

KEEP CALCIUM LEVELS UP. TACKLE CALCIUM DEFICIENCIES WHEN IT MATTERS MOST.

“ I’ve been using Calcimate for years. Low calcium can obviously severely affect cows, so for a start you have to keep up the calcium and Calcimate does that. You’d be absolutely foolish not to give your cows lime flour. ”

ELI VOLLEBREGT

TARANAKI CONTRACT MILKER

CALCIMATE[®]

At a Glance

Location Opunake, Taranaki

Farm Size 260 ha

Herd Size 600 Friesian-cross cows

Stocking Rate 2.2 cows per ha

System

Animals on pasture year-round, supplemented with blended feed of palm kernel, corn gluten and tapioca through in-shed feeding system.

Feeds

Pasture, custom mineral blend including molasses and 150 gm per cow, per day of Calcimate.

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the right advice.

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Eli Vollebregt is a contract milker on a 260 ha property on the slopes of Mount Taranaki. He runs a team of three, milking 600 spring-calving cows. Eli, 32, his wife Susannah, 26, and their two young sons live in a farmhouse on the property.

Eli will never forget the sight of 20 cows stricken with the effects of low calcium. He was a young herd manager, heading into the paddock to round up the cows for milking, and was met with many dozens of cows staggering, stumbling or already down with low calcium.

“It was like a nightmare. I rang up the herd manager and said you better get down here.” The herd’s calcium levels had plummeted due to a change in diet, and within hours cows had started to collapse all over the paddock.

“It was terrifying - one of those scenes you dread coming across as a farmer.” It was a sight Eli has never forgotten.

Today, Eli is a contract milker on a 260 ha farm at Opunake, on the slopes of Mount Taranaki. The soil is free-draining and rich but the farm is pock-marked with volcanic rock and large swathes of swampy rushes. Only around 55 ha of the farm is mowable. He has to work hard to ensure high production, and that means a sharp focus on animal nutrition. He has in-shed feeding, so is able to provide a mix of goodness, including molasses and minerals, magnesium oxide and lime flour, for the cows to feed on during milking. His tried-and-true recipe allows for each cow to eat 150 gm of Calcimate every day.

The property where Eli works is a particularly wet farm, recording around 2500mm of rain each year, so he worries about mastitis and cows losing condition on the challenging terrain. His third concern would be low calcium, but he doesn’t lose any sleep over it anymore, thanks to accurate mineral allocation through the in-shed mineraliser.

“If we didn’t use Calcimate, we’d be chasing our tail, trying to solve problems rather than prevent them. But because I’ve got that lime flour, I’ve got no worries at all. I had 10 down cows through last season and they all survived. I’m observant and quick to react when I see those signs of low calcium. I’m straight in there with the necessary nutrients, as well as

molasses mixed with Calcimate, and it boosts them right back up.”

“Keep calcium levels up, your cows keep producing milk and you save on vet bills. Calcimate saves us money.”

Every second day Eli uses a mineraliser to make a mineral brew to feed the cows in-shed. It takes him about 20 minutes to mix calcium with molasses and other minerals, depending on the needs of the herd that time of year, such as magnesium, zinc and cobalt.

Eli grew up on a farm near Featherston and has been milking cows since he was 8 years old. He remembers his father mixing up Calcimate to drench every row during milking. Eli started his first paid job in dairying at 17 and says, between calving and the start of autumn, Calcimate has always been part of the equation.

“Ever since I can remember, it’s been a stack of 25 kg bags of Calcimate every couple of days. I’m no gym buff, but I lift those 25 kg bags like slices of bread!”

Tips for avoiding low calcium

- ▶ Have cows in the correct BCS at calving (5.0 to 5.5).
- ▶ Reduce calcium intake before calving and avoid any added oral calcium, allowing the cow to mobilise her own calcium from the skeletal system after giving birth.
- ▶ Avoid lush pasture for autumn calving cows and avoid supplementing with magnesium in shed.
- ▶ Feed a good quality dry cow mineral that is high in magnesium just prior to calving and has no added calcium or low added levels.
- ▶ Use a nutritionist to assist with diet formulation throughout lactation, thereby helping to improve productivity and reduce metabolic disorders.

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