



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

# 2010 SOUTHLAND REGION

ELLIOT & JANINE KING  
 PAHIWI

## SUPREME AWARD



Elliot and Janine's pride in their 308ha family property on the northern slopes of the Hokonui Hills rests quietly, but it is thoroughly justified according to the award judges.

While Elliot admits to passion for the land his three children are fifth generation on, it is not his style to talk up what is being achieved on the sheep and beef property. He doesn't need to; the figures, and the award judges, do that job well.

The judges were effusive in their praise of the couple's operation of their Balfour property, describing it as "magnificently presented". The judges used words like "outstanding" to describe Pahiwi's production and wrote that the farm's pasture quality was "startling". The stocking rate is "exceptional for the area", with lamb averages last season 18.7kgs and the mean kill date January 25th.

The praise of the judges covered many areas: "This is a very well managed farming operation by a family with good community spirit," they wrote. "There is a good understanding of the

physical parameters of the farm and a desire to constantly improve both the infrastructure and the amenity/biodiversity values of the property. Stock production is outstanding. Animal welfare issues are well catered for by way of excellent farm shelter, water supplies and stock handling facilities."

Pahiwi is flat to moderately rolling country, with 300ha effective, stopping just below the Hokonui tussock line. Summers can be dry and winters wet, says Elliot. His parents, Jim and Heather, bought the property from his maternal grandparents the year he was born, 1971. He is quick to point out his stewardship of the land is simply carrying on a legacy. "In most aspects, I'm just continuing on from my father," says Elliot. "He knew, from my mother's father, the importance of shelter for example."

Elliot believes he has "just jumped on the bandwagon" in the production stakes. "I know my father had brilliant production. We have probably just souped it up a bit. Better grasses and improved genetics have allowed us to do that."

Elliot and Janine met when both were at boarding school in Dunedin. Elliot went on to earn his B Com(Ag) from Lincoln. Janine, whose accounting qualification and skills strengthen the couple's team approach to farming, returned home from travelling overseas with Elliot in 1997. Sadly, they only had 18 months with Jim King before he died. The couple initially farmed with Heather, who has since moved to Queenstown but still takes an active interest in the property.



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Elliot recalls the time after his father died being difficult. “Even though I’d lived there all my life, running the place was still a steep learning curve for me. The first couple of years we just treaded water.” Now, he believes, “we’ve got a good system”. Not one for overstatement, Elliot adds, “we are just doing the simple things right I suppose.”

Last year they wintered 2650 ewes, 1200 hoggets, 30 Murray Grey cows, 10 heifers, 15 R2 Murray Grey bulls and 200 weaner deer. The higher hogget numbers reflect the decision to discontinue farming deer. This winter they will be lambing 3200 ewes and there will be 50 breeding cows.

The deer will be gone from the farm before winter. The Kings want to halt the soil damage the hinds they had been farming were causing. And they have come to the conclusion, as Elliot delicately puts it, “that I don’t have the right temperament for deer”. He has found “you can’t be in a rush. The deer sense that and become hard to handle, then no one is happy.”

The Murray Grey cows are a relatively new addition to the farm, although Elliot and Janine are familiar with the requirements of recording because of the 300 Coopworth and 200 South

Suffolk ewes they run. The Murray Grey bulls produced are to supply the dairy industry.

In another move to protect their soil, the Kings have had a wintering pad built, upon which the cows can self-feed silage. The pad was intentionally placed on “rotten rock”. It is covered with woodchips generated as part of their ongoing plan for shelterbelt maintenance and creation. Motivated to build the pad by his dislike of seeing cows struggling in mud when strip-fed winter crops, Elliot says their wintering pad is “brilliant, dry and hard.”

The rock beneath the cow pad is the same as that which is quarried from the farm to cover new laneways. These have been created as part of a fencing plan to protect waterways and create more shelter. The Kings are working on a 10 year plan to ensure everything on the farm is “done and dusted”, allowing them time to enjoy the years their children are growing up. Hayley is 6, Myah 4 and Oliver 2.

Building a new woolshed and renovating their house in the past four years were also part of the plan. Both the house and woolshed were around 100 years old. “We thought we’d get on and do those kind of things so we can all have the best years of them.”

Surrounded as they are by dairy farms, Elliot’s decision to spend money on their woolshed sets a stake in the ground for his family’s commitment to their land. “You never know what our children will want to do, but it’s pretty important to us to keep it right for the next lot to come along.”



## JUDGES COMMENTS

- Magnificently presented farm with park-like shelter & habitat, enormous pride in buildings & amenities.
- Exceptional stocking rate & mean lamb kill date for area, outstanding management of pasture, stock and genetics.
- Committed to continuing planting, waterway fencing & drainage programme; understands soils well.
- Very good community contributions & relationships with employee and neighbours.



## TIM & TRISH SMITH AND LANDCORP MARAROA STATION

### MASSEY UNIVERSITY DISCOVERY AWARD SOUTHLAND BFEA WATER QUALITY AWARD

On Mararoa there is a clear commitment to achieving the balance between economic feasibility and environmental care.



This 5440ha sheep, beef and deer property east of Te Anau is, according to the judges, “a very good example of a dedicated manager working with and initiating environmental sustainability along with the corporate owners”.

Mararoa was purchased by Landcorp in 2000 and joined in 2001 with Landcorp’s neighbouring Princhester block. The Smiths arrived three years later, finding, in Tim’s words, “the two farms still being seen as two separate blocks”.

Tim’s task was “to progress the amalgamation” and this he has done with great success. The award judges noted: “This is a showcase property in terms of maintaining and improving water quality through excellent planning and implementation, showing that it is not necessary to fence off every waterway in hill country, as long as buffer zones are created.”

Tellingly, Tim attributes much to collective input. The property employs 11 valued staff, including wife Trish. Vital also are the roles of John Scandrett of Scandrett Rural, Mark Sutton of Waiau Fisheries and Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Trust, Gary Morgan of Environment Southland and Landcorp policymakers. “You’ve got to have good people thinking forward down the same lines, that’s where we have really made progress.”

The property has 5149ha effective; there are six QE II covenants

covering 334ha. Flat to rolling contour covers 450ha with the balance steep. Being in the Te Anau basin, topsoil is thin, fertility is low. The climate can be summed up as “long winter, late spring”, says Tim wryly.

Last year the property wintered 18,000 ewes, 5500 hoggets, 1050 breeding cows, 700 R1 calves, 40 bulls, 4500 breeding hinds and 2000 m/s weaner deer. The deer unit is being extended to allow finishing on the property, eliminating the need to transport nervy weaners.

The Mararoa River runs along the eastern boundary of Mararoa. The farm contains three main water catchment areas. Priority has been to “protect the natural water system” by ensuring property run-off goes through those three main outlets. Clearly understanding the bigger picture, Tim says: “If we don’t start with the care at this end, there’s not much point in doing anything at the other end.”

Key to ensuring waterway protection and effectiveness has been creating a reticulated stock water supply. Rejecting a \$250,000 proposal to supply power to the pump site as too costly, Tim contacted Scandrett Rural and found “the guru of water”, John Scandrett. Using the advantages of existing height and flow, an innovative electricity free system “using the old technology of a Pelton Wheel, with a modern day spin” has been created. Little maintenance is required and the power saving is \$14,000 annually.

Tim is unequivocal about his commitment to treating Mararoa as if it was his own. “Whether it’s your own place or you are a manager, we are all just caretakers of the land.”



### JUDGES COMMENTS

- Use of old technology to develop new water reticulation system.
- Water drops 70m, drives Pelton Wheel, powering pump for 200,000 litres daily up 160m to holding tanks.
- Water gravity fed throughout 40,000 SU property via 120kms piping with no ongoing energy cost.
- Water system necessary to fulfil vision of care for riparian & conservation areas & water quality leaving property.
- Large capital outlay for fencing and riparian planting to fulfil vision of better water quality.
- Brought together a number of agencies to achieve goal of effective buffer zones, riparian & conservation areas.

## KERRY & KIT DUNLOP (STOCK MANAGER HAYDEN PETER) THE GREE

### PGG WRIGHTSON LAND AND LIFE AWARD NEW ZEALAND FARM ENVIRONMENT TRUST LIVESTOCK AWARD

The Gree, a 2851 SU Central Southland sheep breeding and finishing unit, has come a long way from being, as Kerry describes, “a farm of few paddocks and gorse hedges”.



These days the 271ha South Hillend property is undoubtedly a successful, sustainably operated farm, but equally importantly it is a base for the development of sheep genetics that benefit the entire industry now, and in the future.

With stock manager Hayden Peter in place taking care of the daily management, and committed both financially

and personally to continuing the Greeline genetic legacy, Kerry and Kit are content, and the award judges appreciated why.

Noted the judges: “This is clearly an excellent example of the integration of an intensive pastoral system managed in a profitable and sustainable manner within the constraints of the environment of the area. The development of the ‘Greeline’ composite and continuous goal of improving the productivity of the sheep industry through improved genetics has paved the way for producing top quality stock.”

The Dunlop involvement with this land began in 1933 when Kerry’s father and grandmother arrived from Dunedin. Kerry’s grandfather, a professor of theology, had died and “my grandmother wanted somewhere to live and she knew my father wanted to go farming”, explains Kerry.

The family’s connection with farming and improving genetics reaches further back however, as the farm name ‘The Gree’ suggests. Kerry’s father named the Southland property after a family farm in Scotland, where Shorthorn cows were successfully bred. The Gaelic name, Kerry has since discovered, alludes to “matters of the heart”. “It fits us Dunlops here in Southland,” says Kerry, “the people and the farm are in good heart.”

Matching feed requirement to natural pasture growth is a management goal. No winter-feed has been grown since 1970; pit silage provides flexibility to feed the sheep in the winter and if required in the summer. Efficient pasture control is achieved by the use of “semi-temporary” three wire electric fencing, subdividing the farm into four-hectare paddocks.

Kerry says Kit’s influence is responsible for the effective network of shelter on the farm. “This shelter has been worth thousands of dollars when triplet-bearing ewes have been able to have protection from snow and sleet while they are lambing.” After consulting a nurseryman the couple began planting in 1968 in belts fenced five metres wide. Thuyias and Nitán eucalypt were used, with a combination of flax and pampas grass on the leeward side.

Kerry joined his father in a farming partnership in 1964 and began flock recording that same year. “My aim has always been to farm in a profitable and sustainable manner,” says Kerry. “Highly productive sheep and management practises have made this possible.”



### JUDGES COMMENTS

- Enormous passion & commitment to the sheep industry; dedicated a lifetime to the advancement of sheep genetics.
- Given young farmers opportunities; long-term community contribution in various areas like Rotary & the sheep industry.
- Efficient, well-organised immaculate farm with very good shelter plantings.
- Ensuring sustainability of Greeline genetics by involving stock manager Hayden Peter in the ownership.



Within four years, the national flock recording scheme began. “The timing was most convenient,” says Kerry, who also relished the opportunity to be involved with a recording scheme through the New Zealand Romney Development Group in 1969. “It was the first large scale sheep breeding programme in the world,” Kerry explains. He appreciated the chance to communicate with like-minded people, learn from leaders like the then Massey professor Al Rae, and the access to top genetics that being

part of the group afforded.

Kerry points out the Romney group scheme was significant because it began prior to the now-established practise of the movement of sheep semen. Based in Hawkes Bay for 20 years, for every four top ewes that had reared two good sets of twins that the Dunlops contributed, they qualified for a ram from within the group.

“My first motive was I wanted sheep that could perform well under my own management, not just something that looked pretty at a show,” says Kerry. In the past 10 years this early involvement has “crystallised” into the composite line known as Greeline, which combined those early improvements with top genetics from East Friesian, Texel and Coopworth breeds. “Across flock evaluation has shown that sheep from The Gree are genetically equal to the best in New Zealand,” says Kerry. “It has been satisfying to have exported ram semen to

Western Australia for the last five years and there is an order to send livestock to Victoria this year.”

The competition for land use is a revolution that has surrounded the Dunlops on their flat, fertile country for the past 20 years. They are aware of the suitability of their land for dairying. Their desire to make the figures stack up for sheep farming, and the stark reality of wool becoming “basically a by-product” are big drivers in their pursuit for productivity.

Kerry believes wool prices point to the need to explore woolshedding sheep genetics and he and Hayden are currently “looking at the merits” of Wiltshire sheep. “Our work so far leads us to believe it is worth carrying on with, to develop a Wiltshire composite that we can offer as an option to our ram clients to help them with their profitability.”

On The Gree this season there has been a policy shift and 100ha has been leased out for dairy grazing. This is to allow Hayden time to place more emphasis on the sheep genetic programme and Kerry and Kit more time to make community contributions and enjoy their grandchildren in Sydney and Auckland. Kerry has a long history of commitment to Rotary and with sheep industry groups. Kerry and Kit have three children – Jeremy is in London, Rachel and Shona live in Sydney and Auckland respectively.

The Dunlops appreciate the passion and commitment that Hayden shares with them; their collaboration with him is a direct result. “We looked around for a while for someone with Hayden’s qualities,” says Kerry. “I’d like to think a lifetime of work with genetics is not going to just disappear.”



## JUDGES COMMENTS

- *Fantastic stock performance and leading genetics.*
- *Impressive pioneering work around cross-breeding of sheep genetics.*
- *Excellent analysis and monitoring by both Kerry and Hayden of commercial and stud operations.*
- *Wise land use (all grass wintering system), excellent soil condition and early shelter plantings.*

## JACK & JULIE BALLAM

### LIC DAIRY FARM AWARD HILL LABORATORIES HARVEST AWARD BALLANCE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT AWARD

The Ballams' 500-cow dairy operation north west of Invercargill is a fine example of "precision agriculture" according to the award judges.



While Jack's self-described policy of "keeping it simple and making the most of what you've got" is accurate, it belies the comprehensive systems the couple have in place that foster successful, sustainable farming. Noted the judges: "This is a very efficient and functional dairy farm. The Ballams are excellent at planning, monitoring, documenting and analysis."

Such a level of organisation is intentional, and essential; the couple both work off-farm. Jack is a FarmWise consultant and Julie is a part-time physiotherapist. On the farm they work together to ensure it is "fine-tuned". Julie has responsibility for accounting and analysis but she says leadership comes from Jack "because he's top at his game". The couple recognise the importance of life balance, which for them means factoring in time to enjoy various outdoor recreational pursuits.

They operate with a variable order sharemilker on their 194ha (185ha effective) Waimatuku milking platform. Their 96ha (75ha effective) run-off is 20kms away, on the coast at the northern end of Oreti Beach. "Our aim is the maximum utilisation of pasture through grazing and the minimum reliance on supplementary feeding," says Jack. Their quality herd is DNA recorded. No grain or concentrate is used. Farm

surplus is made into silage to be fed out at shoulder periods, with the aim being the "flat milk curve" desired by the milk factory. No bought-in supplementary feed was required last season, or has been so far this season.

They have a simple one-page annual feed management plan for staff. Feed monitoring is undertaken with weekly pasture assessments recorded on a pasture monitor programme. "The big priority is maximising the use of the land and the stock," says Jack. He sees this as more of a priority than "necessarily striving to go bigger".

Jack grew up in Southland in a non-farming family, though he worked on farms and shearing during holidays. After university at Lincoln and Otago respectively, the couple met in Marlborough. They began their path to farm ownership with two years working for Julie's parents in the Waikato. They moved on to 50/50 sharemilking in Waitoa for five years, establishing their pattern of hands-on input from them both.

In 1989 they sold their 180-cow herd and cast their eyes southwards. They purchased the first 114ha of their home block (80ha adjoining was added in 2002). They grazed sheep and dairy heifers, but from the outset their intention was to convert to dairying.

"We could see the potential for sustainable dairying in Southland," says Julie. The climate is a major factor, she believes. She concurs with local wisdom that the Southland weather "might get you down, but it won't let you down". Says Julie: "The reliable rainfall is a definite 'plus' for the industry in Southland."



### JUDGES COMMENTS

- Very efficient & functional dairy farm, demonstrating precision agriculture, an eye for detail with good future planning.
- Livestock 'spot-on' with proven genetics; simple, well-devised systems & monitoring programme.
- Passion for developing people through industry; thoughtfully tailored variable order sharemilking agreement.
- The Ballams really know how to grow grass! - fantastic production in a low-input all grass system.
- Outstanding monitoring & matching feed supply to feed demand.



Upon arrival in Southland Jack worked supervising dairy farming operations for a corporate. Their own conversion took place in 1994. They worked with a 50/50 sharemilker for the first two years and variable order since then.

The Ballams have a demonstrable commitment to the dairy industry and

view their role as caring employers as strongly connected to that commitment. Up to three full-time staff work on their property. Jack describes the sharemilking agreement they use as “a variation of the standard variable agreement”.

The judges commented the agreement devised by Jack and Julie should be “promoted nationwide”. They wrote of, “the support to cash strapped new entrants (to the industry) and the direction and timing of activities providing clarity and boundaries – almost prescription – for success for those who wanted to adopt it as the recipe.”

Describing the agreement, Jack says, “it is very specific on guidelines of how we like to run the farm, we think it is important to set that out very clearly.” Financially it differs from standard in that a lower percentage is paid out, but an allowance is paid monthly and annually for costs. This gives the sharemilker the advantage of a better cash flow, making them “more bankable”, says Jack. Borrowing can then be used

for advancement, instead of merely functioning. “Our aim is to help people achieve their goals,” says Julie. “By adopting the monitoring and pasture management methods set out as part of their role here, we hope they will gain confidence in their management ability and therefore be able to realise their career and personal goals.”

The Ballams say they appreciate the encouragement they were given to progress in the industry, and they strive to do the same for staff keen to learn from them. Employees are encouraged to organise time off the farm and have the opportunity to use their holiday home at Stewart Island.

Julie’s role as “project manager” in two areas was singled out for praise by the judges. Recently she oversaw improvements to the farm’s two staff dwellings and one single man’s quarters. A range of aspects were considered including insulation, new kitchens, painting, outdoor areas and planting.

Julie was also involved in the initial development of their coastal run-off block, which the judges described as “sensitive and hard to fault”. The 96ha block, purchased in 2007, contains a mix of sand hills, swamp and developing light and heavy sand. A new water system has been installed, existing fencing upgraded and unmowable areas and waterways fenced off. Fencing has separated different classes of land, aiding in pasture improvement with better grazing of rough areas and protecting an area of wetland and flaxes.

The Ballams have three adult children, Tessa, Jenna and Sam, who are currently pursuing their professions in England, Auckland and Australia respectively.



## JUDGES COMMENTS

- Detailed feed budgeting system but still simple & robust, easily replicated for sharemilkers and staff.
- Utilise grass extremely efficiently.
- A good understanding of soils & manage them well; understand the strengths & limitations of all their soils.
- Low input (low nitrogen application) striving for very high feed utilisation & cow efficiency.
- Recognise nutrient value of effluent, expanding system to make best use, especially of potash.

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

## THE AIM

The aim of the Ballance Farm Environment Awards is to encourage and support farmers to pursue good environmental practices. When farmers enter the awards, a team of judges 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, and a chance for farmers to get information and advice from the various judging representatives.

## FIELD DAY

The field day will be held at the Supreme Winners property: **Elliot & Janine King, Pahiwi.**

**When:**

Wednesday, May 5th, 2010

**Where:**

Pahiwi  
31 Bunn Road  
Waimea Valley

**For details, contact:**

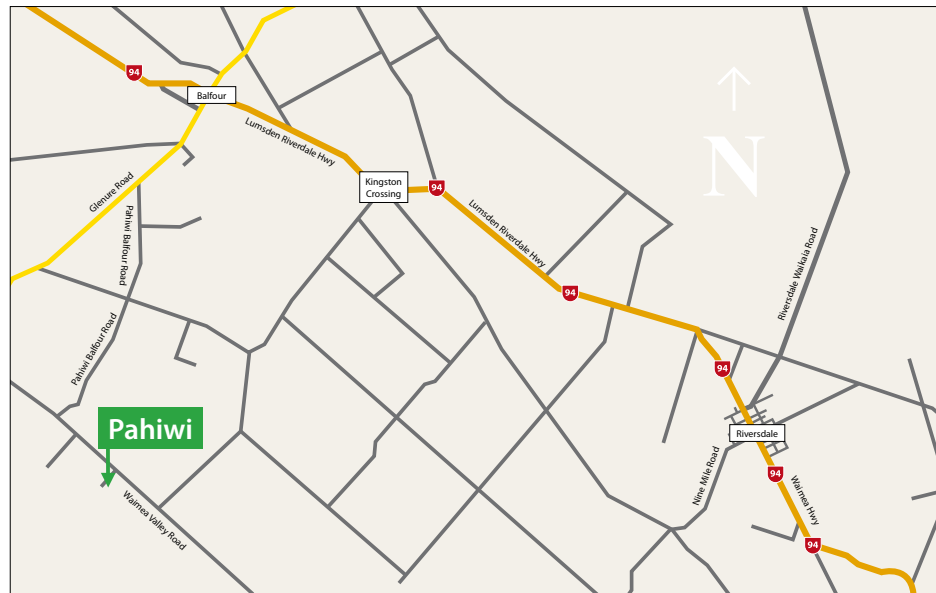
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