

Canada Geese - Update

The Department of Conservation has finalised its report and recommendations on the Canada Geese issue as of September 2008.

The previous Conservation Minister did not make any decision on this report. We are currently waiting for Tim Groser, the new Minister of Conservation to make a decision. Canada Geese affect many landowners and so it is important that the Minister makes a decision that results in action being taken.

We are asking all farmers to make a complaint to Fish & Game if they are having any problems with Canada Geese and to ask that this complaint is officially recorded. This is to make sure that these complaints are passed on to the appropriate officials and a correct picture of the problem is realised

We would like your opinion on whether we should seek legal action for an injunction against Fish & Game that states that Fish & Game should adhere to the geese numbers agreed to in the 1995 South Island Canada Geese Management Plan.

High Country Chairman, Donald Aubrey, would like to hear your comments please contact him at (027) 623 7157.

Shona Sluys, Federated Farmers of NZ - Policy Advisor



Federated Farmers High Country Industry Group Committee 2008



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FARM DAY OUT SUNDAY, 1 MARCH 2009



At Federated Farmers of New Zealand's National Council, meeting held in Wellington 18-19 November, all presidents unanimously endorsed a remit put forward by Wairarapa Province to simultaneously host a farm open day in all 24 provinces across New Zealand. This initiative was seen as a great way to encourage non-farming people to reconnect with their country friends. The 'Big Farm Day Out' will be held on the 1 March 2009; I would appreciate your support in helping to organise our event up here.

We will need to find a host farm and put together a small organising committee to help organise the event.

If you would be willing to host this event on your farm please let me know. I have been encouraged to ask someone else to host so that I can be free to help with the organising.

It would be great if all members can help out a bit. It should be a fun day out for everyone, town and country folk alike.

If you want to be involved in planning this event, please ring either Ali Undorf-lay, provincial support co-ordinator on 0800 327 646 or myself.

Donald Aubrey
Federated Farmers High Country, Chairman
Phone: 03 696 3747



HIGH COUNTRY



NUMBER 65

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2008

Difficult times for many

After so many years of trying it is disappointing that tenure review outcomes achieved by Pastoral Lessees is not greater. From an initial 300 plus pastoral leases we have achieved only 73 outcomes (including 5 whole property purchases). This represents just one in four of the total.

There remain 137 lessees that are not entered in the tenure review process.

So why have only a quarter completed a deal? To answer this question one must recognise that those of us remaining wish to continue to live where we are. To do that we need to remain economically sustainable. For a few, the cost of paying for freehold title has been too high. But for most of us it is the amount of land we have been asked to surrender that has been the stumbling block. Not enough farm left to be realistically viable.

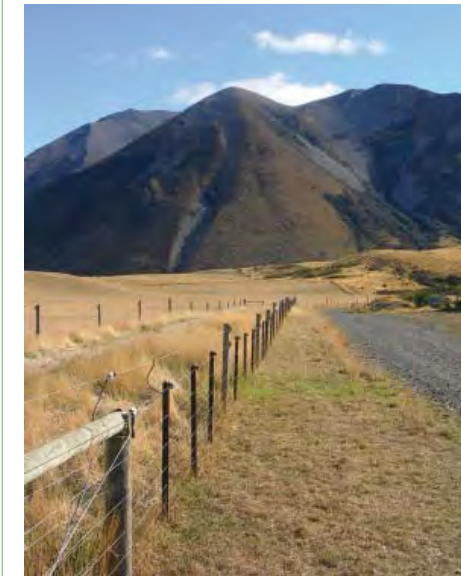
The main issue has been the amount of land considered significantly inherent in value, and the policy that the Crown must own it to protect it. "Expert" advice from the Department of Conservation (DoC) is that only they can do this task. And in the course of this process a large number of new conservation parks have now been established, in keeping with the previous government's wishes.

The election brings a new government and a new approach to tenure review. To ensure the Crown Pastoral Land Act is fulfilled National will:

- implement voluntary, good-faith negotiations between runholders and government
- ensure that the setting of high country

rentals is tied into the earning capacity of the farm property and is such that runholders can continue to maintain properties at an acceptable level

- recognise that high country runholders can be as effective in the stewardship of the land as the crown



I believe this is a sensible way forward for the high country. One that will not only allow for the preservation of tussock grasslands into the future, but also our culture. A high country that includes people living on the land.

In the meantime final summation of the Minaret case before the Otago Land Valuation Tribunal in Dunedin District court is due 9th December as I write. In addition Mount Ida syndicate are assessing their options in an effort to retain access to grazing, and Fish

& Game's declaratory judgment challenge for the right to wander-at-will with a loaded firearm across pastoral leases is due to be heard in the High court in Wellington early next year. At least the Soldiers syndicate can move on in the knowledge that they must be offered their block again.

In closing I express my disappointment that David Parker & Co. were not prepared to shift from their ultimatum to high country families. They sought to clean us out by renting me and many of you off the land. It has been an attempt to force families either into tenure review or to hand over important property rights to survive. I hope the scar this agenda has left can heal. How can Pastoral Lessees ever trust the crown to act in a reasonable manner again?

These are difficult times but to quote my late mother we need 'to keep our chins up' and look positively to the future. The land does not simply look after itself. Both productive and environmental values must be secured.

There is a job to do and I pray that we may obtain a land title that allows us to achieve a result our communities can be proud of. Best wishes...

Donald Aubrey - High Country, Chairman



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Wilding tree control

The Sustainable Farming Fund Wilding Project, headed by Nick Ledgard, in which Federated Farmers High Country has been involved, has entered its third year. Nick reports that the project has continued to make progress during this first four-month period for 2008/09.

Wilding risk assessment maps are almost complete.

Preliminary results from a stem poisoning trial on Arapawa Island support DoC findings that metsulfuron will be the major chemical for cost-effective poisoning of mature trees. The second repeat of a pot trial to determine the best chemical mix for foliar treatment of D-fir was sprayed in late October. It appears that glyphosate is more effective on D-fir than it is on pines.

In the meantime a first draft of the wilding control manual has been completed.

One presentation on wilding risk assessment was made at the New Zealand Biosecurity conference in Hamilton in July, and three presentations on Project research were presented at the New Zealand Plant Protection Society's annual conference in Paihia. These were in addition to the community days in the upper Waimakariri catchment, Tekapo and on Banks Peninsula.

Full up to date information on the project can be found on the Project's web site at www.wildingconifers.org.nz



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Is Government (finally) listening?

Over the past 12 months, in this newsletter and articles in Federated Farmers "Update" magazine, we have suggested that the Government was turning a deaf ear to the needs of the High Country community.



Leading up to the General Election, Federated Farmers issued its own Manifesto, which was launched in the presence of senior representatives of all major parties and a good media presence, in Wellington. The Manifesto covered a number of activities, pointing out exactly what Federated Farmers' members expected from the next Government.

From the High Country perspective we stated:

Federated Farmers High Country expects any Government of the day to provide a fair political environment that allows landowners and leaseholders in the high country to operate their businesses within the spirit and intent of the law, free from threats or coercion driven by whim or political expediency.

Many generations of high country families have, through weed and pest control, ensured the high country remains the iconic landscape it is recognised worldwide for. Farmers provide access and other assistance to visitors to enable them to share in this special landscape.

To continue making this contribution to New Zealand, high country families must be provided with a working environment that allows their businesses the flexibility to remain viable during changing times. The Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998 (CPLA) was introduced to provide some of this flexibility, including the tenure review process.

Federated Farmers supports the CPLA principle that owners of perpetually renewable Crown Pastoral Leases should be allowed to buy the freehold title to all or most of their land, provided there is ongoing legal protection of areas with Significant Inherent Values (SIV). SIVs should be evaluated objectively, on the basis of regional significance, rather than what is present on an individual property.

On properties where large areas of land have both productive and environmental values, protection could be provided by

'sustainable management covenants' under freehold title, as provided for under the CPLA. This would also help to promote community custodianship of covenants; 'sustainable management covenants' under freehold title can be used for land which has both productive and environmental values.

It is also in everyone's interest to respect the preference of those who do not wish to enter into the tenure review process. People should not be forced into entering tenure review because valuations for pastoral lease rental purposes are based on non pastoral considerations.

"Amenity values" (including the view) are irrelevant in the valuation of the Crown's interest in pastoral leases. They add no value to a property used for pastoral purposes (a fact endorsed in the findings of the Government-appointed Armstrong valuation committee).



It did not take the incoming Government long to respond to this. On 23rd October, at the Hawke's Bay A&P Show, the Minister of Agriculture, Hon. David Carter, released the National Party's "Agricultural Policies For The Future".

As Donald refers to in his Chairman's piece, above, the policy included the statements:

National is also supporting the principal of Tenure Review, but believes a new approach is needed to restore confidence in the process and ensure that the intent of the Crown Pastoral Land Act is fulfilled. National will:

- *Implement voluntary, good-faith negotiations between run-holders and government.*
- *Ensure that the setting of high-country rentals is tied into the earning capacity of the farm property and is such that run-holders can continue to maintain properties at an acceptable level.*
- *Recognise that high-country run-holders can be as effective in their stewardship of the land as the Crown.*

A promising start. Let's hope it continues.

(Full details of the Manifesto can be found on the Federated Farmers web site www.fedfarm.org.nz/Our work)

Timing awry?

You have to wonder if some people have any sense of timing at all. Over the past few months we have seen the Chief Executive of the Fish & Game Council come up with a proposal that flies in the face of the newly passed Walking Access Act. This Act was the culmination of years of public consultation (consultation in which Fish & Game was strategically involved).



Then, in what could be seen as a well calculated attempt to stymie their own prospects of getting anywhere in the Minaret Case, Government announced that it had bought St. James Station for \$40 million. The question could well be asked, does this value include payment for amenity values or is Government deliberately escalating the value of High Country Stations to justify its own claims?

Recent, apparently senseless, actions by both Fish & Game and the Lands Ministry could well lead one to wonder if there is a personal agenda behind some decisions. Whatever the reason, one or two people have successfully ruined the good relationship that once existed between High Country farmers and the respective organisations and their members.

High Country Chairman, Donald Aubrey, was quick to respond to these actions with the following media releases:

"OUT OF STEP ON WALKING ACCESS"

RELEASED 26 SEP 2008

Federated Farmers High Country chairman, Donald Aubrey, has slammed Fish & Game for trying to wreck the consensus behind this week's passing of the Walking Access Act.

"Fish & Game's ill-advised filing of court action earlier this week flies in the face of an overwhelming Parliamentary majority. This Act is the culmination of over five year's extensive public consultation that included them," Mr Aubrey said.

"The Act rightly recognises the rights of

landholders to negotiate access to land which is environmentally sensitive. This is why Federated Farmers supported the legislation. Fish & Game's challenge puts at risk improved access to our magnificent high country for all New Zealanders."

"Fish & Game chief executive, Bryce Johnston, has filed for a declaratory judgement in the High Court in respect of the rights attributable to the South Island pastoral leases. These high country properties cover large areas of land and require particular care in their management. Fish & Game seeks the right for his members to wander at will on these privately held properties, in many instances with loaded firearms, at any time of the day or night.

In an earlier media release Mr Aubrey described this move as something akin to 'the wild west of old'.

"It is particularly disappointing to see Fish & Game pursue such an attack on South Island's high country farmers and the hundreds of New Zealand who wish to have safe enjoyment of our high country. Having been party to the walking access initiative, which he now seeks to deliberately undermine, Fish & Game have totally lost perspective over what is important."

"I have received a considerable amount of feedback from Fish & Game members throughout the South Island. They tell me they do not support Mr Johnston's costly bullying tactics. Clearly this approach differs with that passed into law by Parliament."

"I fear for the strong relationship that has developed over many years between high country farmers and recreational users as a result of this action."

HIGH COUNTRY SPEND-UP

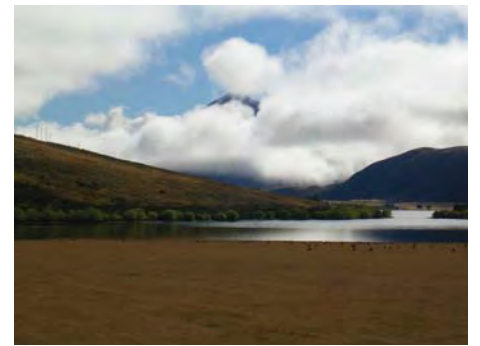
RELEASED 09 OCT 2008

Federated Farmers High Country chairman, Donald Aubrey says the government's purchase of St. James High Country Station is likely to influence a Land Valuation Tribunal Hearing in Dunedin next week. The tribunal will consider the legitimacy of values used to set new rent for South Island pastoral leases.

St. James incorporates New Zealand's largest pastoral lease, 78,196 hectares. It has been purchased by the government for \$40 million as a designated park.

Mr Aubrey says the sale is significant, not only because it is the largest but also because of the price paid.

"Clearly government isn't going to buy something that it already owns. The \$40



million payable to the Stevenson family represents the market rate which largely consists of a payment to extinguish the rights attributable to the lessee. It does not include the Crown's interest in the land. It is that interest that the land valuation tribunal will consider. This is the basis on which pastoral lease rents are set."

"More recently Land Information New Zealand has demanded additional rent payment for things such as the view," Mr Aubrey said.

As part of the St. James deal the Crown requires all livestock to be removed from the lease. Mr Aubrey says where Pastoral Lessees have controlled pests and weeds, the change of ownership now means this cost now falls on the taxpayer.

"Not only are there no livestock from which to gain revenue but the spread of some weeds without grazing will increase markedly. Large areas are expensive to maintain free of weeds and pests and will prove a considerable challenge for the Department of Conservation who now has this responsibility."

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