

## Payout high but farmers remain wary

AS the country celebrates Fonterra's record returns many North King Country dairy farmers are subdued about the 'good news'.

On Thursday the dairy giant announced record revenue for the 2010/11 season - record milk collection, record profit and its best ever payout.

At \$8.25, it is the highest in the co-operative's 10-year history.

Following the announcement Fonterra Shareholders' Council chairman Simon Couper said: "The \$1.30 increase in our annual payout equates to more than a \$300 flow through to every New Zealander's pocket and shows that all Kiwis benefit from a strong Fonterra."

Waikato Federated Farmers dairy chairperson Chris Lewis agrees saying it's a fantastic result and will be good for the economy nationally and locally.

"If it wasn't for this good Fonterra payout you would probably find the economy would be in recession again.

"One thing farmers are good at is spending money in their local towns and when farmers are doing well their towns are doing well.

"They do spend it very generously because they have to run their businesses and feed their families.

"So if farmers do well, towns like Otorohanga and Te Kuiti do well."

### Expenses up

The Te Awamutu dairy farmer says last season was hard production-wise but this season is looking quite favourable.

Mr Lewis says he always plans for an average season, and the funds made available from the increased payout will be applied to debt, rates and insurances, which have taken "massive leaps" this year.

"So while you're getting an increase in income there are also increases in expenses. It's a double-edged sword and you're always struggling to stay ahead.

"Today's market is very trans-

parent and if you're getting good prices for milk powder it also means commodity prices for fertiliser, palm kernel and maize.

"All the other grains are up as well, they go up in tandem.

"Nothing's as cheap as yesterday is it?"

### Cautious response

But while Mr Lewis is pleased about the payout, he remains cautious about the future.

With nine months of the season left, falling world commodity prices could mean a lower payout is "on the cards" for 2012/2013 season.

Local dairy farmers are reluctant to talk 'on the record' to the *Waitomo News* saying they face ongoing challenges of rising costs and uncertain times ahead.

It seems most are choosing to tread carefully, paying debt and possibly buying a much needed, but not necessarily new, piece of farm equipment.

PGG Wrightson Te Kuiti branch manager Carlos Cressy says there were farmers who got burnt in the last recession, so despite the high payout many are choosing to consolidate and service their debt.

And although PGG Wrightson is seeing a small percentage rise in business, farmers are very "careful" with what they're spending their money nowadays says Mr Cressy.

### Records in line

Giltrap AgriZone's managing director Andrew Giltrap says the payout is in line with what was forecast . . . "only 15c more".

His Otorohanga agricultural machinery supply business has received orders making business "a little bit more normal" but still below the company's 10 year average.

Mr Giltrap forecasts projected business 15 months ahead and says the outlook is "reasonably positive for the next couple of years".

"But things could change tomorrow on the world market."



## A Wales' tale

FAN-TASTIC: Welsh rugby's biggest supporter Rhian 'Madamrygbi' Davies (above) visited Te Kuiti on Wednesday to interview Sir Colin Meads for Welsh TV show *Jonathan*. Madamrygbi and her film crew Gwyn Derfel and Richard Fisher (below) are following the Wales rugby team around New Zealand during the 2011 Rugby World Cup. STORY P3.



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**IN DEMAND:** Former Waikato rugby rep and current Welsh rugby coach Warren Gatland signs autographs for a group of St Joseph's school children at Waitomo Domain.



**LINE UP:** Welsh rugby legend Shane Williams was popular on Thursday as large crowds of people queued for his autograph.

# A taste of the red dragons

THE Welsh dragons roared their way into Waitomo last week.

More than 400 people crowded Waitomo Domain on Thursday to watch Wales national rugby team go through their paces, lead by coach and former Waikato man Warren Gatland.

The crowd was given free access to the professional rugby players who signed shirts, posters and flags throughout their two-hour stay.

The visit was a "gentlemen's agreement" between the Gatlands (Warren and Trudi) and long-time friends Chris and Louise Kay of Waitomo (*Waitomo News*, September 20).

Following the meet and greet training session, the Welsh players walked to Huhu for lunch before heading to the Glowworm Caves for a sing-along with the Waitomo Caves Choir.

## High praise

Gatland was full of praise for the warm Waitomo welcome.

"This is true kiwiana bringing the boys here out of their comfort zone to a quiet, or not so quiet, country town.

"It's great to get out of the big

smoke to visit the real New Zealand and I think Waitomo has been perfect for that.

"For me this type of grassroots rugby is what I was brought up on with mums and dads on the sideline, a sausage sizzle and enjoying the hospitality, this is what it's all about.

"I can just see on the boys' faces they have loved coming here to Waitomo."

Surrounded by a scrum of children waving felt pens in the air, Hamilton-born Gatland, who has been at the helm of Welsh rugby for five years, says travelling through Waikato and King Country was like a homecoming.

"The support we had in Hamilton against Samoa was fantastic.

"A huge amount of Waikato people got in behind us which made a massive difference to the players who have travelled halfway around the world to be here.

"It was awesome."

Focused on the task at hand, Gatland is happy with his team's performance in the Rugby World Cup.

"We were really unlucky against

South Africa in our first game, we probably should have won that, and Samoa was really tough as well.

"We were behind at halftime and the boys dug deep to come back and win which was a really impressive effort.

"So we trained really hard today, the boys are in top form and we're looking forward to putting our best performances on the field against Namibia and Fiji to qualify for the quarter finals."

On September 11, Wales narrowly lost 17-16 to current world champions South Africa but bounced back a week later to defeat Samoa 17-10.

They played Namibia in New Plymouth last night and their final pool game is against Fiji on Sunday in Hamilton.

Gatland says the team was also stopping in 'Meadsville' to see the Sir Colin and Stan Meads picture gallery.

Chris Kay says the turnout was amazing.

"The amount of kids was incredible and for some people today who would never get the chance to go to a world cup game this was their chance to get up close and personal with a national team.

"The feedback I got from Warren and the players was that they really enjoyed the relaxed Waitomo atmosphere and mixing with the local people was something they will remember for a long time."

## Welsh TV crew

Te Kuiti also got a taste of the 'red dragon' last week when a Welsh TV film crew rolled into town.

Filming for the TV show 'Jonathan' front-



**KEY FIGURE:** The Welsh team's youngest player George North (19) is assigned with protecting the team's 'Welsh Love Spoon' throughout the 2011 Rugby World Cup.

ed by Welsh rugby legend Jonathan Davies, the crew stopped in 'Meadsville' on Wednesday for a special interview with Sir Colin Meads.

'Jonathan' screens on S4C (Welsh TV) Friday nights during the Rugby World Cup featuring clips from intrepid Welsh supporters.

The show's main interviewer is Eirlys Bellin whose character Rhian 'Madamrygbi' Davies has already interviewed NZ Prime Minister John Key, First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones, former All Black Andy Leslie and Welsh rugby coach Warren Gatland's wife Trudi.

"Sir Colin is an absolute legend," says Madamrygbi.

"He's so charming and so down to earth.

"He told us that he broke his arm and carried on playing rugby in 1970, which is unbelievable.

"He's got so many reasons to be like arrogant and proud and he's not.

"He's humble and says he's still a farmer at heart and I just think he's a legend and only if he was a bit younger I would consider possibly

marrying him.

"Meeting Sir Colin has been the highlight of my trip even more than meeting the Prime Minister."

Madamrygbi was also impressed with Te Kuiti's 'Meadsville' Gallery and was "truly like blown away" with all the friendly people she had met.

"My dream while I'm in New Zealand is to see Wales play the All Blacks in the grand final," she says.

"Also I would like to marry Jamie Robinson (Welsh centre) at the final but if that doesn't happen, Steve from the Glowworm Caves is a definite contender.

"This is the best job in the world and no doubt the highlight of my life so far."

The film crew, which is following the Welsh team around New Zealand, consists of three people in a campervan dubbed the 'Fan Van' including cameraman Richard Fisher and producer Gwyn Derfel.

Their next stop was New Plymouth ahead of the Wales versus Namibia game last night.



**IN CHARGE:** Wales coach Warren Gatland's wife Trudi (left) and Louise Kay of Waitomo played integral roles in organising the national team's visit to Waitomo on Thursday.