



AGRIBUSINESS

Opinion is divided on the proposed Ruataniwha Water Storage Scheme. **PAGE 21**



MANAGEMENT

B+L NZ workshop hears different views on managing high lambing percentages. **PAGE 31**



FINANCE

PGG Wrightson's goodwill disappears and sees it post a big loss. **PAGE 10**

RURAL NEWS

TO ALL FARMERS, FOR ALL FARMERS

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ained to live up to society's expectations.”

Fonterra chief executive Theo Spierings said in a brief statement he accepted Romano's resignation. “Gary has made a significant contribution during his time at Fonterra and we respect his decision,” says Spierings.

RUNNING UP THE HOURS

THE NEW chairman of the Agricultural Aviation Association Alan Beck beside his beloved Bell Jet Ranger helicopter, which he bought in 1977. The helicopter – still flying – was only the second in New Zealand used for agricultural work. Beck, based at Eltham, Taranaki, has at least 17,000 hours flying (almost all on helicopters) to his name. Beck says 90% of his clients are dairy farmers in Taranaki, Waikato and Bay of Plenty.

More page 14

14 NEWS

Farmers need to front on safety

» PETER BURKE

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THE NEW chairman of the New Zealand Agricultural Aviation Association (NZAAA) is appealing to farmers to provide a safe working environment and to fully comply with new environmental standards.

Allan Beck, who owns Beck Helicopters, Eltham, Taranaki, told *Rural News* that farmers need to ensure a safe workplace for agricultural pilots, especially good airstrips and an end to stringing electric fence wires across gullies, the cause of many helicopter crashes.

Beck broke his back some years ago when he hit a wire and knows of at least 24 fatalities caused

by farmers who ran wires across gullies. In Australia, farmers can face legal action for this and a similar law in New Zealand would give farmers the message.

“The industry has had discussions with Federated Farmers and run a campaign with kids in different rural schools to go back to their mums and dads and say ‘why are we hanging wires up in the gully where the helicopters have to spray?’

“Fertiliser application has not really been a problem for aeroplanes because they are up at 200 feet, but in helicopters we fly lower and if you’re spraying you are trying to ‘glue’ that stuff to the ground, so the risk of a

wire strike is greater.”

Beck says farmers need only spend a bit more money on wire and follow the fence line instead of taking a short cut across the gully.

Beck says farmers must expect to pay a ‘fair’ price to have fertiliser spread on their properties. Aerial spreaders have simply gone broke or had a bad crash record by not charging enough to keep their businesses afloat, especially when times are tough.

Beck reckons the new road user charges will put up the cost of transporting fertiliser to farms and he predicts greater use of ‘hot mixes’ of fertiliser. ‘Triple super’ is an example – 16% P as opposed to the stan-

dard 6%.

Key issues in future will centre on sustainability and compliance, Beck says, meaning fertiliser and sprays will have to be applied to council rules, avoiding damage to the environment.

“The public are not fully aware of the technology we are using and that’s our fault as an industry. We know what we are doing, we are compliant; we have to get out there and sell ourselves.”

Beck says the fertiliser manufacturers must be part of the deal. The days of so-called ‘dust’ fertilisers will pass, granulated products being more the norm. Especially problematic is fertiliser and spray drift where lifestyle



NZAAA chairman Allan Beck.

blocks adjoin commercial operations.

“When the townies move into rural areas they are demanding the same

clean air and no noise as when they are living in Auckland – a huge problem. They can make life extremely difficult and we

not only have to change, but be seen to have changed.”

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