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Coral Phillips - Dairy Farmer turned Accountant

Coral Phillips is a Chartered Accountant and Associate at CooperAitken. However, Coral hasn't always been an accountant. Previously she spent many years dairy farming.

Having grown up on a dairy farm in Te Awamutu, Coral obtained a Science Degree at Massey University and then worked at Ruakura, in Animal Nutrition.

Coral started dairy farming in 1980 progressing through sharemilking and dairy farm ownership in Te Awamutu, Matamata and Morrinsville. As you would expect, Coral was on the farm daily, hands on with milkings, stock work, calf rearing and did all the book work.

She started her career as an accountant in 1997 after a change in personal circumstances and hasn't looked back, totally enjoying learning a new skill set, and completing her chartered accountancy in 2006.

Coral is really pleased that she has remained with a rural accountancy firm. She definitely has a special focus helping farming clients to understand how their financial results can help with practical decision-making on the farm. Coral laughs and says "I wish I had the business/accounting knowledge I have now when I was managing the farm as things make so much more sense now".

Coral's connection to the farming industry is still very apparent, with her two sons both now in the dairy industry - Luke working for Fonterra in Waitoa and Aaron a local 50/50 sharemilker. Having the farming connection helps Coral with her clients, as she can explain things in their language. She really understands the decisions they need to make and the enormity of running of a farming operation, the financial struggles, dealing with employees, contractors, health and safety, stock, weather, etc., and the issues of simply being self-employed.

Coral's passion is helping people, and working as an accountant she gets to meet many different people and enjoys being able to work with them all, Coral says, "At CooperAitken we can be very flexible and are able to tailor our service to suit the client. Some clients prefer us to do the minimum compliance work, others prefer regular advice with running their business and some want to learn as much as they possibly can to do more themselves".

The desire to help people is also illustrated by her involvement with staff training at CooperAitken and acting as a mentor to those completing their Chartered Accountant qualification.

Coral has always been part of a rural community and her boys attended local schools at Tatanui and Morrinsville. She likes the support and friendliness that rural towns offer and, once again, Coral and husband Peter live in Te Awamutu.

Keeping her interest in the land Coral enjoys tramping she says, "Te Aroha and Kakepuka have been good training grounds for 2016 milestones Heaphy Track, Mt Taranaki and Mt Holdsworth". She also has a special interest in native plants through her gardening.