

NATURAL FARMING Riverside, Martinborough



Jonty and Mary Wall have been running a BioAg soil and pasture programme on 'Riverside', a 640Ha rolling hill country property near Martinborough, Wairarapa, since 2008. Having made the decision to farm biologically they have been pleasantly surprised at the progress made in such a short time. "I started out with a 3 to 5 year timeframe in mind. We find it hard to believe how much progress we've made so quickly and we're really looking forward to seeing where we'll get to in the next few years".

Jonty and Mary run 120 beef breeding cows. They trade lambs and steers, buying and selling as market and climatic conditions dictate. "We're all grass system and as we run the farm on my own we like to keep things simple. We farm for feed and the trading stock allows us to maintain good pasture cover and flexibility. We are in a summer dry area and it can get pretty wet in winter. We like the simplicity of BioAg liquids – they are easy to mix and apply. And it's cheaper than our former fertiliser regime".

'Riverside' has been in the family for 6 generations and under Jonty and Mary's management since 2002. When they took over the farm they concentrated on improving infrastructure – fences, buildings, yards – and then on an extensive re-grassing programme. "It seemed the right thing to do and I was following what we'd been taught at university but in retrospect we just got on a high input, high cost treadmill. We had animal health issues too. Mary is a strong driver in our determination to live and farm in a more natural way".

In response to questions regarding what they have seen change Jonty responds "It's a whole lot of little things in combination - as though we are restoring a balance. The pastures are denser with greater diversity and variety of species. The colour is rich. The clover and plantains have rebounded and bare patches have covered over. And the proof is in the stock – the cattle are happier and have a great sheen to their coats – we're certain the palatability of the pasture is being reflected in better conversion and weight gain. We're also impressed how clean lambs have stayed after drenching with RumiMate, BioAg's nutritional supplement which stimulates microbial activity in the digestive tract of animals. In fact everything is just falling into place naturally'

"We now notice following heavy rain we don't have the ponding issues we had. The soil permeability and water holding capacity have certainly improved, the worm castings are unbelievable and cow pats are breaking down much faster. Yes, it's a whole lot of subtle good things happening in harmony. Mary and I are much happier with a more natural biological cycle which results in healthier food for people to eat. To us that is the bottom line!"

