



Ballance

Farm Environment Awards

*Promoting Sustainable Profitable Farming*

2 April 2008

### **King Country dairy farmers win top environmental award**

An excellent all-round approach to sustainability has earned King Country dairy farmers Derek and Marion Kloeten the Supreme award in the 2008 Waikato Ballance Farm Environment Awards.

The Kloetens learnt of their win at a special function at the Cambridge Town Hall on 2 April, where they were also named winners of the Gallagher Innovation Award and the LIC Dairy Farm award.

The former sharemilkers moved to their 'challenging' 243ha farm, north of Piopio, 20 years ago and have developed it into a productive and sustainable dairy unit.

Their philosophy is simple. 'We believe three things go hand-in-hand – looking after the livestock, the people and the land. If you get all those right, together, things will happen for you,' says Derek.

Ballance Farm Environment Award judges described the farm 'as a really good all-rounder...and a real achievement in terms of sustainability'.

They said the Kloetens were doing many things well and achieving a good balance between lifestyle and production goals.

'Their land management practices are well suited for the land, and the farm is beautifully maintained.'

Marion describes the contour on their farm as 'challenging' while Derek says it's 'undulating'. While a tractor can be driven over about 70% of the farm, the balance includes many steep sidings, with some areas of tomos.

Four hectares of steep sidings is planted in pines. A planting programme is in place to ensure there are two or three shade trees in each paddock, and natives go into gullies as they are fenced off. Two stands of native bush totalling 8ha have been covenanted to the QEII National Trust.

The farm now milks 500 cows in two herds on 219ha (effective). About 380 cows in the main herd are milked twice a day and the remainder - the younger and smaller cows - are milked all season just once a day.

Last season the Kloetens and their 50/50 sharemilkers Dwayne and Jenny McVeigh achieved a record production of 164,000 kg MS. The McVeighs' introduction of cropping (turnips and maize) has proved a very successful move.

Ballance Farm Environment Award judges noted the importance Derek and Marion place on staff, praising their teamwork, their 'genuine interest in the people side of farming', and their ability to manage stress during busy periods like calving.

The judges were also impressed with how the Kloetens met the challenge of effluent disposal on a farm of this contour. Area and hours of application are meticulously recorded in a book in the farm dairy. Effluent is spread over a 33ha area, half of it steeper land and half the supplementary feed country.

Animal health is a key priority and molasses is used to supplement the diet of the cows through spring and during dry spells. Derek says the molasses plugs some of the gap that exists because of the lack of suitable land to grow crops.

The Kloetens won the LIC Dairy Farm award for their focus on 'per cow production, happy staff, happy cows and lifestyle'. Judges also noted the high standard of animal welfare and the careful management of the stand-off pad to avoid soil damage.

They won the Gallagher Innovation Award for their innovative use of unwanted trees on the farm. Chippings from these trees – mainly willows, poplars and pines - are spread on a stand-off pad to provide a low-cost flooring material that is comfortable for the cows to tread on. This pad is scraped regularly and the material is stockpiled to compost on an old race. Once a year its spread onto cropping ground after the crop has been finished.

Judges also noted the Kloeten's commitment to their community. Marion gives time to the local Victim Support organisation and Derek is chairman of the local Search and Rescue group.

Judges comments on why the Kloetens won the Supreme Award include:

- Low stocking rate fits well with the contour and soil challenges
- QEII covenants are in place with further planting underway.
- Steeper sidlings taken out and planted
- Shade and shelter in every paddock.
- Feed budgeting and grazing management is key.
- Nutrient management is understood and put into practice.

- Staff relationships are excellent. Encouragement is given to help staff get ahead in the dairy industry.

Complete list of winners for the 2008 Waikato Ballance Farm Environment Awards:

**Supreme winner, Gallagher Innovation Award and LIC Dairy Farm Award:**

Derek and Marion Kloeten, Te Kuiti.

**Ballance Nutrient Management Award, Environment Waikato Water Protection Award;** Peter and Marilyn Kidd, Mangakino.

**PPCS Livestock Award, PGG Wrightson Habitat Improvement Award, Waikato Forest and Bird Native Forest Restoration Award:** Barry and Pam Wise, Te Awamutu.

Finalists: Jonathon and Sarah Walker, Ngaruawahia, Neil Aicken, Tuakau, Justin Downing, Morrinsville

**Ends**