

LOCAL VOICE

PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTER

WEST COAST



OCTOBER 2009

President's report

It has certainly been an interesting time to become provincial president, with lots of things going on locally and nationally:

- Environment Court mediation is ongoing on the Wetlands part of the West Coast Regional Council (WCRC) Land and River Bed Management Plan and the Water Plan.
- The review of the National Pest Management Strategy is ongoing.
- Plus voting for Meat Board levy retention (only just).

The global financial melt down has made life very difficult for dairy farmers, with extreme financial pressures being felt by most.

Hopefully, this spring is the low point and everything will go in the right direction from here. With the dollar going up, fuel, fertiliser etc. should come down further, but of course this will slow any gains to be made with the rising milk powder prices. I do feel the light has at least been turned on at the end of the tunnel where, as three months ago, it was still turned off!

I urge anyone who is struggling with stress levels due to finances, low feed levels or heavy work loads (due to lower staff levels) to talk to others at discussion groups, local watering holes etc. Talking often helps to lift a bit of weight off your shoulders. There is also the Rural Support Trust, who are there to help. Confidentiality is a priority for the Trust and they can put you in touch with all the right agencies etc. to help with your issues.



I would like to say a big thank you to those who helped with farm visits for the AgITO Australian equivalents when they visited earlier in the month. They were billeted out for

two nights on the Coast and toured a number of farms, with many different systems being looked at. I know they found it more use to tour the coast than Canterbury as it was more like home here. Apparently there isn't as much irrigation in Australia as one might think!



In July, while on holiday, I had the opportunity to visit an old dairy farm in Canada. It was amazing to see cows being milked while standing chained to a rail, with no bails. The milk line and air line are plugged in above the cows head and one set of cups was moved from cow to cow. The farm staff bent down and put the cups on, as they stood at the same level as the cow. Two staff took 1.5 hours to milk 50 cows (I think the dairy inspector here would cry). Having said that, expansion of bigger cow barns was going strong, with many Dutch investing there at present.

It has been pleasing to see lambs finally bringing a fairer return, it has been a very, very long time coming. I only hope it stays good long enough for bank balances to recover from the years of poor returns. The dollar, once again, may have more to say here than anything else.

Finally, I have another thank you to make to the farmers who answered the call to come to a Grey District Council meeting on possum control issues. I am more than happy to have poor meeting attendances (but would prefer to see many faces!), as long as when an important issue crops up you will all come out and support the very small dedicated crew, who at a local level fight for your right to stay in the business of farming.

Just remember though, some of them are getting older and some may not have the exact same view as you, so it would be great to see a few new faces coming along to the odd meeting. Alternatively feel free to phone with your views, 03 738 0189 on issues, or suggestions of things which are an issue to you that you think the Federation should be lobbying for. I'd ask you to email, but broadband is feeble in my area.

Here is hoping for a record breaker of a season!

Katie Milne - West Coast President



PROVINCIAL MEETING



1PM, FRIDAY 16 OCTOBER 2009

Copper Room, Union Hotel,
Herbert Street, Greymouth

Please note that this meeting will commence at the conclusion of the AGM of Westland Veterinary Services Inc

AGENDA

Welcome

Apologies

1. Minutes of previous meeting
- Quarterly meeting held 31 October 2008
2. Matters arising
3. Correspondence
4. Reports:
 - President
 - Dairy
 - Meat & Fibre
 - Sharemilkers' Section
 - TBFree West Coast
 - Agricultural Training

5. GUEST SPEAKER

Mike Mailey, Hokitika Veterinary Centre

6. General Business

Many issues facing the Coast

My new tenure in the role of chair of the dairy section has taken me as far away as Auckland for the annual Federated Farmers conference and the exploration of many issues facing farmers on the Coast. In particular the impact of the increasing dollar and the Emissions Trading Scheme (see Westport News 15 September 2009).



It's good to see the globalDairyTrade (GDT) milkpowder price increasing, but disappointing to see the NZ\$ has increased to where it is hitting highs of 70cents. On a positive note, what goes up quickly, may

come down quickly! It is encouraging to see that OC cheese has increased its advance payout to \$3.05.

In Auckland the conference pushed Meat and Wool around the levy vote. I don't know if we can honestly say if our questioning of Mike Petersen has made any impact. We were unable to get an admission from Meat and Wool of the value and size of the dairy contribution being around 20-30 percent of their annual income. Also highlighted was the disparity of voting rights for dairy farmers receiving only one vote per 100 stock units, where beef is one per 50. It was good to see the dairy turnout in the levy vote - good on you for making your votes count.

We have been involved in working with TBfree around their proposed changes to the long term strategy, which would have a dramatic effect on the West Coast. It is worth having a read of the strategy which can be found on the TBfree website.

Katie and myself are planning a meeting with the Dairy Company October/November.



Please email through any questions or issues you would like brought up with the Directors (barrystownfarms@xtra.co.nz). This is a good opportunity for Federated Farmers to voice any concerns of our members and maintain contact with the board.

The saying goes the best thing you can spend on your family is time, which at present, is free and non taxable. Enjoy!

Richard Reynolds - West Coast Dairy Chair



From the policy desk

Stock Driving Bylaw

West Coast Federated Farmers has made a submission on the Buller District Council's proposed new stock driving bylaw. The proposed bylaw sees a \$200 permit required for every single stock crossing, or stock movement along a road in the District. After discussions with Council staff, Federated Farmers' submission will question the Council on the costs proposed for obtaining or renewing a permit, the lack of a provision to allow a low number of stock movements in a month at no cost and the high level set for fines for non-compliance. You can view the proposed bylaw on the Buller District Council.



Lake Brunner

Farmers in the Lake Brunner Catchment are in discussions with West Coast Regional Council over the Council's proposed plan change designed to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering Lake Brunner. The plan change would see farmers converting to low



solubility phosphate fertilisers such as RPR or serpentine super, aiming to reduce their Olsen P soil levels to 30mg P/Kg, fence off every waterway and establish culverts or bridges at every waterway crossing. These changes to farming practices will be required to be achieved by 2012, at a cost to the landowner. Discussions will be held with Council to discuss the options for reducing the impact on farming practices at a time when economic returns on dairy farming mean there is little cash flow to make the changes proposed. For further information on this topic contact Katie Milne on 03 738 0189, or myself.

Wetlands

In a process that began in 2002, Federated Farmers has been involved in the establishment of policies and rules for the management of wetlands in the West Coast region, in conjunction with the West Coast Regional Council. Council released its decision in December 2008, however, Friends of Shearer Swamp, The Royal Society of Forest

and Birds, The Department of Conservation and Solid Energy lodged appeals against the decision with the Environment Court. Federated Farmers has remained involved to ensure rules and policies are not changed to the extent that they significantly impact on landowners private property rights. Through attending mediations and potentially an Environment Court hearing we are influencing the outcomes surrounding the policies and rules to manage wetlands in Council's Land and Riverbed Management plan.



For further information on this topic contact Katie Milne on 03 738 0189, or myself.

Anna MacKenzie - Federated Farmers of NZ, Senior Policy Advisor



Contact details

Phone: 03 357 9452 or
Email: amackenzie@fedfarm.org.nz

Poaching a problem

Hopping over the fence and stealing the odd sheep has always been a problem on the Coast, but the number of despicable characters out there is on the rise. This year poaching has become a bigger problem for many farmers and it is becoming increasingly important for us all to be vigilant about who is driving down our roads.

If you see anything suspicious, a car parked up in the dark, stock herding at night or people who are clearly not farmers moving herds please get their registration number and ring the police.

I have had several phone calls from farmers with unexpected dead stock, stock deliberately moved from paddocks so shooters can get access to the river and spooked stock pushing through fences. Federated Farmers are talking to the police about this problem but until poachers can be caught all members are vulnerable.

Katie Milne - West Coast President



Walking access

I believe the draft strategy and code for walking access strikes a balance between normal farming activities and the public's right to walking access. Federated Farmers had considerable input into this precedent-setting strategy and we are now approaching this new stage with an open mind and caution.



I accept that the great outdoors is an important part of the kiwi lifestyle. The draft Outdoor Access Code and National Strategy on Walking Access offers that opportunity, while also mitigating the potentially adverse affect it could have on farming activities.

The draft strategy, developed by the New Zealand Walking Access Commission and numerous stakeholder groups, demarcates areas beyond the farm-gate that recreational

walkers and trampers can access for no charge. It also sets out the conditions by which people can access private farm land and land for public use. More importantly, the landholder has the final say on the terms of access to their land. This requirement was a key aspect in gaining the Federation's support for the draft strategy.

I remain cautious about the proposed one-stop online mapping system to show people where they can and cannot roam until we understand the affect it will have on farming activities. Although we agree walking access to New Zealand's iconic scenery is important, the public cannot be allowed to freely stroll across a working farm. Thankfully, the new strategy acknowledges this reality.

Not restricting public access to certain parts of the farm would have dire consequences for both stock welfare and the farmer's business.

Federated Farmers also appreciates the exclusion of vehicle access to the walking tracks. The strategy makes it clear that members of the public must gain permission from the landholder before gaining access to the walking track. We acknowledges the commission's effort to maintain private property rights when drafting the strategy

**Donald Aubrey -
Federated Farmers of NZ,
Vice-president**



Phosphorous loss from your farm could be money down the drain

The loss of phosphorous from farmed areas results in an economic loss for the farm and can impact on water ways. The majority of P within our soils is held tightly, unavailable to the plant and secure from leaching. The application of phosphate fertilisers and the grazing of stock does have the potential to cause phosphorous loss from the soil system. For your farming business this could literally be throwing money down the drain.

To reduce this financial cost and just as importantly to reduce the potential impact of losing P to water, it is important to review the key areas of loss:

Surface runoff probably has the greatest potential of loss from the farm

- Soluble P fertilisers tend to cost around \$5/kgP, so it is well worth ensuring that ground conditions are suitable for spreading or adopt a little and often policy keeping away from wet areas. Consideration should also be given to high quality RPR, which is less

soluble and costs around \$4/kgP. RPR can be just as plant available as Super if blended correctly. Olsen P on its own is not a true indication of P availability. It is good practice to review what is referred to as Resin P and Anion Storage Capacity as part of your regular soil testing.

- Manures from livestock are high in P and if they are washed off the surface they will be lost from the farm system. Livestock could be cycling 40kgP/ha within the grazing system, with losses of 1-2kgP/ha possible at a cost of \$4-\$10 per hectare.
- Compaction in soils will also increase the likelihood of runoff. In very severe cases of compaction, especially on sloping ground, subsoiling will reduce the potential for direct P loss from surface run off.

Direct introduction of P to water

- Livestock congregating in gateways, around water troughs and directly entering streams also results in small amounts of P



loss. These losses are likely to be smaller than direct surface run off.

The management of phosphate within the system, using good practice can yield profitable results for the farm and for your bank account. Any gain to your pocket is also a gain to the environment keeping our water clean, and proving our farming systems are sustainable, economically and environmentally.

Bobby calf welfare



With the increasing bad press about dairying it is important to remind ourselves of our welfare obligations in respect of bobby calves. How we treat these calves reflects on us all as an industry. Federated Farmers does not condone, excuse or justify the maltreatment of farm animals. Our reputation as farmers and as exporters depends on ethical responsible husbandry. Where proven, the Federation will fully support prosecution.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has an animal welfare code covering minimum standards for the welfare of bobby calves and minimum standards for the emergency slaughter of farm livestock: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/animal-welfare/codes/bobby-calves/index.htm> and Federated Farmers also has fact sheets available via the members section of the Federations website, www.fedfarm.org.nz or by calling 0800 327 646.



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.



Regional Policy work more important than ever

Federated Farmers has been very active in seeking changes to the RMA that are specific to farming businesses. We are committed to making a difference for members in the RMA reforms. The first phase has just come into force. Aimed at streamlining and simplifying the Act, there is good news in that plan processes should be quicker and potentially cheaper for you and other ratepayers.

One less obvious result is a change to the way councils can consult with the community over their plans. Councils can now extend consultation undertaken under other enactments for 36 months after the initial consultation. Councils can then use this consultation to inform the development of RMA plans. An example might be the consultation for community outcomes under the Long Term Council Community Plan process under the Local Government Act.

In practice that means your Federated Farmers Policy team has to be even more vigilant about what your Councils are doing. The answer to every question Councils ask their community can now be used as a basis for implementing plans and policies that have the potential to impact on your farm.

Recently, a farmer asked me who was responsible for keeping an eye on Councils to make sure that the negative effects on farming are kept to a bare minimum. The fact is that your Federation is the only organisation keeping regular tabs on every Council, submitting to plan changes and getting involved in the day to day policy decisions at a Council level.

**David Cooper - Federated Farmers of NZ,
Regional Policy Adviser**



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 out 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

SEEKING A HOST FARM



More than 3400 families visited a Federated Farmers Farm Day in 2009.

2010 looks as if it will be bigger, bolder and more exciting. Farm Day is all about families because farmers feed families, both here and overseas. Agriculture is not just New Zealand's largest industry, it is by far its most important. Farming gives New Zealand its rugged but innovative sense of being. It's in our blood.

Yet, as the urban population expands, not everyone these days knows a farmer. That's why Farm Day is so important.

We are seeking a West Coast farm located near either Hokitika, Greymouth or West Port for next year's Farm Day. If you are interested please contact either Katie Milne, 03 738 0189 or Ali Undorf-lay, 0800 327 646.

Federated Farmers Farm Day 2010

is set down for
SUNDAY, 28 MARCH

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



PROVINCIAL CONTACT LIST



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