



Ballance
Farm Environment Awards®
Promoting Sustainable Profitable Farming

2014 BAY OF PLENTY

Rick Burke and Jan Loney
Pukekauri Farms

SUPREME AWARD WINNERS

ALSO WINNERS OF:
BEEF + LAMB NEW ZEALAND LIVESTOCK AWARD
WATERFORCE INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT AWARD
DONAGHYS FARM STEWARDSHIP AWARD
BAY OF PLENTY REGIONAL COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD 2



Retiring some former grazing land at Pukekauri Farms has increased dry matter production on the remaining pasture by two tonne per hectare. While it seems counterintuitive, Rick Burke says protecting marginal parts of the 350ha property has improved overall performance and added another \$40,000 per 100 ha to the bottom line each year.

“The areas we have retired were among the hardest to manage. They grew the most weeds, were erosion prone and needed more fertiliser. By taking them out of grazing we’ve removed those costs and both the farm and the environment has benefitted. We are now getting better production, increased fertility, better rotational grazing systems and not wasting fertiliser.”

Pukekauri, with its well maintained, healthy pasture and stock, lots of trees and native plantings, is set against the backdrop of the Kaimai Ranges with extensive views to the coast.

Today 110ha of the farm is in covenanted mature native bush, wetlands and riparian planting and 28ha is in plantation pines, redwoods and Cyprus lusitanica. The balance is 212 effective grazing land with shelter trees in exposed paddocks.



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Rick Burke and Jan Loney Pukekauri Farms

SUPREME AWARD WINNERS (continued)



Pukekauri is made up of 250ha owned by the Seddon Family Trust, a 50ha joint venture between the Seddon Family Trust and Rick Burke, plus a further 50ha owned by Rick. The accumulated properties are farmed by Rick and partner Jan Loney as one unit to provide an economic and sustainable block.

The farm carried 420 ewes last year but this is to be reduced to 250 high performance ewes with the aim of developing an eczema resistant Suffolk sheep flock.

Each season 100kg bull calves are grazed for one winter to target weights of 500kg-550kg for processing. Light, 12 month old bulls are carried through spring and early summer, then sold on to two-year bull finishers. The farm carries around 220 bulls, including 20 jersey bulls, in total.

Dairy grazers arrive as weaner heifers then return to their dairy farms in calf. The farm also grazes rising one year heifers from May to May and winters rising two year old dairy heifers and cows. In total the farm carries 414 rising one and two-year-old heifers and mixed aged cows.

The land in Lund Rd is easy and gently rolling to steep and three main streams run through it. Since 1995 these water ways have been progressively fenced out and planted in natives.



Protecting and planting streams has reduced flooding and erosion. "The farm's soil is predominantly Waihi Ash. Erosion has been a problem in extreme weather events in the past. Riparian and wetland protection has had a huge impact on reducing silt runoff and damage to farm infrastructure."

Although relatively new to farming life, Jan plays an important role, using her skills to hone business monitoring and goal setting.

"Jan has helped us focus on industry benchmarks by keeping our farm records right up to date. Through Cash Manager, we can now make instant strategic decisions that impact on our profitability," says Rick.

Quick Facts

Type:	Sheep, Bull Beef and Dairy Grazers
Location:	Katikati
Topography:	Easy, gentle rolling to steep
Farm area:	3545ha, 215ha effectively farmed
Year commenced:	1996



JUDGES' COMMENTS

- Outstanding riparian and marginal land planting looks stunning and greatly enhance biodiversity.
- There is a synergy with fencing and planting augmenting the intensive grazing of pasture.
- Good care of soils and pastures augmented by very effective use of modest amounts of palm kernel.
- The focus is always back to people and people skills. There is strong teamwork between Rick and Jan.

Bruce and Judy Woods Dreamfields Farm Limited

MASSEY UNIVERSITY INNOVATION AWARD



A huge barn on Dreamfields Farm near Edgcumbe was built by Judy and Bruce Woods to shelter cows in winter, protect soils and help preserve pasture, but it has also provided other unexpected benefits.

It is also used as a place to keep their 500 cows cool, and was especially beneficial during last summer's drought. There is always an airflow through the barn and it is usually up to 10 degrees cooler inside, than out in the paddocks. The barn is also ideal for calving, providing a covered, well lit area for both staff and animals.

Dreamfields' pumice soils dry out in summer but can be wet in winter because of a high water table. Since the barn was finished, Bruce has a no-pugging policy in place for pasture. Hands-on monitoring of soil health with a spade and no persistence issues with rye grass are other important areas of pasture management.

Building the large and very expensive barn is yet another progression made by Bruce in refining and sustaining the farming operation which began with the purchase of the original farm in 1975. He was among the first in the area to invest in a pivot boom irrigation system using bore water to irrigate 72ha of the 159 ha farm, providing the ability to grow grass year round. A new

telemetry system is in place which automatically sends data to the Bay of Plenty Regional Council on the use of bore water on the farm, and refinements to the irrigation system means water use is even more efficient.

Always keen to innovate Bruce currently supports a seed company trial of new pasture species on the property.

He has set a target of harvesting 20 tonnes dry matter per hectare per year of grass and a 30 per cent growth in milk production per year over the next four years, and believes that is achievable. Last season, despite the drought, the 420 cows produced 174,000 MS up from 144,000 produced by 405 cows the previous season.

The welfare and health of "the girls" which provide the family's income and lifestyle is always paramount and a regular drench and vaccination programme is in place. Litter on the floor of loafing barns was thought to pose a risk of increased mastitis but the farm has low somatic cell count. Bruce says regular mechanical raking of the saw dust in the barn keeps it clean and cows have regular teat spraying, even before calving. Being in the barn has also made the cows quieter, more content and easier to handle.

The litter has not been changed since the barn was first commissioned 12 months ago but it remains dry, friable and odour-free. Later this year the material, (an estimated 1000 cubic metres of compost), will be removed and spread on paddocks to be used for growing maize for animal feed.

Quick Facts

Type:	Dairy
Location:	Whakatane
Topography:	Flat
Farm area:	15ha
Year commenced:	1975



JUDGES' COMMENTS

- Bruce demonstrates strong financial management and monitoring.
- The cows are in excellent condition and achieving the 20 per cent targeted production.
- The farm is achieving 18T/ha grass growth and targeting 20 T/ha.
- Impressive feasibility investigation followed by construction of a covered barn enabling pasture protection in wet weather and shade for the herd in hot weather.

Trevor and Harriet Hamilton Rere Lake Farm Limited

**HILL LABORATORIES HARVEST AWARD,
PGG WRIGHTSON LAND AND LIFE AWARD,
BAY OF PLENTY REGIONAL COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD 1**



T H Enterprises is a large, and growing business, but it's not too big to care about the environment, animals or staff.

Trevor and Harriet Hamilton are founders of the farming business which began in 1980 and today owns eight farms with 1,458 effective hectares milking more than 6,000 cows and employing 38 staff.

Three of the farms are in the North Island and four in Canterbury. Four of their five children have a shareholding in and are employed in the business.

It is Rere Lake Farm Ltd, in the Lake Rerewhakaaitu catchment which entered the Ballance Farm Environment Awards. It is a 146 ha dairy farm, managed by Andrew Truscott, milking 585 cows which produced 252,882 milk solids in the 2011-2012 season and 215,654 last season, despite the drought.

Trevor and Harriet, who live on the Lake shore, are involved with Project Rerewhakaaitu which they describe as a prime example of consultation at its best. Launched by farmers in the Lake's catchment around 13 years ago, its aim is to preserve the Lake for future generations.



Trevor says the unique form of co-operation between land owners and the Bay of Plenty Regional Council, rather than imposed regulation, has proved that it is possible to intensively farm in the lake catchment without contaminating its waters.

Like other farmers in the Rerewhakaaitu catchment, the Hamiltons have adopted a range of measures to reduce the impacts of their farming on the Lake. These include fencing out the trout spawning Mangakino Stream which runs through the property. Runoff from a bridge and the approach laneways associated with crossing the Awaroa stream has been reduced.



JUDGES' COMMENTS

- Trevor is a natural leader and "wants to set the bar" on adoption of practical mitigations for nutrient-loss management that fits well within a profitable farming system.
- Excellent returns on capital invested and strong business growth.
- An excellent example of what can be achieved when clear objectives and goals are established for a farming business.
- The discipline that goes into the maintenance of excellent pasture quality on this farm is very impressive.



Nutrient budgeting is done annually and GPS is used for tracking fertiliser spreading and recording. The farm has a very good nitrogen-conversion efficiency and good timing with smart use of N-products especially in high risk periods.

As on all T H Enterprises farmers, 10 day pasture walks are carried out to accurately record the status of feed on hand.

Andrew follows protocols set out for all the company's farms which includes a "no thirsty or hungry days for stock". Meeting that standard was testing during last summer's drought and that was when Trevor, who aims to leave day to day decision to his staff, played a more hands-on role.

The scale of the Hamilton enterprise does make it easier to be "green" because there is access to capital which can be allocated to projects, including to protect the environment, where it is required which is something many farm owners don't have the luxury of, says Trevor.



Sustainable farming, Trevor and Harriet believe, is also about caring for, empowering and retaining staff and the company has a sound record in that regard with several staff being retained for more than seven years.

Quick Facts

Type:	Dairy
Location:	Rotorua
Topography:	Gentle rolling to medium rolling
Farm area:	196ha, 146ha effectively farmed
Year commenced:	1995



Heather and Lachlan McKenzie *R.L. and H.S. McKenzie Limited*

**BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS SOIL MANAGEMENT AWARD,
LIC DAIRY FARM AWARD,
MERIDIAN ENERGY EXCELLENCE AWARD**



Doing the right thing by the environment is an essential part of the McKenzie farming philosophy.

Heather and Lachlan McKenzie, owners of Sherwood Farm at Kaharoa, say providing high quality food to the world must be done in the most efficient way possible, and with regard to New Zealand's natural resources.

That commitment goes back to when they bought the former 390 ha dry stock farm 19 years ago, and could have legally discharged dairy effluent from their new shed to a stream. Instead Lachlan built effluent holding ponds and spreads the nutrients through a travelling irrigator.

Sherwood Farm's free draining Kaharoa pumice soils had very low organic content and fertility and the brown- top pastures

presented run-off problems with significant risk of soil erosion. Thanks to almost fortnightly applications of small amount of Lachlan's "witches' brew" - fertiliser, and now chicken manure - to no more than a third of the grazed area at a time, organic content of soils has increased from around two per cent to 10-12 per cent. This has improved water holding capacity and fertility while reducing runoff and nutrient leaching.

In the last 10 years, clover growth has gone from virtually none to good large leaved plants being a reasonable percentage of the now rye grass dominant mixed pastures.



Sediment traps or detention dams in main ephemeral water ways have been installed to reduce soil loss.

The land use has changed to suit its contour which ranges from rolling to steep incised gullies. Today 220 ha is farmed, 120 ha is



JUDGES' COMMENTS

- A really good fit of farming system to the land with once a day milking used to extremely good effect.
- There is a strong emphasis on energy saving technology at the farm dairy.
- A sound understanding of soils and the adaptation of a very effective fertiliser programme to enhance especially organic matter and phosphate.
- Sound environmental practice, extensive protection of native areas and good use of sediment traps



in native bush, and 50 ha of the steeper areas are in forestry. A further 50ha of mainly grazing land is leased.

There is less land in pasture, but average dry matter production has gone from approximately 6t/ ha to 12t/ ha.



Last season, despite the summer dry, Sherwood Farm's 650 cows, now milked once a day, produced 203,000 kg of milk solids. Blood tests are used to check all trace elements with the aim of keeping them in the higher end of normal to reduce health issues. The dairy herd has not been drenched for worms or treated for lice for decades.

Last year the farm was in Fonterra's top 25 per cent for somatic cell count from a once a day milking herd. Last season the 6 week in-calf rate was 89 per cent and overall empty rate 3.4 per cent.

To ensure high milk quality and save power, Lachlan has installed an innovative heat exchange system to snap chill milk before it enters the vat. Off-peak power runs the refrigeration units to chill water, which, during the next morning's milking cools milk from body heat to around 6 degrees.

The extracted heat in turn warms the wash water, the temperature of which is boosted by a solar panel on the dairy shed roof. The results are improved milk quality and significant savings in power use and costs.



Quick Facts

- Type:** Dairy and Forestry
- Location:** Rotorua
- Topography:** Rolling with steep incised gullies, 50% steep
- Farm area:** Own 390ha, 220ha farmed, 120ha in bush, 50ha in forestry, 50ha leased
- Year commenced:** 1994



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, East Coast, Taranaki, Manawatu/Whanganui, Greater Wellington, Canterbury, Southland and Otago.

The 2014 Bay of Plenty Ballance Farm Environmental Awards was held at ASB Arena Suites, Tauranga on Friday 28th February 2014.

THANK YOU

The Bay of Plenty Balance Farm Environment Awards and Farm Environment Award Trust (BOP Region) committee would like to thank Elaine Fisher and Coast & Country for their help preparing the content for the winners booklet.

A big thank you to all people who volunteered their time and expertise with the first round of judging Kevin Stanbra, Sharryn Clark, Wil Blakeway, Bruce Clader, Jim Hitchcock, Gabrielle Walton, Kar Buhler, John Patterson, and the finalist judging team Terry Harding, Lester Deighton, Margaret Wright, John Mackintosh. Thank you to Doug Lineham whom provided additional support in the judging process.

Thank you to all national and regional sponsors and partners. Your involvement in the awards is appreciated and we are grateful for your on-going support.

And finally, thank you to Margaret Wright for your support as the 2014 Bay of Plenty Judging Coordinator.

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 judges 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 judging representatives.

FIELD DAY

A field day will be held at the 2014 Supreme Winner's property.

Name: Rick Burke and Jan Loney
Pukekauri Farms

When: Tuesday 25th March 2014

When: 9.30am to 3.00pm (lunch provided)

Where: 181 Lund Road, RD 2, Katikati 3178



For details, contact: Kirsten Winter, Bay of Plenty Regional Coordinator on 0275 721 244 or bop@bfea.org.nz.

The Bay of Plenty Ballance Farm Environment Awards process is administered by the Farm Environment Award Trust (BOP Region)
FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT: www.bfea.org.nz

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