

Diversity key to farm succession

Anne Boswell talks to Coromandel hereford farmers who have worked hard to support the family farming dream.

A second income is crucial if farmers want to support the succession of the family farm, say Coromandel hereford breeders Kaye and Roy Ward.

The couple, who own Kairaumatī Polled Herefords in Colville, says while they decided to open their farm shop Hereford 'n' a Pickle primarily to showcase produce and meat grown on their farm, a secondary income stream is fast becoming a necessity for most farmers.

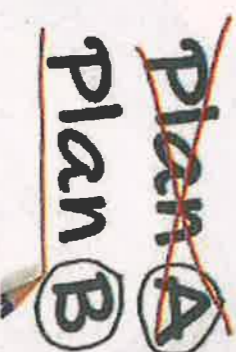
"Unless farm returns increase, farming is going to become more and more uneconomical," Roy says. "It is a problem worldwide that farmers don't feel as though they are being well-rewarded for what they do."

Hereford 'n' a Pickle opened two years ago in November and its success has far exceeded the family's expectations.

"The shop was all about utilising farm produce by making them into pickles and jams, and having an outlet to showcase them," Kaye says. "We always had the pickles in the back of our minds but we decided to add our own meat grown on the farm."

Roy says they started selling biscuits, scones and sandwiches as

THE BACKUP PLAN



per the locals' requests, and soon it became apparent that a good coffee machine was also essential. They have also added prime hereford beef burgers and hereford dogs to the menu, which has proven very popular and showcases the meat in its purest form.

"We get fantastic local support, and most days we get a tour operator bringing an increasing number of tourists through, too," Kaye says.

The shop is a real family affair, with daughter Cathy running the shop with Kaye, and son David processing the hereford beef as the onsite butcher.

The couple's other son James



and his wife Nicole are also involved, learning to run the farm itself - something Kaye and Roy are very pleased about.

"The aim is to keep it a family business and generate enough income to keep the family here," Roy says. "They've all been away and come back. A farm can generate enough income to support one family, but you need to think of other sources of income if you want to generate income for several families."

The farm itself is 464ha and has

ON THE FARM

the local milk company stopped collecting cream.

Kaye and Roy started the hereford stud 20 years ago with 20 breeding cows, and today have 120 breeding cows. They keep all replacements and keep all offspring until sold, and process approximately two fattened animals in the butchery every three weeks, as well as 50 sheep each year.

Last year's 17th annual bull sale saw 47 bulls (22 yearlings and 25 18 month bulls) go up for sale. A couple of bulls were sold to registered studs while the rest went to commercial beef farmers, and the majority to dairy farmers.

The Wards have been particularly focused on meat and EBV traits, rather than growth rates, for the last decade.

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important for us as we don't have a large grass area," Roy says.

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ROY WARD

own beef but they believe this will be resolved soon.

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It was a dairy farm milking 230 cows until the family made the decision to move to drystock when

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Their own sire, Kairaumatī Overland, is a very good all-round sire says Kaye, who also does all the AI herself, using around four-six AI sires annually.

With under 200ha of grass on the property, pasture management is key. The herd is solely pasture-fed with the exception of bulls coming up for sale, which are fed some baleage.

The Wards farm with organic principles in mind but occasionally use drench or penicillin when

required.

"We use natural products as much as possible, which we find very rewarding... we are seeing the grass get better and better," Kaye says.

The family is no stranger to diversification: in addition to the hereford stud and shop, the property has had a working timbermill since 1983, which Roy ran while Kaye took care of the farm.

"The sawmill has been a big part of our life here," Roy says.

"The mill utilises the timber grown on farm, which is roughly one third of the total farm area. We employ five fulltime staff and sell timber direct from the mill and to a couple of wholesale places outside of the peninsula.

"I also enjoy building with our own timber."

The couple is currently navigating some hiccups with securing a licensed abattoir that can guarantee the return of their own beef but they believe this will be resolved soon.

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Coromandel hereford breeders David, Roy, Cathy, and Kaye Ward with Cathy's son George Ward-Bolton.

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