

HIGH COUNTRY NEWSLETTER SPECIAL & CONFERENCE 2009



Accompanying this newsletter is the registration form for the High Country Conference 2009. As usual, Conference will be held on the Friday and Saturday (5th and 6th June) following Queen's Birthday weekend and this year we will be returning to the Chateau on the Park, Deans Avenue, Christchurch.

We will be starting at 9.30am on Friday 5th with registrations and morning tea. The conference dinner will be held on the Friday evening at 7pm, preceded by pre-dinner drinks from 6pm. As normal, conference will end around mid-day on the Saturday followed by lunch.

The Conference theme will be "Covenants" and we are looking for good audience participation as various guest speakers offer their perspectives on what has been a contentious subject up to now.

In addition there will be a number of hardy annuals to debate including an update on what progress (if any) is being made on Canada Geese control. We will also be reporting on developments being made in getting Government support with rabbit control. We would hope that decisions on two significant court cases will have been made by the time Conference comes around and there will be comment on the implications these may have on the High Country communities.

And, of course, there will be the usual round of "in-house" matters to discuss, many of which will be open to debate at the section's AGM which will be held between 8.30am and 10.15am on Saturday 6th June 2009.

Registration

Registration forms are enclosed and you will note that we will again be applying the three-tier registration fee system. Registration for current financial contributors to the SIHC Support Fund is discounted at \$135; current financial members of Federated Farmers (and staff) will be entitled to the second discounted registration fee of \$160, while the standard registration fee is \$200.

Your registration fee covers morning and afternoon teas, lunches (two days), plus the Friday night dinner and covers all overheads.

Those registering and paying before 18th May are entitled to claim a \$15 discount for each person registered and, while we are talking deadlines, please note that we will be unable to book rooms for anyone registering after 25th May.

Special Incentives

This year we are able to offer a special incentive to current contributors to the High Country Support Fund whose registrations (with payment) have been received at the address shown on the registration form by the due date.

There will be two prizes of **ONE NIGHT'S FREE ACCOMMODATION** (Standard Room) at the Chateau on the Park for the night of Friday 5th June 2009, plus one prize of Philip Holden's book "Station Country – the Collection".

The draw for these prizes will take place during the dinner on the Friday evening, but don't forget that to be eligible for entry you **MUST**

- Have registered and paid for Conference by 18th May.
- Have paid your 2008-2009 High Country Support contribution.

Your Committee looks forward to meeting with you all again in Christchurch and promises you another informative and enjoyable High Country Farmers Conference.

AT LAST, SOMEONE AGREED TO LISTEN

It took 18 months, but finally someone in Government agreed to meet us to talk about rabbit control. Those with good memories will recall that the 2007 High Country Conference passed a resolution that "...*Federated Farmers of New Zealand (Inc.) seek ongoing funding from*



central government (through its agencies) of 50% of the costs of the control of rabbits on land where notices of control have been issued by Regional Authorities, as its (Government's) contribution towards achieving ongoing environmental sustainability of that land".

The Federated Farmers 2007 national conference supported this proposal, but efforts to gain a Ministerial ear were fruitless. Further approaches were made after the change in Government last year and these achieved a much more positive response. The outcome was that committee member Jim Ward headed a High Country delegation to Wellington in March. The delegation, consisting of Marlborough farmers Graham Black and Steve Satterthwaite, plus Donald Aubrey and Bob Douglas, met with the Ministers of Biosecurity, Conservation and Lands in three separate meetings plus three constituency MP's (Jacqui Dean, Jo Goodhew and Colin King).

Our case was well received by all Ministers and has received much subsequent publicity. The one hurdle, which was constantly thrown at us, was "Could the Government afford it under the present economic squeeze?" Our response was that the Government could not afford to ignore the problem if we are to trade our way out of the present squeeze.

Watch this space!

LOOKING FOR A RABBITER?

We have been contacted by a self-styled "old fella" who has noticed we are having some trouble with rabbits in this part of the country. He is currently in Hamilton, but would like to spend some "quality time in the south again, doing rabbits".

He says he was brought up on a farm and has been involved in deer culling; shot for sport and meat commercially; been a shepherd in Hawke's Bay; run a string of pack horses around Matawai; mustered bush cattle on the east coast (North Island), and managed a cattle station in Queensland.

If this sounds like someone you could use contact **Rod Thompson (07-824 9589)**.

WHY WERE WE THERE?

At the time of writing this news-sheet we were still awaiting decisions in two significant court cases. One is the Minaret valuation test case, the outcome of which will have a

significant effect on future rental and review negotiations with the Crown. The other was Fish & Game Council's seeking a declaratory judgement that pastoral leases do not confer exclusive possession to the lessee and that the public has the right of access to all Crown Land (including pastoral lease properties).

Crown Law opinion was categorical: lessees do have exclusive right and there is no public right of access. LINZ (as landlord) backed this up, but Fish & Game pursued the case regardless.

The case was heard in the High Court in Wellington in March and hardly had the Counsel for Fish & Game started his address when he conceded that the public does not have automatic right of access to Crown Lands. This led Nick Davidson (QC for the High Country Accord) to question the point of continuing to seek a declaratory judgement on the first point when it would have minimal effect on the issue at debate.

"Why are we here?" he asked – a point well made when you consider the cost to the taxpayer (legal expenses for LINZ and the Attorney General), lessees (legal and travel costs of the High Country Accord whose trustees were cited as co-defendants) and Fish & Game's own licence fee payers who funded a cause that the Council failed to pursue.

A decision is expected on the question of "exclusive" possession at any time, but one does have to wonder at the accountability of the Fish & Game Council when it can fritter away public money on a case that, by and large, it did not pursue.

WILDING TREES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

It may seem somewhat contradictory, but under Climate Change legislation you may need to register and receive approval if you want to clear wilding trees from your property. The situation is involved, so if you are considering such a clearance and are not sure of how you stand it would pay to check with MAF first (0800 254 628).

