

Volunteer fire crew cuts cows free

by
**Kathy
Graham**



THE volunteer fire brigade was needed at one of Dairy Holdings Limited's farms at Te Pirita on the morning of the quake – not to rescue people but to help get cows off a milking platform.

"We had about 30 cows on the platform and the volunteer fire guys used the jaws of life to cut the breast bars so we could get them off," said Gary McGregor, Dairy Holdings' farm operations manager for Central Canterbury.

"The old girls handled it pretty well. I think they knew we were trying to help."

The company has 3500 cows spread over

1300ha on four farms at Te Pirita and all four milking platforms were damaged. "They came off the rollers and some had crushed the pedestals."

Mid-Canterbury House Removals was called in to lift one of the platforms up and push it back to where it was supposed to be.

"The spirit of the people who helped was great. Of the four platforms, we had two going within 12 hours, one the next day and the other one the day after."

While milking was going extremely well leading up to the quake, Mr McGregor said they did have some high somatic cell counts in the days following. However he said there had been no other real problems and everything seemed to be coming right.

"We're getting back to where we were."

While getting the first milking shed going quickly was great, Mr King said, it was unfortunately the one out of the four that went a different way. "We spent 10 hours pushing individual cows on. We didn't

think about it at the time, but by the end of 10 hours you could see everyone had had enough," he laughed. "And it was all being done with generators as well," he said.

Mr McGregor said they couldn't have got through without the support of people who turned up to help.

"Rakaia Engineering, Stocker Contractors, Nairn Electrical – I can't speak highly enough of the spirit of people. We had a 197 KDA generator given to us by McMillan Water Wells. With no power, we couldn't have done without it. Even Synlait's Juliet McLean contacted us offering help," he said.

"We've had our moments with Synlait but we put our differences aside over this and I take that as a positive. It was the amazing spirit shown by everyone involved."

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