



Clarencetown beef producer, Tim Phelan and farm manager Barry O'Neill inspect Angus cows and calves on pastures top-dressed with OGM®.

# BETTER SOIL

# BETTER PASTURE

“*I am not afraid to try new things and OGM® is a cost efficient product for soil improvement.*”



**Tim Phelan is pleased with the results** he has had by applying OGM® to his pastures. He has built up his soils and increased pasture growth and resilience.

When Tim Phelan decided to develop his farm at Clarencetown in the Lower Hunter Valley of NSW, he decided to try to do things right, with a long term view. This is particularly so with his soils.

Tim, like other Hunter Valley farmers, is taking the opportunity to improve his soils with the application of OGM® (Organic Growth Medium). OGM® is a cost effective alternative to either conventional fertilisers or other products, such as chicken litter, and is produced and recycled from household waste to strict NSW EPA and NSW DPI requirements.

“I am not afraid to try new things with a long term goal in mind,” said Tim. “My aim is not just to improve production but to also improve the soil for the long term.”

“I looked at the nutrient levels available in OGM® and compared them with those in turkey litter, compared the prices and concluded that OGM® was the more cost efficient product”.

“Soil tests taken before and after application, have shown just how much benefit to my soils OGM® has been”, he said.

OGM® was applied to a number of paddocks on Tim’s properties located close to Clarencetown in the Lower Hunter Valley. Comparisons of the soils prior to and after application of OGM® show the reason for the good response seen in pasture growth.

A large improvement in soil phosphorus level and better trace element levels are evident.

The soil tests indicated an overall increase in soil pH of 0.5, which means soil acidity has been reduced and that has helped improve nutrient balance and health.

An increase in Cationic Exchange Capacity, or CEC, shows the benefits of adding the humified organic compost product, such as OGM®.

Tim found the soils showed a much needed increase in organic matter which will benefit the soil for years to come. After all, soil organic matter is the driving force of the underground biology that brings nutrition from the soil to the plant roots, to make the nutrients available for plant uptake.

There was good, active nodulation of clover which responded well to the autumn rain in 2017, after an unusually dry summer and early autumn. Clover nodulation is essential for nitrogen production by clovers and well balanced soil nutrition encourages good nodulation.

Tim runs 130 Angus breeders producing well-bred Angus weaners. He hopes to increase numbers to 150 breeding cows as well as run 50 replacement heifers and (if the season allows) growing out some steers.

Farm manager Barry O'Neill said, "we want to increase the amount of winter feed on the farms. We need to boost pasture production coming into and during winter. This will help us keep cattle in better condition prior to calving and have them ready to push-on once the warmer weather allows our kikuyu, paspalum and native pastures to start growing strongly. Getting the soil right will allow that to happen".

Barry said, "after OGM® application we certainly found a lot of earth worms –large and small in the darker organic layer of the soil, where OGM® has been applied. It is

something I hadn't seen before we applied OGM®. The topsoil colour is darker and there seems to be a greater mass of fine roots."

Tim feels the best way to grow good pasture is to have a healthy soil, and OGM® is helping him to achieve that goal.

"I intend to keep using OGM® as I am happy with it as an alternative to using chemical fertilisers. It acts as both a fertiliser and as a soil re-conditioner," Tim concluded.

*“ Soil tests (before and after application) show just how beneficial the OGM® has been to my soil. ”*

### OGM® applied at 10t/ha provided the following results:

- Increased soil phosphorous from 46 to over 60 (mg/kg P, Colwell)
- pH (water) increased by 0.5
- Cation Exchange Capacity increased
- Organic matter increased by 10%
- Active clover nodulation in OGM® treated areas
- Increased earthworms visible
- Higher productivity on farm

### “WHAT THE AGRONOMIST HAD TO SAY”

**Neil Nelson, an Agronomist based** at Singleton NSW, compared the soil analysis results from before and after OGM® application.

"I was pleasantly surprised with the extent of the positive changes achieved in those difficult to influence soil characteristics such as organic matter, calcium level, soil pH and cation exchange capacity," he said.

"One concern the property owner had, was that the salinity level would be increased by use of OGM®. These results do not support that, which is good news."

Neil has also seen positive results from OGM® applied as a topdressing to a range of other properties in the Hunter.

"Overall many of these soils are not as productive as they should be for the rainfall they receive," said Neil. "These soils need improvement on several fronts, including soil fertility as well as improved overall soil balance and health."

OGM® is a cost effective option to have a long term positive effect on soils and improving pasture productivity.



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