

New forest scheme targets hillsides

FOREST owners have welcomed the reboot of the popular Afforestation Grant Scheme announced this week by Associate Primary Industries Minister Jo Goodhew.

“This is squarely aimed at pastoral farmers on steep, erosion-prone land where the economics of production forestry might be marginal,” says Forest Owners Association technical manager Glen Mackie. “It is an endorsement of the environmental attributes of forestry and will doubtless make a useful contribution to erosion prevention and the country’s carbon ledger.”

“Under the scheme, up to 2500ha of new forest will be planted a year. If this is offset against current annual deforestation — based on industry estimates of around 10,000ha a year — the annual decline in planted forest area will fall to 7500ha a year.”

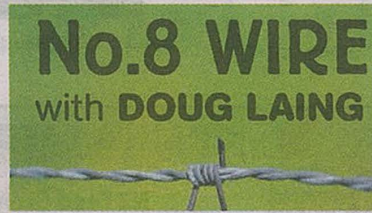
Mackie says there are safety and environmental challenges involved in harvesting forests on steep, erosion-prone terrain.

“So we also welcome the Government’s role in helping to fund research into steep-country harvesting, as well as in trialling alternative species that may perform better than radiata pine in terms of maintaining the stability of hillsides in the three or four years following harvest.”

Mackie says net afforestation was the norm in New Zealand for many decades, peaking in the 1990s.

Since then new planting has fallen to low levels and, in some years, large areas of existing forest have been converted to dairying and other land uses.

“In some cases, this is because new technology and irrigation have made dairying the most valuable use for this



land. In other cases, especially on steep hill country, plantation forests are more profitable than pastoral farming for the country and the landowner, yet landowners are not planting.

“In large part this is due to landowner fears about government and local government policy changes during the growth cycle of a forest,” he says.

Consultant search on

The hunt is on again for New Zealand’s top dairy, sheep and beef agricultural consultants and emerging rural professionals with nominations for the Farmax Consultant of the Year Awards now open.

The winners will be announced at the New Zealand Institute of Primary Industry Management’s annual conference in Ashburton on August 3, and comprise awards for the Dairy NZ Dairy Consultant of the Year, the Beef+Lamb NZ Sheep and Beef Consultant of the Year, and the NZIPIM Emerging Rural Professional of the Year.

The \$20,000 prize pool for the top three categories includes a paid overseas study trip, funds for professional development and funds to take paid hours off work to complete a project that will be of benefit to pastoral farming.

Fagan steps back in

Shearing legend David Fagan’s



DISAPPEARING: Forestry has been a net loser in recent years as other land uses appeal with higher profit and more certainty.

retirement from show competition appears to have been postponed with his likely appearance in four tests for New Zealand in the UK in July.

The Te Kuiti shearer, and Hastings shearer Dion King, won places in the Shearing Sports New Zealand UK tour team after winning the New Zealand Shears Circuit and New Zealand Open Championship finals respectively at what was supposed to have been Fagan’s swansong in Te Kuiti last month.

Sticking to his plans, Fagan turned down the place in the team, and was replaced by South Island shearer and circuit runner-up Tony Coster.

But Coster was available for only part of the trip and, expecting to be in the UK at the time, Fagan has stepped in for the latter stages.

“We cannot underestimate the importance for leading farmers ‘to stay ahead of the game and get that winning edge’ when it comes to running a successful farm operation.”

In its 19th year, the programme covers all aspects of rural enterprise management to help drive business growth, including strategic goal-setting, negotiating and people management.

Whiston takes charge

LIC, a farmer-owned co-operative that provides a range of services

and solutions to improve the productivity and prosperity of farmers, has appointed Paul Whiston as chief executive of its new subsidiary business, LIC Automation.

Whiston, originally from Rotorua, was previously head of sales and marketing for Paymark, the bank-owned payment network operator, where he was also acting chief executive for a time.

Prior to that, he was based in London as general manager international for Simpl, a New Zealand information technology professional services company.

LIC chief executive Wayne McNee said Whiston brought a strong leadership background to the role, and extensive experience in senior roles for information technology organisations that operate in international markets.



PAUL WHISTON