

## CASE STUDY: MATTHEW & JARROD ROSS

# Irrigators obligated to get it right in farm business

***Matthew and Jarrod Ross operate a high performing dairy operation in the Duntroon district of the lower Waitaki. They recognise the value of water to the wider community – Annette Scott reports.***

In showcasing the development of Kokoamo, bothers Matt and Jarrod demonstrate a keen desire to farm within a well-balanced region and community where the social, economic and environmental values are held in equal regard.

Matthew is a strong advocate of ensuring that solutions and issues must be community and stakeholder driven. As irrigators they are well aware they have an obligation to get it right.

With a sound technical knowledge of agricultural production systems and the use of irrigation, the Ross brothers openly acknowledge water is high priority for them in their farming business, more so since Matthew and his wife Julie converted the 320ha sheep, beef and mixed cropping farm to dairy five years ago, on which Jarrod and his wife Susan now sharemilk 1000 cows that produced 2050MS/ha last season.

As they intensified every part of the property they worked on the philosophy of keeping five steps ahead of their irrigation consents ensuring their water take was meeting all social, economic and environmental requirements.

“Water is high priority for us in the faming business but at the same time we acknowledge our obligations to the surrounding water. While core to the running of a high performing farm, we recognise the importance of attention to detail in respect to environmental issues. It’s not all about the dollars and cents in farming,” Matthew said.

“I would never bang a peg in the ground and say I am finished – well not when it comes to water.”

In respect to the development of the property Jarrod said there had been a huge amount of work to convert and adapt to spray irrigation with the establishment of a pivot on the rolling country requiring a lot of earthworks.

But with a biodiversity programme in place and the ongoing introduction of technology to increase water efficiency, progressive planting is getting the property back into shape. The biodiversity programme includes a 1.5ha wetlands area designed to take the run off from pretty much the entire property. Plantings include several kilometres of shelter trees and more than 100 specimen trees.

Soil moisture testing is key going forward to ensure reliability in terms of scheduling water. “When we turn water on for irrigation we will know what we have got, and get it on.”

A former Sharemilker of the Year Matthew firmly believes irrigation needs to be highly reliable in order for investment to be made. He is passionate about irrigation development and the need to get it right.

“When we put water on we want the best outcome possible. That comes back to re-grassing the property, soil testing and monitoring all coming into the efficiency equation. With a top end performing farm I am happy to put money back into it. With our planting programme we have invested in 9500 plants out there.”