

Ballance Farm Environment Awards

CONGRATULATIONS to Ian Cummings of Mangaiwa for being the winner of the prestigious 2008 Ballance Farm Environment Awards for the Horizons region. He also won the Silver Fern Farms Livestock Award and the Horizons Regional Council Award. A large number of farmers and rural professionals attended the field day on the award winning property.



The overall objective of the Ballance Farm Environment Awards programme is to promote sustainable land management on New Zealand farms, believing that role models and education are effective tools to improving farming practices.

This objective is achieved by:

- The judging process, which aims to keep mutually enjoyable and informative.
- A commitment to practical solutions, which benefit people as well as the land.
- Support for diversity - there's never one right answer, it's about what works.
- The Award's deed requires the use of objectives criteria to determine sustainable management where practical.

Entries for the 2009 Awards programme close on 11 November 2008. You can obtain entry information by visiting the official website for the Awards programme at www.bfea.org.nz or by contacting the Regional Coordinator for the Horizons region, Margaret Matthews on 06 342 7783.



Call for leaders

Federated Farmers of NZ 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 and using practical methods and workshops to suit hands-on types. There are two courses which promote both leadership and team building.

If you think that you can make a difference with some polished leadership skills give your President, Brian Doughty a call, 06 342 1846, to discuss attending a course.

**2008 COURSE DATES:
Getting Your Feet Wet
26-27 November 2008**

**Advanced
Leadership Skills
3-4 December 2008**

Employment Seminars

Mark your diary now!!

14 October 2008, 10:00am
Angus Hotel, Railway Road, Hastings

14 October 2008, 2:00pm
Services & Citizens Club,
1 Princess Street, Dannvirke

15 October 2008, 10:00am
Cosmopolitan Club Inc,
398 Queen Street, Masterton

15 October 2008, 2:30pm
RSA, 200 Broadway Ave,
Palmerston North

16 October 2008, 2:30pm
TET Multisport Centre, Portia Street,
Stratford

17 October 2008, 10:00am
TET Multisport Centre, Portia Street,
Stratford (Optional)

**\$65.00 per person
For more information or to register
phone: 0800 327 646**

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Federated Farmers Wanganui
publishes regular newsletters to keep our members informed

President: Brian Doughty, 06 342 1846
Vice President: Tim Matthews, 06 342 7783
Dairy Chairman: Tony Rogers, 06 345 6999
Meat & Fibre Chairman: Grant Derolles, 06 342 1891

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

LOCAL VOICE

PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTER



WANGANUI

AUGUST 2008

The population stakes

Believe it or not we, the rural community, are on the way down in the national population stakes.

According to Statistics New Zealand, we currently have 13.8 percent of the population while holding 97.3 percent of the land (urban 86.2 percent population and 2.7 percent land area).



Given that with land amalgamation and urban development encroaching on the rural - urban borders, we will in the future end up disappearing into that proverbial black hole, unless we decide enough is enough.

We can start by taking seriously the possible role we can play in local, regional and central government by committing our time and energy to stand up for those positions which we know will be coming up in the future.

With that said, it's important that we now hold our hands up for some future positions, in order to have a say for the future.

On the government's NZ Fast Forward (science/food/farm) programme, pastoral and food industries, horticulture, dairy, meat and seafood dominate our New Zealand economy.

Directly or indirectly, one in five New Zealanders work in these industries, so it comes as a surprise when you look at who's who on the establishment group. Where is Federated Farmers with a representative? Maybe a small oversight or something more sinister in that the government possibly

believes we are not the group to represent farming in today's world. Shock, horror, where would they get that from?!!

Longterm our drought situation is continuing to affect a large proportion of our province. We have held discussions with our Wanganui District Council on the availability of a rates postponement, but this would possibly need

to come as part of the Manawatu Rural Family Support Trust assistance package.

If this is something that effects you please give me (06 342 1846) or Tim Matthews (06 342 7783) a call.

Tim has spent many long hours submitting on our District Council Annual Plans, (Ruapehu, Wanganui and Rangitikei) while joining forces with Julie Ireland Federated Farmers Policy Advisor in Palmerston North on the Horizons One Plan.

While we have had the *Overall* and *Land* hearings, some important hearing decisions have possibly sent shock waves to the Council.

With the Section 32 (cost benefit analysis) hearing chair, Joan Allin has issued a minute recommending further analysis is needed for the panel to perform its functions properly.

I suspect that the expert evidence of Dr Jack McConchie and others will miss the mark and the Horizons Regional Council policy group will charge on regardless of what contrary opinions may show up.

This all seems to be a huge communication

bungle by the council from the start. Let's hope they learn at some stage.

It's great to see that our neighbouring province Manawatu-Rangitikei has elected some useful and competent Dairy, Meat and Fibre and Grains executive members.

At a national level our membership model is up for grabs. The most popular option is *People in the Business*, but needs to be sorted in the retired and small farmer area.

My thoughts are very simple. Retired - 65 and not actively farming, Small farmer - a one man unit regardless of size, stock numbers or income.

Cost to belong to these is \$100 for retired, \$300 for small farmer. Both less 10 percent discount for early payment. Please let me know if you have an opinion.

With a declining membership we need to keep it simple and encourage existing members to stay and new members to join. A confusing membership structure along with the high cost to belong is a problem for many.

Let's hope that you get to enjoy a mild spring and great prices for your produce with some good quality family time.

**Brian Doughty - Wanganui
President**



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Good winter grass growth

Dairy farmers in the North Island will be enjoying good grass growth over the winter, going into calving with good covers. The same seems to be true in the South Island, but several snow falls of late may have impacted.



In the South Island, over 100 conversions are taking place this year and again next year. Most are supplying Fonterra, but a number are supplying the new Matura Milk Company and Dairy Trust. The majority of Dairy Trust is owned by Affco, who are also the majority owners of Open Country Cheese (OCC) which has been in the news lately.

Ex-MP Wyatt Creech (who won his Wairarapa seat for National by one vote on countback, and then wrote the rules for dairy de-regulation. He then took advantage of his own rulings in forming OCC) has been jumping on the bandwagon lately by criticising Fonterra for charging world prices on the local market. However, it should be noted that he is not prepared to enter the local market himself, because the export market pays so much better.

Fonterra continues to expand into Australia, buying several businesses and factories including a yoghurt and dairy dessert business in Echuca from Nestle's. They also announced the building of a yoghurt factory in North-East Brazil with Dairy Partners America to meet growing demand.

This news was announced at the same time as Fonterra's legal council, David Matthews, told a select committee meeting that it cost Fonterra \$14 million last year to supply its competitors with cheap milk under regulations, who then have these same companies sell their products in the same market as we in Fonterra do, and then return the profits to large trading houses in Singapore, Japan and Russia!

Something is very wrong in the way New Zealand helps to finance its deficit.

We wish you all the best for a good calving and a great season.

Tony Rogers - Wanganui Dairy Chairman

Food era looming

It's not that long ago that we were complaining about the lack of rain, yeah right.



Food production on flat land has a cacophony of healthy options; dairy support, grain, maize etc., all with big earning potential. Farmers grinding away in the hills are still very much on the back foot. Scanning is down by around 20 percent and with the ewes in light condition docking tallies won't be flash. The hills look like bowling greens, which makes me wonder what the cows are eating.

The drought is having an ugly follow through.

The era of food is looming and New Zealand farmers are well positioned to get a slice of the pie. Federated Farmers have to make sure the rest of the pie isn't devoured by the gaggle of middle men, who have little invested in the industry, but get a large chunk of the end value. These ticket clickers are a threat to all food producers.

As an organisation it is time we get back to the basics. Farmers need the little stuff dealt to and feet under the table when the big stuff is being sorted. While our leadership needs to be strong, the next layer has to be involved in all aspects of decision making.

We need a regular list of all our achievements and anything we are involved in. Not a broad overview, but a central compiled detailed list. Hard facts that we can hold up and say this is what you get when you join.

We have to stop hanging our hat on dog chipping. Are Federated Farmers' member discount cards squeezed into a wallet or handbag, full of cards giving points, discounts and rewards the most effective marketing tool?

Just laying out the story on the table as it is, without the fancy side salad could be our best way to get farmers on board.

Grant Deroles - Wanganui Meat & Fibre Chairman



A word from the editor

I agree Grant. Our Friday Flash is sent to every member, but it only sets out the Federation's weekly highlights. We don't keep a running list of every issue we are active on. The list would be long. It's a good idea though and we'll look into the logistics of adding something like this to our website.

PS: Some members love our discount card and I've even enjoyed the card benefits myself. I guess its horses for courses. We work hard to attract and retain members and many of them enjoy these extra benefits.

Regards Ali Undorf, Editor

Horizons One Plan Update

The formal Plan Hearings Committee process started for the Horizons One Plan on 3rd July before Hearings Chairperson Joan Allin, Independent Commissioner Rob van Voorthuysen and Councillor Jill White.

The first Hearing dealt with overall topics such as the need for the Plan and whether sufficient cost: benefit analysis ratio had been done by Horizons to justify the rules and proposals in the One Plan. Hard hitting submissions from Fonterra, the seven District Councils, Federated Farmers and some individuals have led the Hearing Committee to request Horizons' staff to undertake a more rigorous RMA Section 32 analysis before the Committee can fully consider all submissions. In particular, the Committee has asked submitters to suggest what matters should be considered, and if they can agree on an independent expert to conduct the new Section 32 analysis, focusing heavily on the Water Quality and Quantity sections, and the Highly Erodable Land part of the One Plan. This is a significant win for submitters and will also upset Horizons' timetable for implementing the One Plan.

The Land Chapter Hearings started in Ohakune in mid July with strong representation from individual and groups of farmers. The Hearings Panel of seven were left in no doubt as to the passion of farmers to protect their land and whether the One Plan would assist that. The Hearings Committee was again critical of Horizons' senior management failing to complete the Pre-

Hearings process before Hearings began, leaving submitters unable to properly make their points to the Panel. It seems Horizons have underestimated the time and resources needed to agree with submitters on various points, which has led to postponement of three Hearings to a later date.



These Hearings concern Bio-diversity and Heritage; Infrastructure, Energy and Waste; and Landscapes and Natural Character, which were to have been heard between mid-July and mid-September, but have been deferred to (as yet unknown) later dates. Federated Farmers were scheduled to speak at all of these, but now our next Hearing will be at the Coast Hearing to be held on the 16th September.

Federated Farmers has been impressed with the Hearings Committee consideration and questioning of submitters to date, and their commitment and impartiality to the various parties. Some Hearing days have gone three or four hours over their scheduled end times, as the Commissioners have endeavoured to understand submitters' points.

At the present rate of progress Hearings are unlikely to be concluded by March 2009, in fact Spring 2009 may be more likely. While some people have suggested Horizons withdraw the One Plan in its entirety, it would be an insult to ratepayers to spend a further \$2 million dollars on top of the \$2 to \$4 million already spent on the process. A better result may be for farmers and ratepayers to work with Horizons to change the One Plan, through the Hearings process, to something a little less than the Council hoped to achieve, while still providing an environmental "bottom line" at reasonable cost.

Federated Farmers will continue to represent members concerns at the Hearings process, and any member who wishes to participate or know more should contact Julie Ireland, Federated Farmers of NZ Policy Advisor (phone 0800 327 646) or myself (phone 06 342 7783).

Tim Matthews - Wanganui Vice-president

Nuffield travels with Ali



At the beginning of July, half way through my Nuffield global focus tour, I realised that I was starting to think about agriculture and politics and farmer networks in a much bigger way than just New Zealand. Travel has broadened my perspective. It occurred to me that this is exactly what the Nuffield Scholarship tour was meant to do, encourage me to think bigger and bolder and have confidence in myself.

When I first saw the Nuffield tour programme I felt overwhelmed at the pace and schedule that was being set for us. It turned out not only to be a logistical feat, worthy of being called 'The Amazing Race', it was also a physical endurance challenge. To spend 42 days travelling with 10 other people literally around the world to discover farming on four continents seemed an ambitious and slightly

foolhardy task. How could we possibly make any sense of it? Yet that is exactly what we did. We shared meals with New Zealand, Irish, French, American and Chinese farmers, kicked dirt in their fields and debated issues. We saw produce markets, met with bankers and town planners. We met up with cooperate farmers, peasant farmers, farmers who lived on subsidies and farmers who had to sink or swim on their own initiative.

Farmers in each of these countries took the time to explain their philosophy about farming and what they dreamed of. It has been a humbling and totally motivating experience for me.

I have now set off on my Nuffield solo travels searching for some ways to resolve the urban-rural disconnection. The pace will slow down and I will get to spend more time with people and to develop my thinking. So far everyone I have met has affirmed my study topic and shown an interest in being involved in it. I think that it is true that farmers around the

world are feeling the same pressures from negative urban perceptions.

Over the next three months I will participate in a leadership course in America, work for two weeks with leading rural advocacy groups in the UK, meet with some French farmer activists and, I hope, co-lead a workshop with German and Austrian environmentalists and farmers. In between times I plan to visit past Nuffield scholars and learn more about farming and farm politics. There is a lot to do and take in. I aim to work hard and use this opportunity to really extend myself.

If you are interested in putting yourself forward for a Nuffield scholarship drop me an email: aundorflay@fedfarm.org.nz, I'd be more than happy to answer any of your questions or help you out with an application.

Regards

Ali Undorf-Lay, Federated Farmers of NZ Provincial Communications Coordinator

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