

the dairyman

DECEMBER 2013

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ON FARM

GOOD THINGS COMEto those who wait

ANNE BOSWELL



BROADLANDS farmers Mike and Lisa Parnwell have taken recent accolades in their stride and are continuing to run their small but successful farming operation with little fuss.

The Parnwells have not only been awarded the titles of Best Bay of Plenty farm and Environmental (Low Input) System in the Dairy Business of the Year 2013, but were invited to take part in the Headlands-run Upper Waikato Sustainable Milk Plan Project.

Not bad for a sociable and energetic family that takes leisure time as seriously as work.

Mike grew up on a dairy farm in Horahora near Cambridge and dairy farmed for three years after leaving school, before becoming an owner-driver for an ag-contracting firm in Tirau.

Meanwhile, Lisa grew up in suburban Tauranga and worked for a solicitor and as a postie until the first of her and Mike's three children were born. Lisa and Mike were married in 1994.

After four years as a driver, Mike returned to farming as a 25 per cent sharemilker. The family then moved back to Horahora where Mike spent ten years working for his parents – five as farm manager and five as sharemilker.

The Parnwells moved to



Good management: The Parnwell's feed an impressive 90 per cent of pasture as feed.

Winners: Mike and Lisa Parnwell have won Best Bay of Plenty farm and Environmental (Low Input) System in the Dairy Business of the Year 2013.

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I calved 200 cows without putting my leggings on.

MIKE PARNWELL

their current farm in June 2005, and have spent seven years 50/50 sharemilking.

They started leasing the farm last year, buying the shares off farm owner and good friend Dolphy Mathis.

COW COMFORT KEY ON FARM

The Parnwell's farm is 102ha of flat farmland just south of Broadlands, near Reporoa.

They milk around 250 mainly Friesian cows, a breed Mike is fond of.

Mike has always farmed alone, but for the past year has had a fulltime staff member one board – the latest having started in

November.

“I've always done it by myself, so to have fulltime labour for the last year or so has been great,” Mike said.

Mike is also committed to an AB run, and has a 23ha runoff at Rainbow Mountain (which carried over their weaner calves, carry-over cows and bulls) so the extra staff has been helpful when his to-do list starts to expand.

Mating starts on October 11 and is six weeks of AB with sexed semen, finishing on November 21. The herd is finished with Jersey and Hereford bulls.

July 20 is the planned start

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



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ON FARM

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of calving, which was straight-forward this year thanks to the mild winter.

"I calved 200 cows without putting my leggings on," Mike said.

The mild weather was a small consolation for last summer's drought, which stretched into mid-2013 for the Parnwells.

"We didn't get any real rain until May 20," Mike said.

The farm also has two herd homes, which were finished in March 2007. They were the initiative of farm owner Dolphy, who didn't like watching the cows suffer in the summer heat.

"Dolphy had seen the herd homes used overseas and liked the idea. The herd homes offer a 6-7 degree drop in temperature in summer; you really can feel the difference," Lisa said.

Mike said using the herd homes also meant a \$40-50,000 saving on feed per annum, as well as more comfortable cows.

"The cows eat less on colder days, produce more in summer by being out of the heat, and the cows burn less energy," he said.

PASTURE DROUGHT-PRONE BUT NUTRIENT-RICH

The Parnwell's feed an impressive 90 per cent of pasture as feed. From August until the end of October they supplement with around 2kg of PKE and 1kg of carrots or parsnips per cow/day.

When the grass "kicks away



Lush meadow: The Parnwell's farm is 102ha of flat farmland just south of Broadlands, near Reporoa. and they milk around 250 mainly Friesian cows.

again" the all-grass system is re-established. The farm is particularly affected by drought so the Parnwells keep a close eye on pasture with regular walks.

"With pumice land like this you can go from hero to zero in three weeks," Mike said.

However, the farm has little need for fertiliser. There has been no solid fertiliser applied

to the farm in the seven seasons the Parnwells have been there.

"The farm was saturated with whey so there is high P levels," Mike said. "All the pasture gets is a mix of selenium, magnesium and potassium, and sulphur due to the high P levels. And we use a maximum of 130 units of N."

The effluent catchment from the herd homes is emptied once a year onto poorer paddocks and those that grow crops – 8-10ha of turnips as a summer crop.

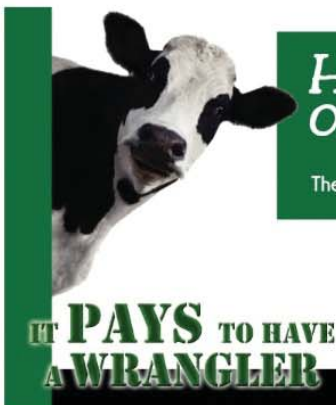
CELEBRATING THE STRONG POINTS

The Parnwells are involved in the Headlands project 'Upper Waikato Sustainable Milk Plan Project'.

The project is being undertaken in the Upper Waikato River Catchment which



Life outside: Mike and Lisa enjoy plenty of hobbies outside the farm.



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Shade shelter: The farm has two herd homes, which were finished in March 2007. They meant a \$40-50,000 saving on feed per annum, as well as more comfortable cows.

extends from Huka Falls to Lake Karapiro. The aim of the project is to develop positive environmental practice on dairy farms in this catchment with the goal of restoring the health and well-being of the Waikato River.

Funded by the Waikato River Authority, Primary Growth Partnership and DairyNZ the project recognises that the natural processes of the Waikato River have been altered over time by physical intervention and changing land use. The project seeks to minimise the impact of dairy farming operations through voluntary actions that are agreed to by the farmer as part of the consulting process.

Mike says there will be an ongoing environmental focus from their business after participating in the project.



“Our waterways were fenced anyway, and we have a low stocking rate and therefore low N leaching,” he said.

Headlands lead consultant Alison Dewes, who has an association with the Dairy Business of the Year competition, asked the Parnwells if

she could enter their business figures into the competition.

They agreed and in June won the Bay of Plenty Best Farm and Environmental (Low Input) awards.

The Parnwells were on holiday in Australia during the awards so Dolphy attended

and accepted the awards on behalf of the farm.

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD

The Parnwell's next goal is to

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

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ON-FARM



Milking shed: The Parnwells moved to their current farm in June 2005, and have spent seven years 50/50 sharemilking.



buy the farm and continue their successful business.

In their downtime, the family has plenty of hobbies to keep them busy. Mike is involved with the Reporoa Pumice Plodders cricket team and goes duckshooting regularly, while the whole family enjoys fishing and waterskiing.

The Parnwell's three girls Mikayla, 14, Maddison, 12, and Jordyn, 11, all play netball and basketball. Mikayla attends boarding school in the Hawkes Bay so there are regular visits to Napier for the family.

The Parnwells also try to have an overseas trip every

couple of years.

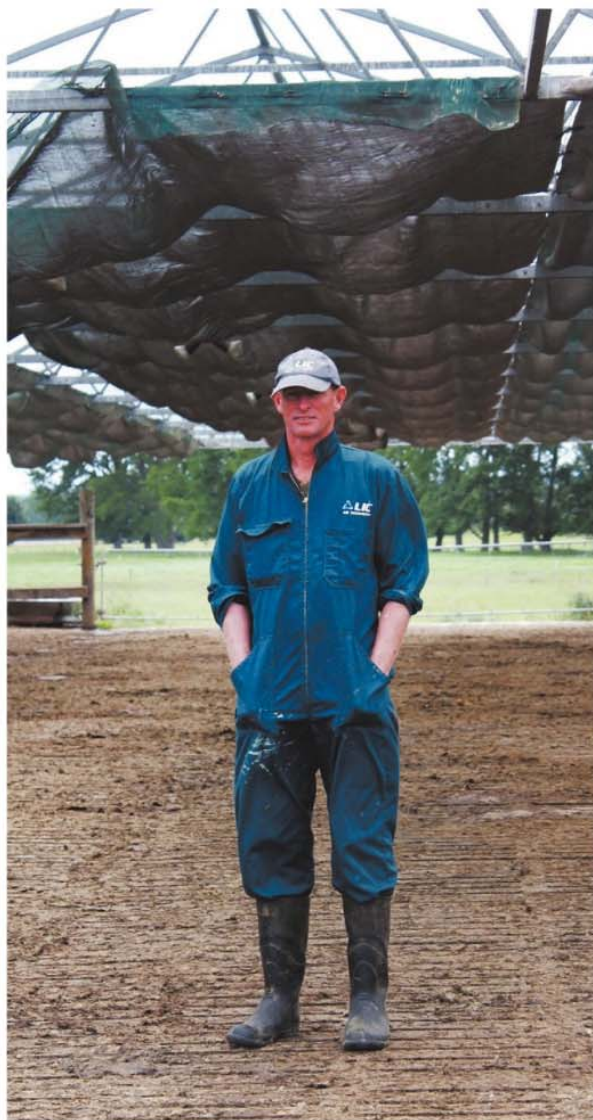
Mike and Lisa said having the fulltime worker has really helped ensure the family keeps their work/life balance with plenty of time for socialising, hobbies and family time.

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The cows eat less on colder days, produce more in summer by being out of the heat, and the cows burn less energy.'

MIKE PARNWELL



Helping hand: Mike has always farmed alone, but for the past year has had a fulltime staff member on board.



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