

Although we submitted a detailed submission, today we would rather tell **our Story**.

**Huirimu Farms Ltd** is a family owned business located in Arohena bordering the Waikato River.

- The shareholders are ourselves- Alistair & Judy, Judy's sister Rose, our daughter Joanna and husband Dan, our son Robbie and wife Shannan. Robbie is the manager of the business. Our other son Mat and wife Kim have their own sheep and beef farm in PioPio. You will have met them during their submissions to this panel.
- Our farm has 3 enterprises
  1. 840 cow dairy.
  2. A dry stock unit comprising 850 breeding ewes, 400 dairy support, cattle and lamb finishing and 50ha maize.
  3. 283 ha leased sheep and beef unit.
- 100 ha put aside for conservation.

### **Our Story.**

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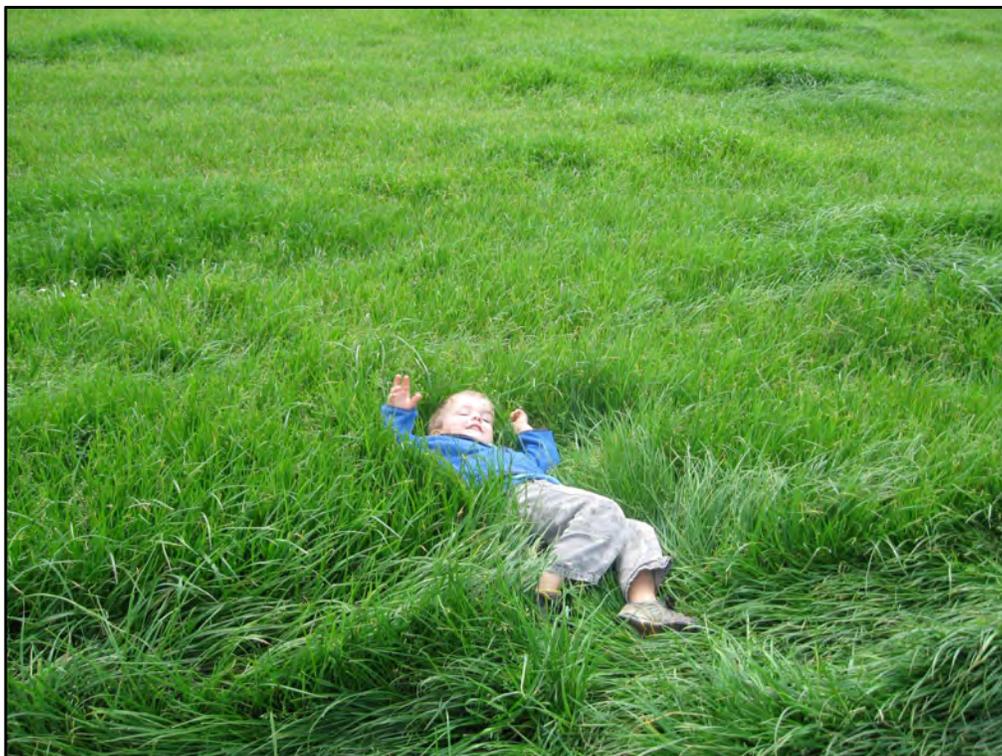
- **Shareholders**
- Our farm has 3 enterprises.
  1. 840 cow dairy.
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We Choose to be farmers.

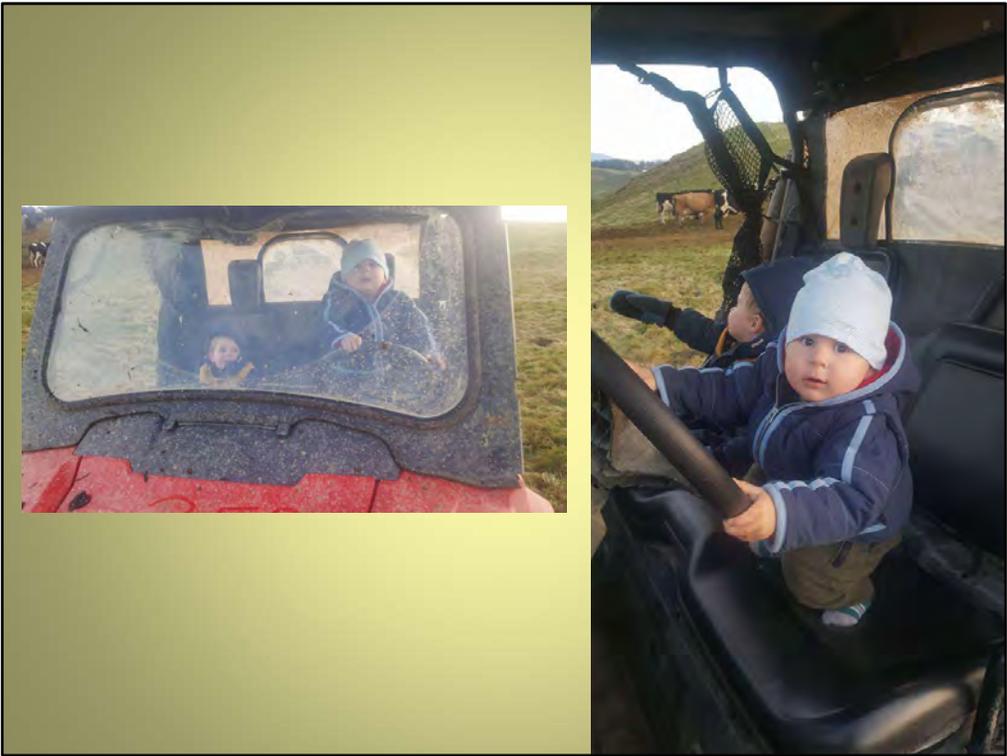
It is important to us, that we provide the opportunity for our family members to return home and work our land.

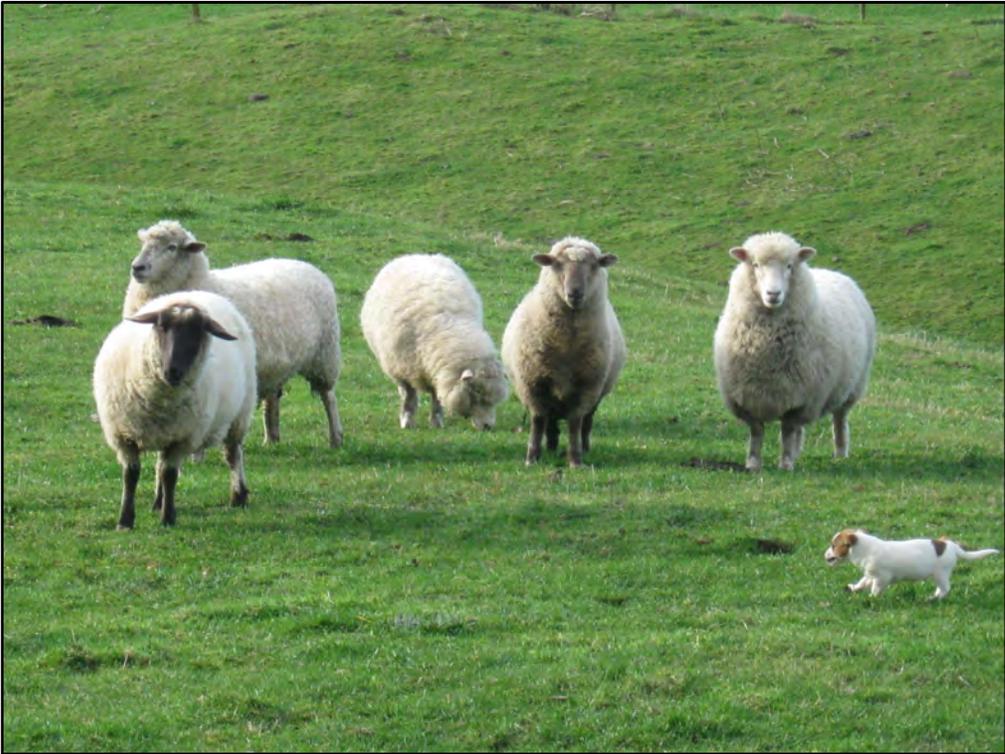
3 generations of the Sherriff family building a silage bunker.











As a sheep and beef farm we struggled to support 2 family members.

Now with the combined dairy, sheep and beef we employ a staff of 8, plus 3 casuals as required.



Staff Increased from 2 family members to 8 staff plus 3 casuals over calving.

We have gone from 2 houses to 7 on the property which includes 4 families with 9 children. This is obviously good for our school and local community.



- Housing from 2 to 7 houses.
- 4 families with 9 children.

## Our obligations as land owners and food producers.

Our responsibility is to produce good clean food that young mothers world wide are happy and confident to feed to their children. Obviously it is also imperative to operate in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner.

So what have we done to help protect the environment and continue to produce good clean food?

We have reduced our cow numbers from 1000 to 840.

We have reduced dairy replacements and sheep nos.

We no longer use winter swede crops for wintering cows.

We use Plantain for summer feed for cows and lambs.

These crops are direct drilled as we no longer use cultivation.

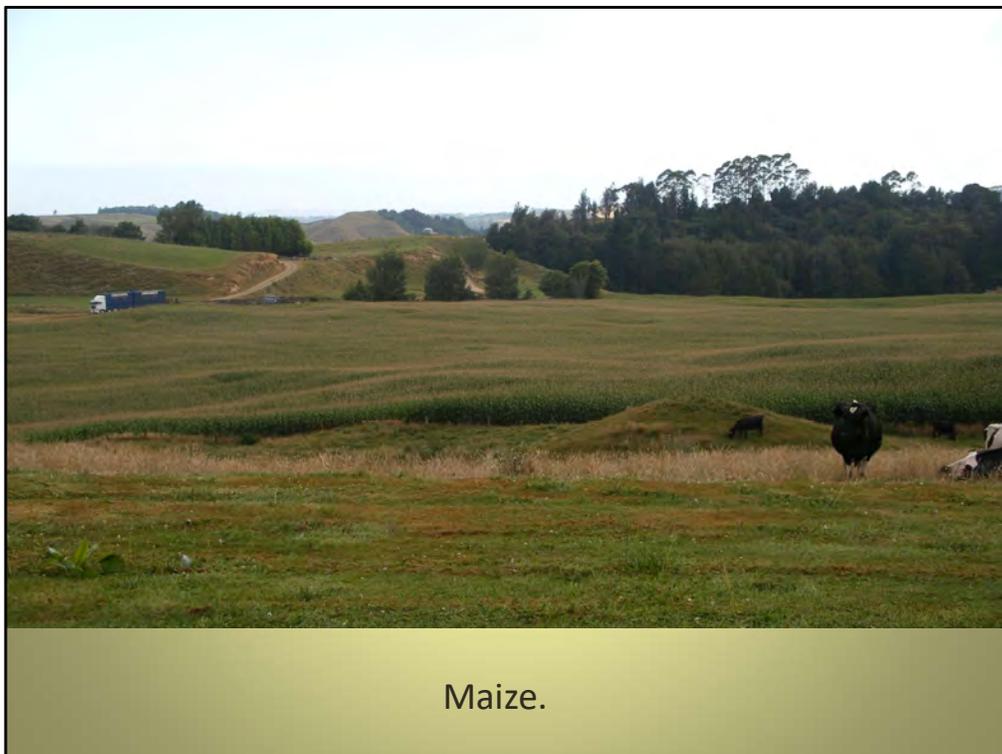
We grow 50ha maize on our support land using conventional methods.

### **Our obligations as land owners and food producers.**

- Clean sustainable food.
- Produced environmentally friendly and sustainably.

#### **What we have done, to help protect the environment and continue to produce good clean food.**

- Reduced stock numbers. Cows from 1000 to 840.
- Reduced Dairy Replacements and sheep Numbers.
- No winter crops.
- Plantain and chicory for summer feed.
- Direct drilling.
- Homegrown 50ha maize.



Maize.

We have been able to make these changes to our system by building 2 herd homes which can feed 600 cows.

These herd homes have been a game changer for our business. We can stand cows off the ground in both the wet and cold reducing pugging of soil. We can provide shade for our cows from the heat. We feed our home grown maize in these herd homes. This allows us to fully utilise our feed resource with absolutely no wastage. The floors of the herd home are a slatted system so all effluent is captured. This effluent is then spread mechanically on a much bigger part of our farm when the weather is suitable. The effluent will also be used on our maize growing ground, thereby reducing the application of chemical fertiliser.

The Environmental Plan (produced by Alison Dewes, a well known environmentalist) that we used, showed the following:

If we ceased using winter crops and used our herd homes in wet weather, for feeding and standing off cows, we could expect to reduce our Nitrogen leaching by 36% even though we are still a pasture based system.

### **Herd Homes – Game Changer.**

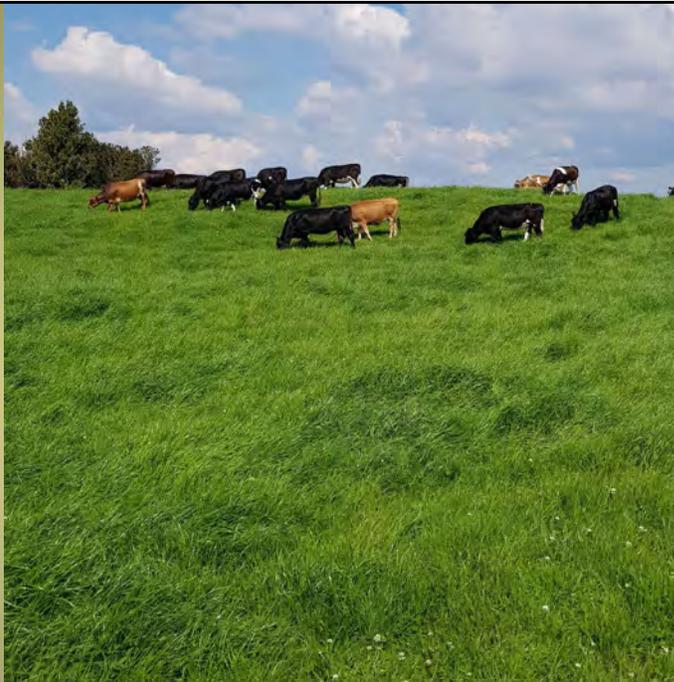
- Animal health – cold & heat.
- Feed management.
- Effluent management.
- Fertiliser reduction.
- Environmental Plan (Alison Dewes).
- Reduced Nitrogen leaching.

## 2 new Herd Homes.

- Shade in the summer.
- Protection in the winter.
- Effluent storage.
- In shed feeding.
- Calving under cover on a straw bedding.



Grass is fully utilised.



Grass is fully utilised.

We farm a conventional dry stock unit carrying replacement dairy heifers, breeding ewes, finishing cattle and lambs. As our dairy numbers have dropped, we are carrying less replacement dairy cattle. Our ewe flock has also reduced for ease of management. Hay and grass silage is grown, which is fed to both dairy and dry stock cattle.



- Change in stock.
- Hay & silage grown.
- Reduction in stock numbers.



## Protecting our farm streams.

We purchased our first farm, on the Western side of Taupo, in 1977. Our policy has always been to protect our waterways. During our first season we completed 1.2km of riparian fencing with the help of Waikato Valley Authority. In 2002 we purchased our Arohena property and continued fencing and planting. We have retired and covenanted approx. 100ha with 6 QEII blocks of native bush.

### Protecting our farm streams.

- 1977 started riparian fencing and planting.
- 2002 Commenced riparian fencing and planting- Arohena.
- QEII covenants - 6 blocks – total 100ha approx.



The MakoMako stream is now fenced from the source to the Waikato River.

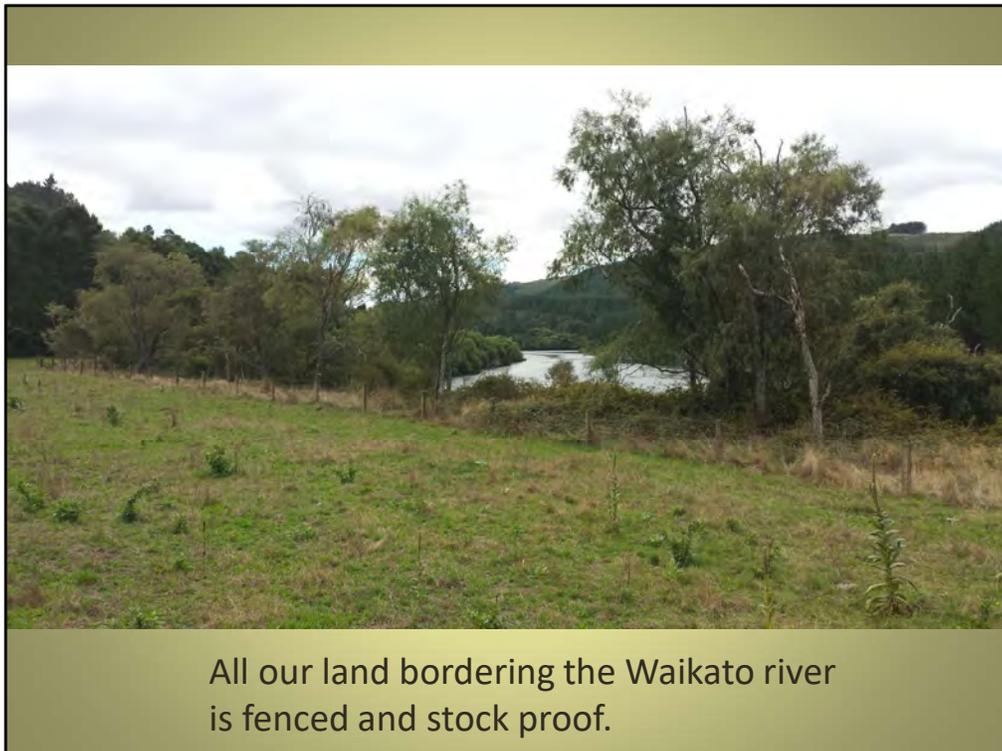


All tributaries into the Waikato river on our property are fenced and planted.



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All our land bordering the Waikato river is fenced and stock proof.



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- Remnants of bush fenced from livestock.
- 6 x QEII covenants (over 100ha).



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Waikato Valley Authority Covenant with the only spawning stream into Lake Arapuni.

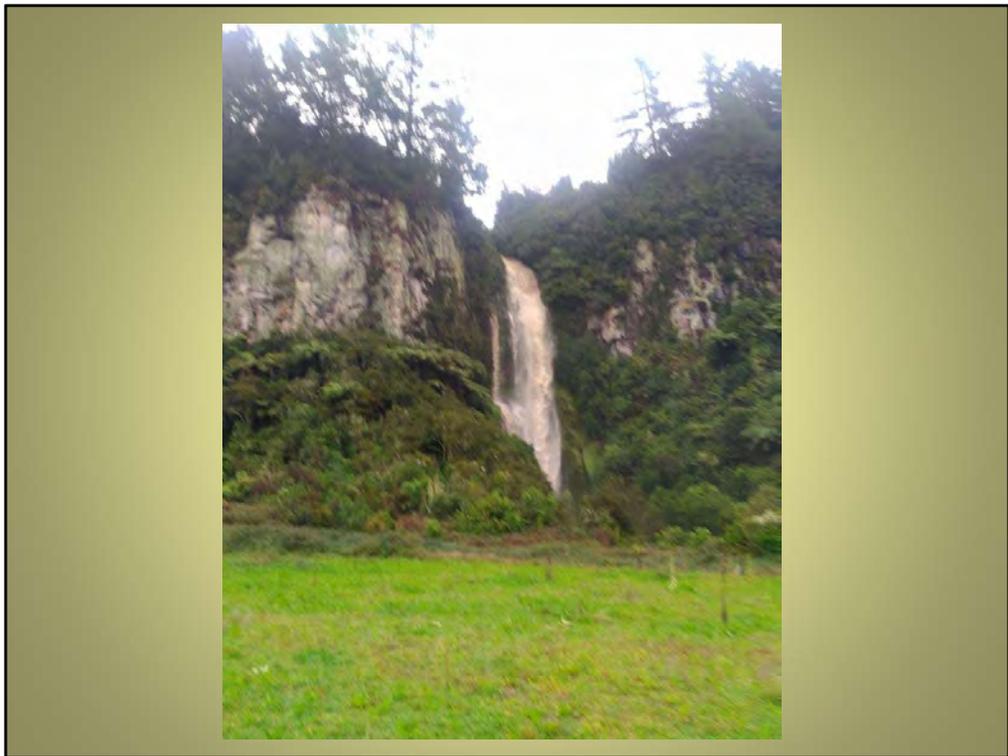


Waikato Valley Authority Covenant with the only spawning stream into Lake Arapuni.

This bush had sheep and cattle grazing in it in 2008, now QEII covenanted.



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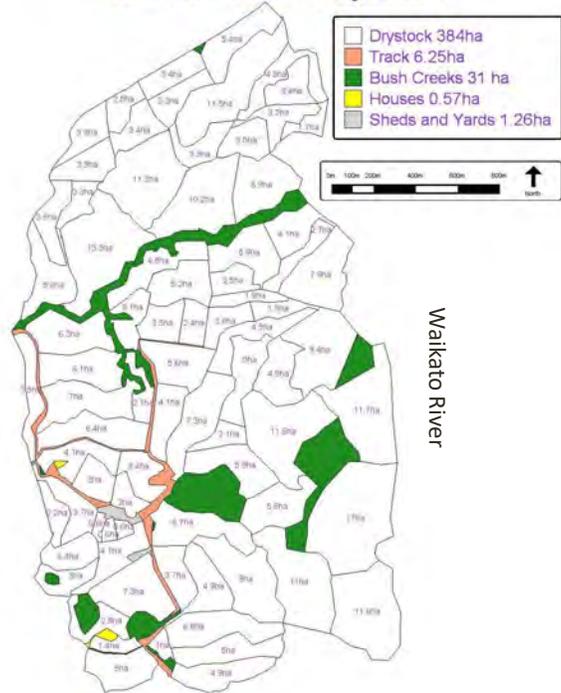


Hill Country farmed with sheep.

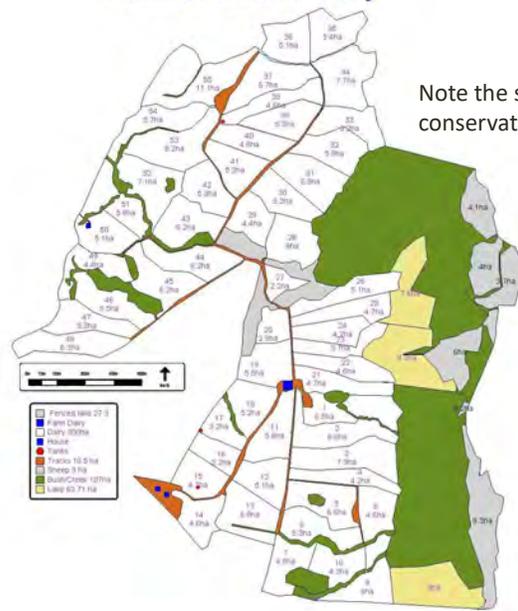


Hill Country farmed with sheep.

### Huirimu Farms Drystock



### Huirimu Farms Ltd Dairy



Note the size of the conservation areas

Waikato River

## Continual Environmental improvements

We have upgraded a farm bridge, which reduced the walking distance for our cows by 400 metres per day. This has further protected a small stream from potential run off. We have just finished building a new effluent storage pond to provide bigger capacity. Our new effluent system will have the Halo monitoring equipment installed. Halo will provide us with our daily water usage and milk temperature which is an MPI requirement. We have also installed new concrete silage bunkers to prevent leaching to the ground.

We recycle green water for some yard washing.

We are using our own GPS system to track and monitor mechanical effluent spreading and crop spraying. Our contractors use Trackmap for fertiliser spreading so we have proof of placement for all products.

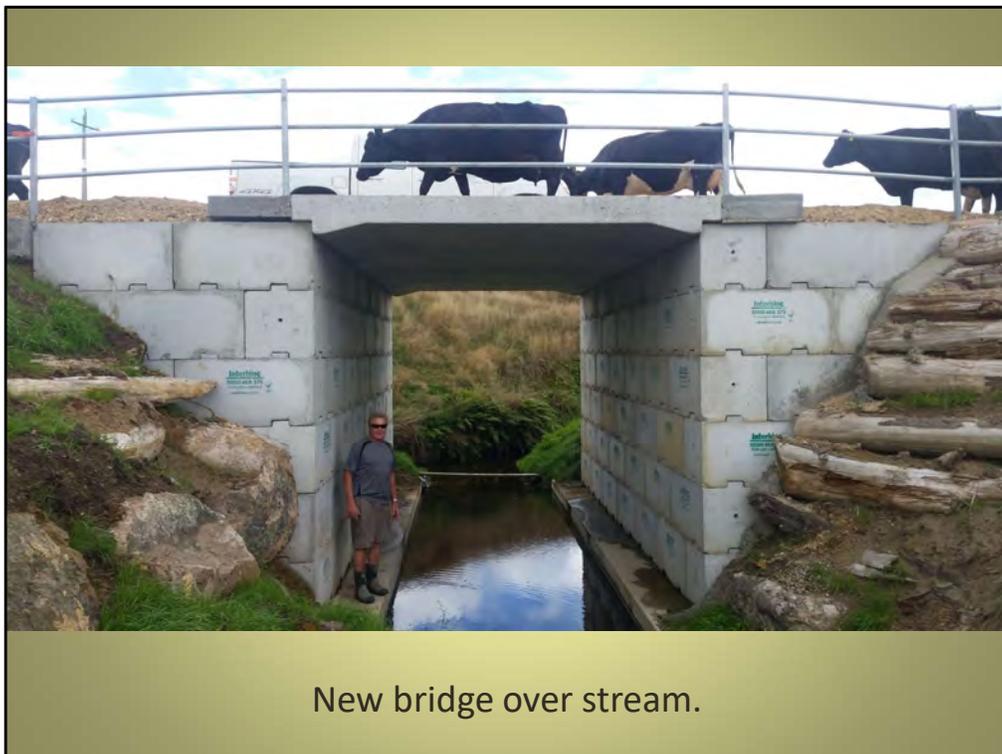
We are exploring ways to reduce the number of bobby calves on our farm, watching the good work being done by Massey University on this topic.

Part of our story is our focus on staff health and safety and animal welfare.

### Continual Environmental improvements.

- Farm Bridge.
- Effluent Pond.
- Halo.
- Silage Bunkers.
- Green Water.
- GPS.
- Trackmap.
- Bobby Calves.
- Staff health and safety and animal welfare.

New bridge over stream.



New bridge over stream.

2 x Concrete storage bunkers for feed.  
No leaching.



- 2 x Concrete storage bunkers for feed.
- No leaching.

New Effluent pond.



New Effluent pond.

New Effluent spreader.



New effluent spreader.

GPS in tractor for precise calculations.



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Unsurprisingly our total production has not dropped.



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## What has this cost?

Over 2.5 million.

- 2 x Herd Homes \$1,000,000
- 2 x feed Bunkers \$ 200,000
- Effluent pond \$ 100,000
- Effluent spreader \$ 100,000
- GPS Tractor \$ 210,000
- Direct drill \$ 80,000
- Halo software \$ 20,000
- Land retirement \$ 800,000
- Riparian planting } assisted by WRC
- Fencing } > 100,000
- Water reticulation

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What are some issues we would like you to consider?

The big problem with riparian planting is weed infestation, particularly blackberry. This is easy to control with chemical sprays, but of course this kills the trees and pollutes the waterways. The size of our conservation areas make hand control impossible.

### Issues.

- Blackberry.



More Blackberry.



## Pig Damage

Wild pigs have become a big problem for us with retired areas providing a perfect breeding habitat. We believe Waikato Regional Council should be doing a lot more work in this area as pigs are a particularly destructive pest.



# What are the practicable ways for us, as farmers, to improve the quality of our sub catchment?

We know that there will always be further work to do.

FEPs will need to be kept up to date.

We accept that FEPs are a logical regulatory tool, however the 4 FEPs that we have done provide us with differing answers.

As Overseer needs to be continually upgraded, it should only be used as a guide because the answers it provides are never consistent.

Farmers who are struggling with the FEP concept will need to be assisted on an individual basis. This will take time to evolve. Older farmers retiring and technology advances will lead to this evolution.

It is clearly stupid that the Government Carbon requirements are not tied into the WRC nutrient requirements. Clearly both issues could be partially solved by working together. ie: Riparian planting of trees could store carbon and attract carbon credits.

We consider it to be appropriate for each farm to have a check list of responsibilities which could be checked online. This would narrow down the farms that need special attention. We know that some farms are so far behind that maybe trees, attracting carbon credits, could be the only option.

Huirimu Farms has spent considerable time and money on our environment. We are not keen to see our business lumped in with a farming business which has done nothing over the years.

We would like WRC to work with us on an individual basis.

## Practicable Solutions

- Farm Environment Plans.
- Overseer.
- Retiring Farmers.
- New technology.
- Government Carbon credits.
- Farm Check lists.
- Individuality.
- Don't lump us in with the non compliant.

# We are totally opposed to

1. Grandparenting.
2. Nitrogen Reference Points.
3. One size fits all.
4. Proactive Farmers being disadvantaged.
5. Use of Overseer as a regulatory tool.
6. Overbearing regulatory regime.

We realise that this submission is lightweight in the overall context, but we feel that our story demonstrates that farmers, with the right attitude and willingness to change, can make considerable improvements to their farming systems. Consequently we do not want the work we have done over the years to now become a disadvantage to us. So work with farmers on an individual basis without draconian rules.

We support DairyNZ, Federated Farmers, Beef and Lamb and Farmers4positive change with their submissions.

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## **Huirimu Farms Ltd Vision statement**

We are making Huirimu Farms a profitable leader in sustainable farming. We deliver the best product by using innovative practices and technologies whilst caring for the shareholders, staff, livestock and environment. We will continually review our processes and explore future opportunities. (2010)

