



Ballance Farm Environment Awards

Promoting Sustainable Profitable Farming

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Media Release

Far North couple's exceptional skill and care rewarded with top environmental award

Exceptional skill and confidence implementing their vision for a 300ha beef breeding and finishing farm at beautiful Taupo Bay, in the Far North, have won the 2008 Northland Ballance Farm Environment Supreme Award for Lindsay and Erica Whyte.

'Your passion and care for the land, soil and water are a highlight of your farm ownership,' said the finals judges of the annual awards.

The Whytes are the third supreme winners in Northland, following the Jack family of Pakaraka in the first year and the Smeath family of Hukerenui in 2007.

The Whytes also won the PPCS Livestock Farm Award for their skill in beef production and a reputation for exceptional cattle growth rates.

The judges were impressed by the long-term view of soil conservation and protection of other natural resources. Nutrient management was described as excellent and livestock performance outstanding.

The property contains 80ha of steep country where the heavier cattle go during the wetter months, because the Whytes have a strict 'no pugging' policy on the lowlands.

The rest of the property is essentially one big intensive beef system, with 1.4ha paddocks on the flats and 1.4 to 1.8ha paddocks on the easy hills.

Paddocks are split further into two or three cells during the vital months of May to October.

The Whytes aim to have well-finished, 15-month cattle to send to the works when the summer dry comes – bulls at 300kg carcassweight (CW) and heifers at 230kg CW.

Weaning occurs in April with bull calves around 250kg LW and heifer calves 220kg LW.

To achieve the finished weights, all weaners must grow at more than 1kg/day LW during their short stay on the Taupo Bay farm, hence the reputation for exceptional growth rates as a result of the mild Far North winter months.

The Whytes have 300 cows, mixed Friesian-Angus and Friesian-Hereford, and they buy in more than 100 Friesian-Hereford heifer calves each year to mate as yearlings and provide herd replacements from the first-time mothers.

Mixed-age cows are mated with Charolais bulls as terminal sires, sourced from Wayne Semenoff, of Broadwood, near Kaitaia.

The Whytes are very keen to produce prime beef, even when the meat schedule doesn't provide an incentive to do so.

They run an all-grass programme with some over-sowing in autumn of annual ryegrass to boost winter feed availability.

The judges noted generous fenced riparian zones in which numerous and diverse native species have been planted. In the past three years 2500 natives plants have been placed in these zones, for erosion control, water quality, amenity, biodiversity and ease of management.

Among the judges' comments for the Whytes were:

- An all-grass system aiming to utilise quality feed as it is produced.
- A keen interest and knowledge of the factors affecting soil fertility.
- Cautious approach has resulted in a sensible and appropriate use of land.
- A rewarding in-depth insight into a well-respected management system.
- Take great pleasure in their business and consider it a privilege to be farming.
- We consider you have fitted all aspects of your farm operation together well, and while each area is individually strong, the integration of all areas is excellent.

Other 2008 Northland awards were:

- LIC Dairy Farm Award – Waitoki Farm, Julie, Paddy and Teri Gordon, Waipu.
- Northland Regional Council Water Quality Enhancement Award and PPG Wrightson Habitat Improvement Award – Doug and Sally Lane, beef farmers, Kaeo.
- Ballance Nutrient Management Award, Gallagher Innovation Award, Tawapou Coastal Natives Community and Life Award, and joint winners of the Hill Laboratories Harvest Award – Natural Touch Ltd, Lindsay, Terrie, Duane and Bronwyn Wells, Kauri, persimmon and lemon growers.

- Hill Laboratories Harvest Award joint winners – Lynwood Orchards, Stephen and Samantha Wade, Maunu, avocado orchard and nursery.
- Merit Award – Murray and Lois Tapp, Pataua.

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