

WHAT'S NEW AT NOVEL WAYS?

ELECTRONIC MANUFACTURING AND DEVELOPMENT NEWS

www.novel.co.nz

Annual Newsletter

February 2018



FEATURES

- How to save over \$10,000 each year
- Improving our dairy industry profits
- The GrassMaster Pro special deal

BATT-LATCH UPDATE

- Batt-Latch a proven time-saver
- Batt-Latch developments
- Text your Batt-Latch from anywhere

Opinion - Putting Farm Gear to the Test

When looking for new farming equipment, farmers in New Zealand face a difficult decision. There is no centralised, independent source of reviews or comparisons of farming products (something like *Consumer Magazine*). This means that farmers must rely on whatever can be found via Google, or the knowledge of others (who are unlikely to have experience with a wide range of different products).

DairyNZ received \$67M last year in levies from the New Zealand dairy industry (with an additional \$16M from the government, and \$7M from exchange transactions). As advised on their website, they invest over half of this into research and development, farm profitability, and national prosperity. It would seem that identifying the best products available to farmers through testing, research and references would be an easy way to improve the productivity of our dairy farmers, and our nation as a whole.

This research might discover some major deficiencies in product line-up, safety issues, gaps in the market, product backup and support, etc. The testing could also indicate top examples of market-led equipment, and independently grade products for the first time in terms of payback time (return on investment (ROI)), warranty, suitability, reliability, safety, hours saved per year, stock health benefits, staff benefits and so on.

For each product, the potential return on investment could be identified (as well as the time period for it to occur). For example, we've had many reports of our Batt-Latch saving dairy farmers over \$10,000 annually per timer (through saved time and reduced lameness and pugging).



Of course, Novel Ways has a vested interest. We are proud of our manufactured items, and would expect them to perform well in any tests or research. Imagine if every product (including even better examples) could have their potential returns quantified. This could easily result in millions of extra dairy farm annual income nationwide, through faster uptake of new ideas.

DairyNZ has more than enough funding and staff to undertake this operation, and roll out the findings to farmers; perhaps through their publications which are free to levy paying farmers, or their 43 consulting officers.

Every farmer should demand that their industry body makes an effort in the area of vetting equipment on behalf of their levy-payers. Let's see some action.

- **Graham Lynch, owner.**

To discuss this article, please contact me at gb1@novel.co.nz

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LIMITED TIME OFFER!

Trade in any rising plate meter (working condition or not), and we'll give you a **\$500 + GST discount*** on a **GrassMaster Pro dry matter meter!**

*NZ customers only

World-leading Pasture Drymatter Instrument

The **GrassMaster Pro** uses the well-established capacitance method to estimate drymatter.

It is highly portable and easy to use, is not affected by pugged pasture or hills, and can be used in damp conditions.

Grass is the major crop in New Zealand. It underpins our agricultural economy and blankets a large proportion of the landscape. Despite this, there are widely held concerns that the management of pasture, drymatter quality and production could be improved quite easily using new tools.



Since 1996, Novel Ways engineers have been involved in the development of an instrument (the GrassMaster) to estimate the drymatter content of pasture.

Using electronic signals, the hand-held GrassMaster probe senses the water trapped inside the nearby grass blades,

and uses a fresh quadrat estimate calibration to give a repeatable average of the measurements, quickly taken across the paddock on a walk. The resulting figure is usually given in kilograms of drymatter per hectare (kgDM/Ha).

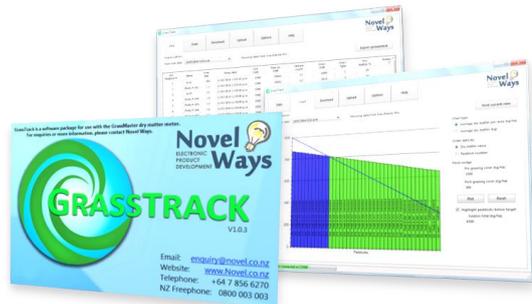
The rugged and dependable GrassMaster Pro holds the average drymatter figure for the entire farm, and this very useful information can be read off the screen or downloaded to a computer.

Extra profitability on farms can result from:

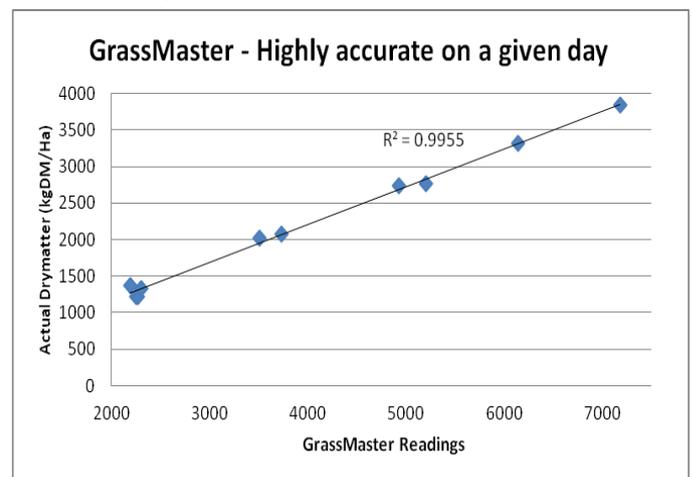
- using better grass cultivars
- having less pugging and damage from improved stock and pasture management
- reducing reliance on supplements,
- using fertilizers carefully,
- improving Metabolisable Energy of the grass grown
- increasing top-soil depth and quality.

Many of these outcomes rely on initial monitoring of the current situation, and accurately measuring changes and improvements. At RRP \$1,995 + GST, the GrassMaster Pro drymatter instrument should be a highly cost-effective starting point.

The GrassMaster Pro is usually calibrated at the start of the walk by both probe measuring and carefully estimating kgDM/ha in one low cover area and one area with high forage cover. The instrument then generates its own equation that can be validated. Once the farm walk is completed by any staff member (you can take data from the side of a quad bike too), the GrassMaster information can be used to quickly create a feed wedge graph, total feed available, and a host of other trending data. We now have a new software package that links up with all of the GrassMaster products, called GrassTrack. This software is free for use, and also exports data to Excel spreadsheets. To match the GrassMaster Pro, GrassTrack has been improved to support the storage of 800 paddocks, suitable for larger farms and forage cultivar trials.



The drymatter readings are taken by an impartial instrument, so they can be relied on year after year. Recent trials also indicate that, once calibrated, the GrassMaster Pro will closely match even highly experienced whole paddock visual assessments of similar forage mixes.



These quadrat readings were taken on a chicory/ryegrass/clover mix paddock and then compared to actual weighed drymatter.

See previous page for a limited time offer on the GrassMaster Pro – with trade-in \$1495+GST

THE BATT-LATCH

The Batt-Latch

Text/Cellular Remote

We are excited to report that a 3G cellular modem option is now available for The Batt-Latch.

Using an internal aerial and modem module, each unit fitted with the add-on has a cellphone address on an internal SIM card. You can text it from any cellphone and ask it to release immediately, check its status, delay or cancel the next release time, or set new release times. Great for the second herd, adjustable milking times, or extreme weather events.

Any cellphone on the farm can be used as the remote control for one or multiple Batt-Latch timers if needed. Each timer has a unique phone number. The Batt-Latch can respond to messages by texting back. For farms without good cell coverage, consider the Batt-Latch Boss (Radio Frequency) system – see our website for details of this option.



You can purchase this new model Batt-Latch with a cellular modem, a \$20 SIM card and internal aerial, operation manual for \$690 + GST (2 year warranty).

In association with Waikato University, Novel Ways has begun development on a smartphone app to communicate with the modem Batt-Latch – watch this space!

The Batt-Latch – A Time Saver!

Our Batt-Latch timer is increasingly popular (NZ and overseas), and during the last year we have sourced rugged components to make them even more reliable. Now with the latest optional extra, you can control the timer with your mobile. Great for late milkings!

Over the last few years, the Batt-Latch (designed and manufactured by Novel Ways in Hamilton), has been making life a lot more pleasant for many dairy and drystock farmers all through New Zealand.

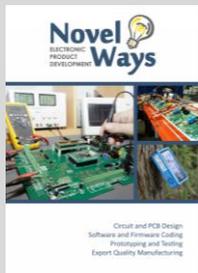


The Batt-Latch gate timer is usually used with the supplied portable spring gate kit to hold the herd back in a paddock, raceway or feedpad.

At your pre-set time the temporary gate's handle is released by the timer's gearbox, and the spring contracts onto the opposite post, alerting the stock that it's time to go. All timers come with a 2 year warranty, and if you own a broken Batt-Latch, we'll fix it for free upon purchase of a second (new) one.

Making the first timers and showing them at National Fieldays over 23 years ago was the start of a huge learning curve for the business. Farmers were moderately interested in using the Batt-Latch for break-feeding over winter, which was the main job it was designed for. Soon dairy farmers tried the timers with their milking herd, and in most cases the cows walked happily to the dairy. More recently, all-grass dairy farming is morphing into larger grass-based systems with supplements, usually placed near the dairy on feedpads. Grass is still the main feed.

Payback period for one Batt-Latch timer is estimated to be as quick as just 15-16 days!



Check out the new brochure on our website:
novel.co.nz/downloads

ADDITIONAL NEWS AND INFO

Save over \$10,000 a year with each Batt-Latch Timer

Many pioneering farmers changed their farm practices to use their Batt-Latch timers more effectively.

Cows can be released from the paddock at 2am or earlier, to a feedpad preloaded the night before. They may **pass under a shock cord gate** at the feedpad entrance, which is held up in the middle by another timer. At a pre-set time when all of the cows have normally passed through, that gate is released back to the normal horizontal position, holding the cows on the feedpad until milking time if required. The herd can be held up in the race or next paddock gateway after milking by another timer, so they all get to the next paddock or a crop allocation at the same time. All of these clever adaptations, and many more, were fed back to us by farmers and incorporated into the design.

When Novel Ways started asking farmers about the benefits of using the timers, some startling answers were given. Several farmers reported **up to 60% lameness reductions** in their herds, and time-savings of **hundreds of hours** per year. While little documented research has been done on the Batt-Latch, cows being allowed to walk at their own pace down races that may be long (and perhaps in less than perfect condition), saves worker time and wear on hooves. One timer used with a 400 cow herd can save upwards of \$20,000 in costs every year.

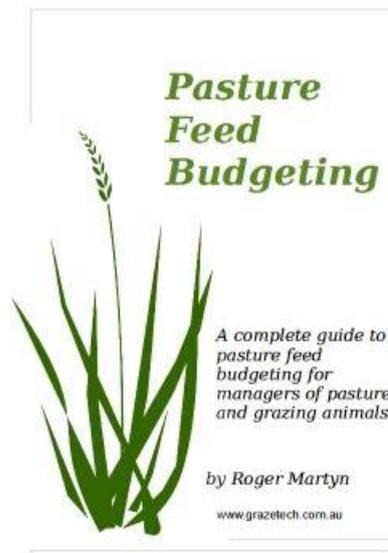
Drystock and runoff farms also suit the Batt-Latch timers. The timer can wait for up to two weeks before releasing, so a small set of timers can be used to move drystock every few days, saving big travelling distances to remote runoffs. Remarkably, at least one **drystock farmer** reported to Novel Ways that if bulls and steers are given more frequent unattended pasture breaks by their timers, they put on weight faster and don't damage fences and paddocks as much. Ideal for cell grazing, technograzing.



Pasture Feed Budgeting Book

*Spiral bound hard copy
by Roger Martyn*

We recommend this 21 chapter, 350 page comprehensive manual on feed budgeting for pastoral managers written by our business associate Roger Martyn (BAGSci). It is accompanied by a CD which contains an e-book version and a suite of powerful spreadsheet templates for paddock records, feed wedges and full forecast feed budgets.



Written in plain and simple language for easy reading, this book covers every aspect of pasture feed budgeting, including an explanation of pasture dry matter (see the GrassMaster article on the following page) and how to carry out full forecast feed budgeting.

Each chapter contains photos, illustrations, tables and check lists of key points in order to keep everything simple, practical and easy to remember and understand – allowing you to effectively apply it to your pasture and maximise your profits.

See the Grazetech website below to view the introduction, chapter one, chapter four and the table of contents. The collection of appendices contains all of the technical resources you will ever be likely to need for pasture feed budgeting.

Perfect for students, new and experienced farmers, research scientists, farm consultants and extension officers.

Spiral bound hard copy available for \$60 AUD from www.grazetech.com.au

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