BULL BEEF SYSTEMS FOR WAIRARAPA HILL COUNTRY

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Agricultural Science at Massey University

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the viability of a number of bull beef production systems integrated with sheep, within summer dry and summer wet Wairarapa hill country environments.

This was achieved by construction of a spreadsheet feed budget simulation model, based on representative Wairarapa pasture growth and animal production data. The model balanced feed requirements over fortnightly periods, with unconsumed feed transferred between periods subject to allowances for senescence and decay. Gross margin analysis was used to investigate the financial profitability of the systems examined, including the base sheep policies used.

A survey of commercial sheep/bull beef hill country farmers within the Wairarapa was carried out to verify the assumptions made in model construction and to identify practical problems/opportunities. Several off-farm factors were then considered (eg supply of bulls, availability of killing capacity, United States beef market) in terms of their on-farm impact and the outlook for bull beef, over the next 2-3 years. Following analysis of the survey and off-farm data, several farmers were re-visited individually, and then a follow-up group meeting was held, to discuss the results of the model and survey analysis.

The study showed that there are a number of bull beef systems which are viable and profitable on Wairarapa hill country, and that the number of bulls farmed on hill country is likely to increase in the future. While some farmers were achieving levels of production indicated feasible by the model, many were producing below these levels. There is therefore considerable opportunity to increase meat production and profitability on these farms. There is also considerable opportunity, in terms of the supply of bulls, for the bull beef industry to expand within New Zealand, although there are some market uncertainties which could hinder this.

The overall conclusion from this study is that the production of bull beef offers considerable scope to increase the profitability of North Island hill country farming, and that this industry will continue to expand.

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Any deficiencies or errors in this report are the sole responsibility of the author.

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