



# Ballance Farm Environment Awards

## Southland Region 2007

### Proud Sponsors



WINNERS OF

- Supreme Award
- LIC Dairy Farm Award
- Ballance Nutrient Management Award
- Southland BFEA Water Quality Award

**Kapua Farms - David and Kay Dodunski**



### Field Day on Winners Farm

- May 10th 2007
- Start time 11.00 am
- Please confirm attendance by phoning (03) 214 4613
- For directions to the Field Day see the map on the back page

## Supreme Winner - Continued

Their holistic philosophy to dairy farming and their concern for both the dairy industry and the people who work in it, contributed to David and Kay Dodunski successes in this year's awards.

They were among the first North Island dairy farmers to move south and convert to dairying.

David and Kay recognise that the so-called "triple bottom line" of social, environmental and profit sustainability overlap. In their holistic approach to dairy farming they have searched for, and put in place management plans that embrace the goal of total sustainability. Such plans are continually being reviewed and evolving.

In doing so they operate a total quality management programme.

David is keen to put something back into the dairy industry and was one of the province's leading dairy farmers to push for a Southland Dairy Demonstration Farm. This recently became a reality with a trust, of which David is a trustee, set up to oversee the programme on a property at Wallacetown. The aim of the demonstration farm is to trial new ways of achieving best dairy practices.

The couple draw on the expertise of a wide range of specialists and are responsive to sound advice they believe will benefit their operation.

As members of the Dairy Green project they were pioneers in trialling the use of the low application rate, K-line system for effluent disposal. The system is designed to hold nutrients within the root zone and is a more environmentally acceptable method of effluent dispersal to land, which, by mitigating/reducing the amount of nutrient loss, contributes to the quality of water leaving the property via drains or waterways. The property is believed to be the largest dairy farm in New Zealand to successfully install and operate a K-line effluent system.

Effluent is held in a large storage pond and only spread via the K-line when soil conditions are suitable to prevent leaching into groundwater or runoff into open drains.

Open drains are not sprayed. Weeds and grasses are allowed to grow, and combined with riparian planting in a wide variety of species, further filters any runoff and mitigates adverse effects on the quality of water leaving the property. Each year 2-3c/kgMS is spent on tree plantings and last winter 2000 trees were planted on the property.



Dairy farms have a high water usage and to reduce the risk of waste, all water is metered enabling leaks or breakdowns to be quickly identified and repaired. Recycled water is also used to wash down the yards, reducing water usage and costs.

David delegates responsibility to his staff who have clearly defined roles. The farm is split into two blocks and herds, each under the control of one staff member, while a third has responsibility for the dairy operation. This gives staff a "buy-in" to what happens on the farm.

The goal is to provide staff with motivation, opportunity and direction to grow their personal abilities and performance. Each winter David travels



to different regions of the country to glean new ideas from other innovative farmers and businesses.

To counter the employment problem on New Zealand dairy farms, David and Kay are also exploring the potential to set up a specialist employment company to recruit skilled labour from overseas.

David avoids a winter soil compaction problem through the use of winter crop and aeration of 10-20 percent of the farm each year.

Pastures have a high clover content and quality, high pasture growth is maintained by grazing to a residual level rather than a specific time. The Overseer model is used for nutrient budgeting and fine tuning nutrient requirements. To prevent the loss of phosphates into groundwater, low rates of RPR and potassium are used three to five times during the year. This has helped reduce the amount of fertiliser used and cost which is now estimated at 30c/kgMS.

David and Kay have set up several trusts and companies to manage their off-farm investments, something they are encouraging and assisting their five children to also adopt. They see investing off-farm as a more efficient way to generate future financial sustainability than paying off debt.

Family time is important to David and Kay who take six to eight weeks off farm each year.

David says they are constantly reviewing their strengths and weaknesses and always looking to the future. "We love the land and looking after it."

## Farm Details

- 335ha flat land at Isla Bank - milking platform 320ha
- 900 milking cows, BW 123
- 1400kg live weight/ha (1700kg plus including dry stock)
- 385,000kg milk solids. 1250kg MS/ha
- Rearing 850-950 calves, 39 percent heifer replacement
- Grazing 150 rising two-year-old heifers on farm for 2-5 months
- Farm working expenses 52 percent
- Operating surplus 2005-06 \$2600/ha

“ Knowledge is one of the most important things in life ”

- David Dodunski

## What Impressed the Judges

- Team approach to staff management
- Low labour inputs
- Employment policy
- Search for and investment in new and more efficient/effective effluent disposal system
- Installation of an ozone water purification system
- Installation of an earth return electrical current system to reduce electrical current in the dairy and cows kicking cups off
- Well thought out duck ponds planted in a range of amenity species and shelter species that will create carbon credits
- Aeration of soils to prevent soil compaction
- Collection of silage leachate which is pumped back over pastures
- Strategic use of low rates of fertiliser
- Excellent, well planned financial management plan
- Strong family focus
- High production results with the focus on kgMS/live weight/ha
- Achieving 6.18 percent on capital
- Emphasising on achieving the "triple bottom line" of social, environmental and profit sustainability
- Efficient use of water management.



  
Ballance Farm Environment Awards

# PPCS Livestock Farm Award

## John and Liz Chittock - Jeff Farm



The adoption of high performing Romney genetics that has produced a significant lift in stock performance, the objectivity and monitoring of all aspects of the livestock operation, convinced the judges to award John and Liz Chittock the 2007 PPCS Livestock Farm Award..

The judges also noted that on a large scale operation such as Jeff Farm, it was encouraging to see the focus on employing and training young people in the skills of livestock farming.

The couple has managed the Salvation Army's Jeff Farm at Kaiwera for the past six years and in that time have made a significant contribution to the property's productivity and development.

The introduction of Wairere genetics has resulted in an impressive jump in the performance of the Romney flock. Hereford-Angus cross is the basis of the cow breeding herd from which replacements are selected. Venison is the main focus of the deer operation.

Leading by example, the Chittocks promote a team working environment with their head shepherd and four shepherds, tractor driver, cook and handyman. Senior staff have a long service record, but because of the number of young people wanting employment, and the opportunity Jeff Farm provides for training, younger people are taken on for a two-year term.

Both John and Liz are excellent communicators and relate well to their staff and the Jeff Farm Board with whom they have a sound working relationship.

John has a strong focus on ensuring stock are in a well fed, healthy condition all year round through providing top quality feed and minerals provided via Dosetron system that provides stock water to the flat paddocks.

Full use is made of the expertise of Jeff Farm's farmer board members, consultants and advisors, a further example of the team approach to the property's successful management.



### Farm Details

- 1939ha flats to rolling/steep hill country (to 250m ), plus 170ha leased hogget block
- 23,146 stock units as 8396 ewes based on Wairere Romneys, 3604 two-tooths, 4000 ewe hoggets, 200 rams, 360 breeding cows and heifers, 479 steers and bulls, 156 red breeding hinds, 152 yearling hinds and 245 yearling stags
- Lambs tailed 145.2 percent (113 percent six years ago), calving 94 percent, fawning 78 percent. All lambs aimed to killed by end of March
- Twice yearly shearing
- Ewe mating targets 65kg, hoggets 53kg
- Lambs average kill weight 17.3kg, 2006. Steers average 320kg at 18 months

John has developed an excellent understanding of the often difficult environment they farm under (1500mm rain and three or four snow falls a year), the property's soil nutrient requirements and management, and being aware of the need for and benefit of shelter. Considerable effort has been spent in the past few years to fence off waterways, moss and red tussock areas and put in place an ongoing shelter and riparian planting programme.

The property is well maintained with excellent standard of farm buildings, access lanes, fencing and staff accommodation.

Swedes are grown for winter sheep feed as part of the pasture renewal programme, which also this year includes paddocks of Pasja and young grass. The property grows top yielding swede crops which has seen it win the Gore A and P winter feed crop competition.

Future goals include monitoring of the water quality of the Waipahi Stream where it enters and leaves the property, replacement of older shelter belts, pest plant control and a stock water scheme on the hill block.

John and Liz ( apart from dog trialling for John and golf for Liz) prefer to devote much of their efforts to the property while their policy is to encourage staff to have off-farm interests.

### What Impressed the Judges

- High stock performance given the climatic conditions and altitude
- Continued focus on improving livestock genetics
- Relationship with staff, the emphasis on encouraging and training young people towards a career in agriculture, and delegation of duties and responsibilities
- Excellent shelter planting programme
- Excellent fencing and ongoing planting of riparian strips
- Close involvement with advisory team including the Jeff Farm Board
- Involvement of Liz in farm financial management
- The use of monitoring programmes for fertiliser usage and stock performance and health
- John and Liz's teamwork and positive attitude towards the property and in the future of farming
- Efficient cattle and deer wintering systems utilising self fed silage pads and sacrifice areas to protect winter pastures
- Grazing policy to encourage tussock regrowth on the hill blocks

# Gallagher Innovation Award

## Andrew Speight - Branholme Cow Company Ltd



Andrew Speight has had extensive experience of dairy farming in the UK, Argentina, Uruguay and New Zealand and has shared his knowledge through consulting to farmers, investors and industry.

He has also presented technical papers on dairy related topics at seminars and conferences in New Zealand, Australia and the UK.

Andrew first entered the Ballance Farm Environment Awards in 2004 winning two categories.

In awarding Andrew the Gallagher Innovation Award, the judges were impressed with the unusual lease agreement and that, within its constraints he is operating a successful business in an innovative way. This includes a management flexibility that enables him to achieve production gains and develop systems that will ensure business sustainability while at the same time mitigating the environmental effects of intensive dairying.

Andrew also has a strong time and motion focus in staff and machinery use, and is continually looking for ways to more efficiently use the property's capital assets, such as new calf rearing facilities and improved effluent collection and distribution.

He believes forward thinking and constant looking for new and better ways of doing things is an important aspect of successful farm management, especially in feed management and utilisation, and the effect it has on production and the bottom line. To achieve this, Andrew constantly monitors feed availability and matches it to demand. This monitoring allows him to buy supplements which will produce the most cost effective/efficient return.

"Well-fed cows are healthier."

Andrew grows barley for use in a pelleted feed, formulated in conjunction with the Winton Seed Company, and lucerne for post calving cows.

Through careful planning and monitoring of the nutrient make up of the property's soils and pastures, he has achieved a 60 percent reduction in the application of artificial fertilisers over the past six years. Nitrogen rates have dropped from 250kg-plus/ha to 90kg/ha.



### Farm Details

- 326 eff ha plus 56ha silage and a grazing block at Branholme
- 1260 cows (1150 milkers). Milking platform stocking rate 3.53/ha
- 1593kg milk solids/ha or 452kgMS/cow. 1887kg live weight/ha
- pH 5.8-6, P 22-40, K 6-23
- Extensive calf rearing operation rather than bobby calves
- BW 125 PW 149
- 87 percent live calves

His philosophy is to eventually produce more from fewer cows, thus maintaining or increasing profit but at a reduced cost.

Last year he began winter milking by buying in autumn calving cows. The practice spreads the calving pressure throughout the year and results in a good income from the sale of the winter calves. Eight hundred calves were reared last year with steer calves finished for beef production and of the 390 heifer calves reared, 140-180 will be kept for herd replacements.

Andrew is so confident of the merits of such a system, that \$60,000 has been spent on improving and expanding calf rearing facilities.

A ring drain around the stand-off pad adjacent to the dairy shed, feed pad and yards collects effluent in a central sump where the liquid is separated from the solids. Liquid and solids are spread when ground conditions are suitable to avoid runoff and leaching.

Water is recycled as wash down for the yards.

The five-year, with right of renewal, lease agreement Andrew has entered into with the property's owner is believed to be the first of its kind in New Zealand. It centres around leasing the property and cows with rent payable monthly according to each month's production.

Andrew's personal philosophy is: "Be healthy be happy."

### What Impressed the Judges

- Exceptional knowledge of nutrient requirements to ensure top healthy and productive animals and attention to animal welfare
- Impressive knowledge of cow genetics and DNA testing of bulls.
- The staff recruitment policy, good staff motivation and relationships
- Constant monitoring of feed availability and quality and preparedness to use the most cost efficient supplements at strategic times of the year
- The absence of CIDRs and induction
- Awareness of soil limitations and nutrient budgeting with low inputs of nitrogen
- Control over effluent collection and disposal
- Impressive knowledge of the dairy industry, both domestically and globally
- Innovative thinking and constant search for better systems to ensure ongoing profitability and sustainability of the enterprise
- Innovative lease agreement with owner

# PGG Wrightson Habitat Improvement Award

## Mark and Leanne Buckingham - Rowellen



Being in the centre of large scale commercial forestry that in recent years has taken out considerable tracts of pastoral land in southern Southland, Mark and Leanne's appreciation of the value of retained forest remnants, their planting of unproductive areas in farm forestry, the creation of ponds and protected swamp earned the couple the PGG Wrightson Habitat Award.

In the judges view, the couple's focus fulfilled the criteria of the award which is given for: "Special places of habitat that have been protected or created to enhance the farm business..."

The large tract of native forest provides excellent habitat for a wide range of native birds as well as providing considerable personal enjoyment for the family.

Since buying their property and its 1500 ewes 14 years ago, Mark and Leanne Buckingham, through considerable time and effort, have turned the property into a high production unit, lifting a less than 100 percent lambing result to 150 percent tailing last season.

They have subdivided the original 35 paddocks into 80 manageable sized paddocks and regrassed the whole farm during that period.

Apart from winter crop where they have broken in new ground, they have adopted a low cost, all grass grazing system that allows for a balanced lifestyle. The aim is to achieve a cover of 2300kg/ha by early May.

A key to Mark and Leanne's success has been their involvement in the Fortification Farm Discussion Group and the Tokanui Farm Forestry Discussion Group, where they have benchmarked themselves against others in the groups, as well as absorbing information that has helped them make progress.

Although much of the property is free draining, Mark is well aware of the problem of pugging in winter, and during wet periods, quickens the pace of shifting wintering mobs to avoid soil structure and pasture damage.

The property is already well set up with numerous farm forestry blocks and shelter belts with an ongoing planting plan in place. Most of the major waterways and several duck ponds are fenced and riparian planted.

Although a stock water supply scheme is a possibility in the future, currently stock have access to specially constructed stock water dams.

Overuse of chemicals is avoided with minimal drenching of lambs and ewes. Monitoring suggests the property is yet to experience a drench resistance problem, something Mark tries to delay by rotating his drench families during the year.



### Farm Details

- Purchased 251ha easy rolling to steep hill property at Fortification in 1993
- 171ha are classed as effective with 38ha in native bush, 35ha in forestry and 7ha in swamp, ponds, shelter belts and the home
- An additional 86ha purchased in November 2006 from a cut-over commercial forest block 3.5km away, is being brought back into pasture
- Wintered 2475 stock units (14.5su/ha) in 2006, comprising 1750 ewes including 400 ewes recorded under Sheep Improvement Ltd, 550 ewe hoggets, 35 ram hoggets 15 rams and 25 one year bulls
- Lamb tailing 2005-06 season, 150 percent main ewes, 98 percent hoggets.
- Mean lamb kill date mid-February-early March, 310kg lamb meat/ha
- Bulls average 0.9kg /day live weight gain over 330 days and killed at 313kg average carcass weight.
- pH 6.0-6.1, P 19-26

He uses a hand held electronic capture system for recording production data from the recorded Greeline composite ewes.

By keeping individual paddock fertiliser histories, Mark strategically targets nutrients as and where they are needed and so avoids unnecessary expense in applying excessive and wasted fertiliser.

In January 2007, 300kg/ha of lime and Super 10 was spread over the whole farm. Low rates of N are applied to strategic paddocks in the early spring and autumn.

Monitoring records include Optigrow for works lambs and a soil test every second year and annual nutrient budgeting to confirm fertiliser status.

Mark and Leanne have two teenage sons, Hamish 14 and Morgan 12. The family is a close knit unit with considerable community involvement in junior rugby and golf, indoor bowls, swimming, cycling, coaching Tee-Ball, home and school and garden club.

Every year they take at least two weeks holiday as a family.

Mark and Leanne take considerable pride in their well presented property and remain optimistic about the future of sheep farming in spite of current depressed returns for lamb meat.

### What Impressed the Judges

- Top stock performance
- Low cost all grass management system
- Establishment of farm forestry blocks in unproductive areas for shelter, amenity values and future income
- Good riparian management through fencing of the majority of waterways and awareness that the property is at the head of its catchment with regard to ensuring water quality
- Excellent subdivision enabling high pasture utilisation
- Maintenance of good soil fertility through regular monitoring of inputs
- Use of high genetic merit stock through the use of a Greeline Composite flock and targeting future yield based payment through the introduction of the Myomax gene for increased muscling
- Wide involvement in community groups
- Strong family bond

# Hill Laboratories Harvest Award

## Allan and Jennifer Taylor - Oakridge Farm



Overall the judging panel was very impressed with the presentation of the property and the integrated stock and cropping operation, plus the fact that the family is fully involved in the property's management when awarding the Hill Laboratories Harvest Award.

The Taylors operate a flexible cropping system, growing 30-40 ha annually of spring sown crops of oats and barley on a three to five year rotation. Allan says stock and crop are complementary land uses.

The main market for oats since the closure of Flemings mill in Gore, is Harroways in Dunedin with barley grown mainly for stock feed to local farmers

Grass paddocks receive an annual dressing of 250kg/ha Super 10 with a similar rate of potassic super on hay paddocks. Crops receive 375kg/ha of 15 percent potassic super and 125 kg urea/ha.

Yields vary according to the season but generally oats produce 7 tonne/ha and barley 8 tonnes/ha.

Regular inspections of the crops are made during the season and any decision relating to chemical application are made in consultation with an adviser. However, fungicides are seldom used.

Crops receive a single weed control spray in the early growth stages. There is an excellent silo and drying system.

In the judges' view the Taylors have a well integrated system of family and farming that makes good use of that word "BALANCE."



### Farm Details

- Farming partnership for 34 years at Charlton, Gore
- 330ha livestock and grain production plus 30ha leased for dairy grazing
- 2300 Romney-Border cross ewes, 100 finishing cattle



### What Impressed the Judges

- The immaculate presentation of the property, with neat and tidy buildings along with the well maintained machinery and vehicles
- Excellent weed and pest control
- Proactive waterway management, including riparian fencing, continual cleaning and ongoing plantings
- Excellent condition of the pastures
- The passion shown by the whole family for the property that contributes to the ongoing success of the farm
- The well set up grain storage and drying facilities and top crop yields
- Tile mapping shows an acceptance of technology and eye for the future
- Family involvement in the community including church, meals on wheels, youth and adult groups and family time

## Ted Coats

National Judging Co-ordinator

The Ballance Farm Environment Awards have attracted 140 entries across the eight regions where the Awards are being held in 2007. The spread of entries continues – many clearly seeking to benchmark their properties using the expertise of the judging groups – others more satisfied with how their properties present and comfortable to have their farms compared with the best in the region this year.

### ► Many Return Entries

It is comforting to have the number of entrants returning to the Awards this year having been involved at least once before. Many have taken on the advice from previous judging visits and done a considerable amount besides. It is evident though, that those returning entrants have found value in being involved with the BFEA process, and have returned for more.

### ► Acceptance of Benchmarking

Major weather events such as the spring snow in Canterbury and the catastrophic floods a few years back in the Manawatu, leave potential entrants asking: "Is this year is the right year to enter?" While it is easy to understand that position, and extreme weather forces choices that don't sit easily with those impacted, sustainability is for all conditions. I am sure that as we all strive to meet our own, our public's and our markets' expectations for sustainable production systems, benchmarking, even under adverse conditions will come to be seen as increasingly important.

### ► Broad Appeal Across Many Land Uses

It is constantly refreshing to see the number of entrants from a wide variety of land uses. Within the traditional arable, livestock and dairy classes, diversification of systems continues apace, especially at the marketing end of the more innovative operations. What was innovative a few years ago has become mainstream and is being constantly replaced. The two main questions asked of entrants: How aware is the entrant of the impacts that their operation is having environmentally, financially and socially? and how innovative are they in addressing or mitigating those impacts?

These two questions remain constant and valuable, despite the innovation occurring around us.

For more information visit our website [www.bfea.org.nz](http://www.bfea.org.nz)

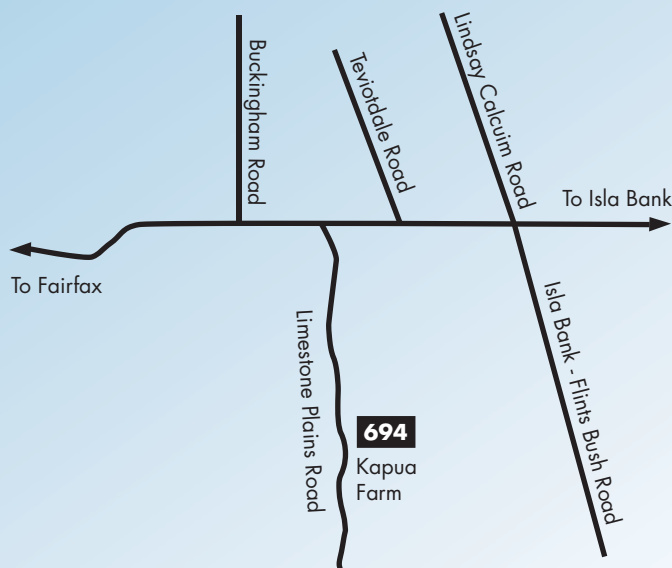
## 2007 Finalists

- **Mark and Leanne Buckingham**  
1669 Waimahaka-Fortification Road  
RD1  
Wyndham
- **Andrew Speight - Branxholme Cow Company Ltd**  
796 Lochiel Road  
RD 4  
Invercargill
- **John and Liz Chiitock - Jeff Farm**  
2150 Old Coach Road  
Kaiwera  
RD 2  
Gore
- **Kapua Farms - David and Kay Dodunski**  
Limestone Plains Road  
RD 3  
Winton

## Supreme Winner's Field Day

May 10th 2007 Start time 11.00am

Please confirm attendance by phoning (03) 214 4613



## Southland BFEA Finalist Judges

Simon Saunders, Southland Regional Judging Co-ordinator

Tony Hammington, Rabobank Southern Regional Manager

Sue Bower, PGG Wrightson Rural Supplies Consultant

John Cutt, former Agricultural Editor, Southland Times

## The Process

Once a farm is entered, a team of judges visits the farm to talk to the farmer and view the property. This is designed to be a positive experience for everyone, an exchange of information and ideas and a chance to get information and advice from the judging representatives.



## Contact Us

If you would like some more information about the Ballance Farm Environment Awards or would like to be included on our mailing list, contact

**Sue Clarke**

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