

Black is the new green when it comes to fencing

SOLID BLACK FENCEPOSTS MADE FROM WASTE PLASTIC ARE RAPIDLY FINDING THEIR WAY ON TO FARMS, ORCHARDS, VINEYARDS AND LIFESTYLE BLOCKS THANKS TO A KIWI STARTUP BASED AT WAIUKU AND FOUNDED BY TWO FARMERS.

Future Post, which won the top innovation prize at Mystery Creek Fieldays last year, is an environmentally friendly fence post made from 100 per cent recycled plastics.

As strong as traditional timber posts, but with additional flexibility, Future Posts can be post driven by a conventional post rammer, drilled, cut with a chainsaw-nailed, screwed, bolted and stapled.

They're non-conductive, so no insulators are required, which saves time, labour and cost; and impenetrable by water, frost, insects and fungi.

That means no moisture, splitting, cracking or rotting.

With UV resistance, and no need for chromated copper arsenate (CCA) preservative treatment, they don't leach, and are expect-

ed to last for at least 50 years, after which they can be recycled again.

Because they're BioGro certified, organic producers can also use them. Animals can't chew them; they're resistant to saltwater and they come in a consistent size and grade with no knots.

As with the best Kiwi innovations, the Future Post concept started with trying to find an ingenious solution for a challenging problem.

While attempting to build a fence on an old rubbish dump site, Kopu dairy farmer and qualified diesel mechanic Jerome Wenzlick found his wooden fenceposts were breaking as he tried ramming them through all the waste plastic in the ground.

With a passion for the environment, as well as a background in fencing, Wenzlick realised if he could build a better fencepost from waste plastic, he'd also help solve a bigger environmental problem.

Soon after, a chance meeting with Bindi Ground, a farmer with previous experience in recycling and repurposing products, led to a business partnership and a commitment to produce premium fencing products that perform better, for longer.

The pair investigated overseas technology for making the posts before designing and building their own manufacturing machinery in collaboration with South Waikato Precision Engineers, Tokoroa.

The business now employs 10 people at Waiuku and makes thousands of fence posts every week from chipped-up milk bottles and granulated soft plastics.

Wenzlick says as the concept of the circular economy gains traction, Future Post has a perfect fit.

"What we're doing is repurposing waste that could have gone to landfill and turning it in to a valuable product for consumers. That's the cool thing about it.

"We expect to use several thousand tonnes of plastic a year."

Another key benefit of the concept is that those who incorporate Future Post into their infrastructure won't have the challenge of trying to dispose of broken CCA-treated posts.

The company has partnered with Fonterra for part of its raw materials supply and as a distribution channel, along with other retailers.

Each standard Future Post contains more than 200 plastic milk bottles and 1700 pieces of soft plastic, whereas a strainer post contains 1600 milk bottles and 12,000 pieces of soft plastic.

Once the waste plastic is sourced (including single use plastic bags, janitorial waste and soft plastics, mostly #2 and #4), it is ground and flaked into a consistent form ready for processing.

Wenzlick says, for this purpose, it doesn't have to be washed, which helps keep Future Post's water footprint low.

The blend of flaked plastics is UV stabilized and extruded into 4 post sizes: 100 mm x 1.8 m; 125 mm x 1.8 m; 125 mm x 2.4 m; and 200 mm x 2.4 m.

As for end uses, Wenzlick says there's no shortage of opportunity, whether it's equestrian fencing, riparian planting and stock exclusion from waterways, marine use, amenity and playground fencing, or kiwifruit and vineyards.

For more detail visit www.futurepost.co.nz.

