



Ballance
Farm Environment Awards®
Promoting Sustainable Profitable Farming

2014 WAIKATO

Mike and Sharon Barton
Glen Emmreth Farm

SUPREME AWARD WINNERS

ALSO WINNERS OF:
BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS SOIL MANAGEMENT AWARD
MASSEY UNIVERSITY INNOVATION AWARD



The Bartons weren't deterred by the prospect of a nitrogen cap on the land when they bought their 142ha property, overlooking the Western Bay's area of Lake Taupo, in 2004.

There were very few land sales in the area at the time they purchased; such was the uncertainty, properties were being listed on the market as either inside or outside the Taupo Catchment. Despite this being Mike and Sharon's first foray into

full-time farming they were clear they wanted to buy, and farm, in an environmentally sustainable manner "not just talk about it".

"We knew the environmental legislation was coming," recalls Mike, "but we did our due diligence and decided we wanted to be an active part of the process which in my view was going to happen anyway, whether people liked it or not." The award judges commended the Bartons writing: "We see your work as being a catalyst to get farmers to think outside of their conventional ways and challenge themselves to be more environmentally aware and responsible."

Their Glen Emmreth Farm - named for Mike and Sharon's now-adult children, Emma and Gareth - in the Tihoi district, carries 2000 su on an all grass system containing their 142ha (120ha effective) and an 8ha lease block. First cross Charolais/Angus heifers are bought in as weaners and finished to R2 age.

The prime heifers are processed and the meat is sold under the 'Taupo Beef' brand, which the Bartons established in 2011, guaranteeing commercial and high-end retail outlets a consistent quality, and supply of product proudly sourced from the nitrogen capped area.



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SUPREME AWARD WINNERS (continued)



The couple believe “eating food is the final step in the agricultural process”. This simple, clear message invites broad buy-in for producing and consuming food from sustainably farmed areas such as the Taupo catchment. The demand for ‘Taupo Beef’ exceeds supply at present.

Together, Mike and Sharon manage and work the farm and the beef supply business, which currently sells beef from two private farms including their own, and from a local Maori Incorporation. “We are taking what was an imposition and using it to grow a brand,” explains Mike, who after buying the farm completed a Masters of Business Administration degree with a research project entitled ‘The Implications of a Nitrogen Cap on Farm Businesses in the Taupo Catchment’.

The judges commented in their feedback report: “This farming business has been built from its inception with the understanding that it must be made environmentally sustainable in an extremely difficult location. It has also grown vertically to allow it to capture the premium gained from direct supply of the consumer demanded qualities of beef.”

The judges wrote they believed taking note of how the Bartons were approaching the sustainability of farming “both environmentally and ethically” could benefit the meat farming industry including “assisting in the creation of a self disciplined effect of good practice”.

But the past 10 years has been no smooth road for the Bartons. “I am very aware there are still some people who think we should not have negotiated as we did,” says Mike. He joined the farmer group Taupo Lake Care when they arrived in the area. He acknowledges it was “a very difficult time, an emotional time” for many, especially those who had been farming around Lake Taupo for a long time. Within a year of joining, illness saw Mike being encouraged to chair the group.

“I was conscious it should go to someone who had been there a while longer than we had,” recalls Mike. “But I respected the request to put myself forward. I explained my view was we needed to be negotiable, reasoned and reasonable as we worked our way through the legislation setting and the implications of capping for farmers. I told the group, ‘if you want a more desk thumping approach, don’t vote for me.’”

Taupo Lake Care represented 95 percent of the private and Maori group-owned farms in the identified catchment area. Mike acted for the group in the hearing stages right through to the Environment Court. He stood down in 2010, after the Environment Court outcome for the nitrogen-capped area. At this point he became one of eight trustees for the Lake Taupo Protection Trust, the new body charged with reducing the catchment’s nitrogen output.

The Trust’s existence and structure was negotiated through the Environment Court process. Funding for its work, which is now almost completed, comes from a combination of central and local government. Key land areas have been valued as if they



JUDGES’ COMMENTS

- Developed target-based methodology that will greatly assist New Zealand farming industry including farm environment management.
- Innovative thinking outside conventional methods has shown them a wider picture to vertically develop and grow business.
- Willing to challenge conventional wisdom about optimum biological Olsen P levels under pumice soil.
- Extensive use of OVERSEER in conjunction with interim results from leaching research aiding decision making.



were not in the nitrogen cap zone then purchased by the Trust. This has shut down 25 percent of the catchment from farming.

Mike is particularly pleased they were able to negotiate the definition of a “nitrogen trading market” involving non-point source nitrogen (from livestock farming) and structure it so credits can only be exchanged between those who own farmland in the catchment, thus avoiding profiteering.

Before they purchased their Taupo farm, the Bartons owned two smaller 150ha properties, first in the Far North and then near the Hunua Ranges, South Auckland. Each property they bought as rough, bare blocks and they combined the development and farming of them with full-time careers in tertiary education, Sharon as a lecturer in the languages area and Mike mainly in tertiary management. When they made the life-changing decision to try full-time farming, their focus was on the Taupo area. “I had been coming to the Taupo region to fish and hunt since I was five, so it wasn’t surprising we gravitated here,” says Mike.

Contour on the farm is mostly flat to rolling with some steep faces around the Kotukutuku Stream, which runs through the farm and adjacent reserve land into Lake Taupo. Initially, fences were repaired, riparian areas secured and planted, new crossings and a dam installed, gums harvested and the area replanted and a central race for ease of movement and soil protection was created.

“By 2006, we felt there was nothing more we could do to improve our environmental performance,” says Mike. “We then engaged in science and offered the farm for research into the true impact of our farming business on the environment. There were no other options for us and we needed to know whether science could support us.”



They successfully “agitated” for science and research funding specifically for farming in the Taupo area and Glen Emmreth Farm became the site for a five-year AgResearch trial, one of the largest farm-scale trials the body has carried out. Other connected projects are also underway, including one with Landcare Research Ltd, who now have a permanent laboratory site there, for work scheduled for the next 20 years.

The couple play an active role in this; extra farm work is often required in addition to collecting data and maintaining the research sites. Mike has presented many papers to conferences throughout New Zealand and in the US with titles like “Farming without subsidies - A New Zealand perspective” and “The science needs over the next 20 years, as identified by an emissions capped farmer”.

Quick Facts

Type:	Beef
District:	Tihoi
Total area:	150ha
Stock units:	2000
Rainfall:	1300mm
Elevation:	580 MASL



JUDGES' COMMENTS

- Proactive mind-set with huge commitment to furthering industry change to true environmental accountability and sustainability.
- Unique example of sustainable land use in conjunction with business model existing in spite of convention and restrictions.
- This farm model shows there are different ways of doing things with outcomes that can fit into tight restrictions.
- All preconceptions of ‘industry best practice’ for sustainability are challenged and mindset shift to new paradigm required.





Richard and Pauline Kean, Phillip and Kim Dykzeul *Jetstream Farm, Milky Way Farms Ltd*

**LIC DAIRY FARM AWARD
HILL LABORATORIES HARVEST AWARD
WAIKATO REGIONAL COUNCIL WATER PROTECTION AWARD**



Phil and Kim are in their second season 50/50 sharemilking their 200 cows on this 83ha property, which Richard and Pauline have owned for 23 years, in the Kaimai foothills.

Contour is 60 percent flat to rolling and the balance hill on the property at Te Poi, south east of Matamata. The milking platform is 70ha. This is a grass only system; target production is 70,000kgMS although last season it was a drought-affected 52,000kgMS.

The award judges commended the partnership writing that it was “an excellent example of sharemilker-owner working relationship”. When the Keans offered the Dykzeuls the position Phil and Kim had only been dairying for four years. “They gave us a chance and we really respect that,” explain the couple, who had careers in environmental land management and accountancy prior to farming.

“We couldn’t get better partners than Richard and Pauline,” says Phil. The Dykzeuls recognise the Keans have done a lot of hard work planting and riparian protection, and made the capital

investment. “So we have to do our bit by making environmental care part of our day to day management.”

The award judges endorsed this approach writing: “Phil and Kim are really passionate about the property and doing a great job. They are driven and well supported by Pauline and Richard.” The Keans don’t live on the farm - Richard has spent much of his working life overseas as an aircraft engineer - but keep a flat there. Their commitment to the place is demonstrable.

The Dykzeuls appreciate the Keans “want sharemilkers who enjoy farming here, and we certainly do, we love it.” They reduce to once a day milking in December but importantly their milk production doesn’t drop. Phil has recently put four beehives on the farm. “Pauline has planted a lot of natives here that are food for the bees and the birds.” Phil points out that the health of the water on the property is evidenced by the presence of native freshwater species like freshwater mussels “fussy filter feeders” and koura.

Direct drilling is used for the regrassing programme. Chicory is successfully being utilised as a summer crop for about 10 percent of the farm. They use a mob of 25 beef cattle following the dairy cows to assist with maintaining pasture quality on the hills. “They are my toppers,” says Phil with a grin.

The Keans graze Phil and Kim’s young stock on their Mamaku property and help on the farm with spraying, tree management and capital projects. The Dykzeuls have two daughters, Summer (8) and Molly (6). Kim works part-time in accountancy.

Quick Facts

Type:	Dairy
District:	Te Poi
Total area:	83ha
Peak milked:	200
Rainfall:	1200mm
Elevation:	80-200 MASL



JUDGES’ COMMENTS

- Extensive fencing and planting over the whole farm for protection of waterways and stock.
- Significant improvement and development based around environmental requirements and good farming practices.
- Excellent understanding of routines, actions, reactions and consequences despite being relatively new to dairying.
- Excellent planning and management of growing chicory followed by an annual grass then perennial, for dairy cows.



Philip and Anne Woodward, Sam and Emily Welch, Kate Broadbent *Nikau Cave and Café, Nikau Coopworth*

**BEEF + LAMB NEW ZEALAND LIVESTOCK AWARD
WATERFORCE INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT AWARD
PGG WRIGHTSON LAND AND LIFE AWARD**



The Woodward's purchased their 250ha rolling coastal property, south west of Tuakau, in 1978 in support of Philip's shearing run, livestock trading, and as time progressed, their five children.

Today the Waikaretu property is most of this, and more. The award judges praised the diversifications of farm income, and the relationships that allowed this to be done successfully. Philip also acknowledges the importance of the human factor: "When you are talking sustainability, you've got to include the happiness of the people involved, that's a big factor," he says.

For 18 years the Woodward's have been operating the considerable limestone caves on the property commercially. Philip and Anne opened the associated café in 2008. Their second child, Emily Welch, her husband Sam and a business partner began a shearing business in 2009 that has grown rapidly. Sam and Emily are both official world shearing record holders and widely respected in the industry.

Five years ago Sam, Emily and Canadian family friend Kate Broadbent took on the Nikau Coopworth stud belonging to Philip's brother Clive, who was delighted there would be a

continuation of his work. The Woodward property is now leased by Nikau Coopworth.

The award judges noted a "culture built around shared input and support as well as close integration with the highly self-sufficient, low energy café business assists a low drawings lifestyle". They also highlighted the inclusion of Kate in the family business mix.

Kate, who like Emily has an agriculture-related degree, met the Woodward's in 1987 through mutual friends. The judges wrote: "Kate is an incredibly driven individual continually looking outside the square. Teamed up with the owners as established farmers they make a winning combination, capitalising on each other's strengths. This gives them all a great deal of flexibility to achieve their goals both on and off farm."

The farm is one property away from the ocean, about halfway between Port Waikato and Raglan, therefore subject to coastal winds and soil erosion. It is carrying 3000 su with a sheep to cattle ratio of approximately 60:40. Lambing percentage at docking is consistently between 160 and 180 percent.

The judges recognised the Woodward's had done much through the years to transform the farm. "Anne has been planting on the farm from day one!" the judges wrote. There is 15ha under QEII National Trust covenant, and more planned. "When I left school I was cutting it all down," says Philip, who grew up in the area. "It's been a bit of an about-face for me."

Sam and Emily have three children, Addison (5), Johnny (3) and Eric (1). They live nearby on their 9ha property.

Quick Facts

Type:	Sheep Stud, Beef, Tourism
District:	Waikaretu
Total area:	250ha
Stock units:	3000
Rainfall:	1400mm
Elevation:	50-350 MASL



JUDGES' COMMENTS

- Valuing people key driver of business; recognise strengths and skills contributing to productive workplace and happy home.
- Industry recognition of excellence in their Coopworth genetics reflected by demand; some rams in top 10 of breed index.
- Excellent team approach to being a sustainable, all-inclusive, diverse business, committed to long-term environmental care.
- Treat water as precious; difficult farm to water but system upgrade means all paddocks now have troughs.





Keith and Margaret Ormsby KP & MA Ormsby Trust

DONAGHYS FARM STEWARDSHIP AWARD WAIKATO RIVER AUTHORITY CATCHMENT IMPROVEMENT AWARD



The rolling hills of the Ormsby property south of Mt Pirongia once contained native bush that 78-year-old Keith helped cut down “to get myself a farm”. At the time, he points out, “that was what was done”.

By contrast in the past five years alone the Ormsby family have planted 25,000 natives on the Ngutunui farm. In the past 10 years all waterways and bush areas have been fenced and planted, and QEII National Trust covenants placed over 25ha.

Of the 250ha area, 202ha is available for the dairying operation run by sharemilkers for the past five years, Grahame and Tania Wallis, with their 568 (peak milked) cows. Production last season was 189,000 kgsMS and they are on target for achieving 200,000 kgsMS this season.

Grahame has thoughtfully split the cows into two herds. A Friesian cross herd is milked twice a day for most of the season and have the shortest walk. The Jersey herd are run on the further hills, the lighter cows doing less damage and being more mobile. They are required to travel further to the shed and are dropped to once a day milking in the summer.

The award judges applauded Keith’s early “commonsense approach” to retiring steep gullies, which are now “showing

through with some beautiful mature native stands”. The judges wrote of more recent work: “Intensive planting, creation and maintenance of gully wetlands has been carried out. Significant sediment trapping and nutrient stripping would be expected.”

Early planting was done with the help of pupils from Ngutunui School, which boundaries the Ormsby property. Keith and Margaret have a long connection with the school, beginning with their children. Around 2004, when the school’s roll dropped to a dangerously low six pupils, the Ormsbys spearheaded a successful drive to return the school to being a central community focus. Keith has just retired from 10 years as Board of Trustees chairman and Margaret from long term volunteering as a teacher aid.

The massive planting effort in the past five years has been a persistent family undertaking. Says Keith, “now when the family come to visit they always have to go and check what they planted”. He says they are grateful for Waikato Regional Council’s ongoing support with plants and advice. “They have been just excellent, really helpful, we couldn’t do it without them.”

Keith traces his ancestry back to a local Maniapoto iwi and the first schoolteacher in the frontier settlement now called Pirongia. He is current president of the Alexandra Racing Club at Pirongia. Keith and Margaret have four adult children - Kay, Brett, Ross and Angela – and four grandchildren.

Quick Facts

Type:	Dairy
District:	Ngutunui
Total area:	250ha
Peak milked:	568
Rainfall:	2100mm
Elevation:	259 MASL



JUDGES’ COMMENTS

- Proactive approach to water protection; good management of soils and pastures on some challenging areas.
- Obvious pride in environmentally sustainable dairy farm; ethos shows in staff and overall improving performance.
- Impressive water test results show water quality improves as it travels through farm from boundary to boundary.
- A leader in example of good results from changes made to farming systems to be able to farm with the environment.



Henri and Yvonne Schipper Swanslea Farm Ltd

MERIDIAN ENERGY EXCELLENCE AWARD



“An excellent and productive partnership” is how the award judges summed up after their visit to the Schippers on their 107ha farm on the Hauraki Plains between Ngatea and Thames.

The judges wrote: “The teamwork between Henri and Yvonne is exceptional for this business and has driven the success of the property, animals and family. Considering they have developed and done most of the work associated with the business themselves is a credit to their vision and tenacity.”

The Schippers milk 280 cows with production averaging 105,000 kgMS annually. They have a six-year-old 40-bale internal rotary shed and do not employ any staff. They clearly enjoy working together and appreciate their Holstein Friesian cows. The cows are run in two herds “so there’s no bullying, Yvonne won’t have that!” says Henri. They have some cows up to 14 years old. “Some people think we are crazy but we think if they’re not giving you any problems, why should you get rid of them.”

The judges described the Schippers “quiet achievers” and Henri “very innovative, constantly thinking outside the square”. The judges, and Henri, credited Yvonne for the “very high standard” of financial management including a strong history of debt repayment.

The farm is flat land, the soil heavy marine clay, requiring special consideration in wet weather. “Sometimes you can’t even get a bike in the paddock,” explains Henri. About five years ago they installed rubber matting in their cowshed yard to create another winter stand-off area. Using a hired grader Henri has “humped and hollowed”, with minimal topsoil disturbance, approximately 80 percent of the farm, to assist drainage.

Careful effluent management is recognised as imperative on this property. The judges described the system “unique” and “very forward thinking”. Henri has devised a windmill-powered stirrer for the two million litre concrete pond he built with help from family and friends. He has also installed a blowing pump to aerate and has introduced ‘ecoZest’ a safe bacterial stimulant for digesting the pond’s organic matter.

Henri came to New Zealand from Holland at 18 years old, a farmer’s son in search of opportunity for land of his own. He and Yvonne were married and began sharemilking in June 1986 and by 1992 had purchased the original 56ha of their farm. They have since purchased a neighbouring property.

The couple have four adult children, Cole, Leo, Dennis and Magan. The two eldest live on the farm and work in the wider farming industry.

Quick Facts

Type:	Dairy
District:	Thames
Total area:	107ha
Peak milked:	280
Rainfall:	800-1200mm
Elevation:	0 MASL



JUDGES’ COMMENTS

- Designed and developed innovative stirrer allowing energy efficient effluent management.
- Big overall energy awareness; well maintained plant and machinery runs efficiently and cleanly.
- Diesel generator at dairy shed for back-up; proactive and great insurance policy.
- Glycol Ice cooler as a pre-cooler for milk reduces overall energy costs.



THE AWARDS

The Ballance Farm Environment Awards are designed to encourage farmers to support and adopt sustainable farming practices. The awards are now held in Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, East Coast, Taranaki, Horizons, Greater Wellington, Canterbury, Otago and Southland.

The 2014 Waikato Ballance Farm Environment Awards evening was held at the Don Rowlands Centre, Lake Karapiro on Tuesday the 8th of April 2014.

THE AIM

The aim of the Ballance Farm Environment Awards is to encourage and support farmers to pursue good environmental practices. When farmers enter the awards, a team of judges visit the farm and discuss the entire farming operation. The awards are designed to be a positive experience for everyone, an exchange of information and ideas, and a chance for farmers to get information and advice from the various judging representatives.

FIELD DAY

A field day will be held at the 2014 Supreme Winner's property.

Name: Mike and Sharon Barton
Glen Emmreth Farm
When: Wednesday 21st May, 2014
Time: 9.30am to 2.00pm
Where: 521 Hingarae Road
Tihoi, Taupo

For details, contact:
Tracy Brown
Waikato Regional Coordinator

Mobile: 027 291 1716
Email: waikato@bfea.org.nz



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