

# Ballance Farm Environment Awards

Promoting Sustainable Profitable Farming

## 2008 WAIKATO WINNERS

DEREK AND MARION KLOETEN

### THE SUPREME AWARD WINNERS FOR 2008



Derek Kloeten with share milkers Dwayne and Jenny McVeigh

When the Kloetens moved onto their 243ha King Country farm 20 years ago they were, in Derek's light-hearted words, "definitely the weirdos in the district".

They came from a Tokoroa sharemilking position to ownership of one of the few dairy farms in their area north of Pio Pio, west of Te Kuiti. It had been converted five years earlier, but no cows had been milked on it the previous year. The Kloetens milked 200 cows in 1988 but this number has climbed to 500.

There can be no doubt the early days learning curve was as steep as some of the hills on the property, but Derek and Marion say they were young and up for a challenge.

The Kloetens are, by their own admission, now "getting it right".

The judges agree, writing in their feedback report: "We described your farm as a really good all rounder and we also believe this is a real achievement in terms of sustainability.

"You seem to be doing many things well and it is the combination of these parts, and a balanced perspective on management that is one of your biggest strengths."

Derek explains their approach like this: "We believe three things go hand-in-hand – looking after the livestock, the people and the land.

"If you get all those right, together, things will happen for you."



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## DEREK AND MARION KLOETEN ALSO WINNERS OF THE...

### LIC DAIRY FARM AWARD GALLAGHER INNOVATION AWARD



Marion describes the contour on their farm as “challenging” while Derek says it’s “undulating”. They can make supplement on 10 percent of the area. Derek can drive a tractor over 70 percent (but is careful not to allow younger staff to). There are steep sidings and, being limestone country, some tomos to farm around. When they took the farm over, there was a serious ragwort problem, but these days weeds are well controlled.

That first season they ran 200 dairy cows, a small number of beef cattle and, to have a go at the ragwort, 800 sheep. Production began for Derek and Marion at 50,000kgsMS. Per cow production has always been their focus with happy cows the goal. There are no inductions and no tails docked on the property.

The farm now milks 500 cows in two herds on 219ha (effective). 380 cows in the main herd are milked twice a day and the remainder, the younger and smaller cows, are milked all season just once a day. Last season – the Kloetens first with 50/50 sharemilkers Dwayne and Jenny McVeigh – the production reached a record 164,000kgsMS. The

introduction of cropping (turnips and maize) on the property by the McVeighs has proved a very successful move. It’s a flourishing partnership, one the Kloetens value, but not just in dollar terms. “They’re lovely people,” says Derek, who adds that the people factor in their three-fold recipe for success extends beyond staff.

“It’s about whoever you come in contact with – what goes round comes round, so it makes sense to treat people well.”

The judges noted the importance Derek and Marion place on respect for their staff, commenting “you seem to have a genuine interest in the people side of farming and your team is probably one of your biggest assets”.

Comments Marion: “We believe we’ve been really fortunate with the contribution of the people we’ve employed as we’ve increased in cow numbers.”

The Kloetens are aware of the importance of managing stress, having been through many springtime calvings themselves. Derek now routinely makes himself available on the farm at busy times. In spring he takes over the effluent spreading and acts as a troubleshooter. “I help stop the wheels falling off!”



### WHY THEY WON...

*Steeper planted areas on the Kloeten’s farm*

#### THE SUPREME AWARD

- *Low Stocking rate fits well with the contour and soil challenges.*
- *QEII covenants are in place with further planting underway.*
- *Steeper sidings taken out and planted.*
- *Shade and shelter in every paddock.*
- *Feed Budgeting and Grazing Management is key on this farm.*
- *Nutrient Management is understood and put into practice.*
- *Staff relationships are excellent. Encouragement is given to help staff get ahead in the dairy industry.*



*Derek demonstrating spray gun for effluent application*

The judges were impressed with how, with careful management, the Kloetens meet the challenge of effluent dispersal on a farm of this contour. Area and hours of application are meticulously recorded in a book in the dairy shed, accessible to all.

It's spread over a 33ha area, half of it steeper land and half the supplementary feed country. "Having the hilly country to spread on to allows us somewhere for it to go when we've got silage shut up," says Derek. He's conscious of minimising effluent applications in the spring. In contrast to when they took the farm over, fertility is getting so high "it's getting hard to manage in the winter".

Effluent is stored in a holding pond and pumped at up to fortnightly intervals. "Having a holding pond allows you to pick your day," explains Derek. The pond is stirred and cleaned out annually.

They have an innovative way of managing their stand off pad. With concrete considered too hard on the cows' feet, they used to spread bought-in bark post peelings. But for the past two years they've been saving money and recycling a waste product by producing their own material, chipping unwanted trees on the farm – mainly willows, poplars and pines. This is scraped off regularly and stockpiled to compost down on an old race. Once a year it's spread onto crop ground that's been eaten off.

Since providing molasses to supplement the diet of the cows through spring – and at selected other times like the big dry this summer – the Kloetens have found their empty cow percentage has dropped from 10 percent to between four to five percent.

They are set up to hold 10tonne of the product on the farm and feed out between 60-70 tonne in an average year. It's provided to the cows with a simple system of 10 connected

concrete troughs. The nearest trough to the storage tank is filled first and then it flows through.

Derek likes that "you can tell how good a day the cows have had in a paddock by how much molasses they eat." The molasses, he says, plugs some of the gap that exists because of the lack of suitable land to grow crops.

The judges noted how well the steeper country is managed. There is careful effluent spreading to avoid run-off and oversowing or direct sow methods are preferred.

There are four hectares of steep sidings planted in pines. A planting programme is in place to ensure there are two or three shade trees in each paddock and natives go into gullies as they are fenced off. Two stands of native bush totalling eight hectares have been made over as QEII covenanted areas.

The Kloetens have made a success of their farm. They're committed to the community that once viewed them "weirdos". Their only son Harvey is active in the dairy industry now too, working on another King Country property at present. Marion gives time to the local Victim Support organisation and Derek is chairman of the local Search and Rescue group.

### Judges comments...

- The farm as a really good all rounder, this is a real achievement in terms of sustainability.
- Doing many things well. It is the combination of these, with a balanced perspective on management.
- Farm production and farm management seem well suited to balance between the lifestyle and production goals.
- Land management practices are well suited for the land and the farm is beautifully maintained.

## THE GALLAGHER INNOVATION AWARD

- Innovative use of unwanted trees. They employ a chipper and recycle these chips to the standoff pad. This acts as a sponge, then once a year they are scraped off, stockpiled, composted, then spread out on crop ground that has been eaten off.

## THE LIC DAIRY FARM AWARD

- Focus is on per cow production, happy staff, happy cows, and lifestyle.
- Cows and animal welfare is good - managed in two herds.
- They recognised the need to provide a good surface for their cows to lie down.

*Simple but effective tree protection*





## BARRY AND PAM WISE

### PPCS LIVESTOCK FARM AWARD PGG WRIGHTSON HABITAT IMPROVEMENT AWARD WAIKATO FOREST AND BIRD NATIVE FOREST RESTORATION AWARD

One of the best things about farming, this Ngutunui couple believe, is being able to see and enjoy, every day, what your work has achieved.

“When we came here we said we’ll farm with what nature throws at us,” says Barry. “What we see each day, with the stock and the environment generally, gives us a lot of pleasure.”

There can be no doubt the sense of achievement the Wises enjoy is justified. Noted the judges in their feedback report after their visit to the Wise property: “It has been developed with considerable thought not just to farm viability and efficiency but also to minimising adverse environmental impacts and enhancing ecological diversity wherever possible.”

Barry and Pam Wise have invested the past 19 years into their picturesque 167 ha mainly rolling contour property that backs onto the south-eastern side of Mt Pirongia.

It’s now an economic dairy grazing and organic kiwifruit orchard unit; a far cry from the rough run-off that confronted Barry and Pam and their two young sons Stephen and Simon when they arrived on the original 76.9ha block in 1989.

“There was a cottage on the place, but it was unliveable” recalls Barry, “and any fences that were here were pretty well shot. We started from scratch.”

Barry came to the property with a clear vision and goal and he attributes these partly to his career working for what is now known as MAF (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries).

“I had seen what worked,” says Barry, “and I knew it was important that we try to operate at a low cost with low impact on the environment.”

The one hectare kiwifruit orchard on the place had just produced its first commercial crop when they took over but in those days it was very much an “added extra”.

Barry, whose work had been with livestock management and genetics, had taken redundancy and he got stuck into creating a deer unit on the 40ha of country he deemed suitable, while still working part-time off-farm. Dairy grazers were run on the balance of the property.

They moved a house onto the farm, siting it next to a “basic, rough duckshooters dam”. Extensive planting and care through the years, with support from the Clean Stream Initiative and NZ Native Forest Restoration Trust, has created a wonderful habitat for a range of wildlife in this and other key areas on the property.

The Wises bought neighbouring properties – 19ha in 1994 and 73ha in 2000 – always identifying areas to fence off and regenerate as they went. Now they have 17 QEII covenanted blocks totalling 27ha. Their effective farming area is 135ha.

The importance of all aspects of water is recognised by Barry and Pam. After their most recent land purchase, they realised a watercourse had been altered. So they changed it back to “where nature intended” and in doing so eliminated a silting problem downstream. The Mangaweka stream and the farm’s five dams are fenced off. The Wises are extra

*The Wise’s with the judges, discussing bush restoration*



### WHY THEY WON...

#### PPCS LIVESTOCK AWARD

- Stock in excellent condition through management of pasture and soil to minimise any damage.
- Energy efficiency is a feature with the use of a water ram for a gravity feed system and a low energy policy for the farm.
- Simple but effective farming system.
- The quality pastures are clean and weeds are well controlled.

*The Wises discussing improvements with judges in the Kiwi fruit block*





*Pam and Barry Wise with their plastic recycling system*



conscious of protecting water quality with the Te Awamutu town water supply reservoir and treatment works being next door.

The home block enjoys lines of treated and untreated water. Water is reticulated to stock from dams on the rest of the property using two Harrison's water rams which Barry says suit them well. "They're reliable and don't need any power to run."

With around 420 dairy grazers wintered on the property and more at other times of the year as feed allows, the Wises also have a back-up petrol water pump system. "We can't afford to be running out of water," says Barry.

Barry takes great pride in his stock care and management. Since selling the deer in 2003 only dairy heifers and weaners supplied by Richard Cross's company, GrazeRight, have been on the farm.

Using a grazing company works well with Barry's tried and true system of four mobs, moved daily around 111 paddocks – which are halved in winter - on the farm. "Because the company provides all the bulls, we can be flexible with numbers in a mob, we don't have to keep individual lots

separate, though we do keep our maximum size at 120 to a mob" he explains. "We can get the most out of the property and do the best we can by the cows."

Moving the cows each day has many advantages according to Barry. In the winter, soil and pasture damage is minimised and in the summer it ensures there's always grass cover so soil moisture is retained.

He keeps a close eye on the stock. The company requires they are weighed four times a year. "But when you move them each day you can see if something is dropping off and you can get on top of things pretty quickly."

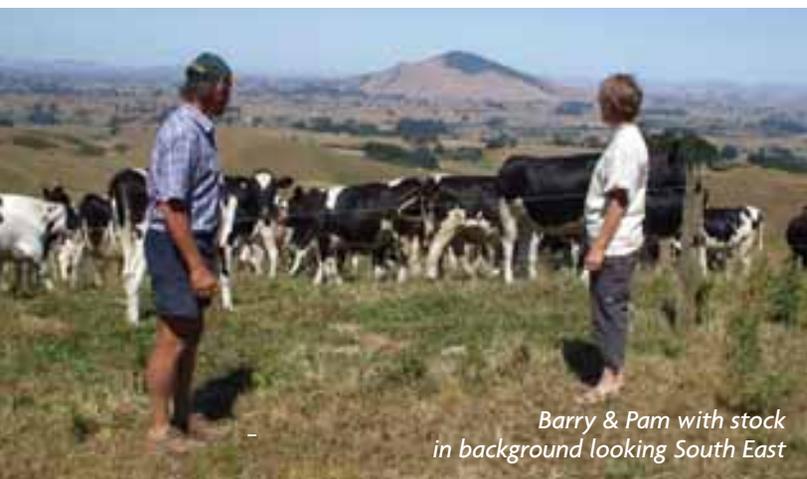
The judges were impressed with the "transformation" of the block purchased in 2000, heavily infested with gorse. Barry and Pam chose to "save on chemicals and save the environment" to fight the gorse. For about a year Barry's "spare time activity" was towing the heavy-duty mulcher from the kiwifruit orchard through the gorse.

"It was real slow, hard work but it worked well," says Barry. "I did two passes in different directions so I got it all. It killed the old gorse outright. We've just had to spray the regrowth."

In their first year, the Wises got help in their kiwifruit orchard. "Pam's got green fingers, but we really didn't have a clue about kiwifruit," admits Barry. "After that though we decided we'd better get our heads around doing it ourselves."

**Judges comment...**

- Effective, simple, and with passion. That, say the judges, is Barry and Pam Wise's operation in a nutshell.



*Barry & Pam with stock in background looking South East*

**PGG WRIGHTSON HABITAT IMPROVEMENT AWARD**

- All waterways fenced.
- Bush fenced and protected by way of QE2 covenant.
- Bio-diversity is promoted with Native bird corridors extended.
- Extensive native re-vegetation plantings already carried out.
- More planned for these riparian areas.

**WAIKATO FOREST AND BIRD NATIVE FOREST RESTORATION AWARD**

- An excellent example of extensive native regeneration.



## PETER AND MARILYN KIDD

### BALLANCE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT AWARD ENVIRONMENT WAIKATO WATER PROTECTION AWARD

A keen awareness of their unique part of the world shapes the way the Kidds approach making a living from their land.

Peter and Marilyn originally came to the Tihoi area between Mangakino and Taupo 25 years ago when they secured a 270ha sheep and beef ballot farm, but now they're milking 725 cows off 345ha (effective) there.

They converted to dairying in 1996 and added 115ha to their holding in 2000. Theirs is a large, well-managed, low stress operation.

Commented the award judges: "This farm would provide a useful contrast to more highly stocked and intensive farming systems.

"Environmental management is important to the Kidds, and this is demonstrated not just in words but also in deeds."

The contour of the property is mostly easy, with some - including much of the newer block - rolling country.

Significant features of the area are the predominantly light free draining pumice soils (requiring careful use of fertiliser to prevent leaching) and the weather. "We can get frosts all months of the year," explains Peter.

Protecting wetlands, plantings and soil conservation measures means they don't graze 45ha of their land but Peter stresses he's "no tree-hugger" or extremist. "I'm more of a mainstream environmentalist driven to run a sound business.

Both behind and beyond his farm gate Peter recognises that the effect of nitrogen run-off represents a "big unknown" for the future of farming. "If we don't limit it, someone will do it for us with legislation," he warns.

Peter is committed to working towards a solution. Despite being outside the official Lake Taupo catchment area, he's a long-term supporter of the Taupo Lake Care Group.

The quest for an answer concerns him. He believes "capturing the hearts and minds of all farmers" is the challenge, but the answer is not to stop farming.

"The more you know, the more you find you don't know," he says, pointing to new research that shows areas covered by gorse and broom, not being farmed, are leaching 50 percent more nitrogen than a typical sheep and beef farm."

Their conversion from sheep and beef to dairy 12 years ago was a well-considered one.

"The farm's contour lent itself to it," says Peter, "but the climate was a question."

However there was a dairy farm 12 kms away, and thorough investigation convinced Peter and Marilyn the dairy industry "showed lots of promise".

"So even though there was a lot of debt involved, we went ahead, and it's been the right move."

Their best production season so far has been 278,000kgsMS with their target being 285,000kgsMS.

They began their dairy farming years by hiring a contract milker who they felt confident would plug the initial gaps in their knowledge about dairy cow management.

Peter found he had little trouble adapting to the pasture management aspect. "Dairying actually simplifies pasture management decisions," he says, "because you've only got one class of livestock to consider."

### WHY THEY WON...

#### BALLANCE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT AWARD

- *Excellent management and understanding of soils.*
- *Updated effluent irrigation system.*
- *Good production with low additional supplements and inputs.*
- *Looking for quality information about future nutrient management.*
- *Low stocking rate, to minimise damage to fragile soils.*

*Peter and Marilyn Kidd with the judges*





*Peter and Marilyn Kidd*



After two years they made the switch to lower order sharemilkers, employing Kevin and Tricia Hallmond who have been there ever since. Their employee Wayne Mc Millan is in his sixth season at Kowhiri. The award judges made special note of the staff, saying their long tenure indicated positive employer/employee relationships. The judges also commented on the farms “impressive” pastures, writing “it takes a lot of commitment on the part of farm staff to maintain the low weed populations”.

For their part, Peter says it is a priority to ensure their farm is a pleasant place to work; that standards and equipment are well maintained. Employing sharemilkers is the preferred option as it invites more buy-in to farm profitability.

Peter believes it's very important that clear lines of responsibility are drawn, and adhered to. “We try to avoid overlap, it can lead to problems,” he says. He rears all the replacement calves and is in charge of the cultivation, cropping and fertiliser.

Peter's nutrient budgets are set by combining regular soil test results, his observations and knowledge, and input from his fertiliser company representative Andrew Rutherford. He recounts a sharp early lesson he had on his property. One of the paddocks he assigned for beef cow calving was a hay paddock when the farm was part of a much larger Lands and Survey block.

“I learnt the hard way it was low in magnesium from all the years of hay coming off it, this resulted in a very poor response to Urea. I think that was the beginning of realising I needed a bit more of a holistic approach to nutrient management.” Pasture silage is harvested from support land, and other parts of the farm, as surpluses allow. Summer turnip and winter swede crops are used as part of a pasture renewal programme as well as providing feed at those climatically challenging times of the season.

To conserve organic soil matter, only the no-till method is used for crop sowing, while a power harrow is used for regrassing.

All replacements are grazed on the farm except for 90 calves and 30 carryover cows.

Native plant expert, Peter Marshall of Acacia Bay Nurseries, helps with the selection of plants and trees on the property, based on species found locally. Steep faces and wetlands have been fenced and planted.

### Judges comment...

- “The Kidds are running the farm in a manner that will be profitable in the long term – healthy land, pastures and animals all contributing to this.”



*A fenced and planted gully on Kowhiri*

## ENVIRONMENT WAIKATO WATER PROTECTION AWARD

- Priority given to planting and protection as part of farm development.
- Clear understanding of water issues and managing for the future.
- Extensive range of activities underway – plantings, protection against gully erosion, investigating use of nitrification inhibitors, keen to preserve and build organic matter in soils.



## OTHER FINALISTS

### NEIL AICKEN, WAIKAWA TRUST – BEEF, TUAKAU

- “Work with Nature, not against it.”
- Decisions made for the running of the property are backed up with well-documented accurate data.
- Working towards more environmentally sensitive farming practices.



### JUSTIN DOWNING – DAIRY, MORRINSVILLE

- “Get to know the farm before you make any decisions or changes.”
- Plans to maintain and improve farm environment including wetland planting and bush remnant restoration.
- Passionate about his animals and production.



### JONATHON AND SARAH WALKER, SOGGY BOTTOMS HOLDINGS – MIXED LIVESTOCK, NGARUAWAHIA

- “From 60 acres you cannot make a living on this class of land, so they have taken a value-added approach.”
- Good shade and shelter, stock management and animal health and welfare.
- Working towards breeding and growing animals in a free-range system based on organic principles.



PLEASE NOTE: THE HILL LABORATORIES HARVEST AWARD WAS NOT GIVEN TO ANY PARTICIPANT THIS YEAR.

## UPCOMING DATES – FIELD DAY

DEREK AND MARION KLOETEN  
6TH OF MAY, 2008

10.30- 2.30  
LUNCH PROVIDED

Derek and Marion Kloeten  
Mathers Rd, Te Kuiti

For a map contact Phillipa Crequer  
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waikato@bfea.org.nz  
or down load a map from [www.bfea.org.nz](http://www.bfea.org.nz)



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