

Many congratulations to Mrs Jan Wills (NZHA Life member) who was recognised in the 2015 New Years Honours List, being made an Officer of the Order of NZ for Services to the Beef Industry.

Jan has worked tirelessly for the Hereford breed, serving on both the NZHA Council and on the Hereford Prime board, as a current director. She was also the first woman Secretary General of the World Hereford Council.

Her lifelong commitment to the Hereford breed, is well respected and this 2015 acknowledgement is much deserved.

I am sure all NZHA breeders extend their congratulations to Jan for a job very well done.

The following feature was published on pg 15 of the Farmers Weekly (January 12th, 2015 – Vol 14, No1) newspaper...



***BULLY FOR YOU:** Jan Wills started breeding Herefords in 1968.*

Almost 50 years on her services to the breed have been recognised in the New Year Honours.

When Jan Wills and her husband Barrie were married they followed the Wills family tradition of showing cattle at the local A&P shows.

The young couple soon realised an opportunity to breed their own cattle and being beef farmers surrounded by dairy farmers they themselves were a breed out on their own, Wills said.

“We chose the Hereford because the quiet temperament of the breed suited our intensive farming style. With dairy all around us we were beef farmers in a pocket surrounded by dairy and growing.

“We became the first stud to breed Herefords with the cross to Friesian and we went on to specialty breed the Herefords more suitable to mate with Friesian heifers,” Wills said.

“Showing fat cattle at the local shows went out for us 40-50 years ago, being overtaken with exhibiting our Hereford breed.”

Wills is positive about the Hereford breed’s future because of its popularity with the dairy industry where farmers mate the breed with their cows and sell the dairy-beef calf at a premium.

Her passion grew for the breed and with an interest in the meat industry Wills’ involvement started with the New Zealand Hereford Association in the early 1990s.

Her 20 years of dedication to the Hereford cattle breed earned her a place on the 2015 New Year’s honours list.

The 74-year-old from Matamata was made an Officer of the Order of New Zealand for services to the beef industry.

“It’s an honour for me and certainly a great honour for the (Hereford) breed to be recognised,” she said.

Wills is a life member of the NZ Hereford Association and served on the association's board for over 20 years.

She was elected in 1992 as the first female councillor to the board of the NZ Hereford Association and went on to be the first female president of the association, a position she held from 1999-2001.

She was then elected as the first woman secretary-general of the World Hereford Council. She was also the first chairwoman of NZ Performance Beef Breeders.

Wills has retired from most of the administrative work involved in serving on those boards, although she remains a director of Hereford Prime NZ.

Inspired by her interest in the meat industry, Wills was instrumental, with immediate past Hereford Association chairman Don Goodall and current chairman Laurie Patterson, in establishing Hereford Prime in the 1990s as a branded Hereford beef product.

“I am very passionate about the Hereford. I still help to promote the breed and the brand. People seem to think I am bigoted and the reason I am is because I believe in it and I do enjoy it.”

The Wills operated their own Hereford stud at Matamata before retiring to town in 2007.

They are life members of the Hereford Association’s South Auckland club and still participate in club activities while Jan now enjoys more time at bridge and golf.