

# Central Otago MIRROR

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## Worm farmer has effluent solution

JO MCKENZIE-MCLEAN

Central Otago worm farmer Robbie Dick plans to get his worm castings from cow effluent scientifically tested to prove to doubters the end product is worth the investment.

Dick is in the early stages of putting a proposal together to apply for funding to support scientific testing of the worm castings from two Southland dairy farms.

"We would like to get funds to prove to farmers we have got a good product.

**"It is the same as what has been used for centuries - the way nature has done it - just on a commercial basis."**

Robbie Dick

"It is the same as what has been used for centuries - the way nature has done it - just on a commercial basis.

"We are putting a proposal together to show this is the best way to eliminate a lot of the effluent.

"If winter shed effluent is cleaned out on a daily basis and the product is de-watered - that is a lot better than sitting in ponds where it goes anaerobic and there is a strong risk if it gets into the waterways of doing a lot more harm."

His long-term vision was to see dairy farmers processing effluent using worms on their own properties, and they would be able to use the end, toxin-free and

sustainable product, on their crops.

Central Otago REAP Sustainable Living program co-ordinator Clair Higginson said the worm farmer was passionate about tiger worms' ability to process food and farm waste and to then use the product as chemical and toxin free fertiliser.

"What Robbie needs at the moment is some hard data.

"Evidence that will convince science minded potential users that the project would improve their feedstock. Then evidence that the economics of it stack up.

"That's why it's important to get this work done."

Mossburn farmer John Lang said he had supplied Dick with effluent from his dairy farm for the past year.

"It is a commercial thing ... there is definitely a market for Robbie's product."

Worm orders were coming in from around the country, including a company in the North Island that was freighted 80kgs of worms last week to treat organic waste.

There was also an increasing demand for worms to treat human waste from composting toilets, he said.

"I get about four or five plumbers in a week wanting 12 kilos of worms when they are installing composting toilets."

Robbie Dick, of Central Wormworx Ltd in Cromwell, says produce from his garden is proof his worm casting fertiliser is a high quality product and sustainable option for dairy farmers to treat effluent. However, he is seeking funding to carry out scientific testing to prove its value.

PHOTO: JO MCKENZIE-MCLEAN



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