

August 2017

Farm Plan Stories

Sam and Sarah Duncan on their Elsthorpe farm.



The Duncans

There were no surprises for Elsthorpe farmers Sam and Sarah Duncan when they opened their new Farm Environment Management Plan.

Their farm is 330ha of easy rolling country in the Elsthorpe district, including a 65ha block where Sam's parents now live.

Sam and Sarah's partnership took over the business last year but they have officially owned the farm and stud since April. The property's stocking rate is 50:50 sheep and cattle.

They run 1,000 ewes. All lambs are finished on the property as well as 123 cows and heifers. The Elgin Angus Stud's 41st annual on-farm auction held in June saw 31 bulls sold for an average \$7,300.

The stud, started by Sam's grandfather Jock Duncan in 1952, was taken over by his parents Mick and Barb in the early 1970s.

Two main tributaries of the Tukituki River run through their property - the Wharemate flows for 1.2km to the Makara, which continues about 1.6km to their boundary.

"The Wharemate is small and meandering but the Makara is quite a big stream. We've already done some fencing, but have a bit more to do," Sam says.

Emma Buchanan - an approved Farm Plan provider from Soter Rural Compliance - did their farm plan, following a neighbour's recommendation.

"She was laid back, easy to deal with and very practical," Sam says. "With her farming background she knows how things work, and what needs to be done."

Soil tests done before Emma's visit showed no issues with nutrient budgeting. "We're well within the limits," Sam says.

Sam says they have a few bits and pieces to pick up but essentially, they knew what had to be done. "Erosion is not a huge issue here as we're not that steep - just ongoing planting of poplar and willow poles. We also have some small wet areas we generally keep the cattle off. Otherwise they make a mess."

A 6ha wetland in the middle of the farm was fenced around 10 years ago. "There are white pines (w) growing in the water, which is unusual and sparked some interest from the Regional Council. At the moment it's all congested with willows so getting rid of them will be the first job to help preserve this piece of natural habitat."

"Emma liked what we'd done with the wetland. All up, she was here a little under four hours. We took her around the farm, had a discussion over a coffee and then she sent the report back. She had a set price for the size of the farm, which meant no surprises with the bill either."

Sam says they're pleased the report is done and they can get on with fencing and farming.

"Improving water quality in our streams and rivers is important. Everyone needs to do their bit, rural and urban. If we all work together, it will ensure our waterways are preserved for future generations."

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