

# Trials unveiled at Mt Adde

By Blair Ensor - The Marlborough Express



Scientific: New Marlborough monitor farm facilitator Richard Hunter tells a crowd of farmers at Tuesday's field day about a new fertiliser trial on some of Mt Adde's hill country.

New field trials have been unveiled on Marlborough's monitor farm, Mt Adde.

At the first field day of the year, at Greg Harris' 800-hectare Awatere Valley property, organisers revealed a fertiliser study on the farm's hill country and a separate trial which will look at different summer feed crops under irrigation.

Mr Harris was named Marlborough's sixth monitor farmer in February last year after Chris Dawkins' three-year tenure as the district's monitor farm concluded. The monitor farm programme is a community-based programme that began in 1991 to demonstrate best practice or new opportunities both on and off the farm.

Facilitator Richard Hunter said there had been a lot of interest around nodulated stack dust [NSD], a byproduct of the West Coast cement industry. Mr Harris had used the pasture additive for about five seasons and had noticed a distinct shift in PH levels on his property, Mr Hunter said.

A trial, which would start in autumn and compare NSD, lime and optimise pellets, would look at changes in pasture composition and productivity, he said. "If [plants] don't have breakfast in the morning they are going to suffer a wee bit," he said.

Mr Hunter said late summer pasture species in the "engine room" or flat irrigated land of the property was the focus of another trial which would begin before winter. A paddock of Tabu, an annual pasture grown next to Awatere Rd, would be replaced with plots of about eight different rye grass species. The aim was to identify which species delivered the best production under irrigation, he said.

Mr Harris said he had always wanted to conduct trials on his property because they added value to the local farming community. There would definitely be more trials at Mt Adde before his time as monitor farmer was over, he said.