

# RURAL GUARDIAN

South Island wide 

JUNE 2023

TO EVERY FARM IN THE SOUTH ISLAND



RURAL RECHARGE P9



HIVES AND HIKERS P12

# DAIRY'S RISING STAR

Page 24



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# FROM THE EDITOR

WITH Claire Inkson – OPINION

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# Telling our story

While attending an event recently, the discussion turned to how to tell our farming story better, a topic that has been debated back and forth in the agriculture sector for years.

One farmer made an interesting point: with the supposedly negative narrative attached to the word 'farmer',

we should instead label ourselves 'food producers'.

On the face of it, this seems logical. Food producer, while it doesn't take into account the fibre sector, doesn't carry the same negative connotations as the word farmer has with some of the urban demographic.

But at this same event,

another farmer stood up and told the crowd that he was proud to be a farmer and intended to keep referring to himself as such.

And something about his passion and the strength of his conviction resonated with me.

Consumer expectations are changing, and we need to meet those changes.

That is undeniable.

But the New Zealand agriculture sector has so much to be proud of, and I hate to think that, on some level, we have bought into this negative narrative ourselves and forgotten that New Zealand farmers are already some of the most efficient in the world.

And with innovation constantly being researched and developed, we will only become more so.

We can be proud to be the farmers we are today and continue to build upon the excellent work around sustainability we have already achieved to be even better farmers in the future.

We can do both.

Since our last issue, we have started a Facebook and Instagram page, so I hope you have the time to give both of those a like and a follow.

We will post articles on there regularly, so if you miss the print copy in your mailbox, you can find us there too.

This issue celebrates the achievements of the shining stars of the deer and dairy sector. Congratulations to all winners of the Dairy Woman of the Year, the New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards and the Deer Industry Awards.

We are excited to attend the Young Farmers Grand Final in July, too—best of luck to the regional finalists.

We chat with Craig Wiggins, a champion for rural mental health and an all-around good bloke, and talk shearing in Mongolia with Sam Bryan.

We look at agritourism at Island Hills Station and how to stay healthy through the calving season. So pour yourself a cuppa, put your feet up and have a read.

I hope you enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed making it.



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# AGRICALENDAR

This month's rural event round-up

## AGRICALENDAR June 2023

**JUNE 1**  
Moving day

Traditional moving day for dairy farmers

**JUNE 1**  
World Milk Day

Global day to celebrate the importance of milk.

**JUNE 5**  
King's Birthday  
Public holiday

**JUNE 7**

Between the Domes Catchment Group Winter Wellbeing Evening with Wendy Frew

Held at the Mossburn Community Centre. To register or for more information contact Peter Sim on 0274875115

**JUNE 7**  
Regional Agritourism development program

Held In Invercargill. For more information, or to register, go to: <https://www.agritourism.nz/2023-regional-agritourism-accelerator.html>

**JUNE 8**  
Beef + Lamb comedy show and night off farm

Held at Winton Memorial Hall, Winton.

For more information, visit [beeflambnz.com/events](https://www.beeflambnz.com/events)

**JUNE 9**  
Tee up to tackle hunger golf day

Held at the Waimate golf club and hosted by Meat the Need NZ to raise funds for the Waimate Community Foodbank and Timaru Foodbank. For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/MeatTheNeedNZ>

**JUNE 10**  
Southern Dairy Hub Gala Dinner

Ascot Park, Invercargill. Tickets available at Eventbrite

**JUNE 14**  
Beef + Lamb NZ Ladies long lunch

Held in Gore, Southland. Tickets available at Eventbrite.

**JUNE 14-17**  
National Field Days

Mystery Creek, Hamilton. For more info visit: <https://www.fieldays.co.nz/>

**JUNE 16**  
Time out Tour with Matt Chisholm

Held in Middlemarch, Otago.

Register at: <https://www.rural-support.org.nz/Time-Out-Tour>

**JUNE 17-20**  
E Tipu Food and Fibre Sector Summit

Held in Christchurch  
<https://etipu.boma.global/>

**JUNE 18**  
Woolfeast Christchurch

Annual wool spectacular held at Pioneer Stadium, Christchurch.

For more info visit <https://www.facebook.com/woolfeast/>

**JUNE 28-29**  
Moving day

Held in Invercargill, Southland. For more info, visit : <https://www.side.org.nz/>

**JUNE 29-30**  
Growers Leading Change

Lincoln Event Centre, Christchurch.

For more information, visit: <https://www.far.org.nz/>

**JUNE 30**  
Balfour Young Farmers Bark Up

Balfour Sport Complex. Visit Balfour Young Farmers on Facebook for more information.

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# Deer industry conference showcases industry's best



Deer Industry NZ chair Mandy Bell presented the Premier Elworthy Environmental Award to Richard Burdon, with chief judge Janet Gregory of MPI.

Around 200 deer farmers and marketers attended the annual Deer Industry Conference in Ashburton on May 10.

The punchy one-day conference, hosted by the Canterbury-West Coast branch of the NZ Deer Farmers' Association (NZDFA) and Deer Industry NZ (DINZ), was packed with 14 speakers.

This included reports on the latest developments in the velvet and venison markets overseas as well as exciting results from research projects run on deer farms.

The day ended on a high note with the inspirational Sir Ian Taylor founder of Animation Research, whose message was to "Bugger the boxing, pour the concrete anyway".

Deer farmers also had plenty of opportunities to connect with

their peers from other parts of the country for the first time since the last industry conference in Invercargill in 2021.

#### Deer industry awards

The industry's annual awards were presented at a gala dinner at Hotel Ashburton.

The 2023 Deer Industry Award went to Hawke's Bay deer farmer and vet Richard Hilson.

This year's NZDFA Matuschka award for unsung contributor went to Robbie Bruce of the Taihape-Ruapehu branch.

Gill McLean won the MSD/Allflex photo award for her beautiful picture of a curious fawn.

#### Environmental awards

Otago farmers Richard and Sarah Burdon took home the deer industry's premier environmental award.

They won the First Light award

for sustainable farming with a customer focus and also took home the premier Elworthy Environmental Award for their work on Glen Dene, a 2989-hectare station that runs from the shores of Lake Hawea to the surrounding high country.

The third-generation farmers run sheep, beef and deer as well as a campground and trophy hunting business on the farm.

The judges said the Burdons had a well-run farm with a clear customer and sustainability focus. They also commended them for the early adoption of carbon credits and the high level of contribution to, and interaction with, the local community.

South Canterbury farmers Lyal Cullen and Marion Neill won the NZ Landcare Trust award for excellence in sustain-



Deer Industry NZ chair Mandy Bell.

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

able deer farming.

The judges were impressed by the extensive shelterbelts, woodlots and riparian areas and the pair's willingness to trial a range of plants to see which species worked best. Their in-depth knowledge of deer wintering at Springdale and long-term water quality testing that showed minimal impact from farming, was also noted.

North Canterbury's Scott Hassall won the Duncan NZ award for his high level of innovation as farm manager of Iffley in the Waikari Valley.

The judges commended Hassall on his focus on environmental projects and in-depth knowledge of the whole farming system.

Manawatu farmer Mike Humphrey from Green Hill won the New Zealand Deer Farmers' As-

sociation next generation award, while fellow Manawatu woman, Simone Hoskin from

Five Hawks Farm, won the Gallagher technology and innovation award.

The Streamlands Export award for environmentally sustainable velvet farming was won by Waikato couple Ross and Monique Moore.

#### Post-conference farm visit

About 75 deer farmers visited Darryl Butterick's Staveley Road farm to hear how the severely impacted deer farm had recovered from the devastating Canterbury floods two years ago.

It also allowed North Island farmers to learn from their South Island counterparts' experience and have a conversation about practical alternatives for fencing off waterways on-farm.



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# Potholes and dead wallabies

Recently our family car fell into a pothole on a main rural road leading to a rural and tourist town.

Immediately afterwards, the left rear tyre went flat. The spare was fitted to complete the journey and the wheel taken to our tyre supplier for repair. It turns out that the alloy wheel was buckled, so it was sent away for repair.

A week later, the front left tyre went flat and on inspection by the tyre supplier, the alloy rim was found to be cracked, so it was sent away for an expensive repair.

The following week, a noise developed that resulted in the car being transported to the dealership and the end result was several days in a workshop having damaged suspension components replaced.

It turned out to be an expensive pothole, possibly more expensive than actually fixing the pothole, particularly if damage was done to more cars than just ours.

Now an economist would classify all of this as "economic activity" and extrapolated out, the minister of finance might even extol "economic activity is picking up in the regions".

Now none of this fixing two wheels and a suspension actually got us much further ahead as a nation did it. It was circular, wasted expenditure.

The cause was that we aren't maintaining our roads



The government can kill wallabies at a cost of \$153,000 each, but can't maintain our roads.

adequately, the solution is easy, maintain the roads to a safe standard and save wasting money on damaged vehicles. Clearly, we either are not spending enough money on road maintenance, the work is being poorly done, or roading funding is being diverted off to other government and council expenditure.

But there are not only potholes

across all of our roading network, there are potholes across all of our society.

Our education sector is underfunded and our teachers are striking, our defence force, our sewage and stormwater infrastructure and our social services all desperately need more funding than currently allocated to them.

Our health sector is in chaos, some would say on the brink of collapse. Health is a bit like the roads, the sooner a patient is seen and interventions provided, the quicker the recovery back to a productive member of society, with a direct reduction in support required and an exponential reduction in costs that are associated with escalating health

conditions.

So, all of this is coming back to a central problem, we are either spending too little on our infrastructure and services to adequately maintain the condition of the asset or service; we are not ensuring a quality of the spend; or revenue raised for a particular purpose is syphoned off to other areas of spending, or a combination of all.

There is a term for this, it is "sweating the asset". Stretching the expenditure as far as possible, while still providing the minimum level of function that is acceptable.

We have been through a period on unprecedented Government spending under the guise of "Covid Recovery" and I have been involved in, or had an insight into projects and organisations who have had money fall from the sky like pennies from heaven.

\$2.76 million for the Department of Conservation to kill 18 wallabies at a cost of \$153,000 each is a prime example of money burnt.

This Quarter we have posted the worst Current Account Deficit since records began and the worst deficit/GDP ratio amongst the world's 40 Advanced Nations.

We need to be very careful, we may well have potholes all across our services because we have wasted our money and can longer afford to fix the holes.



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# New 'good things' campaign



World rugby champion and Beef + Lamb Ambassador Stacey Waaka.



Beef + Lamb chief executive Kit Arkwright

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

By Claire Inkson

[Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz](mailto:Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz)

Beef + Lamb New Zealand has launched a new campaign, "Good things start with New Zealand beef and lamb", to raise the industry's profile and promote the benefits of eating New Zealand beef and lamb.

It comes at a time when there are conflicting narratives around the health benefits and sustainability of red meat for consumers, but Methven dietician Cushla Holdaway says it's about weighing up what the science is telling us and following the evidence.

"A lot of studies don't distinguish between red meat and processed meat. And that's quite challenging because there's obviously a difference between how they are processed and what's in them," Holdaway says.

Studies have shown that while most New Zealanders are still keen eaters of red meat, those turning to a plant-based diet do so partly for sustainability and environmental concerns but primarily because they see it as a healthier choice.

Holdaway said the trick is to stick to the recommended intake of 500 grams per week and steer clear of processed meats.

"Red meat is a valuable part of our diet.

"It's one of the richest dietary sources of iron, zinc, B12 and protein,"

Holdaway said.

The campaign has world champion rugby player Stacey Waaka as an ambassador and will focus on reassuring consumers of the nutritional value and sustainability of the product.

Having an athlete as an ambassador is a recognition of the nutrition beef and lamb provide as part of a wider, well-balanced diet, Beef + Lamb New Zealand chief executive Kit Arkwright said.

"We are delighted to have Stacey on board as our new ambassador.

"Seeing her score her try in that remarkable final, it was clear how much passion and enjoyment she has for representing her country.

"I don't think there is a better analogy for how our farmers, butchers and chefs feel about showcasing what makes New Zealand beef and lamb the best in the world," Arkwright said.

Arkwright says the campaign is not only about promoting the health benefits of eating beef and lamb but also a celebration of the product itself.

"There's a really close link between life's memorable moments and great food."

"Some of our favourite treasured memories, such as Christmas day, a wedding and barbecues at the beach, probably featured our product at some point that day, and maybe was even a catalyst for bringing people together," Arkwright said.



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## B+LNZ FARMER FEEDBACK SESSIONS

Beef + Lamb New Zealand is holding a series of informal sessions around NZ to listen to what farmers have to say and to better understand their thoughts on key issues and opportunities. The sessions are part of B+LNZ's response to farmer concerns raised during the recent annual meeting remits process.

Come along to talk about what's important to you.

More info and to register at [beeflambnz.com/feedback-sessions](http://beeflambnz.com/feedback-sessions)

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MP for Selwyn, National Party spokesperson for Rural Communities, Animal Welfare, Biosecurity, Food Safety, Women and Associate Spokesperson for Agriculture.

## Plan to deal with the mountain of red tape

For a fairly new MP who went to Wellington primarily to represent the farming sector, it's been a really exciting few months pulling together the National Party's policy proposals for New Zealand's world class agricultural industry.

We announced the first tranche of these policies in mid-April and have another two tranches to come.

In declaring some fairly sweeping changes to farm regulations aimed at peeling back the mountain of red-tape that has buried farmers for the past five years, I hope the industry will see their voices reflected in our proposals.

I've always been of the view that policy should be designed from the grassroots up – for it is, after all, our grassroots farmers and growers who will be the end 'users' of these policies. For that, I am grateful to the hundreds and hundreds of people I've had contact with over the past two years who've fed back to us what works – and what doesn't.

National's Getting back to Farming package makes 19 changes to rules and regulations that have choked the industry, caused monumental anxiety and, in many instances, have actually created regressive outcomes.

These changes will help farmers get on with earning the income on which their livelihoods, New Zealand's economy, and New Zealanders' standard of living, depend.

This is about using targeted rules with clear environmental limits so farmers can work with confidence.

We have also committed to restarting live cattle exports – but with the strictest regulations in place to ensure world-class animal welfare standards. We will take an evidential approach to the welfare of our animals, based on scientifically-backed, best practice.

Much has been made by advocates of the sector of the need to implement a 'gold standard' which Australian

exporters have led the way in creating. Developed in 2020, the Gold Standard is a 12-point regulation framework that is performance-based, demanding that all potential exporters and importers are licenced by MPI.

At its heart is the assurance of the good physical and mental health in animals, including freedom from stress and good nutrition.

Welfare standards have not previously been enshrined in legislation. Previously, both MPI and exporters have relied on 'guidelines' rather than strict statutory criteria.

In mid-April I boarded the last ship to leave Napier, the MV Gelbray Express, to see for myself what best-in-class looks like. This was a \$100 million custom-built ship that has me more convinced than ever that, with the right regulations in place, New Zealand can lead the world in the safe, humane transfer of animals. I saw for myself the state of the art

pens, drainage, water, feed and air conditioning systems. I saw calm, relaxed animals, sitting comfortably in sawdust beds. I spent time with the vets and stock handlers to understand what the daily checks and routine consists of. Throughout the voyage to China I was sent the daily updates and photos and saw no sign of animal distress, heat stress, injury, humidity or high ammonia levels.

If we form the next government, these custom-built ships will be the only ships that will receive licensing or certification to transfer our animals.

I also want New Zealanders to understand that we will license and, importantly, audit importers and offshore farms to New Zealand animal welfare standards - this will provide everyone the comfort of knowing our animals live a good life, for their whole life. We will ensure a further overlay with an international accreditation agency like Quality Assure carrying out

final certifications.

So now I say to the industry; your move.

In my view, it is up to the industry itself to prove its merit, open itself up to the public, and earn its social license to operate. There is only so much that governments can legislate for – I have listened to the feedback, and I have acted on it - the rest is on the shoulders of those who seek to continue this trade. Much like the dairy industry has opened up its farm gates, so too must the quarantine facilities, the trucking companies and the shipping operators themselves – not to mention the destination farms – to prove to New Zealanders the world-class systems and facilities they operate.

New Zealand can and will lead the way in this industry. Under a National government, we will support the sector to set the standard for global best practice – but it needs to earn that reputation for itself.



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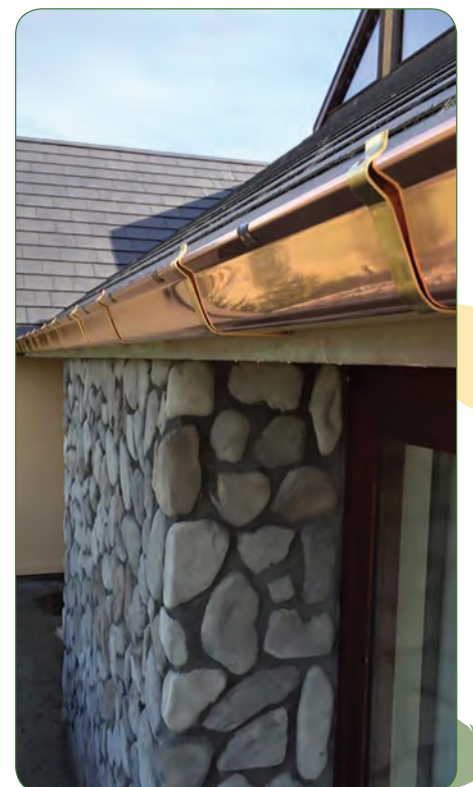
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# RURAL RECHARGE

Take a smoko break for mental health



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED



## A chat with 'Wiggy' Wiggins

By Claire Inkson

[Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz](mailto:Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz)

When Covid sent New Zealand into lockdown, Canterbury-based Craig Wiggins' usual work as a speaker and MC for events was effectively shelved. Undeterred, Wiggins turned to social media to connect with farmers and the rural community.

'Whatever With Wiggy' began as a Facebook page and group in April 2020, building connections when Covid had further isolated farmers from their mates and communities.

"I started a Zoom meeting on Thursday nights called "Whatever with Wiggy", and it really grew.

"We ended up with politicians in there, and we talked about mental health and farming issues. It was a real community and had quite a lot of members through the Facebook page," Wiggins says.

In September 2021, the importance of mental health was brought home tragically for Wiggins when he lost two friends to suicide.

"I realised we were missing something.

"We were stuck inside our phones and not connecting with people from our past or even communicating well, especially through Covid."

Wiggins sent out a challenge on Facebook and created a video asking farmers to "lean on a gate and talk to a mate" in the way farmers had decades ago at the sales yards.

The video went viral, and a grassroots mental health movement was born.

"We designed a campaign around staying connected and taking five minutes out of your day to either appreciate what you've got or to lean on a gate and talk to a mate and get back to those friends you had when you were young and happy," Wiggins said.

Whatever with Wiggy is now a charitable organisation, with a group of trustees who help Wiggins move the organisation forward.

"We registered as a charity so that if anyone wants to help us help others, they can do that.

"We just wanted to be transparent about what we are doing.

We don't want this to be a money-gathering exercise; we want it to be a facilitation programme."

Whatever With Wiggy works with the Carr Family Foundation to run rural health checks for farmers at events.

Wiggins will be at the South Island Dairy Event in a purpose-built van with medical professionals to give health checks to farmers.

"Some of them haven't been to a doctor for quite some time, so we just do it while they've got their gumboots on where they are instead of trying to get them into town."

The organisation sees Wiggins travel the country, recently visiting Northland, a region still struggling after Cyclone Gabrielle, for another of the organisation's initiatives, Agriconnect.

Agriconnect runs seminars for rural professionals who are

often the only point of contact for farmers and may be faced with struggling clients.

The seminars give rural professionals, who are on the front line with farmers, the tools and awareness of what to look for, how to offer help and the appropriate avenues to get a farmer who is struggling, the support they need.

"We educate the rural service industries on how to have those conversations, how to look after their colleagues and clients and what services are available in each area.

"It's regional-based, and it's not from the top down.

"It's more grassroots as to what's available in each area."

Wiggins said there is no silver bullet or quick fix for solving the mental health problems facing rural New Zealand.

"The only way we are going to fix this is to build stronger communities.

"So strong communities are strong people, and strong people are strong communities.

"The rates of suicide are hard to analyse in rural New Zealand because some of them become what's known as accidental deaths.

"The reason I'm doing this, though, is because of the fallout depression and poor mental health has on our families, which means our partners and children especially.

"If we can help them help their people, we can help the whole picture."

For anyone that is struggling, getting to the root of the problem is essential, whether that is around farm succession planning or a relationship, for example.

It's important to work through what is triggering anxiety and mental un-wellness, Wiggins said.

"It comes down to communication.

"There's no point putting a band-aid over mental health.

"You have to figure out what's triggering it," Wiggins said.

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# The Farming Fast Five: talking to Ben Todhunter

We ask farmers five quick-fire questions about farming, and what agriculture means to them. Here is what Ben Todhunter from Cleardale Genetics had to say.

## 1. What did your journey into farming look like?

I grew up on Cleardale where the family has been farming for nearly 100 years. I worked on a range of farms in NZ and overseas, Studied at Lincoln University and University College Dublin and came home to help as my father needed a new hip. I always wanted to be able to work outside and use my brain as well. I was restless on the farm for a bit, but now get to do that.

## 2. Tell us a little bit about your farming operation.

Cleardale is a 1700 ha Rakaia Gorge foothills breeding and finishing property with 210ha irrigated. We have dual purpose fine wool sheep and beef cattle with SX fine wool sheep and Angus studs.

## 3. What challenges have you faced in your farming business, and how have you tackled those challenges?

Getting footrot felt like I was a bad farmer, it was like a social disease.

It took a long time to learn how to manage the disease effectively and now we have turned it into an advantage through breeding and marketing the leading genetics for footrot resistance.

Droughts were a challenge too, and developing a hydro/irrigation JV with Mainpower has helped – but it took over ten years!

## 4. What has been a major highlight for you in your farming journey?

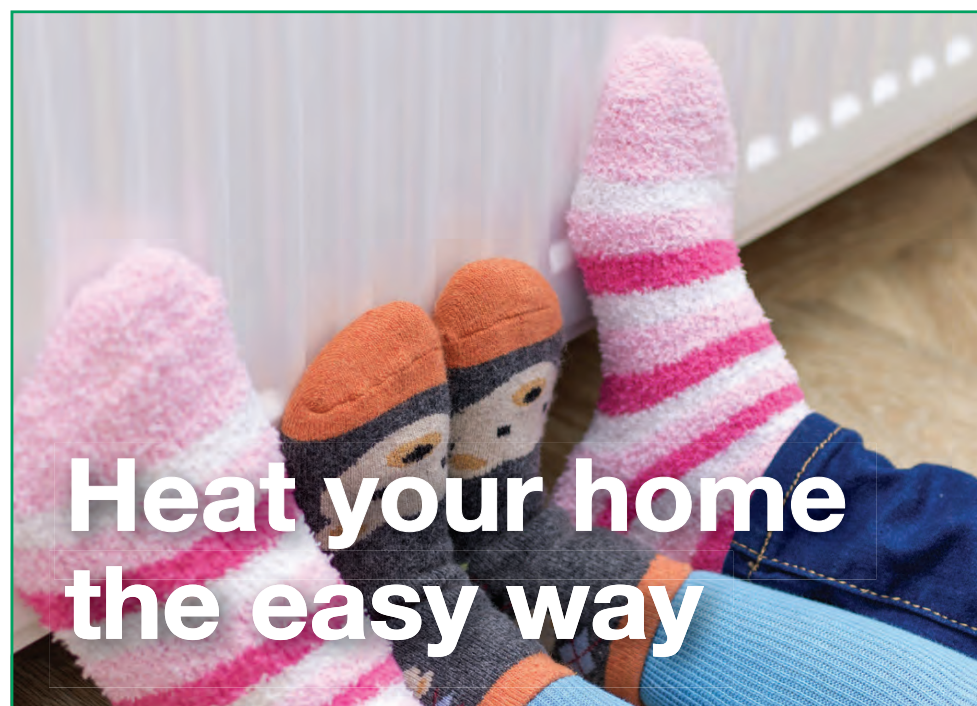
Supporting high country farmers and leading a response to Helen Clark's assault on those farmers.

Breeding Cleardale 171230, a sheep that has been widely used and has benefit to the industry.

Having the opportunity to raise children on a farm, with their grandparents close.

## 5. What advice would you have for the next generation of farmers?

Learn about yourself. What gets you excited and energised? What are your triggers? Search for and interact with people who get things done. Try things. Be present for the journey.



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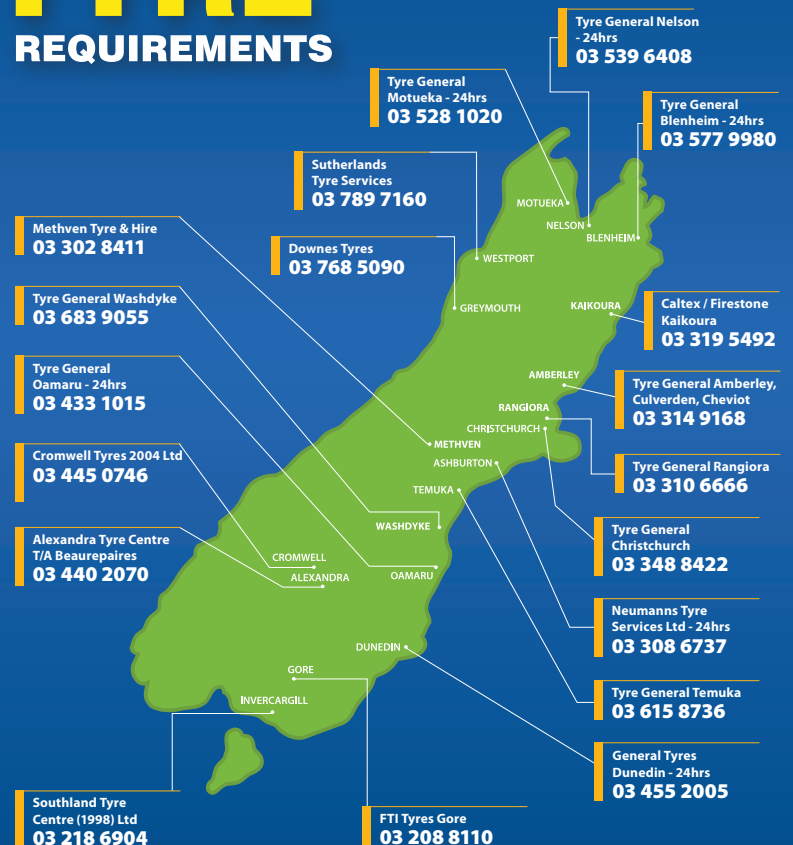
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# State-controlled farm plans will set farmers up to fail

The government's approach to farm plans was opposed by some regional councils, but their concerns were ignored. Our farming groups requested an industry-led approach to farm plans working in partnership with farmers, rather than a state controlled one-size-fits-all approach. They too have been ignored.

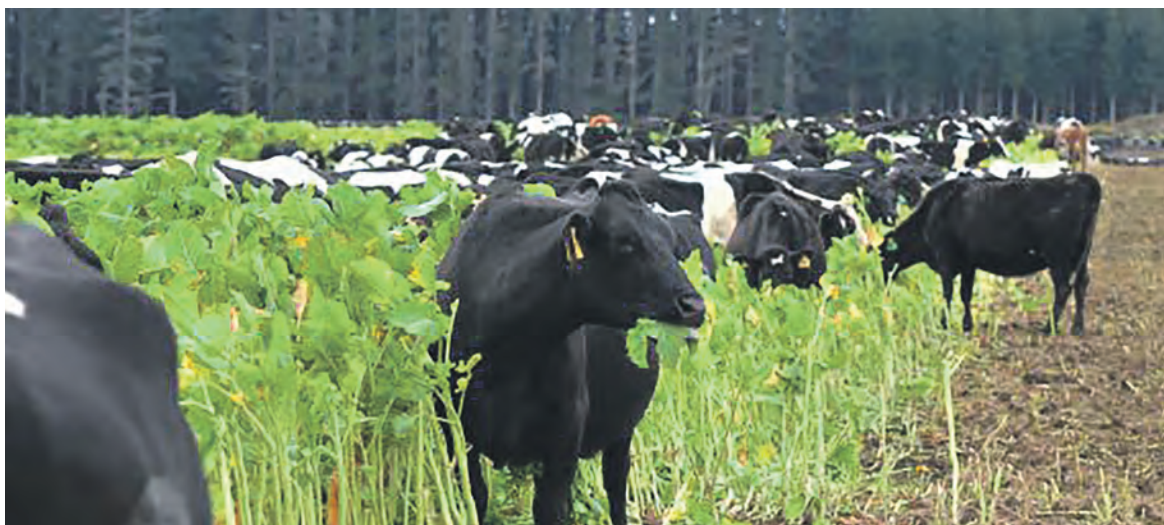
In the past 12 months government officials have been beaver-ing away behind closed doors but no one seems to know what is going on.

State-controlled farm plans are being captured into new legislation that has been widely planned, with our farming advocacy groups (and others) calling it unworkable, needing to be withdrawn and taken back to the drawing board.

Amidst all this, farmers are confused about the different farm plan approaches.

The governments mandated farm plan model has major detrimental implications for farmers compared to an industry-led approach advocated for by our sector.

A major concern is it will



State-controlled farm plans don't take into consideration different farming activity.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

mandate all farmers to have a government prescribed farm plan – regardless of the farming activity, the catchment or region they are in, or the effects of their activity. This type of unprecedented state control mandate would never have been allowed under previous legislation, but this government has removed the protection ordinary citizens used to have from unrestrained state

control. The government's model requires a top heavy compliance system with the writer of the farm plan, the certifier and the auditor all having to be different people. Another major concern is that state controlled farm plans are publicly discoverable, meaning farmers private information would be accessible to the public and environmental lobby groups. To understand why the govern-

ment's model is so bad it is worth reading the Taranaki Regional Council (TRC) submission on farm plans. Taranaki can rightly feel aggrieved as they have spent 25 years building a voluntary farm plan system with 99% of dairy farmers on board and around 70% of hill country farmers. When the new law is enacted the TRC are going to have to convert their farm plans to the government

system, or start from scratch.

A major concern for TRC is that years of building positive working relationships with farmers will be undermined by them being forced to implement the government's model – a model that neither TRC nor the community want.

Groundswell NZ shares the concerns about the government's model, and we support an industry led approach to farm plans. Our bottom lines include that farm plans must be empowering, a partnership between the farmer and their farm plan advisor(s), flexible to meet each farmer's needs and resources, targeted at the key priority environmental issues on each farm and catchment, and owned by the farmer.

Groundswell NZ have called for farmers to refuse to do the government-mandated farm plans. We urge all farmers to support this campaign which would help farming advocates and regional councils lobbying on our behalf for an industry-led approach to farm plans.

*Jamie McFadden - Groundswell NZ environmental spokesperson*



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# Buzz from hives and hikers

Alternative income streams are often necessary to keep farms afloat. *SHARON DAVIS* chats to Hurunui farmers Dan and Mandy Shand to find out what they learnt from running hives and a private walking track on Island Hill Station.

When third-generation farmers Dan and Mandy Shand returned to the remote Island Hills Station in North Canterbury in 2002 they knew they would need to explore alternative forms of income to make the farm viable.

The Shand family had run sheep and Angus cattle on the 7000-hectare Hurunui farm at the head of the Mandamus River since 1928 – but the vast high-country farmland was not very productive.

Even at school, Dan recognised the need to diversify income streams and completed a school project exploring tourism on the farm.

The couple decided to invest in honey production and agri-tourism.

#### A buzz about honey

"A friend suggested we try honey," said Dan.

He quickly went from never having looked inside a hive to owning 400 hives.

"I read a book, borrowed money, and bought 400 hives from a local bee keeper."

The bee keeper ran the hives on the farm for the first season and then Dan took over.

The Shands ran the business for 15 years. It grew into a 2000-hive operation employing six bee keepers and four staff in the shed in summer, as other farmers wanted to have bees on their farm.

However, the Shands decided to sell in 2021 when a combination of immigration and housing policies alongside new honey regulations made the business more challenging and expensive to run.

Finding staff was difficult and



Shaun Monk briefs a group of walkers before they head out on the station's walking track.

we had no certainty, said Dan.

The Shands still run hives on the farm, but now have none of the responsibility.

#### Making tracks

Dan and Mandy built one of the Island's first private walking tracks on the station and ran that for 10 years.

It took more than two years to cut the track and convert buildings for accommodation.

You need more infrastructure to run an agri-tourism business than most people realise, said Dan.

Building a track and accommodation takes a lot - but there is also the upkeep.

"It's a huge commitment from a financial and time perspective," he said.

The hours were long. Mandy

would be up making muffins in the farm kitchen at 6am after waiting up until 9.30pm the night before for guests to arrive and settling them in.

"It's pretty full on – and meeting all the people was part of the fun."

But it got harder as the kids got older, Dan said.

They ran the track for 10 years, but decided to close it in 2013. "I was ragged," said Dan.

It was time consuming, it didn't leave them enough family time, and required someone to be on the farm all the time.

"We couldn't go to weddings or funerals together," Dan said.

However, the track re-opened a couple of years ago with rebranded offerings including multi-day guided and unguided



Island Hills Station owners Dan and Mandy Shand.

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

walks, as well as hunting packages run by a friend, Shaun Monk.

He runs his business on our land, said Dan.

"Shaun is a one-in-a-million. You need the right person and the right offering."

"We were already friends and got on well. I'd not thought of someone else running a business on the farm, but I could see it working," said Dan.

#### Run for nature

Shaun was instrumental in organising the Skedaddle trail run through the farm as a fundraiser for conservation and predator trapping.

It attracted more than 400 entries with entry fees supporting conservation and pest eradication on the 600-hectare QE II open space covenant on the station.

Dan said it took an incredible effort from a lot of people and volunteers to make the trail run work.

"A trail run project is not worth thinking about unless you already have a track," Dan said.

There are also a number of future exciting plans, including adding a mountain bike track on the farm.

Dan attributed his success at diversifying his farm's income to a mix of luck and necessity – and the ability to identify opportunities before they became popular.

The Shands have recently employed a farm manager to free them up for new ideas and projects.

Dan plans to get his drone license and explore a seeding service for farms.

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# Mongolian adventure awaits

By Claire Inkson  
[Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz](mailto:Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz)

Camel shearing, yurts and a stint in the desert lie ahead for a group of farmers and shearers that will embark on a trip to Mongolia to share their shearing skills.

The group comprises of around 13 Rabobank clients and staff who aim to train 120 herders to shear using electric machines.

For Rabobank Ashburton agribusiness associate and former shearer Sam Bryan, the June trip is a chance to give something back and experience Mongolian culture.

"This is the first time I've really had the chance to make a meaningful contribution.

"It's quite low-hanging fruit in terms of the potential difference it can make to their local economy."

The trip follows a visit to New Zealand by four Mongolian herders through the Share Mongolia program funded through the Rabobank community fund.

The program aims to give Mongolian farmers training and access to modern shearing equipment.

Currently, most shearing in Mongolia is done using scissors, a time-consuming method that limits the number of sheep shorn to just thirty per day and makes

it difficult for herders to support their families.

When armed with skills and the necessary equipment, herders can shear around 200 sheep per day, sixty days per year, and make around \$100 per day instead of just \$15.

Bryan will be travelling to the Gobi desert on his three-week trip and is looking forward to the adventure, which will include living in a yurt in what will be a complete immersion into Mongolian life.

"To be honest, I don't really know what I'm in for, and I guess that just adds to the adventure," Bryan said.

"I've never travelled to a third-world country, so I'm probably going to go out and get some gear and prepare myself a bit for that and go in boots and all when I get there."

Bryan, 37, grew up on a farm and began shearing at 30, entering the speed shearing competition circuit before joining Rabobank.

"My shearing experience is quite limited compared to others, but I know enough to show people the basics."

One thing he hasn't done to date, though, is shearing camels which is on the cards for this trip.

"I had no idea; I thought this was a joke. But after reading about it, I can certainly say it will



Rabobank agribusiness associate and former shearer Sam Bryan.

PHOTO: CLAIRE INKSON

be interesting," Bryan laughs.

Rabobank agribusiness manager Paul Brough has been heavily involved in the Share Mongolia program since he first visited the country in 2019. Brough says camel hair is one of the best natural fibres but is currently difficult to harvest.

"At the moment, the herders shear them with scissors, which takes two hours, or they have to wait for the fleece to malt and pick it up off the ground, which is ridiculous," Brough said.

"So Sam and his team will take over some handpieces donated

by a guy that makes them in Palmerston North. An Aussie guy tried it a couple of years ago, and it worked. So we just have to confirm that and then promote it."

Camel fibre is finer than wool, lending itself to luxury products such as coats, bedding and rugs. Shearing the hair rather than collecting it after malting means the fibre will be in much better condition and can be packaged, Brough said.

One of the members of the group will take a spinning wheel and will try spinning the camel

fibre.

"If that works, we will leave the spinning wheel there, and the herders can make yarn," Brough said.

Brough sees the Share Mongolia program as having a significant positive impact on the herders' quality of life and enabling them to practice more sustainable farming methods.

"These people are really poor. The way they are farming isn't sustainable.

"They are losing 3500 square kilometres per year from grazable land to desert, mainly from overstocking."

By farming less stock more efficiently, Mongolian herders will be able to remain farming and become more productive, Brough said.

The Mongolian expedition relies on funding, with 19 different Mongolian herder groups requesting shearing courses.

Six groups have been granted funding from agencies such as the United Nations and various banks and embassies, and with other groups close to reaching their fundraising goals, that number is set to increase.

Each course costs around \$15000, with \$8000 of that being equipment left for Mongolian herders to use and potentially share their knowledge and skills with other local farmers.



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# Have your say on BW plans

Dairy farmers have until June 27 to give feedback on a proposal to change to a single national animal evaluation breeding index that uses genomics.

The sector currently uses three indexes to rank cows and bulls on their likely breeding potential.

DairyNZ chair Jim van der Poel said this created confusion and sub-optimal outcomes.

“We believe the best way to help dairy farmers achieve the highest rate of genetic gain in their herd is to have one independent Breeding Worth (BW), including genomics - and involving all the industry players.”

Genomics provided better and earlier predictions of the desirable and undesirable traits of bulls and cows and allowed farmers to make better breeding and culling decisions, van der Poel said.

This was key in enabling the dairy sector to remain internationally competitive, and for increasing farm profitability and sustainability.

DairyNZ subsidiary New Zealand Animal Evaluation Ltd (NZAEL) was working on a single BW to inform consistent evaluation and better breeding decisions.

NZAEL would co-ordinate the single BW as a credible source of data available to everyone to use.

New Zealand's genetic gain has



DairyNZ chair Jim van der Poel.

remained steady for more than 10 years and could be better, van der Poel said.

“Collectively, through better rates of genetic gain, we could unlock potential additional sector profit of \$136 million every year.”

New Zealand was falling behind other countries because it did not have a sector-wide approach and was not using independent genomic selection to identify elite young bulls.

“We can make faster, more informed breeding decisions that will help farmers increase yields, improve efficiencies and breed herds that are easier to farm and have a lower environmental footprint,” van der Poel said

Visit <https://www.dairynz.co.nz/> better-BW to have your say. Consultation closes at 5pm on June 27.



The Cates team is proud of hitting the 50-year milestone and is now planning for the next 50 years. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

## 50 years of Cates' seeds

By Sharon Davis

Mid Canterbury grain and seed company Cates hit a 50-year milestone last month.

Cates was started by Peter and Jocelyn Cates in April 1973. Since then it has grown into a household name in rural Canterbury, becoming an important business partner for farmers and a link to the global seed trade.

General manager Stuart Begg said 50 years in business was a great achievement – and something the company and staff were very proud of.

“Our business has been built on the strength of our people. They bring skills, knowledge and a genuine commitment to our clients and industry.”

However, the 50-year milestone was only possible with the ongoing support of the local farmers and clients, for which Cates was grateful, he said.

“We are very proud of our history but also continue to focus and plan for the future in both our domestic and international markets, to ensure we are here for at least another 50 years.”

While Cates planned to expand to meet the growing global demand for New Zealand-grown seeds, Begg said the company remained fiercely proud of its origins and the relationships it had built over generations.

“We are a local company. If a farmer wants to talk to us, we're there. We strive to add value for our customers, that's what Cates is about,” he said.

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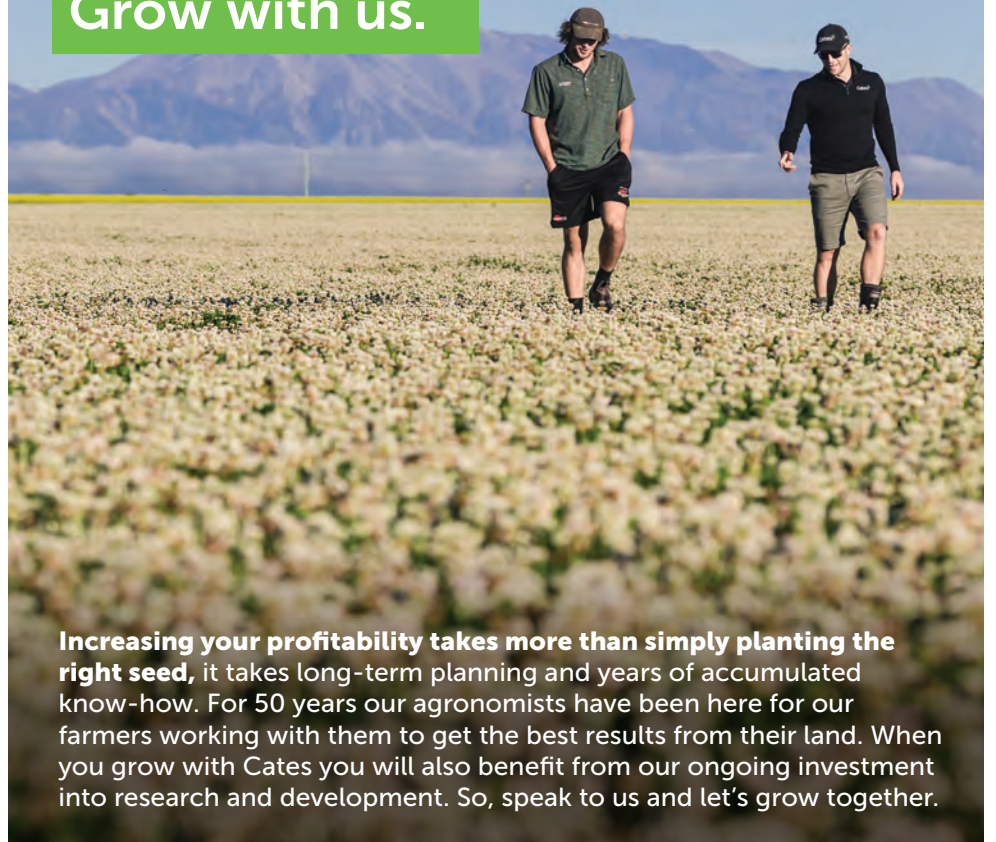
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# Focus on biosecurity

By Sharon Davis

OSPRI is increasing its level of education and support to farmers in Mid Canterbury to improve biosecurity preparedness in the area.

OSPRI's head of traceability, Kevin Forward, said the greater Ashburton area had fallen below the national average for the National Animal Identification and Tracing (NAIT) records.

However, the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) also found the accuracy of the records on the locations they had to visit during the local outbreak of Mycoplasma Bovis last year was of a major concern.

"This can cause significant delays to the response due to the lack of reliable traceability records and can allow the disease to spread to other locations."

NAIT helped track the movement of cattle and deer and was a vital tool in a disease outbreak response.

Inaccurate records slowed the response, increased the cost, and could allow the disease to spread, Forward said.

Poor records could lead

to farms being inspected needlessly "causing increased stress for the farmers affected", he said.

Forward said OSPRI was committed to supporting farmers to understand their NAIT obligations, and the importance of adopting good on-farm traceability practices, as part of their overall biosecurity preparedness.


"The ability to manage a disease outbreak, contain it, and work towards its eradication relies on accurate traceability records. Simply put, we all have a role to play when talking traceability and biosecurity, everyone must do their part for the system to work and for the industry to be protected."

OSPRI's local regional partner Fiona Caldwell will run a series of NAIT workshops, drop-in centres, and webinars to help farmers understand their NAIT obligations and why traceability is important.

"We're trying to support farmers so they can avoid getting to the point where they're receiving infringements or being prosecuted for non-compliance with NAIT," Forward said.


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**Important NAIT timeframes**

**1 Tag**




Tag within **180 days** of birth.  
**OR**  
Before first movement off-farm.  
*(Whichever comes first)*

**2 Register**




Register tags within **7 days** of animals being tagged.  
**OR**  
Before movement off-farm.  
*(Whichever comes first)*

**3 Make movements**



Record **sending** and **receiving** movements within **48 hours** of animals either leaving or arriving on-farm.

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#### Drop-in Sessions

18 May: Farmlands, Ashburton  
24 May: Hinds Community Centre  
30 May: Farm Source, Rakaia  
14 June: Farmlands, Ashburton

#### Workshops

There is a 10am and 2pm session on the following days:

25 May: Sinclair Community Rooms, Ashburton  
8 June: Sinclair Community Rooms, Ashburton  
12 June: Hinds Community Centre  
21 June: Farm Source, Rakaia

#### Webinars

24 May: Moving day NAIT

essentials – 6.30-7pm

7 June: Tag and register – 12-12.30pm

14 June: Tag and register – 7-7.30pm

More information and future dates are available at <https://www.ospri.co.nz/news/lets-protect-our-industry-mid-canterbury/>

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# A stress-free transition



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

The first of June is traditionally moving day for dairy farmers across the country and requires careful management and good communication for a stress-free transition.

It's a busy time on the farming calendar, and patience on the roads is important, says DairyNZ engagement lead Tony Finch.

"We have a huge number of farmers moving households and from one farm to another. That includes personnel, contents, machinery and, in particular, livestock," Finch says.

While moving day was traditionally just one day, it can span over a week. With some farms moving livestock by foot, patience is paramount while travelling on country roads.

"People need to be aware that rural roads could have increased traffic, and people will need to have an element of patience and slow down.

"Don't toot your horns because it's a stressful time for people and animals, and

we don't want to elevate that," Finch said. Good communication between farm owners, the people leaving the farm and new ones coming on would ensure the move is as seamless as possible.

Coordinating and talking with transport companies would mean there were no misunderstandings around stock departure and arrival dates, Finch said.

It is important to take breaks to keep stress levels to a minimum and ensure animals are treated with care and respect.

Biosecurity is a big-ticket item, and all movements need to be recorded and tracked through NAIT.

It is equally important to ensure that all boundary fences are checked and that any equipment being moved is clean.

"It's about ensuring you look after your people and your team and communicate well with the people helping you move.

"Livestock should be as stress-free as possible, and biosecurity needs to be at the highest level," Finch said.

## Tips for Moving Day

- Ensure all cows have NAIT tags and are registered in the NAIT system
- Check the farm you are moving to is TB and m bovis free
- Ensure all equipment is clean
- Contact your insurance company and let them know where you are moving to and when.
- Use professional cleaners to do a final house clean. If you are doing it yourself, make sure it's to a high standard.
- Make sure you know when the house you are moving into will be vacant.
- Pack essential items such as important documents and phone chargers separately.
- Ensure body condition score targets will be met as per your contract on takeover date.
- Wear high visibility clothing when moving stock by foot, and use warning signs and a flashing light on vehicles.
- Plan ahead and take the most direct route possible.
- If moving machinery, drive slowly, and have a pilot vehicle if necessary.
- If using a stock truck, book this in advance.

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# Strategies to cope with families at calving time



Calving is a busy time of the year and juggling kids, relationships, and running a household can be a challenge. We asked the Farming Mums NZ online community what strategies they use to make life during calving run smoothly.

- Get a cleaner for over the crazy period. It doesn't matter if your house is messy, but it makes you feel a whole lot better coming home to a clean house.
- Do your grocery shopping online. If you can't be bothered going to town you have

the option of getting it delivered. If you feel like getting off farm, then your shopping's already done for you to pick up and you'll have time for a coffee or meal in town.

- Make sure you have a good play list to bop away to while at work.
- Get a week's worth of meat out of the freezer on Monday and use a slow cooker or pressure cooker. Put the dinner on in the morning ready to serve at dinner time.
- Have a backup stash of dinner food. Frozen chips and pizza are great to have on-hand for 'those' days.
- Do the washing every day, so it doesn't become a job as big as calving.
- Buy a robot vacuum cleaner.
- Clean a room a day if you feel housework is getting on top of you.
- It's divorce season, so arguments are common when dealing with cows and calves. Don't take anything personally.
- Teach the kids to put their own clothes away. Mount Washmore is a common sight.
- A monthly calendar on the fridge with all the info needed on it - kids sport, meal ideas for the week, etc.
- Have two crockpots so you can have a lunch meal in one and a dinner in the other, or you can use one and get one

ready for the following day.

- If you have kids on the farm, have teat seal boxes containing activities and snacks.
- Have a microwave, fridge, kettle etc. all at the cowshed, so if you have a busy day you can still have a quick break and a bite to eat.
- One calf at a time and if it's being difficult, try another one and come back to it later.
- Don't sweat the small stuff. Food, clean clothes and sleep are priorities, and get a bit fitter so the first week doesn't kill you.
- No one died from a messy house.
- Boil eggs when cooking on the stove top, for a quick lunchbox filler or quick sandwich topper for a fly-by feed.
- Invest in RTs for communication with kids who are old enough to be at home.
- Continual strengthening of core muscles and keep checking that they are engaged when required.
- Have a stash bag with nuts, or bars, and some Up & Go / electrolytes to take with you, for when there is no getting home to eat.
- Get a thermo mix so the kids can cook easily, and they can't burn it. Also if you are late in and know it's going to take 20 mins to cook something, you can have a shower or do jobs and not have to sit and stir.

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# Down cows are no longer a certainty of dairy life

Death, taxes and down cows do not all have to be certainties in a dairy farmer's life.

As dairy farmers you do not have to accept that this is a reality, and by changing your focus on farm from treating sick animals to prevention you can remove one of the 'certainties' from the list, making dairying more enjoyable and more profitable.

Unfortunately, the acceptance of down cows being part of life is reinforced by their prevalence during springtime. Downers are now so common it is like a self-fulfilling prophecy; every farm has them, it's just some are worse than others.

DairyNZ published that there are about 2% of cows in a herd that actually go down in New Zealand during the calving period. For every one that goes down, there are at least 10 times more that are sub-clinically suffering the same problem. In fact, DairyNZ suggests that 1/3 of all cows in New Zealand are affected. This results in further problems with calving, milk production, fertility and mastitis through the season.

There are many reasons for the high levels of hypocalcemia

in cows in the dairy industry. The most well acknowledged is the magnesium deficiency created in cows by excessive levels of potassium and nitrogen based molecules in our modern grasses. This lack of magnesium means that the cow fails to regulate her own calcium homeostatic systems prior to calving and also during lactation.

A failure to regulate calcium homeostasis by magnesium means the cow fails to break down sufficient bone prior to calving to allow for available calcium at calving. It also means the cow is unable to absorb sufficient calcium during the lactation period, which means she is unable to replace her bones. Not dissimilar to not replacing body condition score.

By pasture dusting, drenching and water dosing with magnesium prior to calving we are enabling the cow to break down her bones and use this calcium at calving. However, this is effectively "raiding the bank" when it is not necessary. It also means that we have to replace more calcium in lactation, which is likely to be already lacking.

Hypocalcemia has also been



demonstrated to be the precursor for just about every major metabolic disease post calving. This includes mastitis, ketosis, retained placenta, metritis, dystocia and even prolapse. These metabolic diseases increase the loss of body weight in early

lactation, reduce production and have a negative effect on fertility.

So how can you tackle hypocalcemia?

The first part is to feed a balanced diet all year round. This enables cows to have a healthy skeleton prior to calving

and enable the cow to draw on this reserve during calving and into lactation. To achieve this we need to maintain the macro mineral balance (calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium) and also the fat soluble vitamin balance. It is important to realize that minerals and vitamins are not feed additives, they are critical components of a cow's diet, not unlike energy, protein and fibre.

The second part is to balance her diet immediately prior to calving, in what we call the transition period. Research has shown it is possible to achieve this on a grass based diet by utilising highly available sources of magnesium, calcium and an advanced form of vitamin D called HyD. HyD has been demonstrated to increase the absorption of calcium and phosphorus from the diet during the milking period and to activate calcium prior to calving.

The farmers that have adopted balanced nutritional systems don't fear calving – they often get to the point where a down cow is most unusual, and certainly not to be expected as a normal part of calving.

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PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

# Service matters with utes

By Claire Inkson  
[Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz](mailto:Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz)

When choosing a farm ute, performance, reliability, cost, and fuel economy are all factors farmers and agribusinesses need to consider.

What often gets overlooked, though, is after-sales maintenance and the ability to get your ute serviced locally.

When things are busy on-farm taking a ute an hour away for a service, as well as the time lost waiting for the service to be done, is a major inconvenience.

For North Canterbury Vets director Craig Patterson, choosing a fleet vehicle that could be serviced locally was a huge draw-card.

After looking at different ute

options, North Canterbury Vets chose to go with the Mazda BT-50, a decision Patterson says has been a good one.

"We looked at the BT-50 from a mechanical and technical perspective, the features it provides, and the local distributor and servicing, and it was the logical decision," Patterson said.

Choosing the Mazda BT-50 meant North Canterbury Vets could rely on local dealer Arthur Burkes in Amberley for servicing.

The vet clinic has had a relationship with the company since 2007, initially with a fleet of Holden Colorado utes. For Patterson, convenience and supporting a local business have paid off.

"It's about having a good

relationship and supporting local. Our staff know their staff, and we get really good after-sales service."

The four-wheel drive BT-50 is available in four options – the GSX, GTX, the Limited and the higher-spec Takami.

The three-litre, six speed turbo diesel gives a fuel economy of around 8.2 litres per 100 kilometres, making it efficient compared to other utes on the market.

Towing isn't an issue either, with the BT-50 pulling up to 3.5 tonnes, making it an excellent choice for both the farm, or towing the boat on the weekend.

All models come with Android and Apple car play and via a touch screen, with the Limited and Takami models providing

extra options like remote start and heated seats.

While the BT-50 may provide all the comfort and the interior style of a luxury SUV, this ute isn't just a pretty face. Patterson says the BT-50 still handles the more rugged terrain of a farm with ease.

"We use the vehicles on-farm in very muddy conditions, especially in winter around cattle yards, and more specifically around dairy.

"We often have to go into paddocks to calve cows, and the vehicles are well suited to that," Patterson said.

It's a sentiment echoed by Progressive Livestock agent Rob Blincoe, who purchased a new Mazda BT-50 earlier this year.

"I've got nothing bad to say about it, and it's been going great,

and it's great working with the local guys at Arthur Burke.

"I use it for a work vehicle, but when I can get out, I like to go deer stalking and run it up hills and through parks. It just does everything I want it to do," Blincoe said.

The capped service plan also appealed to Blincoe, as well as the five-year warranty and roadside assistance.

Arthur Burke general manager Craig Schroder says the Mazda BT-50 has been well received by local farmers looking to upgrade.

"A lot of farmers and people that use them as a workhorse would never buy a ute unless it was a good, solid package. And it's great that Mazda has stuck with that," Schroder said.

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## Tourist attraction in paddock

One 2020 election hoarding in a paddock at Mount Somers turned out to be a fascinating social experiment.

After posting online about my first column making it to print, I was reminded by a friend (we'll call JR for this story) who still hasn't quite let go of the fact I chose to offer our now local MP the opportunity to put up a hoarding in our paddock, not sure what this had to do with anything about my last effort, but I did reply to the comment that I'd use that as an idea for a future column all the same.

Now, the idea anyone could get riled or outraged by one of many hoardings spread across the country is an interesting one,

lets face it, no one is going to be influenced to vote a particular way, nor will it change the outcome of an election, so why not have a little fun with it?

Some calls were made and up went said hoarding, even as we were putting it up one neighbour drove past a couple of times, but I didn't think things would get much more interesting than that aside from a high chance of an artist reimagining how it looks, someone thinking the river would be a better spot for it to be, if a spring Nor-Wester didn't have it's way with it first.

I've never been asked directly by those that took great interest in the hoarding what the

motivation was. In a nutshell it was a bit of a dig at the shambles the team that'd be the more popular colour choice of hoarding around here as much as I felt our local MP was the best person to be representing us in Wellington, instead of the last-minute change of candidate from across the river. My site also offered the opportunity for it to be up within view of where another MP from Team Shambles grew up (and I get along with well) so I thought it'd be quite funny if word was to spread along the bush telegraph!

To my amazement it became something of a tourist attraction, most days when out on the farm I'd see

vehicles stop or drive slowly past. One day there were three vehicles parked up there for some time - were these folks suddenly influenced to research policy? One day I was spraying a paddock beside the hoarding and within minutes received a photo from a friend in Dunedin who'd been sent it from JR with me in my sprayer in the background! By coincidence too, opposite the end of my driveway a hoarding soon appeared with the now vanquished leader of The Shambles Party, what were the chances?

If you're feeling quite strongly about the state of politics and direction of this country, getting

involved with stimulating some thought and discussion in your local community can be quite an eye-opening experience, as well as getting to know your local candidate better. It has its pitfalls but on the whole it might just become something people will still be talking about years later, even one hoarding as it turns out can have this effect!

Will I be looking to do the same again this election?

What colour hoarding did I chose to stimulate a similar amount of discussion and interest?

You'll have to keep an eye out closer to the time on your way to Mount Somers to find out ...

## Mixed reaction as final live export ship sails

By Sharon Davis

The last live export sailing was met with mixed reactions after a government ban came into effect at the end of April.

The bill to ban live exports was introduced over concerns about animal welfare issues during long sea voyages, mainly to China. It gave farmers two years to transition away from the live export market.

Animal rights activists held

celebrations at several towns around the country, including Timaru, on Sunday.

Meanwhile the National Party plans to reintroduce live exports with new animal welfare rules including purpose-built ships, should it win this year's election.

Mid Canterbury dairy farmer Phil Everest said there was a place for the well-managed export of breeding stock.

Some developing countries

needed to improve their stock and New Zealand had surplus good breeding stock, he said.

"It's a good use of livestock - as long as it is controlled."

The current ban on exports would reduce the income for farmers who reared extra heifers for export. It could also affect the local selection and breeding choices.

Everest said he supported National's proposal to reintroduce live exports of cattle.

Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor said the Government ban was introduced to protect New Zealand's reputation for ethical trade.

"Recent talk of restarting live exports by sea simply ignores the reality that our consumers overseas take issues of sustainability, climate and animal welfare seriously."

An animal welfare focus was part of a plan to protect future export growth and was in-step

with likeminded partners, he said.

"Australia has moved to phase-out live export of sheep, and animal welfare standards are bedded into our free trade agreements with the UK and the EU."

"This Government is committed to ensuring our farmers stay at the forefront of sustainable and ethical trade and that every part of our food production system upholds high standards of animal welfare," O'Connor said.

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# FRUSTRATION AS M.BOVIS RETURNS

Mid Canterbury farmers are disappointed and frustrated by a new *Mycoplasma bovis* infection on a dairy farm north of Ashburton.

However, they regard it as a “blip” and are pleased the infection was found quickly and likely has a traceable source of infection.

In February New Zealand was down to one infected property, which was cleared just two weeks ago.

But hopes that the country was finally rid of the cattle disease were dashed when the new infection was found through routine testing last week.

Mid Canterbury Federated Farmers president David Acland said the new infection was disappointing and frustrating but part of the process of eradication.

“There’s always going to be a blip. We’re on top of it early, and it

is important that we understand how it occurred. Hopefully, we don’t get more.”

He urged farmers to take biosecurity seriously to ensure “the investment made by the government and farmers was not wasted.”

Acland said the new infection was not a cause for concern.

However, he would be worried if investigations could not show how the infection occurred.

Director of the Ministry for Primary Industries eradication programme Simon Andrew said the infected Mid Canterbury dairy farm was near Ashburton.

“It is not in the Wakanui area and has not been infected previously.”

The infection was confirmed last week through MPI’s network surveillance, he said.

“The property was tested as it neighbours, another dairy farm,

was cleared of infection earlier this year. That farm had strong links to the Wakanui cluster through animal movements.”

It was too early to confirm what strain type the infection was. However, the neighbouring farm had links to the Wakanui cluster that was infected with the original strain of *M. bovis*, Andrew said.

MPI was investigating the source of the infection and working with the farmer to “depopulate the property” with minimal disruption.

Andrew’s advice to farmers in Mid Canterbury and across New Zealand was to be vigilant with biosecurity practices.

“Especially in the lead-up to Moving Day, it’s important that all animal movements are recorded in NAIT. Accurate NAIT records allow us to trace animal movements quickly and minimise

disruption for the farm.”

He also advised keeping herd groups separate to isolate any infection and minimise disruption if an infection is found.

“As we move into winter a lot of farmers will be sending cattle

out to grazing. It’s important that farmers talk to graziers to let them know they expect their cattle to be separated from other herds to mitigate the risk of contracting any infectious disease, not just *M. bovis*,” he said.

## M.bovis facts

The disease was first discovered in New Zealand in July 2017 on a farm in South Canterbury.

New Zealand embarked on an ambitious programme to eradicate *M.bovis* in 2018, funded by the government (68%), DairyNZ and Beef + Lamb New Zealand.

Since then, more than 183,345 cattle have been culled

from 280 farms and \$641 million from a \$870m budget has been spent on eradication.

The last known infected property on Banks Peninsula was cleared of the disease only two weeks ago.

A total of 2879 claims have been processed and paid, while 13 are in process. Nearly \$240m has been paid in claims so far.

# Southbridge dairy manager an industry rising star

By Claire Inkson

[Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz](mailto:Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz)

Southbridge dairy farmer Jack Symes has won Dairy Manager of the Year at the 2023 New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards.

The announcement was made at the awards gala dinner at the Cordis Hotel in Auckland on May 13.

"I'm excited about what lies ahead for myself and the opportunities it will create," Symes says.

"It's good to see all the hard work and effort I've put in over the last six months pay off.

"It's a classic example of what you put in, you get out."

Symes grew up on the 160-hectare Southbridge dairy farm he now manages belonging to his parents, Judy and Brian Symes, who are proud of their son's achievement.

"Mum and Dad came up to the awards, and I had my Uncle there as well and a table of friends.

"It was good support; that was massive to me," Symes said.

Symes and the other finalists were treated by sponsors to a series of activities while in Auckland, including a cocktail dinner function held by Ravensdown, a chance to chat with Ravensdown chief executive Garry Diack and a cooking competition hosted

by Fonterra. Meridian sponsored a mini putt game, and all finalists participated in an amazing race around Auckland's central business district, with sponsors, on the morning of the awards day.

"The sponsors put a lot of money into the awards process and really made it a memorable week. It was a lot of fun meeting people from all over the country, all different nationalities, ages and gender.

"You get a really good picture of how the industry is looking going forward, and it's exciting. That was probably the best thing about being up there for the week."

Judges described Symes as an intelligent, humble and personable farmer who is focused on quality all-year round.

"Jack is the full package," says head judge Renee Rooney from Lake Brunner. "He gets the grassroots basics right, through to in-depth technical knowledge, including financial acumen."

"He's analysing all the time, is thorough with his decision-making, and does everything to a very high standard."

Symes, a first-time entrant, won the DeLaval Livestock Management Award, the Fonterra Dairy Management Award, the Ravensdown Sustainable Pasture Award, the NZDIA Personal Planning

and Financial Management Award, and over \$24,000 in prizes.

"Jack is a very intelligent, quiet achiever who presented a pristine property," says Judge Jack Meehan from ANZ.

"He runs a tight ship, and his financial planning reflects a commitment to future goals."

The judges noted Jack was strong across the board and demonstrated best practice in all areas of the farming operation with strengths in pasture, animals and financial management.

"He works hard and puts a lot of energy and effort into doing a good job for the business," says judge Janine Swansson from DairyNZ.

"He articulates well, and everything he says is well-considered."

The judges noted that Jack has proactive management skills, especially with regard to milk quality and were impressed with his good planning.

"The property demonstrated clean pastures, and Jack was flexible on his system depending on the conditions," said the judges. "He takes pride and care in the farm."

The judges were impressed with the overall high calibre and diversity of all Dairy Manager national finalists and that they all loved the dairy industry career pathway and progression opportunities.



Jack Symes

PHOTO: CLAIRE INKSON

## Canterbury and North Otago shine bright at awards

Alongside Dairy Manager of the Year winner Jack Symes, three other Canterbury North Otago finalists were placed in the 2023 New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards.

Hinds dairy farmers Jonathon and Stacey Hoets placed third in the Share Farmer category, winning Honda Farm Safety, Health & Biosecurity Award and over \$24,000 in prizes.

The Hoets are 20% equity partners with John and Kelly Nicholls on a 17-hectare Hinds property, milking 760 cows.

The judges describe the Hoets as a practical, innovative couple

who have good systems and processes in place.

They use technology very well and use it to their advantage, including apps and GPS coordinates and collars for their cows, judges said.

"They are also very strong in the health and safety area and demonstrated that they are naturally doing it on-farm," says judge Steve Canton.

"An example of this is the multiple PPE points they have stationed around the farm to ensure it's available and able to be used when required."

The Dairy Trainee runner-

up, Brayden Johnston, won the DeLaval Communication and Industry Involvement Award along with \$9,300 in prizes.

Johnstone is a farm assistant on the Rakaia Island "Turner Family" 540-hectare, 1450-cow Oxford property.

The judges noted that Johnstone is a person who can speak across many ages in the industry.

"He has plenty of goals and is very driven to achieve them," says judge James Courtman.

"He's an excellent communicator."

Cameron Henderson from

Oxford was named the 2023 Fonterra Responsible Dairying Award winner and received the John Wilson Memorial Trophy.

The New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards and Fonterra introduced the prestigious award to recognise dairy farmers who demonstrate leadership in their approach to sustainability and are respected by their fellow farmers and their community for their attitude and role in sustainable dairying.

Judges were impressed by Henderson's attention to detail, extensive leadership roles and community involvement in a

number of local and national organisations.

"Cameron is essentially spending more time involved with community projects than farming," says judge Michael Heard.

"He's built his business to give him the flexibility to really get involved in the numerous environmental projects he is passionate about, including being a founder and trustee of the Waimakariri Landcare Trust, a member of the ECan Regional Water committee and various roles on the Dairy Environment Leaders group."

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# Major winners and placegetters and merit award winners

## 2023 New Zealand Share Farmer of the Year:

- Winner Hayden & Bridget Goble, Taranaki
- Runner-Up Aleisha Broomfield, Waikato
- Third Jonathon & Stacey Hoets, Canterbury/North Otago

### Merit Awards

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| DairyNZ People & Culture Award                         | Aleisha Broomfield      |
| Ecolab Farm Dairy Hygiene Award                        | Hayden & Bridget Goble  |
| Federated Farmers Leadership Award                     | Aleisha Broomfield      |
| Honda Farm Safety, Health & Biosecurity Award          | Jonathon & Stacey Hoets |
| LIC Animal Wellbeing, Recording and Productivity Award | Hayden McDonald         |
| Meridian Environmental Sustainability Award            | Aleisha Broomfield      |
| Ravensdown Pasture Performance Award                   | Hayden & Bridget Goble  |
| Trelleborg Business Performance Award                  | Aleisha Broomfield      |
| Ecolab Interview Award                                 | Hayden & Bridget Goble  |

## 2023 New Zealand Dairy Manager of the Year:

- Winner Jack Symes, Canterbury/North Otago
- Runner-up José Hamber, Manawatu
- Third Finja Philips, Auckland/Hauraki

### Merit Awards

- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| DairyNZ People & Leadership Award                      | José Hamber     |
| DeLaval Livestock Management Award                     | Jack Symes      |
| Fonterra Dairy Management Award                        | Jack Symes      |
| LIC Interview Award                                    | Chihiro Hanyuda |
| Meridian Environmental Sustainability Award            | Nicole Barber   |
| Ravensdown Sustainable Pasture Award                   | Jack Symes      |
| NZDIA Personal Planning and Financial Management Award | Jack Symes      |

## 2023 New Zealand Dairy Trainee of the Year:

- Winner Bill Hamilton, Northland
- Runner-up Brayden Johnston, Canterbury/North Otago
- Third Sarah Powell, Manawatu

### Merit Awards

- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| Best Video Award presented by Streamliner            | Bill Hamilton    |
| DairyNZ Practical Skills Award                       | Bill Hamilton    |
| DeLaval Communication and Industry Involvement Award | Brayden Johnston |
| Federated Farmers General Farming Knowledge Award    | Sarah Powell     |

## 2023 Fonterra Responsible Dairying Award: Cameron Henderson, Canterbury/North Otago



New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards national winners Bill Hamilton, Hayden and Bridget Goble and Jack Symes.



Cameron Henderson, the 2023 Fonterra Responsible Dairying Award winner from Canterbury/North Otago  
PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

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# Taranaki farmer wins Dairy Woman of the Year

By Claire Inkson

[Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz](mailto:Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz)

Gowns were on, the wine was flowing, and the cheers were loud at the Dairy Women's Network gala dinner as Taranaki dairy farmer Donna Cram was announced as the Fonterra Dairy Woman of the Year for 2023 in Invercargill.

The gala dinner was held at the Ascot Hotel on May 3 as part of the Dairy Women's Network 'Brighter, Braver, Bolder' conference. Cram was one of four finalists nominated for the prestigious award.

"I'm quite shocked," Cram says. "I didn't think I'd win; I talked myself out of it."

As Dairy Woman of the Year, Cram will receive a scholarship of up to \$20,000 for an approved and personally chosen development programme and professional or business coaching.

Cram hopes to use the scholarship to complete a leadership course with the Global Women organisation that aims to be a catalyst for New Zealand's social and economic success by championing diversity in leadership.

"We need lots of leaders on the ground supporting other people in action," Cram said.

Cram credits her success to the study and support she received as an Agri Women's Development Trust alumni.

"Five years ago, I could hardly say boo to a goose, and that's what giving someone confidence can do.

"There are so many good things happening in the community; you never forget your grassroots and the people that help get you where you are."

Judges recognised Cram's heavy involvement in her community as the Taranaki Catchment Communities Inc chairperson and founder, part of the DairyNZ Dairy Environment Leaders, an ambassador for Federated Farmer, and a councillor at Taranaki Regional Council.

"Donna also has a focus on the environment and how we can continue to produce amazing food in a sustainable way," Dairy Women's Network trustee Donna Smit said.

"She leads by example, and her farm was one of three finalists in the Fonterra Responsible Dairy Award in 2021.



Dairy Women's Network partner relationships, marketing and communications director Zellara Holden, Ballance director Sarah von Dadelszen, and DairyNZ director Tracy Brown..



DairyNZ trustee Donna Smit.



Fonterra chief executive Miles Hurrell and Donna Cram.

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“In particular, she exemplified taking a grassroots, local, regional and international view of dairy, and you can see that translate into the influencing she does at regional and central government level.”

Smit acknowledged the other finalists, Kimberley Crewther, Rebecca Miller and Sheena Penwarden, as incredible women who brought passion, leadership and mana to the sector.

“They are everything we should be proud of in the dairy sector; they are courageous, kind, passionate and visionary”.

Fonterra remains a major

sponsor of the awards, which Fonterra chair Peter McBride said showcased the vital part women play in the dairy industry.

“We are excited to be supporting women in agriculture, especially dairy,” McBride said.

McBride said the awards night showcased the finalists, but the quality of the nominations coming through in the lead-up to the finals was also impressive.

“It really shows the depths of talent that exists in our industry,” McBride said.

Fonterra chief executive Miles Hurrell described Donna as an outstanding

ambassador for the industry.

“Her leadership qualities, community engagement and commitment to sustainability represent some of the best attributes of Kiwi dairy farmers. We want more young people coming into the dairy sector, and she’s helping to do exactly that,” Hurrell said.

The gala dinner and awards concluded a day of speakers and workshops for attendees and culminated in a night of dancing and networking as guests enjoyed a well-earned night off the farm and a chance to dress up and celebrate in style.



Fonterra chief executive Miles Hurrell, Fonterra director Cathy Quinn, 2023 Dairy Woman of the Year Donna Cram and Fonterra chairperson Peter McBride.



Fonterra was the major sponsor of the event.



PHOTOS: CLAIRE INKSON Dairy Women of the Year finalist Rebecca Miller (centre) shares the evening with her family and friends.



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# Putting all our milk bottles in the one crate

New Zealand exporters in general, and Fonterra in particular, often come under fire for being too reliant on the Chinese market. Part of that reliance, of course, is due to the fact we've been able to negotiate a free trade agreement with China but struggled with other large protected markets like the United States, India and Canada. The government may have recently negotiated deals with the EU and the UK, but our agreement with China has been in place for 15 years.

Despite the warnings of impending doom often sent Fonterra's way, it is one of the Cooperative's competitors who is once again feeling the effects of putting all its milk bottles into one crate.

When I first wrote about Synlait in late 2020, their share price and profitability had plummeted due to one of their customers' heavy reliance on the Chinese grey market to get their product into China.

The A2 Milk Company (A2MC), which is owner and customer of Synlait, played a dangerous high-stakes game, relying heavily on an informal network of Chinese

students and personal shoppers to distribute much of its product into China. It's a game that has cost other companies dearly in the past.

Daigou, buying on behalf, is a network of Chinese nationals living in or visiting Australia who buy local products and ship them back home to groups of friends, and to customers cultivated via the social media app WeChat. It is not uncommon for Chinese tour groups to visit stores like the Chemist Warehouse and buy products in bulk, much to the ire of locals trying to buy product for themselves.

Covid-19 stopped daigou in its tracks with Chinese students and tourists unable to visit Australia and even now, over three years later, the channel has still not fully recovered. According to the Australian Financial Review, in just a six-month period, sales of A2 Platinum English infant nutrition fell by 35.5 percent.

Unsurprisingly, in response to A2MC's inability to get product into China, competitors rushed to fill the vacuum. The Chinese government also took steps to close the price gap between domestically produced and imported infant formula.



Cheese lollipops for Asian markets are made with New Zealand products.

With restored consumer trust in Chinese manufactured product and the daigou channel still faltering, A2MC has cancelled orders from Synlait totaling 1,650 metric tonnes, or 5% of Synlait's Advanced Nutrition sales. Synlait now must find a market for this milk that was previously earmarked as high value. I suspect the people who lecture companies to pivot from making whole milk powder to higher value products are probably the same people who believe in the adage "if you build it, they will come". Most

businesses make a product to meet consumer demand, not make a product and then blindly hope someone will buy it.

Synlait's earning guidance has once again been slashed and their share price has fallen off a cliff, and once again it would appear to be due to its major clients' dependence on the Chinese market.

So how has Fonterra fared in the face of a Chinese market that has cooled considerably in the current financial year? The cooling is evidenced by the steadily declining milk price

and decreasing returns from the fortnightly Global Dairy Trade.

The dairy cooperative did what it does best, and shifted product to where the money was. They have reduced their exports to China from over 40% in 2022 to only 26% this year, and in doing so they have doubled their profit.

Rather than making a product and hoping there is a market for it, Fonterra has looked at consumer taste in China and created and refined products to meet these needs. Cheese lollipops, which taste exactly how they sound, and a cream cheese tea drink called Tea Macchiato are just some of the foods that now include custom-made New Zealand dairy products.

Observers and pundits are right when they say a company should be careful of being too reliant on one market, but maybe they should also dig a little deeper and see that a smart company can pivot quickly and turn their raw material into the product that will give them the best return possible and send it to the place that's willing to pay. It just so happens that most of the time, that place is China.

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- Shaun Pound - Pokene

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# Keeping your nutrition on track during calving

By Claire Inkson  
 Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz

Keeping good habits when life gets busy is always a challenge, and calving season is no exception. The key is setting aside time to prepare for the week ahead, Methven dietician Cushla Holdaway says.

"It's about really trying to prioritise some time each week, whether that's to do some online shopping for groceries, making a rough plan for what meals are for the week and just setting yourself up to be consistent rather than just hoping for the best," Holdaway says.

While carbohydrates tend to be convenient, it's important to make sure your food intake contains a good amount of healthy protein and vegetables.

"I always encourage quick, simple protein sources, which could be easy things like pre-preparing a whole bunch of boiled eggs that you can peel and use as you go."

Easy options like canned fish are a good source of protein and omega-3, as well as dairy products such as cottage cheese and high-protein yoghurt.

Adding cheese to your meal is an excellent way to boost protein and calcium intake as well, Holdaway said.

Slow cookers and instant pots are a great way to cook food in bulk, leaving enough leftovers for lunch the next day.

"Slow cookers are especially good in the winter time, and the beauty of cooking in bulk is that you put the effort in once. It makes things so much easier because who wants to spend a whole day meal prepping on a Sunday?" Holdaway said.

Organising healthy snacks to have on hand is a good strategy for maintaining healthy eating habits when things are busy, and getting home for a healthy snack can be difficult.

"The risk is that you get so hungry that you come back inside and then probably make worse



Methven dietician Cushla Holdaway.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

food choices because you are just ravenous.

"Having somewhere in the dairy shed, where you can have some snack food or maybe tuck some nut-based muesli bars in your overalls, is a great option.

Having something available so you don't get too hungry is important, and calving is pretty physical, so your energy needs are generally a lot higher too."

While skipping breakfast when heading out the door in the early hours is tempting, it's an important meal to set yourself up for the day ahead.

"The danger for active people

is that by skipping breakfast, you're missing an opportunity to get nutrition in your day, which can lead to overeating later on."

Staying away from high-energy carbohydrates for breakfast and instead choosing nutrition and protein means you start the day with a bang, Holdaway said.

"If it's really early, you're not going to necessarily feel like eating.

"If that's the case, then maybe having something really simple like a banana before you head out the door and then coming in an hour or two later for something a little bit more adequate.

"Eggs on toast alongside some yogurt with fruit is great. It's not really smoothie time of the year, but if people do like smoothies, then it's a good way to get multiple vitamins and minerals and different kinds of fruit and veg in one drink."

Cooking in bulk and being prepared helps farmers keep to their nutrition goals over calving and is an excellent way to eat healthily when food prices are high.

Cushla also recommends using frozen and canned vegetables as a convenient, affordable way to maintain a healthy diet.

Bulking up meals with lentils

and chickpeas can increase the number of servings in a meal, as well as protein intake.

While online shopping is more convenient during busy times, Holdaway recommends shopping at veggie shops and butchers where possible.

"Supermarket fruit and veg generally costs more, but if you can get to a proper fruit and veg shop and butchery, or you have a home kill, that's going to be way more cost-effective.

"If you are cooking in bulk and generally buying in bulk, it's going to be much more affordable," Holdaway said.

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# This is our pilgrimage



## A WORD FROM JAMIE ...

**M**uch as Muslims make the pilgrimage to Mecca, cricket fans to the MCG for the Boxing Day Ashes Test and golfers to Augusta for the Masters, Kiwi farmers religiously make the annual trek to Mystery Creek for the National Agricultural Fieldays. And it's great that Fieldays is once again back to its spiritual home, winter in Waikato. While last year's "Summer Fieldays" was an interesting interlude, brought about by necessity, it was never going to work as well as mid-June, when almost every farmer and grower has a break in the traffic, to take in the latest in technology and machinery for the farm. But even if you're only at Mystery Creek to kick a few proverbial tyres, it's a great reason to get off the farm, take a break, smell the roses and network with fellow farming folk. There's so much to take in and learn at Fieldays. You could easily spend all four days doing nothing other than just wandering around hoovering up free information to improve your farming operation. I love Fieldays, and other than a heavy fog at Hamilton Airport, wild horses couldn't drag me away! See you there.

## IN ROWENA'S WORDS ...

**A**fter six and a half short months, Fieldays is yet again upon us. Restored to its usual winter time slot, it promises to be a great chance once again for farmers to reconnect after a very challenging season. Believe me when I say, it'll be much needed. There's just something special about Fieldays. I can never pinpoint what it is, but the annual pilgrimage to Mystery Creek holds a very dear place in my heart. This June, it'll be 15 years since I first walked through the gates. A young, Massey University graduate (bachelor of communication), feeling like a bit of an imposter, clutching my ridgeline fleece pack and propping up the bar. Little did I know that the next time I attended, it would be as a farmer myself – within 12 months, I was contract milking on the other side of the world. And I've never looked back. It's anyone's guess how many schoolchildren, university students or young people in general could be inspired this year. Drawn into the primary sector as farmers, scientists, mechanics, bankers, vets or any number of careers the primary sector offers. Even broadcasters. Our industry has never needed the best and the brightest more. Bring it on.



Jamie Mackay and Rowena Duncum broadcast The Country radio show on Newstalk ZB, GoldAM and Hokonui, Monday to Friday, 12-1pm. Also streamed on iHeart Radio and on demand via www.thecountry.co.nz

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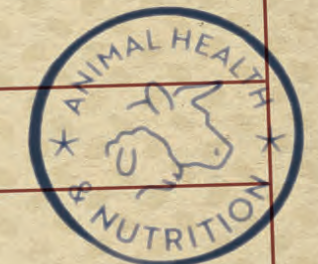
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# Shining a light through the gloom

**COMMENT:** We need a change of mindset to compete at global level, argues **Mike Petersen**.



**T**he unhealthy air of gloom floating across the food and fibre sector does not seem justified when we consider its success in recent years.

Export receipts across all sectors have more than doubled in the past 20 years from \$20 billion in 2004 to more than \$53b in 2022. In the sheep and beef sector alone, the Ministry for Primary Industries forecasts \$12.4b of export receipts for the coming year and, with farmgate prices remaining at elevated levels, this is an extraordinary result.

Farmers and growers across New Zealand certainly have valid reasons to feel gloomy about the sector's prospects. Cyclone Gabrielle and other weather events have taken their toll. Policy change and regulatory reform in the areas of freshwater and climate change have been poorly implemented and communicated. Inflationary pressures have taken the gloss off what has been an extended period of healthy farmgate returns. With on farm inflation running about twice the rate of New Zealand's average 6.7 per cent, this will hurt farmers in the coming year. The good news is that while inflation is persistent and at elevated levels, it appears the peak



is over, and interest rates will also trend down in the year ahead.

The interesting part of today's situation is that this sector has faced many similar challenges before and worked through these to thrive. I have no doubt we will do this again, and the future remains bright for those prepared to lift their heads and realise the opportunity.

Farmers and growers have missed the message they continue to be world leading in nearly every area of their business, but we need to keep moving to stay there. Others are catching up, and as an exporting country we need to ensure we stay at the head of the pack.

It is time to be forward thinking, accept change is coming, and adapt to ensure we remain global leaders in the area of food and fibre pro-

duction. Governments are not driving this agenda. This is consumer and customer driven change, and while some aspects may not seem rational to Kiwi farmers, they will be requirements imposed by retail chain partners in order to retain the ability to access their customers. There will be limited premiums for these individual requirements, unless we stack up a compelling range of attributes that together provide a compelling story alongside premium and differentiated food and fibre products.

Some realities are clear.

The world is increasingly focused on climate change, and the food and fibre sector will need to reduce emissions and drive towards net zero targets with urgency. Arguments here about whether emissions are

**The huge changes sweeping across the sheep and beef sector are consumer driven.**

Photo / Warren Buckland

warming or not are irrelevant. Our competitors offshore are all adopting net zero targets by 2040 or 2050, and if we ignore this reality we will lose our seat at the table.

We will also need to ensure our animal welfare standards are fit for the modern consumer's view of animals living well. This will require clear interpretation to ensure our standards are put in the context of our farming systems which differ from many others in the world. Our environmental and sustainability credentials will need to meet customer expectations and provide us with the opportunity to operate at home. Banks and insurance companies will have similar requirements of farmers and growers in order to access funding for our businesses. All of this will need credible and trusted verification to ensure the attributes being claimed are real and able to be translated internationally with ease.

I have no doubt that the food and fibre ecosystem is up for this challenge, and farmers should not feel alone in adapting and adopting the changes required. This ecosystem of professional, service and support companies is stepping up to the plate to invest directly in helping farmers and growers with the changes required. We will all need to do more but, then again, that is what we have always done, and we will do it again.

The future for premium, attribute-rich New Zealand food and fibre production, backed with credible and trusted verification, is real and can be assured. We now need a mindset change to help us get there. ■



Mike Petersen is a sheep and beef farmer and a director of an agribusiness company

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# Grab gumboots and head to Fieldays

**RURAL EVENTS:** Green focus sees launch of the Fieldays Sustainability Hub showcasing initiatives on sustainability

**C**ircle the 14th to the 17th of June in your diary as Fieldays is back to its traditional winter dates.

After the one-off shift at the end of November last year, visitors to Aotearoa's largest agri-event will once again be rugging up and battling the Waikato fog to head to Mystery Creek in Hamilton.

Celebrating 55 years of innovation, education and globalisation, Fieldays continues to provide a platform for farmers, innovators and businesses to come together and celebrate the primary sector.

"We are thrilled to be celebrating this milestone," said Peter Nation, CEO of the NZ National Fieldays Society.

"Since its inception in 1968, this event has grown and adapted to the changing needs of the industry. It's not just an ag event, it's a celebration



of our rural culture and heritage.

"We have a number of exhibitors who have been on this journey with us for all 55 years and this is a testament to the values of the society and what this event delivers for the sector.

"In saying that we also have vol-

unteers and life members of the society who have also been working tirelessly for 55 years to make this event the success it is and we thank them also for their ongoing support."

Fieldays' 55th anniversary is also a chance to reflect on the event's positive impact on the our wider economy. With local and international exhibitors and visitors descending on Mystery Creek for the four-day event generating millions of dollars in economic activity for Aotearoa and helping promote our food and fibre to the world."

Fieldays' continued commitment to education and collaboration this year sees the launch of the Fieldays

**Fieldays is a great way to connect with friends and family, says Peter Nation.**

Sustainability Hub with support from the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

"Sustainability is a strong focus for the society, and it's fantastic to be collaborating with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) on the Fieldays Sustainability Hub," Nation says.

"We've made a strategic decision to use the scale of Fieldays to help educate both visitors and exhibitors so that future generations will benefit from improved sustainability practices across the primary sector."

The new hub will feature a select number of sustainability-focused organisations, including EPA, Ministry for the Environment, Wilderlab, RiverWatch, Toitū Envirocare, Instep and more showcasing some of the initiatives under way across the motu and the way that working together can overcome some of the challenges and hurdles in this area.

Alongside the hub, there will be a Fieldays Sustainability Trail which can be accessed via the official Fieldays App. This trail will lead visitors to other Fieldays exhibitors across the site who are demonstrating sustainability practices, products, and initiatives.

Nation is eagerly anticipating the opening of the gates: "Many parts of the country have experienced a very rough time over the past few months and some time away from home, farm or work will be a welcome change for many. They can reconnect with friends and family, get free advice, grab a bargain and just have a good day out." ■

**We've made a strategic decision to use the scale of Fieldays to help educate both visitors and exhibitors so that future generations will benefit from improved sustainability practices.**

— Peter Nation



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# Thousands of tonnes of plastic recovered

**RECYCLING:** Plasback runs an accredited scheme to recover farm plastics, writes **Kem Ormond**



**S**etting up business in New Zealand in 2006, Plasback has gone from strength to strength when it comes to plastic recycling.

Plasback was one of the first Product Stewardship schemes for agriculture to receive accreditation from the Ministry for the Environment in 2010 and re-accredited in 2017.

In 2022, 5500 tonnes of plastic was collected for recycling, double the amount in 2021, when 2600 tonnes mainly made up of bale wrap and pit covers was collected.

The reason for the increase is partly because of the Fonterra Cooperative Difference scheme in which dairy farmer shareholders are rewarded for sustainability practices. This includes recycling of waste plastic from ensiling feed but greater awareness and social conscience play a big part.

Operating its original, and effective, bin-and-liner system, Plasback has collected more than 28,000 tonnes of waste since the scheme's inception. The collection includes bale wrap, silage pit covers, shrink wrap, pallet covers, polypropylene bags, high-density polyethylene (HDPE) containers, vineyard nets, irrigation pipes and polypropylene twine from farms and vineyards.

As part of its continued commitment to Product Stewardship, Plasback now operates nine purpose-built balers nationwide, designed to improve the onward transport logistics from their main centres to the recycling plants, and have introduced new products made from recycled plastics such as Tuffboard, Tuffdeck, and Plaswood.

With its head office in Christchurch, the company has a reliable



**Every piece of plastic collected from customers is recycled.**

Photo / Warren Buckland

**Below, made from waste plastic, Tuffboard is being used to great effect in calf pens.**



network of 13 independent contractors.

Plasback commercial manager Neal Shaw says: "Customers who have their plastic collected are interested in traceability. They want to know where their plastic is going and what is the end product."

Every piece of plastic collected from customers is recycled, 20 per cent in New Zealand and 80 per cent overseas, but all is recycled.

Products produced from this recycling includes Tuffboard, builders' film and recycled plastic pellets to be reused for making other plastic products.

Farm plastics are one of six waste streams that are in the process of being mandated. This means suppliers of plastic for use in the ag sector will be required to pay a levy, which in turn will be paid to a Product Stewardship organisation that will administer the funds for collection and processing of plastic.

NZ agriculture's effort to recycle its waste plastic is a good-news story that should be more widely known.

While the mandated scheme is on its way, the present system is still voluntary. Plasback is encouraging

producers of plastics to be part of the Plasback scheme so the industry can manage the waste and the costs.

Shaw says the hardest part are the "free riders", those businesses that sell plastics but take no responsibility financially for the recovery and recycling of the product.

"There are plenty of forward-thinking businesses who have actually stepped up, but there are still plenty that are taking the wait-and-see approach," he says.

"This approach is more about avoiding costs associated with actively participating in recycling initiatives until they are compelled by government legislation."

Getting behind the Plasback scheme is going to make this a better world for our children, and their children to come. ■

## WASTE NOT

- In 2021-22, Plasback used more than 40,000kg of waste plastics to make more than 1600 sheets of Tuffboard
- Plaswood is a wood alternative, resistant to rain, frost, and snow, and not affected by UV light
- Plasback now owns and operates nine purpose-built balers located throughout NZ.
- Plasback has collected 12.2 million individual teat seals, weighing 17,000kg from 52 clinics
- Since 2006, Plasback has collected over 28,000 tonnes of waste plastic from the primary sector.

**Customers who have their plastic collected are interested in traceability. They want to know where their plastic is going and what is the end product.**

— Neal Shaw, Plasback



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# Silver Fern Farms conference is back

**SPONSORED CONTENT:**

Book in some off-farm time to celebrate and be inspired, writes **Kem Ormond**



**I**t is time to celebrate and get inspired, so pack your bags and book in some time off-farm. The Silver Fern Farms' Plate to Pasture Farmer Conference is back for 2023.

Silver Fern Farms will be celebrating its 75th Anniversary and this means the 2023 event is lining up to be the biggest and best farmer conference yet.

Attendees last year numbered 550, and they enjoyed a jam-packed agenda which featured a number of speakers and experts including Nadia Lim, Tim Groser, Diana Rodgers RD, Dame Valerie Adams, Kantar and Silver Fern Farms' own leading farmers, to name a few.

This year's conference has been designed to keep you engaged and inspired. Interesting and insightful topics for farmer suppliers and include customer insights, sustainability in action, market analysis, and on farm innovation, plus attendees will enjoy presentations from Silver Fern Farms' own in-house experts.

The selection of special guests at this year's conference will not disappoint. Celebrated chef and restaurateur, Peter Gordon, will share his experience around the evolving demands of premium consumers and the opportunities for leading producers.

Once again, Silver Fern Farms has made the 2023 conference free to attend for suppliers and shareholders, and suppliers are urged to register their wider farm teams. This is an opportunity to get off the farm together, catch your breath and celebrate the past season, while getting inspired for the season ahead. All roles and ages are invited to attend.

The Plate to Pasture Farmer Conference is a fantastic opportunity to catch up with friends and colleagues over the three days. Not only will you get to enjoy a great lineup of speakers, industry leaders and experts, the conference also offers some great social and networking opportunities, and a couple of big celebrations.

It's an opportunity to connect with like-minded farmers, industry partners and enjoy time kicking up your heels with your own farm team.

There's no better way to kick off a celebration than with a good old



**CONFERENCE CONTENT:**

● **AGENDA**

Day 1 – July 18, 2023 From 5.30pm: Cooks on Fire Welcome Dinner  
Day 2 – July 19 From 8am: Conference plenary and workshops From 6.15pm: 75th Anniversary Gala Dinner and Plate to Pasture Supplier Awards  
Day 3 – July 20 (Optional) From 9am: Post-conference tours and masterclasses

● **WORKSHOPS**

Innovation workshop  
Carbon mapping with Lynker Analytics  
Consumer insights deep dive Fifth Quarter – from pet food to wearables to cosmetics

● **TOURS AND MASTERCLASSES**

Net Carbon Zero Farm tour  
Belfast Processing Site tour  
Butchery Masterclass with Silver Fern Farms own master butchers  
BBQ Masterclass with NZ BBQ champion Dean Davis  
Cooking Masterclass – A World of Flavour with Cooks on Fire judge Nici Wickes

Kiwi barbecue. This year's Cooks on Fire Welcome Dinner, is a great chance for a catch up with old and new faces, while enjoying some world class barbecue fare from the contestants of TVNZ1's hit series Cooks on Fire.

In the same evening you will be able to enjoy watching the highly anticipated final of the 2023 Silver Fern Farms Boning Competition.

Taking place in a specially built "boning ring", this event has all the atmosphere of a high adrenaline sporting event, demonstrating the immaculate skill and speed of Silver Fern Farms' own master boners.

Evening two will be the special Silver Fern Farms 75th Anniversary Gala Dinner-a chance to get dressed up and acknowledge a huge milestone for the company and red meat

industry. This evening will also see the presentation of the prestigious Plate to Pasture Supplier Awards for 2023 – judged from Silver Fern Farms' top supplying farms-plus a yet-to-be revealed VIP guest on the couch.

The Plate to Pasture Supplier Awards gives Silver Fern Farms the opportunity to recognise the farmers who live and breathe incredible produce and demonstrate an intimate understanding of global consumer needs. The prize for the winning farm includes an international market tour, visiting customers and learning about the global supply chain.

The conference is to be held at the incredible Te Pae Convention Centre in Christchurch. This state of the art venue is a highlight in itself, with this event spread across the 1400-seat auditorium, 2800 sq m expo halls and breakout rooms. Christchurch has plenty of accommodation within a stones throw of Te Pae and the central Christchurch venue is a quick 25 minutes from the airport, with direct flights across the country. ■

**Here's an opportunity to get dressed up and celebrate the Plate to Pasture Supplier Awards.**

Photo / NZME

Registrations now open. To find out more and to register your team visit [silverfernfarms.com/conference](http://silverfernfarms.com/conference)



**THE FARMERS THE WORLD NEEDS**

Join us to celebrate 75 years of Silver Fern Farms alongside our great lineup of guest speakers, industry leaders and our own in-house experts.

We'll also host the Silver Fern Farms Boning Competition National Finals, and celebrate the Plate to Pasture Supplier Awards for 2023.

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PLATE TO PASTURE FARMER CONFERENCE 2023



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# Surprise place where kiwifruit began

**HORTICULTURE:** How a furry little fruit became a star export for NZ. By **Kem Ormond**



**T**his week I was blown away to find our humble kiwifruit actually originated in Whanganui. If you had asked me in a quiz, I would have said Tauranga... and how wrong I would have been.

These furry little fruit were first called Chinese gooseberries and, despite the name change to kiwifruit, are not native to New Zealand.

In 1904, seeds were brought to New Zealand by Mary Isabel Fraser, who at the time was the principal of Wanganui Girls' College, who had been visiting mission schools in China. In 1906 they were planted by nurseryman Alexander Allison and there was great excitement when the vines first fruited in 1910.

Because the fruit had a slight gooseberry flavour, the public started calling it Chinese gooseberry, when in fact it is not at all related to the Grossulariaceae family to which gooseberries belong.

During the height of the Cold War in the 1950s, New Zealand started exporting the fruit to the United States, but the name Chinese gooseberry turned out to be an absolute marketing nightmare for Turners and Growers.



In 1959, during a Turners and Growers management meeting, Jack Turner (part of the management team), suggested maybe a name change to Kiwifruit. This idea was promptly accepted and later became the industry-wide name.

The Bay of Plenty town of Te Puke was where New Zealand's kiwifruit industry began and it markets itself as the "Kiwifruit capital of the world". Because kiwifruit is also grown in China, Italy, Iran and Chile, most of New Zealand's kiwifruit is now marketed under the brand name of Zespri, partly as a way of distinguishing 'Kiwi' kiwifruit from the produce of other countries.

Bruce Rhodes of Whanganui is a well-established grower of kiwifruit, having started planting shelter belts

in 1978 ready for kiwifruit vines that were planted two years later. He presently has seven and a half hectares planted in vines, consisting of 5ha of green kiwifruit, 1.5ha gold and 1 ha red. This year is his first pick of the red kiwifruit and it is destined for the Asian market.

The green is slower growing, harder to prune and the producer gets a return of about \$5.50 a tray. The gold grows faster, is easier to prune, more productive and the return is \$9-10 a tray. Then there is the new red variety, still in its early days, a smaller fruit and returning \$17.20 a tray. It is grown earlier than the green or gold, so is more susceptible to frost damage.

I asked Bruce what changes he has seen in the kiwifruit industry over the

**Zespri Gold kiwifruit have played a major role in the evolution of the export market.**

Photo / NZME

past 40 years. "Changing from growing kiwifruit on t-bars to pergolas has added 20 per cent more production, and made pruning so much easier," he said. "In the early days of multiple exporters which dropped the price, growing kiwifruit was uneconomical, the best thing was when Zespri came on the scene and we had just one exporter representing the producer.

"PSA has caused a lot more expense for growers as they have to spray more regularly, rules and regulations pertaining to putting down water bores has got become much harder, with so much red tape putting off new people wanting to get into the industry. Plus if you don't have a regular and stable work force, this becomes a problem".

Luckily for Bruce he has had the same group of workers for 15 years and only has to rely on employing a few locals in the busy season.

When it comes to changes in the packhouse, Bruce says, "it is the place where the biggest changes are happening, with limited workers, more automation is definitely in the pipeline".

The kiwifruit industry has certainly faced some bumpy years in recent times and adverse weather has added to the pressure. They have also had the usual pressure of a limited work force, and growers have had to endure poor returns.

Farmstrong has joined forces with NZ Kiwifruit growers to produce new resource material to manage the ups and downs of the kiwifruit industry. Check out Live Well, Grow Well on the Farmstrong site. ■



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# Research and innovation on display

By **Claire Inkson**  
[Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz](mailto:Claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz)

More than 200 farmers have heard how science and innovation can help to address challenges facing the dairy sector.

The 2023 DairyNZ Farmers Forum, "Research to Reality", was held at the Ashburton events centre on May 9.

Farmers had the opportunity to hear first-hand from DairyNZ scientists and industry leaders.

Information sessions highlighted the latest research and technology that would allow farmers to remain competitive and resilient when faced with changing environmental regulations, staff shortages and meeting consumer expectations.

Much of the innovation provided real-world solutions at a farm level and had been developed within Canterbury, DairyNZ chief executive Tim Mackle said while addressing the forum.

"Of course, farmers need to stay profitable, and we know here in Canterbury that over 9000 people are

employed in the dairy sector.

"We also know that the sector contributes about \$10 billion to the regional economy. So there's a lot at stake."

The forum, hosted by The Country executive producer and radio presenter Rowena Duncum, included DairyNZ's general manager for new systems and competitiveness Bridget Maclean and forecast practitioner and strategist Melissa Clark-Reynolds as keynote speakers.

Clark-Reynolds said the dairy industry was entering a time of turbulence, and the sector was under pressure to reduce emissions. Part of that challenge was to look at what premiums could be added to milk to gain a higher price point and meet consumer expectations.

"Our farmers produce artisan milk at volume. This is milk that is from grass-fed cows, in the open country, and produced by farmers that care for their animals, people, communities and country," Clark-Reynolds said.

"We need to make these benefits and natural-ness at the forefront of our products to differentiate us as we

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compete in a world where milk will be made cheaper and better by technology in the future.

“Dairy is the backbone of our economy, and we produce milk well. But now is the time to prepare for the disruption that is coming in the next 10 years and consider how you will shift to differentiate your individual businesses.”

The morning concluded with a speed science session, with 10 DairyNZ scientists giving bite-sized presentations of their work around topics such as genetics, cow fertility, eco stream health and heat stress.

An extended lunch allowed farmers to meet and talk to DairyNZ scientists in person and see first-hand technology being rolled out on-farm now and what was in store for the future.

The Farmers Forum finished with a series of information rounds, where farmers could choose two presentations from six different DairyNZ scientists on a range of topics, from profitability and nitrogen loss to workplace productivity and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



DairyNZ chief executive Tim Mackle.



Keynote speaker Melissa Clark-Reynolds.

PHOTOS: CLAIRE INKSON



MC Rowena Duncum introduces the speed science segment of the forum.



Keynote speaker Bridget Maclean.



The Farmers forum was well attended by over 200 farmers.



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# Practical innovation for the benefit of farmers' backs

## The easy-entry calf trailer prototype

On display at the Farmers Forum was an easy-entry calf trailer prototype designed to reduce injuries associated with lifting and carrying calves. It was the result of a three-year project funded through ACC's Workplace Injury Prevention Grants programme and DairyNZ's levy. The three-year project, led by senior scientist Dr Callum Eastwood, is being developed by DairyNZ alongside delivery partners QCONZ and Kea Trailers.

### Features and benefits:

- A spring-loaded, self-closing saloon door
  - High reinforcing bar to prevent stooping when loading calves
  - Latch function to prevent gate opening during transport
  - Off-set hinges to allow 180-degree opening for ease of unloading
  - Easy, faster and safer calf loading
  - Reduces awkward bending and lifting compared to loading calves on other calf trailers.
- The trailer has been trialed on



A farmer tries augmented reality glasses.

farms through 2022 and 2023 and has had great feedback. DairyNZ will continue to refine and improve the design, taking on board feedback from farmers.

### Augmented Reality Glasses

Farmers at the forum had the opportunity to try a pair of augmented reality glasses,

technology which has the potential to allow farmers to tell a paddock's pasture cover or how much dry matter per cow it contained at a glance.

The futuristic pilot project, led by DairyNZ scientist Brian DelaRue and Dr Callum Eastwood, could also be used for



DairyNZ scientist Brian Dela Rue with the calf trailer prototype.

farm machinery maintenance and body conditioning scoring.

Augmented reality is technology that adds information to what people perceive with their senses. The technology could allow farmers wearing an augmented reality headset to see any relevant information, voice

record data, and connect with an off-farm expert, such as a vet or agronomist.

DairyNZ has collaborated with Lincoln Agritech to explore how augmented reality could make a difference on dairy farms, including potential benefits and limitations.

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# If you always do what you've always done, you always get what you always got

We can't do the same thing and expect different results. Albert Einstein's definition of insanity is somewhat similar, when referring to out of date soil testing and fertiliser practises; Doing the same thing year after year and expecting a different result.

With farming economics at the present time being tight, due to high inflation, higher interest rates and lower commodity prices, producers are looking for different production approaches and ways to balance the farm budget. The high costs of fertiliser over recent years, particularly influenced by overseas freight, are forcing farmers to rethink their fertiliser strategy, which is reflected in a reduction of 20-30% of normal fertiliser usage by the major players in the industry.

Innovative producers are moving away from the views held so strongly by decades of traditional fertiliser production models, methods and practises. They simply don't believe the current fertiliser production model. Their experience with new fertiliser practises, have seen increases in production and gross margins. With the new environment they now find themselves in, innovative farmers are forcing the reductionist scientific community to rethink traditional fertilising systems. Multi-pasture species, focusing on soil biology, balancing soil nutrients, and fertiliser to stimulate Photosynthesis are at the forefront of this new complete systems approach.

There are locations where current farming practises are not sustainable from an environment point of view, due to leaching of fertiliser nutrients through the soil profile or runoff. To continue farming in those areas, sustainable and resilient practises will be adopted, there are lots of farmers doing this right now, but I believe they can do better. Changes in the way we test and evaluate the soil and its fertility



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

should be investigated, current testing procedures are not correctly identifying problems and issues these soils have. At a time when New Zealand needs its farmers to be producing at maximum production levels to pull this country out of its economic gloom, any reduction in land to be farmed would be disastrous and unnecessary.

Balancing soil nutrients, fertilising the soil correctly, accurately identifying excesses and deficiencies are at the

forefront of the Albrecht System of Soil Fertility. This is not a base saturation ratio theory, as some have incorrectly labelled it. The Albrecht System of soil fertility uses the Total Exchange Capacity of the soil to identify the sum of cations in the soil. The Base Saturation is calculated from this soil audit. There is a relationship between the physical structure of a soil and its cation exchange capacity/base saturation percentage.

I challenge why we continue

with the pH theory; only suppling enough soluble nutrients to grow a crop in one year. Farmers have been socially conditioned for decades with practises that are counter-ventilative to maximum production. Just look where that has led us to?

Soil pH is not an indicator of the Calcium levels in the soil. In true terms, pH stands for percentage hydrogen in the soil – how acidic the soil is measured on a logarithmic scale. In fact, Magnesium, Potassium and

Sodium have more influence on the soil's pH than Calcium, chemically speaking. Yet, farmers are only advised to lime when the PH of the soil is low. The physical structure of a soil can only be brought into alignment with the textbook definition of an ideal soil by a proper understanding and use of the Total Exchange Capacity & Base Saturation of that soil.

New Zealand continues to use the Olsen P test, designed by Dr Olsen for Alkaline soils with a pH 7.5 and above, as an industry standard to assess soil phosphate levels since 1976. As clearly stated by New Zealand's commercial labs, the Olsen P test over-estimates Phosphate levels in low pH soils (below pH 7.0) recently limed soil, or the application of phosphate fertilisers that contain Calcium (e.g. RPR or Guano). Using the Perry Ag Lab (PAL), the Albrecht system uses the Bray P2 extract in terms of P2O5 for soil with a pH of up to 7.4. Soils with pH>7.5 and automatically are tested with the Olsen P method.

Why, when the majority of New Zealand's soils fall between pH 5.5 – 6.5, are we still relying on the inaccuracies in the Olsen P test?

There is increased consumer interest in pasture fed meat and milk. It is often assumed that there is no difference in the meat from different production systems, grain fed, mono pastures or multi-species pastures, but the difference in productions systems goes well beyond omega-3 fatty acids, proteins and there is a 50-60% difference in the abundance of compounds between them. New research is looking at the food Matrix of 1000's of compounds that benefit human health.

Changes need to take place in the soil microbiome, to enable farmers to reduce inputs and restore soil health and improve profits, with the benefit of promoting Food as Medicine.

If you always do what you've always done, you will always get what you always got.

– D.L.Hart, 15.5.2023

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Waikaitu

# Growing your farming destiny



Doug Micheal, Rhys Roberts, Mandy Bell, Sarah Perriam-Lampp, Gabi Miceal, Tim Jones & Hamish Gow.

PHOTO: CLAIRE INKSON

By **Claire Inkson**  
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The Lakeside Hall near Leeston is a little off the beaten track, but that didn't deter a full house

of farmers from getting together for "Growing Your Farming Destiny", an event held by Ellesmere Sustainable Agriculture Inc (ESAI) with speaker and rural advocate Sarah Perriam-Lampp.

The event, held on April 28, was one of nearly twenty events organised by the catchment group over the last three years and was held to celebrate the work achieved by the group for

the Tinaku Project. The project, funded through MPI's Nature and Extension Funding, has seen the group grow its network of members and stakeholders and complete

60 riparian planting projects on members' farms. The project has enabled the planting of 50,000 natives along 14 kilometres of rivers and streams, as well as water quality monitoring.

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Sarah Perriam-Lampp, Hamish Gow, Tim Jones, Mandy Bell, Rhys Roberts, Doug and Gabi Micheal.

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"It's nice to have some positive events that celebrate the good things, rather than just chasing regulations," ESAI treasurer David Birkett says.

The ESAI is a farmer-led catchment group in the Selwyn district that advocates for members on legislative matters, upskills them on sustainable farming practices and provides networking opportunities.

The Growing Your Farming Destiny event featured a panel of six guests who talked about their farming journey, global trends and consumer expectations.

- Hamish Gow, the Sir Graham Harrison Professorial Chair in Global Value Chains and Trade, a lecturer at Lincoln University and an independent ministerial appointee on the Fonterra Milk Price Panel.
- Rhys Roberts, chief executive of Align Farms.
- Tim Jones, chief executive and founder of Grow Good, New Zealand's first qualified B consultant.
- Mandy Bell, chief executive of Deer Industry NZ.
- Gabi and Doug Micheal, owners of Gladfield Malt.

Meeting consumer expectations in a shifting landscape was a key focus of the evening.

"The problem is, we don't know who our consumers are," Hamish Gow said.

"We sell to the meat company, but we don't know who the consumer is in the marketplace."

Consumers needed to be reached individually, and those serving customers directly needed to tell the story to those customers, Gow said.

Farmers need to target zip codes, not continents, Rhys Roberts said.

"Whether that may be two or ten zip codes, the question is what do they want, and how do we get it to them?" Roberts said.

"That's what we are quite passionate about in our business."

"You can be at the right place at the right time, but have you got the right attitude?"

Tim Jones said that consumers were increasingly interested in provenance.

"There are savvy consumers that want to buy a product that ticks quite a few boxes, and provenance is one," Jones said.

"Sustainability is also important. Consumers want to know how this thing was made and who made it."

The evening concluded with dinner and a question and answer session.

ESAI has recently received further funding to help facilitate ESAI members and other farmers in the region to develop Integrated Farm Plans.

This latest project aims to build farmers' confidence and capability to adapt to the multiple changes and challenges they face with the Integrated Farm Plan approach, and will begin with a pilot group in May.

"We think the support we give fellow farmers is important," David Birkett said.

"It's quite different coming from fellow farmers versus someone who doesn't have any skin in the game or is not necessarily directly involved in farming."

"They can talk to people who have already been through that part of the regulation, got their consents, or been audited. It makes the pathway easier for people," Birkett said.

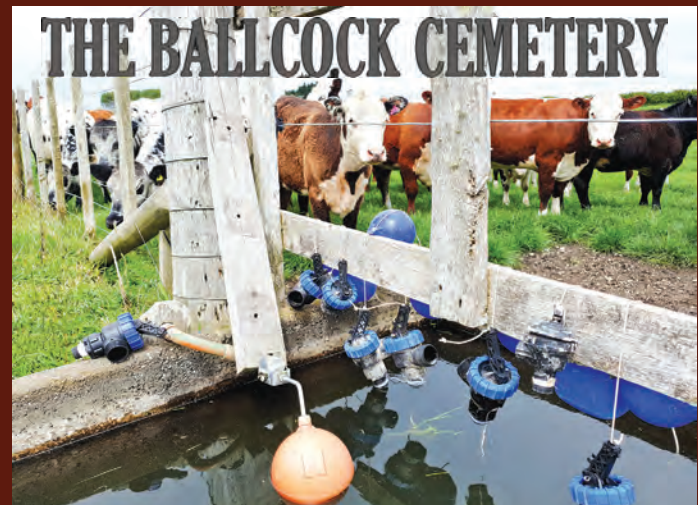
**"It's quite different coming from fellow farmers versus someone who doesn't have any skin in the game or is not necessarily directly involved in farming".**  
– David Birkett

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# Dairy farmers get on SIDE

By Sharon Davis

Up to 400 dairy farmers could be heading to Invercargill in June for the two-day South Island Dairy Event (SIDE).

SIDE event chair Emma Hammond said the advantage of SIDE was that the workshops were designed and run by farmers, for farmers.

"Instead of a sales pitch from reps, we hear from farmers and industry experts about their experiences, feedback and challenges when using the agri-related product or service."

It was also an opportunity for farmers to invest in themselves and gain best practice information about things that can help them on their farm - and to share challenges that they may be having, she said.

The event will be held at ILT Stadium Southland in Invercargill on June 28 - 29 with the theme: "Adapt, Empower and Succeed".

SIDE offers a selection of practical workshops and culminates with a field trip to the Southern Dairy Hub, a 349-hectare commercial-scale research dairy farm at Wallacetown, near Invercargill.

There are 12 workshops to choose from. They include Q&A sessions, discussions from industry experts, and feedback from farmers on their experience

on topics such as wearables, efficient nitrogen use, utilising catchment groups, and how to be the best boss.

SIDE also offers inspiration from two keynote speakers, including women's rugby player Tyla Nathan-Wong, and para-triathlete Shaz Dagg. A keynote session on the climate is also planned.

For more information and to register, go to [side.org.nz](http://side.org.nz)

## One-day event for young farmers

BrightSIDE is a one-day event for young farmers run on June 28 alongside South Island Dairy Event (SIDE).

Students, farm assistants, and 2ICs looking to progress their careers can learn about opportunities and progression.

BrightSIDE includes workshops, keynote speakers and provides the opportunity to network with hundreds of dairy leaders who attend the SIDE conference. It is all about inspiring, encouraging and uplifting those starting out in the dairy industry.

The workshops include information on personal finance, becoming fit to farm, a panel discussion on wealth creation in the dairy industry, and a look at contract milking and becoming self-employed as a farmer.



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In 2019, Frano Staub, the General Manager of Theland Purata Farming, partnered with Catalyst Performance Agronomy to find the perfect solution for guaranteeing winter feed availability for their nine dairy farms and two support blocks across Mid-Canterbury. Adopting SureYield™ removed all risk and simplified the normally complex process of fodderbeet agronomy.

Frano engaged in discussion with senior Catalyst agronomist, Derek Thelning and Catalyst CEO, Patrick Davis, focusing on the security of winter feed for Purata's 13,000 MA cows and

young stock. The decision was made to introduce fodder beet crops to each farm, totalling 363 hectares, ensuring a reliable feed supply without compromising farm productivity.

Yield and budget targets were set for the fodder beet crops, and all planning elements were agreed upon before planting commenced. Every aspect of crop management, from groundwork and fertilisation to weed control, was meticulously handled to achieve optimal results.

The results from the 2021-22 season were exceptional. The average yield target of 24,800kg DM/ha for the 363 hectares of fodder beet was surpassed, with Catalyst achieving an impressive result of 27,700kg DM/ha. Derek attributes this success to the additional level of control provided by SureYield™.

The key factors that led Frano and the Purata board members to choose SureYield™ for their farm system included - the additional peace of mind that came with the written yield target, budget, and contract along with their confidence in Catalyst as a partner. Frano enjoyed the ease that came with having a single point of contact throughout the entire process, ensuring clear communication, and streamlined operations. The outstanding results achieved with SureYield™ have solidified the trust in this partnership.

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Frano Staub, General Manager of Theland Purata Farming, and senior Catalyst agronomist, Derek Thelning.

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