



Ballance
Farm Environment Awards®
Promoting Sustainable Profitable Farming

2010 BAY OF PLENTY WINNERS

TESSA AND BRUCE CALDER,
 WITH THEIR FARM MANAGER TAMA MURRAY
 PIKOWAI FARMS

SUPREME AWARD WINNERS ALSO WINNERS OF THE NZFEA LIVESTOCK AWARD

Another small forest has been planted on Pikowai Farms. Bruce and Tessa Calder with farm manager Tama Murray put in a week of back-breaking work last year to plant 3000 native trees to add to thousands they've already planted on the hill country farm near Matata.

"WE are proud of what we have been able to achieve. It would have been nice to do this 30 years ago but then we were focused on developing the farm. Now we are able to concentrate more on the environment," said Bruce Calder of Pikowai Farms.

That focus means hours of often back breaking work for Bruce and Tessa Calder and farm manager Tama Murray, planting thousands of native trees on the 453 ha hill country farm in Airstrip Rd near Matata.

"When we bought the initial 270 ha in a ballot in 1975 it was fenced into 16 paddocks, one of them 100 acres. Stock were pretty hard to manage," said Bruce.

Since then a further 180 ha has been added and over time the 350 effective hectare property has been subdivided into 170 paddocks with an average size of 3ha. The Calders have also planted 20,000 production pine trees.

Retiring wetland, streams and gullies makes stock management easier and reduces the need to invest time and money in marginally productive areas.

The couple credit Tama, who has been on the farm for 10 years, for inspiring them to keep up the programme and to enter the Ballance Farm Environment Awards. "Tama is absolutely key to the running of the farm. He treats it as his own and has a real enthusiasm for the environmental work," said Tessa.

"I think a lot of what happens on farms is pretty innovative but farmers don't stop to think about that – they just find a solution to a problem.

"For years Bruce and Tama have unrolled bales of hay down sidings too steep to re-grass. When stock graze they trample in the seeds and before long we have wide strips of clover," she said.

Environment Bay of Plenty has assisted with planning retirement areas and how best to plant and fence them. It also contributes to the cost of fencing but even so committing to kilometres of new fencing to protect plantings comes at a financial cost, especially in times of falling returns.

Horses are the couple's other interest and one they now have more time to indulge. Both ride competitively, with considerable success, in shows around the country. Most mornings Tessa exercises horses in a dressage arena in front of the family home, which has stunning views across farmland to the sea.

"The Bay of Plenty is a beautiful place to live – why would you want to be anywhere else," said Tessa.



From left: Bruce and Tessa Calder, farm manager Tama Murray

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KERRY, LEA & BRAD SNOWDON Y WORY TRUST

BALLANCE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT AWARD

IT May be called `YWory' Trust Farm but that doesn't mean its owners don't take farming and the environment seriously – they just do so with a sense of humour.



KERRY and Lea have been milking 330 cows on their 177ha (155 ha effective) farm in Republican Rd near Lake Rerewhakaaitu for eight seasons now and conservation is part of their management plan.

“The stream on our farm flows away from the lake towards Galatea catchment but we value the lake and are part of what the

Rerewhakaaitu Lake Projection Group is doing to ensure its water quality does not deteriorate,” said Lea.

The Snowdons, along with son Brad, pay particular attention to when fertiliser and effluent is applied in order to avoid leeching from the Kaharoa and Tarawera ash soils.

Lake Rerewhakaaitu has one of the better water qualities of all the Rotorua lakes, a factor Kerry and Lea believe can be partly attributed to the careful management practices of the farms which surround it.

“We acknowledge the costs to farmers, of adhering to regional council consent conditions, future proofing our storage and spreading of effluent, are important for the future of the environment and farming. As farmers we must be responsible for our environmental impact. Sustainability is the key to our future.

“We have to get away from the `dirty dairying' image, which is undeserved for most farmers,” said Lea.

Kerry said local farmers were very aware of the fragility of their local environment. “There are issues about how many days' storage is needed and conditions for its application. It can't be applied when it is too wet or too cold,” said Kerry.

The stream which meanders along one boundary of the farm is fully fenced and planting both its banks (a distance of around 2km) is part of the trust's plans for the coming seasons. “We have a small nursery of native plants ready to put in,” said Kerry.

Pine trees on a steep bank were milled but the young trees which have sprung up in their place will have to go, said Kerry. It won't be easy planting the stream banks, which are covered in broom and other weeds but the Snowdons plan to tackle it in manageable stages.

The family has owned 20 ha of the property for 20 years, subsequently buying a neighbouring dairy farm, complete with cowshed, to set up their own operation.

Dairy farming is hard work – Kerry describes it as `five to nine, seven days a week' – and that's probably a good week – but it's a business and a lifestyle the Snowdons enjoy, even more so on their own land.

The family's philosophy of farming is summed up on the carved wooden sign Brad presented his parents for Christmas 2008 - `Y Wory'.



JUDGES COMMENTS

- *Your relationship with the environment and the business of farming.*
- *Your use and management of water.*
- *The health and condition of your milking herd.*
- *The strategic use and application of fertiliser.*

JENS AND MIN WULFF BUSH VIEW TRUST

LIC DAIRY FARM AWARD

JENS and Min Wulff have a 'living cathedral' on their Taumata Road farm - the clearing in a stand of towering native trees where the couple exchanged their wedding vows in 2008.



"THIS was the perfect spot for the wedding ceremony. The guests enjoyed it so much they didn't want to leave for the reception," said Min who arrived at the 'cathedral' in an area of protected native bush by horse and buggy. Jens preceded her in a vintage car – a 1928 Model T.

"It seemed right to get married here because this represents so much of what we love about this property," said Jens who bought the 217 ha farm seven years ago.

Of Bush View's 217 ha, 115 ha is in grass with 15 ha in pines and the balance native bush. "Most of the bush has been protected by covenants as the previous owner used those blocks to gain transferable subdivision rights to create some lifestyle blocks when the farm was converted from a dry stock to a dairy unit," said Jens.

However, there were a number of other stands of trees unfenced and

Min and Jens have a plan to protect nearly all of them over the next few years.

"I was concerned that left unprotected the big trees would eventually die or blow over. We've fenced off some and then planted young natives underneath with the idea that they

will get established quickly and reduce the need for weed control."

Fencing the areas and encouraging the bush to re-establish provides shelter for stock and habitat for birds too. It's with food for both birds and bees in mind that Jens and Min decide which native plants to grow.

"We've noticed a dramatic increase in birds, pigeon in particular, but also tui and bell birds," said Min. The couple credit the increase in birds partly to the annual Te Ranga School's possum hunt.

"We take part every year and the first time got 280 possums along our bush boundary. Numbers have been decreasing each year since which is great for the environment but the school has now had to extend the event to get more possums," said Jens. A trapper who operates on Taumata Rd farms has also noticed a drop in numbers.

The farm is at an altitude of 430 m above sea level on a plateau in the ranges between Tauranga and Rotorua. The winters are long and often harsh but high rainfall – around 2.5 metres a year, is some compensation. "Our best months for milk production are through the summer when farmers in other areas are struggling," said Jens.

The farm calves 360 cows, milking 350 through the season. Each year 75 to 80 heifers are grazed off the property, returning as in-calf two year-olds.



JUDGES COMMENTS

- Your commitment to each other and the property was delightfully evident.
- We were impressed with cow condition, production and the contentment of the herd.
- A very good balance in the consideration of land use, production and protection.
- The strategic application of fertiliser is acknowledged.

DARREN AND TRACEY CHINNERY RIVERSTONE ORCHARD

HILL LABORATORIES HARVEST AWARD ALSO WINNERS OF ZESPRI™ KIWIFRUIT ORCHARD AWARD

THE Chinnery family love the fast flowing mountain stream which tumbles over rocks on the boundary of their Riverstone Orchard despite its sometimes threatening nature.



“WHEN it rains 150mm in a 24 hour period the Tuapiro Stream takes on a different form. It’s brown, it’s higher (by a couple of metres) and it smashes ferociously on its banks, sometimes, carrying large broken trees with it,” said Tracey who with husband Darren and their children Finn, Fergus, Forest and Phoenix call the Katikati orchard home.

It was in just such an event in July 2007 that the stream took a piece of the Chinnery’s land, washing away an area of approximately five by 60 metres very close to their home.

Repairing the damage cost \$25,000 but Darren and Tracey have no regrets about spending the money and believe they have learned a lot from the experience.

“We approached Environment BOP in a desperate situation and asked what options we had. The contact we were given was Darryl Hall, who has turned out to be an absolute legend. With his help and guidance in August 2007 we ended up restructuring the bank on a gentle angle. This incorporates a rock foundation with the silt being laid back over the top and then 450 native Carex Secta grasses being planted in between the nooks and crannies. The idea of this is to help bind the bank together. The job took four and half days with two 12

tonne diggers and over 300 ton of rock being bought in,” said Darren.

Six months later, another storm eroded a section of the garden a little further downstream. That has also been repaired and thanks to both operations, Darren and Tracey now know a good deal about stream bank restoration and the planting of native plants.

The 3.5ha green kiwifruit orchard is the family’s primary source of income and over the past 10 years has absorbed tens of thousands of dollars in capital improvements including shelter removal, a tractor, an implement shed, irrigation, frost protection, drainage, pergola replacement and artificial shelter.

All that investment is finally paying off with the orchard producing returns which are more than double the industry average in the last four years.

For the last four years Riverstone has been among the top three performing orchards for fruit packed by DMS (Direct Management Services). Darren manages orchard inputs with a strong focus on producing great tasting fruit.

Because it is so close to the river fertiliser is applied little and often, rather than bulk applications which might wash off in heavy rain. “We now apply up to five side dressings per year with no base and irrigate it immediately after application.” The Chinnerys want their orchard to provide a solid income while being a place that future generations will enjoy and connect with.



JUDGES COMMENTS

- *The strength of your family unit and its willingness to contribute as a partnership.*
- *Your ability to convert an unproductive orchard into a productive and profitable enterprise.*
- *Your commitment to a program of native plantings for shelter.*
- *To meet a practicing orchardist that has the ability, commitment and passion to lead within the industry.*

RAY AND SHIRLEY HAYWARD

PGG WRIGHTSON LAND AND LIFE AWARD

FENCING and planting steep gullies makes economic and environmental sense and is safer for stock, says Ray Hayward who once lost several thousand dollars worth of stock in a gully on the Pikowai Rd farm he owns with wife Shirley.



THE original Lands and Survey Department developed block of 640 acres (258 ha) the couple bought in a ballot 35 years ago was fenced into just 14 paddocks, four of which totalled 320 acres. Today there are 90 paddocks and only three of the original fences are left.

Ray believes in 'do it once, do it right' and that's how he has tackled every job on

the farm, including fencing and the installation of a robust reticulation system.

Like all the hill country in the Pikowai area, the land is medium hill and fragile, it rises from 250 feet above sea level to 535 feet. While it often fares better in years which see lower country dry out, El Nino weather patterns usually mean drought.

"We have suffered four droughts since we owned the farm. The last was in 1997-98 and the worst in 1982-83 and each time it was an El Nino weather pattern so I keep a close eye on weather predictions and reduce stock numbers if I think it's going to be dry."

The reticulation system Ray has installed gives him confidence in water supply for stock, even in the driest of years.

Severe weather of the opposite kind has also caused problems.

"The three big storms of '04, '05 and '06 all hit the farm hard. We had up to 300mm of rain over a 10 hour period in '05 and '06," said Ray.

That much rain on such steep country was bound to leave its mark and the worst affected areas were the gullies which eroded rapidly.

Those are areas Ray has targeted with fencing and planting, putting in hundreds of native trees, including rimu, kauri, totara, puriri, matai and kahikatea. "Many of them are probably not native to the area but they are doing well, the kauri in particular, and provide food for native birds."

"There was only one patch of native bush on the farm when we bought it and I fenced it off but it was pretty poor so I've planted more trees in there too."

Ray's farm is part of the Meat and Wool Board's Economic service survey and his meticulous record keeping adds to the information the service draws from farms throughout the country to track how the industry is performing.

That his management systems are effective is evident in the fact that in many areas his performance is above the national average.

The Pikowai farm has 150 rising two year-old steers, 125 rising one-year-old steers, 135 breeding cows, 63 rising one-year-old heifers, 593 ewes, 160 ewe hoggets, 10 whethers and six rams.

JUDGES COMMENTS

- The Hayward family has a sound record for involvement within the community.
- Ray is recognised amongst his peers as a willing contributor to the New Zealand farming industry.
- The attention to detail in the delivery of water across the farm.
- Fencing and animal handling facilities are of a very high standard.

DAVID AND CLARE BEUTH

MASSEY UNIVERSITY DISCOVERY AWARD

From the waters of a small pond high on a Mamaku dairy farm comes the unfamiliar sound of frogs.



DAVID and Clare Beuth, owners of the 101ha farm in Maraeroa Road, were surprised to discover frogs living in the isolated pond which is also home to a large number of ducks, when they bought the farm seven years ago.

“You don’t hear or see frogs like you used to years ago so it’s great to know we have some living on our farm,”

said David.

The frogs created so much excitement among assessors for the Ballance Farm Environment Awards they contacted the Department of Conservation whose staff were keen to check the amphibians out. “There’s a disease which is believed to be killing frogs and DOC wanted to check on the health of our ones,” said David.

The pond was developed by the previous owners, John and Jocelyn Cole, but David and Clare have kept it, and another patch of native bush, fenced and protected from stock. “We can’t take credit for retiring these areas but we have certainly continued to maintain them,” said Clare.

The couple, and their children Georgia (9) and Adam (5), moved to Mamaku from a sharemilking position at Waihou Bay on the East Coast in 2002. Clare has a degree in agricultural science and was a farm advisor when she met David. David is the son

of a bank manager who has worked his way up through the dairy industry from trainee to farm manager and with Clare to sharemilking and now farm ownership.

They make a good team for the business of dairy farming. “David has the bright ideas and I’m more conservative.”

The most recent of David’s ‘bright ideas’ was the construction of two herd homes for the farm’s 290 milking cows.

“We are 600m above sea level and in some ways this region is like the North Island equivalent of Southland. It gets very cold in winter,” said Clare.

“We get more than 2000mm of rain annually and because this is rhyolite country, the top soil quickly becomes saturated as the water can’t penetrate the rhyolite, which leads to pasture being pugged up by the cows,” said David.

The couple did their budgets, discussed them with accountant Jeanne Bright and the National Bank and took the plunge.

The new Herd Homes, constructed by the Whangarei-based company of the same name, were completed in October last year and Clare and David say they have made a positive impact on the wellbeing of their cows and pasture and long term will play an increasing important role for the environment.

The farm carries 290 dairy cows, 80 weaner calves, 11 beef bulls and 70 yearling heifers which are grazed in Tauranga.



JUDGES COMMENTS

- *Your personal desires to achieve in the business of dairying.*
- *The addition of a new dimension to dairying in the Mamaku region – the use of herd homes and cropping options.*
- *A positive, balanced approach to business and cost control within current financial constraints.*
- *Yours is a demonstration of a positive partnership at work.*

BARRY & MAGGIE WAITE, AND CAROL BURT WEARDALE FARM

ENVIRONMENT BAY OF PLENTY ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

BRIX testing and pest monitoring are synonymous with orcharding but Te Puke sheep and beef farmer Carol Burt regularly peers through a microscope looking for evidence of intestinal worms or eczema in sheep droppings, and uses a refractometer to test for brix (sugar) levels in grass on the 276ha family farm in Rangiruru Rd.



“We breed with rams which are resistant to worms and eczema and only drench our lambs when monitoring indicates they need it,” said Carol who with husband Tony lives on the property belonging to her parents, Maggie and Barry Waite.

Carol owns the animals and equipment on her family’s farm, which she manages in partnership with her parents.

With just two paddocks flat enough to make silage, the Rangiruru Rd farm is about 300 metres above sea level and

divided by a deep gully.

The property over winters 170 beef cattle, 170 dairy heifers, 500 ewes and 180 hoggets on 200ha of grass. The other 76ha is in bush, protected by 19km of fencing and a QE II covenant. Barry said: “The birds are coming back and there are kokako on some neighbouring farms.” Fencing the protected area has also made stock management easier as animals are no longer lost over steep faces or in bush.

“When the ewes are close to lambing, we set stock them on the back of the farm and pretty much leave them alone to avoid mis-mothering.”

Few sheep or lambs were lost during lambing and docking rates were over 150 per cent, thanks to ensuring the animals were well fed and up to weight when they went to the ram.

RICK AND JANE BURKE, DERRY AND JENNY SEDDON PUKEKAURI FARMS

ENVIRONMENT BAY OF PLENTY ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

BURACRACY can be a barrier to development but one Katikati farming partnership attributes local body regulations for assisting it to grow three fold in 30 years.



“We have been able to grow our business by working closely with Environment Bay of Plenty and by utilizing opportunities within Western Bay of Plenty District Council rules to create separate titles and free up capital,” said Rick Burke of Pukekauri Farms in Lunds Rd.

It was Dr Derry Seddon and his wife Jenny who bought the first 100 acres (40.46 ha)

in Thompson’s Track in 1978 and four years later their daughter Jane and husband Rick began managing the property which is now part of a family trust.

Over the years Rick and Jane also bought land and now farm a total of 370 ha in their own right and for the trust.

Rick’s initial focus was a straight farming one but as he worked with Derry he saw the merits of retiring marginal land, protecting waterways and planting trees. Today 75 ha of the 370 ha has been retired.

“While we have decreased our total grazing area, production has increased,” Rick says.

Bush blocks are protected under QEII Trust and by 1995 a formal programme of retirement and environmental enhancement was drawn up with Environment Bay of Plenty.

Derry has established the Lund Rd pest control group, which, with the co-ordination of Environment Bay of Plenty, targets possum and rats. Rabbit, pigs, possums and deer are controlled by hunters and the farm has an on-going gorse spraying programme.

The farm’s contour is rolling with soil types from variable ash at 300ft above sea level to light with a stony subsoil at 1000 feet.

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 eighth year in the Bay of Plenty Region.

THE AIM

The aim of the Ballance Farm Environment Awards is to recognise farmers who 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.

A big thank you to all people who volunteered their time and expertise with the assessment process: Matt Osborne, Bernie Rushton, Des Pooley, Earl Wells, Chris Mountfort, Richard Candy, Karen Martelletti, Rod Calver, Terry Harding, Norm Ngapo, Pat Kilgarrieff, Alistair Mowart, Richard Pentreath, Jayson Benge, Richard Hart, Bernie Rushton, Graeme Shirley, Paul McCarthy, Cameron Bierre 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

The field day will be held at the Supreme Winners property.

Bruce and Tessa Calder

When: Tuesday 30th March 2010

Time: 9.45am to 3.00pm (with lunch provided)

Where: Pikowai Farms
166 Airstrip Road
RD 4, Whakatane 3194

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:

www.bfea.org.nz

- The Bay of Plenty Ballance Farm Environment Awards process is managed by the Farm Environment Award Trust (BOP Region).

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