

Crown Pastoral Land Tenure Review

Lease name: BLAIRICH

Lease number: PM 026

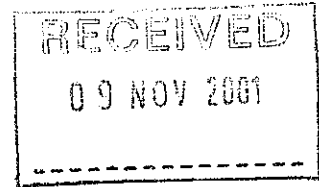
Fish & Game Report

As part of the process of Tenure Review Fish & Game councils may provide advice on significant inherent values within the pastoral lease, and the information may be incorporated in the Conservation Resources Report. The advice is part of the information gathered and assessed for the development of a preliminary consultation document.

The report attached is released under the Official Information Act 1982.

July

06



7 October 2001

Simon Bamford
Knight Frank
16a Fyffe Street
Blenheim

Dear Simon

Reference Blairich Pastoral Lease Review

Please find enclosed Neils' original report on the property with the summary recommendations. The recommendation for marginal strips, or similar, to protect the trout fisheries and public access to them still stand.

Quail and quail habitat are regarded as a valuable resource on this property but given the nature of the farm and farming practices it is now accepted by our Council that our best approach is to rely on the goodwill of the land owner to provide regulated access to hunters.

The man made and enhanced duck ponds are recognised as an important wetland habitat in this area and are annually shot during the season by hunters known to the lease holder. A protection mechanism registered on the title, to protect into perpetuity these locally significant wetlands, is sort.

Regards

David Oberdries

Field Officer

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D. Oberdries".

A large, stylized handwritten signature or scribble, possibly a second signature or a large flourish.

PASTORAL LEASE INSPECTIONS

BLAIRICH PROPERTY

Inspected on 16 May 1997

by	Neil Deans	Fish and Game
	Simon Bamford	Knight Frank (representing the Commissioner of Crown Lands)
	Martin Heine	Department of Conservation
	Jan Clayton-Green	Department of Conservation
	Hugh Cooper	Pastoral Lessee
	Ian Mitchell	Former Commissioner of Crown Lands Blenheim

The Blairich property lies on the north facing side of the Blackbirch Range located in the lower true left of the Awatere Valley. Several properties are to the north across the Blairich Stream; to the west is Crown land in the upper Omaka catchment; to the south is the Blackbirch scenic reserve while to the east is the Awatere River.

The property includes some flats beside the Awatere but most of the property is steep hill country on the northern side of the Blackbirch range.

Matters of Interest to Fish and Game

The primary areas of interest to Fish and Game on or beside the property include the spawning of salmonids, especially trout, in Blackbirch Stream and potentially also in the upper reaches of the Omaka River on the other side of the property. Blairich is one of the better trout nursery streams in the Awatere catchment and Blackbirch Stream on the south eastern side of the property is the most important trout spawning stream in the Awatere catchment.

The other matter of interest is upland game habitat and hunting opportunity, especially for Californian quail, and to a limited extent paradise shelduck and grey duck habitat on the property.

On the flat part of the property there are two created hunting ponds which are quite good hunting during the season.

The initial part of the inspection was along the southern boundary by four wheel drive vehicle between the upper part of the property and Blackbirch reserve. There was little of interest to Fish and Game in this part of the property except for the occasional stock water pond which had ducks on it and the upper part of Blackbirch in which the lessee Mr Hugh Cooper indicated there was a small covey of around ten chukar resident. Issues regarding

an appropriate line of a boundary between any reserved area and the upper part of the grazed part of the property are of no particular interest to Fish and Game as there are neither sport fishing nor gamebirds in that part of the property.

After lunch a brief inspection was made of the far part of the property adjacent to the upper Omaka river. There is quite good riparian vegetation retained adjacent to areas which have been cleared of various forms of scrub. Brief inspection of some two hundred metres of the river did not indicate any evidence of trout although it is possible there may be some trout use of this part of the river including spawning.

The return route traversed a number of scrubby gullies with suitable habitat for coveys of quail. According to Hugh Cooper quail numbers are not particularly high at the moment. It appears habitat values for quail have diminished in recent times for a variety of reasons. These include habitat change due to burning or scrub removal, the effects of predators and possibly poisoning operations although apparently these are only undertaken about once every five years.

The lower part of the central Blairich River valley has a number of gullies with suitable habitat for quail. According to Mr Cooper approximately six or seven coveys are known from the area. None were apparent on the day of inspection however despite very good weather conditions and particularly good listening conditions.

Several areas of concern to the Department of Conservation for native vegetation reasons have no particular interest to Fish and Game except they are likely to be used by quail from time to time. Their use, however, would be reduced if they were to revert entirely to native woody vegetation. On the other hand continued clearance of some vegetation such as kanuka providing cover and roosting sites for quail is undoubtedly also likely to reduce quail numbers in the area.

Small numbers of paradise shelduck were observed adjacent to the farm dams. Some of these dams are used by both paradise shelduck and grey duck for breeding although this is likely of local value only.

Concluding Discussions

Mr Cooper is evidently a very keen hunter of both gamebirds and big game. He invites friends to hunt quail on his property from time to time. At the conclusion of the day the topic of quail hunting was discussed. The issue of trying to develop and provide for hunting opportunities into the future was discussed from the Fish and Game perspective. Various mechanisms to achieve the Fish and Game's long term objectives were briefly touched on, including a covenant for gamebird hunting access or alternatively negotiation with a variety of landowners to gain access for legitimate and approved hunting groups.

Mr Cooper pointed out quail hunting opportunities are at least as good if not better on adjacent properties and it may be more effective to negotiate the issue with all of the relevant landowners rather than this pastoral lease. This was acknowledged, but it was

pointed out to Mr Cooper that the opportunity for access for quail hunting needs to be considered on this property in this particular case as a pastoral lease under tenure review.

Summary

In summary the Fish and Game fisheries interest in Blairich is restricted to the trout spawning and nursery streams of Blairich and Blackbirch which should be adequately protected by marginal strip provisions in the event of freeholding. Similar interest or potential in the Upper Omaka River should also be catered for by marginal strips. Suitable foot access to the upper Omaka through Blairich would also be desirable to provide public opportunity to visit this area.

The most significant Fish and Game interest, however, is in Californian quail habitat and quail hunting opportunities in the lower altitude gullies of the Blairich and Omaka catchments. At present the quail resource is maintained by, but only available to, Mr Cooper and his invited guests. Blairich is one of the most significant pastoral leases in Marlborough for quail habitat. Maintaining quail habitat is not a primary objective of farming the property, although an important secondary objective, complementary to the property under its present management regime. Future land owners may, however, have little regard for quail habitat or hunter access.

Fish and Game would wish to see the option of providing quail habitat and allowing for reasonable hunter access as an outcome of the tenure review process. This is reasonably complementary to the present land use practice. It is acknowledged that the land maintaining the best quail habitat can be retained as farmland and there is no suggestion it should not be freeholded.

This issue needs to be considered and practical options outlined for discussion and negotiation. At this stage the options include a hunter covenant for reasonable access to hunt specific areas during the season. Obligations on the part of the landowner, Fish and Game and any permitted hunters would need to be discussed and clarified from the outset.

It would be prudent for Fish and Game to debate the upland game habitat and hunter access issue with other landowners in the area to look for robust long term solutions. This may be best achieved by Fish and Game acting as facilitator between land owners and hunters. Efforts made in habitat protection for quail could be rewarded by securing hunter access. Conflicts may arise if habitat development or protection significantly constrains farm development or if hunting access impedes farm management or vice versa.

Neil Deans
Manager
7/11/01