



**Ballance**  
**Farm Environment Awards®**  
*Promoting Sustainable Profitable Farming*

# 2014 TARANAKI

Gavin Faull and Oliver Faull (directors)  
 Tony and Loie Penwarden (sharemilkers)  
*Faull Farms Ltd/Trewithen Partnership*

## SUPREME AWARD WINNERS

**ALSO WINNERS OF:**  
**BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS SOIL MANAGEMENT AWARD**  
**LIC DAIRY FARM AWARD**  
**MASSEY UNIVERSITY INNOVATION AWARD**  
**PGG WRIGHTSON LAND AND LIFE AWARD**



This 1150-cow year round milking operation, on 371ha at Tikorangi just inland from Waitara, was described by the award judges as “a strong example of dairying and what can be achieved”.

Currently the farm comprises of a 282ha milking platform and four nearby run-offs totalling 89ha. Contour is flat, with some easy sidlings. Production last year was 487,909 kgMS and they are on target for 540,000 kgMS this season.

Gavin Faull took over management of this property’s original block, the 40ha Faull family farm in 1990. Although his adult life and work has never seen him working the property, the farm clearly represents a heritage important to him and an industry and region he is hugely committed to. There have been Faulls on this land since 1867.

The business has grown under Gavin, and continues to do so, explains one of his three sons, Oliver, an Auckland-based accountant for extensive domestic and offshore family interests. “Dad doesn’t live there but it is part of the Faull family, and always will be,” says Oliver of the land. “Right from the start he had the vision to create an economically and environmentally sustainable business out of it, rather than just a small farm. Dad does a lot of pushing of boundaries, he’s the dreamer and he pushes the rest of us.”



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## SUPREME AWARD WINNERS (continued)

The Faull farm was Tony and Loie Penwarden's first 50/50 sharemilking job; they began with 540 cows. When they arrived in June 2004 they went straight into winter milking in a 29-aside herringbone.

Now, they put 850 spring calving cows and 300 autumn calving cows through a high-tech 60-bale rotary shed with their team of four full-time staff and six permanent part-time "milk harvesters" as Californian Loie calls them.

The award judges were impressed with the overarching expectation from all parties for "best practice" in all areas and believed this was being achieved. The judges wrote: "Increasing, utilising and embracing a high level of technology within the business while maintaining your focus on people is admirable. Without doubt, if the prime minister wants to demonstrate great farming practice to a key delegate from another country, then they need to visit this property."

Indeed, the property has a history of welcoming visitors including agricultural students, schools and special interest tour groups. The Faulls have published a book, "Where Milk Comes From", which has an informative text and contains quality photos from the farm.

The cowshed, built in 2007 with the expectation the business would grow, has added extras like a viewing platform, a reception room, and bathroom facilities. There are six flagpoles that regularly fly a range of flags including New Zealand, Taranaki, Fonterra, American (for Loie!) and Swiss-Belhotel International, Gavin's company that manages over 125 hotels and projects worldwide.

The cowshed is fully automated with electronic tag recording for each cow. This and a comprehensive range of other farm

information is currently progressively being transferred to the AgHub cloud based data management system allowing ease of management decisions and distance monitoring. In 2011 a system was installed to automatically cluster flush between each cow's milking, reducing the transfer of bacterial infections. The old cowshed has been converted into an automatic calf-rearing complex with computer controlled feeding system.

Maize for silage is grown mainly on the run-offs. About six percent of the farm is planted each year in turnips and, a new and successful crop this year, chicory. All paddocks are soil tested and 136ha of the milking platform is piped to allow precision "timed to perfection" effluent application via two smart hydrants, each with six guns.

Recently they have moved to spraying on nitrogen in the form of dissolved urea instead of the usual dry application. This allows them to apply it themselves with farm tractors, at a rate of about half when in dry form, "and it's working just as well," says Tony.

There is one hectare of native bush covenanted with QEII National Trust. The original Faull homestead has only the chimney remaining but the area, including a stand of large puriri trees, is protected from stock and is a focus for the Faull family. They have a tradition of marking significant family events like births or marriages by gathering together to plant kauri amongst the puriri.

Three of Gavin's four brothers remain minority shareholders in the land. Gavin and his wife Carol have sons Matthew, Oliver and Edward.



### JUDGES' COMMENTS

- Two businesses combining effectively to service aspirations of both.
- Commitment to staff and their families is exceptional, above and beyond the norm.
- Excellent adoption of technology and innovation; being applied to a wide range of areas on farm.
- Remarkable community focus from both Faulls and Penwardens financially and in terms of time and support.



The Faulls and the Penwardens share an extensive and inherent commitment to their people and community. The judges noted this, writing “this is superb and the judges acknowledge this work and passion”. The Faulls give sponsorships and scholarships to a range of groups including the Len Lye Centre, church, schools and sports clubs. Gavin is a board member for Venture Taranaki.

When the Penwardens arrived they were busy with winter milking then calving. When they “came up for air” in the summer they realised they didn’t know their neighbours so hired the Tikorangi hall, distributed a flyer introducing themselves, and invited everyone to a shared dinner. “We had 150 people turn up,” smiles Loie. “It was wonderful and you know what, it has become an annual event!”

That shared focus on people resonated with Gavin and the Penwardens when they first met. Gavin was seeking sharemilkers to replace a couple who were moving on after 11 years. Tony and Loie, who had moved from Loie’s native California in 1991 to go

dairying in Taranaki, were settled in a long-standing lower-order 800-cow sharemilking position.

Gavin offered them the position but in the tally-up the Penwardens found they were \$120,000 short. Such was the connection already however that Gavin loaned them the money. Says Loie: “I guess he’d been looking for us. He wanted people that could work with people, not just people who had the right amount of money.”

Tony describes working for Gavin, who spends a lot of time out of New Zealand, as “not your ordinary sharemilking business”. Gavin, says Tony, “is quite an inspiration, he tackles business very head on, he loves challenges”. Tony and Loie replicate the value placed on people with the farm staff and their families. The judges noted the length of tenure and wrote: “This is a very relaxed and happy work environment.” Loie distributes a farm newsletter each week.

Full-time staff are herd managers Ron Hough and Heath Hirini, tractor driver Kaine Hales and maintenance man Ian McDonald. The “milk harvesters” are a team who work out their roster swaps between themselves and generally work milkings to suit; some also have full-time town jobs. “They are all highly skilled, punctual, conscientious, just the best,” says Loie.

Tony and Loie have three adult daughters, Rachael, Hannah and Hilary.

## Quick Facts

<b>Type:</b>	Dairy
<b>District:</b>	Tikorangi
<b>Total area:</b>	371ha
<b>Peak milked:</b>	1150
<b>Rainfall:</b>	1700mm
<b>Elevation:</b>	200 MASL



## JUDGES’ COMMENTS

- Excellent per hectare and per cow production levels relative to region.
- Very good progress on riparian planting, backed by long-term management plan; good shade trees.
- Long term approach and plan for their farm’s environmental impact; intergenerational family involvement fostered.
- Very good understanding of soils and how soils impact on business; integrated approach to effluent management.

## Robin and Jacqueline Blackwell Mangaotea

**BEEF + LAMB NEW ZEALAND LIVESTOCK AWARD, HILL LABORATORIES HARVEST AWARD  
DONAGHYS FARM STEWARDSHIP AWARD,  
and TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL SUSTAINABILITY AWARD**



The Blackwells are openly passionate about Mangaotea, their 658ha mainly flat to rolling property north east of Stratford. “We are really loving what we are doing,” says Robin with undoubted sincerity.

The award judges highlighted the Blackwells’ commitment, writing that they would like to see it “communicated to peers so they can experience what is possible with commitment and pride”.

The couple’s property, which is about 20 minutes drive from the base of Mt Taranaki and punctuated by some steeper ridges, is in the Tariki district and winters 11,327 su. The cattle to sheep ratio is 90:10 with producing bulls for their annual September sale and grazing young dairy stock for long-term clients being their main focus.

The award judges applauded Robin and Jacqueline’s positive

approach to farming. The judges wrote of the Blackwells: “Driven, focused, passionate applicants with a wide awareness of all areas affecting their farming operation. They hold an immense amount of pride in their farm. Their hard work is evident throughout the property and enthusiasm levels are infectious.”

Robin has lived in the area all his life. He took over the original 80ha block of Mangaotea from his father in 1980 and he and Jacqueline have progressively grown their holding, purchasing five neighbouring blocks between 1991 and 2009 and leasing a total of 215ha adjacent. Their total effective area is 591ha.

In the past five years they have protected two peat swamp areas containing stunning fully mature kahikatea; each area is 1.5ha and is covenanted with the QEII National Trust. They have more sites planned for covenanting including an area of peat running up into steeper native bush slope. “It’s a wonderful feeling to be able to do this,” says Robin. “There was so much blanket clearing of the land in the past so we are trying to do our bit to address this.”

The farm is named for the Mangaotea stream that runs through it. Fencing and planting of riparian areas began in the mid 1990s at the encouragement of Tony Burgess, who was at the time working for the regional council. “We have an annual hunt here,” explains Robin, “so Tony got a good look at our place from the back of his horse.”

The riparian initiative progressed into a full Land Management Plan and the judges commended how implementation of this afforded sustainable land use. They wrote: “Very conscious of small areas of erosion-prone land classes and these have been either left with native vegetation or retired and planted in most cases.”



### JUDGES’ COMMENTS

- Lead the way in bull sales with commitment to stock health and minimising disease transfer.
- Good knowledge of nutrient requirements and utilisation.
- Strict quarantine stock policy; all animals coming onto farm held separately for at least 24 hours.
- Graziers required to sign letter that not only covers animal numbers but health status as well.



The judges also praised the “proactive fencing and planting of most waterways for stock safety, ease of management and riparian protection”. Robin says in any development work they view riparian fencing and planting part of the process. “It is not only good sense environmentally, it makes sense economically. It makes the wintering of cattle so much easier.”

The award judges described as “exemplary” the commitment of the Blackwells to “protecting existing assets, weed control and pest control all over the property”. The Blackwells enjoy abundant bird life including tui and kereru and they have heard but not ever seen kiwi. Robin describes his father Maurice “a bit of a planter” so feels he grew up understanding the importance of trees on a property.

The couple staged their first on-farm bull sale 17 years ago, with support from their stock agent. 60 bulls were sold the first year and now that number is around 180 annually. About a quarter of them are yearlings, the balance two year olds. They

breed their own Angus, Hereford and Murray Greys and buy in selected Jersey bulls mainly as weaners. “We are very strong on traceability, we like to have all the information to back up our product. We appreciate we have a very good following of repeat clientele.”

The judges were impressed with the measures taken by the Blackwells to protect stock health. They commented: “Conscious of multiple stock classes coming and going, and the need to avoid biosecurity risks.”

Bulls sold in the September sale are grazed free on-farm until required. The last bull leaves Mangaotea on November 20. This comfortably allows the next phase in the property’s annual calendar to proceed. Paddocks are shut up and in the latter part of the summer around 1500 big round bales of hay are made. About 1000 of these are sold to mostly dairy farming clients and the rest stored for winter use on the farm.

Dairy grazing is an integral part of the Mangaotea operation and the Blackwell’s take great pride in their successful long-standing relationships with owners. Their first dairy farmer client came on board in 1991, and remains. Their biggest clients, who graze 350 dairy heifers there each year, have been doing so for 15 years.

Robin and Jacqueline are both an active part of the Mangaotea workforce, assisted by full-time employee Mike Johnson. The couple have three adult children, Daniel, Hamish and Zarrah.

## Quick Facts

<b>Type:</b>	Beef, dairy grazing, and sheep
<b>District:</b>	Tariki
<b>Total area:</b>	658ha
<b>Stock units:</b>	11,327
<b>Rainfall:</b>	1800mm
<b>Elevation:</b>	200-307 MASL



## JUDGES’ COMMENTS

- High level of commitment to environment; waterways fenced and planted, QEII National Trust covenant, encourage and respect biodiversity.
- Well-run business that changes to accommodate market challenges.
- Excellent soil and pasture management, much consideration given to stock class and soil type to prevent damage.
- Good use of water resources, a large property but each paddock contains a water trough.

# Tim and Sue Hardwick-Smith Kohunui Farm

## MERIDIAN ENERGY EXCELLENCE AWARD



Tim and Sue's conscious decision to farm just 720ha of their 1400ha South Taranaki property is an unmistakable indicator of their approach to farming and land stewardship.

The award judges wrote of the couple: "Always looking at ways of making things easier in terms of managing and running the farm, but in a sustainable manner and not at the expense of the environment or the longer-term integrity of the farm."

Kohunui Farm, east of Eltham, carries 7000 su with a 70:30 sheep to cattle ratio. Contour of the property, the original block of which has been in Tim's family since 1915, is predominantly steep but there is about 150ha negotiable by tractor. The Patea River comes into the farm on their eastern boundary and becomes Lake Rotorangi on the property.

The Hardwick-Smith's began establishing a sustainable rotational forestry operation 21 years ago planting mostly pine. Now there is 100ha of forestry on Kohunui, all of it on steep, marginal land. In addition there is approximately 600 ha of regenerating native bush that the couple consider "not worth bringing back in".



## JUDGES' COMMENTS

- Maximising natural water resource.
- Innovative thinking to create very effective self-running water ram system.
- Both water systems require no energy input.
- Long history of planting for aesthetics, shade, stability and production forestry.

Explains Tim: "We recognised a long time ago that some areas originally cleared should be left alone and we have concentrated on farming the less steep areas more intensively."

The couple, who began running the farm by leasing from Tim's parents in 1995, are especially aware of the environmental value of their 400ha bush block, long known as "The Totaras", which has gone from providing totara for original farm fenceposts to scrub and manuka and now native bush. This block is home to at least two aging female kiwi. The Taranaki Kiwi Trust, of which Sue is chairperson, is planning to release a young male kiwi there soon. There is a hut in the kiwi block used by Forest and Bird volunteers who have made it their mission to take care of pest control.

The judges noted sustainability was important to the couple "both from a business and lifestyle perspective". For example, they use only oral drenches, they make time to have extensive community commitments, and at times they combine recreation with farm work by using pushbike or horse for transport.

In the past two years Tim has tapped two farm springs and created a water system fed by a water ram and gravity, making all three farm water pumps obsolete. "That's his engineer's brain at work," says Sue proudly. The judges commented: "To create a water system that effectively runs itself and covers such a large area is a great achievement."

Tim and Sue have three children: Julia (21), George (19) and Ben (16).

## Quick Facts

<b>Type:</b>	Sheep, beef, forestry
<b>District:</b>	Mangamingi
<b>Total area:</b>	1400ha
<b>Stock units:</b>	7000
<b>Rainfall:</b>	1400mm
<b>Elevation:</b>	152-304 MASL



# Kenneth and Rachel Short Shortland Farm Ltd Partnership

## WATERFORCE INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT AWARD



Kenneth and Rachel milk 450 cows in a grass-based system on their 142ha milking platform. The remaining 26 (effective) ha of this flat family farm, situated on the southern boundary of Opunake township, is used for the partnership's young stock.

The Shorts are 25 percent variable order sharemilkers holding 30 percent equity in partnership with Rachel's parents Louis and Barbara Kuriger. Rachel is the fourth generation on her mother's side to farm the property that she managed for two years before Kenneth, a builder by trade, came on board.

The award judges were impressed with Kenneth and Rachel's "excellent financial planning" and the young couple's approach. The judges wrote: "The policy of 'farming within limits' is to be admired and demonstrates a clear respect for the environment and sustainability." Explains Rachel: "The grass-based system is working for us, our farm working expenses are low, it fits our goals. It is an amazingly simple system that is profitable and sustainable."

Their target production is 144,000 kgMS and, except in last summer's drought, they are consistently achieving 320 kgMS annually per cow. Each year they grow about 110 tonne of turnips.

They choose to make their own big rounds of hay instead of wrapped silage. Testing proved the nutritional value of their hay was almost the same as good quality silage but they prefer hay because they can make it for one third of the price, and have no used wrap to dispose of.

The family own all the equipment required and Rachel's father enjoys running and maintaining it. "Making the hay is quite a hobby for Poppa and his grandkids," says Rachel with a grin.

The couple are grateful for the foresight of Rachel's grandfather and some contemporaries who established the Cold Creek Community Water Scheme, which provides the farm with reliable, inexpensive water. However all efficiencies are still a priority to them. Recently they fitted a non-return valve on the self cleaner for their backing gate, which only turns water on when the gate moves. "Now, at peak, our water usage is only 32 litres per cow per day in the shed," says Rachel.

The partnership employs Taylor Field, who is in his second season there. Both the Shorts work part-time off-farm. Kenneth completed his first season as an AB technician for LIC in 2013. Rachel commenced as a health and safety consultant for OnFarmSafety New Zealand last October.

The Shorts won Taranaki Sharemilker of the Year in March last year.

The couple have two sons, Zak (5) and Max (3).

### Quick Facts

<b>Type:</b>	Dairy
<b>District:</b>	Opunake
<b>Total area:</b>	180ha
<b>Peak milked:</b>	450
<b>Rainfall:</b>	1200-1600mm
<b>Elevation:</b>	80 MASL



### JUDGES' COMMENTS

- Excellent knowledge of water use on the property.
- Practices established to maximise water efficiency; storm water diversion and water monitor next to shed.
- Excellent use of health and safety policy, sign in and file very available; high visibility vests.
- Riparian planting completed on one side, now filling in gaps.

## 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, Horizons, Greater Wellington, Canterbury, Otago and Southland.

The inaugural 2014 Taranaki Ballance Farm Environment Awards evening was held at The Devon Hotel in New Plymouth on Thursday 3rd of April 2014.

## 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.

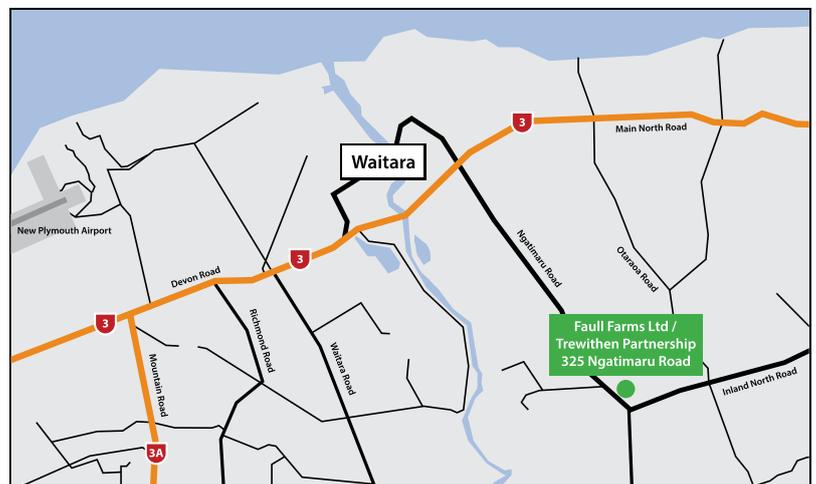
**Name:** Gavin Faull and Oliver Faull (directors) and Tony and Loie Penwarden (sharemilkers)  
Faull Farms Ltd/Trewithen Partnership

**When:** To be announced

**Where:** 325 Ngatimaru Road, Tikorangi, Waitara, Taranaki

**For details, contact:**  
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**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BALLANCE FARM ENVIRONMENT AWARDS, VISIT: [www.bfea.org.nz](http://www.bfea.org.nz)**

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