farm</li> <li>• Improving cow comfort for next summer and beyond</li> </ul>



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