



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

# 2014 NORTHLAND

Roger and Jane Hutchings  
*Lodore Farm Ltd, Okaihau*

## SUPREME AWARD WINNERS

**ALSO WINNERS OF:**  
**BALLANCE AGRI-NUTRIENTS SOIL MANAGEMENT AWARD**  
**LIC DAIRY FARM AWARD**  
**MERIDIAN ENERGY EXCELLENCE AWARD**



Very sustainable dairy farming with a business that is productive and profitable while having minimal impact on the environment has won the Supreme Award for Roger and Jane Hutchings in the Ballance Farm Environment Awards for Northland in 2014.

The judges recognised Lodore Farm Ltd at Okaihau, Bay of Islands, for exactly what the Hutchings family aspires to be – sustainable, productive and an enjoyable and rewarding place to live and work. “The balance has been found between financial performance and the environmentally and socially sustainable aspects,” the judges commented.

The 270ha (effective) dairy farm with two support blocks (totalling 160ha effective) is overall a very aesthetically pleasing property that was extremely well presented.

Roger and Jane have expanded the original Okaihau farm bought by Roger’s parents, Malcolm and Marilyn, with two adjoining properties over time. They now farm a predominantly pedigree Ayrshire herd milking 680 cows in two herds, assisted by Brad Stewart and Sam Rapuna, both of whom are entrusted with considerable responsibilities. Malcolm and Marilyn, Roger’s parents, remain involved, from another nearby property on Lodore Rd.

The two herds on the spring calving farm consist of the older cows milked twice-a-day and the heifers milked once-a-day to keep condition and calving rate at good levels and to be able to make more use of the back of the farm.



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## SUPREME AWARD WINNERS (continued)

Use of supplements throughout the year, including a meal feeding system in the rotary dairy, and a moderate stocking rate of 2.5 cows/ha keeps condition on the cows and extends milking until June. The production target this year is 240,000kg milk solids, which would be 353kg/cow and 888kg/ha.

The Hutchings showed good awareness of a wide range of financial key performance indicators and had farm working expenses consistently below the Northland benchmark, the judges commented. Their passion for dairy cows was evident in the high BW and PW figures for the Ayrshire breed and the maximisation of values per animal through attention to detail, genetic gain and an embryo transfer programme.

Roger and Jane have a very good knowledge of the variety of friable clay soils formed on old basalt lava flows and match their livestock classes to land types.

The effluent irrigation system has a timer on the irrigator to reduce the risk of excessive application, plus the ability to vary rate from 5mm to 40mm an hour. Pond slurry is applied to crop paddocks and only maintenance superphosphate used on paddocks which have reached the target Olsen P readings. The property is now in full maintenance after extended use of a nutrient management plan. The need for a larger effluent irrigation area was highlighted by the plan and is now being acted upon. Total use of nitrogen annually is 150kg/ha applied with low application rates around 30kg/ha.

The long-term biodiversity planning and execution is very impressive, including bush and waterway fencing, weed and pest management, kiwi listening and fostering and the deliberate no-dog policy. The property has one of Northland's top 150 wetlands, fenced with generous margin and planted with regionally suitable native trees and plants. Waste is well-

managed, including silage wrap, metals, chemical containers and dead stock.

The energy excellence award came from the recently installed 22 kW solar panel array on the farm dairy roof which has great potential to reduce electricity use from the national grid, while feeding power into the grid during periods of low demand.

Staff relationships, community involvement and work-life balance were all commented upon favourably. Rostered weekends off and regular time away at the family bach are attractive aspects of employment for Brad and Sam as well as the Hutchings family.

Involvement in the Puketotara (River) Community Pest Control Area (CPCA) since 2011 has resulted in a considerable drop in the numbers of possums, mustelids and rats, greater canopy in the protected bush areas and an increase in the bird life. Lodore Farm and its nearest run-off comprise 30% of the Puketotara CPCA and most of the catchment of the river, which flows to the Kerikeri River and Inlet, an important nursery for aquatic life in the world-renowned Bay of Islands.

The farm has close to 100 bait stations, stoat traps and cat cages, which the Hutchings must refresh. Kiwi have always been present and their numbers are increasing. A very attractive wall map of the property in the staff (and family) social room proudly locates the kiwi sightings by all members of the Hutchings team, by dates in the relevant paddocks.

### Quick Facts

<b>Type:</b>	Dairy
<b>Location:</b>	Okaihau
<b>Area:</b>	349 ha, 270 ha effective
<b>Stock:</b>	680 cows - 550 are registered pedigree Ayrshires



### JUDGES' COMMENTS

- Very sustainable, high input system which is profitable across all aspects of the operation with strong business practices evident.
- There is a clear balance between the financial performance of the operation, and the environmental and socially sustainable aspects.
- Strong focus on sustainable staffing and bringing young people into the business.
- Overall a very aesthetically pleasing property that is extremely well presented.



## Andrew Kirk Landcorp Kapiro

### BEEF + LAMB NEW ZEALAND LIVESTOCK AWARD



Outstanding livestock and people management on one of the top-performing properties nationwide for Landcorp have won the Beef + Lamb New Zealand Livestock Award in Northland for Andrew Kirk in 2014.

Andrew is corporate business manager for Kapiro Station, covering 2643ha (1810ha effective) in the Bay of Islands, which combines commercial sheep and beef farming with Angus cattle breeding, producing 150 sire bulls annually. Andrew's role has grown since first going to Kapiro in 2007 and he is now also corporate business manager for the adjacent Takou Bay dairy farm and is a member of the North Island operations management group for Landcorp. He also serves on the Beef + Lamb New Zealand Farmers' Council and the Farmer Research Advisory Group.

The integration of sheep, commercial beef, stud beef cattle and dairy farming has created a high-performing business unit. Under Andrew's management, Kapiro has produced top results within the Landcorp peer group and is consistently well above Northland averages. Lambing is 160% with Romney ewes going to the ram at 65kg LW average, well above the national average. Calving is around 96%, also an exceptional achievement.

Animal health care is all done according to a comprehensive plan, including faecal egg counts and drench resistance trials.

The judges commented that this was excellent management practice. Gorse control and riparian fencing of waterways and areas of erosion have been a major focus of Andrew's management, along with retirement of bush blocks into QEII National Trust covenants. Over 90% of waterways are now fenced, up from 60% when Andrew first arrived.

Kapiro will be fully reticulated for stock watering by the end of the 2015 financial year and Andrew is working with the Northland Regional Council to identify wetland/stream/soil conservation areas that would benefit from retirement. The two main soils types on Kapiro are managed differently, with the volcanic one third taking the heavier stock over winter such as breeding cows and young bulls break fed behind power fences. The two-thirds balance of the farm is sedimentary type soils and is grazed during winter with lighter stock such as ewes and lambs and dairy heifers. Fertiliser use is according to a nutrient management plan from 2011, informed by annual soil tests and colour-coded paddock maps.

A monthly farm tour to sight all 353 paddocks coupled with Farmax and various Landcorp farm management programmes gives Andrew excellent information, enabling strong record keeping and good understanding of the financial implications of key decisions.

Kapiro has very good community relationships, including permission for horse riding and school cross-country events and art work on a disused woolshed by local youths in hope of reducing vandalism and graffiti.

#### Quick Facts

**Type:** Beef and Sheep  
**Location:** Kerikeri  
**Area:** 2643 ha, 1810 ha effective  
**Stock:** 5,000+ sheep, 8,000+ cattle including an Angus stud



#### JUDGES' COMMENTS

- Absolutely impressive stock management resulting in superb animal health, condition and appearance.
- Stand out performance with 160% lambing and 96% calving – the production per animal is enviable.
- Very high standing and respectability within the industry – with performance to match - rivalling not only Landcorp colleagues but also industry wide.
- Farms with a pride and passion in his livestock and their performance - as if the farm was his own.

## Patrick and Rebecca Malley Onyx Capital Ltd, Maungatapere

**MASSEY UNIVERSITY DISCOVERY AWARD  
PGG WRIGHTSON LAND AND LIFE AWARD  
WATERFORCE INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT AWARD**



Three years after buying a 24ha kiwifruit and avocado orchard at Maungatapere the Malley family has made many innovations and established a horticultural contracting business to ensure employment for their staff members.

Patrick and Rebecca are new to full-time orcharding and work with Patrick's parents Dermott and Linzi, previously Hawke's Bay apple growers. Patrick has a degree in commerce and Rebecca in veterinary science, and both have since graduated at level 4, Production Management in Horticulture.

The Northland orchard is mainly kiwifruit, the majority being Hort 16A Gold and the balance split between Hayward Green, G3 Gold, G14 Green and a Zespri trial. New male cultivars have been introduced to the canopy to improve pollination and the productive area of Hort 16A has been extended 8% by installation of new end assemblies.

The 2.5ha of Haas avocados are older trees which have been heavily pruned to bring them down to manageable size and to get more light into the canopy. The family plans to replace the avocados with more kiwifruit over time.

The judges commented that the Malleys are very passionate about their business and are constantly looking for ways to improve on-orchard practices and to run their business more efficiently. They look at the big picture by realising that success will come not just from lifting production but from controlling all aspects of producing. Included are the choice of the best varieties and growing structures, raising staff morale, following the crops off the orchard to the packhouse and getting involved in biosecurity.

The Malleys have recruited, trained and retained a core of staff members which, because of the seasonal work, needs to be contracted out to provide full employment. Other orchardists are enabled to improve fruit quality and business practices and the Malleys can employ staff members year-round. Last year they introduced a "living wage" for contracting staff of \$18.50 per hour, started a staff touch team (called Onyx Titans), began Farmsafe courses and companywide first aid certification for health and safety awareness and NZGAP certification.

The orchard has a very strong focus on biosecurity, including a locked front gate and boot and vehicle spraying before entrance, in order to reduce the risk of PSA virus coming into the Whangarei district. For the past three years it has been a Kiwifruit Vine Health sentinel for Whangarei and the new varieties have been grafted to reduce PSA risk. Patrick is secretary of the Whangarei PSA committee, has instigated a Maungatapere grower discussion group and driven development of a local kiwifruit pollen mill.



### JUDGES' COMMENTS

- An unparalleled level of innovation across the whole orchard was a key feature of their operation.
- Outstanding production results achieved through the skills, and retention of those skills, of their staff.
- An all-round efficient and wise use of water throughout the business that allows them to continue production during drought far ahead of others in the industry.
- Control of their destiny by measuring, monitoring and testing; strong quality control systems and a total streamlining of their operation.



Future biosecurity plans include some covering of 3.2ha of Hort 16A and the propagation of seedling rootstocks on the property.

The Malley family makes considerable use of monitoring and measurements around the orchard, especially in soil and water management. Regular soil and leaf testing help target fertiliser applications, plus advice from a horticultural specialist, and fertigation has been installed to focus application of nutrients to the root system.



They have made annual applications of Agri SC (ammonium laurel sulphate soil conditioner), Digester and 1% biuret urea to increase vine mulch breakdown and improve soil quality and aeration. Compost bands and comfrey plantings have been started under the kiwifruit canopy to improve water retention, biological activity and bring feeder roots closer to the surface. The use of comfrey for ground cover around the vine trunks is planned to replace glyphosate spraying in future.

The orchard gets irrigation water from two sources – a large neighbouring lake for the kiwifruit and from the Maungatapere Water Company for the avocados. Kiwifruit water is delivered through dripper and avocado watering is done by sprinklers. Some drainage issues with runoff water from nearby Maungatapere mountain have been fixed with ditches and diversion to the lake, turning a negative into a positive. The orchard has a 67% share of the lake water with a lease of more than 40 years.



Metering and fertigation have been introduced by the Malleys to the reticulation and irrigation is informed by an electronic weather station with remote sensors in the orchard measuring soil moisture at two levels, temperature, leaf moisture, air moisture air temperature and wind. Trials have been set up to investigate alternative sprays to HiCane (hydrogen cyanamide) and on biological alternatives for the control of cicadas, the worst insect pest of kiwifruit.

## Quick Facts

<b>Type:</b>	Horticulture
<b>Location:</b>	Maungatapere
<b>Area:</b>	24 ha
<b>Stock:</b>	13 ha in kiwifruit; 2.49 ha in avocado trees



## JUDGES' COMMENTS

- *Extremely well targeted fertigation which achieves excellent production results.*
- *Compost is used extensively to improve the efficiency of their fertigation programme, whilst assisting with water retention.*
- *An intense passion and pride in their team which is clearly reciprocated through the staff-driven sports team – the Onyx Titans.*
- *The creation of a harvesting trailer that assists with handling to preserve fruit quality, labour efficiency and harvesting effectiveness that is second to none.*

## Stephen and Ann Kearney Kerikeri

**NORTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL WATER QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AWARD  
HILL LABORATORIES HARVEST AWARD  
DONAGHYS FARM STEWARDSHIP AWARD**



Riparian enhancement, innovative use of cropping and biodiversity encouragement and to improve pasture quality by the Kearney family and their sharemilkers were praised by the Ballance Farm Environment Awards judges in Northland for 2014.

Waterways connected to the Puketotara River have been generously fenced off, including those on the newly leased block, in its first season of milking. "Considerable planting has been very well established over a long period," the judges commented. The Kearneys have made a significant contribution to motivating and up-skilling local farmers for successful riparian planting. Active long-term biodiversity and biosecurity management includes weed and pest management, kiwi habitat encouragement and involvement with the local Landcare group.

The dairy farm has almost doubled in size this season with the lease of a neighbouring property, to expand the herd from 220 to 360 cows. They are now milked through an 18-a-side herringbone in two herds; 119 heifers and smaller cows milked once-a-day and 234 larger cows milked twice-a-day. Ann and Stephen have been sharemilking on Ann's family trust property of 148ha (85ha effective) since 1987 and from 2011 they have employed Chev Rosandich and Mary Phillips as lower-order sharemilkers.

Stephen now works off the farm; Ann focuses on management of biodiversity and land care and their son Richard is employed as a farm worker by Chev and Mary. "Sustainability has become a priority on our farm – we want a good future for our children and their children," the Kearneys said. The home farm has 30ha of mature native bush with stands of kauri and puriri, stock being excluded since 2001.

Now attention has shifted to weed control and pest management. They target gorse, tobacco weed, blackberry, ginger, wandering jew, acmena, privet and banana passion fruit. The target species for poisoning, trapping and shooting are possums, rats, stoats, feral cats hedgehogs, hares and mynah birds. Wetlands and rivers have been progressively fenced since 1996 and the home milking platform has been completed. Next to be done will be the river flat only grazed by Jersey bulls. Waterways on the adjacent leased block of 82ha were fenced and the connecting races laid down before the start of milking this season.

The Kearneys estimate they have approximately 2ha of swamps fenced off and regenerating, with poplars and some flax planted. Puketotara Road used to be a train track for hauling kauri logs down to Waipapa landing from Puketi Forest and other areas during pioneering times.



### JUDGES' COMMENTS

- Very intimate understanding of overland flow of the farm water including a comprehensive aerial photo with direction of flows marked.
- Exceeding all requirements with generous areas fenced off, planted or preserved – well above normal lease requirements.
- Excellent example of riparian enhancement and biodiversity working over and above usual requirements.
- Innovative use of cropping to increase pasture quality on the leased block.



The lagoon on the Kearneys property was formed to store water for the steam engines and that has now been fenced off to exclude stock. Brown teal are now believed to be resident in the lagoon and the river below, but as they are night feeders and very elusive photographs have not yet been obtained.

The judges were particularly impressed by the water quality plan for the home farm which includes a very intimate understanding of overland flow of the farm water including a comprehensive aerial photo with direction of flows marked. Livestock water is obtained from a stream, pumped up to a holding tank which also collects water from the implement shed roof. The farm also has a windmill and spring to supply troughs towards the back of the farm.



Water used to cool milk is held for washing down the yard and any excess is returned to the stream. New effluent ponds were constructed during 2013 in preparation for milking 140 more cows.

A small pond was constructed to hold effluent while the larger new ponds were made and it has remained the first place that effluent goes. A contractor empties this pond and spreads the effluent slurry on the farm every 20 days, with crop and new grass paddocks targeted where possible. A much deeper and larger new pond follows and then a shallower evaporation pond.



The judges also praised the willingness of the Kearneys and their sharemilkers to try new and inventive cropping techniques, including fodder beet for the first time. This summer, 14ha of turnips and 8ha of maize were grown as well as the 1ha fodder beet trial. All crops are sown into sprayed out pasture with direct drilling to reduce sedimentary run-off.

Over the years the Kearneys have had considerable community involvement off-farm, including Landcare, Young Farmers, Coastguard, Dairy Women and DairyNZ.

## Quick Facts

<b>Type:</b>	Dairy
<b>Location:</b>	Kerikeri
<b>Area:</b>	148 ha, 85 ha effective
<b>Stock:</b>	360 cows



## JUDGES' COMMENTS

- Large tankered-effluent spray area with all riparian areas well managed, including weed control and very generous fenced areas.
- Retention of an historic 'bush railway' pond previously used by steam trains.
- Participation in the local kiwi monitoring programme.
- The noticeable quality of what is grown and integration within the overall pasture management plan.

## 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, Taranaki, Horizons, Greater Wellington, Canterbury, Otago and Southland.

The 2014 Northland Ballance Farm Environment Awards evening was held at the Copthorne Hotel and Resort, Bay of Islands, on Wednesday 2nd of April 2014.

## 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.

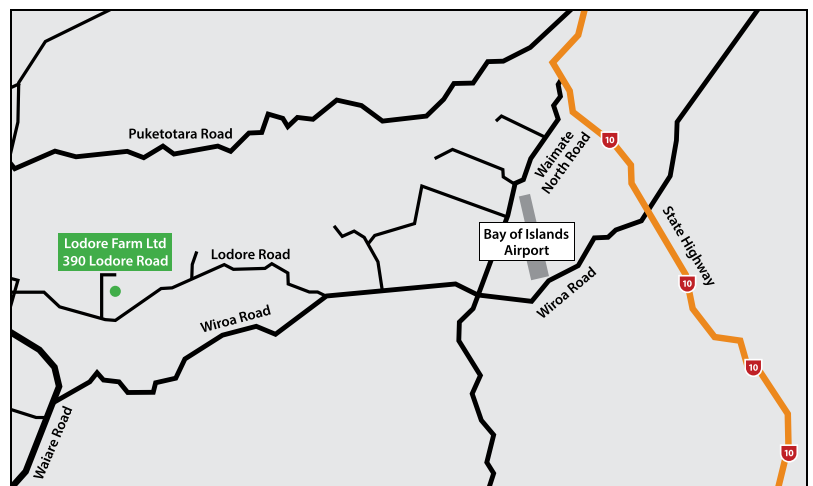
## FIELD DAY

A field day will be held at the 2014 Supreme Winner's property.

**Name:** Roger and Jane Hutchings  
Lodore Farm Ltd, Okaihau  
**When:** Thursday 8th of May 2014  
**Where:** 390 Lodore Farm Road, Okaihau  
Northland

**For details, contact:**  
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**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BALLANCE FARM ENVIRONMENT AWARDS, VISIT: [www.bfea.org.nz](http://www.bfea.org.nz)**

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