



“The pond crust was 1 metre thick. Bloody machines were useless.”

The Feather’s farm

Kay, Roger and Marc Feather own Wairango Station, an 806 hectare dairy farm on Taharua Road. The *Taharua Stream* begins on their farm and because of this, they are closely monitored by the Hawkes Bay Regional Council.

Big pond + vertical stirrer

To meet regulations, the Feathers built a large effluent pond equipped with special pumps and monitoring equipment.

Roger recalls: *“Because there wasn’t a great power supply to the pond, we were told that a Vertical Stirrer was an adequate way to deal with effluent solids. So we bought one.”*

\$16,000 for nothing!

After two years, the pond crust was getting out of control. In their concern, the Feathers consulted with the stirrer company. *“They told us that we needed a second stirrer. These stirrers are \$8,000 each, but okay, if we have to, we have to. So we bought another one.”*

Six months later, no progress had been made. *“That’s when the company said ‘You need 4-6 stirrers’. I was angry about that. I felt they’d misrepresented the whole situation.”*

The danger of Overflow

As the pond deteriorated, the Feathers faced a series of problems. *“As more solids built up in the pond, our pump was losing efficiency, sucking up thicker contents.”*

Not only that, our pond was dangerously close to overflowing. There was the fear of breaching our effluent consent.”

\$33,000 for nothing!

To reduce the problem, \$9,000 was spent removing the metre thick crust with a long-reach digger. That proved to be a temporary fix – the crust returned within a month.

The next move was to bring in a **pumping contractor** with a heavy-duty pump to stir and pump the pond.

“He pumped, but not as much as we wanted” said Roger. *“He told us, ‘Your pond has deteriorated too far. We’ll need to come back in four months.’ That cost us \$24,000!”*

Six weeks later, the crust was back thicker than ever.

Slurry Bugs? It won’t work.

In her readings, Kay came across **Slurry Bugs** – **the bacteria that eat crust**. *“I thought, instead of using more machines, let’s try a biological approach.”*

Roger was less convinced. *“I said to Kay, ‘You’re dreaming! If two stirrers can’t fix the pond, how are bloody bugs gonna solve it?’”*

“I will not pay unless...

After contacting David Law, the Feathers agreed to trial **Slurry Bugs** in their pond. On one clear condition from Roger:

*“I told David that I would need to see my face reflected in the pond. We would not pay a cent unless **Slurry Bugs** worked. He agreed, so we both signed the deal on that basis.”*

From that moment, **Slurry Bugs** were added to the pond. But given the hardened state of the pond and the reluctance of farm employees to follow new practices, results were slower than expected. At one point, Roger nearly stopped the trial.

“Honestly, I was ready to pull the pin. But I was out-voted by Kay, Marc and employee Colin Murray. Also, David claimed he had discovered something in sample testing that he was convinced was a game-changer.”

Good God! Unbelievable!

Within three weeks, the adjustments had worked. Roger recalls: *“I hadn’t seen the pond for a while, then one day in June I came over the hill and saw it. **Good God! That’s unbelievable!** That what’s I said. The pond was back to how it was when we first built it. I could see my reflection in the surface!”*

Read the full story...

...at our website www.slurrybugs.co.nz or call Angie on 0800 4 SLURRYBUGS (0800 4 758779) to learn more about **Slurry Bugs**.



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