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COUPLE LANDS DREAM JOB 3

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COUPLE LANDS DREAM JOBS

The hours are long and the work is hard but this Hawke's Bay couple is more than happy with life on the farm.

ONE thing people always like about farming is the lifestyle. Certainly there are the rainy days, but then there are the beautiful, sunny ones, when those working outside would never dream of swapping fresh air and freedom for air-conditioned offices and desk jobs.

That is the way it is for Hawke's Bay couple Suzanne Ward, 24, and Campbell Bremner, 25.

They live on Ms Ward's parents Waiwhare farm, Wrekin Station, on the Napier/Taihape road, west of Hastings. She is stock manager there and Mr Bremner works on a property 10 minutes' drive down the road.

They have been born and bred on farms – Mr Bremner in Dannevirke and Ms Ward at Waiwhare. She spent her first five years in the cottage where she and Mr Bremner now live, before moving into the homestead with her parents after her grandparents moved into town to allow their son and his family to take over the farm.

Of the four Ward children in this generation – two older brothers and one younger sister – Ms Ward has been the only one to show any interest in taking over the property. She decided in the seventh form at Sacred Heart College, in Napier, after a lifetime of helping on the farm, that farming was the career path she wanted to take.

“When I left school, I decided to go to var-

sity to study agriculture, with the intention of returning home to farm. I did a bachelor of business studies (agribusiness) at Massey University.”

She was in Palmerston North for four years – in the last year she was manager of The Fitzherbert, a student hotel.

“That was an eye-opener – I was very happy to come back to the farm to deal with a different type of animal. When I finished my degree, Dad was ready to step back – or up – into the tractor with his other business, Kaweka Contracting.

“For me, he now plays a farm adviser/mentor role for the stock – he's there when I need an answer or advice for something or I need a hand. My official title is stock manager, covering anything to do with the sheep and cattle, and we share-farm deer with another farmer. I'm in charge of day-to-day management, reporting to Dad.”

Farm ownership is an ambition.

“It's in a trust at the moment and I'd have to buy out the others, but ultimately I'd like to be able to say it's mine,” she says.

It is getting more common to find a woman running a property, but Ms Ward says it took a while for people to take her seriously as a farmer.

“When I first started full-time I think some truckies found it amusing and they were



Don't fence them in: During busy times of the year farming couple Campbell Bremner and Suzanne Ward try to catch up on special occasions. Much of the time they are either working the same long hours, from dawn till dark, or one is working early when the other is working late.
Picture: KATE TAYLOR

always very polite. Now, I'm just another farmer I guess. Our stock agent's great – we deal mainly one-on-one now and it has never been an issue that I'm female. He treats me like he would any other farmer. I've heard that one truckie said to someone that you wouldn't want to mess with me, so I thought that was pretty funny. I've never had any problems with the shearers either and I think the rousies enjoy having a boss they can gossip with.

“I think it's never really been an issue because I've grown up here, people know me, know my family and know that I've always been capable of driving the tractors and doing the stock work.

“I think I've earned people's respect and considering that I was only a few points behind Campbell in the local Young Farmer Contest, not too many will argue.”

During busy times of the year, Mr Bremner and Ms Ward try to catch up on special occasions. Much of the time they are either working the same long hours, from dawn till dark, or one is working early when the other is working late.

They find time for Young Farmers though – Mr Bremner has just finished as chairman of the local club and Ms Ward does the newsletter. They also play polocrosse, so caring for their horses takes a big part of their spare time.

Mr Bremner grew up on a farm leased by his family for several decades. He spent many weekends and holidays helping his father, as well as busy times like lambing and docking.

“I tried carpentry in the school holidays once but spent most of the time looking out the window watching the farming. It was then I decided that I wanted to go farming in one form or another. I love working with animals and being outdoors.”

He left school at the end of the sixth form and went to Taratahi Agricultural College, near Masterton, in 1996.

“I worked in a place near Dannevirke for four years, working my way from shepherd to head shepherd. To be able to progress higher than that, I moved away and got a job working on another sheep and beef farm, at Patoka.”

Two years later he decided to work for him-

self doing casual labour around the district, but was offered a full-time job at the Hildreths' Glen Alma Romney stud, just down the road from Wrekin Station.

It was his second time on a sheep stud.

“Stud work is a lot more time-consuming – you have to be more particular about everything. I have certainly learnt a lot about the importance of genetics in the past few years. A stud farm is run on the same basis as a commercial farm but there are some very particular jobs, such as recording, that take time. Putting the rams out isn't a case of opening the gates – it's a totally different scenario.”

One of the things Mr Bremner loves most about farming is the freedom.

“I love catching those special sunrises, when everyone else is still sleeping. It's especially great when there's a view where you're working. Every now and then you stop for a second and just appreciate it. It's only for a second mind, that's about all the time you get.”

□ Those interested in a farming career should visit:

www.agricultureito.ac.nz

Fact file

Names: Suzanne Ward and Campbell Bremner

Jobs: Shepherds

Employers: Glen Alma Romney Stud and Wrekin Station

Attributes: Likes working with animals, the outdoors (in all kinds of weather), can work alone and in a team.

Remuneration: Varies greatly though accommodation is often part of the package.