

LOGGING THE FARM FOREST - THE OWNER'S VIEWPOINT

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INTRODUCTION

My first task was to identify in my own mind the maximum volume which constitutes a limited scale logging operation.

I arrived at a maximum figure of 500 m³, thinned or clear felled, on terrain which can be safely worked by a 4-wheel drive farm tractor. The figure of 500 m³ fitted many farm woodlots in size; i.e. 1 ha at age 20 - 25 years.

If the recommendations of the last Forestry Conference were to be implemented, and 5% of farm land was planted in a mixture of configurations; i.e. woodlots, shelterbelts or widespread agroforestry, the forestry resource in New Zealand would more than double. Much of this volume would fall into the "Limited Scale Logging Operation" area. There are advantages in planning forestry operations towards annual sustained production to spread taxation to a yearly basis. A sustained production would mean harvesting ½ ha to 1 ha per year on an average sheep and cattle farm.

MARKETING OPTIONS

The grower has a range of options open to him for presenting his produce to a purchaser :

On Stump,
On Ride,
On Truck,
At Mill Door,
or in Processed Form to End User.

All but the first option leaves open the opportunity for the grower to add value. The question I wish to address is :

Is the grower (in general) equipped to handle a logging operation, or part thereof?

- A. Is the grower capable of setting out a contract with the purchaser?
- B. Is the grower capable of planning the felling operation, skidsites, fleeting, measuring etc?
- C. Is the equipment available on the farm?
- D. Are there the necessary skills to operate safely and

efficiently?

E. How does this work in with general farm work?

ANSWERS

- A,B In general farmers do not have the knowledge or ability to perform these tasks. No doubt they could be learnt and there is a need to inform people of where sample logging contracts can be obtained.
- C. Most farms these days have 4-wheel drive tractors, chainsaws, wire strops etc which, in some circumstances, could perform quite adequately.



Locally-built 3-point linkage winch based on Scandinavian design

(LIRA Photo L353/9)

- D. The skills and safety angle must be of considerable concern. If farmers were to become involved in logging they should consider attending courses designed to teach these skills.
- E. If the farm has several staff then there should be few concerns, but a one man situation is seldom able to cope. The mill may not enjoy waiting until the lambs are drenched and the broken fence at the back is patched.

GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT FARMERS LOGGING

Few farmers shear their own sheep, build their own homes, do total engine overhauls on their cars or tractors, market their wool, meat and surplus livestock. They employ experts specialising in the different areas allowing themselves to get on with their special job which is stock, pasture and land management. There are always the exceptions to these generalisations. I happen to be one of those people who enjoys a challenge and do most of the above plus the logging and processing of timber.

WHO THEN, IS TO LOG THE WOODLOT TIMBER?

No doubt there are efficient logging contractors throughout New Zealand, but most, if not all, would be employed in large scale operations. Those available to log the woodlots, windbreaks etc, are the rats and mice of the industry. Their work skills, machinery and managerial ability are poor. There are also the 'fly-by-nighters' taking advantage of farmers' lack of knowledge in this area. Gross overcharging and many untidy jobs have, and still are occurring. There are also genuine people who lack the business skills to run a viable operation, and who subsequently go to the wall.

THE INDUSTRY'S NEEDS

1. Training Programmes.
2. Improved Equipment and Work Techniques.
3. An Overseer for Quality and Safety Control.

The above suggestion is to trouble-shoot before it is too late. In a very physical job attention to detail is sometimes missed.

4. An Attitude by the Timber Industry towards creating a Strong Viable Logging Section.

I am aware that many of the large companies have a policy similar to the above. I am also aware of the work of LIRA, the Forest Service and the Forestry Safety section of the Labour Department. We should already have a strong, well trained harvesting section. Don't say the timber industry is young. It's the oldest industry in New Zealand since European settlement.

WHO PAYS FOR THE TRAINING?

Quite simply, the Industry. I would liken the programme to that of Shearer Training courses set up by the New Zealand Wool Board. Our shearers have remained the best in the world due mainly to this injection of funds into the harvesting of the wool crop.

CONCLUSIONS

The logging section of the timber industry in New Zealand has a poor safety record. This is supported by the high Accident Compensation Commission rate. To suggest that unskilled farmers or farm labour can log woodlots safely is foolish. For them to attempt to perform this work with ill-equipped machinery and gear is asking for failure.

Of course there are always exceptions to the rule. Farmers are the mothers of many inventions due to necessity.



"....farmers are the mothers of many inventions...." Fence protector for shelterbelt felling operations developed by Peter Smail, farm-forester, Canterbury.

(LIRA Photo L272/17)