

Farming – The Year Ahead

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Spotlighters warned to follow rules or risk prosecution

THE MOUNTAIN Safety Council is warning spotlighters to follow the rules or risk prosecution, injury or even death.

Firearms and Hunter Safety Programme Manager Nicole McKee says while spotlighting is a legitimate form of hunting, engaging in the practice on land without permission is poaching. This is a "practice that is dangerous and illegal".

She says there have been anecdotal reports of near-miss incidents all over the country. Recent comments from local landowners, police and firearms instructors suggest illegal spotlighting incidents are increasing.

Many hunters and rural residents are expressing concern about being "spotlighted" while being out and about on their own properties. Rural residents on their way home have reported being lit up by spotlighters and there is extra concern from homeowners whose homes are being lit up by spotlights during the evenings.

"If this activity doesn't stop then sadly it's probably only a matter of time until we have another injury or fatality," says McKee.

There have been four deaths and eight injuries from spotlighting incidents involving hunters in the past two decades. In 2010, Rosemary Ives was fatally shot by Andrew Mears while camping in the Kaimanawa Forest Park. Mears mistakenly thought Ms Ives' head lamp was deer eyes and took a shot after failing to identify his target as human. In 2012, there was one serious incident in Capterbury and two serious incidents in Southland, including one fatality.

Extra care is required when spotlighting as the field of vision is limited to the beam of the spotlight.

"Target identification needs to be



In the spotlight: Aran Waitoa, of Takapau in Central Hawke's Bay, takes a break from spotlighting. Aran previously worked for Taranaki Regional Council and Hawke's Bay Regional Council pest control teams and now does both spotlighting and pig hunting for fun and food.

positively confirmed and the firing zone not lit by the spotlight needs special consideration."

Hunters should ensure that they have permission from the landowner to spotlight on their land. Some reports have also been received regarding vehicles being used for spotlighting.

"Shooting from a vehicle on a public road is not only dangerous, but illegal. It is an offence to carry a loaded firearm or a magazine in a vehicle on a public road, even if the magazine is not in a firearm. I urge all hunters to absolutely follow the seven basic rules of firearms safety at all times. Otherwise the consequences could be fatal."

Spotlighters should ensure they have permission of the landowner or

a permit to spotlight on the land; explore the proposed hunting area in daylight so they are aware of the terrain and any potential obstacles such as the location of neighbours, stock, housing and sheds; maintain situational awareness of the firing zone. Remember that your spotlight will only light a small portion of your firing zone; ensure that if they are spotlighting as a group, that they know where their hunting buddies are at all times. If contact is lost, stop hunting until contact is re-established; and positively identify their target as non-human, beyond all doubt.

For more information about firearms and outdoor safety go to: mountainsafety.org.nz/firearms

Award winners learn valuable lessons

KATE TAYLOR

THE feedback from the judges was the biggest bonus for first-time Ballance Farm Environment Award entrants Robin and Jacqueline Blackwell.

The Blackwells have a 658ha beef, dairy grazing and sheep farm, known as Mangaotea, in the Tariki district about a 20-minute drive from the base of Mt Taranaki. They won four merit awards in the inaugural Taranaki awards (for livestock, harvest, stewardship and sustainability) earlier this year but missed the supreme prize, which was won by a dairy business also with four merit awards. Robin Blackwell says they were initially thrilled just to be in the final top six.

"We hadn't even contemplated what would happen then. After getting the first award, we thought we'd done well. That was blown away by that. And then to get so close to the Supreme... there were side bets on the tables as to who was going to win."

Blackwell says they will definitely enter the competition again, but not this year, as there are a number of things they want to work on including a new



Inspired: First-time Ballance Farm Environment Award entrants Robin and Jacqueline Blackwell.

wetland development and more QEII National Trust covenants.

"One of the most valuable things from the awards was the feedback sheet with both positives and recommendations for the future and they were mainly areas that in the back of our head we knew we needed to improve on anyway. Now it's there, it's written down and it has

given us the boost we needed to get out and do it.

"You don't often realise how other people see our operation or business until you enter something like this. The positive comments were amazing. So this has allowed us to sit back and appreciate what we've done and also to set out some new goals."

The judges said the Blackwells were driven, focused and passionate and held an immense amount of pride in their farm. The judges said hard work was evident throughout the property and their enthusiasm was infectious.

Blackwell has lived in the area all his life and took over the original 80ha block of Mangaotea from his father in 1980. He and Jacqueline have progressively grown their holding, purchasing five neighbouring blocks between 1991 and 2009 and leasing a total of 215ha adjacent.

The cattle to sheep ratio for their 11,327 stock units is 90:10 – their main focus is producing bulls for their annual September sale (service bulls sold mainly to Taranaki dairy farmers) and grazing young dairy stock for local, long-term clients. Their biggest clients, who graze 350 dairy heifers there each year,

have been doing so for 15 years. About 180 bulls (quarter yearlings, three quarters two year olds) are sold each year – mainly angus and hereford with some murray grey.

Mangaotea is an annual entrant in the Steak of Origin competition – they've been in the finals twice and have come second twice in the Best of British section (with an angus processed at the Taranaki Abattoirs in Stratford).

Mangaotea has a small southdown sheep stud formed in 2008 lambing 70 ewes (as well as a commercial romney-based flock put over their southdown rams for export lambs).

In the past five years, the Blackwells have protected two 1.5ha peat swamp areas containing stunning fully mature kahikatea with QEII National Trust covenants.

Blackwell says riparian fencing and planting is an integral part of any development as the property is named for the Mangaotea Stream that runs through it.

"It is not only good sense environmentally, it makes sense economically. It makes the wintering of cattle so much easier."

Book recalls tales from a life in farming

Hawke's Bay farmer Kerry Butler has edited a chapter from his book *Blimmin Heck: Tales & Musings of a Kiwi Bloke*, which recounts his life of escapades, frustrations, hunting, fishing and fun.

WHEN it comes to "people" and their little foibles, one frustration is how petty and stingy some of them can be.

I heard of a case where a farmer was asked if the Girl Guides could collect pine cones to sell, as a means of fund raising. This farmer said they'd have to pay him so much a bag!

I must tell you about a farmer I worked for. This old guy didn't believe in wasting money. Instead of buying ropes, we had to save the baling twine when feeding out – then by plaiting several strands together, and joining, we'd end up with a rope.

Another tiresome job was cutting the bits of wool off the huge pile of dags that get thrown aside during shearing.

You were also expected to earn your wage by doing a full day's work. I remember one Christmas Eve I had my chores finished by



four o'clock so asked if I could knock off and go to town to do my Christmas shopping. The old bugger said I could fill in till five by bucketing out some water-troughs, and give them a good scrub.

Besides being mean, he was tough with it. He hired someone to do some scrub-cutting and shortly after he started work on his first morning, the boss turned up on his horse and noticed the guy was still wearing his Swannndri... so promptly sacked

him on the spot, because he couldn't have been working very hard if he still had his jacket on!

When it came to stock work, you didn't just do a full day, you went from daylight till dark. A young shepherd and the boss were riding past the chook-house one morning, and the young guy asked "are those perching pullets?"

The boss says "what do you mean by that"? And the shepherd replied "well, when we go to work they are perching, and when we get home from work they're perching."

He was told to pack his bags.

Secure your

FIREARMS

- A young child must not be able to gain ready access to firearms.
- Store firearms and ammunition separately, or, make sure the firearm cannot be fired.
- Firearms must be secured against theft.
- Never leave a firearm in a vehicle that is unattended.



NEW ZEALAND MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL