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About the survey

An online survey on the current and future management of Molesworth Station was shared on the Department of Conservation (DOC) website (www.doc.govt.nz) from 15 December 2017 to 14 April 2018. This report summarises the survey responses.

DOC received 4503 responses to the survey and would like to thank all those who took the time to make their views known.

While the survey was not part of a statutory process, the feedback received will help inform us about people's views on the current management of Molesworth and their preferences for its future direction.

Background

A management plan for Molesworth was approved in 2013, the intention of which was to transition the station from its traditional focus on farming to include more recreation and conservation activities. This management plan places restrictions on public access to allow farming requirements to be met. The current farming lease, which is held by Pāmu Farms of New Zealand (Landcorp Farming Limited), expires in June 2020.

This survey forms part of our consultation with the public on the future of Molesworth, prior to the expiry of the farming lease in 2020.

A note on interpreting this summary

Although there were 4503 responses to the survey, not everyone answered every question (indeed, some questions were mutually exclusive). For example, 4460 people answered Question 1 (99% of all respondents), whilst only 1400 people answered Question 2 (31% of respondents). The number of responses to each question is indicated.

Responses to multiple-choice and 'yes/no' questions are summarised in graphs.

Responses to open questions, where people were asked to comment and tell us what they think, are summarised under the key themes that were mentioned.

Next steps

We are working in partnership with Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura to develop the next steps for considering future management options. We are also working closely with the Nelson Marlborough Conservation Board and the Molesworth Steering Committee (which advises on the management of Molesworth).



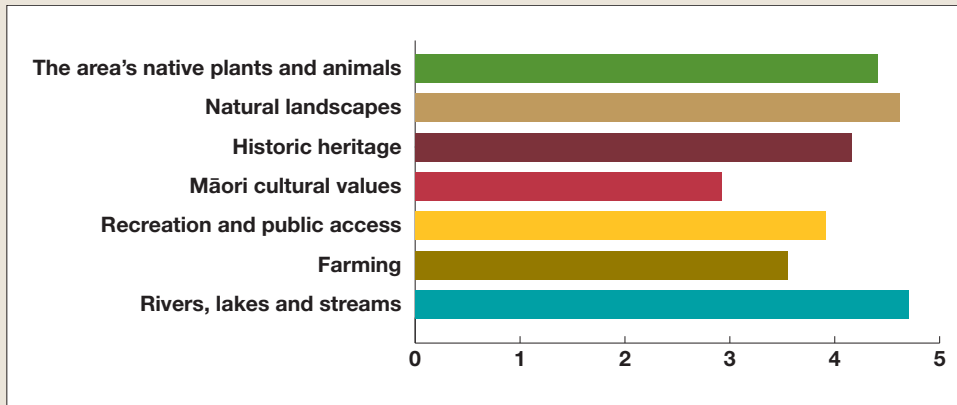
Summary of the survey responses

Question 1:

Molesworth is currently managed to protect a range of different values. Thinking about Molesworth, how important are each of the following to you?

(4460 people responded to this question)

(43 people skipped this question)



	1 Not at all important	2	3	4	5 Very important	Total	Weighted average
The area's native plants and animals	0.56% 25	2.57% 114	12.18% 540	24.51% 1087	60.18% 2669	4435	4.41
Natural landscapes	0.47% 21	1.18% 52	6.15% 272	20.77% 919	71.44% 3161	4425	4.62
Historic heritage	1.54% 68	5.08% 224	16.88% 745	28.69% 1266	47.81% 2110	4413	4.16
Māori cultural values	19.87% 878	19.69% 870	25.78% 1139	17.50% 773	17.16% 758	4418	2.92
Recreation and public access	3.20% 142	9.87% 438	21.99% 976	22.35% 992	42.59% 1890	4438	3.91
Farming	13.10% 579	11.61% 513	18.65% 824	20.14% 890	36.50% 1613	4419	3.55
Rivers, lakes and streams	0.13% 6	0.67% 30	4.49% 200	18.51% 824	76.19% 3391	4451	4.70

Question 1(a):

If you feel any of these values are particularly important, please tell us why.

(1400 people responded to this question)

Natural values

Respondents focused on the protection of natural values through the use of sustainable farming practices. A frequent suggestion was for stock to be excluded from waterways (including riparian margins) and other areas of ecological significance.

Landscape values were linked to farming, with respondents believing that land management practices were responsible for maintaining the distinctive, large, open wilderness area.

Farming

Farming was highlighted as an important value by the people who responded to this question.

"Having an iconic piece of land like Molesworth as a farm helps both farming and urban communities better understand one another and by seeing what huge challenges farming in this remote country, it can help us think more about who we are as a people and what things we value as a nation."

Many believed that farming practices reduce the risk of fire and help to control pest species. Concerns focused on the potential for pest species to spread if farming was to be phased out – to the detriment of all other values. The St James Conservation Area was repeatedly mentioned as an example of an area where pest species are dominating retired farmland.

Farming was inextricably linked with historic heritage. Respondents regarded high country farming practices to be historic and unique to New Zealand, and emphasis was placed on maintaining traditional farming practices for current and future generations. Many respondents suggested that high country farms provide valuable opportunities for sharing knowledge and for training young shepherds and farmers. Historic farm structures, such as buildings and bridges, were also identified as important cultural icons.

"... [an] important station for young shepherds/farmers to learn husbandry and farming skills ..."

Many respondents supported the status quo, expressing confidence in the current management arrangements.

"The fascinating ongoing opportunity for Molesworth is to truly integrate farming and natural values ..."

A small number of respondents wished to see farming removed completely, with Molesworth preserved as a national park or another conservation designation. Others wished to see the area planted in indigenous forest to reflect the state of the environment before it was farmed.

"We must strive to protect our native flora and fauna and promote their future survival, especially through securing their natural habitats."

Recreation and public access

Recreation and public access was identified as a core value, with many respondents engaging in a wide range of interrelated recreational pursuits.

"I see it having enormous potential for further recreation and tourism opportunities."

"... public access is important as land is becoming more unaffordable for us youth ... to get away from reality and enjoy the views, experience and peace I find important ... it's the closest my family will ever get to a farm."

"Public access is extremely important, particularly for hunters, fishers and hikers."

"These [goose] hunts are a great way to reconnect with family and friends away from busy lives in the city."

Restricting access over the winter months received more support than allowing access throughout the year due to perceived safety concerns and the desire to protect Molesworth from mass tourism.

Other

Other values mentioned included:

- concerns about the use of aerial 1080
- the importance of balancing all values, ie integrating farming with other values
- keeping Molesworth in government ownership
- the need for additional resources to look after the area.

CONCERN AND INTEREST IN MOLESWORTH

The Molesworth lease had recently been relinquished to the Crown when this 1938 clipping from the Otago Daily Times appeared. The Government faced many challenges over how best to rehabilitate the station, which had suffered severe erosion compounded by overgrazing, and rabbit, deer, goat and weed infestations.



Question 2:

What opportunities do you see to improve management of native plants and animals in Molesworth?

(2700 people responded to this question)

The people who responded to this question identified four key opportunities to improve the management of native plants and animals in Molesworth.

- Increase efforts to control animal and plant pest species.
- Employ sustainable farming practices.
- Restore sensitive natural areas.
- Fence off significant natural areas to protect native species.

Increase efforts to control animal and plant pest species

The spread of pest species was a huge concern for the majority of respondents due to their impact on the health of native plants and animals. Many considered pest control to be an essential part of farming and useful in maintaining the health of native species. The spread of wilding pines was the most common pest issue mentioned, but broom, gorse, rabbits, geese, goats and didymo also featured. Drone technology was one suggested option for weed control.

“The single biggest factor long term will be weed control ... weeds like pine and broom have the potential to rapidly and totally replace native plant communities from the river beds and valley floors to the tops.”

Employ sustainable farming practices

Many respondents endorsed the current relationship between farming practices and conservation efforts, supporting the idea of farm managers working alongside DOC. One suggestion was to have more DOC rangers employed on the station.

Many considered the farm to be well managed, with strong connections made between good farming practices, pest control and managing fire risk.

“Managing farming practices to enhance and maintain biodiversity. In some areas continuing grazing to keep pest plants under control while in others retiring grazing to enable recovery of some native plants.”

Restore sensitive natural areas

The restoration of sensitive natural areas to create habitats for native species was a goal reflected in many responses. Key areas included riparian margins and wetlands. Creating indigenous corridors to link native species across the landscape and increasing the conservation status of sensitive habitats to maintain viable populations of threatened and/or endemic species were favoured. In addition, developing working partnerships with community groups and businesses was also encouraged. One suggestion was for local nurseries to assist with growing plants for enhancement projects.

Further research, monitoring and education to improve the management of native species at Molesworth were all encouraged.

“Some additional land areas should be retired from farming and allowed to return to their natural state ... this needs to be done in a managed way.”



Jewelled gecko.

Fence off significant natural areas to protect native species

The majority of respondents supported fencing off sensitive or ecologically significant areas from stock and foot traffic, with the aim of enhancing biodiversity values. A key suggestion was to retire marginal farmland to allow the land to regenerate. Actively restoring biodiversity hotspots to encourage endemic plants and animals to multiply was also recommended. Another widely supported option was to reduce stock numbers in areas that have been identified as having significant natural values.

“Fencing off valuable ecological areas from stock would be a good start.”



Use volunteers

Respondents considered the use of volunteers to control pest species and restore significant areas as a positive option. Suggestions included using recreational hunters and four-wheel drivers, as well as approaching community groups and learning institutions, such as schools and universities, to take part in restoration efforts and creating partnerships where appropriate.

Other comments

Some respondents suggested that:

- 1080 should not be used to control pests
- greater restrictions should be placed on public access, particularly for foreign tourists
- improved signage should be used to raise awareness about the protection of native species.

Additional suggestions included:

- increasing the facilities available, such as the establishment of a visitor centre, toilets and camping areas, to restrict the impact of visitors to designated areas
- increasing funding for DOC to carry out its work

- allocating a portion of the farming revenue to pest control and habitat enhancement
- investing visitor donations in pest control and habitat enhancement.

A minority focused on preservation options, including:

- the complete cessation of farming activities to protect natural values
- the creation of a mainland island with predator-proof fencing
- designating Molesworth as a national park/conservation area
- designating the area as a World Heritage Site.



Top: Native plants at Molesworth.
 Bottom left: Fenwiper or southern cress.
 Bottom right: Tussock ringlet butterfly.

Question 3:

What opportunities do you see to improve management of natural landscapes in Molesworth?

(2500 people responded to this question)

The majority of respondents to this question expressed support for maintaining the status quo. They considered that the current management approach is working well to protect landscape values. Recurring comments referred to the relationship between farming and pest control – in particular, the idea that farming generates an income to support pest management. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of using sustainable farming practices to protect the natural landscape.

“Leave it as it is. Farming it extensively as it is at present generates income to control the spread of noxious weeds and animals.”

Wilding conifer spread viewed in the Alma-Tarrdale area of Molesworth.



Undertake pest control

A similar number of respondents focused on pest control – in particular, the eradication of wilding pines.

People identified the importance of:

- a comprehensive pest management strategy
- increased funding for pest control
- research into the best pest control method(s)
- the use of volunteers and community partnerships to carry out pest control.

“A better understanding of ecology and population dynamics of introduced pest species. This should be considered ahead of using poisons.”

Carry out restoration, regeneration and erosion control

Restoration, regeneration and erosion control received around the same number of responses as pest control. Protecting the natural landscape was an interrelated theme.

Planting indigenous species was repeatedly emphasised in relation to restoration and regeneration, and there was recognition of the importance of increased funding for such projects. Respondents supported fencing off sensitive areas, including significant waterways, to control erosion.

“Encouraging plants native to the area to increase in higher alpine locations would improve the landscape and help with erosion.”

Restrict public access and new developments

Managed access for all users was a central theme, particularly for foreign tourists, who were considered to be a greater risk to landscape values than New Zealanders, especially when freedom camping.

The current regime for controlling access to Molesworth was strongly supported, with emphasis placed on motorised vehicles remaining on formed roads and walking trails being restricted to areas where they are less likely to impact on both landscape and vegetation values.

Concerns for landscape values focused on the potential for new developments to be proposed in the future. Respondents recommended restricting the addition of further power lines, prohibiting mining activities and maintaining unsealed roads rather than tar-sealing the roads.

“Avoid any inappropriate development that would degrade the natural landscapes.”

There was strong support for increasing non-motorised access, such as walking and biking, through the establishment of trails and facilities to cater for these interest groups.

Establish a conservation park

A smaller group of respondents wanted farming to cease so that the area could become a conservation park. Related suggestions emphasised leaving nature alone to “do its thing” and “take its own course”.

Top: The Sedgemere tarns. Below: Bill Chisholm left, and Wally Williams right, holding the sign that went on the truck ahead of the cattle from Hammer to Addington. Photo: Department of Lands and Survey historic collection



Question 4:

What opportunities do you see to improve management of rivers, lakes and streams in Molesworth?

(2488 people responded to this question)



Restrict or remove stock from waterways

By far the greatest concern among the people who responded to this question was stock access to water bodies. Many suggested fencing off water bodies, particularly in sensitive areas such as wetlands, headwaters and lakes/tarns. Others proposed reducing stock numbers or restricting stock to designated areas where there would be less chance of them contaminating water or damaging

fragile ecosystems. Some respondents questioned how practical it would be to fence all waterways, suggesting that only the most significant areas be fenced. Concerns were also expressed about the visual impact of fencing on landscape values and retaining public access to the margins of rivers.

“Perhaps fencing off stock from some waterways, although given the low stock densities I haven’t seen much evidence of damage on Molesworth so far.”

Maintain the status quo

The second largest group of respondents supported maintaining the status quo. Many considered that the current farm managers are doing a good job in looking after waterways, with the current level of grazing having minimal impact.

Respondents acknowledged an increase in pressure on waterways when stock cross rivers or streams or graze too

close to the edges, but this was not perceived as having a significant impact on water body health. The intensification of farming practices was predicted to be detrimental to aquatic ecosystems, however.

Some respondents felt that the use of sustainable farming practices, such as low stocking rates in sensitive areas, was a practical way of looking after water values, and considered that this approach balances farming with conservation values. Respondents expressed the belief that farm managers already use this approach.

“As water is regularly tested at present, I feel this is not an issue.”





Severn River.

Enhance waterways/ riparian planting

Enhancing riparian areas was considered important for maintaining water values. The creation of native habitats around water bodies was linked to water quality, as well as the provision of nesting sites for birds and shelter for native species. Establishing vegetation corridors was believed to be beneficial for both aquatic life and the health of land-based species.

Water enhancement programmes that target the unique environment coupled with specific planting regimes were proposed. Water quality monitoring and research into habitat restoration were also supported by respondents in this group.

“Focus on better river/stream edge restoration and ways/solutions to keep stock away from waterways.”

Restrict access and tourist activities

Respondents focused on the potential damage to water values that is caused by tourist activities, such as freedom camping. Concerns were related to pressures associated with increasing numbers of tourists, such as the disposal of human and other waste, the contamination of waterways, and increased foot traffic in sensitive areas.

Education and signage for visitors on the potential impact they could have on water bodies and other fragile ecosystems were considered important.

Camping was identified as a potential problem, with many respondents suggesting the creation of designated areas with appropriate facilities to minimise the impact of visitors. Campsites and toilets should be situated away from water bodies and areas of ecological significance.

Four-wheel driving and motorbiking in and around water bodies was another area of concern. Respondents felt that such activities required strict controls to protect water values. Some also felt that these recreational activities may need to be policed by rangers in the future, particularly if the number of visitors increases over time. To this end, formed tracks, designated crossings, bridges and appropriate signposting were considered important to keep visitors on specific routes.

The biosecurity threat of increasing numbers of visitors was also emphasised (see ‘Undertake weed and pest management’ to the right).

“The best way to preserve and improve water quality is to limit the type of activity, eg freedom camping will eventually degrade water quality.”

Undertake weed and pest management

A large number of respondents were concerned about the spread of didymo or ‘rock snot’. Suggestions ranged from establishing washdown areas for vehicles entering Molesworth to increasing education and signage, highlighting the importance of cleaning fishing equipment. It was expected that facilities for camping and picnicking would be kept away from waterways.

Other concerns related to the presence of geese in and around waterways and the use of 1080 to control pests.

Farm sustainably

Sustainable farming was encouraged through the application of ‘good environmental practices’.

“An improved partnership where mutual understanding of high country farming and conservation values achieve a balance for water use and quality that can be a model for the whole country.”

Question 5:

What opportunities do you see to improve management of historic values in Molesworth?

(2360 people responded to this question)

Protect and restore historic heritage

There was resounding support for the protection of historic values in Molesworth. The main focus was on the maintenance and restoration of historic structures, such as buildings and bridges, particularly those that have been damaged by earthquakes. Old farm equipment, historic photos, maps and trails were also considered important.

“The public and DOC need to realise a lot of the historical values of Molesworth are based around early settlement and farming of the station.”

A few respondents noted the significance of preserving Māori cultural values alongside European history, such as the ancient trails through Molesworth.

The need for increased resources to carry out the required maintenance on historic structures was emphasised. Suggestions included the use of volunteers, such as the establishment of a ‘Friends of Molesworth Group’; financial contributions from central government; revenue from farm profits; and tourist charges to access Molesworth – for using the facilities and visiting historic sites and buildings.

Maintain a working farm

Respondents supported maintaining a working farm for historic reasons. Many commented on the excellent job the farm managers are currently doing, in conjunction with DOC, to maintain historic values.

“I think the historic values of Molesworth are already well managed ... to maintain these historic values I believe that Molesworth Station should continue to be run as a farm.”

Increase education, information and signage

Respondents expressed their appreciation of the historic heritage information and signage that is currently available. While many considered this information to be satisfactory, a similar number suggested that signage could be increased.

“... there is a good balance of information boards spread along [the] road, but care needs to be taken not to overdo these. The landscape is what is amazing, too many ‘tourist’ stops actually detracts from this ...”

Other suggestions included:

- providing additional information on mustering trails
- locating information panels at rest and picnic areas

- establishing a visitor centre at the entrance to Molesworth
- converting one of the historic buildings into a museum
- creating a web page on the historic values of Molesworth
- developing an app that people can use during their visit to Molesworth
- recording and displaying more photos and stories
- conducting organised tours to increase public awareness of the historic values.

Discussing future priorities for restoring and maintaining historic values was considered an important part of the management plan review process, with respondents supporting a collaborative planning process. In addition, an audit of historic values was proposed.

FORDING THE WAIRAU RIVER

Fording the Upper Wairau River, by Frederick Weld, 1855.

Frederick Weld and Alphonso Clifford travelled up the Wairau River in 1855. Their exploration resulted in the naming of many landmarks in Molesworth including Tarndale, Barefell Pass, the Guide River, the Leaderdale, Mt Princess and

Lake Tennyson. Weld claimed Lake Tennyson to be “... in beauty far surpass[ing] anything I have seen in New Zealand”. Early exploration was driven by the desire to find practical stock routes between Canterbury, Nelson and Marlborough.



Fording the Upper Wairau River 1855. Painting by Frederick Weld

Question 6:

What opportunities do you see to improve management of Māori cultural values in Molesworth?

(2000 people responded to this question)

Many respondents considered that they were unable to answer this question either because they felt that they had insufficient knowledge to do so or considered that the question should be answered by Ngāi Tahu. Enabling local iwi to describe Māori cultural values associated with the area was considered imperative.

Other respondents emphasised the significance of Ngāi Tahu participation in management planning. The obligations of DOC under the Treaty of Waitangi were mentioned, with importance placed on a partnership of care and responsibility.

“Let the iwi tell you what is important to them and acknowledge it in the proposed plan.”

Respondents reflected on the need for more information and interpretation of Māori cultural values. Documenting tribal associations with the area was encouraged, and acknowledgement and respect for Māori cultural values was an interrelated theme.

“There seems to be a lack of information on Māori culture in the area, there could be more done to educate people on the importance of the area to Māori and the history of the area.”

Māori rangers and Māori tours were identified as possible options to help raise awareness of the significance of the area to iwi (told from an iwi perspective).

Other suggestions included:

- the use of Māori names
- signs in te reo Māori and English
- information on Māori traditional practices and taonga species
- the use of indigenous species rather than introduced species in restoration projects
- improving the current signage to include Māori values.

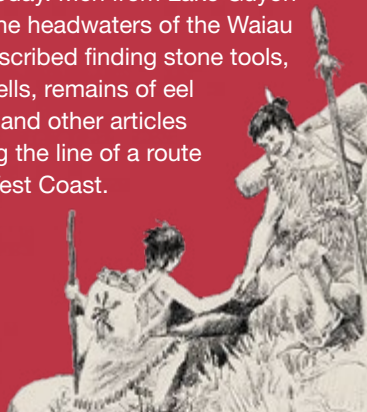
Some respondents were unsure whether Māori had a historical connection with Molesworth and queried whether Molesworth would have been too cold for traditional Māori occupation. Uncertainty about tribal associations with the area was evident.

Others felt unable to comment due to a lack of knowledge about traditional travel routes and settlement patterns in the area.

“Did Maori use the area extensively in the past? What are their stories?”

MAORI TRAILS

The Molesworth country was one link in the Māori trails developed throughout the high country of Te Waipounamu (the South Island). The trails, resting places, mahinga kai (food gathering places), burial sites and stories relating to the trails are recorded in Ngāi Tahu traditions and are of immense significance to the iwi today. Men from Lake Guyon Run at the headwaters of the Waiau River described finding stone tools, pāua shells, remains of eel baskets and other articles left along the line of a route to the West Coast.



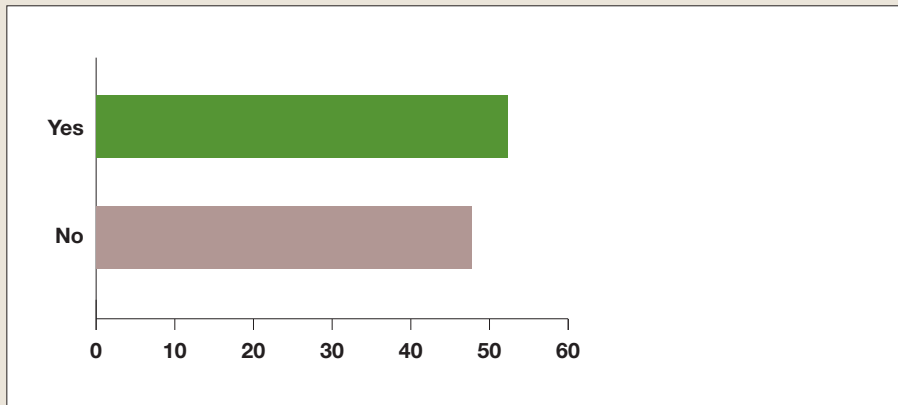
Left: Ngāi Tahu. Drawing by Donald Buglass
Right: Māori trails developed throughout the high country.

Question 7:

Would you like to see any changes to public access and opportunities for recreation at Molesworth?

(3494 people responded to this question)

(1009 people skipped this question)



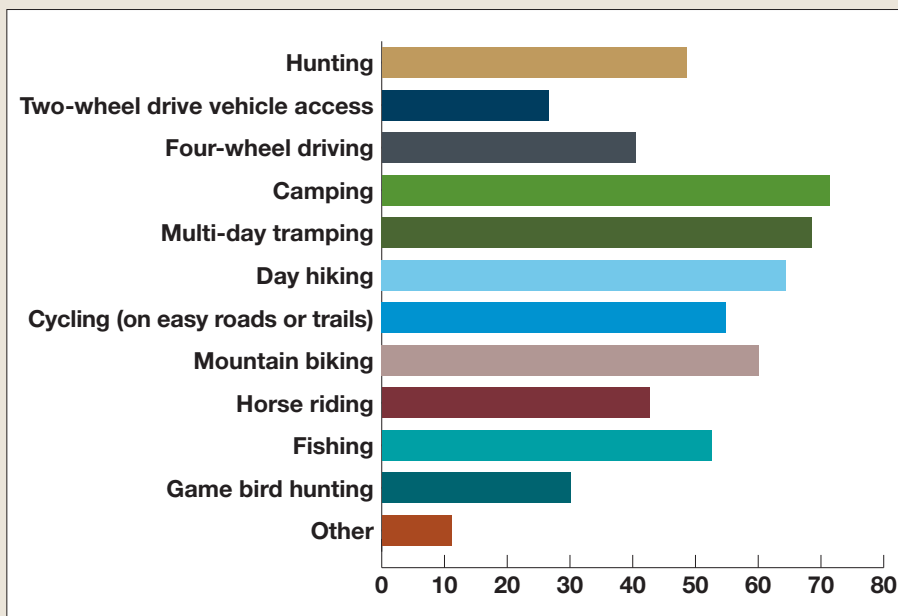
		Responses	
Yes	52.26%	1826	
No	47.74%	1668	
Total			3494

Question 8:

If you would like to see changes to public access and recreation opportunities at Molesworth, in which areas would you like to see changes?

(1698 people responded to this question)

(2805 people skipped this question)



		Responses	
	48.59%	825	
	26.56%	451	
	40.46%	687	
	71.38%	1212	
	68.61%	1165	
	64.43%	1094	
	54.89%	932	
	60.13%	1021	
	42.64%	724	
	52.59%	893	
	30.09%	511	
	11.13%	189	
Total			1698

Question 8(a):

What specific changes would you like to see?
(In relation to public access and recreation)

(1260 people responded to this question)

and

Question 9:

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about future public access at Molesworth?

(971 people responded to this question)

A combined summary of responses to Questions 8 and 9 is provided because very similar responses were received for both questions.

Many respondents supported an increase in access in one or more ways, while others expressed concern about how to manage increasing visitor numbers. It was felt that an increase in recreational infrastructure would benefit all users, but the potential for conflict between activities was also recognised.

Overarching themes for managing access included:

- reviewing the current use of the area to identify ways in which access could be simplified and made more equitable in the future
- zoning activities to avoid potential conflict and increase the safety of different users
- restricting motorised vehicles to formed tracks only
- introducing an equitable booking system for all forms of recreational access
- continuing with the current hunting ballot system, with the potential to expand hunting areas in the future
- developing an outdoor access code to emphasise the harsh environmental conditions and provide information on how visitors can protect natural values
- publicising access opportunities and developing a calendar of farming activities that explains public access restrictions – respondents noted that communication between farm managers and visitors could be improved.

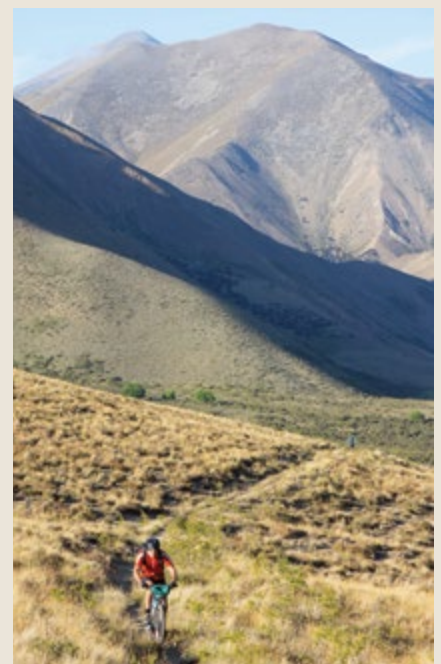
“Molesworth’s beauty and remoteness needs to be preserved and mechanical access – 4WD, helicopter, bikes – needs to be carefully managed and controlled.”

There was widespread recognition that any increase in access and recreation opportunities would also require increased infrastructure in the form of information and facilities for visitors. Suggested infrastructure improvements ranged from developing tourist accommodation to the establishment of additional huts, toilets, and camping and picnic areas. Options for funding these infrastructure improvements included introducing a road toll(s), hut fees, concessions for tour groups and entry fees for foreign tourists.

Respondents considered it important that public access does not conflict with the protection of natural values. Emphasis was placed on looking after the special qualities of Molesworth as a condition of access.

“Molesworth has the scale to support a wide range of recreational activities.”

A range of changes was identified to support increased access. The development of camping sites, huts and associated facilities, such as toilets, were most frequently mentioned, with these facilities considered beneficial to all users. Walking, tramping and mountaineering were also supported by many people, particularly those seeking an increase in day walks and multi-day trails.



Top: Rafting on Waiau Toa/Clarence River.
Below: Mountain biking in Molesworth. Photo: Dave Mitchell.

Cycling, mountain biking and hunting all received similar emphasis. The establishment of public and private partnerships for developing walking and biking trails was suggested, with the Old Ghost Road being highlighted as a positive example. The potential for increased conflict between motorised and non-motorised forms of recreation was noted, with concerns relating to safety and the quality of the experience. One solution was to create zones or areas for different activities (including farming). Larger hunting areas would be welcome additions.

Advocates of four-wheel driving and horse riding placed importance on the development of tracks and associated facilities.

Cross-country skiing, aviation and paragliding opportunities were also mentioned.

Question 10:

If you would not like to see changes to public access and recreation opportunities at Molesworth, please tell us why.

(1300 people responded to this question)

Most people who responded to this question supported the current level of public access and recreation. Their reasons for this are outlined below. People also expressed support for not restricting access further.

Danger of overuse

A common concern was the belief that increasing numbers of tourists and visitors would be detrimental to all other values associated with Molesworth. In particular, respondents mentioned the increased waste and pollution from visitors, such as freedom campers; the spread of pest species; vandalism; and the cost of managing increased visitor numbers – eg for the upgrade of facilities to cope with the demand.

A central concern was the degree to which increased development would detract from the nature of the experience being sought by current users. Respondents did not support Molesworth becoming a destination for mass tourism, such as a Great Walk.

Another related issue was the perceived fire risk from opening the area up to larger numbers of people.

Good balance of interests

Finding the right balance between farming, conservation and access was another dominant theme. Respondents considered that the current balance of interests was good.

“Existing access is a perfect balance between allowing people to enjoy Molesworth without too much pressure on the ecosystems and farming operations.”

Some people noted their support for the current system of managing hunting through a ballot system.

Protection of natural values

The protection of natural values through restricted access was considered essential. There were concerns that increasing public access would not only be detrimental to landscape values, but also to sensitive ecosystems – native flora and fauna, and waterways.

Restricting access was considered an opportunity to allow the environment to recover.

“Allowing more access will compromise the heart and soul of this unique landscape.”

The adverse effects of increasing public access in other parts of the country were also mentioned.

“... you don't have to go too far to look at other overused and resource-stretched DOC parks and walks and how tourism overuse is slowly or in some cases quickly ruining them.”

Wilderness experience

Respondents emphasised that Molesworth is appealing for many visitors because of the wild and remote nature of the experience.

“... it is remote and therefore one of the few ‘quiet’ spots left in NZ.”

Comments reflected on the danger of opening up the area to increasing numbers of visitors, with concerns centring on the potential degradation of the iconic wilderness experience. The pristine nature of the environment was highlighted as a value that could be easily lost or degraded. ‘Beauty’ and ‘remoteness’ were common terms that were used to describe Molesworth.

“I think the remoteness and how difficult it is to access is partly why it is so special!”

Safety concerns

Safety concerns ranged from dangerous, inexperienced driving on gravel roads through to the challenges of the wild, remote terrain and weather events. In addition, the limited cellphone reception and difficulties associated with rescuing stranded tourists were recurrent themes. Harsh winter conditions and the fire hazard in summer were also noted.

Hunting in Molesworth.



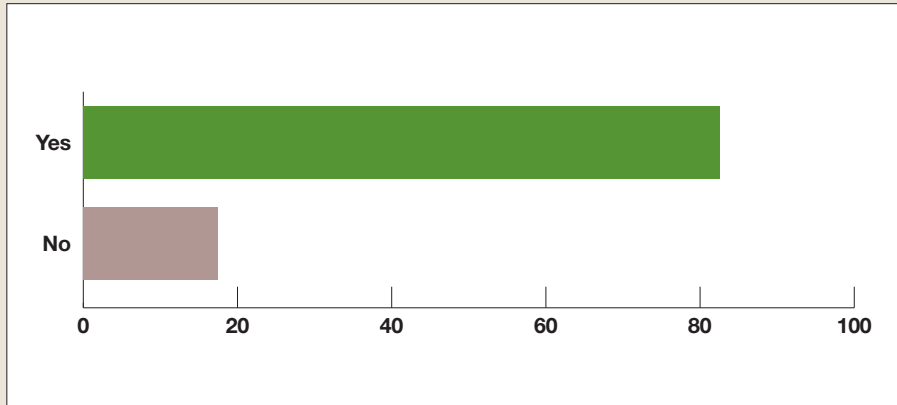
Question 11:

Do you support continued farming at Molesworth?

(3386 people responded to this question)

(1117 people skipped this question)

Question 11 led respondents directly to either Question 12 or 13, depending on their answer.



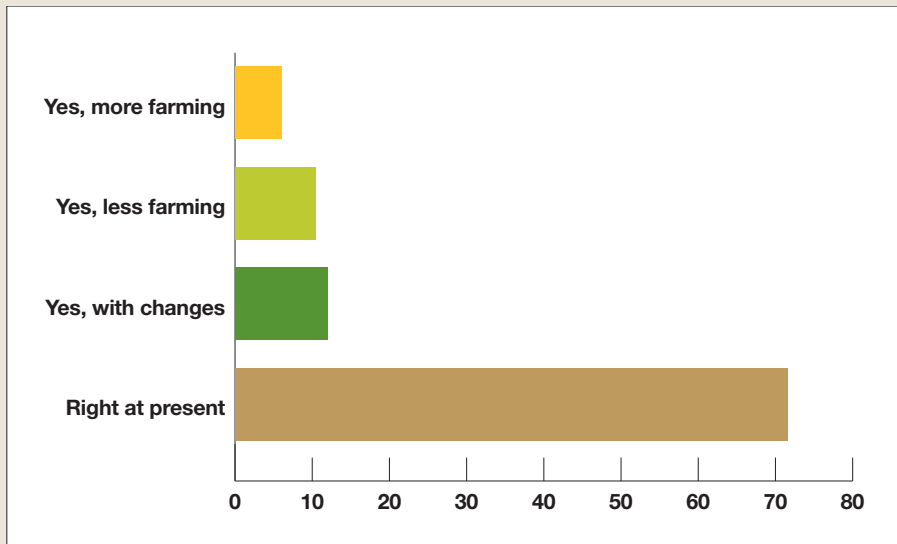
		Responses	
Yes	82.52%	2794	
No	17.48%	592	
Total		3386	

Question 12:

If you support continued farming at Molesworth, would you like to see changes to the way that Molesworth is farmed?

(2682 people responded to this question)

(1821 people skipped this question)



		Responses	
Yes, I would like to see more farming at Molesworth	6.04%	162	
Yes, I would like to see less farming at Molesworth	10.37%	278	
Yes, I would like to see other changes to farming at Molesworth	12.04%	323	
Farming at Molesworth is about right at present	71.55%	1919	
Total		2682	

Question 12(a):

If there are any specific changes you would like to see to the way Molesworth is farmed, please tell us.

(1000 people responded to this question)

Although many of the people who responded to this question provided detailed comments, a similar number felt unable to comment on the current farming practices without more knowledge and information.

Farmers as custodians

Respondents described the current management approach as being respectful of the environment as well as other users of Molesworth. Farm managers were identified as stewards of the land rather than being solely focused on the economic return.

Comments reflected support for farm managers maintaining a viable farm while also providing for other values, such as conservation and public access. A link was made between land management and weed control and the importance of an integrated management approach.

It was noted that the status quo encompasses the notion of farmers as custodians who are 'innovative and responsive to change' in relation to farm management, but also in looking after natural values.

"From what I can see Molesworth has been farmed well, preserving the environment, yet generating a financial return for a good number of years."

Sustainable farming

Employing sustainable farming practices was seen as paramount. Comments emphasised the importance of using "good or best management practice". It was unclear whether respondents considered the current management regime to be sustainable.

Respondents were concerned that farming should not be carried out at the expense of other values. The importance of investigating new methods of farming with fewer adverse effects on natural values was highlighted, and a review of areas that are suitable for farming was also suggested. In addition, the monitoring and review of farming practices was considered important to ensure the farm continues to be managed sustainably.

"[Keep] cattle out of fragile places - rivers, wetlands, valleys/gullies and off the higher areas."

Many respondents did not feel that they had enough knowledge to comment on the current farming regime but expressed support for the use of sustainable practices.

Other comments referred to the importance of protecting sensitive areas from degradation by reducing cattle numbers and/or restricting stock access to these areas. Water bodies, riparian margins and wetlands were examples of areas requiring greater protection.

Sustainable farming practices were directly linked to the protection of natural values, particularly waterways.

Weed and pest management

Pest management, particularly weed control, was regarded as an integral aspect of farming. Many respondents thought that pest control would require greater investment in the future.

"... I think farming helps to reduce broom/noxious weed growth ..."

It was considered that farming must be viable in order to fund weed control. An increase in pest species coupled with the perceived fire risk associated with invasive plants was a key area of concern. Others recommended that farm management should include the St James Conservation Area in the future.

Balanced interests

The importance of balancing different interests was a common theme. Some respondents felt that farming currently takes precedence over other values and suggested that a more balanced approach should be used in the future. Such comments were linked to the importance of Molesworth not being profit driven to ensure that the farming component is in balance with public access and conservation.

"I would also like to see an effort made to develop a unique farming method for this kind of land and vegetation which results in both economic value and improved biodiversity - in other words net gain for both."

The greater separation of farming from recreational areas was one suggestion to accommodate different interests. Ensuring stock numbers are maintained at levels that support conservation gains was another recurring theme.

A number of people suggested that farm management could enhance their relationship with the general public, with more transparency recommended.



Question 13:

If you do not support continued farming at Molesworth, please tell us why.

(520 people responded to this question)

The perceptions of respondents who did not support continued farming were clustered into four themes.

Damage to the natural environment

Farming was perceived as having an adverse effect on water quality. Other key concerns related to the erosion of plant and animal diversity, cattle grazing in vulnerable ecosystems, and the degradation of riparian margins by cattle grazing in and around water bodies. Respondents also commented on climate change and the importance of reducing CO2 emissions.

“In terms of climate change, Molesworth Station will become increasingly difficult to farm due to drier conditions and it makes sense to change the landuse now ...”

Importance of a conservation focus

Respondents expressed their preference for ecosystem restoration and conservation. Suggestions included designating Molesworth as a national park and returning the high country to its pre-farmed, natural state.

“I feel it [farming] is incompatible with the protection and conservation of unique flora and highland native grassland.”

Restricted access and recreation opportunities

There was a perception that the current farming operation prevents the public from accessing large parts of Molesworth, restricting access and recreation opportunities.

Uneconomic and unsustainable

Many respondents considered Molesworth to be ‘marginal farmland’ that is uneconomic and environmentally unsustainable. Some also considered that farming interferes too much with public access for limited financial return or wider public benefit.

“This marginal fragile countryside could benefit NZ more in being protected as a protected natural area through its ecosystem services and potentially recreation and tourism rather than farming.”

HISTORY

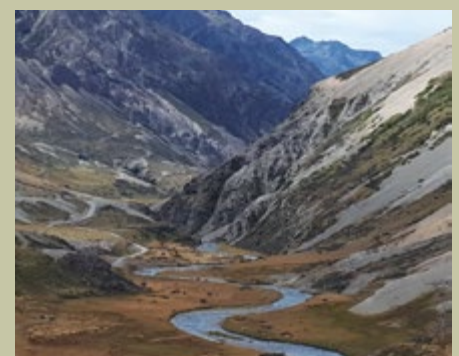
Molesworth Station has grown from a group of neighbouring runs into New Zealand’s largest farm. Its history of farming, battling introduced pests and climate extremes in a big, challenging and fragile landscape, has shaped the character of both land and the people who have worked here. It has come to typify the large-scale pastoral farming enterprises, which began in Marlborough with the Flaxbourne Run in 1847 and became the mainstay of the New Zealand economy and a strong influence in a New Zealand ‘identity’.



MOLESWORTH NATURAL RESOURCES

Molesworth is characterised by the diversity of its elevation, landforms, soils and extremes of climate, which influences the animals and plants that live there. Rainfall varies dramatically from wetter areas in the west to much drier areas in the east. Molesworth is one of only a few centres of ‘endemism’ in New Zealand, with a high proportion of terrestrial and freshwater species existing here and nowhere else. Geologically, Molesworth contains features that are nationally significant, and which contribute to its high level of endemism. Molesworth spans the headwaters of three major river catchments – the Clarence, Wairau and Awatere, which contain lakes, tarns and wetlands. Braided rivers and wetlands through Molesworth represent nationally significant ecosystems and are habitat for ‘Threatened’ and ‘At risk’ bird

species. Dryland ecosystems cover a substantial part of Molesworth. These ecosystems occur in the rain shadow areas east of the main ranges of both the North and South islands of New Zealand. They contain a high proportion of New Zealand’s most threatened native ecosystems and species. Only a small proportion of dryland ecosystems are legally protected throughout New Zealand. This elevates the importance of Molesworth as a protected dryland ecosystem site.

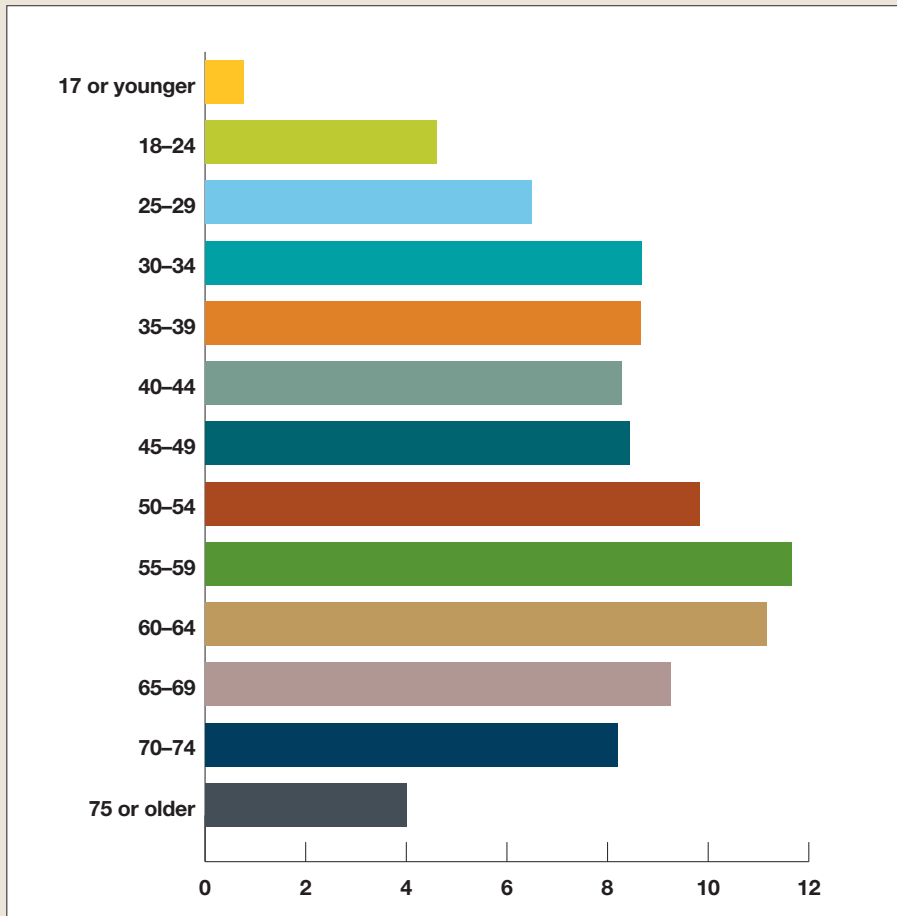


Left: Cattle in the yards at Molesworth. Photo: Department of Lands and Survey historic collection.
Right: The upper Wairau River.

Question 14:

What is your age?

(3296 people responded to this question) (1207 people skipped this question)

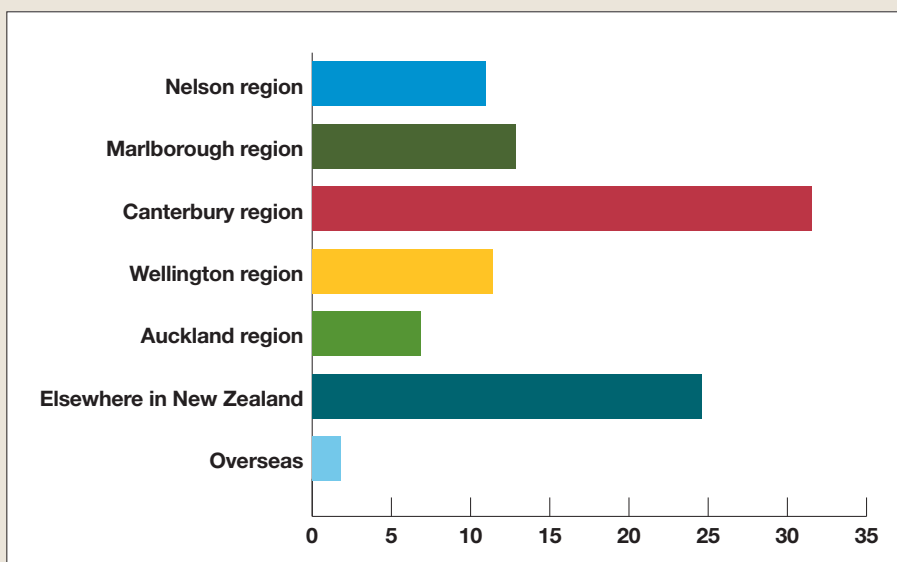


	Responses	
17 or younger	0.76%	25
18-24	4.61%	152
25-29	6.49%	214
30-34	8.68%	286
35-39	8.65%	285
40-44	8.28%	273
45-49	8.43%	278
50-54	9.83%	324
55-59	11.65%	384
60-64	11.17%	368
65-69	9.25%	305
70-74	8.19%	270
75 or older	4.00%	132
Total		3296

Question 15:

Where do you usually live?

(3303 people responded to this question) (1200 people skipped this question)



	Responses	
Nelson region	10.96%	362
Marlborough region	12.84%	424
Canterbury region	31.55%	1042
Wellington region	11.38%	376
Auckland region	6.87%	227
Elsewhere in New Zealand	24.61%	813
Overseas	1.79%	59
Total		3303

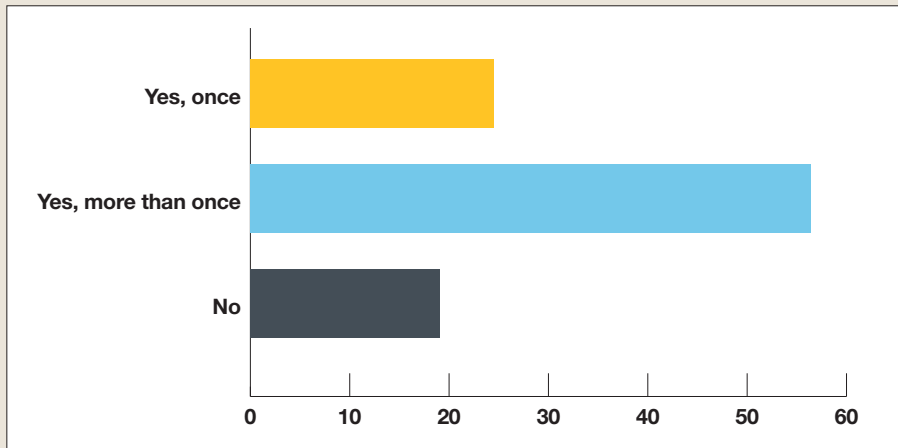
Question 16:

Have you visited Molesworth before?

(3341 people responded to this question)

(1162 people skipped this question)

Question 16 led respondents directly to either Question 17 or 18, depending on their answer.



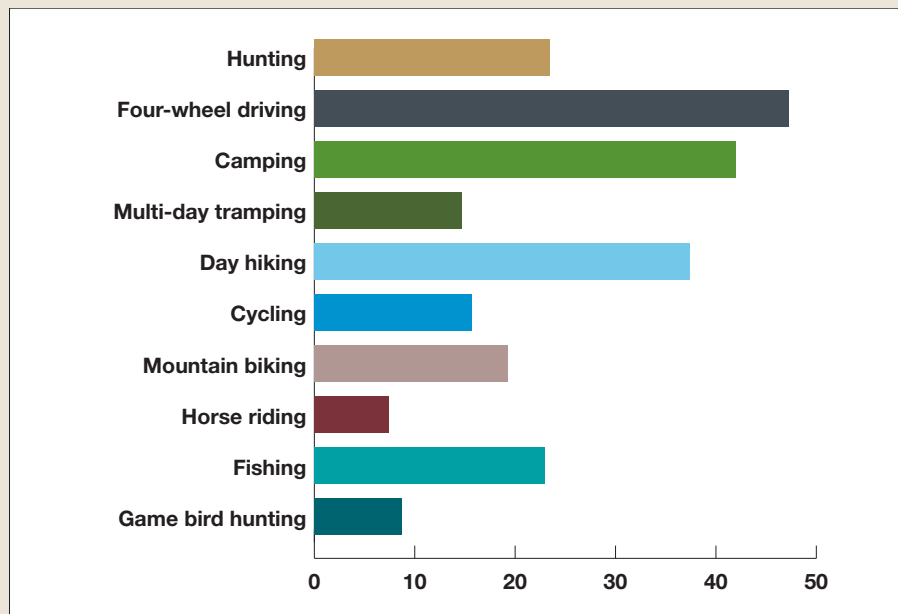
		Responses	
Yes, I have been there once	24.48%	818	
Yes, I have been there more than once	56.42%	1885	
No, I have never visited Molesworth	19.10%	638	
Total			3341

Question 17:

Thinking about your previous visits to Molesworth, what recreational activities have you undertaken?

(2229 people responded to this question)

(2274 people skipped this question)



		Responses	
	23.46%	523	
	47.29%	1054	
	41.95%	935	
	14.72%	328	
	37.42%	834	
	15.66%	349	
	19.25%	429	
	7.45%	166	
	22.97%	512	
	8.75%	195	
Total			2229

Question 17(a):

Other recreational activities?

(Relating to activities not covered by the multi-choice question)

(960 people responded to this question)

Some people repeated activities that were listed in the multi-choice section of the survey. A snapshot of the comments representing 'other' recreational activities is provided below.

Driving through

"Casual drive through en route north. Sublime, magnificent."

"We drove slowly through stopping often to enjoy and look in awe at the landscape, rocks, lizards/geckos and lack of cars - met only one! Awesome ..."

"Driving through to enjoy the wilderness area as a different ecological and geological landscape from other accessible areas in NZ."

"We drove through in a vintage car."

Motorcycling

"Motorcycle touring, enjoying the amazing countryside and views."

"Motorcycle adventure camping and fishing."

Farm visitor/ work-related trip

"Mustering and droving cattle to the sale yards in the late 1950s."

"Counted the cattle for Lands & Survey, high country farm visits."

"I have worked as a researcher on Hieracium control and grazing management in Molesworth in the 1980s."

Flying

"Flew around the Station and landed on the air strip."

"Backcountry flying (pilot) over this area many times."

Sightseeing

"Enjoying the isolation and landscape. The sense of space. Family connection so great to share what grandparents experienced."

"Day trips to show my family the area."

"Merely driven through and taken in its rugged beauty. A step back in time."

Photography/painting

"Photography, star gazing (dark sky is excellent as no nearby towns)."

"Short walks in different parts. Taking photos, especially of the indigenous vegetation."

"Painting, photography, reading, picnicking, soaking up the landscape."

Rafting/canoeing/ swimming

"Swimming. Enjoying the peace and quiet."

"Rafting down the Clarence from the Acheron."

"White water kayaking."

Running

"Molesworth run every year. Fantastic event allowing a small number of people to experience the area."

"Running - Molesworth annual harrier race for over 20 years."

Historic

"Cobb Cottage fan ... love it."

"We stopped at places and enjoyed the scenery and wondered about the early settlers and families and how they survived."

Surveys/study

"Study of aquatic insects."

"Worked as an ecologist volunteering for 3 months in Molesworth."

"Travelled through several times also participated in monitoring historical vegetation sites."

"Surveying and sampling peat swamps."

Other

"Picnics and just 'time-outing'."

"Refreshing the 'soul'."

"Numerous volunteer ranger shifts at both the Acheron and Molesworth campsites."

"... gathering gooseberries and red currants from what's left of the old garden at the Acheron cottage."

"Observing nature in all its wonders, birds, plants and invertebrates."

"Botanising and enjoying the scenery and remoteness."

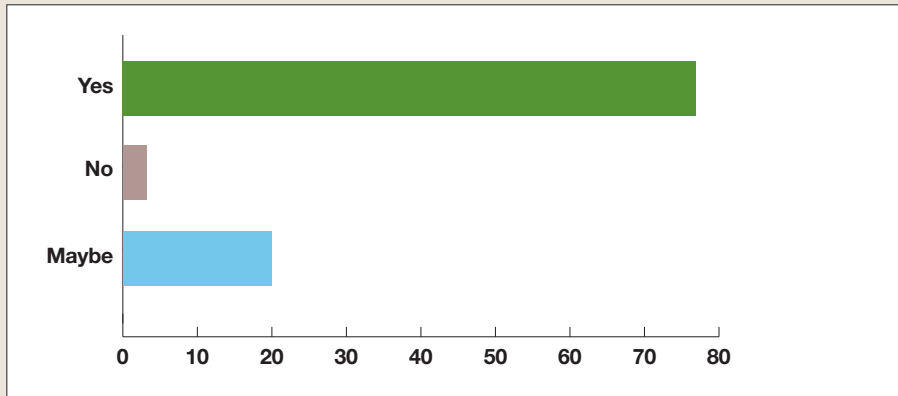
Respondents also took part in army exercises, tour-guiding, cross-country skiing and mountaineering.

Question 18:

If you've never been to Molesworth before, do you intend to visit?

(637 people responded to this question)

(3866 people skipped this question)



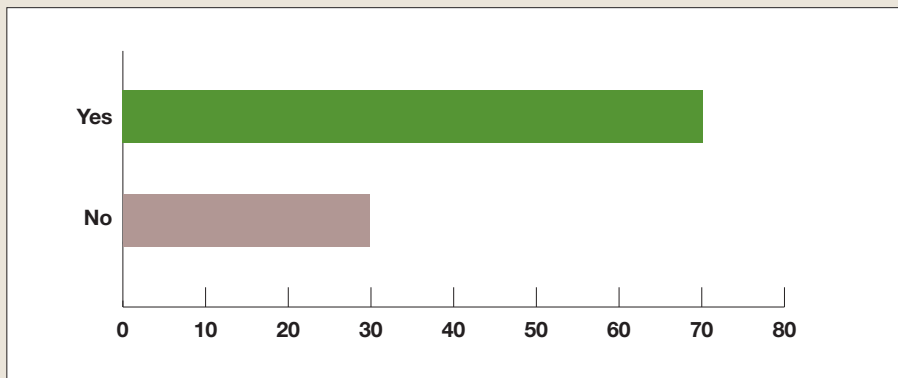
		Responses	
Yes	76.92%	490	
No	3.14%	20	
Maybe	19.94%	127	
Total		637	

Question 19:

Would you like to be informed about future opportunities to have your say on the management of Molesworth?

(3326 people responded to this question)

(1177 people skipped this question)



		Responses	
Yes	70.14%	2,333	
No	29.86%	993	
Total		3326	



Camping at Lake Tennyson.



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Front cover: An 1860 topographic plan of parts of the Leatham, Molesworth, Upcot, Barefell, Severn and Wairau survey districts. *Credit: Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga*
Back cover: Aerial view of the Acheron valley.

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