



**YOUR QUARTERLY FARMAX NEWSLETTER**  
SUMMER 2014

## TAKING STOCK

FARMAX recently made forecasting pasture growth easier with a new online tool called *My Forecast*.

As the name indicates, *My Forecast* gives you just that – a pasture cover growth forecast for your farm – it is that specific.

*My Forecast* uses data from the industry-developed Pasture Growth Forecaster, which was developed through funding from Beef + Lamb New Zealand and DairyNZ.

Last year, we gave farmers the opportunity to try *My Forecast* for free. More than 600 signed up – sheep, beef and dairy; FARMAX and non-FARMAX users alike.

We were heartened by this response, as it proved once again that New Zealand farmers are prepared to try new technologies that give their farm and our industry an international advantage.

It is evident that farmers found value in *My Forecast* during the trial, with many choosing to continue using it as one of their everyday decision making tools.

If you have not tried *My Forecast* for your farm, I urge you to give it a go. We would love to hear how it is working for you.

**GAVIN MCEWEN**  
General Manager



## MY FORECAST: YOUR FARM'S PASTURE GROWTH...AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

*My Forecast* is New Zealand's first online tool forecasting pasture growth to within a 5km by 5km location anywhere across the country.

FARMAX general manager, Gavin McEwen, said signing up to *My Forecast* is as easy as entering the address of the property and a few simple contact details.

"There are no contracts or minimum sign up periods.

As soon as you join you can view short-term, current season and long-term reports which

will enhance your decision-making around stock feeding for today, while taking into account what is likely to happen in the near future."

He added that *My Forecast* was designed for the benefit and use of

all pastoral farmers – sheep, beef and dairy – regardless of whether or not they already use FARMAX decision support software.

However, he said those farmers using FARMAX can integrate

data from *My Forecast* with pasture cover actuals from their FARMAX files to create

an even more accurate forecast of pasture growth tailored to their farming operations.

You can sign up for *My Forecast* today for \$9.95 +GST per month at [www.pasturegrowthforecaster.co.nz](http://www.pasturegrowthforecaster.co.nz).

"...*My Forecast* was designed for the benefit and use of all pastoral farmers – sheep, beef and dairy..."

**PASTURE**  
GROWTH FORECASTER

**SIGN UP AND SIGN IN TO**  
*My Forecast.*

Sign up

[www.pasturegrowthforecaster.co.nz](http://www.pasturegrowthforecaster.co.nz)

or **0800 327 629**

Short and long range pasture growth forecasts for your farm for only **\$9.95 +GST** per month.

**FARMAX**  
YOUR ADVANTAGE

# TOP CONSULTANTS ANNOUNCED AT FARMAX CONFERENCE

FARMAX conferences in November brought together the country's top rural consultants and agri-business professionals to tackle the issue of how the industry can do more to help New Zealand's pastoral farmers lift productivity.

A highlight of the conference was announcing the inaugural FARMAX Consultant of the Year awards.

John Cannon of Hastings took the North Island title and Simon Glennie, rural consultant with AbacusBio, was named the South Island winner. AgFirst Hawke's Bay consultant, Ben Harker, was named FARMAX Emerging Consultant of the Year.

The North and South Island winners each received a \$4,000 prize sponsored by Beef + Lamb New Zealand and the Ministry for Primary Industries which includes funds for further education in pasture-based production and 40 paid hours to conduct an industry-related research project.



Stuart Anderson (L) Ministry for Primary Industries presents North Island Consultant of the Year award to John Cannon (R)



Simon Glennie (L), South Island Consultant of the Year and Alan Tinnelly (R) from Ministry for Primary Industries



Consultants and agricultural professionals discussed real farm scenarios



(L-R) Farmer Geordie Bull from Tirohanga, looks on as John Stantiali, Martin Bennett and Mike Woods analyse his file



Stuart Anderson (L) Ministry for Primary Industries presents emerging winner Ben Harker (R) with his award



(L-R) Alastair Haliburton, Sally Lee, Lycinda Lett, Phil Journeaux and Greg Lambert conduct business analysis



David Todd from Toddy Talks discussed the need to make a point of difference in the agricultural industry

# MODELLING TAKES FARMING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Tim Rhodes has a lot on his plate. He is charged with running the Wi Pere Trust's three farms in the Gisborne front country, which include Tangihanga and Otara Stations and Wi Pere Finishing Farm.

And it is no small responsibility. The 4,863 hectares of East Cape land is a taonga for Wi Pere whanau. Tim is charged with growing the farm's commercial success for the family's future generations.

Collectively, the farms winter 21,000 breeding ewes, 5,700 hoggets and 10,000 trade lambs, which are predominantly FE tolerant Coopworth.

## FOCUS ON MODELLING

Tim joined the Trust in 2003 as operational manager of Otara Station. During his first year, the farm became a Meat and Wool Beef Focus Farm and it was through this project he was first introduced to FARMAX decision support software.

Over the years, Tim has mastered FARMAX which has been instrumental in what he describes as "taking the farms to the next level".

"FARMAX is an excellent predictor of what is going to happen. On a monthly basis I use it to test different strategies for short-term scenarios around feed budgets, such as feed deficits or surpluses. Long-term I use it annually to set, test and determine overall farm strategy and policy - and this is where I find it adds immense value to our farming operations."

## SUPER-CHARGING STRATEGY

In 2010, Tim and the Wi Pere Trust set up a strategy group of experts to super-charge their planning and take the farm to the next level.

Tim used FARMAX to create a draft proposal of what he thought the farm could achieve over the next five years.

"FARMAX was crucial in helping us determine what policies would and wouldn't fit. It identified where our feed deficits were going to be and where demand was outstripping feed supply."

"FARMAX is an excellent predictor of what is going to happen."

After modelling different scenarios, Tim said the group was in a position

to further investigate their options, a number of which have been put into practice, including developing the finishing farm.

Tim brought in soil experts and did more modelling in FARMAX to test different scenarios, including draining the land for the finishing farm which was soggy and wet in winter.

"We used FARMAX again to model how much DM we could get from the land based on two scenarios - draining it or leaving it wet. The cost to drain the land was a significant investment - so we needed to be sure we were doing the right thing."

He said changes were then made to the land over a period of time, and today it has exceeded their expectations in terms of the return on investment.

Tim said for a corporate farm FARMAX is an important tool for strategic policy planning and testing - but he said smaller farms can get even more out of FARMAX.

"I absolutely recommend FARMAX - and not only for big farms. In fact, the smaller the farm, the more precise FARMAX can be. The trick is understanding what you are trying to achieve in the first place, and then committing to use FARMAX properly to help you get there."



Tim Rhodes, Wi Pere Trust

## IN BRIEF

### LINCOLN SCHOLARSHIPS

Applications for the 2014 FARMAX Scholarship are now open! \$5,000 will be awarded to a postgraduate researcher from Lincoln University whose study involves the use of FARMAX. The scholarship aims to encourage research into the benefits of planning, monitoring and reporting farm performance. [www.farmax.co.nz/about-us/scholarships](http://www.farmax.co.nz/about-us/scholarships).

### FARMAX TRAINING CALENDAR

Our 2014 courses will be held across the country, covering FARMAX dairy and sheep, beef & deer software. Courses are tailored to user level and are free for farmers. Sign up today at [www.farmax.co.nz/training-and-advice/training-and-events](http://www.farmax.co.nz/training-and-advice/training-and-events).

### FARMER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

FARMAX believes New Zealand's pastoral farmers are among the best in the world. This year we are proudly supporting the Wairarapa Farmer of the Year Awards and the Dairy Industry Awards in the Bay of Plenty.

### CONSULTANT MAP

Our new interactive map will help you find FARMAX-trained consultants in your area. You can filter your search by dairy or sheep & beef, and view consultants' specialities, such as animal health or farm systems analysis. Consultants who would like to feature on the map should contact the FARMAX team. [www.farmax.co.nz/farmax-farm-planning-tools/farmax-consultants](http://www.farmax.co.nz/farmax-farm-planning-tools/farmax-consultants).

[www.farmax.co.nz](http://www.farmax.co.nz)

## DID YOU KNOW?

If you use FARMAX, you can send your actual growth rates to the Pasture Growth Forecaster model so that it can 'learn' about your site's fertility to provide a more accurate forecast. Contact the FARMAX HelpDesk to find out how 0800 FARMAX (327 629).

## FARMAX FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

FARMAX applications have developed over the past 10 years into leading-edge decision support tools for pastoral businesses. This has not happened by accident - many of the features and functionality in FARMAX Pro and Pro Dairy have come from user feedback and ideas. In November last year, we asked customers to rank a list of development ideas from 'not important' to 'very important'. Below are the top developments deemed most important by FARMAX users. This feedback will form the basis of our 2014 development strategy.

### SHEEP, BEEF & DEER

1. Update feed intake equations implemented in the model to further improve the accuracy of FARMAX.
2. Assign stock to blocks and record and report pasture covers for each block on the farm.
3. Add a farm's actual pasture growth records from historic years for easy reference.
4. Integrate FARMAX and Overseer to avoid double data entry and enable analysis of farm system changes.
5. When creating scenarios, have a sensitivity table to vary key inputs to see the impact these have on the results.
6. A financial report which values the cost of feed and income from livestock enterprises on a monthly basis.

### DAIRY

1. Integrate FARMAX and Overseer to avoid double data entry and enable analysis of farm system changes.
2. When creating scenarios, have a sensitivity table to vary key inputs to see the impact these have on the results.
3. Update feed intake equations implemented in the model to further improve the accuracy of FARMAX.
4. Improve the minimum cover line, so that it more accurately reflects the feasibility of the feed budget.
5. Automatically import into FARMAX from Fencepost the actual milk production sent to the factory which is currently entered on a 10-daily or monthly basis.
6. Automatically import MINDA information into FARMAX to save re-entering data.



## FARMAX TIP

Feed categories have been separated in a recent update to FARMAX Dairy. Supplements can only be bought or produced on farm, but not both. For example, if you produce pasture silage on farm, but need to purchase more in, you will need to create a new feed in the Crops & Feeds Database. Click on New Feed and then choose the correct category. Fill in the same attributes as the existing database (you can pop this screen out). Contact the FARMAX HelpDesk for more information on this new feature.

## TELL US WHAT YOU THINK AND WIN!

Your opinions on our products and services are really important to us. Our 2014 annual survey seeks your feedback on our software development, training sessions and HelpDesk.

We welcome your ideas about how we can improve and make your experience as a FARMAX customer even better. This year, everyone who participates in the survey is in the draw to win a Windows tablet that runs FARMAX! [Tell us what you think today at www.farmax.co.nz/surveys2014.](http://www.farmax.co.nz/surveys2014)

