

Ballance Farm Environment Awards

CONGRATULATIONS to Mark and Nicky Morrow of Ashburton for being the winners



of the prestigious 2008 Ballance Farm Environment Awards for the Canterbury region. They also won the Silver Ferns Farm Livestock Award. A large number of farmers and rural professionals attended the field day on their 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, aims to keep the awards mutually enjoyable and informative.
- A commitment to practical solutions, which benefits 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 objective criteria to determine sustainable management where practical.

Entries for the 2009 Awards programme close on 22 October 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 Canterbury region, Nicola Hunt on 03 353 9711.



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35 Sir William Pickering Drive,
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4 November 2008, 10:00am
Federated Farmers Building,
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Ashburton

4 November 2008, 7:30pm
Farming House, 23 Butler Street,
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Mid Canterbury Federated Farmers
publishes regular newsletters to keep our members informed

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



MID CANTERBURY

LOCAL VOICE

PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTER



SEPTEMBER 2008

MID-CANTERBURY

Introducing the 2008-09 team

Spring is officially here and in the farming sector that signals the start of a new production season. And so it is with Federated Farmers Mid-Canterbury. For the most part the faces are all the same, but we have had the equivalent of a minor cabinet reshuffle. Given the land use change and new faces in this county every year it's timely to introduce the Federated Farmers Mid-Canterbury team to you.

Before I do that, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank Rupert Curd for his service to Federated Farmers over the last few years. One of the pleasures of being involved with Federated Farmers, for me, is observing all the different styles and approaches to issues that people have. Rupert's ability to cut to the chase and yet still inject a bit of that legendary sense of humour at just the right moment has been appreciated by us all.

MICHAEL MORROW

I am your new provincial President, Michael Morrow. I am 43 and an arable farmer at Longbeach, coastal Mid-Canterbury. We farm intensive herbage seed, feed grain production, and 1000 breeding ewes and winter lamb finishing around the fringes of that operation. I've grown up with irrigation and defending it is a passion. I'm a director of United Wheat Growers (UWG) and as such represent UWG on the national executive of Federated Farmers Grain and Seed.

WILLY LEFERINK

My provincial vice-president is Willy Leferink. Willy needs no introduction to anyone in the dairy sector. Willy's reputation as a top production dairy farmer and his attention to detail makes him a huge asset to this team. Add to that the fact that he is currently the national vice-chairman of Federated Farmers Dairy industry group and his value to this province increases.

DEAN MCCONNELL

Dean McConnell is the chairman of Federated Farmers Dairy locally and carries into that role vast experience, not just in dairy, but also from his background and continued involvement in the sheep and cropping scene. He also has an excellent understanding of water issues and is currently working hard on finding ways to meet the labour requirements of his industry.

JEANETTE MAXWELL

Jeanette Maxwell brings a huge amount of energy and passion for her industry and to her role as chairwoman of our local Meat & Fibre section and also to her new role as national vice-chairwoman of Federated Farmers Meat & Fibre. With NAIT, industry mergers, the Emission Trading Scheme and an active role on her Methven farm, Jeanette will be very busy.



DAVID CLARK

David Clark is a Valetta cropping farmer and as such is the new Chairman of our Grain & Seed section. David runs a large seed, grain and livestock operation and is also an irrigation farmer with a keen interest in all issues surrounding water. He also sits on the national executive of Federated Farmers Grain & Seed industry group.

KEVIN GEDDES

Mid-Canterbury Federated Farmers is incredibly well served by our locally based staff and rest assured that our work as elected office holders would be far harder without them. Kevin Geddes, well known to all in this province, is the Federation's longest serving staff member (note that I didn't say oldest Kevin) and as such he carries a wealth of knowledge that he is always happy to share. His policy responsibilities within the Federation cover fertiliser, transport, herbage seed and adverse event management. His roles in external organisations include; Executive Director of the Fertiliser Quality Council and the New Zealand Groundspread Fertiliser's Association, and administrator of Herbage Seedgrowers Subsection of Federated Farmers. Kevin also provides provincial support for Federated Farmers

Mid-Canterbury and offers wise council on a daily basis.

LIONEL HUME

Lionel Hume is a senior policy advisor for Federated Farmers of New Zealand based in the province. Lionel does outstanding work on all things water and RMA related. His work analysing annual plans, the Natural Resources Regional Plan (NRRP) documents coming out of Environment Canterbury and with national environmental standards now coming out from Government, are invaluable. Lionel often works to impossible deadlines and is charged with summarising these documents, seeking members' feedback and then drafting submissions in response. His analytical skills and the quality and thoroughness of his submissions are always noted by those we submit to.

KAREN KROG

Karen Krog is the face and voice you will interact with in Mid-Canterbury's office. Karen provides us all with the administration support we need so much. She also provides administrative support to a number of affiliated groups that the Mid-Canterbury Federated Farmers office services.

That's the team, there are of course vice-chairmen and co-opted members of the executive board and provincial executive that I haven't mention. We run a very inclusive outfit, which makes giving the right job to the person with the right skill set very easy.

We won't profess to getting it right every time and that is where you, our members, come into it. If you have a field of interest, or expertise then pick up the phone, write an email, respond to a request for feedback on an issue or come along to a meeting occasionally. This province has always been at the forefront of New Zealand agriculture because of its farmers' ability to look beyond their own farm gate.

To keep you in touch with what we do on your behalf we are going to produce a regular Mid-Canterbury newsletter filled with local issues, opinions and updates. Don't be afraid to comment.

Bring on that spring sunshine!

Michael Morrow - Mid-Canterbury President

A brighter outlook

Hi everyone, for those of you who don't know I'm Jeanette Maxwell and I am Mid-Canterbury's Meat & Fibre chairwoman. I am also the vice-chairwoman on the Federated Farmers Meat & Fibre industry group executive.

This has been a difficult year for our type of farming with inputs costs soaring and some of the poorest returns in a very long time. The outlook for this coming season is looking somewhat brighter with the prediction that lamb prices will average around \$75.00 and wool prices set to increase.

The weather, for some of us, has left little to be desired and we wait patiently for a warm sunny spring. Please be aware of animal health issues given the trying conditions for some farms.



There are many burning issues for sheep and beef farmers at present. There was the Silver Fern Farms /PGGWrightson vote on 8 September. I hope you all managed to attend your local meeting where possible and read all the information so you could make an informed decision.

The Wool Holding Company (a temporary name) is underway. It has yet to make some final appointments to positions, but this will happen in due course. It is hoped that a prospectus will be out later in the year. If you currently sell your wool through PGGWrightson it will now be selling through The Wool Holding Company.

A major issue at hand is National Animal Identification Traceability (NAIT), this is linked to Farms Online. There are many questions to be answered around this issue, namely who will own the database, who can access it and who will pay. Plus the possibility that this could very well be the base for an emissions trading scheme. The Federation will be working very hard on this matter to get the answers we need. Happy lambing and calving.

Jeanette Maxwell - Mid-Canterbury Meat & Fibre Chairwoman

A cold wet start to spring

A cold and wet start to spring has certainly bought its trying times, hope everyone is managing to cope with all the problems that seem to keep arising with each new day. A bit more sun may mean fewer problems. Remember if you aren't handling things talk to others, if you are short of feed, the problem won't go away, take action.

Talking of other shortages, staff is an ongoing problem. Willy has been putting a lot of time into the immigrations head office; he thinks he is making steps forward only to take two backward. If you have a staff shortage, please register these vacancies with WINZ as this is where the Immigration Department seems to judge if there is a staff and skills shortage, therefore affecting the list of temporary immigration positions granted.

At present Environment Canterbury (ECan) are carrying out their annual monitoring of effluent consent compliance. If you see them ask the question of; what they are doing, how they are doing it and if there is something wrong what is it? Also, perhaps it would be an idea if farm staff were advised to direct



all enquiries and questions from ECan staff to the boss or consent holder.

I am looking forward to the summer silage season. It was suggested to me the other day that with the ever increasing prices of everything we should consider doing the deal based around quality (ME), because with good silage we should be able to make a margin, but rubbish can be bloody expensive.

I hope the vat is starting to fill up and the springer mob is getting smaller, and here's to looking forward to a great season of food production (helping to feed cities).

Dean McConnell - Mid-Canterbury Dairy Chairman

Production costs on the rise

A catch cry for cropping farmers is that they "haven't been able to turn a wheel". As I listen to yet more rain on the roof, it's more a case of the wheels turn a little too easily!

Whilst frustrating at times, the wet winter will provide fantastic recharge for the aquifers and give us a great start to spring. As we look to the next harvest we are all faced with decisions to make regarding the selling of our crops. Do we forward contract or do we wait and see what the free market will return?



Whatever approach we each take it is more important than ever that we consider our costs of production. In the last 12 months input costs and inflation have been higher than most of us have ever seen. Since July 2007 Superphosphate is up 160 percent and Urea is up 131 percent, by the time you read this fertiliser will have increased further. Diesel has increased 55 percent, wages,

electricity, freight, interest and compliance costs have also increased markedly. Those pricing new machinery have seen rises in the order of 25-30 percent and that's if you can get a machine supplied!

Our gross margins show that our direct costs for growing feed wheat have increased by \$1,000 per hectare this season. As an industry we are very fortunate that our product prices have increased and this is a direct result of increasing global prices. The Chicago Board of Trade July Wheat Futures have increased 63 percent for the year. The current free market prices that we are seeing offered are by no means a bonanza for the arable industry; these prices fairly reflect the returns needed to cover our increased cost of production.

Each farmer's situation is different, but it is important to understand our costs prior to making a decision on selling our year's produce.

Recently I attended a grower's evening hosted by a grain and seed firm. One of the senior managers was justifiably proud to announce to the growers that no longer was the employment performance of the company representatives judged by the number of contracts that the representative had managed to get signed! Ummm.....

David Clark - Mid-Canterbury Grain & Seed Chairman

NAIT news

RECAP

Last year Meat & Fibre delegates passed a resolution supporting, in principle, the electronic identification and traceability of cattle. No detailed information was available at that time, but it appeared a reasonable and worthwhile idea based on biosecurity and market assurance issues.

In July 2008 the Meat & Fibre executive received the National Animal Identification and Tracing's Biosecurity Discussion Document giving the first detail of the proposal and were asked for submissions by 1 August 2008.

A number of issues are of concern:

1. The financial analysis doesn't stack up. Costs outweigh the benefits. Some of the assumptions regarding on farm benefits are wildly optimistic.
2. The scope of the NAIT document has grown enormously and now suggests inclusion of sheep. There are also onerous on-farm compliance requirements.
3. There is reference to the NAIT database being used for other purposes including the emission trading scheme.

This is a very different proposal to what was

outlined 12 months ago. Farmers would be burdened with yet more cost and compliance for little proven benefit. The NAIT concept has taken on a life of its own and farmers are again faced with more rules, regulations and costs with no apparent commercial gain.



ACTION TAKEN

Meetings and discussions were held with the NAIT Governance Group and their funding organisations (Meat & Wool New Zealand, Dairy NZ, DINZ, MIA, and DCANZ) to seek further information and clarification. Most of these groups share Federated Farmers concerns and many are also talking with NAIT. At this stage Federated Farmers awaits clarification on issues raised with NAIT before forming its final view. The close

off for the Federated Farmers submission has been delayed until this information has been supplied.

MEAT & FIBRE'S POSITION

There are some positives around electronic identification and traceability. However, Federated Farmers remains unconvinced over the commercial drivers and overall benefits and see little reason to support the NAIT proposal in its current form. Federated Farmers is also concerned about use of collected data for other purposes. The Federation is not convinced that enough consideration has been given to a more cost effective alignment within existing capabilities and structures like the Animal Health Board. Members can be assured that Federated Farmers will continue to pursue the above issues to ensure that the interests of Meat & Fibre producers are protected.

HAVE YOUR SAY

If you wish to have your say about the issue, the easiest way is to use the Feds blog. You can also find it in the "Our Work/Have Your Say/Is NAIT on right track?" part of the Federated Farmers website www.fedfarm.org.nz

**Extract from The Rambull
Federated Farmers Meat & Fibre newsletter**

It can take just a phone call



When George and Marjorie Morrison rang Don Nicolson, President Federated Farmers of NZ, with the idea that Federated Farmers should look at the Canadian farmers' 'Farmers Feed Cities' campaign, I don't think he realised that we would have the opportunity to visit their campaign manager in Toronto.

One of the great things about being a Nuffield scholar is the emphasis on spontaneity; being willing and able to follow a lead. Because I was visiting the Farm Bureau (the American version of Federated Farmers of New Zealand in Washington), it was relatively easy and cheap to hop on a plane and fly up to Toronto.

I found Scott Allison, campaign manager for Farmers Feed Cities positive and enthusiastic. We had a great meeting where we talked over urban-rural politics and issues that we had in common. Scott said that their campaign was the Ontario farmers' response to the increasing lack of understanding that city people had about rural matters. The farmers wanted to remind their city neighbours that

the food they ate was a healthy local product grown by people that they knew. They were also keen for city people to realise that the Canadian countryside was a working farm landscape, which was highly productive and profitable.

These arguments are the same that we use in Resource Management Act district and regional planning submissions when we want to remind councils that regulation should not be set so high that it removes the right to farm. Farmers need to be able to work their land and grow food without having to constantly think about what consents they might need.

I was impressed with the Farmers Feed Cities campaign and I think it could work well here in New Zealand. I was also pleased that Federated Farmers is an organisation where a member feels welcome to ring a national president with a suggestion. We all have to take responsibility for making our organisation a more effective lobby group. George and Marjorie's story shows how even a phone call can make a difference.

If you are interest in reading more on Farmers Feed Cities visit their website: www.farmersfeedcities.com.

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

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