

Farmers dispute cull claims

Farmers strongly dispute claims by Fish and Game that the Canada geese cull in the Wairarapa was a success.

"In spite of hunter efforts, only 40 percent of the required number of geese were removed.



To achieve the compliance number of 2,000 birds under the Canada Goose Management Plan for Wairarapa, hunters needed to kill at least 1,683 geese, said Anders Crofoot president for Wairarapa Federated Farmers.

"As 1,000 geese still need to be culled, farmers were correct in predicting that this attempt would be ineffective.

"Federated Farmers has always said hunting culls are not the best method of maintaining numbers and has repeatedly advised Fish & Game that a helicopter cull at moulting time is the most effective way to knockdown the goose population to designated levels.

"Fish & Game have said that helicopter culls are expensive and dangerous but the fiasco that unfolded over the weekend put

more than geese at risk. Federated Farmers has learnt in an ironic twist that Fish & Game had to hire a helicopter to rescue one of their jet boats that became stuck in the shallow lake.

"Farmers are incredibly frustrated the job isn't being done properly and an opportunity has been wasted. Not only are the numbers killed inadequate but the hunt has had the effect of dispersing geese to other areas and therefore the chance for an efficient cull in the future is dubious.

"Fish & Game are implying that there is opportunity for ongoing culls but the reality is they are not doing their job. There is one chance to cull which is during the moult before fledging birds take flight and this year the opportunity has been wasted," Mr Crofoot said.

The most recent count of Canada geese on Lake Wairarapa is 3,683 birds, well above the agreed level of 2,000 for the whole district.

Federated Farmers recommends Canada geese should be placed under the Wildlife Act's fifth schedule – giving it no protection and the possibility of being tagged a pest, allowing more effective culling techniques.

"Losing its protection would allow landowners, councils and others in the community to act more aggressively to bring this pest down to manageable levels," Mr Crofoot said.

For more information:
Anders Crofoot, 06 372 6465
Wairarapa - President

Donald Aubrey, 03 696 3747, 027 623 7157
Federated Farmers' national board
spokesperson for wildlife management

Call for leaders

Federated Farmers runs two leadership courses for up-and-coming farming leaders. The programme is important to the Federation's succession planning. Programmes are highly interactive, delivering information using practical methods and workshops to suit hands-on types. The two courses promote both leadership and team building.

If you think that you can make a difference with some polished leadership skills give your President, Basil Meyer a call, 03 732 3660, to discuss attending a course.

2008 course dates:
Getting your feet wet 21-22 May or
26-27 November 2008

Advanced Leadership Skills 28-29 May
or 3-4 December 2008.

WANTED - Meat & Fibre Chair

Jean Douglas, Chair Meat and Fibre, is resigning at the AGM in May. This means we have a vacancy to fill.

Over the last few years this sector has been under represented, both regionally and nationally. So, if you are passionate about sheep and beef, have a view to what's happening with lamb, wool and beef prices, marketing, processors ... and can make yourself available four-six days a year for meetings then why not consider having your name put forward?

If you would like to know more about this position feel free to phone Jean Douglas 03 755 4141, Basil Meyer 03 7323 660 or Dianne Milne 03 738 0038.



Canada Geese have made news again and we stand firm on our submission calling for them to be removed from the protected schedule and have them on the unprotected schedule. They are a pest causing substantial damage.

On 15th and 16th February I did attend (as an observer) part of the Federated Farmers Dairy conference in Christchurch, which was run this year in conjunction with their Australian counterparts. The range of topics and speakers was very interesting and high profile. "Climate change and farming" with presentations from both sides of the

West Coast

March 2008

West Coast faring well this summer

With the summer drawing to a close, I trust that you all had the opportunity for a holiday break. Whilst, in general, most of the Coast enjoyed reasonably good farming weather, many of our farming colleagues in other regions have faced extreme dry conditions. For example the Waikato milk volume (as of mid/late February) was more than thirty percent down on a daily basis compared to twelve months ago. Disappointing to say the least when one is expecting a payout at the level indicated.

At Federated Farmers regional level not much has been happening. Currently a letter is drafted in support of West Coast Regional Council's Coastal Plan, which would allow for the unblocking of river and creek mouths in the coastal Marine Area as a permitted activity under certain conditions. The current plan is silent on this activity, which makes resource consent necessary.

The hearing for the significant Wetlands, under the Land and Riverbed Management Plan is set to begin on March 4th. Federated Farmers has made a submission and we will be presenting our submission. The significant wetlands will most likely be another hot potato and we will keep a close eye on the proceedings.

Tasman were certainly, in my view, the most interesting topic.

Warren Mason presented the Australian picture showing slides of current dry areas and rainfall compared to fifty years ago. This showed a concerning trend. Taking the statistics back another hundred years, however, nothing much is different today. The message I took from that was that statistics can be misused in many ways.



Over a cup of coffee, I had an interesting conversation with the Aussies and their summary of the NZ environment policy/carbon tax/emission trading scheme was: NZ farmers are faced with the impossible task of needing to be carbon neutral and yet maintaining international competitiveness.

Planning for our AGM is well underway, the proposed date is May 3rd, which is a Saturday. This means that the AGMs of Federated Farmers Marlborough, Nelson, Golden Bay and the West Coast are all being held in the same week, making it easier for National Board members to attend as many Regional AGMs as possible.

The location and venue of our AGM has not been set yet, but will be advised together with guest speakers and the agenda.

This is my fourth year as president and I look back over some eventful times. The Land Access campaign and the debate over the erosion of private property rights, microchipping of dogs, SNAs, Regional and District plans, climate change, the agricultural contribution to greenhouse gasses and carbon footprint, water quality and allocation ...

Federated Farmers West Coast enjoys strong support from farmers and also the wider communities. We are, however, experiencing a reduced willingness by members to become more involved. This is your only lobby group advocating on your behalf, ensuring that your views and concerns are heard and represented at both local and national levels. For us farmers to continue to operate in an increasingly hostile climate, we must remain united and actively involved.

I am asking you to consider whether spending a few days a year looking after your long term farming interest is too much. You all can contribute to ensure that future farming generations (your children) can operate a viable farming business.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you at our AGM.

**Basil Meyer - West Coast
President**



Recruit members and be paid

Earn commission,
work in your local area.

You choose the hours, when
and how you work.

Federated Farmers
is looking for contractors
to recruit new members.

For more information contact:
Di Wyllie 0800 327 646
dwyllie@fedfarm.org.nz

West Coast Federated Farmers of NZ
publishes regular newsletters to keep our members informed

President: Basil Meyer, 03 732 3660
Dairy Industry Group: Katie Milne, 03 738 0189
Sharemilker Representative: Doug Butcher, 03 732 3013
Sharemilkers Employers: Frank Brenmuhl, 03 318 1565
Meat & Fibre Industry Group: Jean Douglas, 03 755 4141

For comments on this newsletter or if you wish to join Federated Farmers please contact:

A challenging season

As usual the season has been kind to some and rough on others here on the Coast. With such a large geographical spread we should hardly expect anything less ... or should we? Considering how dry it has been, in general, compared to the rest of the country we have probably gotten off lightly.



The situation for most, this season, has been challenging to say the least. Having our highest ever payouts and not being able to achieve an average production, has really knocked the wind out of people. With all the increasing costs most will only be on a par with last season due to the lack of production and the dry conditions.

Rain has eased the situation for some parts but the Waikato has still missed out and many are close to drying off early. Winter feed stocks are at a very low level country wide, so early winter planning will be essential this year.

I have just been to our Dairy conference in Christchurch where I caught up with delegates from all over New Zealand and

Dairy worker shortage

Federated Farmers is continuing its work to bring to the Immigration Departments attention the size of the problem with respect to the dairy worker shortage.



Australia. There were some great speakers with scary messages and some average speakers with even scarier messages.

The emissions trading scheme to be introduced by this government was explained and it certainly doesn't look good for us here. We won't be able to get credits here on the coast for the likes of eco-n as it seems to be ineffective here. We won't get any credits for riparian planting of trees against waterways unless they are more than 15 meters wide each side of the water. So it would seem that the region with the lowest stocking rates in the country will end up with the biggest burden to bear from carbon emissions, even though we probably have the least impact on the environment.

At least a thirty percent drop in emissions will be required to meet the targets. The Australians were amazed that our government officials could stand up in front of us and basically tell us to shrink the wallet of the country. Surely it makes sense for us in New Zealand to keep producing as much food for the world as we can as efficiently as we can, considering that world food stocks are at low levels similar to those at the end of WWII.

One small glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel is that MAF has said that the system is not yet set in stone so we may have a chance through submissions to get a little common sense injected into the system.

Katie Milne - West Coast Dairy Chairperson



Every dairy conversion requires around three to four more workers for that particular farm and, with the rate at which conversions are happening and New Zealand's tight labour market, the shortage is going to get worse before it gets better.

Federated Farmers is therefore making ongoing representations to the immigration department in order to get them to allow "farm employees" in under the skill's shortage list.

To date this has been difficult owing to the immigration departments focus on "skilled" workers. They do not consider "farm employee" a skilled position, at this stage.

William McGimpsey - Federated Farmers of NZ, Policy Advisor

Aussies on the Coast

A group of Australian dairy farmers recently learned that 'flipping' and 'humping and hollowing' are all part of every day life for farmers on the West Coast. The farmers from across the Tasman joined up with Federated Farmers Dairy Section members for a look at two Landcorp Dairy farming operations on the West Coast and saw the benefits of these novel and very practical farming practices. For Katie Milne, Chairperson of the West Coast Dairy Section it was a chance to show just what is being done on the Coast.



The tour was organised as part of the Dairy Section's Council meeting in Christchurch. About 50 people including partners took part in the tour which began with a look at Cape Foulwind Station near Westport. The station carries more than 20,000 stock units made up of deer, beef and sheep. In addition to this, three dairy farms are being developed here, each with herds of about 1000 cows.

A feature of the land development programme to achieve this move to dairying is the process of 'flipping'. Such a concept was new to the Australians and to some New Zealand dairy farmers. This involves turning over the soil and breaking the impervious iron pan to improve drainage. This reduces pugging and allows for reliable pasture growth.

Inland from Greymouth, is Weka Station where four new dairy blocks have been brought into production using 'humping and hollowing'. Again the terminology amused the Aussies and the actual practice amazed them in more ways than one. The system is used to manage heavy rainfalls, generally the opposite to what Australian farmers have to deal with. The four blocks are each carrying between 700 and 900 cows and another block is scheduled to come into production in 2011.

After touring the farms, delegates were able to relax as they took the Trans-Alpine Express back to Christchurch for the Council meeting.

Introducing Doug Butcher



FederatedFarmersWestCoast Sharemilker's representative is Doug Butcher.

Born in Reefton, Doug started in the dairy industry in the Bay of Plenty in 1995. He returned to the West Coast in 2001 and has farmed in the Grey Valley for seven years, the last five of which have been 50/50 sharemilking with his partner Caroline. Their first 50/50 job was in Totara Flat with 280 cows. Then, after 4 years, they decided to increase cow numbers and moved to Slatey Creek where they now milk 620 cows. They have two daughters; Jessie five, who desperately wants to drive tractors and milk cows, and Sophie two, who is just discovering the joys of farm living!

Doug and Caroline are keen advocates of the New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards and, this year, are entering the sharemilkers competition for the third time. They achieved third place in the Top of the South/

West Coast region in both 2006 and 2007 and have also won the "Meridian Energy Farm Environment Award". They would encourage any sharemilker, Farm Manager or Trainee to enter as the benefits that can be reaped are enormous.



Caroline, Sophie, Jessie and Doug.

Doug is also involved with the West Coast Dairy Action Team and the Dairy Environmental Leaders Forum.

The Dairy Action Team (DAT) is a farmer-driven group that identifies regional environmental issues and helps to develop

Annual grind crucial to farm economics

It's that time of year when councils plan their rate increases. Not exactly a popular topic, but one that gets a lot of attention from Federated Farmers.

Most folk run a mile from the two-inch thick annual and long term plans, that set out council's spending and rating intentions for the coming year.

Not Federated Farmers. Those plans are the basis of your rates invoice, and too many farmers are now paying rates in excess of \$10,000 a year for them to be ignored.

Growing cost

The last ten years has seen huge growth in local government activity and expenditure, with staggering increases for many farmers. The extent to which the cost of rates is affecting primary industry is reflected in MAF's monitor farms - where rates are often in the top six farm working expenses. Anyone trying to make a living from farming knows how it stacks up.

The real concern is that modern local government is empowered to do pretty much anything, but is restricted to a narrow, medieval funding base made up of property value rates and property charges. Confusing at best, rates do a great job of preventing communities from assessing the costs and

benefits of the things councils get up to. For farmers it means a tax on a big portion of their capital investment to pay for all manner of community services.



The challenge

The challenge for Federated Farmers is to meet the demands of members calling for representation wherever rates are rising. This meant nearly 70 submissions around NZ on rates last year, all within a couple of months.

This is no easy task. Any farmer that has submitted on rates will tell you that the odds are stacked against us. We are a population minority in most districts with plenty of juicy rateable land available to the council. Despite this Federated Farmers has had a restraining impact on rates, and seen councils improve the equity of their rating systems over time.

practical solutions. The team encourages actions to be taken on-farm to achieve change in areas such as nutrient losses, microbial levels in water, effluent disposal and promotes sustainable farming practices that will enhance the profitability of dairying.

The Dairy Environmental Leaders Forum is a network of dairy farmers from all over New Zealand and aims to empower them to drive sustainable environmental change in their own communities. This initiative was developed under the Dairy Industry's Sustainable Environmental Management Strategy, which sets out a plan of action to reduce the dairy industry's environmental footprint whilst maintaining its viability.

Both groups are keen for more farmers to get involved, if you would like more information regarding this you can contact Doug by email: butcher_newick@farmside.co.nz or phone: 732 3013.

'Getting Rid of Ridiculous Rates'

This year Federated Farmers has produced "Getting Rid of Ridiculous Rates", a publication available to all Federated Farmers members interested in the growing cost of local government. Call our freephone, 0800 327 646, to order your copy.

FMG

RURAL FINANCIAL SERVICES

Help support your local Federated Farmers province by nominating Federated Farmers as your agent. If you are a customer of FMG's and nominate Federated Farmers as your agent, you will get a 2.4% rebate on your premiums and FMG will pay your local province a 1.6% rebate.

If you are unsure who is your nominated agent please call FMG on:

0800 366466