

# LOCAL VOICE

PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTER



RUAPEHU

NOVEMBER 2009

## Busy on farm and off



I've been spraying thistles in the hay paddock. The grass is too long and I'm praying I'm not doing too much damage to the pasture. I should have been spraying it yesterday, but I was at the Taupo Monitor Farm Day listening to scientists give some very positive results for tests they had been doing on nitrogen leaching. It seems there are some potentially beneficial mitigating actions farmers can try to reduce their leaching. Actions such as putting in three percent of your farm into wetlands because it seems that wetlands have the potential of removing 70 percent of the nitrogen out of the water before it enters a waterway. Of course the micro organisms that remove this nitrogen turn it into nitrous oxide, which is then released into the atmosphere and can increase your green house gas liability. Alternatively you could make your water troughs movable because stock urinate when they drink so if you move the trough you 'spread the load' so to speak.

Unfortunately, Overseer cannot incorporate these mitigating factors into the computer model and the compliance officer told the farmers present that they had their consents for 25 years, they must abide by the terms of the consents, they would be monitored annually through farm records, diary entries, and farm visits, and if they were found in breach of their consent they would be prosecuted. I watched the farmers collectively squirm.

Farmers in the Horizons District face similar restrictions. The four provincial presidents and our new policy advisor (Tessa Mills, see her story on water) are working hard to make sure that our farmers don't feel the wrath of compliance officers. We were battling to make sure we had enough time at the hearing to get our arguments heard. Remember Ohakune? The dairy farmers needed their opportunity to speak up.

As I waited for the spray tank to fill I checked my emails to find one from Tessa advising we had been given our day. I went out with another load thinking that this was why Federated Farmers is so important. As we are out there working on our farms there are numerous people in offices all over the country fighting on our behalf. Without these people we would be knee capped as farmers. The annual Federated Farmer subscription is a small price to pay for the level of back up we get. The list of things these guys work on is endless and it is vital that ideas and legislation by bureaucrats is ground-truthed through the farmer based organisation. Thank you for

being a member and helping to support this work. If your neighbour isn't a member, lend him this newsletter and remind him that he is getting all the benefit off the back of your subscription.

I was deep in thought and realised that I was getting wet. 'The wind must have got up' I thought, but I looked up to see it was raining. Some things you can't blame on regional councils!

Hope to see you at the Christmas dinner, otherwise have a great festive season and all the best for 2010.

### RECYCLING

Recycling your empty drench containers is relatively simple. Triple rinse them, drill a couple of holes in the bottom of them and phone up Ruapehu District Council to organise dropping them off to Rob at the dump on a Tuesday or Thursday.

Its good for the Council and great for your farm environment. If we don't start using the facility at the dump they will move it to a province that appreciates it.

Let's lead the way and show the country that we do our part to help keep our farms clean and green!

### CONGRATULATIONS

On behalf of Ruapehu Federated Farmers I would like to congratulate Roger on his election to the Chair of the Manawatu Wanganui TB Free Committee.

*Lyn Neeson - Ruapehu President*

## Local Government Representation Review

You may have been aware that Ruapehu Federated Farmers submitted to Ruapehu District Council in support of changes to Local Government representation in Ruapehu.



The proposals would have divided council wards on a largely urban/ rural basis.

We believed that Council's proposals met a lot of our members concerns.

Unfortunately councillors got cold feet and on the day voted for the status quo.

This means rural people will continue to be under represented and, particularly those in the Tamarunui Ward, largely disenfranchised.

We are not saying the present councillors in the Ward do not do a good job or do not

give rural needs due consideration. It is just that when push comes to shove the electoral support of these councillors is urban and rural needs will come off second best.

Ruapehu Federated Farmers has decided that the opportunity to take this further is too good to miss and so we will be taking a case to the Local Government Commissioner.

This happens some time in December, so wish us luck!

*Jim Walker - Ruapehu*

# October coldest in 64 years

What a challenging few months for us in the Ruapehu (and elsewhere) it has been! After a pretty tough winter, early spring growth conditions looked promising until mid-September, when it turned cold and really knocked the later lambers around. October was not much better (coldest in 64 years) and the general consensus around the place is that everyone is well and truly "on top of the feed".



The Commodity Levy vote has been and gone. A disappointing turnout of only 39 percent of voters having their say resulting in the wool and goat meat levies being ditched, and sheep and beef meat only just crept in. I wonder if the results of the vote were a reflection of disillusionment with Meat and Wool New Zealand or a general disillusionment with the industry. I think it is probably a bit of both, but having voted to entrust Meat and Wool (or whatever they will be called) with further levies for the next five years, we must ensure that we are engaged in how they are spent.

Earlier this month Annie and I attended the Meat & Fibre Council meeting in Methven. The two most interesting speakers for me were Tim Groser and Professor Keith Woodford from Lincoln.

Tim is the Minister of Trade and Conservation, Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs and Associate Minister of Climate Change Issues – International Negotiations.

He would not be drawn on the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) and made the point that the "customer is the new regulator" and the "interface" between the producer and the consumer. The customer is the supermarket, not the consumer.

While we may not agree with the whole climate change issue, the "customer interface" (supermarkets) do and therefore we just have to deal with it! It is all political.

On the positive side, he outlined the tremendous opportunities for us, the developing countries are getting richer faster, the global population will need 50 percent more food in the next 20 years and 100 percent by 2050. New Zealand's trading

prospects are vastly improved (New Zealand's exports to China have increased 62 percent in the last 12 months, agriculture, forestry and IT supplies).

He outlined progress and success in trade negotiations that have emerged recently including a coalition with New Zealand, Australia and South East Asia, and a new Free Trade Agreement with the GCC (Arab countries), which will produce \$1.3-1.4 billion in exports, which will be predominantly agricultural.

The Minister reiterated that this is not wishful thinking, it is actually happening. He is extremely positive and is adamant that we are in the best position, in trading terms, that we have been in for 30 years.

He believes that our future lies in being the "food basket for Asia", although Europe will still play a big part in our lamb trading.

There appears to be great confidence throughout the industry in Minister Groser and I think that he is the right man for the job.

Professor Woodford, from Lincoln University, spoke about Co-operatives, what makes them successful and in what environments they can best operate. Again, his presentation reiterated to me that for both our meat and wool sectors we need companies that are farmer-owned and governed, who can work collectively in the marketplace for the good of the New Zealand meat and wool industry, and producers. Not as a monopoly, but New Zealand Inc.

For these companies to be successful they need capital. Capital that we, as meat and fibre farmers, are struggling to generate, but for me consolidation of our industry is still vital to our future.

Whilst we were on the bus travelling through Mid-Canterbury Chris Allan, the Meat & Fibre delegate from that area, gave us a fascinating run-down on what it takes to farm in that area. The money invested in water infrastructure is unbelievable, as is the bureaucracy that they are subjected to via Environment Canterbury.

For this hill-country farmer, I was pleased to see the bush, hills and sheep (rather than dairy cows) on my return to Taumarunui and we have barely had a dry day since!

Whilst reading AA Milne to my four year-old recently, I came across this passage which reminds me a bit of what we experience as farmers:

*"It's snowing still", said Eeyore gloomily.*

*"Is it?"*

*"Yes", said Eeyore.*

*"However", he said brightening up a little,*

*"We haven't had an earthquake lately".*

I hope you all have a great Christmas, may the dollar plummet, the sun shine and the rain fall every three days.

**Kirsten Bryant - Ruapehu Meat & Fibre Chairperson**



Federated Farmers Farm Day for 2010 will be held on Sunday 28 March.

Ruapehu Federated Farmers are privileged to have Don Buchanan and his partner, Cherie Riches, as Farm Day hosts for 2010. Don along with Cherie farm "Rangiriri" a Piedmontese and sufflock stud on Hikumutu Road just on the outskirts of Taumarunui.



*Don Buchanan & Cherie Riches*

Don's interest in Piedmontese began more than 20 years ago and along with Cherie's expertise as an AI technician they have worked together to achieve a very impressive herd of stud cattle.

Don is making quite a name for himself and the piedmontese breed at the annual Meat and Wool NZ Beef Expo Steak of origin. He has won many awards over the years, but last year breed the beast for Lake Farm Beef to take away the supreme award in the local trade division. Don was also placed third in the European breed.

Rangiriri stud cattle both male and female are now sold to all corners of New Zealand.

The day will be run on much the same format as last year, however, we have obtained permission to convey people around the property on the back of vehicles, so should be a very interesting and fun day.



RUAPEHU FEDERATED FARMERS  
**CHRISTMAS DINNER**

7pm, Friday 11 December 2009

**Zeebers Restaurant & Bar**  
cnr Hakiaha & Maata Streets  
Taumarunui

**ALL WELCOME**

7pm for a short meeting in the bar  
7.30pm (or thereabouts) dinner

**RSVP** to Audrey, phone: 894 5833



**PROUDLY SPONSORED BY:**

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## Bluegreens forum Taupo 2009

Last month I attended the Bluegreens forum held over two days in Taupo. The Bluegreens is the National party's policy advisory group on environmental issues. The Bluegreen caucus is headed by Hon Nick Smith, Minister for the Environment and Climate Change Issues - Hon Tim Groser, Minister of Conversation, Associate Minister for Climate Change Issues (International Negotiations) and Hon Kate Wilkinson, Associate Minister of Conservation. Plus 15 other MP's make up the Bluegreen caucus. In his opening speech the key words were environment and energy, resource sustainability, economic growth while improving the environment and the government's environment priorities: 1. climate change; 2. water; 3. biodiversity; 4. oceans; 5. air quality; 6. outdoor recreation; 7. water management; 8. contaminated sites.

During the day there were four sessions including "A new start for fresh water", "Growing a green economy", "Technologies to make a difference for Climate Change", and "Co-management (co-governance) of resources with iwi".

The Hon Nick Smith stated that with National's new style of environmental governance they had formed the Land and Water forum, which included Federated Farmers along with ten other non-governmental groups to build a consensus on a way forward for water management in New Zealand. He also stated New Zealand must clean up our waterways, protect our biodiversity, reduce emissions and use energy more efficiently.

The Hon Wayne Mapp, Minister of Research, Science and Technology, assured the meeting that science-based approaches will prevail when it comes to Climate Change and that New Zealand must not only play its part, but also needs to be influential, especially in the area of agricultural emissions research.



The Hon Chris Finlayson, Minister for Treaty Negotiations, said National was committed to co-governance, not co-management, which was in relationship to the settling of all 60 Treaty Settlements by 2014. Tuwharetoa spokesperson Dean Stebbing also told the meeting their tribe agrees with co-governance because Tuwharetoa don't have the capacity for co-management. Hon Chris Flinlayson also noted that both Fonterra and Federated Farmers must be tied into any solution. Quote: "Co-governance is here to stay and the task is to ensure it is managed and viable".

Kate Wilkinson and other speakers commented about protecting New Zealand's clean green image as tourism sits just behind agriculture for income into the New Zealand economy.

This was a very interesting couple of days and it was great to be able to speak to and ask the questions of MP's from all over New Zealand on a number of subjects relating to agriculture and future of farming. I came away from the forum feeling that, as farmers and landowners, we must become more aware of government policy that's being forced on us through the regional and district plans. There are changes coming that we are not going to be able to change or stop, but maybe we can get some of these changes "twinked" to our advantage if we all work together as an industry and make our voice heard.

**Annie Carmichael - Ruapehu Meat & Fibre  
Vice-chairperson**

## PROVINCIAL CONTACT LIST



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Annie Carmichael 07 893 7566

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Roger Beck 07 894 5184

### WATCH OUT FOR TUTSAN

Avoid letting this dangerous weed loose on your pasture. Kill it if you see it. Now is the best time.

Dave Alker, Horizons Pest Man in Taumarunui gives you this advise:

The best chemical to use is probably Tordon Brush killer or products made up from the same active ingredients, use at label rates for gorse, making sure to use a sticking agent, if late in the season i.e. when flowering the leaves form a wax like surface, so make sure you have complete coverage of the plant, a mist blower is good for this.

The plant is easily found this time of year,



as the season progresses the plant changes from green to golden brown almost rust colour, especially when out in open pasture.

It has a small yellow flower, blooming from mid November, can grow up to 1.5 metres tall. Seeds are spread by birds and wind, and it spreads madly. Plants can be found in most places i.e. roadsides, river/creek margins, forestry blocks, native bush margins, gardens, bluffs and hill faces.

If you would like to know more or want to contribute to Taumarunui's own Tutsan Action Group (who are investigating biological control) please phone Dave on 021 227 7137.

# The multi million dollar water question

How will water quality and quantity be managed under Horizons proposed One Plan.

This has literally become a multi million dollar question. Well that's the amount so far spent developing Horizons Regional Council (HRC) 'mother' of all regional plans, the One Plan where they attempt to fold in both the regional policy statement and the regional plan into one document. Much of the plan has already been through the hearing process with provisional recommendations made. Specifically the land chapters have been considered and some gains from what was originally proposed have been made, due in part to the excellent job that Federated Farmers executives and policy staff did pulling together not only the submission, but also a sound argument presented at the hearing.

The water chapters are up next and may constitute the biggest challenges yet faced by farmers in the Horizons region. The HRC, which encompasses the Manawatu, Rangitikei, Tararua, Wanganui and Ruapehu districts, has proposed a new methodology aimed at improving surface water quality in some key river systems within the region. Farmers in the Ruapehu district, within the Whangaehu River catchment, are likely to be affected as this water management zone has been identified as a priority area. Priority areas are those that have been assessed to have poor river water quality and where Horizons believe that water quality may be improved by targeting intensive land use (irrigated sheep

and beef, horticulture, cropping and dairy) and limiting nitrate loss from these systems.

While everyone is keen to see an overall improvement in water quality within the region Federated Farmers have strong reservations about how Horizons plan to make these changes. In essence normal intensive farm operations will, under the proposed One Plan, become a controlled activity. Although there are many facets that make up overall river water quality the focus for many of our farmers has been predominantly around the nitrogen loss limits proposed in the One Plan.



Nitrogen in the river system is just one of the factors that contributes to slime growth in rivers.

The rules, as developed in the proposed plan, limit calculated N leaching loss based on the productive potential of land. Put simply this suggests that soil that is more fertile is permitted to leach more nitrate than other less fertile soils, the argument being that where

productivity is higher your system will leak nitrogen, but that overall there will be more production per unit of N loss. Although this may sound like a well considered approach, individual farmers who have managed their business based on a set of best management guidelines could now find the goal posts have moved and indeed for some they will have an impossible target.

In order to better inform our members of the potential threats that this approach to water quality management may have we ran a series of three meetings on the 4-5 November where we outlined Federated Farmers key concerns and tabled some possible alternatives. Overall farmers were deeply concerned about how the plan could affect their right to farm and worried about both the short-term and long-term financial consequences of needing to comply with the somewhat onerous targets of N loss currently set in the plan. Contrary to Horizons belief that farmers are on board with the plan most of our members, present at the meeting in early November, were clearly not on board. In saying this, however, there is a general consensus among our members that improvements can and should be made in some instances and that the productive sector industries take some ownership of the problems in surface and ground water quality in the region.

**Tessa Mills -  
Federated Farmers of NZ,  
Policy Advisor**



## Impacts of regional Funding on Northern Manawatu Wanganui

The area of Manawatu Wanganui known as the Northern TB Management Area includes some 32 operations, including the Hauhangaroa Range.

The areas to the west of this group (Waitaanga, Waikaka, Waikaka South and Tatu Haeo) have almost ceased control and are in the final survey phase to ascertain freedom from disease.

However, those areas in the south and centre of the region, plus those against the Hauhangaroa Ranges, are in various stages of the eradication phase. This means that to achieve eradication from disease it is important that possum levels are consistently maintained below an RTC of two percent. Consistent funding is crucial to the successful achievement of these targets.

Funding for possum control is maintained by a combination of crown, industry stakeholder and Regional Share. These sources are tied by a proportionality formula, which means that reduction in one source automatically results in multiplier effect on the other sources

A reduction or loss of funds to this area will mean that progress to eradication will considerably slow down and control will need to be maintained for a much longer period of time before consistent proof of freedom is achieved. It would be expected, that as a result of this, infected clusters of possums could be left behind and an increase in infected herds would result. This will have both management and financial impacts on those farms and surrounding areas. One potential outcome is that areas that are due for reduction in testing intensity (either test frequency or age group eligibility) will have this delayed because of increased risk around potential vector infection.

Part of the new AHB Strategy proposal is the desire to have proof of concept for total eradication of disease from large areas. Sections of the northern Manawatu Wanganui TMA including the Hauhangaroa Ranges up to and including the Rangitoto Ranges have been selected as ideal for developing this proof of concept. This programme which

includes work on a range of techniques for control of large bush areas through either, aerial control at various loadings and delivery techniques, and follow up monitoring of possum densities using improved detection techniques.

Partial or total loss of funding as a result of reduced or zero Regional Council funding will have a catastrophic impact on this programme. Implications would extend onto the Waikato side of the Ranges as well as this is a combined plan across both management areas.

Maintenance of consistent funding is crucial to the successful holding of the incredible gains that have been made in this part of the region. A massive reduction in infected herd numbers has been made of recent years. This is directly attributed to the consistent and high level of intensive possum control that has been planned and managed.

**Roger Becks - Chair of the Manawatu  
Wanganui TBFree Committee**