

SIR ARTHUR WARD AWARD 1998

Landcorp Farming Limited

The Sir Arthur Ward Award recognises excellence in the application of the principles of animal production. It is appropriate therefore that the New Zealand Society should recognise New Zealand's largest farming organisation, Landcorp Farming Limited.

Landcorp Farming Ltd is a subsidiary of Land Corporation Limited, a State Owned Enterprise formed on 1 April 1987. As at 30 June 1997, Landcorp owned or leased a total of 101 sheep and beef farms and 25 dairy farms. The total area of 399,622 ha farmed (including 180,659 ha on Molesworth Station), spans the length and breadth of the country. Landcorp farms carry a total of 1.52m stock units, comprising of 766,319 sheep su, 694,063 cattle su, 51,410 deer su and 6,749 goat su.

The coordination and management of a large and complex mix of animal production enterprises requires skills in coordination, logistics and most importantly a good sense of practical judgement. Since its formation, Landcorp Farming Ltd has maintained a continual programme of rationalisation to increase the operational efficiency and improve the profitability of its core livestock farming business. Across the country, Landcorp farms have been moulded into efficient production-line systems, with dedicated functions of either breeding, growing or finishing livestock. Re-grassing, subdivision, further land development and judicious purchasing of some finishing properties, have all contributed to an improved basis on which to operate a productive livestock business.

Landcorp also emphasises efficiencies in livestock breeding, nutrition and management. Genetic improvement programmes are coordinated and structured to generate productive flock and herd replacements, as well as to generate high-growth slaughter livestock through exploiting planned crossbreeding programmes. Landcorp's genetic improvement programmes are self-sustaining in both livestock and technical servicing. Improved animal nutrition and management, coupled with effective pasture management and forage production systems, again self-sustaining in technical backing, add value by supporting the genetically improved capital and revenue-earning livestock.

Many outside observers would consider Landcorp Farming Ltd's greatest asset to be its land holdings, or perhaps its livestock, or even its genetic resources. While Landcorp acknowledges that these are all assets in their own right, to its credit the Company maintains that its greatest asset is its staff. Senior managers, operations managers, office staff, farm managers and farm staff, all work with a commitment to the business of profitable livestock production. The Company routinely runs a series of personal development and training courses for all staff, to encourage this commitment and sense of teamwork. The positive feedback from participants reinforces Landcorp management's determination that these courses will continue.

Corporate livestock production is a business that

requires planning, budget analysis, information processing and above all, practical and competent animal and pasture management. Landcorp Farming Limited accomplishes all these things and more. The achievements of Landcorp Farming Ltd in the application of sound principles of animal production are many and varied. And the bottom line is that these achievements have been profitable.

- Starting with a net operating profit of \$82,000 over the first 15 months of operation in 1987/88, Landcorp reached a record \$20,429,000 a mere 6 years later in 1993/94.

- Total fixed assets (land, improvements, forests and livestock) has increased from \$149m at establishment in 1987, to \$401.7m in June 1997.

- Wool production has increased from 4.4kg/sheep su in the 1990 season to 5.5 kg/sheep su in 1997. Over the same time period, lambing % increased from 95.7% to 111.3%, calving % from 84.5 to 89.2% and fawning % from 83.4 to 85.2%.

- Some 433,000 lambs are slaughtered each year, along with 209,000 older sheep (predominantly ewes), 50,000 beef cattle and 6000 deer.

Landcorp Farming Ltd is a respected participant in many areas of animal production. Several of its breeding programmes are internationally unique, with genetic trends that suggest near maximal rates of progress using current technology. Many of these programmes have been described in our Society's own Conference Proceedings, documenting their innovative design, rates of success, or provision of uniquely large and detailed data sets.

Landcorp continues to participate at the leading edge of animal production science in New Zealand. The Company recently purchased an X-ray computer tomography (CT) scanner and is involved in the very successful *INNERVISION* joint venture with AgResearch, as well as being a major contributor of animals and data for another venture involving genetic linkage in rib-eye muscling. Development of synthetic sheep breeds based on intense screening operations from the Company's large commercial populations, in-house use of advanced breeding value estimation procedures and database designs, laptop computer-based on-farm livestock recording in breeding programme operations, improved technical supervision of new pasture mixtures, special-purpose pasture development and crop and fertilizer usage, retained ownership of products beyond the farm gate, continued commitment to product quality, and a strong customer focus, all indicate how Landcorp Farming Ltd plans to lift its rate of improved performance in the animal production business.

The New Zealand Society of Animal Production is happy to recognise Landcorp Farming Limited as a worthy recipient of the Sir Arthur Ward Award for 1998.

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