



**Ballance**  
**Farm Environment Awards®**  
*Promoting Sustainable Profitable Farming*

# 2010 NORTHLAND REGION

BRIAN AND GAYE SIMMS

## SUPREME AWARD



The lifetime achievement of Brian and Gaye Simms in developing, farming and sustaining their slice of Far North paradise has been hailed by the judges of the Northland Ballance Farm Environment Awards for 2010.

Brian took up the Kaitaia property of 111ha (70ha effective) 45 years ago when it was mostly bracken fern and manuka on steep hillsides, with patches of native bush.

Now it is a showplace property with high conservation values which has milked as many as 112 dairy cows for an average production of 320kg/cow milk solids in recent times.

Now the farm is being converted to beef farming, as Brian and Gaye seek to spend more time with family, community activities and travelling.

“This rolling to steep land is not really suited to dairying in the modern sense but it probably gave the best economic return compared to other forms of pastoral farming,” said Brian.

At the time of judging the Simms were milking 85 cows, and were carrying replacements and some dairy beef. Although this is a small herd, with low inputs this is a viable and sustainable farming unit.

They have a major shareholding in 18ha of 15-year old pines on the property, under separate title and managed by P F Olsen.

The property is debt-free and off-farm investments have been made on a regular basis.

Throughout the long farm development Brian’s policy has been: If it is difficult to manage, fence it out and either encourage to revert to native bush or plant in multipurpose exotic species.

Brian initially fenced off all areas of mature native bush for ease of management and to preserve the bush. Since then he has been fencing off streams to reduce stock losses, reduce soil erosion and make farm management easier.

Brian has experimented widely with alternative tree species to control erosion, provide stock shade and shelter, produce special purpose timber, and amenity values. He has been secretary or president of the Far North Farm Forestry Association for the past 13 years.

Trees have been planted every year and now most very steep faces have been removed from grazing and planted.

All perimeter fencing is permanent post and batten. On steep slopes Brian has fenced off small strips across the slope using two electric wires to exclude cattle. Within the strips he has planted several species of trees to protect the slopes.



Excellent regeneration of native bush understory.

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## BRIAN AND GAYE SIMMS

### NORTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL WATER QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AWARD



Agroforestry on the Kaitaia farm owned by Brian and Gayle Simms has worked particularly well and created an interesting and diverse multiple use landscape. Careful consideration has been given to locating species where they are most likely to do well and produce good timber. Trees have been carefully tended to ensure quality is maintained. The intention is to remove a few high value trees at a time to protect soils whilst obtaining a reasonable financial return.

Waterways are fenced and shaded to guard against sediment run off and enhance biodiversity values.

All major streams and many minor streams have been fenced for a number of years, some with assistance from the Northland Regional Council Environment Fund. All streams have stock crossings and provide fish passage.

Water is reticulated to all paddocks and the cattle have ample shade.

With some areas of bush having been protected for over 25 years and with ongoing possum control, the broadleaf bush is in a very healthy state. The forested areas of the farm are high quality and have a diverse and healthy understory, and a lush canopy, which bodes well for their long term viability.

While there are no covenants on bush blocks on the property, Brian and Gayle will consider these before they sell to ensure protection in perpetuity.

The abundance of birdlife and bird habitat on the farm is very noticeable, the Farm Environment Award judges commented. Further attention to stoat and rat control, and the more widespread use of native species in future plantings could be expected to give a noticeable increase in the number and proportion of native birds. Linking the areas of bush together where possible with native habitat corridors would also assist native populations to persist there.

The farm dairy effluent disposal system is low tech, but compliant, and relies on plantings to extract nutrients before they reach waterways.

Weed control on the pasture and native bush portions of the farm has been excellent.



Agro-forestry plantings across pasture slopes.

### JUDGES COMMENTS

- Stock have been fenced from streams for years with wide riparian margins to capture nutrient runoff on steep slopes.
- At the first sign of soil instability, areas have been fenced off & planted with suitable trees.
- Exotic species of timber trees selected to complement the native bush.
- No adverse effects on the environment - bridges over streams, water piped to all paddocks, conservative stocking to minimise pugging.



## WAIRERE FARMS SANDY & SHARYN MOORE

### NZ FARM ENVIRONMENT AWARD TRUST LIVESTOCK FARM AWARD

Sandy and Sharyn Moore at Pipiwai, central Northland, run an impressive and highly productive sheep and beef unit on very difficult terrain, the Ballance Farm Environment Awards judges commented.



Sandy Moore, Pipiwai, shows impressive production on very difficult terrain.

The 486ha property (280ha effective) is steep contour with dry and stable volcanic soils, almost 100% kikuyu in the summer and autumn.

The steepest areas have been retired to protection and production forestry, which totals 160ha.

When the judges visited in February, Sandy was running 800 bulls, 50 breeding cows and 850 ewes. Lambs were sold for processing or as stores by the end of November.

Within 90 paddocks of an average 3ha size, there are 16 intensive bull finishing systems, which over the winter are subdivided into 28 breaks with a 56-day rotation to match.

The rotation is achieved with sticks and strings, beginning with cattle mobs of 50, and 25 head for the bigger cattle. They are shifted every second day, but not at weekends, as this is family and leisure time. The intensive beef systems are achieving 400kg/ha CW annually. The beef cows are calved in late October/early November to suit the available feed and the progeny achieve good weight gains.

The ewes are set stocked on the sheep country and once weaned the lambs go on to the best bull country with cattle. The lambing outcome is 121% but high scanning numbers suggest the result could be improved to 140%.

All paddocks are fed with spring water by gravity. The water courses on the property are often impractical to fence or to bridge, because of terrain. The stony bottomed creeks and waterfalls are a unique feature of this property. However reserves of mature bush have been fenced in the headwaters of the streams.

These diverse and significant stands of native forest are a haven for native birds and wildlife, including kiwi, tui and pigeons.

Stock classes are integrated for pasture management, parasite and weed control. Over the winter Sandy breaks the farm up into shady and sunny faces. The sheep graze the shadier, damper faces whereas the bulls graze the sunnier, drier faces. All fertiliser is applied by air making the application of lime uneconomic hence the lower than optimum soil pH.

The judges were very impressed by Sandy's passion for and skill with livestock management.



### JUDGES COMMENTS

- Intensive sheep & beef grazing systems maintain control of kikuyu dominant pastures while achieving production at Northland's highest levels.
- Matches stock classes to soil conditions & rotates classes to aid weed and parasite control.
- Stock shifted every second day with no shifting at weekends to allow for family & leisure time.
- Stock grazing extreme topography are well cared for.

## JOHN & CHRISTINE PEDERSEN

### PGG WRIGHTSON LAND & LIFE AWARD (JOINTLY)

John and Christine Pedersen exhibit a strong passion for their farm and for the environment, with a large number of plantings and species of trees, according to the Northland Ballance Farm Environment Award judges.



Matthew, Christine and John Pedersen of Parakao, have a farm succession plan, along with a shared interest in farm forestry.

A forestry interest, which included two terms for John as Mid-Northland president of the Farm Forestry Association, has been passed on to their son Matthew, who did a forestry degree and works in Whangarei, while helping part-time on the Mangakahia Valley farm.

He is an important part of the management team. He grazes some of his own stock on the farm and manages it as John and Christine's interest in travel increases.

They have comprehensive planning in place for the future as they want to work less and travel more. Matthew will look to take a bigger role as time goes on.

A wide range of exotic trees have been carefully sited and well tended, said the judges, while 15ha of impressive native bush has been fenced.

The property gets very wet during winter and the soils are prone to earth flows and slumping, which is guarded against with tree planting. The Pedersens run lighter stock classes to help prevent pugging damage.

Gullies and waterways are fenced, including the production plantings of eucalypts, blackwoods, lusitanicas and others). Electric fencing creates 110 paddocks which are then further subdivided with stick and strings for winter grazing management. All paddocks had water reticulated from dam supply and abundant shelter and shade. All fencing is done by hand.

In February the Pedersens were running around 250 bulls, steers and heifers and 270 sheep.

More than 100 cull ewes and 100 lambs had been sold to lighten the load in the drought.

For the past eight years the Pedersens have hosted International students for 12 weeks work experience and they also host young travellers from time to time. They have found this a life changing experience and have benefited from reciprocal hosting in European countries.

The Pedersens had considerable community involvement in school committees, land care groups, sports and hall committees and the farm forestry participation.



### JUDGES COMMENTS

- *The Pedersen family love being on their farm & are willing to share their beautiful environment with international students.*
- *John is incredibly proud of the productive and picturesque farmland his family has created.*
- *The Pedersen family promote their enthusiasm for fencing streams and planting trees to the community.*
- *Matthew is involved in day to day management and is planning to increase his involvement in the future.*

## KEN & JANINE HAMES

### BALLANCE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT AWARD PGG WRIGHTSON LAND & LIFE AWARD (JOINTLY)

Well-connected, very motivated and astute farmers and business operators, was how the Northland Ballance Farm Environment Award judges described Ken and Janine Hames, of Paparoa.



They are intensive beef farmers on 310ha (234ha effective) of rolling to steeper hill country, also equity partners in dairy farms with close to 1000 cows in total and have great time management for farming, community involvement, children's activities, directorships and veterinary practice for Janine.

Ken categorises decision-making into \$10, \$100 and \$1000 decisions, spending the appropriate time on each.

The nutrient budget and nutrient management plan demonstrated very good fertiliser use practices on soils which can get very wet in the winter and dry out in the summer.

All of the heavy cattle are sold before it gets too wet and many of the steeper faces have been fenced off and planted to prevent erosion.

During the summer drought older cattle were sold, leaving Ken with 200 yearling bulls, 200 autumn calves, 50 young dairy heifers and 200 dry dairy cows on the farm when the judges visited.

Multiple income streams mean sustainability through beef farming, dairy grazing, dairy equity shares, farm forestry and off-farm incomes. The farm has 22ha of forestry, 54ha of bush and access to a 79ha effective lease block.

The soil is Waiotira clay loam with a medium phosphate retention, which is prone to pugging. By running lighter weight autumn born bulls pugging is reduced. When soils do become waterlogged, Ken shifts stock daily and in some instances twice a day.

Mobs are restricted to 50 head, so whole farm tallying is straight forward.

Nitrogen is only used if the feed budget indicates that the farm is running out of feed and a soil temperature gauge is used to make sure applied nitrogen is not wasted.

The bulls are intensively farmed behind sticks and string subdividing over 100 paddocks and the dairy heifers and cows are used to control kikuyu dominant pastures.

Ken has a hunger to learn and up skill, and is ear-marked as a rural leader, which means he has been accepted for scholarships and travelled extensively internationally within the agribusiness industry.

He keeps the cattle farming system simple so that he can be involved in any off-farm opportunities which come along. Janine is a vet and works four days a week based in nearby Paparoa. Their two children are involved in farm work where they can and the 10-year-old son built his first fence recently.

Janine takes a close interest in maintaining and extending the arboretum of eucalypts, lusitanicas, redwoods, ashes and elms, and the farm also contains a 5ha QEII bush covenant.

**Above:** Ken and Janine Hames, Paparoa, skilled and multi-tasking with leadership aspirations.



### JUDGES COMMENTS

- Janine & Ken share their considerable skills with a number of local community organisations.
- Ken has a vision & passion for the future of New Zealand farming - industry leadership potential.
- Janine & Ken have clear goals centred around work/family balance.
- Nutrient management plan prepared in collaboration with fertiliser company representative.
- Using Overseer he analyses nutrient requirements & determines optimum fertilizer application depending on his finances.

GRANT & KATE MCCALLUM

## MASSEY UNIVERSITY DISCOVERY AWARD

Management of dairying with the difficult soil types and topography and innovative nutrient budgeting and management by the McCallums of Maungaturoto have impressed the Northland Ballance Farm Environment Award judges.



The judges praised the spirit of inquiry and the resultant care for the environment, which merited the inaugural Massey University Discovery Award in Northland.

The 502ha effective farm milks 510 Friesian cows on once-a-day milking with split calving, achieving 132,000kg/yr milk solids.

The dairy unit of 240ha and run off occupy the same

property, which has a manger and another employee, while Grant and Kate rear 400 dairy beef calves.

The McCallums carefully match topography and soils with stocking rate, being passionate about avoiding pugging damage. No feed is brought on to the property and all silage is made in bags, with plastic wrap recycled.

Visible erosion-prone areas have been planted in radiata and fenced off.

Effluent management on the farm typifies the quest for knowledge, with ponds cleaned once a year and the effluent applied to pasture. A feeding pad for the baleage is covered with fresh mulch every year, scraped and applied to pastures as a form of compost.

Run off from the pad is directed to a pond which is emptied

and spread over paddocks. The McCallums aim to use minimal nitrogen and prefer natural fertilisers and reactive phosphate rock.

They have a nutrient budget and management plan refined by e-Cogent, which has also done a carbon emission audit along with financial spreadsheets.

Spot spraying for weeds and thistles is preferred, along with the occasional gorse control. Control of possums and mustelids has been contracted out.

Grant and Kate together with NZ Waterways Restoration are involved in setting up a trial to introduce grass carp and water weed into their third effluent pond. Grass carp are filter feeders that consume suspended algae from the water column and cannot breed in the wild in NZ. Spawning must be induced in enclosed ponds with the aid of natural hormones. They can grow to 20kg and have a life expectancy of 20 to 25 years.

The judges also commented favourably on the approach of the McCallums to employee relations and health and safety. Staff members are offered contracts, training, good quality accommodation and regular hours of work and time off. Staff members also have input to environmental matters on the farm.

Grant and Kate are very active in their rural community in day-to-day matters. Grant is on various boards and committees and is heavily involved in party politics.

**Above:** Grant and Kate McCallum have a passion for seeking more knowledge.



## JUDGES COMMENTS

- *Have a passion for seeking knowledge about sustainable dairy farming.*
- *Determined to find more answers about soil fertility problems as they do not accept that all required trials have been done.*
- *Have a go at trying out new ideas such as carp in effluent ponds.*
- *Always looking at alternative practices but not taking them at face value.*

## JUKEN NEW ZEALAND LTD NORTHERN DISTRICT

### HILL LABORATORIES HARVEST AWARD

Japanese-owned forestry company Juken (JNL) in the Northland province grows some of the best radiata pine in New Zealand on a sustainable basis, certified by the international FSC audit.



Trees are harvested at around 30 years of age and the land replanted, usually within six months.

The company employs 500 people in Northland and operates 30,000ha of exotic forest on 36,000ha of land. Most (20,000 ha) of this is located at Aupouri, along with large forests at Otangaroa/Mangapa and

Whitehills. Some of the land is owned by JNL while other areas are leased either privately or from the Crown.

JNL Northland began logging in 1994 and aims to cut about 1000ha annually to produce 500,000 tonnes of wood. It is required to replant under the terms of its leases and by the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions.

JNL utilises aerial photographs and annual foliage sampling to check for nutrient deficiencies. This information is used to put together specific fertiliser programmes, working alongside fertiliser company representatives.

Minimal environmental impact is the governing philosophy of JNL, from land preparation, to planting, fertilising, harvesting, transport and manufacturing at the Kaitaia tri-board plant.

Environmental plans must be developed before a forest is logged to identify significant waterways, native bush areas,

kiwi and areas of risk. This allows JNL to utilise different logging and management practises to suit different classes of country and soil types.

The company is very aware of its responsibilities to staff members and to the wider Far North community. The health and safety environment for workers in an inherently risky industry is governed by many protocols and is a shared responsibility for all.

The waste management policy is to deal with each type of material appropriately.

Branches are trimmed from trees where they are felled, leaving most of the green and wood waste to recycle on site in the forests.

The company believes it is replacing the use of unsustainable native hard wood timbers with renewable engineered and solid wood products from the sustainably grown exotic forests and it also strives for zero waste, zero pollution and zero complaints about what it does.

Much of the waste is either recycled to produce energy or used as mulch.

JNL Northland has protected wetlands within the forests and areas of natural heritage have been identified and preserved. It has worked with the local landcare group for fencing off Lake Ngatu at Waipapakauri and it has commissioned surveys in the lakes of mudfish populations.

**Above:** JNL Northland's Rowena Walker, left, harvest supervisor, and John Robinson, forest manager.

### JUDGES COMMENTS

- *Impressive long term planning to continuously supply logs in a vertically integrated organisation.*
- *Logging practices & seasonal timing to suit different classes of country & soil type.*
- *Aerial photographs & annual foliage sampling to put together specific fertiliser programmes.*
- *Working with local landcare group to restore Lake Ngatu.*

## STEPHEN & ANN KEARNEY

### LIC DAIRY FARM MERIT AWARD

Steve and Ann Kearney, on Puketotara Rd, Bay of Islands, have received a merit award for the dairy farm most likely to become a future showcase.



They share milk 180 cows on 133ha (90ha effective) owned by a family trust, established by Ann's father. Steve and Ann have also bought a 20ha run-off north of Kapiro.

Through pro-active drought management they have limited the milk loss this year to approximately 10,000kg MS below the average production of 65,000kg.

The non-milking balance of the home property is 32ha bush and scrub and 11ha fenced off waterways and tracks.

The volcanic soils are prone to surface erosion under cultivation, so the Kearneys use no-till or minimum tillage methods of establishing crops and pastures, aiming to do 10% of the farm each year.

The Kearneys have a sustainable fertiliser regime with a

nutrient management plan developed in conjunction with their fertiliser company advisor.

Dairy effluent management involves a two-pond system with nil discharge for most of the year, otherwise to a fenced 50 metre-long wetland. The ponds are cleaned annually and effluent spread on paddocks before a crop or after hay.

They are members of a group of adjoining property owners who are working together to protect corridors of remnant bush along major streams in the upper Kerikeri and Waipapa River catchments. Another member of the group carries out possum control for fur on their property.

The Kearneys have structured their farming business with an eye to the future. The plan is to develop the farm to a stage where it can support a share/contract milker, possibly son Richard, and they can work off farm.

Steve works part time for the Kerikeri Police and has worked as a pilot for the Bay of Islands Coastguard while Ann is secretary to a very large soccer club, with 450 to 500 active members, based in Kerikeri.

- Good dairy effluent management & understanding of the nutrient value of the effluent.
- Risk of erosion on their volcanic soils minimised by using minimum tillage methods.
- They are proactive on animal health matters.
- Have good planning for the future.
- Work with community groups protecting biodiversity in the area.
- Streams & bush are fenced off with a wetland project underway with NRC assistance.

### FIELD DAY

A field day will be held on Brian and Gaye Simms' Supreme Award farm on Snelgar Rd, Kaitaia, off Clough Rd, 5kms south of Kaitaia on SH 1. All welcome and lunch provided.

**When:** Wednesday, 26th of May 2010  
10.30am - 3pm

**For details, contact:** Gayle Farrell

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:

[www.bfea.org.nz](http://www.bfea.org.nz)

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