



Brian McCracken
Craigantlet,
Newtownards,
Northern Ireland,



The herd / dairy cattle

- Specialist dairy herd
- 250 dairy cows
- Breeds: NZ Friesian and Jersey Kiwi Cross
- 5,650 litres/cow/year
- 4.45% fat & 3.63% protein
- Milking two times a day
- Spring calving system
- Turnout date: late February
- Average age at first calving: 24 months
- **Parlour:** 30 point swing over herringbone

The farm

- **Workforce:** Family run farm, with one full and part-time employee
- **Land:**
- 130 ha Agriculture area, 90 ha Grazing platform
- 450-750 feet above sea level
- Shallow soil - drought prone in summer



Innovations

“Our aim is to turn grazed grass into high solids milk and run a profitable farm”

- Highly innovative system low cost system with excellent technical efficiency
- Target high quality pastures as grazed grass account for the majority of diet. Measures grass cover weekly
- Reed bed system installed 15 years ago to clean and recycle water
- Automatic heat detection for the herd
- Use batt latch automatic gate release timers to save labour at milking times
- Bulls selected from top 5% of daughter proven sires. Strong emphasis placed on fertility, milk solids and cow longevity
- Replacement heifers selected from cows calved in first four weeks
- Closed herd, with health and vaccination protocols in place
- Networks with other farmers on a regular basis to learn and improve his farm performance

Areas of interest
Cow genetics
Fertility
Calf health