



□ Rodney Oates with his sons Connor and Fraser in a highly productive Progrow pasture closed for hay at Ruabon.

PROGROW and NEW TETILA ANNUAL RYEGRASS

Seven full grazings plus hay at Ruabon

RODNEY Oates' family have been dairy farmers for 75 years in the Busselton district.

Nowadays, Rodney and his wife Kelly operate a 20-stand swing-over herringbone dairy, but the three previous buildings are still standing on the Ruabon property, Hillcrest.

Up to 375 cows are milked in the spring, with numbers falling to 180 over the summer.

The Oates family have renovated pasture for the past 10 years but Rodney says they have learnt much in the past five years.

"And our fertiliser utilisation has improved," he says.

"We now tend to apply little and often."

About 200ha of the arable 285ha on Hillcrest are reseeded annually with a broadcaster spreader, followed by harrows.

Last year, 80 percent of the area to be sown was treated with an aerator which fractures the sandy loam soils and greatly improves infiltration.

Rodney sowed 200ha to a mix of 8kg/ha Progrow, 2kg/ha New Tetila and 1.5kg/ha each

of Paradana balansa and Persian clover last year, between April 18 and 22.

The seed went on with 90kg/ha DAP, 50kg/ha MoP and 10kg/ha Pasture Cu, Zn and Moly.

The dairy herd first grazed the Progrow and New Tetila pastures quite hard four weeks after sowing on May 15 and 17.

Rodney used follow-up grazings to tidy up ungrazed areas and to set these paddocks up for maximum regrowth during the growing season.

About 50kg/ha of urea was applied after each grazing.

Subsequent grazings on the Progrow included June 10, 13 and 22; July 9, 10, 25 and 26; August 15 and 17; and September 4 and 7.

Milk production in the spring got up to 29 litres per cow.

Paddocks were locked up for hay from September 4 when 90kg/ha of urea and potash was applied, with a further 75kg/ha two weeks later.

The hay paddocks were only locked up for seven to nine weeks but produced good growth.

Rodney cut 10 rolls of hay per hectare, each 550kg over a 4.5ha area.

He says some paddocks sown to the ryegrass mixture actually produced as many as 15 rolls per hectare, equating to 8.25t/ha.

The hay was 80 percent dry matter and will be tested for quality.

Rodney has sown New Tetila for a number of years now and says it reliably produces good bulk.

"It does tend to seed off a bit early at times, but we had a cool season and kept it grazed, and it was okay and didn't head off," he says.

"The regrowth after we'd cut hay was excellent and stayed green until the first or second week of January."

□ **More information: Irwin Hunter & Co**
Ph: 9383 4708 Fax: 9384 8029
www.irwinhunter.com.au