

Meeting Notes
Ideas & Feedback
Shabor Ltd, Oparau, 23rd July 2019

Prepared by Ginny Dodunski, Totally Vets Ltd

Presentation from Simon Stokes; B+LNZ Environment Strategy Manager
'Getting started with farm environmental planning'

Concepts

Farm business planning – make land and environmental plan (LEP) an integral part of this
Precision thinking – get specific about land capability and use
Data capture – show what you do

Have confidence - most of you are doing a lot of what is required already.

A good dense pasture sward on our hills is good future proofing. *Ginny: Is this accepted in Wellington? Simon – we are working on that.*

Farm business plans

LEPs need to be seen as part of overall business plan, rather than sitting to one side. This is helpful for your own planning and could also include animal welfare, health, biosecurity etc, as well as production and financial targets and benchmarks.

The future will bring more 'precision farming' (automated measuring and monitoring systems), data collection and reporting. This may increase the involvement of other family members or staff in the farm business

Protection and enhancement of your natural capital (land, soil, water, vegetation) is vital to the long-term success of a farming business.

Steve – plans should have clear and measurable goals, but ok it's ok for goals to change or develop.

Land use capability

A system of classifying your land based on:

- Slope
- Aspect (north/south facing - can have big impact on pasture growth curve)
- Geology
- Soil type
- Erosion activity (NZ is a naturally eroding landscape)
- Vegetation.

Step one: Map the farm

Aim to map to accuracy of 1:15000. This means every 150m is accurate for the above details.

Map should include: soil types, soil fertility, soil health (Visual soil assessment (VSA)), erodability.

Bill - we did this ourselves through endeavour 20 years ago, was in first deer land care manual.

Murray - can use Farm IQ for this, also Ravensdown, Hawkeye. Problem for owner-operators is that this is all more administration.

Erosion

It is important understand natural erosion pattern on farm (not stock generated erosion) and plan environmental work around this. Natural erosion patterns affect sediment run off far more than stock generated erosion. Focus on dealing with this first.

Best way to deal with stock erosion is a good dense pasture sward on your hills.

Slips on mud stone: in 20-30 years get a soil back on slip areas that grows 80% of previous production. This result has been measured at many different sites and is consistent.

Steve - our approach is right stocking rate, right stock in right place, appropriate subdivision. Plus comprehensive fertiliser policy. Making the most of our natural capital. We have had lots of help - Landcare Trust, Ravensdown, Agresearch.

Simon: Soil health looks very good; there is very little slip erosion here.

Steve - worst erosion here is in summer when grass dries right off, hooves cause soil damage.

Visual soil assessment (VSA)

Low cost, effective soil health measure.

Put in link from Maria



Climate mitigation

2 areas to consider:

- Climate events: storms and droughts
- Emissions:
 - Methane: Don't have any solutions at the moment. Potential options in cattle fodder. Greenhouse gas consortium has been working for a decade and not come up with any practical solution. There is an oral dosing option that works but currently requires a daily dose

Carbon assessment tools: Data out only as good as data in.

- Overseer
- Lincoln Carbon Calculator:
<http://www.lincoln.ac.nz/Research/Research/RC/AERU/Carbon-Calculator/>

More soil loss = more carbon loss.

Don't account for Bush blocks. Native forest is looking like a better option than plantation forestry for long term carbon sequestration, however older blocks don't sequester as much carbon.

Stock exclusion from waterways

Glen - Is fencing off waterways and providing habitat for insects going to impact on farm production, animal health (ticks etc)?

Bill – blackberry becomes a major issue when you fence off waterways

Get involved in a catchment group and get control of own destiny.



Biodiversity

Understand what you currently have and document it. There will be an increasing need for predator control.

Farm Updates

Clarke: Got 5 weeks feed from crop. Feeding silage to hinds, they don't like it. 6 inches of mould on top (!) PKE being fed to hinds and stags. Stags still roaring. Trying to get velvet stags onto kale crop at home but they want to keep fighting. Half of water system on Harrisons is fixed. Killed all lates and empties out of 2yos.

Hunter: Grass has been short but growing now. Feeding out to all – Hinds PKE, stags Lucerne baeage. Cut 1 stag a month ago, 3 to cut now, rest ready to drop buttons. Pasture tests completed recently, all nutrients sufficient or better.

Raroa: Grass has grown all winter. Started all stags on maize last week. Trophies on DDG. All stock on rotation; getting ad-lib baleage. Raphno lost quality, will tidy up with cattle, 6 weeks of cattle feed left on it. Some stags with plenty velvet, lots of spikes in R1 males, three of them are 10 inches plus.

Wellington: Hinds in trees, PKE plus silage, plan to keep in trees till September. Cut 1 MA stag, OG at 11kg. Also cut one in May - 2.5kg (no regrowth). Have cut 30 spikers, some well OG. R1 LWG: Reds 163g/d average, Wap average 87kgLW doing 153g/d currently

Blackburn: Hinds on self-feed silage stack. Will keep them there until September. Feeding out maize silage into paddock as well. Wasting at least 20%. Weaners good as ever been. PKE started recently for them 1kg/head every 3 days. Scanned; high dry rate. TB tested 250 for 17 reactors. Stags still roaring; hard to keep weight on them. Holding in one paddock and feed out, damage one paddock only. *Bill: finds moving them every 2 days reduces scrappy behaviour.*

Templeton: Scanned 20th July, stag removed on 20th April. 89% SIF R2s, Red SS mated mob 94%. MA Hinds 88% BCS 4; picked up weight since weaning. W/D's killed out at 59kg. Scanned dries go next week. Was it a season to pull stags out early? Could pre rut weaning have helped?

Drenched fawns 9th July, 82kg stags LWG 400g/d, pasture cover 1650kgDM/ha – credit to Fiona. A couple of R1 stags have spikes up. Stag fawns are eating +++ PKW; purchased extra 28T feed. Buying silage back off contractor! New silage feeder coming. First buttons dropped last week.

Bristow: Hinds still on self-feed silage pits. One batch is much better quality than the other. Starting to see a visual difference between the two mobs of hinds and a different rate of feed consumption. Feeding out to stags. Nothing has cast yet, but they are in good BCS.

Grass is ok, getting eaten fast. Scanning: 88% SIF in terminal hinds, 70% SIF in first fawners, 95% SIF in recorded reds. Pulled out stags early - 20th April (2 cycles). Policy was to cut terminals off early.

MS Wapiti cross weaners average 80kg. Reds about 72kg visually.

Fallow eating heaps, staggers going away. Bucks all pre-sold. Shift in October.

Farm update and tour

After a dry autumn it has been a good winter for pasture growth.

Sheep

Terminal ewes have started lambing; are vaccinating and set stocking the maternals this week and next. Ewe hogget scanning was back, a consequence of the very dry autumn. Stopped raining 10 January, had only 30mm in the next 120 days.

Plan to provide more Wiltshires to industry – will sell 1000 ewe lambs this year. Top Wiltshire ewe lambs sold for \$385 this year; our dry hoggets sold at \$220.

8-year job to breed from wool base to shedding flock. 98% here are full shedding.

Plan to sell 60-80% of males off mum; kill down to lighter weights in male lambs (17 - 18 kg LOL) and grow females better to sell into industry.

Steve- policy was to grow big late lambs to spread cash flow but now getting hammered by droughts, change policy.

DAP applied over sheep country in autumn made a huge difference.

Farm has become GAP (good agricultural practice) accredited for lambs supply contract. Get premium store price, sale done via meat company, no commission. Agreed price before they leave the farm.

GAP is most of the stuff you are doing anyway, just better recording of product use, animal health plan is mandatory. Used to late dock ewe lambs (as replacements); now don't dock at all.

Deer

Weaned 7th March. Fawns small due to lack of pasture quality. Started feeding maize in February, should have got going with this earlier.

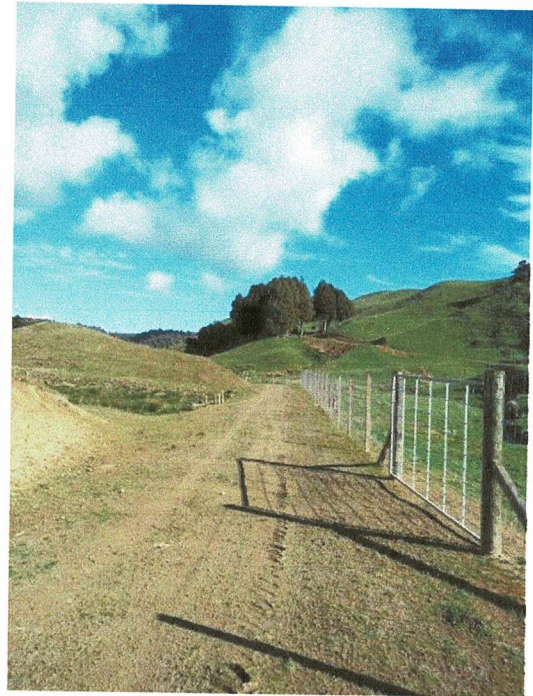
No AI this year; naturally mated new hinds

Yearling hinds underfed, also one stag jumped out. Scanned these - have 84 to fawn; high dry rate.

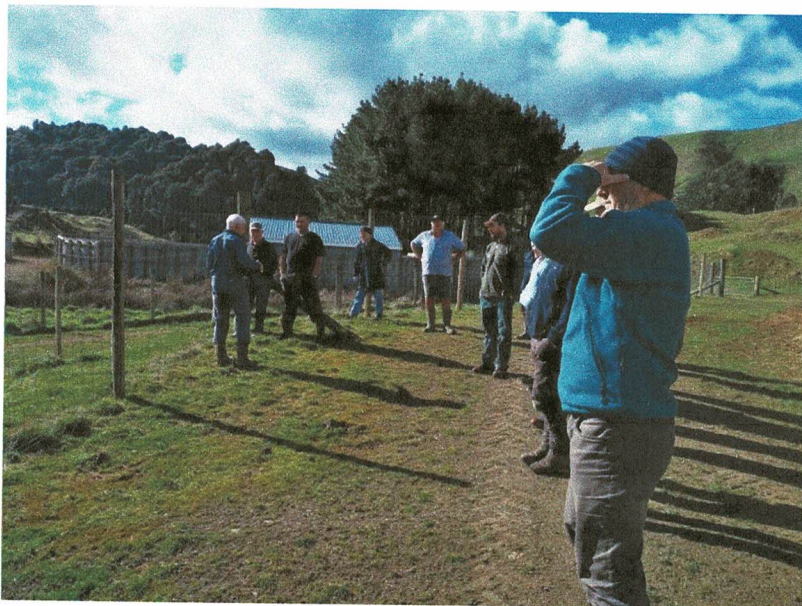
Development/environmental

Are streambank fencing all of valley, since big 300mm rainfall of August 2018.

Won't decide what to plant until we are clear on best source of funding to support this.



Hole behind deer shed is settling pond for deer shed. Not a lot washes out of shed anyway; was designed for big yards and small number of deer in shed.



Steve: You need twice as much deer fencing as you have deer - relief valve.

Sediment pond:

- Doesn't overflow, backs up valley – was fine in August '18 storm.
- Drains 200ha



Second sediment trap (in hind block) has been measurably improving water quality. Worst *E coli* counts come from patch of bush where deer camp. Will fence pond off.

Steve: comments on farm environmental work:

- *Always thinking where farm will be in 10 years.*
- *Sees opportunities for the farm in addressing environmental requirements*
- *Get on with the work while funding is available*
- *Billion trees ends 2024*

Alan:

- *Horizons fencing and planting subsidies end next year*
- *Once subsidies are gone the work will become compulsory and user-pays*

Pasture

Top flats: Lost control last of grass here last summer when water was cut.



Still showing effects of this in pasture quality.

Minimal damage from fence pacing, 4 years of weaning in same laneway area; have a mitigation in plan:

- Feed out every day
- Hold weaners on metally area of laneway till they settle
- Then let them drift out into weaner paddocks

Move deer with maize feeder to minimise running around paddocks.

VSA exercise

VSA is a scientifically justifiable and validated measure of soil health and directly correlates to pasture production.

<https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/publications/books/visual-soil-assessment-field-guide/download-field-guide>

Do in spring to assess earthworms.



In paddocks that have been cultivated in recent years or have suffered treading damage, look under fence to compare to original soil.

Murray - what would indicate visually that compaction is occurring?

Simon:

- *Mottling in profile is sign of water not getting away. See no impediment to drainage here*
- *Compacted soil gives hard compacted lumps right at surface, has squished air out of peds. Blocks at surface, can't crush in hand, drop root mat and it breaks into big hard lumps.*
- *Volcanic and pumice soils: try not to cultivate, when you turn them over you are replacing thin topsoil with less fertile volcanic material of lower fertility and organics matter*
- *The soil here is weakly structured and it would be preferable to avoid cultivating it*
- *Deer are being farmed in extensive enough way to match land type here*
- *Heavy cattle should not be farmed here*

Steve:

- *Dairy heifers didn't work here*
- *Keep deer social groups together, cuts out fence pacing etc. We don't split mobs for fawning.*
- *Each hind group has own small number of paddocks that they rotate around, MA hinds wintered in one paddock. Just moving out around flat tops now.*

Feedback from the group

Maria: Passion for environmental work very evident

Glen: Well done on making the most of the funding & expertise available to you

Barry: Large farm, running it well, like the emphasis on getting involved in research and use of experts

Bill: Farm looks great for middle of winter

Fiona: Nicest deer farm ever seen!

Briar: First time at AP meeting, awesome discussion

Dean: You've got more feed than us. Nice country

Campbell: Top flats still look hungry. Have you done detailed soil test? *Steve: Is a pasture species problem. Rhys: Is very exposed to prevailing wind, never been developed. Campbell: Try putting seed in with fertiliser; if unsuccessful consider spray and pray. We are growing much more feed in our S&P areas now but you must to put plenty of fertiliser on.*

Ian: Well done Steve, the farm is a credit to you. Can see major improvements. Should deer fence easy country.

Andrew: First time here. Well done with the fencing, can't have been easy. Can see early weeds coming. *Steve: Normally spray 30L a day when doing stock work and chopper does country that we can't get to with the knapsack.*

Hollie: Good gates

Jackie: The place is looking great. You are ahead of rest of us with your environmental work. *Steve: It's about getting over the biggest hurdle, which is starting. Most of us have done a Beef + Lamb level 1 LEP; use that as your start point. Council field staff are really helpful. Get onside with them.*



P2P

Advance Party

Campbell: Its quite easy here because you started with a with blank canvas. Is harder for established farms. We may put up 10km of fencing to put up a 2km stream fence. Can create more damage trying to fence 25 degree plus slopes. Simon – we are advocating that this requirement be removed.

Simon: You have done an amazing amount of work in 5 years. *Steve: We have channelled money from high earning farm into the development of this one. Having good a stock manager helps.*

With regard to your waterways; do the back block one first. With regard to regenerating slips/pasture damage, small steep areas with little or no growth might never come back, watch what you spend.

Murray: The ability to put right people around you has paid you big dividends. *Steve: I get them to all come on the same day so we can discuss issues and all learn from each other.*

Alan: End of July, should be the worst day of year and the farm looks amazing. Don't overstock it, looks good under current policies. Feed spend minimal. *Steve: Most of feed spend in accounts was for Whakamaru.*