

# Compost maker uses special recipe

By HELEN HARVEY

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RUSSELL HOW spends his days in it up to his knees.

Compost, that is. A year ago he started up his own business called Return2Earth and set about making compost to his own special recipe.

He calls it composted soil conditioner and ingredients include chicken and goat manure, horse manure from the racecourse, green waste from the transfer station and wood chips.

“Once a month, a big mulcher comes down from Rotorua and shreds the greenwaste.”

He has a small hut at the back of the landfill and enough room for 13 windrows of compost, each 100 metres long. There are nine in process at the moment.

Making the compost takes five months and Mr How had a small amount ready in January, but is waiting for spring to really push his product to farmers. Two farmers have already used the product extensively and while it is



too early for there to be any data to record its effectiveness, visual results have been very pleasing, Mr How says.

The compost is all natural and no chemical fertilisers have been added.

Farmers always ask how much NPK there is in the compost, he says. There is a small amount, but

it's not from chemicals, it's natural.

During the compost making process the compost can get as high as 70 or 80 degrees, Mr How says.

Part of the process is to check it regularly and look at the moisture content and smell it to check the odour. That will tell Mr How

**From the earth:** Russell How is producing a special compost for dairy farmers and growers.

Photo: CAMERON BURNELL.

whether he needs to add more water or if the compost needs aerating.

“We try and keep the environment as good as we possibly can . . . try and maintain it between 50 and 70 degrees, which is the optimum temperature.”

The important thing is to keep the moisture and air ratios right for bacteria to stay alive and reproduce.

He then puts the compost through a screen to take out the stones.

The compost is made for dairy farmers and maize growers, but bags of the compost are available to home gardeners from the transfer station on Colson Rd.