

LOCAL VOICE

PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTER



TARANAKI

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2009

Staffing changes for Taranaki province



The Taranaki Federated Farmers Executive Committee wishes Nicola and Wade all the best for the arrival of their baby, due late this month.

In the past week, the Taranaki province has seen a couple of changes in staffing. Firstly, Nicola has taken maternity leave for the next six months and we wish her and Wade all the best with their new arrival. The Taranaki executive will miss Nicola's input into the issues that all Taranaki farmers face and the work she has done on council submissions. Federated Farmers has advertised for a replacement to carry us over in the short term.



Secondly, Taranaki has a new recruitment officer, Christopher Fleming, who will travel the region drumming up membership. Christopher will also be able to report back any issues you may have. Christopher's family have a farm in Taranaki so he has a background in farming.

Some farming businesses have seen fit not to renew their membership due to their decline in income. In times like this, it is even more important to pay your membership so we can put people in place to fight on your behalf through submissions to local councils or at the national level. If not for Federated Farmers, your farming costs would have risen

at a far greater rate due to compliance costs from regional and local government. \$500 is cheap insurance to be able to keep farming year after year.

Derek Gibson has taken over the role of Dairy section chairperson, as Caroline Gilbert has resigned from that position. We wish Caroline all best in her new endeavours. Caroline has put a lot into this section over the past 18 months and has kept many people on their toes throughout New Zealand.



Last month I attended a tour of a number of farms around Stratford with the Taranaki Regional Council and the Minister of Agriculture, the Hon David Carter. This provided an opportunity for the Taranaki Regional Council and us to raise issues of importance in Taranaki and show the Minister how important agriculture is in the Taranaki and what has been achieved environmentally.



The Taranaki Federated Farmers building is now complete. Thank you to all who donated to the building renovations.

Peter Adamski - Taranaki, President



Federated Farmers Farm Day 2010

is set down for **SUNDAY, 28 MARCH**

Please mark this date in your diaries as we would appreciate members support.



INVESTING IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

The Rural Communities Trust recognises that living in a rural community can also mean facing barriers to education, health and other services.

Each year the Rural Communities Trust approves grants to individuals, families and community groups with a diverse range of needs who live in rural areas.

WE WANT TO HELP YOU!

Find our more about our funding criteria, grant applications or how to support our work by visiting

www.ruralcommunitiestrust.org.nz
or phone 0800 327 646

Next funding round closes
31 October 2009

Grass growth slow

By now some of you will be well into lambing and those of you on the easier country will have done most of the docking. Until docking is done, it is very difficult to get an idea of lambing percentages.

Grass is very short on some farms due to frosts and lack of fertiliser, and until we get some warm rain, grass growth will be nil. Some sheep farmers are supplementing their cash flow by rearing dairy beef. Hereford cross calves are being bought for about \$170-220 plus Friesian bull calves can be bought for about \$70-80 depending on demand. Cattle prices remain firm. Some farmers have not sold their wool and have it stored at the Wanganui wool stores. With prices hovering around \$2/kg, there will not be much fertiliser flown on this year! The Aussie owned banks in New Zealand could follow RD1 and other stock firms' lead and help New Zealand farmers through these difficult circumstances.

Harvey Leach and I attended a seminar organised by the Taranaki Veterinary Association. This was a meeting organised for accountants and bank managers to give them details of which cost cutting methods would be effective.

CEO, Stephen Hopkinson, gave a very detailed and analytical powerpoint presentation of cost statistics. Some examples were that cheaper products had only half the effective ingredients, with the result that farmers were not administering the required



Dr Julie Everett-Hincks performs a lamb post mortem.

amount for good results.

Another example was where the farmer had his grass magnesium tested. The levels were high, but not high enough to prevent milk fever. With the result that very soon after ceasing the prescribed additional Mg amount, 80 cows were down plus several dead the next morning.

Harvey made a very notable comment that cost cutting methods resulted in a lot more stress, which a farmer, in these times, could well do without!

Harvey and I also attended a regional council meeting that several travelling opposition members were invited to. Phil Goff, Lynne Pillay, Chris Carter and Harry Duynhoven were good ambassadors and we were able to talk to all, albeit, rather too briefly.

Meat and Wool New Zealand's Taranaki sheep focus day, "On farm Lamb Profitability" was held in the Toko hall. Liz Russell welcomed a mixed audience of 50 farmers to a very interesting panel of speakers. Paul Kenyon (Massey University) gave a presentation on increasing the number of twins and triplets, increasing survival rate and increasing the number of female lamb (hogget) reproductive capabilities.

Dr Julie Everett-Hincks spoke on tips and techniques to improve lamb survival this spring. Julie also gave a lamb post mortem. These post mortems are designed to give farmers indicators of what causes lamb deaths and take measures to counteract same. To find out more read this Journal written by Julie and KG Dodds at http://jas.fass.org/cgi/content/full/86/14_suppl/E259

Other speakers on the day highlighted key interest points:

- Greg Sheppard (Sheppard Agriculture) spoke of achieving goals in relation to lambing percentages. Weight achieved at weaning and the worth of the lamb mob at weaning time
- Ray Moss (AgResearch) spoke on a new system of break fencing lambs.
- Tom Fraser (AgResearch) spoke on



Chirs Carter speaks with Harvey Leach and David Mcleod.

weight gains after weaning and what crops benefit the fastest weight gains.

Thanks to Liz Russell for organising an awesome array of passionate speakers.

Some farmers may question what Meat and Wool NZ is doing for them but I don't think there was a sheep farmer there that didn't learn something.

For those farmers who missed this day, there are handouts, DVDs and other publications available. Contact Meat and Wool NZ on 0800 696 328 or contact myself.

Here is a tip for those of you on higher speed internet. Download Open Office, it's a word programme that's identical to Microsoft, but doesn't cost a tonne of fertiliser.

I have seen a number of quad ATVs being driven on the road and have to ponder if those farmers have insurance or if their ATV is even registered for the road!

Frank Grant, Rural Area Commander New Zealand Police, is urging farmers to be more vigilant when storing your firearms. Remember to store ammunition and bolts separate from rifles. It may seem simple but many people forget!

Have a good lambing and let's hope this spell of mild weather lasts till the end of lambing.

**Neville Wallace -
Taranaki Meat & Fibre Chair**



PROVINCIAL CONTACT LIST

PRESIDENT

Peter Adamski 06 751 4217

IMMEDIATE PAST-PRESIDENT

Bryan Hocken 06 756 5867

DAIRY CHAIR

Derek Gibson 06 756 5867

EASTERN REPRESENTATIVE

Graeme Hight 06 754 4404

VICE-PRESIDENT

Harvey Leach 06 764 8333

MEAT & FIBRE CHAIR

Neville Wallace 06 278 6005

SOUTH TARANAKI REPRESENTATIVE

Jim Duff 06 752 7100

TARANAKI OFFICE MANAGER

Shelley Porteous 06 757 3423

TREASURER

Charles Bayly 06 762 2857

MEAT & FIBRE VICE-CHAIR/ CENTRAL REP.

John McMurray 06 756 7099

NORTHERN REPRESENTATIVE

Clive Gaustad 06 752 6814

Calving well underway

This is my first report as Chair of the Taranaki Federated Farmers Dairy section.

Calving on all of Taranaki's dairy farms is well underway. In the coastal areas, it has been a much kinder season (weather wise) than winter, with animal health problems and the feed situation on farms improving daily. Here's hoping for a normal spring/summer period.



Federated Farmers of NZ AGM/Conference 2009

In July, I attended Federated Farmers AGM/Conference ("One Event") in Auckland. It was great to network with dairy representatives from other regions. The conference had some good speakers and it was interesting to listen

to the Minister of Agriculture, David Carter and also Rodney Hide.

A Fonterra shareholders council representative, Murray Douglas, spoke to our section on relevant issues and reinforced that Fonterra's capital structure would not be rolled out unless the board and the council agreed on the concept. Fonterra has since released a statement to say that this is to be announced on Sky TV on 18 September at 1pm and 8pm.

PKE

In the last month, there has been some discussion around the animal feed PKE and its link to the destruction of Indonesian rain forests. Greenpeace has come out and said Fonterra is part of this. We need to be careful how this is seen by the greater public, as Fonterra or RD1, which is the retailer for PKE, is only one of a number of merchants sourcing PKE.

We, as farmers, are experiencing harder financial times and are looking to feed our dairy cattle at the lowest cost. PKE fits this criteria, but as farmers we don't want to be seen to be part of ecological destruction. My understanding is that PKE is a waste by-product, which would be burnt if not exported as animal feed.

Shipping of Fonterra products via the New Plymouth Port

Fonterra announced early this month that it will no longer be using New Plymouth as its shipping port for products from the Whareroa plant. Instead this will be railed to either Tauranga or Auckland. This decision has caused a lot of discussion, particularly locally. However, since that announcement, Fonterra have said that they will still be using the New Plymouth Port to ship some of its products.

Meeting with David Carter, Minister of Agriculture

On 14 August, I was privileged to attend a meeting at the Taranaki Regional Council with the Minister of Agriculture, David Carter. He had a simpatico ear to our concerns over the tight financial times facing farmers. He also mentioned that the Government will be supporting the ETS in some form, as it feels New Zealand agriculture needs to be making an effort in this area for our continued export trade in the future.

Finally, I would like to thank our past Dairy Chair, Caroline Gilbert, for her continued support.

**Derek Gibson - Taranaki,
Dairy Chair**



Taranaki policy wins in brief

Fuel Tax

The Government has decided to dedicate all revenue from petrol tax and road user charges to the national land transport fund. Federated Farmers has long advocated this as a guarantee that investment will continue at levels necessary to maintain our transport infrastructure and it will also put an end to road users subsidising other government programs. The Federation would like to see at least some of this increased revenue to be allocated to councils to help fund the maintenance of their local roads, reducing the burden on long-suffering ratepayers. Federated Farmers has asked the independent rates inquiry to recommend an increase in Land Transport New Zealand's Financial Assistance Rate, from the current average of 53 percent of roading expenditure to a flat rate of 90 percent.

Rural Broadband

The Government has announced the establishment of a Broadband Investment Fund, containing \$325 million operating and \$15 million capital funding available over a maximum of five years. \$75 million of the operating funding has been earmarked for rural-based projects. We are hopeful that the fund and other telecommunications initiatives will help lead to a vastly improved voice and

broadband services for both urban and rural people.



Raw Milk Review

MAF has been reviewing parts of the Dairy Industry Restructuring Act. The latest review has involved Fonterra's obligation to supply certain quantities of raw milk (regulated raw milk) to independent milk processors. Federated Farmers Dairy supported MAF's option of offering this milk to independent processors at the Fonterra farm gate price plus a premium of 'x' which would be found via an annual auction. The Government has agreed to this option, which will be bought in for the 2010/2011 season. Federated Farmers is pleased with the outcome as there was a possibility of making Fonterra's obligation to supply regulated raw milk more onerous



Abacus Group is proud to support Federated Farmers Taranaki and to add value to the farming community of Taranaki by hosting informative seminars and providing quality risk advice.

Our advisers are specialists when it comes to advice around life, trauma, income protection and health cover for farm and business owners.

For an obligation-free consultation please contact Abacus Group today on 06 759 0111 or see our website, www.abacusgroup.co.nz for more information about our recent and upcoming seminars.



Control of gamebirds causing damage

Sometimes it can be difficult to know who to contact or what to do when you find paradise shelduck, mallard duck, Canada goose, pukeko or black swan causing damage to your recovering hay paddocks and areas of new grass or crops, or pecking holes in your bales of silage. But these species are listed in the first schedule of the Wildlife Act 1953 and are managed as gamebirds by Fish & Game New Zealand. This means they can be hunted during the game season, but are legally protected at other times of the year.



Control of gamebirds causing damage is pretty straight forward during the game season. Land occupiers can shoot the birds in accordance with the regulations, or some of the region's 1,000+ game licence holders can do it for you. Season lengths vary from eight weeks in May and June for ducks, to an extended season through to mid-August for pukeko and through to late-September for Canada goose. There is also a 50-day summer season in February and March each year for geese and a weekend shoot in late February for paradise shelduck.

When damage occurs outside the game season, Fish & Game must issue a

permit under delegated authority from the Department of Conservation to allow the birds to be legally dispersed or controlled. Dispersal usually involves Fish & Game setting up LPG-



operated scare guns on the affected pasture or crop. This is a free service and the gas guns are very effective at dispersing paradise shelduck and mallard duck. The guns are less effective for Canada geese and pukeko and for these species shooting is often the best option. The permit can provide for this to be done by the farmer or other nominated persons, or Fish & Game can organise hunters to do the job. In respect of Canada geese, Fish & Game can put you in touch with responsible Taranaki hunters who have invested in decoys and "layout blinds" to increase their success and who will be happy to target the geese coming into your property.

Currently, Fish & Game receives more reports of pukeko causing damage than for any other species, followed by paradise shelduck. Few complaints are received each year about mallard duck, Canada goose or black swan. For further information, or to report gamebirds causing damage, please phone the New Plymouth or Wanganui offices of Fish & Game NZ on 06 757 9676 or 06 345 4908.



**Allen Stancliff -
Fish & Game Officer**



Federated Farmers members have the opportunity to influence the safety, visibility and comfort of children waiting on local bus routes thanks to an exciting new initiative.

Every year, farm building company Totalspan donates bus shelters to rural communities through their Undercover Kids Programme. This year, with the support of Federated Farmers, they are extending Undercover Kids to include three additional shelters.

Federated Farmers members (who can nominate local bus routes or schools they believe would benefit) will determine the location of these shelters. Nominations close on October 31st, and application forms can be downloaded from fedfarm.org.nz/ourwork/undercoverkids

Each of these new shelters will have a plaque acknowledging Federated Farmers' involvement.



More emotion than fact in driving age debate

The Government's release of a discussion document on road safety has reignited the debate on raising the driving age. Given the problems posed by the boy racer phenomenon (a potent mix of alcohol, high-powered cars and youth), the desire for public debate is understandable.

Decisions however, need to be based on facts, not emotion.

Fact: it's not age that's the crucial factor in determining a driver's propensity to have an accident, it's how much experience they've had behind the wheel.

Statistics show that newly unsupervised drivers (i.e. drivers who have just moved from their learner to restricted license) are the most accident prone group, regardless of how old they are. If you look at countries with higher driving ages, there is still a spike in accidents where people begin driving alone, they're just older. If we were to increase the driving age here in New Zealand we would simply be shifting the problem to an older age bracket.

Federated Farmers has thus opposed any suggestion of increasing the driving age. We did, however, support the previous Government's road safety initiative; to increase the length of time a learner license must be held from six to 12 months. We believe that more time behind the wheel supervised by an experienced driver will lead to fewer crashes when driving unsupervised on a restricted license.

Increasing the driving age would curtail the freedoms of young people in rural areas. It's too far to bike or walk and there are no buses or public transport systems. It would mean relying on mum or dad to drive teenagers to rugby or netball practice or to after school jobs and other activities, and farming families are pretty pressed for time during some parts of the year.

Young adults in rural areas have also had exposure to vehicles from an early age and tend to be more competent drivers as a result. So if the driving age was raised, we



would hope that some sort of exemption could be negotiated.

How would rural communities be affected if the driving age was raised? We're keen to hear your view, either join our pod discussion or get in touch with William McGimspy at Federated Farmers in Wellington (0800 327 646).