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**Welcome to [ASK] - Always Seeking Knowledge!**  
**#11 - Tuesday, March 25, 2003**  
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**1. Quick [ASK]**

Change creates amazing opportunities for us to all use human creativity in order to find the 'Weak Link' in our business, and go the extra mile to strengthen it. What an opportunity to assess everything we are doing, and to ask ourselves, 'are we doing this because we choose to retain allegiance to past behaviour, or is that past behaviour the best way to do things now, in the light of changed circumstances?' Think of it as driving a car. Do we not constantly change the way we drive to maximise the conditions under which we find ourselves? We choose to take the high road or the low road, depending on our desired outcome. Choice is constant.

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**2. Welcome**

I have just learnt of a simultaneously sad - yet inspiring - story, occurring at Wauchope, on the Mid-north Coast of NSW. It is sad because it is yet another reminder of the peril attached to operating in a monoculture environment, in this case a kikuyu pasture.

A local dairy farmer was recently walking his cows into the yard for their morning milking, when one keeled over, dead. Shortly another died. He called in two private vets and the government vet, but by days end the count was 29 bodies. There are now at 55 dead and the number is rising - that is close to 50% of his herd.

Apparently kikuyu naturally develops a toxin during the early stages of rapid growth immediately following a prolonged period of no-growth. That was the situation at Wauchope - a prolonged drought - then suddenly there was rain - and feed. As explained to me, the rumen wall changes cell structure due to the toxin from the grass being ingested. The rumen fails to 'see' that it is full, the animal continues to eat, and starts to display bloat-like symptoms. Then the animal begins to dehydrate, as the significantly increased water needs of the over active rumen are met, in part by extracting water from the blood. This causes a major blood problem, and shortly the animal is dead.

By way of background, the farmer has spent a fortune on fodder during the drought, incurring massive debt, much as I described in [ASK] 10. Now half his 'factory' is gone. His local Co-op put out an SOS, looking for cows that could be gifted to the farmer, in order to allow him to keep producing - and to stay in the game. Here is the inspiring part. The family has been gifted cows from all over Eastern Australia, and others have provided the freight to get them to Wauchope. What a generosity of spirit.

Many people must now address the root cause of this situation. It actually was not bad luck. It was a planned event, only the timing was unknown. Of course, where kikuyu is native, both animals and the grass co-evolved, so the animals know the risk. Not so the poor old dairy cow from Holland living in Australia, eating an African grass. Some people will have to make very hard decisions at some stage about mono-cultures.

Finally, if you haven't already heard, Suzie is to be a mother-in-law!! Our son, David, has announced his engagement with Camilla MacKenzie, also of Quirindi. They are to be married in September, and our good wishes go to them both.

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### 3. Choosing is our choice

You will have read and/or heard, ad nauseum in recent days, that we live in "uncertain times". If that is the case, *carpe deum* - seize the day! There are always benefits to be found by those who look during a time when uncertainty abounds. Some call it buying straw hats in winter.

No matter what we think about activities in world politics, one thing is for sure, change is occurring. And contrary to the belief of some, we can all influence the direction of that change in some way, by our response to the changes. We can each choose our response.

Choosing our own response is a gift all humans possess. Everyone is moved by the words of Victor Frankl, in his outstanding book, *Mans Search for Meaning*, in which he describes his time incarcerated in a German camp during WWII, and cruelly treated. He observed that his captors had greater mobility than he, but he had greater freedom than they did, because he (and only he) could choose his response to their actions against and to him. He called this the 'ultimate freedom'.

Right now we are seeing commodity prices falling in both NZ and Australia by as much as 30%, largely due to changes in our exchange rates relative to the rest of the world. Why would our exchange rates be changing? Could it be that people in other lands have a perception that we each have something they would like? The usual economic understanding is that prices tend to go up as demand increases and down in periods of low demand. Land values in NZ are skyrocketing at the moment. They appear to offer little relativity to commodity prices, and to have a lot to do with the perception of foreign investors that they can have a quality of life in NZ.

Change creates amazing opportunities for us to all use human creativity in order to find the 'Weak Link' in our business, and go the extra mile to strengthen it. What an opportunity to assess everything we are doing, and to ask ourselves, 'are we doing this because we choose to retain allegiance to past behaviour, or is that past behaviour the best way to do things now, in the light of changed circumstances?' Think of it as driving a car. Do we not constantly change the way we drive to maximise the conditions under which we find ourselves? We choose to take the high road or the low road, depending on our desired outcome. Choice is constant.

We should not be afraid of change, it is after all a natural function. Evolution seems to naturally occur. What is distracting to some is the speed at which we now sometimes need to change, yet therein lies the opportunity. Humans in any and every circumstance can enjoy the benefit of 'human creativity'. A mind of extraordinary unused capacity lies within each of us. It would seem unusual that we have been given so much mind capacity

without a reason!

Just this week we came across such an example. A lady who first came across Holistic Management about two years ago related an extraordinary range of experiences, and about her choosing her responses. She had been raising a few pens of pasture raised meat chickens. The trials had proved the concept, but profitability suddenly started to drop as grain prices reflected the Australian drought. She had two choices - address what was now a marketing weak link, or take the option of 'sitting out a bad market' - refer again to Page 8 of 'Mastering the Basics' in Holistic Financial Planning. After testing towards her goal (which, by the way, is laminated and stuck to the 'loo' door) she chose to sit out the market.

Then almost immediately, and without warning, she lost her part time job. Her situation was now a bit difficult! Yet, within weeks she had been offered five full time positions that would have compensated her very well. Again, she tested each of them, and they all failed because of demands placed on her family, or some other aspect. Some would call her choosy. Enlightened people would know she was choosing her life consistent with her values.

Now she has a job that, as she says, "I once would have never dreamed I could have obtained". Therein lies the secret. She had the two important ingredients - she has a deeply owned (and visible!) holistic goal, and she had developed a vision (more than a dream) of the type of job that would move her towards her holistic goal. She says, "two years ago I would have taken the first thing that was offered, I would have been so reactionary to my circumstances. Now I know I can create my own circumstances".

In the next few weeks there will very likely be much negativity pushed into your world. We all have both the capacity and the obligation to choose our response to it. Start looking for the opportunities. If you are 'up' whilst others are 'down', you will have a great advantage. Be prepared for change, test the options towards your holistic goal, have a clear monitoring strategy, and move on.

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#### 4. Update your Diary

Support Groups - can you let both ourselves and HDMA know of your dates, so we can each let others know.

##### Events we have planned include:

Monday, March 31, Quirindi, NSW	Introduction to Holistic Management
Friday, April 4, Gresford, NSW	Holistic Grazing and Land Planning
Tuesday, April 29, Quirindi, NSW	Wealth Generation/Financial Planning
Saturday, May 3, Wingham, NSW	Wealth Generation/Financial Planning
May 19, Comboyne, NSW	Introduction to Holistic Management
May 23, Singleton, NSW	Introduction to Holistic Management
May 27, Wanaka, NZ	Wealth Generation/Financial Planning
May 30, Wingham, NSW	Holistic Grazing and Land Planning

##### Support Groups

April 29, Krumbach, NSW

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## Coaching

For many years our business has been coaching people in holistic goal formation, wealth generation planning and biological planning. This service is provided by regular phone schedule, by email, or in person at your location.

Successful people use a coach to stay on track. Importantly, in difficult times coaching often provides the critical difference between clarity and debilitating confusion.

Without caring help, it is all too easy to deviate from where you want to be - to some place else. We act as a 'process coach', letting you focus on the outcome you require, taking away the worries people so often experience - such as, 'Am I doing this the right way?' Coaching is an important part of working on your business rather than all the time in the business.

Email [blward@holisticresults.com.au](mailto:blward@holisticresults.com.au) to discuss your coaching time.

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## 5. REMINDER - An important field-day Meet some successful practitioners from a range of environments

HDMA has organised a field day at Kooragang City Farm (KCF), part of a wetland in the mouth of the Hunter River, at Newcastle, NSW, and later at Newcastle University. There, a range of practitioners from both brittle and non-brittle environments will share their stories. The date is March 29th.

City Farm is a 150ha. part of a publicly funded \$10m project to restore the 1,500ha. Kooragang Island. Manager of KCF, Rob Henderson has chosen many ways regenerate this once sad environment of . Of particular interest is his decision to use cattle to rehabilitate both saline and fresh water degradation. I would rate this as a major project involving holistic decision-making in Australia, even though the total area grazed at the moment is relatively small. It flies in the face of conventional wetland management thinking.

The guest speakers in the afternoon at the University are:

**Megan and Andrew Mosely**, who farm 70,000ac. in a brittle environment at Cobar, producing meat goats and sheep, cattle and opportunity cropping. Several weeks ago Megan was runner-up in the prestigious ABC Rural Woman of the Year awards.

**David and Mary Marsh**, who principally produce wool on Allendale, near Cowra, NSW. David and Mary are members of a very active support structure in their region, and widely regarded for their husbandry practices.

**Margaret McMahon**, a cattle producer from Clarence Town, in the lower Hunter Valley. Margaret is a lawyer by training and a 'refugee' from Sydney some years ago. She supplies stock to the City Farm. Margaret is particularly active in support activities in the Hunter Valley, and widely regarded and respected as a leader in her community.

**Martin Babakhan**, is a senior meteorologist with the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, and is the Hunter District Meteorologist. He is also a highly acclaimed lecturer in aviation meteorology at Newcastle University and resident broadcaster on ABC local radio in the Hunter. His special area is El Nino, and the end of drought. He has predicted this drought to be finished by the end of March, so bring your gumboots, because he has a reputation of not getting it wrong.

**Peter Howarth**, well known to many of you, is a farmer with his wife, Judy, at Wombramurra, at Nundle NSW. Peter and Judy have applied their city business skills to agriculture and to their community. In recent years they have assisted Nundle to gain an excellent tourism profile, and several years ago constructed a woollen mill in the town. At the moment they are constructing with others a meat processing plant in Tamworth, to vertically integrate their beef production. This production was ioriginally from Simmental and Devon stock, but is now largely composite in nature.

Concurrent with this field day will be the Annual General Meeting of Holistic Decision Making Association (Australia and NZ) Limited.

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## 6. Books and Materials you can use

"What Went Wrong"  
By Bernard Lewis  
ISBN 0 75381 675 x

Bernard Lewis, English born author and historian, is Professor of Near Eastern Studies Emeritus at Princeton University. The book is just 178 pages, and covers the rise of Islam, its relationship to and with Christendom, and to Eastern beliefs. It was in complete form at the publishers on September 11, 2001, having been in the process of writing since 1988, so is by no means a quick knwee jerk response to that activity, but a true study of Islam.

The central premise is that Islam has moved from being the predominate influence on civilisation to a steadily declining influence, especially in the last 300 years or so. Much of our scientific achievement came from the Islamic countries, but now there is virtually no new science arising from the region. More particularly he describes how many non-Muslim people over the ages found refuge in Islamic states, where they were treated better (even though regarded as infidels - meaning not a Muslim - than remaining to be persecuted in Christian countries).

Lewis suggests that Islam accepted the works of the Prophet as complete and entire at the time they were written. This led the Muslim communities (of which there are several major groupings - who each developed not from religious differences but through political differences) to polarise.

On the one hand are the fundamentalists who say the problem lies in Islam having deviated over the years from the written word, and in having any dealings with the infidels. Such dealings are to them 'the' problem. On the other hand the 'modernists' consider it is the persistence of beliefs and practices that might have been creative and progressive a thousand years ago, but are neither today. These people have found ways to accommodate the infidels, but they too are confused as to why they are not progressing like Western nations when they too adopt Western habits. In essence, Lewis proposes that the difference lies in the Western notion and habit of the separation of church and state. There is no such notion in Islam. They are indivisible, the one and the same.

For the time being the game on all sides is all about blame. Lewis writes,

'But for growing numbers of Middle Easterners it is giving way to a more self-critical approach. The question, "Who did this to us?" has led only to neurotic fantasies and conspiracy theories. The other question - "What did we do wrong?" - has led naturally to a second question, "How do we put it right?". In that question, and in the various answers that are being found, lies the best hopes for the future.

I wonder how the decisions will be made. How do people of any persuasion insert the concept of a holistic goal sitting above a hallowed document of how-to's, now perhaps thousands of years old? There is the opportunity.

By the way:

You can get this book from The Book Connection in Dubbo, NSW

Ph: 02 6882 3311 Fax: 02 6882 3311 or email [orders@bookconnection.com.au](mailto:orders@bookconnection.com.au)

(Also ask them about their Mail Order Catalogue - it is terrific)

or

Scorpio Books in Christchurch, NZ

Ph: 03 379 2882 Fax: 03 379 2886 or email [scorpbk@ihug.co.nz](mailto:scorpbk@ihug.co.nz)

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## 7. Good people looking for a start

There are increasing numbers of Zimbabwean's arriving in each of our countries. These people are usually highly skilled, and keen to re-start their lives after difficult times. Suzie has been liaising with such a couple. They have been in Australia about 18 months, and are looking for an opportunity. The couple are skilled in dryland and irrigated cropping, including horticulture. They have experience in pasture chickens reared in chicken tractors. This family are keen to negotiate a suitable arrangement, that might include either a salary basis or share enterprises, with a house included. For an introduction, can you call Suzie (best after hours) on 02 9929 5568.

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## 8. Quotes that mean something

"There is no traffic jam in the extra mile."  
--source unknown

"One of the greatest discoveries a man makes, one of his great surprises, is to find he can do what he was afraid he couldn't do."  
--Henry Ford

"He that cannot ask cannot live"  
--Old proverb

"I want to do it because I want to do it."  
-- Amelia Earhart

"Everything's in the mind. That's where it all starts. Knowing what you want is the first step toward getting it."  
-- Mae West

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## 9. Joke

**Subject:** Think before you argue

A couple went on vacation to a fishing resort up north. The husband liked to fish at the crack of dawn. The wife liked to read.

One morning the husband returned after several hours of fishing and decided to take a short nap.

Although she wasn't familiar with the lake, the wife decided to take the boat. She rowed out a short distance, anchored, and returned to reading her book.

Along came the sheriff in his boat. He pulled up alongside her and said, "Good morning Ma'am. What are you doing?" "Reading my book," she replied ...as she thought to herself, "isn't it obvious?"

"You're in a restricted fishing area," he informed her. "But officer, I'm not fishing, Can't you see that?", she said. "Yes, but you have all the equipment. I'll have to take you in and write you up." replied the sheriff.

"If you do that, I'll have to charge you with rape," snapped the irritated woman. "But I haven't even touched you." groused the sheriff.

"Yes, that's true", she replied, "but you do have all the equipment."

MORAL: Never argue with a woman who knows how to read.  
It's likely she can also think.

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This publication is intended as information and not advice. You should test any ideas contained herein towards your own holistic goal.

Regards

Bruce Ward