

President`s Newsletter. December 2016

Dear members.

As December arrives our thinking is drawn towards Christmas. For most regions of New Zealand the season has been wet and cool through the spring with grass growth well in excess of past seasons. Fertiliser application has been steady and the upward movement in the Global Dairy Trade is returning some much needed confidence to the dairy sector.

As usual NZGFA is involved in a wide number of issues so I will outline a few of them. Firstly, your Council has asked N3 to become more active in Branch areas where the numbers using the N3 buying scheme has been low. I hope you have all been contacted and given the opportunity of signing up with N3 and taking advantage of the considerable savings to be made on many purchases. If not for yourself, then a discount card for employees is a great way of saying thank you to staff at no cost to yourself. I have attached an N3 promotional brochure to this email.

Recently we have been involved in the development of the Farmer Spreadmark scheme. While NZGFA supported this concept several years ago, there was little farmer interest until a leading South Island dairy processor began asking for fertiliser traceability for N fertiliser spread by suppliers on their own farms. The draft proposal is to develop a scheme similar to GrowSafe™ which is the scheme that permits farmers to use agrichemicals on their own farms. The draft Farmer Spreadmark scheme proposes no spread pattern testing over trays but more emphasis on the farmer having a good knowledge of the fertiliser spreader and its manufacturer`s settings for different rates of fertiliser to be spread. The audit of compliance for fertiliser spreading is proposed to be carried out by the dairy processor`s on farm audit process. The Association view is that Farmer Spreadmark must be part of the national scheme (as Spreadmark), be a `One Product Test` across trays and be for N fertilisers only. On – line Spreadmark training to be available to the operator and the farmer. Operator safety needs to be included in Farmer Spreadmark training. Testing across trays is essential to maintain the integrity of Spreadmark. We could explore 1m tray spacing (as opposed to 0.5m, and no less than 3 values under the line for the test). We are comfortable with the Synlait on farm audit to cover the integrity of the Spreadmark fertiliser placement.

Dean Brooks represented NZGFA at a recent Coronial inquest into a fertiliser spreading fatality on Banks Peninsular nearly a year ago. Dean was called by the coroner as an expert witness giving evidence from his first hand inspection of the accident scene. Increasingly NZGFA are being used as expert witness` in serious accident investigations and are able to contribute to the body of information needed to properly understand the causes of serious accidents and hopefully to develop industry training to keep drivers safe when spreading on steep country.

On behalf of Maryann and my family I wish you and all your families the very best for the Festive season. Please take the time to enjoy your families this Christmas and take some time to refresh yourselves after another busy year. We all look forward to a safe and productive 2017.



Brent Scully
President 5/12/2016



