



# Ballance Farm Environment Awards

*Promoting Sustainable Profitable Farming*

18 April 2008

## **High Country family wins top environmental award**

Wanaka farmers Richard and Sarah Burdon are the Supreme winners of the 2008 Otago Ballance Farm Environment Awards.

The Burdons, who farm high country station 'Glen Dene', were announced winners of the prestigious award at a special function on 18 April.

Ballance Farm Environment Award judges were impressed with the Burdons' management of the station and the way in which they utilised the great scope of the operation while planning for further enhancement.

'It is commendable to see how this type of landscape can be economically farmed in association with conservation values.'

Judges said the Burdon family's mission statement - to maintain control and management of the land with continual improvement of the soil, water, vegetation and saleable commodities, showing profitable returns and successful business management - is clearly reflected in the day-to-day management of their property.

Glen Dene Station occupies most of the land between Lake Hawea on the east, Lake Wanaka on the west, the Neck to the north and stretching out to the Hawea camping ground. The property has just come through tenure review, with a freehold area of 6000ha. A further 380ha is leased and used for grazing dairy cows or stock finishing.

The station has been in the Burdon family for many years and is now run as a company, Glen Dene Ltd, which is effectively held by a family trust. Richard and Sarah Burdon act as managers and are in charge of all day-to-day decisions.

Glen Dene has six full-time staff and considerable use is made of part-time people with experience relevant to specific tasks.

The station currently carries 15,000 stock units (1.4 su per effective ha) comprising mainly Merino sheep along with 1900 deer and 172 cattle.

One of the most impressive aspects of the property is how each stock class

is complementary to the other. Stock is managed to ensure that optimal use is made of the extensive high country grazing areas, bracken fern-dominant improved pasture and the more intensively developed flats.

The goal is to bring another 200ha per year into production. It is estimated that 2000ha still remain in bracken fern and will eventually be developed over the next 10 years.

Currently Glen Dene sends most of its Merino clip to Icebreaker, a relationship the Burdons worked hard to develop and intend to expand if possible. Contact has also been made with Smart Wool, John Smedley and Loria Piana.

The Burdons have also successfully moved into a trophy stag operation. This operation is unique in that the natural lake boundaries and limitations on helicopters and vehicles allow a true 'big game' experience for paying hunters. This is another example of how the property's natural characteristics have been utilised to optimise financial sustainability.

The family also plans to establish a wildfowl breeding area and has embarked on a programme to fence off and preserve a large area of native bush with thoughts of developing public access in the future. Several steep gullies have also been left with their mantle of native bush to protect the land from erosion.

Following the New Zealand Biodiversity strategy and High Country environmental guidelines, there is also a programme in place to plant more windbreaks, extend riparian plantings, enhance wetlands, prevent stock access to waterways and continue to retain and enhance gullies in their native state.

About 37ha is already in forestry (mainly shelter plantings) but there are firm plans to plant 1000 trees per year, specifically in areas unsuited to meat or wool production. Records of these plantings are to be kept with a view to the possibility of using the plantings to meet or benefit from carbon credits

As well as the Supreme award, the Burdons also won the Gallagher Innovation Award, for among other things, the trial and successful development, in association with a fencing company, of a 'clip-on' deer fence that converts a conventional fence to a secure deer fence at a more competitive cost.

Judges' comments on why the Burdons won the Supreme Award:

- A business plan with strong buy-in of all staff who have clearly defined roles
- Good nutrient management and more than 20 years of monitoring
- Well considered succession planning
- Excellent financial management
- Impressive integration and management of different stock classes

- Good relationship with agencies such as Department of Conservation
- Efforts to develop alternative income streams
- Excellent staff management and communication of shared goals
- The family's well recognised community involvement and industry leadership.

Judges' comments on why the Burdons won the Gallagher Innovation Award:

- The trial and successful development, in association with a fencing company, of a 'clip on' deer fence that converts a conventional fence to a secure deer fence at a more competitive cost.
- Collaboration with other industry contacts to focus on improving the long-term sustainability of the property.
- In association with another sheep breeder, the development of a Fine Merino Composite to improve lambing percentage without compromising the Merino wool quality.
- Collaboration with Canterbury University to optimise the biodiversity and production goals for SI high country farmers.

The full list of winners in the 2008 Otago Ballance Farm Environment Awards is:

**Supreme and Gallagher Innovation Award:** Richard and Sarah Burdon, Glen Dene Station

**Ballance Nutrient Management Award and Hill Laboratories Harvest Award:** Andre Lategan, Amisfield Winery

**LIC Dairy Farm Award:** Philip, Heather and Geoffery Wilson, The Taieri Dairy Co. Ltd.

**PPCS Livestock Farm Award and PGG Wrightson Habitat Improvement Award,** Fraser and Lorraine McGarvie, Duxglen Farm

**Otago Regional Council Award:** Robert, Linda, Kate and Dave Butson, Mount Nicholas Station

**Ends**