

## Pedal power for head space

Riding a bicycle 7200km from Paris to Dakar will give dairy farmer John Faulkner plenty of "head space" to refocus his thoughts on where to from here for the highly productive operation he and his wife Robyn run at Culverden, North Canterbury.

He'll be away from the hectic day-to-day activities of running the 465-cow dairy farm that will this season produce 222,000kg of milk solids (MS).

He and Robyn were finalists in the Dairy Business of the Year competition, sitting proudly in the top 10 percent of performers in Canterbury for /cow and /ha production. Last year their profit was more than double the region's average.

John said performance had been diluted over recent years as he dealt with a life-threatening illness, undergoing treatment throughout 2004.

Recently he's been given the all-

clear by doctors but the experience has caused the couple to re-evaluate what they do and why. While John is off on biking adventures, Robyn is keen to develop her art.

They brought 250 Friesian cows from the North Island family farm, the result of 60 years of AB. Their breeding worth (BW) is now 120, production worth (PW) 133 with a recorded ancestry of 95 percent.

### Fonterra doubts

John was a staunch supporter of the formation of Fonterra but one reason for not upgrading their 35-aside herringbone dairy is the cooperative's recent performance and uncertainties over where it is heading.

He has a diploma of management studies from Waikato University and a post-graduate diploma in commercial studies from Lincoln.

The Faulkners moved to Culverden from Waikato in 2002 after John had seen South Island oppor-

tunities during his four years with Trustbank Waikato and Westpac.

The 145 effective ha property is irrigated by a mixture of Rotorainers and lateral sprinklers. It has high-quality silt loam soils and potential for improvement.

They upgraded lanes but mainly got stuck into improving the pastures through tight grazing management, regrassing, maintaining low residuals and spraying out thistles.

The 475kg average liveweight cows peak at an average of 2.25kg MS/day and through judicious feeding of high-quality pasture manage to hold 2kg MS/cow/day throughout December.

Their top cow peaked at 4.51kg MS/day and by February 24 had produced 603kg MS.

Last season the couple used 100t of palm kernel as well as silage but discontinued the practice after finding it time-consuming and wasteful to feed out.



Robyn and John Faulkner in their dairy.

They had also installed lick balls in the dairy for molasses and have decided to stick with that and this year will feed 100t.

Silage is also used in the autumn

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## High input, high output

Waikato dairy farmers and finalists in the Dairy Business of the Year competition Brendon and Rochelle O'Leary have used a high input farming system to double production on their family owned 85ha peat farm in Gordonton.

Brendon's vision for the business was to increase both profit and production while utilising the high value land efficiently and sustainably (*Dairy Exporter*, October 2006).

In 2000, O'Leary Farms bought a 40ha runoff, 18km from the home farm, to support the milking platform. The runoff is intensively used with 12ha to 18ha planted in maize, producing on average 22t of dry matter (DM)/ha. The remainder grazes all young stock and harvests on average 80t DM of grass silage for the home farm.

"Quality feed and quality management gives quality results," Brendon said.

In 2001 they moved to split calving to increase pasture use, maximise labour efficiency, increase production and to have the power to contract supplements competitively 365 days of the year.

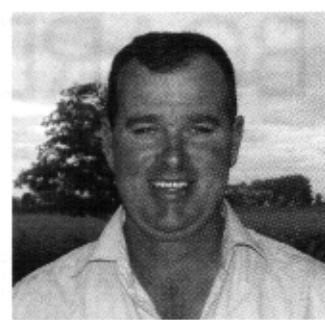
Gradually the autumn/spring calving split became 50:50 and in 2004/05 production hit 180,000kg of milk solids (MS).

LIC premier sires KiwiCross bulls are used with three weeks of AB then bulls for a further three weeks. The result is a 92 percent submission rate after three weeks mating with 10 percent empty after six weeks for both calvings.

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to help lengthen the round and keep cows producing well through to the end of May.

In total this season, 645kg of dry matter (DM)/cow will be fed as supplements, less than the 710kg



Brendon O'Leary.

In the 2005/06 season cows were fed 1000kg/cow maize silage, 620kg/cow of palm ker-

nel and 580kg/cow of brewer's grain. Pasture is still the O'Leary's number one feed, harvesting an impressive 14.9t DM off their consolidated farm for 62 percent of the cows' diet for the season.

All the farm is undersown in autumn, mainly with Tabu. They aim for a farm cover of 2250kg DM at June 1, then to keep levels between 2000kg and 2200kg DM. Nitrogen is applied after every grazing at a rate of 27 units/ha.

O'Leary Farms' operating profit/ha for the 2005/06 season was \$2826 or \$596/cow. **D**

fed out last year, but it will bring increased production of 12,000kg MS and the ability to carry 20 more cows. Planned start of calving is August 1, dry-off the end of May.

All of the cows are wintered off, silage costing the Faulkners 24.52c/kg DM in the stack.

Their operating profit last season was \$1833/ha based on their financial accounts, more than twice the Canterbury average of \$717/ha.

They normally employ two fulltime staff, Donna Schenkel and Tim Loos. He will take over management next season. **D**