



Ballance Farm Environment Awards

Promoting Sustainable Profitable Farming

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Media Release

Rangitikei Farmer's 'Outstanding Personal Effort' Rewarded With Supreme Environment Award

Rangitikei farmer Ian Cummings has been named Supreme winner of the 2008 Horizons Ballance Farm Environment Awards.

Ian, who farms 807 hectares of medium to rolling hill country northwest of Taihape, also won the PPCS Livestock Farm Award and the Horizons Regional Council Award.

He picked up his awards at a special ceremony on 9 May.

Ian has devoted much of his working life to the land, and Ballance Farm Environment Award judges were impressed with his commitment to improving the farm for future owners.

'Ian is to be commended on the outstanding personal effort that has gone into turning a former overgrown, neglected lease block into a productive sheep and beef unit which enhances the original home block.'

Ian's farm comprises 400ha that was originally farmed by his parents, and a neighbouring block that was leased until its purchase in 1988.

Ranging up to 960m above sea level, the farm endures harsh winters with snow expected over the whole farm every year. But Ian says it is 'terrific' summer country for finishing stock.

Deliberately set up as a one-man operation, the 600ha effective farm winters 2500 Perendale-Romney ewes, 1000 hogget replacements and 180 Angus cows.

Much of the stock work is undertaken on horseback.

All livestock is regularly weighed and faecal egg counts are conducted to monitor worm burdens. Cull stock are liver-sampled to monitor copper and selenium levels.

About 25ha of the farm is regressed annually. This land is cropped with brassicas for two years before going back into grass. An 8 hectare lucerne crop is grown for supplement. Ian keeps the first cut and subsequent cuts are sold.

Surplus summer grass is made into hay, and a portion of this is also sold off-farm.

A wide range of tree species has been planted in areas fenced off for shelter, beautification, woodlot, wetland preservation and/or erosion control. Ian's an active member of his local Farm Forestry group and he continues to investigate new tree species that may be suitable for his farm.

All woodlots that require it are pruned and certified. Some contain slow-maturing types, which Ian readily admits will be there 'for someone else'.

His sister Sharon has helped with planting. Ian's brother Larry has also made a vital contribution to the farm. A 150ha block of QEII covenanted bush that is currently being fenced is benefiting hugely from his personal war on possums.

The family's connection with the land also endures through Ian's parents. Father Bill has retired to Taihape, but his mother Janet still lives on the farm. 'She's not quite ready to leave the farm and the animals and go to live in town yet,' says Ian.

For the past three years Ian has lived off the farm on his partner Kathy Munson's small property at Mataroa. They share a love of horse trekking, a passion Ian has had more time to pursue in the past five years since selling a portion of the home farm.

But his affinity with his land is obvious. 'This kind of country is a challenge. It's been a long road, very rewarding though.'

Ballance Farm Environment Award judges were also impressed with the farm's new water system which incorporates a water ram with one of the highest lifts in the southern hemisphere.

It had its first big test this summer, when dams dried up on the farm for the first time in Ian's memory. 'It stood the test of the 2008 dry . . . it's been a really good investment.'

BFEA judging points on why Ian Cummings won the Supreme Award:

- Outstanding personal effort, takes great pride in property
- Excellent water supply utilising impressive water ram operation
- Commitment to improving farm for future owners
- Set up as a one-man operation, low labour input
- Stock, forestry and wetland preservation all to be commended

BFEA judging points on why Ian Cummings won the PPCS Livestock Farm Award:

- Mature shade trees for stock, desire to plant more
- Excellent maintenance of tracks, lanes, fences and gates
- Stock in excellent condition and health

- Interested in learning and updating on animal health issues

BFEA judging points on why Ian Cummings won the Horizons Regional Council Award:

- Wetland fenced and planted
- Diverse range of tree plantings
- Member of local possum control and Farm Forestry groups
- Large native bush area under QE II covenant
- Interested in learning and updating on forestry issues.

Other category award winners in the 2008 Horizons Ballance Farm Environment Awards were:

Ballance Nutrient Management Award; Grant and Diana Baird, Kawhatau Valley, Mangaweka

Hill Laboratories Harvest Award; Grant and Diana Baird

PGG Wrightson Habitat Improvement Award; Dan Steele, Retaruke, Owhango

Gallagher Innovation Award; Dan Steele

LIC Dairy Farm Award; Michael and Aaron Taylor, Makowhai Farms, Ohakea

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