

# Pea Weevil

*The journey of a  
community to  
eradicate*

Karen Williams

Wairarapa commercial pea grower and  
farming advocate





## A Brief Introduction



- Wairarapa girl
- Uni of Otago - Geography & Resource Management degrees
- Policy and planning experience
- Ahiaruhe Farm “a townie who married a farmer”
- Ballance Farm Environment Award Supreme Winner Wellington Region 2013
- Agri-Women’s Development Trust - Escalator 2015
- Pea Weevil Industry Representative on MPI Governance
- Federated Farmers Governance 2018
- He Waka Eke Noa – Climate Change Partnership 2019



# My Leadership Why

---

“Helping farmers and the agri-sector to engage more effectively with local, regional and central government so that they can be more environmentally, economically and socially sustainable”

Developed through the Agri-Women's Development Trust 'Escalator' Programme 2015

---





# Ahiaruhe Farm

- 480 hectares
- Arable (wheat, barley, red clover, ryegrass, peas)
- Livestock (trade lambs and bull beef)
- Irrigate up to 160 hectares
- 2.8 kms of Ruamahanga River boundary



## Who is Federated Farmers?

Lobbies  
government on  
behalf of farmer  
members

Origins in 1899,  
Federation formed  
in 1945

Proud history –  
FMG Insurance,  
Ravensdown, Rural  
Women NZ

Arable, Dairy, Meat  
and Wool, High  
Country, Goats and  
Rural Butchers

24 Provincial  
Presidents and  
Executives

7 Board Members  
plus National  
Council

13,000+ farmer  
members, plus  
corporate partners  
& affiliates



## Roles at Federated Farmers

### National Vice President 2020

- Resource Management Act, Health and Safety, Transport, He Waka Eke Noa Steering Group, People and Culture Committee Chair

### National Arable Chair & Board Member 2018-2020

- Arable, Biosecurity, Rural, Fire, Hazardous Substances, Transport

### Wairarapa Arable Chair 2017-2018



Current Board: Wayne Langford, Andrew Hoggard, Chris Lewis, Karen Williams, William Beetham, Colin Hurst, Chris Allen

CEO: Terry Copeland





## Organisational Purpose

Empowering Farmers



## Strategic Priorities

Be the respected voice of farming

Foster an inspired leadership network

Support vibrant rural communities  
Optimise our influence

Grow and promote industry leadership



## Strategic Deliverables

Develop our reputation as a trusted network

Build community resilience



- **March 2016:** Pea weevil discovered at seed processing plant

- ## Wrapping support around growers

- ## Monitoring and surveillance – national and local

This map displays the Pea Weevil Controlled Area in the Wairarapa region of New Zealand. The controlled area is outlined in purple, covering parts of the Wairarapa District Council and the Southern Wairarapa District Council areas. Key locations labeled include Masterton, Carterton, Waikarepa, and various smaller towns like Bulls, Eketūmoko, and Waipara. The map also shows the regional boundary between the North Island and South Island, and the territorial authority boundaries. A legend identifies the symbols used: black dots for LINZ Place Names, a dashed line for Regional Boundary, a thick purple line for Controlled Area, and a thin grey line for Territorial Authority (2016). An inset map shows the location of the Wairarapa region within New Zealand. A scale bar indicates distances up to 40 km, and a north arrow is present.



# The Social Impact of an Incursion

---

Personal

Local  
growers

Wairarapa  
Community

---



## Becoming the Pea Weevil Lady

- First major role in governance
- An industry observer – what did that mean?
- Supporting a growing ban
  - family, neighbours, friends
  - pressure from industry
- Confidentiality agreement – how to influence and inform?
- Before we had Zoom - diminished impact
- The dreaded ‘C’ word
- Chatting with the Minister – Hon Nathan Guy
- Relentless media commitments
- No remuneration or covering of expenses
- Personal toll



## Local Growers

- Genuine feelings of anger, frustration, disbelief, mental stress - RST
- Loss of their most lucrative crop
- Important part of the crop rotation, nitrogen fixing/different chemistry
- Peas grown on contract - few replacement contracts offered
- Felt abandoned by seed industry
- No apology or apparent remorse from seed company
- Not well informed at the start, communication variable
- Ex gratia payments – difficult process
- Mycoplasma Bovis took over MPI priorities and the headlines



## Wairarapa Community

- Failure of businesses, no financial support
  - Masterton Vegetable Seeds
  - Associated businesses (trucking companies, machinery clean down)
- No one could grow peas in garden – Tararua to Cape Palliser
- No peastraw was available or allowed in
- “Unsightly signs” – Tararua Mayor Tracy Collis
- Vigilant community
  - Reports of non-compliance
  - Supermarket updates





# Process of Eradication

- National surveillance: area freedom after two years
- Wairarapa trap crop regime: sweep netting and lab analysis

Year 0 = 2016, Pea Weevil discovered in Masterton seed store

Growing Season	Number of Trap Crop Sites	Weevil Found	Weevil found Area Freedom Declared = 2 years
Year 1 = 2016-17	20	1700 (multiple sites)	-
Year 2 = 2017-18	25	15 (2 sites)	-
Year 3 = 2018-19	25	0	-
Year 4 = 2019-20	15	0	Area Freedom Declared

# Sweep Netting

- Done under contract with AsureQuality



## Media Attention



### 'Patient' farmers await weevil plan

Local News > 'Patient' farmers await weevil plan  
by | 9 Aug, 2016 | Local News, Rural

By Seamus Boyer editor@age.co.nz Slow but steady progress is being made on a plan to help Wairarapa farmers dealing with the pea weevil threat. Last month the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) announced a two-year, region-wide ban on pea crops after populations of...



### Elimination credited as a world first

Local News > Elimination credited as a world first  
by | 25 Jul, 2020 | Local News, Rural

Growers and representatives from the Foundation for Arable Research, Federated Farmers, the Ministry for Primary Industries, the Cropping Strategy Group, and Assure Quality gathered to celebrate eradicating pea weevil on Wednesday. PHOTO/GIANINA SCHWANECKE GIANINA...



### Pea ban 'likely' to continue

Local News > Pea ban 'likely' to continue  
by | 15 Jan, 2018 | Local News, Rural

MPI arable industry representative Karen Williams with FAR chief executive Nick Pyke. PHOTO/BECKIE WILSON BECKIE WILSON  
beckie.wilson@age.co.nz A Wairarapa ban on growing pea crops could be extended for a further two years, after more weevils...



### Weevil banishers credited

Local News > Weevil banishers credited  
by | 26 Sep, 2020 | Local News, Rural

Gladstone arable farmer and Federated Farmers vice-president Karen Williams. PHOTO/FILE GIANINA SCHWANECKE  
gianina.schwanecke@age.co.nz A company involved in the eradication of pea weevil in Wairarapa, credited as a world first, has been named a...



### Worried farmers in crisis over weevil threat

Local News > Worried farmers in crisis over weevil threat  
by | 3 Aug, 2016 | Local News, Rural

By Seamus Boyer editor@age.co.nz Increasingly worried pea crop farmers have been given alternatives to help escape the "crisis" brought on by the discovery of the pea weevil in Wairarapa. And while the list of possible solutions spans from baked beans to...



### Too early to rule out pea compensation

Local News > Too early to rule out pea compensation  
by | 29 Jul, 2016 | Local News, Rural

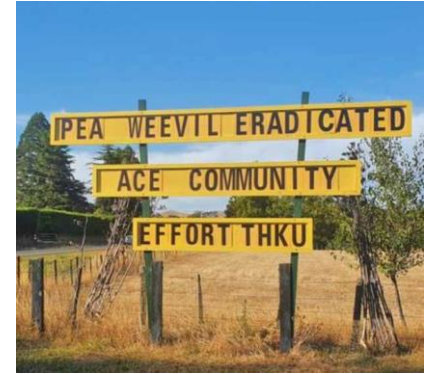
By Alisa Yong alisa.yong@age.co.nz Compensation might still be on the cards for farmers hit by a two-year ban on growing peas, says Wairarapa Federated Farmers president Jamie Falloon. Mr Fallon confirmed he had been in discussions with the Ministry for Primary...

## Success

- World first
- Announcement by Minister O'Connor 17 February 2020
- Resume NZ pea weevil free status + reduce agchem reliance
- Optimism for other eradication programmes
- Peas again

Plant spring 2020

Harvest summer 2021





## Why were we successful?

Masterton Vegetable  
Seeds and Graham  
Corrin

Grower buy in and  
community buy in  
“Team of 5 million”

Committed  
leadership – not  
their day job

Effective media  
campaign

Trust - eventually

Strong collaboration  
(growers, FAR, Feds,  
MPI, seed and plant  
industries)

Dogged pursuit of  
eradication – eye on  
the prize

Support for growers  
– Alternative  
Cropping Strategy, ex  
gratia payments

Geography – natural  
boundaries

Bit of luck on our  
side!

## Biosecurity Awards

- Finalist in 2020 Biosecurity Awards – GIA Industry Award
- First time key players had been in a room together
  - Wairarapa growers
  - Federated Farmers leaders
  - Foundation for Arable Research
  - TAG group
  - AsureQuality
  - NZ Grain & Seed Trade Assoc
  - MPI
- No award but a lot of pride and satisfaction



## Christchurch pasta makers share their pro tips

Jake Kenny · 05:00, Mar 31 2021



SUPPLIED

Friends Steffano Pessina, left, and Alba Micheli are the



## Durum Wheat Project

- Wairarapa Cropping Strategy - SLMACC
- Trials of growing durum wheat
- Further funding – SFFF
- Samples sent to NZ chefs and pasta makers
- Develop a sustainable business

## Key lessons for the Future

1

Work as a  
team

2

Build trust

3

Communicate early  
and  
effectively

4

Prevent incursions  
rather  
than eradicate

5

Support people in  
the wider  
team

6

Celebrate  
success!



Hear no weevil, see no weevil, speak no weevil



Thanks, Karen Williams

23 July 2021