



## YOUR QUARTERLY FARMAX NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2014

### TAKING STOCK

In this edition of *Advantage*, we congratulate the winners and finalists of the FARMAX Consultant of the Year Awards, which were held at the NZIPIM annual conference in August.

New Zealand has many talented rural professionals and we are proud to be able to recognise the value that they contribute to farmers and the agricultural industry. Thank you to our co-sponsors - DairyNZ, Beef + Lamb NZ, NZIPIM, NZX Agri and MPI - for helping us acknowledge excellence in New Zealand consultants.

FARMAX software caters to deer farmers as well as sheep, beef and dairy farmers, but it is not often that we get to hear what our deer clients are up to and how FARMAX is working for them.

Over the page we hear from Des Ford of Deer Improvement Limited about how he uses FARMAX on his deer farm, with the help of AbacusBio consultant, Simon Glennie.

Spring is finally here and we hope that the weather is kind to you! We are always keen to hear your stories, so please do feel free to get in touch.

**GAVIN MCEWEN**  
General Manager



### TOP CONSULTANTS HONOURED AT ANNUAL AWARDS

This year marked the second FARMAX Consultant of the Year Awards, which were held in conjunction with the New Zealand Institute of Primary Industries Management annual conference in Hamilton last month.

A shared passion for achieving profitable and successful farming operations saw three top consultants win the awards.

Soil nutritionist Hannah Best from Hawke's Bay picked up the Emerging Rural Professional of the Year Award, while Canterbury rural consultant Wayne Allan won Sheep and Beef Consultant of the Year and Chris Lewis from the Wairarapa won Dairy Consultant of the Year.

The FARMAX team were incredibly impressed with the quality and calibre of nominations put forward for this year's awards and thanked those who took the time to nominate their consultants and colleagues.

Sponsored by DairyNZ, NZIPIM,

Beef + Lamb NZ, MPI, and NZX Agri, the awards were open to all agricultural consultants and a prize pool of \$20,000 was up for grabs, including:

- a paid overseas study trip
- professional development funds; and
- paid hours off work to complete a project or initiative that will be of benefit to the pastoral farming industry

The Farmers' Choice Award was also introduced this year, which went to consultant Rachel Joblin from Stantiall and Partners based in Feilding and Richard Greaves, a sheep and beef farmer from Hawke's Bay. They both received NZX Agri subscriptions and FARMAX products and services.



Wayne Allan (L), Hannah Best, Chris Lewis (R)

**FARMAX**  
YOUR ADVANTAGE

# FARMAX MAKES THE DIFFERENCE DURING TOUGH TIME FOR DEER FARMING

South Island deer farmer Des Ford is in the business of expressing the genetic potential of red deer in New Zealand to help deer farmers achieve killable weights more quickly and efficiently.

So the fact that FARMAX calculates their monthly feed demand by undertaking monthly pasture covers and regular stock weights assists the operation immensely.

Ford runs a 390.58ha operation called Deer Improvement (a subsidiary of LIC) in Balfour near Gore, in Southland.

Deer Improvement bought the land 10 years ago and fully converted it to deer.

Deer Improvement has been using FARMAX for nearly 12 months, and Des says it has already made a massive difference to the way he and his team can confidently manage feed supply for their high breeding value sales stags, which ultimately allows them to present them in the best condition for sale.



Des Ford

“Because of our biosecurity status, we aren’t able to bring animals or feed on or off the farm,” says Ford.

“As our focus is genetic improvement, we also need to hold all stock until they are a year old to measure their genetic potential.

“Given this, we needed to ensure that we always had sufficient feed on-farm to cater for the stock we have to carry on-farm, so FARMAX was the perfect fit because it allows us to budget our feed requirements 12 months in advance.”

Because of the increasing genetic gain in both their stags and hinds, FARMAX also allows Ford’s staff to predict the increased feed required for the bigger breeding animals on an annual basis as their breeding values continue to rise.

## DES’ TOP FOUR FARMAX BENEFITS

1. **Ease of use:** The system is very easy to enter data into and generate graphs from
2. **Useful reports:** FARMAX reports are useful for meeting our corporate reporting requirements
3. **Support:** Support from FARMAX is always available when you need it
4. **Forward thinking:** Being able to predict forward feed requirements with changing farming patterns. FARMAX also allows us to consider different options based on animal types and numbers being carried.

## DEER CONSULTANT PROFILE SIMON GLENNIE, ABACUSBIO

AbacusBio agribusiness consultant Simon Glennie has been working with Des for about 15 months now and says things have changed a lot on the farm over that period.

“Due to the quarantine status of one of the blocks, there are restrictions around stock movement, but using FARMAX Pro has ensured that feed is available at critical periods to ensure stock performance and value is optimised,” says Glennie.

This, he says, is where FARMAX farmers are at a much greater advantage than those who operate without the benefits of the system.

“There have been several highs and lows in deer farming over the 11 years that I have been consulting, and currently we are experiencing one of the lows,” he said.

“The ability of FARMAX to model potential system changes and analyse the financial outcome of the change is very powerful.

“Issues and opportunities on-farm can be recognised and dealt with earlier.”

Glennie said deer systems tend to have a flat feed demand relative to supply and a challenge, particularly for southern deer farmers, such as Des, is the long winter and the need to supplement effectively so that profit is maximised.

“Once a good base model for the farm is generated, policies can be compared easily and with the required degree of accuracy, allowing farmers to concentrate on risk elements and practicalities knowing that the grass and supplement system will work.”

Simon Glennie won FARMAX South Island Consultant of the Year in 2013 due to his expertise in grazing, project management and use of new agricultural technologies to help clients make the most of their businesses.

“Issues and opportunities on-farm can be recognised and dealt with earlier.”



Simon Glennie

# FARMAX FIRST TO ADOPT FARM DATA CODE OF PRACTICE

FARMAX is the first company in New Zealand to begin the Farm Data Code of Practice accreditation process.



New Zealand  
Farm Data Code of Practice

Launched in June, the Farm Data Code of Practice outlines steps organisations must take to safeguard farmers' data and ensure information is stored and shared in the most secure way possible.

By adopting and implementing the Farm Data Code of Practice, FARMAX general manager Gavin McEwen said the company will assure farming clients that their data is managed in a responsible way.

"Compliance with the Code of Practice will show that we are committed to furthering the use of information technology-based solutions in the industry. We believe the guidelines set out within the Code of Practice will eventually lead to greater confidence from farmers in how FARMAX handles their data," he said.

McEwen said the way data supports better decision making on farms is increasingly important for those operating in the rural sector.

"More so than ever before, we live in an environment where data is an essential element of the farming business, and seamless exchange of data between systems will soon be the norm."

While FARMAX already meets many of the requirements of the Farm Data Code of Practice, the company worked through a self-assessment and also signed a statutory declaration of compliance to prove its systems and processes are compliant.

An independent review panel will assess FARMAX's application and then certify the company as compliant.

## 2015 FARMAX CONSULTANT CONFERENCE

The 2015 FARMAX Consultant Conference will be held in Wellington on 7-8 May 2015. Next year's conference will be more focused on training and will include three separate streams: introductory FARMAX training, advanced Dairy Pro analysis and advanced Sheep, Beef and Deer Pro analysis.



Consultants will also be given the opportunity to become FARMAX-accredited at the conference. All consultants whether or not they use FARMAX, are invited. Farmers and industry professionals who use FARMAX or who want to use FARMAX are also welcome to attend.

We will keep you updated on the conference schedule, guest speakers and how to register, but for the time being, make sure you save the date!

## FARMAX TIP: CALIBRATING MILK PRODUCTION

It's important to remember to calibrate your model after you have entered your milk production for the period. Under the production figures, it shows a MS/milker figure: Actual and Model.

These should be aligned as closely as possible so your model reflects what is actually being produced on-farm. This is a really good sense check at

the end of updating. If the figures are extremely different to one another it outlines a problem.

Some things to double check: cow numbers and supplements fed out. Once you know these are correct, you can start to calibrate the pasture offered and pasture quality. Tweak until matching.

## IN BRIEF

### MASSEY AND LINCOLN UNIVERSITY TRAINING

Each year, we hold introductory FARMAX courses for students at Massey and Lincoln Universities and this year we had a huge 85 students take part! We have also developed a special version of the FARMAX software that can be used on all Massey and Lincoln University computers. This gives students the opportunity to learn FARMAX at no cost, giving them an early advantage on their way into the agricultural industry.

### HORIZONS BENCHMARKING PILOT

An initiative between AgFirst Northland, FARMAX, ANZ and Ballance has begun, which promises to further the potential and value of agricultural benchmarking. The Horizons benchmarking pilot is underway with a trial group of 10 Northland farms. Physical and financial farm information is run through FARMAX and then analysed, providing past, present and future benchmarking data. For more information about this initiative, please contact Steve Howarth at [steven.howarth@farmax.co.nz](mailto:steven.howarth@farmax.co.nz)

### AGHUB INTEGRATION

The first part of an integration between FARMAX and AgHub is underway. Pasture cover measurements calculated in the AgHub software, can now be transferred into FARMAX, aligning your farming information and saving you time. The second part of the integration will allow plate meter and feed reader information to be transferred into FARMAX. Watch this space!

### FARMAX INTERNSHIP

FARMAX is looking for a Lincoln or Massey University student to join FARMAX over the summer as part of a paid internship. In the internship, the student will have the opportunity to learn about the FARMAX software, business development, marketing and agricultural information technology. For more information about the internship, please contact Gavin McEwen at [gavin.mcewen@farmax.co.nz](mailto:gavin.mcewen@farmax.co.nz). Applications close on 3 October.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Climate change is having an effect on dairy cows by causing heat stress. Cows do have the ability to acclimatise to increases in temperature, but this can take days or weeks depending on the breed. Being exposed to temperatures over 25°C and especially over 29°C compromises the milk production of dairy cows. Yet another challenge that farmers face in an ever-changing environment!

## POSITIVE OUTLOOK FOR SPRING

The calendar has just rolled over to September, marking the official start of spring. The daffodils are out and soil temperatures are generally on the up, so has spring arrived?

Looking back over winter the weather has been far from 'average'. For most of the East Coast and Northland, June and part of July were a dream run with mild temperatures, stock in good condition and achieving growth rates, and plenty of feed around. FARMAX clients across Northland, Gisborne and Hawke's Bay had pasture covers 100-300kg DM/ha higher than July 2013 - sentiment was upbeat.

However, Mother Nature was not finished with winter. Early July brought widespread flooding and strong winds to Northland. The East Coast didn't escape lightly either, with a cold-snap passing through during August, knocking down soil temps, pasture growth and stock performance.

Typically over July and August, pasture covers are close to bottoming out as farmers look to scrape through to balance date when the spring flush takes off. Thanks to the floods and cold snap, FARMAX customers found that covers dropped a further 100kg DM/ha, putting more pressure on a key time of the year when feeding levels are already tight.

Combining the good early winter with the rough late winter, what does that mean for farms now? Comparing feed levels for August with the same time last winter,

FARMAX customers in Northland are generally sitting OK with more feed than a year ago, and Gisborne and Hawke's Bay are very similar to the previous winter. We expect this trend to continue into September.

Looking forward to spring, things are looking up and we are all hoping the market and climate stars will align for a good season. NIWA is predicting the chances of El Nino developing over spring 'appear to be lessening' and the chances of above average temperatures over August to October 'are likely to be above average'. Considering August temperatures have been below average surely this means September and October will be well above average - good conditions for lambing! Soil temperatures across Northland and Hawke's Bay are sitting above nine degrees, so expect to see pasture growth kicking in soon!

The outlook for beef and lamb prices are also looking positive. At the time of writing, the beef schedule is sitting on \$5.15/kg, well above previous years' levels of low to mid \$4/kg. Lamb pricing is also on the up, after the spike in pricing over 2011 and the following drop, pricing is recovering well sitting at \$6.20/kg currently, which we hope is a more sustainable price for farmers and end consumers.

After the rough late winter, conditions are looking up - warm weather coupled with good pricing. As the saying goes 'make hay while the sun shines'.

BY STEVE HOWARTH

## AUSTRALASIAN DAIRY SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM



FARMAX is excited to be sponsoring the Australasian Dairy Science Symposium, which is being held in Hamilton from 19-21 November this year. The symposium is a key event in both the New Zealand and Australian dairy calendars, as it is an ideal place to exchange ideas, gain new knowledge and make connections in the dairy industry.

If you will be attending the conference, be sure to come and visit our stand. We look forward to seeing you there!

## HAVE YOU MET... JULIA?



Julia Hoddinott is the training manager at FARMAX, responsible for organising training courses for farmers and consultants. She also assists customers on the HelpDesk and manages the business financials.

She is the socialite of the FARMAX team and her favourite part of the job is getting to meet new people - making new industry connections and friends alike.

Julia enjoys everything active, from diving to fishing to tramping and she has a passion for food, winning the Hoddinott family version of My Kitchen Rules!