



Ballance
Farm Environment Awards®
Promoting Sustainable Profitable Farming

2011 BAY OF PLENTY WINNERS

GRAHAM AND MAVIS DYER
 BAY PARK ORCHARD

SUPREME AWARD WINNERS

**ALSO WINNERS OF: HILL LABORATORIES HARVEST AWARD, ZESPRI®
 KIWIFRUIT ORCHARD AWARD AND MASSEY UNIVERSITY DISCOVERY AWARD**

Graham and Mavis Dyer have a talent for nurturing not only plants and the environment, but people too.

Their Bay Park Orchard at Ruahihi is a show case for the kiwifruit industry, is pioneering commercial gingko production, has an arboretum of exotic trees and for years has provided much needed employment for people from Vanuatu.

Mavis and Graham have been formerly adopted into a Vanuatu family and granted a piece of 'custom land' and a house, in recognition of their long established close relationship, years of support and provision of employment for members.

"It began when we hosted Malcolm Mele while he attended Tauranga Boys College in the 1980s. Since then we have made many trips to his village in Vanuatu. Malcolm has 12 siblings and over the years members of his extended family have come here to work," said Mavis.

Bay Park Orchard is one of the few which employs its own seasonal staff under the official RSE (Recognised Seasonal Employer) scheme and provides on-orchard accommodation. The Dyers believe it is worth being part of the process which

enables people from the Pacific to gain employment in New Zealand, supplementing what can be very meager earnings in their homeland.

The contrast couldn't be greater between the people from Vanuatu and the young Czechs who arrive seeking work. "Many of them are nurses or IT specialists, well educated people here as part of their OE. We never have to advertise. They find out about us by word of mouth," said Graham.

That both Graham and Mavis have a love of growing plants is evidenced by their extensive garden, often open for garden rambles, and the number of rare exotic trees on the property. They also propagated trees they helped plant in McLarens Falls Park in the Kaimai Ranges, renowned for its autumn colours and spectacular specimen trees.

The couple have travelled throughout the Pacific collecting seeds from every variety of kauri (Agathis) they could find, establishing a grove on their own property and in Sydenham Gardens next to the Brookfield School in Tauranga.

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National Partners

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GRAHAM AND MAVIS DYER
BAY PARK ORCHARD

SUPREME AWARD WINNERS



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It is their considerable knowledge of plants which enabled them to successfully grow both green and gold kiwifruit in the Kaimai ranges at an altitude which experiences around twice the rainfall and less sunshine than orchards closer to the coast.

Careful management of the soil, canopy and frost control have been part of their management strategies and they've turned the frost protection storage pond into a wetland, constructing a cabin on its banks for the enjoyment of their own grandchildren and those of neighbouring families.

Now together with sons who own orchards on either side of Bay Park, they are growing new Zespri varieties. However, that is not the limit of their innovation. Recently two hectares were planted in ginkgo biloba trees for eventual nut production.

The Dyers are venturing into the unknown, carrying out their own research and development, some of it with funding from New Zealand Trade and Enterprise.

Dr Nigel Banks of Scinnova Ltd has been commissioned to research the storage attributes of ginkgo nuts and the Dyers' long term plans include establishing a processing facility on the orchard to prepare the ginkgo nuts for export to Asia.



JUDGES COMMENTS

- *The opportunity to visit a “symphony” of colour, plantings and passion.*
- *Your interaction with people and families both nationally and internationally.*
- *We acknowledge your desire to be professional orchardists whilst, at the same time, pursuing other diverse activities.*
- *Your levels of orchard production demonstrate a sustainable enterprise.*

BARRY HOGG, ANDY AND RACHAEL MITCHELL
RODWAY PARK

BALLANCE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT AWARD & BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS HABITAT IMPROVEMENT AWARD

BREEDING high performance velvet stags is part of the sustainability focus of Rodway Park Red Deer Stud but its been so successful the deer have already 'out grown' part of a major facility on the farm.



"We focus on antler genetics and sell three year old stags for both velvet and breeding," said Rodway Park manager Barry Hogg.

"However, the heads our stags are now producing are so big we will have to modify the shed in which buyers view them to make the races wider because some stags can't walk through them now," he said.

The sustainability philosophy behind breeding stags which grow large velvet heads is that of being able to increase production while grazing fewer animals.

"One of our four-year-old stags produced 8.3kg of velvet and we just don't know what his eventual potential will be," said Barry.

Rodway Park, at Ngakuru south of Rotorua is owned by the partnership of Andrew and Rachael Mitchell plus Moris and

Anne O'Reily who employ Barry to manage the 150 ha Rodway Park.

Barry took over the position mid last year but the 30 year-old is far from inexperienced in deer farming. He managed a deer farm after leaving school and by the age of 19 bought part of his parents Neville and Karen property in Paengaroa.

Barry operates Rodway Park on his own, relishing the challenge of running the property and its 587 deer plus 196 sheep and a few cattle.

The farm runs 297 mixed age breeding hinds, 20 sire stags, 220 yearlings, 41 two-year-old and 30 three-year-old stags.

With so many stags it would be reasonable to expect erosion to be a significant problem, especially given the steep nature of the farm which has only 22 ha of flat to rolling contour. However, the deer are bred for temperament and managed in a way designed to reduce stress and lessen environmental conflict.

The genetics of the deer on Rodway Park can be traced back to Warnham Park and Woburn Abbey blood lines in the UK famed for their ability to produce significant velvet and trophy heads, plus their quiet temperament.

Rodway park is a relatively "young" farm, with the land broken in from native bush around 50 years ago. The partners have carried out a 3.5 ha water-way enhancement and protection project around the farm's major spring fed water way with funding assistance from Game Bird Habitat Trust, Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust and Clean Streams.



Rachael and Andy Mitchell,
with their manager Barry Hogg

JUDGES COMMENTS

- We acknowledge your enthusiasm for the deer industry and your pursuit of genetic excellence.
- We appreciate the work completed with wetland development and commend your commitments to future projects.
- Your knowledge of soil nutrient requirements and your ability to question perceived recommendations.
- It was apparent to us that a healthy climate of management interaction exists between everyone at Rodway Park.

TONY AND JOANNA CARR OMANIA

BEEF + LAMB NEW ZEALAND LIVESTOCK AWARD

WHEN Tony and Joanna Carr plant 'food trees' on their Rotorua farm it's not just native birds they have in mind.



"Tony likes to plant a few fruit trees too, just in case he, the staff or our children get hungry when they are on the way up the farm," said Joanna.

Planting trees to feed humans and birds as well as to enhance and protect the land is very much part of the whole team and sustainability approach the Carr's take to managing their farm, Omania.

The couple, who have three children, Libby (11) Henry (10) and Toby (7) highly value the input of their staff Joel Hensmen and Jeremy Murray.

They also value and respect the Carr family's significant links to Omania, the property first settled by Tony's great grandfather in 1918 and hope it will remain within the family for generations to come.

The couple leased the farm from Tony's father Peter (who still lives on the property) and his uncle Ian in 1999 and in 2005 bought Omania.

The 550 ha farm, which is a combination of freehold and lease land, is on the eastern shores of Lake Rotorua, not far from the Rotorua Airport. It runs 1800 Coopworth-East Friesian cross breeding ewes, 700 hoggets, 3300 lambs and 20 terminal sire rams. In addition it carries 300 Jersey bulls, 160 Friesian Bulls and

40 steers. Most of the bulls are sold or leased to dairy farmers. Tony and Joanna are building a service bull business, which provides not only an income but a farming system that is more sympathetic to the wider Rotorua environment.

Preventing erosion and reducing run-off of nutrients from the farm is a major focus. Tony regularly has the steep farm tracks contoured with large 'humps' to channel water during heavy rainfall to areas less prone to erosion. Even on the flats, flooding can be a problem so bunds have been formed as a means of holding water and slowing down its progress. Planting trees in vulnerable areas is essential both for environmental and farm management reasons as heavy rainfalls can easily cause extensive erosion in steep gullies.

Every autumn Tony, Joel and Jeremy set up what Joanna calls 'the Lego farm' with paddocks subdivided into small 'cells' by electric fencing to enable bulls to be moved frequently, creating less impact on the pasture.

"It requires more work because of the need to constantly move the stock but it's worth it," said Tony.

Significant areas of native bush have been retired and fenced out and it's not uncommon to see flocks of pigeon or tui feasting on the trees planted at the edges of the bush.

The property's steep nature means it enjoys extensive 360 degree views from its highest point, something the family likes to share with visitors, including tourists who come to the property, often through the Tauranga based No 8 Tours.

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JUDGES COMMENTS

- Your commitment to your family, your property and further education for everyone.
- Looking for diversification of your enterprise into the future both on and off – farm.
- The considerations given to environmental sustainability as you continue to develop your farm.
- Your lambing percentage and the condition of your slaughter bulls is acknowledged.

KERRY, LEA AND BRAD SNOWDON Y WORY TRUST

LIC DAIRY FARM AWARD

Although their land doesn't drain into Lake Rerewhakaaitu the Snowdon family has spent \$50,000 to help mitigate the impacts of their dairying operation on a fragile framing environment.



"It's a lot of money, but we recognize the necessity to have accurate effluent spreading procedures in place to gain a 20 year consent, and that is a good investment in our farming environment," said Kerry who with wife Lea and son Brad run the 117ha farm.

The money has been spent on a sand trap, a solids bunker and a concrete-lined 110m³ sump, with a

floating pump and agitation system, to hold effluent from the nearby dairy shed before it is spread onto the farm.

It's just one stage in the planned upgrade of Y Wory Trust's farm effluent handling systems. The next stage is to build a pond on a slope above the sump to further increase the capacity to store effluent when conditions for spreading it are too wet or too cold.

Like many, Y Wory Trust farm suffered from an unusually dry spring. The 350 cows were put on once a day milking on December 1, because of the dry conditions.

"We have gained confidence from going to once a day from the past two seasons. It is a strategy, not about production, but about slowing the rotation down and minimizing grass and the grazing level, protecting our cows' weight loss, their pregnancies, and minimizing stress for both the animals and ourselves while waiting for the rain.

"This is the fourth year in a row that we have been facing a drought," said Brad.

With careful management, Y Wory Trust has farmed successfully through three dry seasons, recording its second best production ever in 2009-2010, despite the dry.

"Animal health and welfare is always our first priority. Everything we do is geared around looking after the cows," said Kerry.

This year 16 ha has been planted in chicory and clover for break feeding to help the animals through the summer.

Kerry and Lea began milking in the Rerewhakaaitu district 30 years ago and bought the first 47 ha of their current farm in the mid 1980s. Nine years ago they bought an adjacent 129 ha recently converted to dairying and began farming in their own right, making significant improvements to the property.

Sustainable farming for the Snowdon's is also about sustaining their own health and they do that by sharing farm tasks each concentrating on areas they enjoy and are good at and sharing decision making with daily conversations about farm management.

"We have plans for almost any situation, so if we've taken one step and things haven't improved, we know what the next step will be. It's important to have options, no matter how grim the situation might seem," said Kerry.

As a close family, with a shared commitment to dairying and the land, the Snowdon's demonstrate that balance is important in all aspects of their lives.



JUDGES COMMENTS

- A willingness to test new technologies on the farm.
- A 'can do' attitude, when something needs doing it has been appropriately prioritised and planned.
- The decision making on the farm definitely included an ethical approach.
- A diversity of their interests by investing in forestry on the farm.

VAL BAKER, DES AND AUDRA THOMSON GLENVILLE PROPERTIES LTD

PGG WRIGHTSON LAND AND LIFE AWARD

GLENVILLE with its mature exotic and native trees plus well fenced lush pasture has a long-established look but just 55 years ago the Katikati dairy farm presented a very different picture.

“My Dad talked of taking two hours to walk what is a relatively short distance from one part of the farm to the road because he had to battle through rough scrubby re-growth,” says Val Baker, who manages the property on behalf of the family-owned company Glenville Properties Ltd.

The Baker family bought the run down farm and felled trees for its sawmill before beginning the arduous task of clearing the land. In the 1960s Doug (who died in 2006) and his wife Florence bought out other family interests.

Doug knew plenty about timber milling and not so much about farming but Florence did. It was her knowledge and understanding of milking cows in particular which helped guide the property in its early years.

Florence remembers teaching one young sharemilker how to manage his heifers. “He hadn’t weaned the calves and the first time it took three hours to get them milked, they were so flighty,” she said.

Doug and Florence ran the farm alongside their two other businesses, timber milling and property management. In 1993 Doug handed over farm management to their daughter Val.

“I’d spent a lot of time on the farm but didn’t really know much about farming. However, I’ve discovered the best way to learn is to ask questions and take advice from successful farmers,” she said.

Val’s talent for extensive record-keeping, and her natural affinity with livestock have helped the farm increase production year

on year with its herd of 135 cows producing 310 KgMS per cow this season.

“Our focus is very much on caring for the land and the animals. If you take care of them, they will take care of you in return.” Audra and Des Thomson, the farm’s current staff, have been there two seasons and their sensitivity to the animals and skill for farm management fits well with the Glenville philosophy.

“The Uretara Stream which passes through Katikati township to the sea, and a tributary of the Rereatakahia Stream called Ngututura both flow through Glenville. We have fenced off most of the streams.”

The result is crystal clear waterways surrounded by trees which provide vital shade and nutrients for aquatic life. The farm hosts one of the two Uretara Stream Environment Bay of Plenty water testing sites and figures for desirable aquatic life are among the highest in the district.

The old Norfolk pines, planted by early settlers are a favourite haunt of North Island Kaka. Existing stands of native bush plus new plantings of native and exotic trees with flaxes are providing habitat, food for other birds too.

To Val and the Baker family, continuing Doug’s vision for the land and the sustainability of Glenville means creating “a good quality of life and to live within the financial means of the property”.



Val Baker, with her managers, Des and Audra Thomson



JUDGES COMMENTS

- An extremely well maintained property with all livestock presented in exceptional condition.
- Great pride in record keeping, able to give fertiliser history of any paddock back and beyond a 10 year period.
- Exceptional pasture quality due to fertiliser programme and annual soil testing.
- Aiming for total farming sustainability.

TONY AND JOANNA CARR OMANIA

BAY OF PLENTY REGIONAL COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

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The contour of the farm tracks, designed to divert storm water, is also ideal for mountain bike enthusiasts and the Carrs are keen to develop the adventure tourism potential of Omania.

However, the couple now have another potential income stream – a 3ha truffiere planted in 1119 ever green Quercus Ilex oaks the roots of which have been inoculated with the truffle producing fungus. It will be some years before they discover if truffles are growing, but if they do the trees should be a very valuable addition to Omania's income.



WINSTON FLEMING KIWI OUTBACK

BAY OF PLENTY REGIONAL COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

In the 1930s Len Fleming lived in a tent for 18 months and milked cows by hand while clearing bush on the land now owned by his son Winston at Kaharoa, near Rotorua.



“Dad bought the farm in 1936 during the depression when the previous owner had walked off because of bush sickness in their cows caused by lack of cobalt in the soil,” said Winston, who has inherited much of his father's pioneering spirit.

Though he needed to clear bush to make an economic farm, Len Fleming left many areas untouched because of

the wealth of bird and plant life they contained. “Dad knew all the birds and trees, he taught me their names and told me which areas should be protected,” said Winston who left school at 15 to begin working on the farm.

During his years working on the farm Winston has broken in new land but also fenced and retired other areas, protecting 10 native forest reserves, most of them under the QEII Trust.

“Kokako are living in our bush and I've even seen them on the ground foraging for bugs and worms just like blackbirds do, even though they are generally believed to stay only in the trees,” said Winston who has carried out the fencing himself – much of it by hand.

The farm has 120 ha of effective grazing land, 5 ha of pinus radiata and 40 ha of native bush reserve. Virtually all wetlands have been retired and fenced to prevent stock access. Since 2000 the water supply system has been upgraded with four strategically placed tanks filled receiving water pumped from a spring.

Because of the love both he and his father had for trees, there are significant native remnants left in paddocks to provide shelter and shade for stock.

Although the farm is rich in native trees, Winston has also planted 1000 nikau palms, 30 matai, 50 kauri, 12 kowhai trees in the past three years. Over the last decade he's planted fruit cherry trees as a further food source for native pigeons.

Winston's passion for the New Zealand bush and wildlife mean he's also keen to share what he has on his property with others through eco-tourism.

To that end he's set up a venture called Kiwi Outback to host visitors and constructed an 'outback' location in a clearing on a high point in the bush. There's a covered table made from a large slab of timber, a bush barbecue, a washing up area completed with a Crocodile Dundee style Landrover 'kitchen window' and a hut for accommodation.

It's also the spot where Winston loves to tell stories and recite his own poetry for the entertainment of visitors.

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, Manawatu/Whanganui, Wellington, Canterbury, Southland and Otago.

This is their ninth year in the Bay of Plenty Region.

THE AIM

The aim of the Ballance Farm Environment Awards is to recognise farmers who pursue good environmental practices. When farmers enter the awards, a team of assessors 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, plus a chance for farmers to also get information and advice from the various assessing representatives.

THANK YOU

The Ballance Farm Environment Awards and the Farm Environment Award Trust (BOP Region) committees would like to thank Elaine Fisher and the Bay of Plenty Times for their help in preparing the content for the winner's booklet.

A big thank you to all people who volunteered their time and expertise with the assessment process: Cameron Bierre, Rod Calver, Terry Harding, Richard Hart, Chris Mountfort, Alistair Mowart, Norm Ngapo, Matt Osborne, Des Pooley, Graeme Shirley, John Travers, Earle Wells.

Thank you to our entrants who entered the awards this year.

Thank you to all regional and national sponsors. Your sponsorship of the awards is appreciated and we are grateful for your ongoing support.

Thank you also to finalist assessors; John Bourke, Bruce Calder, Doug Lineham, John Mackintosh and Ian Pirani.

And finally, thank you to John Mackintosh for being the 2011 Judging Coordinator for the Bay Of Plenty.

UPCOMING EVENT – FIELD DAY TO BE HELD AT THE SUPREME WINNERS PROPERTY

The field day will be held at the 2011 Supreme Winners property.

Name: Graham and Mavis Dyer
When: Tuesday 29th March 2011
Time: 9.45am to 3.00pm (with lunch provided)
Where: 246 Ruahihi Road, RD1, Tauranga

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT: www.bfea.org.nz

- The Bay of Plenty Ballance Farm Environment Awards process is managed by the Farm Environment Award Trust (BOP Region).

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