



CHASING HISTORY: Brent Kerehona is devastated by the theft of irreplaceable documentary footage.

Reward for return of doco footage

By LINDY LARD

Farmer not deterred by record effluent fines

By IMRAN ALI

A TOWAI sharemilker has been fined \$20,000 for continually discharging animal effluent into a stream.

It is the biggest penalty handed out to a Northland farmer to date for the offence.

Henry Van Den Bogaart, 44, was also ordered to pay \$1000 in costs after being found guilty by a jury of discharging a contaminant into a tributary of the Paiaaka Stream in August 2006.

Northland Regional Council officers, who visited Mr Van Den Bogaart's farm nine times over the last four years, took samples from

an effluent storage pool that was over-flowing at the south-east corner near a farm race.

During six of the visits officers found rules for animal effluent disposal were being breached.

In response to the fine, Mr Van Den Bogaart told the Northern Advocate he had done his best to contain the discharge after the original pump and back-up pumps failed in winter.

He said the effluent was being discharged into an area that had been designated as a second pool and not into the Paiaaka Stream as NRC claimed.

"NRC is trying to save face. There's no way the fine will be a

deterrent," he said.

Mr Van Den Bogaart said every time he tried to fix a problem, NRC inspectors served him with an abatement notice.

But in his judgment, Judge Fred McElreath criticised Mr Van Den Bogaart's high level of recklessness, saying he could have replaced a faulty pump or called the NRC.

The aggravating factors included his recklessness, the lengthy period of time the effluent had spilled and the fact he had been served abatement notices on several occasions.

Judge McElreath found Mr Van Den Bogaart's financial statement,

in which he claimed a take-home pay of \$13,000 a year with expenses of a similar amount, "quite unreliable".

He said the statement didn't include the value of 190 cows, land, dairy shares, plant and machinery and more than \$200,000 income Mr Van Den Bogaart received from Fonterra in the 12 months to May 31, 2006.

Farmers of New Zealand operations manager Bill Guest said no one else had been fined but the fact was farmers needed to take responsibility for their actions.

He said it cost far less for farmers to correct their effluent discharge systems than pay fines.

"A lot of them who get fined are the ones who can afford to straighten up their situation. If farmers persist with such behaviour, then they should ask themselves whether it's worth staying in the dairy industry," Mr Guest said.

He said those who blatantly flouted the laws over discharge should not expect support from farmers' leaders.

NRC records show a quarter of Northland's 1900 dairy farms discharged effluent into rivers and streams last year.

More than 100 abatement and 70 infringement notices totalling \$83,500 in fines were issued.

In BRIEF Local digest

Patient still missing

Police are still searching for Tony Hopkins who went missing while on escorted leave from the psychiatric wing of Whangarei Hospital on Saturday. Mr Hopkins, 39, who changed his name from Jayden Chase, is not considered dangerous but police are worried about his safety. He is described as white, slightly built, with medium-length brown hair and piercings in his nose, chin and eyebrows. Anyone with information on Mr Hopkins whereabouts should contact police on (09) 4304500.

Are you a Lotto winner?

Three of the 15 tickets that won Lotto Second Division at the weekend were sold in Northland. Tickets sold at Pukers Bay of blanks in Russell, Dargaville, Foxstap and Lotto, and Tony's Maungaturoto each won \$16,998 on Saturday. NZ Lotteries Chief Executive Todd McLeay said anyone who bought their ticket from any of the winning stores should write their name on the back of the ticket and check it