

5th August 2023

Dog Feeding Costs – Time for more Dog Tuckers?

At Field Capacity Just like many overdrafts, the water table in the NI is at capacity. It is only taking 5 ml of rain, for water to be running off hills and gully's. Leaving a post hole while eating your mutton sammy is a risky move. With lambing underway the wet ground is not helping... 'rain from the top and bottom'. The lever has been pulled on N applications for some or grazing dry hogget's out. Cows and R2 cattle are on Jenny Craig and having mud fights.

In the **Waikato/King Country** the recent cold is biting hard. Winter traders are grumpy, with margins taking a beating. With the high cost of holding these lambs, the financials will look sick. The 1st of August is the first date that Fresh Water Farm Plans went live in the Waipa catchment, not that you would know it. A "soft launch" by the Waikato Regional council is the new 'speak' for we don't have a clue. So, the clock is ticking but they haven't got the hands on the clock, so No one has a clue what the time is! Another poorly resourced and executed government policy!

Tararua - Ground conditions are very wet and feed utilisation has been poor. Many are walking the set stocking tight rope. Ewe condition is great and cattle are in good nick after the summer. Scanning is up, with plenty of lambs on board. **Manawatu** has been cold and wet, with rain earlier in the week and a lack of sunshine and drying conditions. Snow hit the hills in Taihape and Northern Manawatu later in the week slowing growth leading into set stocking. Feed needs to lift, as there are plenty of lambs on board. The **Wairarapa** had snow on high eastern hills and the foothills of the ranges on Thursday plus more rain. This reversed the good done by the NW wind and sunny days early in the week. Feed is dropping under set stocked ewes and later lambers are praying for some drying weather, sun, and feed to lift as 7Twins/Ha is scary! Forestry blocks, roads and baleage are being well utilised and break sizes are 'skinny'.

Fonterra has slashed its forecast milk price for the 2023/24 season by \$1 as demand slumps. The milk price range is \$6.25 to \$7.25 per kgMS, with a mid-point of \$7 per kgMS. Many believe red meat prices follow dairy 😞

Huge shout out to the **Rural Support Trust** who organised a much-needed day out for Tinui/Riversdale Farmers, who like many have had a season of weather to forget. Mini vans took farmers to the rugby, golfing, then jet boating (Thanks to those who had 12 boats waiting). On route, the Coasties had a crack at beating Gladstone at a tug of war (unsuccessfully of course) with a final debrief at the Gladdy Pub, there were smiles all round!

Kids have the Red Crayons out!

S&B budgets are being crunched and it is not pretty, with many forecasting the dreaded 'red ink'. Most are looking down the barrel of \$200-\$250/Ha less revenue on the back of soft mutton, lamb and beef prices. Costs have leapt up another level and interest has gone up over 230%. After helping pull the nation out of its covid economic woes someone better send a memo to Mr Robinson not to budget on a tax take from the S&B and Dairy sector for a while. The **South Island lamb schedule** has tumbled to \$6.50/kg and mutton \$3.00, pretty sobering if you are a sheep & beef farmer. On a positive note, **Ravensdown** have dropped Urea - from \$889 to \$809, DAP \$1,299 to \$1,199.00 and Granular Ammonium Sulphate (GAS) \$650 to \$535, nice to see one farm cost going down.

AT A GLANCE	Aug-21	Aug-22	- 2 Weeks Ago	- 1 Weeks Ago	This Week	Latest change
2022 Store Lamb (30-35kgLW) (S Yards)	\$4.44	\$4.39	\$3.25	\$3.25	\$3.35	\$0.10
Indicator PM Lamb (15-19kg)	\$9.17	\$9.32	\$7.05	\$7.00	\$7.00	\$0.00
Store R2 Steer	\$3.24	\$3.47	\$3.15	\$3.15	\$3.25	\$0.10
P2 Steer (295-320kg)	\$6.16	\$6.45	\$5.75	\$5.75	\$5.75	\$0.00
P2 Bull (295-320kg)	\$6.09	\$6.28	\$5.70	\$5.70	\$5.70	\$0.00
Local Trade Beef (220kg)	\$6.09	\$6.52	\$5.50	\$5.55	\$5.65	\$0.10
AP Stag (50-65kgCW)	\$6.28	\$8.23	\$8.75	\$8.75	\$8.75	\$0.00
Strong Wool Indicator	285	248	266	262	262	0
90-day Bill Rate	0.38%	3.08%	5.61%	5.65%	5.64%	-0.01%
US Bull Price 95c/lb US)	288	269	235	240	248	8
\$NZ/UK Exchange Rate	0.5049	0.5213	0.4800	0.4788	0.4786	-\$0.000
\$NZ/\$US Exchange Rate	0.6975	0.6278	0.6174	0.6156	0.6083	-\$0.007

Annual Dog Feeding Costs – Time to do more Dog Tuckers?

Dogs are arguably the most valuable asset on the farm (On the days they listen to you). Like all farm expenses we have seen a rapid increase in the cost to feed dogs on farm. Since we last reported (November 2021) the cost of dog feed has risen on average 32% with some companies really 'sticking' the sheaf knife in with a 70%-80% increase (See table). Many farmers are now looking at ways to reduce this farm cost by switching brands or mixing and matching without compromising dog performance. We have analysed all the major dog foods and compared them in a table below.

The Numbers

The average FAB class 2 farm in our database in 2022 was 1230 Ha with 3.3 labor units. Say the head shepherd has 5 dogs, junior shepherd 4, and owner 4 then this property is feeding 13 working dogs plus 'Ginger' the pet Labrador making it 14. Below is a snapshot of the annual cost of feeding 14 dogs (more in table below):

- Purina Pro Plan Performance - \$1745 dog - \$24,430
- Purina Tux Adult Energy Extra - \$873 dog - \$12,222
- CopRice Working Dog - \$632 dog - \$8,848
- Black Hawk Working Dog - \$1164 dog - \$16,296
- Mighty Mix Frozen Conc. - \$532 dog - \$7,448



\$7500 at the low end to \$24,000 at the 'gold plated' end is a big bill each year so it's worth a look at the options out there. Remember these are just the feeding costs and don't include the vet bills, insurance, vaccinations worming etc.

2007 Survey

A survey from the NZ sheep dog trial association showed:

- A high percentage rated nutrition, a balanced diet and the dog's acceptance of the diet as being very important when choosing dog food (75%, 62%, and 68% respectively). Hold this thought on importance of nutrition as you need to know what to look for on the labels.
- Diets were consistent all year round between peak and off peak periods, with different combinations of dry food and/or homekill dominating.
- During peak periods of work 61% fed a combination of dry food and homekill.

Current Market Dynamics

- Working dog nutrition has come a long way in the last 10-15 years and there are a variety of feeds on the market, especially dry feeds.
- From 2020-2022 the cost of protein and fat for these dog foods spiked along with all animal products. This has recently eased back especially the likes of mutton. The dry dog feeds need starch and starch prices are still relatively high.
- The price of the dry dog feed is impacted heavily by key components like starch and where the companies source this.
- One of the best value for money feeds in the below table is CopRice Working Dog. Interestingly CopRice is the animal food division of Ricegrowers Ltd trading as SunRice, one of the largest rice food companies in the world so they have one of the key ingredients on tap at a cost-effective price.

- Another big change driving dog feed decisions on farm is the mutton price. Today a 20kg cull ewe is only worth \$65/hd (\$3.25kg CCW). In November 2021 it was worth \$136/hd (\$6.80kg CCW). It used to be very attractive to put any ewe that can walk on the truck. With dog feed so expensive and mutton in the doldrums, more dog tucker is being killed for dog feed and not as much effort to get the marginal ones on the truck.

Working Dog Nutrition

- One of the most important factors for working dog performance is nutrition. With some dogs running up to 100km/day at speeds of 20-30km/hour, suitable nutrition ensures dogs work better for longer. Dogs that are fed appropriate levels of protein and fat sustain less musculoskeletal injuries than dogs that are not. Feeding a high-quality diet specially formulated for a high workload has been proven to increase endurance and decrease soft tissue injuries and stress fractures of bones.
- Nutrition-related diseases seen in NZ working dogs include poor-healing skin, bone weakness resulting in susceptibility to fractures, joint problems causing lameness, and poor immune system function resulting in an increased frequency of infections.
- A dog's coat can be a giveaway as to its nutritional status – ideally the coat should be glossy and smooth, without dandruff. Working dogs should be lean and muscular, but not skinny. A different diet can be dramatic in terms of these indicators so don't just go for the cheapest - experiment and observe any visual coat changes and work habits/stamina.

Dog Tucker

- The all-meat (home kill) diets fed to many NZ working dogs are deficient or marginal in many vitamins and minerals, including iodine, B vitamins and vitamins A and E. Without bones, meat is markedly deficient in calcium. However, every time you feed a dog a bone that it can chew into fragments, you are playing Russian roulette. On most occasions, the bone fragments will pass through without problems, but once in a while, bone fragments will obstruct or penetrate the bowel causing rapid death. In addition, feeding bones (or wool remaining on carcasses) often results in constipation. Large beef bones that dogs can chew on but not chew up are good for their teeth and will not cause problems.
- Home kill meat can be used to supplement commercial dry diets. The vitamins and minerals in good quality dry diets are usually enough to compensate for the deficiencies in meat, provided meat comprises no more than 30% of the total diet. **In practice** there are farmers out there feeding half of the dogs diet as home kill meat and the other half good quality dry food and they report no issues with performance.

The time cost to kill a Dog Tucker (DT) – is it worth my time?

Take a ewe that could be sent to the works:

- Current value at works 20kg x \$3.25/kg = \$65/Hd
- Discussing with various farmers/shepherds the killing and processing time is **30 mins per DT**.
- Includes all of the below:
 - Prep Knives/muster into yards
 - Killing
 - Load up and remove offal
 - Cut up carcasses and bag and put in freezer
 - Based on doing 10 DTs at a time for efficiencies
- At \$40/Hr (Casual Rate) The cost is \$20 a DT
- Total 'cost' is \$85 per DT or \$4.25/kg
- Many would argue that staff and their own labour are already paid for in salaries so there is no labour cost. If this is how you look at it then this figure is \$65 per DT or \$3.25kg (works value)

Ewes that are unfit to send to works, bearing ewes, cull rams etc

- No starting value on these as effectively 'worthless'
- At \$40/Hr to kill and process these the cost is **\$20 a DT**
- Per Kg the DT costs you \$1kg.
- If you don't put a value on your time then it's a no brainer and the feed is essentially 'free'

With the value of works ewes plummeting there is a temptation to think it would be better to divert these ewes into DTs. Valuing the works ewe and the time taken to kill DTs works out at \$4.25kg for this feed, there are feeds in the table that are cheaper per kg and per day to feed than this. It's a different story for the ewes that are unfit for the works especially if staff can work killing DTs into their schedule.

Balanced Diet

The best way to ensure a complete and balanced diet is to buy a commercial product that has been properly tested for nutritional adequacy. Some diets are low in protein and high in carbohydrate, they tend to be very bulky and filling. These diets are similar to eating weetbix and many dogs can't physically eat enough to meet their energy needs. Dogs on these diets also tend to pass a lot of poo.

Working dogs need a calorie-dense diet. There are three key components of a diet:

- **FAT** which is the most calorie dense component
- **PROTEIN** which provides calories for sustained energy and essential amino acids for building and repairing muscles
- **CARBOHYDRATE** which provides short bursts of energy.

Interestingly, the fat and protein not only provide calories but they include L-Carnitine that enhances efficiency of fat metabolism, lowering heat production of the body. This acts like a radiator allowing the dog to 'run cooler' and to recover quicker and mitigate heat stress.

What To Look for on the Dog Food Label

Nutrient-dense food with a high amount of calories per bite is key. Working dogs need a diet which is

- At least 25-30% protein (ideal 30-32%)
- At least 20% fat (ideal 20-30%)
- An energy content of over 4000kcal/kg

For more tailored advice on which food to feed your working dog we suggest you consult your vet.

Comparing the Nutritional Value of Dog Feed Is Vital

It is usually more economical to feed dry diets rather than canned diets or rolls because much of the weight of the latter product is made up of water. Most dry diets contain 3-4 times the nutrient and calorie content of wet diets of the same weight of product. All this information is clearly listed on the back of dog food bags. Also have a look at the list of ingredients - they are listed in order from highest to lowest, ideally choose a diet that has a protein listed first, i.e. chicken as opposed to chicken by-pass meal.

You get what you pay for

Remember the Weetbix analogy - diets low in protein and high in carbohydrate tend to be very bulky and filling (paying for crap). Some farmers mix and match to keep costs down and use higher ratios of fat & protein in the peak periods. They also mix in mutton as well. This allows you to pick your ratio of protein and fat and compare brands

that give you this mix. The tendency is to go straight to the cheapest per annum cost and not factor in the performance of the dogs on different diets.

Dog Feed Analysis as of 4-8-2023

BRAND	Bag Size KG	PROTEIN	FAT	\$P/BAG \$P/kg	Price Change % since November 2021	\$P/DAY	\$/Year/Dog	*GUIDE TO FEEDING Active Dog - 30kg
Royal Canin 4800 Pallet 36 Bags	20	32%	30%	\$157.0 \$7.9	28%	\$5.1	\$1,865	651g
Black Hawk Working Dog Pallet 32 Bags	20	32%	22%	\$145.0 \$7.3	15%	\$3.2	\$1,164	440g
Eukanuba Premium Performance Sport 10+1 Deal	19	30%	20%	\$171.8 \$9.0		\$4.0	\$1,446	438g
Purina PRO PLAN Adult Extreme 12+3 Bag Deal	18	32%	30%	\$167.2 \$9.3	75%	\$5.7	\$2,082	614g
Purina PRO PLAN Performance 12+3 Deal	20	30%	21%	\$167.2 \$8.4	82%	\$4.8	\$1,745	572g
Pedigree Vital Working Dog	20	24%	15%	\$109.0 \$5.5	34%	\$3.2	\$1,174	590g
Purina Tux Energy 14+2 Deal	25	20%	18%	\$104.1 \$4.2	31%	\$3.1	\$1,117	735g
Purina Tux Adult Energy Extra 12+ 2 Deal	20	25%	20%	\$102.9 \$5.1	22%	\$2.4	\$873	465g
CopRice Working Dog 14+2 Deal	20	25%	15%	\$77.0 \$3.8	13%	\$1.7	\$632	450g
Mighty Mix Frozen Conc 20 Bag Bulk Deal	25	17%	36%	\$108.8 \$4.4	22%	\$1.5	\$532	335g
Mighty Mix Nourish Dog Biscuits 25 Bag Deal	20	20%	11%	\$113.0 \$5.7		\$2.6	\$949	460g
Possyum (roll)	2	22%	8%	\$14.0 \$7.0	18%	\$4.9	\$1,787	700g
Superior Chunky (roll)	2	21%	10%	\$10.0 \$5.0	14%	\$3.5	\$1,276	700g
Medallion High Country Dog Roll Purchased in store	2.2			\$12.0 \$5.5		\$3.82	\$1,392	700g
Medallion Station Blocks Purchased in store	18			\$100.0 \$5.6		\$4.17	\$1,521	750g
^Dog Tucker (20kg CCW) Works quality \$40/Hr value on time	20			\$85.0 \$4.3		\$3.2	\$1,179	760g
^Dog Tucker (20kg CCW) Unfit for works/bearing \$40/Hr value on time	20			\$20.0 \$1.0		\$0.8	\$277	760g
Dog Tucker 40% , Purina Tux Adult Energy Extra 60% Diet						\$1.7	\$635	
Dog Tucker 30% ,CopRice Working Dog 70% Diet						\$1.4	\$526	

* Packet recommendation, ranges worked back to a 30kg dog at peak work period/active. Prices as at 2/8/23 and all are GST Inclusive

^ See explanation of Dog Tucker costs in article

Nutrition, and Feeding Amounts

The table above outlines the key percentages of fat and protein in each different brand of feed. Remember the target is at least 25-30% protein (ideal 30-32%) and at least 20% fat (ideal 20-30%).

The feeding amounts are a guide only, each dog is different and will have their own energy needs. The feeding suggestions offer a starting point for you to work from, keep an eye on your dog's weight and adjust the feed amount appropriately.

Buying in Bulk

For the analysis we have taken 'off the shelf prices' for the feeds from vets and rural merchants. There is a huge difference in the individual bag price vs the bulk farm deals. For example, Tux Energy per Bag is \$119, the 16 bag deal is \$104, 28 Bag deal \$102. Proplan Performance \$209 per bag, 6 bag deal \$174, 15 Bag \$167. If you are not buying in bulk you are **chucking money away**. Because of this we have stated when it is an off-the-shelf farm bulk deal. Vets offer these bulk farm deals as well as the likes of Mighty Mix just ask.

Medallion Pet Foods Farmer Exchange

This exchange is where farmers can send non-productive stock to Medallion Pet Foods and earn Farmer Exchange credits to redeem against dog food from a local stockist. A number of subscribers use this service and wanted us to analyse what the value of the credits were vs the value of that stock if it was sent to the works

The below analysis looks at an 'ordinary sheep' on the Medallion 'share basis' (From the website)

- Stock processed at Medallion
- Farmer receives 70% of the dressed weight.
- 20kg ewe receives 14 medallion exchange credits.
- Works value of that ewe would be 20kg X \$3.23 (net) kg = \$64.6/Hd. This puts each credits nominal value at \$4.60/credit (\$64.6/14)
- 50 credits (\$230) will buy you 8 dog rolls (17.6kg) equates to \$13.07kg
- 53 credits (\$244) will buy you 18kg of Stamina Station Mince \$13.56kg
- 53 credits (\$244) will buy you 18kg (Carton) of Work Dog Station Blocks Frozen) \$13.56kg

Put another way it would take 3.78 ewes at 20 kg CCW to get your 53 credits which purchases 18kg of Station mince.

It appears from this analysis, that you would be better off sending sound stock to the works even at \$3.23kg for mutton. One advantage of Medallion pet foods is they will take stock that would normally get condemned at the works. This could be udder issues, feet issues or sheep at very low BCS. This is also a good outlet for those cattle that you can see are going backwards and will not recover. Care is needed to make sure unhealthy stock can be transported, as the same animal welfare standards apply. Another added benefit of this service may be sending rams or getting stock gone in a dry period.

Tips for Feeding Working Dogs

- Keep in mind that at peak workload, some dogs may not be able to physically eat enough food in one meal to fully replenish what has been lost. Consider twice daily feeding at these times.
- It's advised not to feed directly before exercising. Eating directly before exercise can result in abdominal pain, vomiting, and even life-threatening bloat (GDV; a condition to which Huntaways are particularly prone). Giving a small feed prior to exercise has not been shown to improve endurance.
- Feeding within 2 hours after finishing exercise results in maximum nutrient absorption.

- Hard working dogs will need to eat a high quality food even on days they have not worked, to make up for the losses on really hard days

Dog Covers & Bedding

- Many farmers swear by using dog covers in the winter and having soft bedding in kennels. Dogs don't have to divert as much energy into keeping warm and anecdotally less feed is needed to maintain body condition. This would be a great research project to quantify the impact of dog covers and soft bedding.



How to confuse a Vegan



This is what happens when children are raised by vegans



Other Prices

SI Lamb Schedule	\$6.50	↓	SI P Beef Schedule	\$5.60	=
NI Local Trade Beef	\$5.65	↑	NI 220-245 kg M Cow	\$3.75	=
NI 220-245 kg P Cow	\$3.85	=	NI Venison 60 kg stag	\$8.75	=

NOTICES

Hogget grazing available in the Manawatu for Aug to Dec. Would be based on weight gain contract, looking for around 1,000. Please contact Ian Strachan 027 4304021 or strahani@inspire.net.nz

Casual shepherd available -Masterton, Carterton, Greytown. Stock/yard work, stock rotation, Honest & reliable. Can provide references if required. Contact Sue 021882271

STORE STOCK PRICES

(Sale yard prices unless stated otherwise)

		SOUTHERN NORTH ISLAND		CANTERBURY		OTAGO/SOUTHLAND	
Store Lambs (2022)	40-46 kg	\$3.05-\$3.15	↓				
	36-40 kg	\$3.05-\$3.35	=	\$3.00	=		
All Males	32-35 kg	\$3.20-\$3.45	↑	\$3.00	=		
	29-31 kg	\$3.30	↑	\$3.00	=		
	26-27 kg						
	24-25 kg						
Ewe Lambs	40-45kg	\$3.10-\$3.20					
	35-37 kg	\$3.00-\$3.40	↑				
	32-34 kg	\$3.15-\$3.40	↑	\$3.00	=		
	29-32 kg	\$3.40-\$3.60	↑	\$3.00	=		
SIL Ewes	Tops	\$145-\$155	=				
	Med	\$120-\$130	=				
Works Ewes	25-28 kg	\$3.35	=	\$3.00	↓	\$3.00	↓
Top Trad R2 Steers	450-550 kg	\$3.25	↑	\$3.20	=	\$3.20	=
Med Trad R2 Steers	400-450 kg	\$3.25	↑	\$3.30	=	\$3.20-\$3.30	=
Med DX R2 Steers	450-500kg	\$2.80-\$3.00	=	\$3.10-\$3.20	=	\$3.10-\$3.20	=
Top R1 Steers	240-300 kg	\$3.70	↓	\$3.70-\$3.80	=	\$3.60	=
Med R1 Steers	180-240 kg	\$3.80-\$3.90	=	\$3.90-\$4.00	=	\$3.70-\$3.80	=
DX R1 Steers	220-280 kg	\$3.00-\$3.30	=	\$3.70-\$3.80	=	\$3.65-\$3.70	=
Top Trad R2 Heifers	390-430kg	\$2.75-\$2.90	=	\$2.90	=	\$2.80	=
Med Trad R2 Heifers	330-390 kg	\$2.80-\$2.90	=	\$3.00-\$3.10	=	\$2.90-\$3.00	=
DX R2 Heifers	300-400 kg	\$2.60-\$2.70	=	\$2.80	=	\$2.70-\$2.80	=
Med Trad Weaner Heifers	200-250 kg	\$3.10-\$3.20	↓	\$3.20-\$3.30	=	\$3.20-\$3.30	=
DX R1 Heifers	180-240 kg	\$2.80-\$3.00	↓	\$3.20-\$3.30	=	\$3.20-\$3.20	=
R2 Friesian Bull	450-500 kg	\$2.90	↑	\$2.90	=		
	400-450 kg	\$3.00	↑	\$2.90-\$3.00	=		
Friesian Bull Calves	250-300 kg	\$3.40	=	\$3.50-\$3.60	=		
	190-250 kg	\$3.50-\$3.70	=	\$3.70-\$3.80	=		

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