



# Ballance Farm Environment Awards

Promoting Sustainable Profitable Farming

## 2009 BAY OF PLENTY WINNERS

PAUL AND JOANNA MCCARTHY  
GALATEA, MURUPARA, DAIRY FARM

## 2009 SUPREME AWARD WINNERS

Also winners of the...

PGG Wrightson Land and Life Award

LIC Dairy Farm Award

Fish and Game New Zealand, Eastern Region  
Water Management/Conservation Award

Over the past 24 years Joanna and Paul McCarthy have transformed what use to be a scruffy drain into a lush oasis of ponds and trees.

Paul, whose hobby is the study and cultivation of trees or woody plants, formed the lakes for the birds. The water fowl came and Paul embarked on a planting programme which rapidly spread from the ponds to the grounds around the house. The McCarthys also planted shelter and shade trees in the paddocks.

Joanna and Paul came from the Waikato in 1985 with a two-month old baby, the first of their five children, and Paul's parents Tom and Margaret who helped with the youngsters, freeing Joanna to raise calves and carry out other farm work. Until last season Margaret also worked in the milking shed. Galatea suffered badly from drought last summer, and this season the rain has again by-passed the valley. They purchased the farm across the road which has a irrigation consent. Without it they probably would have dried off the cows earlier.

The paddocks without irrigation are dusty and brown with little apparent life left in the grass after grazing, but the herd of 200 cows is still producing around 1.7 kg of milk solids thanks to Joanna's excellent pasture and feed management. Feeding palm kernel throughout the summer has also helped the cows maintain condition and production.

The winters are no longer as severe, although harsh frosts still happen. Re-forestation of the hills surrounding the valley, the formation of Lake Anawheua and the trees farmers have planted may all have played a part in reducing frosts, but Paul and Joanna say, it could also be global warming at work. Optimistic that the drought may not return next summer, Joanna and Paul are none-the-less changing their farming practices just in case.

The McCarthys share their farm with guests from throughout the country and around the world who stay in the farm cottage and the family regularly hosts overseas exchange students too.

### Judges comments

This is almost the perfect situation one could wish for when farming:

- A profitable farming unit, developed over 24 years of hard work and a family that's interest is farming
- A good balance between farming and other interests (eg. Trees, tourism, ASSE, school, travel)
- Physically fit to meet the challenges of farming and a well layed out farm with a good infrastructure
- Complimentary skills and segregation of responsibilities.

BENEFITS ● IDEAS ● INNOVATION ● MANAGEMENT



Paul & Joanna McCarthy



The water fowl came and Paul embarked on a planting programme which rapidly spread from the ponds to the grounds around the house.

National Partners



Regional Partners





## BRUCE AND TESSA CALDER, PIKOWAI FARMS, WHAKATANE DRYSTOCK AND DAIRY SUPPORT

### BALLANCE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT AWARD SILVER FERN FARMS LIVESTOCK FARM AWARD GALLAGHER INNOVATION AWARD



*Tess & Bruce Calder,  
together with their farm  
manager Tama Murray*

"Much of the farm's recent success is credit to Tama's enthusiasm", the Calders said.

It looks as if a giant river has attempted to form a maze of canyons through what was once a flat plateau but the challenging nature of Pikowai Farm hasn't stopped its owners turning it into a productive and sustainable enterprise.

There's not a lot of flat land and Kaharoa ash is the predominate soil type so fertility and erosion are issues, but Tess and Bruce Calder, together with their farm manager Tama Murray are more than equal to the challenge.

The couple have owned the farm since 1975 when they bought 27 ha in a ballot. Since then a further 180 ha has been added, along with 34 ha of mainly flat lease land taken on as a 'grass factory'.

Water is taken from a spring at the bottom of the farm and it is pumped to the centre and reticulated around the property. Even after 33 years, development is continuing, with wetland currently being drained to create new pasture, under the watchful eye of Environment Bay of Plenty.

Diversification and continual re-investment in the property are keys to its success. Pikowai Farms runs 1100 breeding ewes, 300 ewe hoggets, 383 head of cattle plus 1000 dairy cows over winter there. To cope with the significant increase in stock numbers in winter, kale crops are grown along with 20,000 bale equivalents of hay. Some of the hay is sold into the equine industry. Between 1992 and 1996, 109 ha were planted in pinus radiata and every year poplar poles are planted for shade trees. Dams have been established. A wild duck breeding area will be fenced and planted to provide habitat.

Bruce is immediate past Master of the Rotorua and Bay of Plenty Hunt, councillor for the Mid Northern Royal Agricultural Society, treasurer of New Zealand Hunt Association and on the management committee for the Te Puke A&P Association. Tess is past president of Eastern Bay Dressage group.

They also promote their equine sport at home, opening parts of their farm for pony club events, horse treks and hunts. The farm also hosts the Otamarakau School charity bike ride each year.



*Cattle on Pikowai Farms*

### JUDGES COMMENTS

- *The farming operations are built up to fit the opportunities around the farm, such as the forestry and dairy, as well as the wider equine industries.*
- *Feed management and stock rotation on the property are very well matched to the range of six different farming enterprises.*
- *Securing a long-term manager who is committed to the property, and providing new housing to accommodate the young family.*
- *Use of surplus fencing in forestry blocks to provide permanent break fencing to subdivide large blocks.*
- *Ability of the Calders to look outside the square has resulted in opportunities for them.*



## KEITH AND WENDY HOLDOM, CROMHALL FARM, TE PUNA KIWIFRUIT ORCHARD

### HILL LABORATORIES HARVEST AWARD ZESPRI™ KIWIFRUIT ORCHARD AWARD



The pied shags now have up to 100 nest in trees in the pond forming a kind of multi-storied shag apartment.

Keith and Wendy Holdom never imaged forming two lakes on their kiwifruit orchard would create real estate so desirable new residents would flock in.

Their fruit was so badly frosted the first season in the orchard, they decided to establish a reservoir for frost protection. They discovered the added bonus of beautifying the area with wild life. Keith formed the lakes using earth moving equipment. Swans, ducks and other native birds live on and around the lakes.

Visitors to the couple's 10 ha orchard are more likely to be shown the ponds before the 4.5ha of green kiwifruit vines. Wendy and Keith and six-year-old son Thomas are just as proud of the performance of their kiwifruit – it's just that they are slightly more proud of their conservation project.

Keith uses biological orcharding practices, promoted by USA medical doctor Arden Andersen.

Keith admits they are not an organic orchard and still use some weed sprays when they need to. But mostly they use environmentally friendly products from Abron Soil Solutions

of Waharoa, which they believe has had a beneficial impact on the wild life on their property.

Wendy and Keith want to produce food which is nutritious and safe said Wendy. While she isn't involved in the day to day management of the orchard, Wendy has a keen interest in its operations and takes care of much of the administration side of the business. Keith meanwhile combines orcharding with being principal caregiver for Thomas who is a student at nearby Matahui Rd School.

Keith is responsible for foliar fertiliser applications, mowing, development and on-going maintenance while Gro Plus supplies the labour for picking, pruning, fruit thinning and day to day management. Keith works closely with John Beaton from Gro-Plus, Malcolm Cook and Jacquie Tink of Abron. Admitting that he still has a lot to learn about kiwifruit, Keith appreciates their advice.

Under this combined management approach the orchard produces 11,500 trays of early start fruit with a count size of 31.5. "I'm pretty pleased with that but there's room for improvement".



### JUDGES COMMENTS

- *Keith and Wendy are very enthusiastic about what they are doing.*
- *Very good production and returns.*
- *Recognition of market/consumer demands for food from more sustainable systems. This has led to the use of biological impacts.*
- *Attention to detail, timeliness and being able to identify the right people to work with all contribute to a successful operation.*
- *Wetland area is impressive as are plans to develop other non-producing areas of the orchard.*
- *Keith is always trying new things which will ultimately lead to improvements.*



## NEIL HEATHER, AWARUA FARM (HEATHER PARTNERSHIP) ROTORUA, SHEEP AND BEEF FARM

### ENVIRONMENT BAY OF PLENTY ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD



*Neil Heather standing next to Umarua Stream*

Neil Heather is the third generation of his family to farm in the shadow of Mount Ngongotaha and he takes the custodianship of the land and waterways seriously.

Neil has taken his grandfather Percy Heather's vision for the land much further by retiring 20 ha (50 acres) of bush under the Queen Elizabeth II Trust and planting the banks of the Umarua Stream and the Ngongotaha River which run through the farm.

The Heather family owns the bed of the Umarua Stream. Neil's grandfather bought it along with the land, from a local Maori, who technically gave the family the right to exclude the public from the fishery on their land but they don't.

Neil allows a certain number of people to fish here but has to restrict numbers because this is a working farm and he can't allow just any one to wonder where and where they want.

The original 160 acres Neil's grandfather bought has been increased to 800 acres (323.74ha) – including paddocks on the flanks and part of the top of Mount Ngongotaha, where hay is made.

The 110 Angus stud cows and 1200 Romney breeding ewes on the farm are the beneficiaries of Neil's belief that trees are good for stock as well as wildlife.

Even after they have been shorn, sheep will seek shade under the trees from the hot sun. Neil is sure stock which have shade and shelter do better. He has planted hundreds of shade trees on the slopes of the mountain and in all but hay paddocks elsewhere on the farm.

## GODFREY AND MARGARET MACKERSEY, MAKERETI FARM, WHAKAMARAMA SHEEP, CATTLE AND DEER FARM

### ENVIRONMENT BAY OF PLENTY ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

When Godfrey and Margaret Mackersey broke in their Whakamarama farm they had it only slightly easier than the pioneers of a century before – Godfrey had an ancient chainsaw instead of an axe.

There was only one fence, effectively only one small paddock of grass and the rest was mostly cut over bush and scrub. Clearing was financed from Godfrey's share milker's wage and when he wasn't on the dairy farm, he was up at Odey Rd cutting down trees.

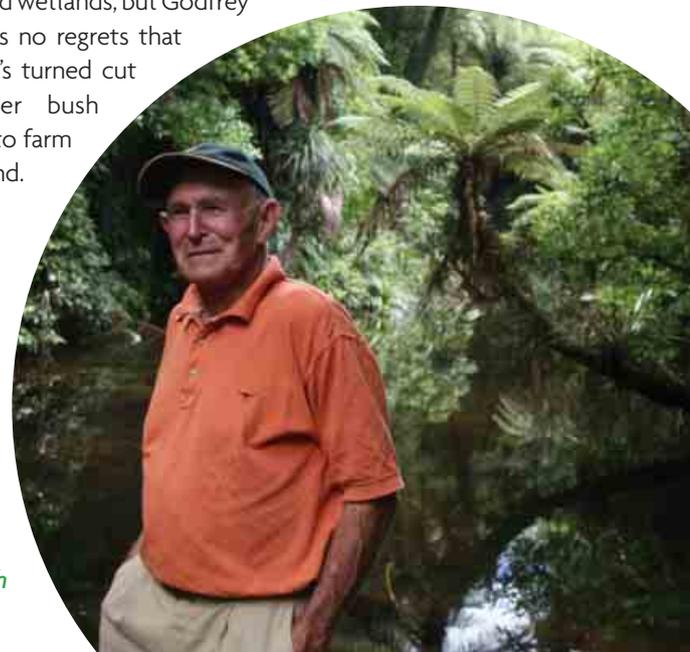
The farm became a playground for the couple's three daughters, Jane, Sue and Anne, said Anne who with husband Alistair Grant operates the hydroponics business Highland Roses from a block of land they bought on the family farm.

Not all the bush had been cut over and the Mackerseys have preserved more than 100 ha on the 250 ha farm.

Godfrey admits to a love-hate relationship with the bush. "It's hard work clearing this kind of land and then you come across areas which are just too beautiful to fell," he said.

Now 500 Coopworth ewes and 250 hoggets graze the farm along with 70 Angus Simmental cross cows.

Where once the drive was to clear land for production, the move now is preservation of sensitive areas, including bush and wetlands, but Godfrey has no regrets that he's turned cut over bush into farm land.



*Godfrey Mackersey standing in his preserved bush*



**PAUL & LOUISE BURT AND JOHN & LINDA BURT, THE RUN WHAKATANE, SHEEP AND BEEF FARM**

**NEW ZEALAND FARM ENVIRONMENT AWARD TRUST HABITAT IMPROVEMENT AWARD**



"Regulations regarding farming are changing and it is better to be proactive than have these things forced upon you," Paul said.

Brothers Paul and John Burt and their families are not only owners of an impressive coastal farm, but also of a piece of Burt family history.

Their great grandfather H R Burt, a surveyor and one of the first Europeans in the district, owned 'The Run' at Pikowai farm in 1891.

H R Burt sold it in 1907 after he and his two teenage sons drove a flock of merino sheep from the Hawkes Bay to the farm, only to have most of them die because the country didn't suit them. Three generations later the brothers bought back part of the farm from their neighbour, a bachelor they had worked for as teenagers.

Together Paul and Louise, John and Linda and their children farm 1500 acres of the original 6000 acre Burt farm, and lease adjoining blocks. They graze 2000 coopworth sheep, 350 beef cattle and dairy grazers. Swedes for stock feed are grown as a cash crop.

Animal health is of a prime concern and the Burts have bred sheep resistant to facial eczema, a significant advancement

in animal health which has resulted in a reduction in stock loses.

Shortly after buying the farm in 1990 the families began planting trees, fencing water ways and retiring areas of native bush in steep gullies. To them it was immediately obvious the gullies should be fenced out both to preserve the bush and to make stock management easier and safer. The blocks were among the first to be fenced in partnership with Environment Bay of Plenty and became something of a test case for other farms.

The protected areas, one of them under the QE II Trust, are popular with tramping and school groups and on the lease block, a retired stand of bush forms a wildlife corridor for kokako and other native birds under the management of the Manawahe Eco Trust which is successfully working to increase kokako numbers.

The Burts are involved in school and community groups and have created a motorbike trail on the farm, giving others the chance to experience their slice of rural life.



**JUDGES COMMENTS**

- *Adopting environmental programmes right from the beginning*
- *A commendable commitment to environmental best practice*
- *Choosing light weight stock for minimal ground disturbance*
- *Vey much a central part of the community*
- *Have put in a considerable effort into looking ahead; forestry, cropping and dairy grazing*
- *Significant bush areas, wet gullies and slip-prone sidlings retired and/or replanted in appropriate native and exotic species*



## ANNE VAN LEEUWEN, LITTLEWEED, KATIKATI LIFESTYLE PROPERTY

### RE/MAX BOP LIFESTYLE AWARD

"This place only makes sense if it is enjoyed by others," said Anne Van Leeuwen of Littleweed near Katikati, not just people but wildlife too.

Hundreds of people and a variety of wildlife, have, over the past 30 years, enjoyed Littleweed's 7.5ha orchard. The persimmon orchard side of the property was always Anne's late husband Wim's, the cultural side was hers. Wim van Leeuwen, was a pioneer of persimmon growing in this country.

When the couple moved to Work Rd, the land was open pasture. Today it is filled with hundreds of trees, many of them planted by Anne.

While Wim worked to find the most effective ways of growing the bright orange persimmon fruit, Anne set out to turn Littleweed into a cultural centre, hosting local music events from 1979 to the early 1908s based around the 'Kumera Shed' – where harvested kumara were stored outside of festival season. Emerging talent and many of the performers at Littleweed festivals have gone on to successful careers.

When Wim died suddenly 1982 Anne was left with a large orchard and two young sons to raise. The festival stopped for almost 25 years, beginning again in 2005.

In the years in between Anne was involved in the growing, promotion and export of persimmon, continuing Wim's work, including growing the fruit on trees trained along three levels of trellis.

Today Littleweed continues to produce persimmon but only for local market. Meeting stringent export standards became too costly and difficult.

Anne took out many of the trees and turned Littleweed into a garden orchard. She also planted two blocks of avocados and they are doing well.

Littleweed operates on environmentally sensitive principles, using conventional fertilisers and sprays as necessary. Anne has tried just about everything over the years from organics, to biodynamics. Now she does what feels right.

The garden orchard includes feijoa, citrus, fig, peach trees, walnut, chestnuts, macadamia and timber trees including black walnut.

There are exotic and native specimens, plantations and shelter trees too, creating a home for hundreds of native and exotic birds. The pond in a natural amphitheatre attracts water fowl.

"In 2005 Anne came out of festival 'retirement' and Littleweed has hosted three recent concerts, in 2005, 2006 and again in 2008.

They have continued the tradition of giving emerging performers the chance to further their career and the public the opportunity to experience new and challenging entertainment."



Anne Van Leeuwen



**RUTH GERZON & JOHN MAYRICK, OHOPE  
LIFESTYLE PROPERTY**



**TRIMAX MOWING SYSTEMS LIFESTYLE AWARD  
RUNNER-UP**

Ruth and John met in a croft in northwest Scotland and when Ruth told John it was possible to own land in New Zealand and that became his ambition. However, he never imagined the kind of land the couple eventually bought near the Ohiwa Harbour but he's far from disappointed.

For John it is like a dream to own a large home set among hundreds of trees, on 13.8 ha of once almost bare land. Now it's heavily wooded and includes three hundred chestnut trees, some planted in the 1920s.

The land is steep and Ruth and John have progressively planted it in trees, many natives, and many exotics. They agree they have made mistakes, planted the wrong thing in the wrong place but overall it's worked out ok for them.

John not only installs, repairs and maintains water systems for clients, but he also divines water, so water and water ways are the focus of his 'day job'. However, it was helping his daughter Marama work on a school project about eels and their migration which made him aware of the barriers man

has placed in the way of the movement of many native fish.

Then the opportunity arose to create a new and safer roadway entrance to the block from the highway. Forming a new driveway left a triangular piece of paddock which was 'no good for anything'.

Together with Matt Bloxham and John Douglas of EBOP along with neighbour Kelly Hughes, John devised a plan to create a wetland with a series of ponds which would raise the water level enough to give fish access to the culvert and the upstream habitat.

Kelly and John have taken their interest in fish migration even further, working together to devise baffles for culverts to slow down water flow, and a system to keep flood gates open longer at slack tide, both to allow fish easier access up stream.

**MERIT AWARD WINNERS**

**LIC DAIRY FARM MERIT AWARD WINNER – AHU MOANA DEVELOPMENT PAENGAROA  
NORTH BIO TRUST**

Te Puke, Owner Representation – Jim Gray, Sharemilkers – John and Andrew Winmill, Dairy Farm

"This award recognises the superior management skills of John & Andrea within their business regarding people and time plus dairy industry issues".

**LIC DAIRY FARM MERIT AWARD WINNER – MAC AND LYNDA PACEY**

Tulachard, Rotorua, Dairy Farm

"This award recognises good dairy management and the integration of family members into their farming business".

**LIC DAIRY FARM MERIT AWARD WINNER - AARON AND CATHY HYNDS**

Te Puke, Dairy Farm

"This award acknowledges the desire and determination of Aaron & Cathy to progress and succeed in their chosen field of dairying".

**SILVER FERN FARMS LIVESTOCK FARM MERIT AWARD - ROGER AND NOREEN MARTIN**

Waipapa, Mamaku, Sheep and Beef Farm

"This award recognises good animal management and the retention of significant natural areas".

**LIFESTYLE MERIT AWARD - KELLY HUGHES, UPSAND DOWNS**

Opotiki, Lifestyle Property

"This award acknowledges a commitment to environmental sustainability within land management and plantings".

## THE AWARDS

The Ballance Farm Environment Awards are designed to encourage farmers to support and adopt sustainable farming practices. The awards are now held in Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Manawatu/Whanganui, Wellington, Canterbury, Southland and Otago. This is their seventh year in the Bay of Plenty Region.

## THE AIM

The aim of the Ballance Farm Environment Awards is to encourage and support farmers to pursue good environmental practices. When farmers enter the awards, a team of assessors visit the farm and discuss the entire farming operation. The awards are designed to be a positive experience for everyone, an exchange of information and ideas, and a chance for farmers to get information and advice from the various assessing representatives.

## THANK YOU

On behalf of the Ballance Farm Environment Awards and the Farm Environment Award Trust (BOP Region) committees would like to thank Elaine Fisher and the Bay of Plenty Times for their help in preparing the content for the winner's booklet.

Thank you to Kate Brennan for promoting the lifestyle category on [www.lifestyleblock.co.nz](http://www.lifestyleblock.co.nz)

A big thank you to all people who volunteered their time and expertise with the assessment process:

John Meikle, Bernie Rushton, Des Pooley, Earl Wells, Chris Mountfort, Steve Brightwell, Karen Martelletti, Rod Calver, Terry Harding, Norn Ngapo, Pat Kilgarrieff, Alistair Mowart, Andrew Scott, Jayson Benge, Tim Woodward, Malcolm Whitaker, John Lamason, Brent Hills and John Travers.

Thank you to our entrants who entered the awards this year.

Thank you to all regional and national sponsors. Your sponsorship of the awards is appreciated and we are grateful for your ongoing support.

Thank you also to finalist assessors; John Mackintosh, Ian Pirani, Doug Lineham and John Bourke.

## UPCOMING EVENT – FIELD DAY TO BE HELD AT THE SUPREME WINNERS PROPERTY

There will be a field day to showcase the Supreme Award winning farm in the next few weeks. Keep an eye out on the Ballance Farm Environment Award website, [www.bfea.org.nz](http://www.bfea.org.nz) for more information once details have been finalised. An invitation will sent out to you to confirm details.