

LESLIE AND EVELYN SHAW – OPARAU

WAIKATO FOREST & BIRD NATIVE FOREST RESTORATION AWARD



Leslie and Evelyn Shaw

The coastal fencing with nearly 5 km of the harbour is a real environmental asset to the property and the Shaw's are to be commended on taking on such a project. Also of note is the area of bush fenced off 10 years ago it is an excellent

example of lowland coastal forest habitat. The fenced-off bush is regenerating so well that the Shaw's are able to provide lots of seedlings for restoration of native bush in the Kawhia area.

SPECIAL AWARD – MARKUS RUEGGER

Passion for sustainable farming is a powerful driver in the life of this 28-year-old Swiss immigrant, turned Matamata sharemilker.



Markus Ruegger with the judges

Though not from a farm in his home country, Markus recalls he was just six when the lights of his destiny went on for him.

have cemented his commitment to this country, and the dairy industry.

After school he completed a three year agricultural apprenticeship; practical and theoretical training. A fellow trainee gave Markus an insight into the possibility of life on the land here being more achievable than in Switzerland. "So I came to have a look here, for six months," says Markus, "I thought I'd take the opportunity to learn a new language, if nothing else came of it. "I'm still here!"

He's thoroughly impressed the award judges in his second season of his first sharemilking job, milking 184 cows 50/50 on the 57ha T.M. Hopkins estate farm at the base of the Kaimais.

It was July 1999 when, Markus arrived in New Zealand with a work visa. The ensuing years of hard work he's undergone

The judges' feedback report is peppered with positive words to describe Markus and his approach to farming: "Outstanding responsibility – totally focused – high environmental values," it reads. "The improvement in both the production and the whole farm condition is a credit to him and his work ethics."

UPCOMING DATES – FIELD DAY

SUPREME WINNER – WAIKIWI LTD
1 MAY 2007, 10:00AM-2:00PM

Waikiwi Ltd, Bob Jefferis, David Jefferis
134 Jefferis Rd, Waeranga

Will be signposted, 'to field day'.
For a map contact Phillipa Crequer on
07 855 5179 or email waikato@bfea.org.nz

NEED MORE INFORMATION... www.bfea.org.nz

- For more information please contact the Ballance Farm Environment Awards through Environment Waikato's Freephone 0800 800 401 Ballance Agri-Nutrients Freephone 0800 222 090
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Ballance
Farm Environment Awards

2007 WAIKATO WINNERS



BFEA 2007 – VIEW FROM HERE



The Ballance Farm Environment Awards have attracted 140 entries across the eight regions where the Awards are operating 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 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.

Present sensitivities leading to widespread 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?
- How innovative are they in addressing or mitigating those impacts?

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

– Ted Coats
National Judging Coordinator

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WAIKIWI LTD
DAVID AND LYNDI JEFFERIS, BOB JEFFERIS

**BALLANCE FARM ENVIRONMENT AWARD
SUPREME WINNERS 2007**



Bob and David Jefferis are successfully working with a nod to both the past and the future as they go about their daily business at the helm of the family farm.

The father and son team, along with David's wife Lyndi, run a multi-faceted livestock and cropping farm operation on 485ha just east of Te Kauwhata.

David is fourth generation on this land. His great grandfather, one of four English brothers, came to the area from Dunedin in 1905 and bought the original 220ha block, Waikiwi, for a sheep breeding, stud ram and cattle fattening unit.

Sandwiched as it is between two cities reaching out for each other – Auckland and Hamilton – and with definite dairying conversion potential, the partners in charge of this property invested time and thought before establishing the current systems of operation and function that they believe will allow the lifestyle and future they choose, on land they hold dear.

This is, according to the feedback report of the award judges, “a well managed, intensively run family farm, with excellent succession plans in place”.

The farm annually trades approximately 800 cattle and up to 3200 lambs. Maize is contract grown – this season 70ha for maize silage and 100ha for maize grain. In addition 32ha of the farm is leased out for market gardening, growing onions and potatoes.

The property is flat to easy rolling and the country tends to be summer dry.

The beef, lamb and cropping operations are carefully interwoven in a system that considers inputs, returns and sustainable farming practises as one goal. No breeding stock is carried. Says David: “Our goal is the best net return off the land while maintaining a balanced lifestyle. We're always considering what works for the farm, but at the same time we also look at what works for the people.”

David is a full-time labour unit. Bob also works on the farm but his input, David classifies with a grin as “not full-time”. They consider themselves fortunate to have a long-term



**BALLANCE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT, HILLS HARVEST,
PGG WRIGHTSON HABITAT IMPROVEMENT AND
ENVIRONMENT WAIKATO WATER PROTECTION AWARDS**

casual worker, Rob Raw, who lives locally and works 25 hours a week for about eight months of the year.

A simplified summary of their operation for the past four years looks like this:

- summer/autumn the farm carries 1/3 crop and 2/3 cattle and
- winter/spring the farm carries 1/2 lambs and 1/2 cattle.

Their best land is utilised for growing maize silage and fattening lambs on annual grasses, in between the maize silage crops. Some maize grain ground is used for winter lamb finishing, depending on the time of grain harvesting. Maize stubble is mulched back into the soil with the aim being to maintain soil health and structure. Lambs are traded between early April and late September, fitting in around the crops, while avoiding facial eczema and minimising worm burden risk.

The core bull policy is purchasing 100kg weaner calves, with the aim of them only spending one winter on the property. However there is additional cattle trading of one to 2 1/2 year bulls. In the winter the cattle are run in a rotational cell grazing system that matches animal age to soil type. Facial eczema risk – which is high in this area – is virtually eliminated by having the weaners on brassica crop (1/3 rape and 2/3 pasja) during summer and into the autumn.

Noted the judges: “The pasture and crop programme is on a five year turnover of pasture, resulting in a very healthy, thick sward of pasture. The soil structure is also very good, with root depth up to 30 cm.”

David credits the environmental emphasis on the property to his father. “He has set an amazing example,” David says; though he admits he and his sisters didn't always think so. “When we were younger, we spent a lot of our school holidays planting trees and flaxes on this place”

However David believes he now sees and appreciates the results of Bob's passion, “both aesthetically and production-wise”.

“I have watched Dad turn some of the worst parts of the farm, boggy wet areas, into spectacular ponds with all the complementary vegetation and wildlife.” The ponds also act as silt traps for any run-off with sediment staying in the ponds and clean water coming from the overflow.”

In the past 18 months some focus has been moved to replace shelterbelts that have, according to David, “run their course” or, with hindsight, have been found to be “not the right type”.

David began farming on the property in 1994 and worked there for 3 1/2 years before moving on to manage another Waikato dry stock property. While on a working holiday in the US in 1999 David and Lyndi began buying land from Bob. They came home in 2001 and with Bob began reviewing the farm management and structure. David joined a farm business group and believes this proved a key factor when exploring operational options for the farm. “I made valuable contacts and was able to identify the right people to see,” he says. “Sound advice regarding succession, that we sought and received, has been vital for all of us.”

In 2003 the business was restructured forming Waikiwi Ltd, an operating company, which owns the stock and plant on the property. The company leases the land from the titleholders – a family trust that was set up as part of the farm succession solution and, in their own right,

“Succession is possibly an area where there doesn't tend to be a lot of open discussion,” says David, “but we've gone there and have arrived at what is a very satisfactory and fair structure for us.”

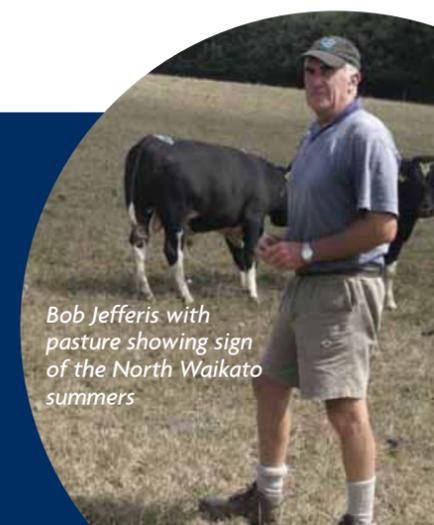


David Jefferis with an example of the ponds that have been created on the farm

JUDGES POINTS

- Intergenerational passion for the wellbeing of the environment
- Excellent understanding of soil and biology
- Implementation of business plan with written goals
- Succession plan in place
- Open mind to the future
- Excellent use of consultants, contractors and casual staff
- Sustainable system providing good balance of time on and off farm
- Soil tests on all paddocks annually, serious attitude to monitoring
- Nutrient budgets and plans used

- Stock management well balanced with the cropping programme
- Very high quality fencing in all retired areas
- All waterways fenced, plantings increase nutrient uptake
- Excellent relationships with market gardeners who lease land
- Maize yields going up due to choice and management of cropping programme
- Maize contract grown for clients with very good relationships involved
- Bob's design and construction of bike ramps over fences improves travelling time
- Bull cell rotational grazing system simple, effective and flexible



Bob Jefferis with pasture showing sign of the North Waikato summers

MĀRA ROA FARM
JOAN DE RENZY AND CRAIG FULTON

LIVESTOCK IMPROVEMENT DAIRY FARM AWARD

The concept of partnership features strongly on the De Renzy property near Matamata.

Both farm owner and sharemilker independently describe the operation of the farm as a great working partnership.

“Joan wouldn’t be happy to hear herself called a boss,” warns Craig Fulton with a grin. “It wouldn’t be an accurate description at all. There was no question when I did the entry form,” says Joan De Renzy, “the entry is in both our names. It wouldn’t be right if it wasn’t.”

Their shared-stewardship approach to farming reflects a partnership of another kind too – with the land, a 120ha family farm of mainly easy rolling country southwest of Matamata.

Ensuring the property is in good heart, both economically and environmentally, underpins the partnership that the award judges singled out for comment in their feedback report.

Reads the report: “We were impressed by the relationship and co-operation evident between Joan and Craig, despite the obvious generation gap and your different and potentially conflicting roles and aspirations.”

Joan took over the reins on the property around 25 years ago when her husband Peter became ill. She has lived there all her married life, raising three children with Peter, but has found her passion for the place has grown as she has become more involved.

Water protection and tree planting is ongoing, despite the encroachment of lifestyle blocks and, as Joan tells it, “lots of people saying I’m too old to be planting trees, that I’ll never see the benefit”.

Through the years Joan says she has fiercely protected the small wetland and lagoon on the property, which surrounding natural springs feed into. When many didn’t, she recognised its importance as the kidneys of the area, and refused requests to have it filled in. Craig, she says proudly, understands, and has never asked.

Craig and his wife Hannah are in their fifth season sharemilking 350-360 cows on the 108ha (effective) property. They’re on track for their production target of 320 kg/cow and 1,065kg/ha, a 7.5 percent increase on the previous season, despite some difficult seasonal conditions.

Two extra staff are employed, one full-time and one seasonal to help during calving.

The farm is a low input system, which relies on good pasture management by the sharemilker and, as Joan puts it “fine tuning, and keeping things simple”.

Joan’s approach to the business of the farm is as forthright as she is. “If you are going to do something,” she says, “you do it right.”

An example of this is the new loop line effluent storage/irrigation system, installed last November. The old irrigator was not nicknamed “the irritator” for nothing, says Craig. When he and Joan got together to find a solution, they didn’t just look at another irrigator; they sought a system that could resolve wider issues, including potentially meeting anticipated new industry standard requirements.

Now the Larall (Low Application Rate And Low Labour) system is in use, Joan and Craig say the cost – higher than

a new travelling irrigator – is well justified. Running costs, both labour and electricity, are significantly lower; there’s 14 days of effluent storage available (instead of one) and the system allows for effluent analysis, so nutrient input can be monitored, and targeted.

“Joan’s great because she’s really keen on keeping the farm top notch and she’s always open to ideas about bringing the farm up to the next level,” says Craig.

The judges agree, noting in their feedback report for Joan and Craig: “You demonstrated how a mature dairy farm can continue to be improved.”

Joan is, says Craig, “very proactive” on the farm. She describes her input like this: “I can’t dig post holes but I can support

and encourage.” Joan prides herself in her good ongoing relationship with previous sharemilkers.

She’s a founding member of the QFENZ (Quality Farm Employers of New Zealand) programme and likes to know that people who have contributed to the operation of the farm have gone on to achieve their own goals and objectives. “We don’t all call her Granny Joan for nothing,” says Craig.



Craig Fulton and Joan De Renzy



Joan de Renzy and Craig Fulton with final round judges

JUDGES POINTS

- Clear goals, well organised and presented
- Extremely conscious of those who will follow – owner(s) and sharemilker
- Long term commitment to environment
- Sharemilker thinks like an owner
- Water management, particularly the retention and enhancement of wetland seepage areas
- Recent installation of high quality, high volume loop line effluent storage/irrigation system
- Good understanding of nutrient management and use of nutrient budgets

- Minimum tillage policy
- Aggressive anti-pugging policy, 2 stand off pads and development of runoff effluent system
- Multiple gates into paddocks to limit damage
- Waterways protected, planting continuing
- Farm map with irrigation lines, GPS mapping
- Excellent races, stock shelter
- Focus on high quality employment and staff training

PROPERTY OF GARRY AND MARIE-JOSE REYMER
MANAGER BLAIR FINE

GALLAGHER INNOVATION AWARD

A high-tech animal monitoring system installed as part of cowshed renovations 13 years ago on this Cambridge farm continues to turn heads.

The system's ability to individualize the production, input, condition, weight, activity, treatment and nutrition level of each cow has resulted in the implementation of a wide range of efficiencies of practise on the 96ha farm.

The award judges described the combination of a number of pieces of technology, and it's integrated application in the cowshed each milking, as "superb".

Their feedback report reads: "This is an excellent example of a high input, high return dairy farm being farmed with an understanding of inputs and their influence on the environment. It's certainly been money well spent," says Garry. "I can't understand why more don't adopt this technology. A lot of people still think its state-of-the-art and they're surprised at how old it is."

Since Garry took the lifestyle-changing step of employing a full-time staff member five years ago, he has confined his work on the farm to pressure times, like calving and mating, and holidays.



Garry Reymer and manager Blair Fine

JUDGES POINTS

- Superb monitoring and recording of cows at every milking
- Gary has incredible knowledge on cow nutrition
- Supplements are specific for each cow
- Good working relationship between owner and manager
- Learn by research and advice, willing to try new things
- Constant re-evaluation for environmental impact and cost effectiveness
- Excellent farm infrastructure
- Shade trees for shelter in paddocks and races



Garry Reymer

Blair Fine is officially the farm's assistant manager but he's the only full-time labour unit. He's in his second season milking the 300 Friesian cows on 87ha (effective) on the mainly flat property just west of Cambridge.

A keen YFC supporter and multiple Young Farmer of the Year regional finalist, Blair says he had not encountered a cow monitoring system such as that at the Reymer farm until he came to work there. "But it's not hard to pick up and use," says Blair. "You just have to remember it's a tool, there to be referred to, not a Bible."

"We still use whiteboards and notebooks like everyone else, it's just that with the system, what you know makes running the farm so much easier."

At the heart of the system is the collar worn by the cows. Says Blair: "There's definitely no cowbell on these. We've got whistles, but no bells!"

The collars have a unique code, identifying each animal and allowing data collected at milking to be recorded. There's also a pedometer on each collar, so they can tell how active the cow has been. This is especially useful when considering health or condition issues.

Using a crush and in-built weighing system, the cows are weighed as they leave the shed. This data is compared against what the cow has produced and used to calculate how much supplementary feed the cow is given in the shed during next milking. "With the feeding in the shed at milking time, it means you're not spending a good part of the rest of the day out there in the paddock with the feed-out wagons."

LOCHIEL FARMLANDS
MANAGER KIM ROBINSON

PPCS LIVESTOCK FARM AWARD

Looking after the livestock is a top priority on this large North Waikato property, and it shows.

The philosophy behind the policy is simple, says manager Kim Robinson. "Your stock are where you make the money, so you have to look after them."

The award judges agreed when they visited the 2900ha property at Glen Murray, north west of Huntly. In their feedback report the judges noted: "You have a pro-active style of management resulting in excellent stock performance and returns while being a good steward of the land."

Since 1989 the business has grown, with land ownership now totalling 2900ha. Land purchase wasn't a focus, says Kim, "more like a natural progression, things were working well".

He puts this down to open communication, and lots of it. The board meets fortnightly and Kim is also fully involved with the day to day running of the property, so has a clear picture of what is happening at all levels at any given time.

Contour of the farm is medium to steep, with just under 450ha of river flat. Three blocks containing streams and mature native bush, totalling over 100ha, have been permanently fenced off.



Manager Kim Robinson

JUDGES POINTS

- A large scale operation with noticeable attention to detail
- Farmed to minimize effects on environment, good bush remnants fenced
- All stock viewed in excellent health and condition
- Major streams fenced, filter traps at bottom of three catchments
- Excellent fertility and nutrient balance over farm
- Good access around such an extensive farm
- Extensive planting of poplar poles for soil conservation, erosion control and shelter
- Good matching of stock types to wide range of soil types and topography



Lochiel Farmlands

There's plenty of work for keen dog and stockmen says Kim. Stock numbers indicate the scale of the operation. At the beginning of last winter the farm was carrying 9500 ewes, 2900 hoggets, 14,000 winter trade lambs and 2150 head of 18-month cattle (1380 bulls and 795 steers).

A feed pad is used for wintering up to 300 cattle. This protects the river flats, freeing them up for the lambs but also gives a buffer against having to pay higher prices for the class of cattle they would otherwise need to buy in for the farm in the spring.

At one time they concentrated on younger and smaller cattle, but Kim found the heat and summer dryness the property is prone to did not suit them. Now the beef focus is on larger cattle and a faster turnover, with some of the animals spending just three months on the property. The need for stock is, admits Kim, almost constant, but the award judges did not see this as a problem, given Kim's contacts and "excellent stock buying skills".

Mindful of the effect the farming operation had on the environment, the decision was made last year to monitor water quality in the Mangatia stream, which begins and ends within the farm boundaries. This stream flows into the Opuatia, which runs into the Waikato. Samples are collected and sent away monthly and so far results show negligible nitrogen and phosphate is entering the waterway. "We're pretty pleased with that," says Kim.

With flash flooding common, fencing off all waterways is not a viable option. So the three main watersheds have filter systems in place at the bottom of each.