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JANUARY 2024

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## AWARDS FOR TOP WOMEN

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# FROM THE EDITOR

WITH Claire Inkson – OPINION

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# Celebrating success of our rural women

In November, I was privileged to attend and photograph the NZI Rural Women New Zealand Business Awards.

Credit needs to be given to Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) and their sponsors for creating this opportunity to celebrate and showcase entrepreneurial Kiwi rural women.

Women are being recognised more in agriculture these days, and many hold executive positions within the primary sector.

We have Kate Acland as Beef + Lamb New Zealand chairperson, Mandy Bell as Deer Industry New Zealand chairperson, Nadine Tunley as chief executive of Horticulture New Zealand and Charlotte Connoley as the first female president of the New Zealand Grain, Seed and Trade Association, to name a few.

At a grassroots level, however, it can be challenging for women to find a seat at the table in rural communities and



It can be difficult for women to find a seat at the table in the agriculture sector. PHOTO: ANDREA PIACQUADIO

on family farms.

Add children to the mix and distance to the nearest town, and career prospects for rural women can seem slim. And that can be isolating.

While some women take a hands-on approach on the farm, some family farming systems simply don't allow for that, and not all women who marry farmers necessarily

want to get behind the wheel of a tractor.

What the RWNZ Business Awards category winners have in common is that they have found solutions to these obstacles, and many have found ways to create successful businesses that also have the dual purpose of benefitting their communities.

What also struck me

was how humble, positive, and supportive these women were of each other's accomplishments.

The awards are important in celebrating success and shining a spotlight on these businesses, but also because they show other women what is possible both inside and outside the farm gate.

On another note, I encourage rural women to join your local Rural Women New Zealand branch.

The organisation is moving forward with a modern approach, and you can become as involved (or not involved) as you wish.

What's important is that this is the only organisation specifically advocating for rural women and communities, and they deserve our support.

To join, visit their website [www.ruralwomennz.nz](http://www.ruralwomennz.nz)

You can read about the NZI Rural Women New Zealand Business Award winners on page 4.



## FARMVIEW

OPINION with Nicola Grigg

# Government shifting the dial

"The formation of the new coalition government will mean some long-awaited positive change for our rural communities and farmers. Our farming communities are inherent to the overall success of New Zealand, and our new coalition government is focused on replacing and repealing unnecessary regulation that makes

your job more difficult - however, this won't be an overnight fix.

I feel very privileged to be appointed by Prime Minister Christopher Luxon as the Minister of State for Trade, National's Associate Agriculture minister, and the Minister for Women – all of which are responsibilities I am thrilled to take on.

Anyone even remotely connected to the wider agricultural industry will know farmers have had an incredibly challenging time over the past six years – a culmination of on-farm inflation being at decade-long highs, plummeting commodity prices, supply-chain issues, interest rate increases, and

domestic inflation squeezing rural families and rural businesses from all sides.

With all that in mind, one of the primary aspirations for the new government is to restore confidence in agriculture.

To tackle this, we've released our 100-day plan comprising of 49 actions – many of which will

have a direct impact on farming communities. Those actions include repealing the Clean Car Discount Scheme, also known as the 'Ute Tax,' introducing legislation to refocus the Reserve Bank on a single mandate of price stability, stopping blanket speed limit reductions that will do

*Continued on P3*

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# Good news for farmers

By Sharon Davis

The new historic three-party coalition has a pleasing representation of rural New Zealand in parliament, and appears to be good news for Mid Canterbury's farmers and rural communities.

National Party's Todd McClay has been appointed as Minister of Agriculture, supported by associate ministers Nicola Grigg (horticulture) from National, Andrew Hoggard (animal welfare and skills) from ACT and Mark Patterson from NZ First.

McClay is also Minister of Forestry, Minister for Hunting and Fishing, Minister for Trade, and Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Grigg also has the Minister for State of Trade and Minister for Women portfolios. Hoggard is Minister for Biosecurity and Minister for Food Safety and Associate Minister for the Environment, while Patterson is also Minister for Rural Communities.

Mid Canterbury Federated Farmers president David Acland said he was "really pleased" with the representation that rural New Zealand had in parliament and the inclusion of two hands-on farmers with the inclusion of Hoggard and Patterson in those roles - and Grigg coming from a local Mid Canterbury farming background.

Acland was also pleased with



Todd McClay, seen here with National leader Christopher Luxon, is the new agriculture minister. PHOTO: NZ HERALD

the spokesperson roles and how the roles had been distributed to meet the balance between the coalition parties.

"They provide tension and it highlights the importance of the rural areas in New Zealand."

Both Patterson and Hoggard are former Federated Farmers presidents, he said.

Patterson's role representing rural communities would allow the Otago sheep and beef farmer to focus on rural education and rural health and "access to all that sort of stuff", said Acland.

Hoggard, a Manawatu dairy farmer, had experience through Federated Farmers negotiating with the previous Labour government on regulations around climate change and in the freshwater policy space.

"They both have good hands-on experience in these roles to work with Todd McClay."

Acland said Hoggard's environment and biosecurity portfolios would hopefully reduce the "silo mentality" that existed between the two.

"There's good balance" in the representation, he said.

Acland was also pleased to see a "change and refresh" with the rejig of portfolios held by Labour Party ministers.

Former Rangitata MP and Labour list MP Jo Luxton has taken on the agricultural role and was at a recent Federated Farmers national council meeting to meet everyone and "explain how she wants to go forward".

Dunedin MP Rachel Brooking is Labour's new environmental spokesperson.

Acland said the previous ministers had been "quite combative" and the change in portfolios "should freshen up how they look at those roles".

"If we don't have general consensus - across parties and across governments - we can't build enduring change and we end up with violent (policy) swings."

Acland said farmers wanted policies that were good for the environment and communities.

"We don't want sudden change. We want long-term vision and investment in transport and infrastructure that will enable the free flow of freight and traffic to the export ports in Timaru and Christchurch."

Acland said the new government's plan to "turn back the clock" on the Resource Management Act reform was good.

He said farmers needed clarity on the proposed changes to freshwater regulation.

"They are having conversations with rural and environmental

groups to reach agreement and progress toward enduring change."

Acland said some of the freshwater regulations had a deadline of the end of 2024 and farmers needed clarity on any changes before Christmas.

Mid Canterbury had freshwater plans before it was required by the Labour government and was ahead of many other councils - and was "one of the most highly consented areas" in the country.

Acland also wanted clarity around climate change mitigation and whether there would be a cost to farmers.

"Corporates like Fonterra are driving change on emissions, so there is no need for charge."

In Acland's view the cost was used to encourage change and was not needed if farmers were already on the "right trajectory".

## Agriculture ministers

**Todd McClay** - Agriculture minister, forestry minister, trade minister, hunting and fishing minister, associate foreign affairs minister.

**Nicola Grigg** - Minister of State for Trade, Minister for Women and associate agriculture minister (horticulture).

**Andrew Hoggard** - Biosecurity minister, food safety minister, associate

environment minister, associate agriculture minister (animal welfare, skills).

**Mark Patterson** - Rural communities minister and associate agriculture minister.

**Shane Jones** - Ocean and fisheries minister, regional development minister, resources minister, associate finance minister, associate energy minister.

From P2

nothing but slow the productive economy down, starting work to establish a new regulation agency to improve the quality of regulation, repealing the Water Services Entities Act, also known as 'Three Waters', doing away with the disastrous new RMA and reverting back to the original until there is space in the legislative programme to begin it again from scratch and, of course, getting rid of the raft of anti-farming regulation that the Labour government imposed on our farmers.

Among those priority pieces of work are agreements we've made with our coalition partners to maintain a split-gas approach to methane and carbon dioxide through to 2050 and review the methane science and targets in 2024 for consistency with no additional warming from agricultural methane emissions.

We will reverse the recent ban on live animal exports while ensuring the highest standards of animal welfare, and regulating for export and import certification to ensure destination farms comply with NZ animal welfare standards. On that note, we also plan to reform the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee to ensure its functions, membership and mandate are appropriate.

We will cease the implementation of new Significant Natural Areas and seek advice on the operation of existing Significant Natural Areas as part of the Government's programme to reform the Resource Management Act and will improve Farm Environment Plans so they are more cost-effective and pragmatic for farmers.

While we are committed to eventually pricing methane in order to reach our carbon zero 2050 goals, we will enable farmers and landowners to offset sequestration against their on-farm emissions. Reaching those goals will also be helped by our planned liberalisation of genetic engineering laws.

We will replace the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 to allow district councils more



Nicola Grigg. PHOTO: NZ HERALD

flexibility in how they meet environmental limits and seek advice on how to exempt councils from obligations under the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 as soon as practicable. We will also replace the National Policy Statement for Freshwater 2020 to rebalance Te Mana o te Wai to better reflect the interests of all water users with urgency.

To my mind, these all serve as good examples of what is to come for rural New Zealand and are a direct result of the feedback you, as farmers, have given me and my colleagues over the past three years.

Wearing both my trade and agricultural hats, I'm looking forward to working with my cabinet colleagues on rural issues in the coming months, with a focus on growing the industry and creating trade opportunities. We have a busy time planned for the opening of the 54th Parliamentary term and there is a lot of work to do.

Although the past years have been difficult, and there may be some difficult times to come, we are excited and ready to go to work for the New Zealand public and do our bit to shift the current dial."

**Nicola Grigg**  
Minister of State for Trade  
Associate Agriculture Minister  
Minister for Women



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# Rural women entrepreneurs recognised at awards event

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

Hunterville farmer Sophie Hurley has won the Supreme Award at the NZI Rural Women Business Awards for her wool bag and luggage brand, Honest Wolf.

The award winner was announced at a gala dinner at the Rydges Hotel in Christchurch on November 24 as part of the Rural Women New Zealand National Conference.

Seven category winners were vying for the coveted award.

Rural Women New Zealand national president Gill Naylor said the awards were a chance to showcase the diversity of talent in rural communities.

"There's so many inspirational, entrepreneurial women out there in rural communities.

"Primary industry is a really important part of rural New Zealand, and there are so many other things happening out there.

"We really enjoy the opportunity to showcase some of that."

Hurley is the first winner of the Emerging Business Category to scoop the Supreme Award.

Naylor said Honest Wolf was an excellent example of rural enterprises' innovation, entrepreneurship and responsiveness to changing times.

"In seeking a solution to declining wool prices at the time that plastic bags were being phased out, Sophie and husband Sam saw an opportunity to use their wool to create a sustainable alternative, and Honest Wolf was born."

Hurley was also praised for her relief efforts following the devastation of Cyclone Gabrielle on the North Island East Coast after she added a donation button to the Honest Wolf website, which saw \$90,000 raised for affected rural communities.

Hurley says the Awards are an essential opportunity for businesses to be recognised.

"It puts businesses on the map, and sharing that success with all this talent being showcased with the awards is awesome."



Rural Women New Zealand national president Gill Naylor (centre) with category winners Kylie Rae, Kathryn Wright, Laura Koot, Haylee-Chanel Simeon, Emma Hasler and Sophie Hurley.  
 PHOTOS: CLAIRE INKSON

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Supreme Award winner Sophie Hurley.

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Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

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Kathryn Wright, who won the Rural Health and Wellbeing category, was one of five South Island Category winners.

**South Island shines at awards**

Five out of the seven category winners in the 2023 NZI Rural Women's Awards are from the lower South Island.

Te Anau-based counsellor Kathryn Wright, who won the Rural Health and Wellbeing Excellence Award, says that

entering the awards has been an "empowering experience."

"The whole week, the whole experience has been fantastic, and it comes with a great sense of personal and professional achievement."

Wright said it was important to celebrate our achievements and push ourselves out of our comfort

zone. "We need to do things that make us feel uncertain or uncomfortable, because they mean a lot to us."

"If they mean enough to us to put ourselves out there, then they are worth doing."

**The Award winners for each category are as follows:**



Sophie Hurley, who won the Supreme Award for her business Honest Wolf, with husband Sam.

**Creative Arts:** Botanic Press – Emma Hasler, Wanaka

**Emerging Business:** Honest Wolf – Sophie Hurley, Hunterville

**Innovation:** Real Country, Laura Koot, Kingston

**Love of the Land:** Nature and Nosh and The Bush Boardroom – Kylie Rae, Waikato

**Rural Champion:** Target PR – Rebecca Greaves, Pongaroa

**Bountiful Table:** Hayz At The Anchorage – Haylee-Chanel Simeon, Bluff

**Rural Health and Wellness Excellence:** Kathryn Wright Counsellor – Kathryn Wright, Te Anau

# Safeguarding family farming futures

*Fox and Associates create legacies with land*

**R**ural estate planning. Just three words but there's no doubt they're highly significant.

That's because estate planning holds a critical role in the agricultural sector, enabling the seamless transfer of family farm ownership and control from one generation to the next. It often involves changing land boundaries and if it does then few do it better than award-winning Christchurch land surveying firm, Fox and Associates.

They've been around for over 40 years, specialising in creating legacies with land and safeguarding family farming futures with professional land planning expertise, which is where Fox and Associates' professional surveyors Craig McInnes and Alex Liggett come in.

They're from farming backgrounds, understand the concerns of rural people and enjoy helping families through the various complexities that come with estate planning.

"We keep a pretty close eye on managing the whole land planning process to make sure that families get the end result that they want," said McInnes, who is also a Fox



Alex Liggett



Craig McInnes

and Associates' director.

"We handle everything, from dividing the farm between siblings, or selling blocks to release equity to buy out non-farming siblings, and making sure all the right consents are obtained."

"We understand the subdivision process and the different forms of land ownership, including easements, covenants, and other encumbrances."

In simple terms, McInnes and Liggett project manage the whole deal for their clients from start to finish.

"We can do that by working



with a team of professionals and experts, such as a client's accountant, solicitor, valuer and real estate agent, to help achieve the desired end result."

McInnes said it was all about enabling a smooth transition of farm ownership and control to the next generation.

"It's about ensuring the retiring generation benefit from the wealth they have created, while making it affordable for the incoming generation."

"The estate planning process is also an important vehicle for communicating family expectations to avoid potential messy disputes later because there's a lot at stake."

Fortunately, Fox and Associates are there to make it easy, which includes offering an initial no-obligation chat to chart a pathway through the obligatory land planning red tape.

"We are a boutique consultancy. We look after our customers,"

McInnes said.

"We get great satisfaction seeing the succession or estate plan being implemented, which usually creates ease of mind for all family members."



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# FARMINGFASTFIVE

We ask a farmer five quick questions about agriculture and what farming means to them

The farming fast five : Where we ask a farmer five quick questions about farming, and what agriculture means to them. Today we talk to Ashburton dairy farmer **STACEY STEWART**.

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

I am originally from Tasmania, Australia.

My parents had stock trucks and fertiliser trucks.

The best part of my school holidays was getting up early with dad to go to the sale yards.

A highlight of those days was the bag of minties for 50 cents and getting to clean the truck.

Dad would have the cleanest truck at the sale yards!

In my late teenage years, I started dibbling in farming and really enjoyed it.

Mid-twenties I had nine months living with my sister in Norway, after that I wanted to spread my wings further.

It was a toss-up between Canada and New Zealand.

I picked New Zealand as it was closer to home, my plan was to come and work for 12 months and then head to Canada.

15 years later, one husband, three children and a dairy farm, I am yet to make it to Canada!

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

We have a third generation, 180-hectare, 550 cow dairy farm nestled between the North and South branches of the Ashburton River.

I run this with my husband Mark, brother-in-law TJ and parents in law David and Maree.

We are a split calving herd of pedigree Holsteins.

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



Stacey Stewart.

Our biggest challenge was the 2021 floods which hit on 31 May, and we took over the farming operation on the 1st June.

The floods showed us how resilient we are and how we could

overcome any challenges faced. Other challenges are the usual volatility of milk prices, increase in costs and making sure we have it right for future generations.

## 4. What has been a major

## highlight for you in your farming journey?

Completing my Diploma of Primary Business Management this year.

Also involving myself with Farmer Time and connecting with urban schools in the North Island, giving them an insight into farming and what is involved and where their food comes from.

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

If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door - Milton Berle.

Immerse yourself into as many courses, activities, groups, discussions as you can. Take every piece of advice on board and work out which parts align with what you are wanting to achieve.

# Blenheim farmer makes shortlist for top Australasian farming awards

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

Blenheim farmer and Marlborough Federated Farmers vice president Richard Dawkins has been short-listed for the prestigious Australasian Zander McDonald Award.

Dawkins describes being short-listed as a fantastic opportunity to expand agricultural networks.

"It will be great to be involved with those high calibre people and also to have a greater understanding of agriculture across Australia."

The awards, named after Australian farmer Zander McDonald, who died in a tragic accident on his cattle property in 2013, recognise future leaders working in agriculture.

The short-list of ten applicants – five from New Zealand and five from Australia - have been selected for their leadership skills,

passion and contribution to the primary sector.

The short-listed applicants will be interviewed next month, with three finalists selected from each country.

In March, the finalists will attend the Zanda McDonald Award Impact Summit in Queenstown, where an Australian and a New Zealand winner will be announced at a celebratory evening.

Awards chairman Shane McManaway says the judges were "blown away" by the calibre of applicants.

"It's encouraging to see the immense talent coming through from the next generation," McManaway said.

"We're thrilled with our short-list and looking forward to meeting everyone in person."

The award winners will each win a personal development package, including a personalised mentoring trip in both countries



Blenheim farmer Richard Dawkins.  
PHOTO: SUPPLIED

by private jet, \$10,000 of tailored education or further training, media coaching and ongoing network opportunities.

Dawkins encourages farmers to enter competitions like the Zander McDonald Award, even if they feel overwhelmed by daily farm life.

"I think it's important we try and grasp these opportunities and get that broader perspective of what's happening out there."

## New Zealand Zanda McDonald Award finalists.

- Carla Muller, 31, Agricultural Economist and Principal Consultant for Perrin Ag and former Director of NZIPIM, based in Whakatane.
- Jordi Hoult, 29, vet and Senior Advisor at the Ministry for Primary Industries, based in Manawatu.
- Nancy Crawshaw, 27, is an extension officer for Angus Australia based in Nuhaka Northern Hawke's Bay.
- Richard Dawkins, 34, sheep and beef farmer and Vice President of Marlborough Federated Farmers, based in Blenheim.
- Tim Dangen, 31, beef farmer in Muriwai West Auckland, and 2022 recipient of the FMG Young Farmer of the Year Award.

## The Australian Zander McDonald Award Finalists:

- Caitlin McConnel, 33, Agribusiness Lawyer at Clayton Utz, Chair of the Future Farmer Network and farmer based in South East Queensland.
- Nick Dunsdon, 33, Manager of Coban Pastoral Co and Rural Property Agent at GDL based in Cunnamulla, Southwest Queensland;
- Sam Fryer, 33, Regional Area Manager for the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority and founder of "A Place To Call Home" podcast, a guide to agricultural land ownership;
- Tessa Chartres, 32, General Manager Business Development for Murray Irrigation Ltd and Chair of the South West Music Regional Conservatorium, based in Deniliquin New South Wales.
- Xavier McCluskey, 29, Processing Specialist for Greenstock, based in Tamworth NSW.

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# Helping to boost food production knowledge



Participants and organisers of the Rabobank Food X programme, held in Canterbury earlier this year. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

By Robin Oakley

A few years back I was asked by my Rabobank agribusiness manager if I was interested in joining the bank's Upper South Island Client Council – a group of Rabobank clients located across the top half of the South Island who work with the bank to address key industry and community challenges in farming and agribusiness.

Wanting to do my bit for the sector, I agreed to come on board, and I've now been sitting on the council for the last two and a half years, with the last 12 months in the role of council chair.

It's a role I've thoroughly enjoyed and I'm really proud of what the council has been able to achieve in recent years despite some pretty trying times for the sector as a whole.

The Upper South Island Council meet once a quarter to discuss what is happening across the sector and to develop initiatives linked to our five key themes; agricultural education, environmental sustainability, the rural/urban divide, rural health and adaptation/disruption. We're one of four client councils the bank has across New Zealand, with backing for any council initiatives coming via the Rabo Community Fund – a fund set up by the bank in late 2021, which is funded by an annual contribution from Rabobank New Zealand.

Agri education is the theme that has

taken up much of our council's focus over recent years, and in 2023 we managed to get a number of key activities off the ground, which are helping to build awareness of where food and fibre comes from, as well as highlighting career opportunities in the agri sector.

One of these was the Rabobank Food X programme which ran in April in Canterbury last year and saw twenty high school students from across the South Island take part in a four-day live-in programme to learn about career pathways in the food production supply chain. Run in conjunction with Lincoln University, the all-expenses-paid educational camp was attended by students from 11 high schools across the Canterbury, Otago and West Coast regions and took in visits to a range of agribusiness operations across the Canterbury region.

Another key agri-education initiative that came to fruition late last year was our "Grow" agri-focused board game. Following more than two years in the development and production process, 550 copies of the new game were delivered to more than 125 secondary schools across New Zealand in October last year, where they were used by students to help with revision for their National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Agribusiness exams.

And these two initiatives really are just the tip of the iceberg, with the councils

also supporting a host of other activities and organisations in 2023, such as the Rabobank Financial Skills farmer workshops, Surfing For Farmers, Growing Future Farmers and Meat The Need.

The Council continues to receive plenty of good feedback off the back of these initiatives, and it's really satisfying to be involved in these

activities, which are injecting some much-needed positivity into the sector.

*Robin Oakley is the owner of Oakley's Premium Fresh Vegetables and chair of the Rabobank Upper South Island Client Council. Rabobank client councils help to build knowledge and understanding of food production.*

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# Driven by desire to help

Rural Volunteer firefighters are the unsung heroes of our communities. Today we talk to *JAMES CARR* from Amberley Fire Brigade about what it means to be a rural volunteer firefighter.

**1. How long have you been a member of the Amberley fire Brigade?**

Just over 11 years, coming up through the ranks earning the position of senior firefighter and acting station officer.

**2. What made you want to join the Fire Brigade?**

Like any kid growing up, I wanted to be a firefighter to help my community.

Moving to Amberley 13 years ago, I could finally fulfil that dream.

Being approached by senior members, it was a clear decision to join.

**3. What do you enjoy most about being a volunteer firefighter?**

Being able to help people in their time of need, as well as connections made with people in the community.

The new skills I have learned on courses I use in emergency situations in day-to-day life.

**4. Tell us a bit about your contracting business?**

I established James Carr contracting in 2018.

One of my passions in life is big machinery.

I started out as a contract operator to farmers and contractors around the area, assisting them in their operations

I currently have my own tractor doing direct drilling, effluent application and earthmoving.

I'm still learning about business, and have overcome many adversities.

Moving forward, I look to grow my business in the Hurunui District.

**5. How do you juggle your contracting business with call outs?**

If I'm close by or in Amberley, I'll do my best to turn up to help and support the crew.

With long duration calls or natural disasters, I have to extend my work day or week.

**6. What are the biggest challenges facing rural fire brigades?**

Lack of people to volunteer.

Also, most people think we are paid full time firefighters and don't understand the amount of time and commitment it takes to be a volunteer.

Management is often out of touch with the inner workings of brigades, and often forget we are volunteers.



James Carr - like any kid, I wanted to be a firefighter.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED



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# Passing the Mid Canterbury rural property baton

As PGG Wrightson Real Estate bids farewell to Robin Ford, another well-established name in the region's farming circles steps up.

Ford's 30-year career as one of PGG Wrightson's top-performing rural property salespeople ends this month.

Stepping into this significant role, with a return to his Mid-Canterbury roots, is Jeff Donaldson, whose career spans the international resource industry and a multi-generational agricultural heritage.

"My grandfather acquired the first family farm in Westerfield after World War II, and my journey began managing my parents' town-supply dairy farm at Ashburton Forks.

After my parents' dairy farm sold about 30 years ago, I moved to Australia to pursue opportunities in the resource and mining sector, making annual trips home to enhance the operations of my own run-off block. I kept the farm up-to-date and financially successful, including converting what was part border dyke-part dryland property, putting pivots on, and establishing a lucrative dairy

support operation.

"Robin and I communicated frequently, and when I told him that I was moving back permanently, he suggested this career change. He has been and will continue to be an excellent mentor and a wealth of valued knowledge."

Ford reckons Donaldson's deep understanding of Mid-Canterbury agriculture suits him well to rural property.

"Jeff and I have stayed connected over the decades and through several property transactions. Jeff understands agricultural success in Mid-Canterbury. Assisting farmers to buy and sell property is an ideal fit for him."

Donaldson is enthusiastic for the new role.

"In my time I have seen the evolution of Mid-Canterbury farming, experience I am eager to leverage in support of local farmers as they take on what is often the most significant transaction of their careers."

Although retiring from his rural property role, Ford will remain engaged through his shares in several Southland farms and Christchurch



Robin Ford and Jeff Donaldson.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

commercial property. Jeff Donaldson joins Dan van

der Salm and Mark Hanrahan as rural property salespeople

in PGG Wrightson Real Estate's Ashburton office.

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This training course provides a deep understanding and combined knowledge of profit-planning, cow nutrition, ration balancing, animal health, pasture management and milk production management. Concluding with effective dairy feeding strategies – plus all those other burning questions.

Suitable for all types of farm situations, from grass only to supplementary feeding. New Zealand Farmers are finding this course an essential tool in assisting their dairy farming futures. They report having more confidence and peace of mind.

The great news – MilkMaP Dairymasters has funding options available for eligible participants as a registered course with the Management Capability Development Fund, helping business owners access training services and providing up to a 50% subsidy.

This is a Regional Business Partner (RBP) Network project that employs Growth Advisors available to support business owners' growth and innovation.

People attending a two-day Dairymasters course can expect to progress their basic knowledge of animal nutrition right through



to balancing rations; learn the necessary processes to develop customised, profit-based feeding strategies; and improve overall farm performance and achieve sustainable, long-term business goals.

Develop your critical thinking with interactive working examples of farm management and profitable dairy feeding strategies.

Mid-Canterbury sharemilker Jeremy Duckmanton, is always looking to upskill his managers Denys Kudinov who operates 940 cows on 235ha and Blake Gordon

who operates 930 cows on 235ha.

Jeremy took the course first and loved it so much he wanted Denys and Blake to take it so they could all be on the same page for operating and management decisions.

Denys and Blake both said that after the course, "They made a lot of changes to their operations, achieved the highest production the farms have ever seen and the condition of their animals have significantly improved".

They recommend the course to anyone who is looking to improve their



operations and gain new ideas from the experts.

MilkMaP Consulting is in the business of sharing knowledge to drive bottom-line profit for New Zealand's dairy farmers. Knowledge is power.

Visit [www.milkmap.nz/our-services/dairymasters-training-course/](http://www.milkmap.nz/our-services/dairymasters-training-course/) to register for the course, or call MilkMaP on 0800 662 667 if you have any questions or need help with registering.

The next round of courses start in February 2024.

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# From farm to fridge in bottles

By Sharon Davis

A Canterbury dairy farmer has put a modern twist on the traditional milkman deliveries with a weekly home delivery of fresh A2 farm milk in glass bottles.

Alex Irvine has leveraged the scale of his family's dairy farms in Springston to secure a supply of creamy A2 milk and built up a pasteurising and bottling plant, along with a distribution network around Canterbury and Nelson.

Canterbury's Choice offers the dairy farm equivalent of farm to plate with fresh milk hitting the consumers' fridge straight from the farm. Their A2 milk is also supplied in the Nelson area through Milk and More.

When Irvine started developing his business in 2019 he decided to deliver A2 milk in glass bottles as a point of difference.

"It was when A2 milk started to grow in popularity because of the A2 protein education with consumers."

One of the Irvine family's four dairy farms has a 100% A2 herd and that farm supplies the milk factory operation. The rest of the milk from the farms is sold to Fonterra.

Irvine said he's had a lot of good feedback, particularly

from the parents of toddlers and children who had issues with A1 milk, but thrived on A2 milk.

"It's cool hearing these sorts of stories."

Irvine converted an old staff room into a small-batch pasteurisation factory to prove his business concept – and soon business started to boom.

The 27-year-old's plans to buy a house were put on ice as he invested his savings in outfitting an old workshop into a factory and bottling plant to export standard.

He has a 2000-litre continuous pasteurising capacity and a bottle washer and bottling plant that can handle 3000 bottles an hour.

Irvine said he roped in his brothers, friends and family and put in a "lot of blood, sweat and tears".

At one point Irvine worked 44 hours non-stop and dragged his brother through 41 hours of that.

It was literally milking the cows, pasteurising and bottling the milk, washing the plant, driving to Nelson to deliver a consignment of milk – returning home, and then starting all over again.

Irvine had nothing but praise for his staff, who sometimes worked 18 to 20-hour days in the first year of the business.

"It's amazing to see where



Alex Irvine.

we've come from."

Irvine said the business was still growing organically as people discovered the home delivery service.

Customers were either interested in the A2 milk, the nostalgia factor of real milk



The bottle is back. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

with cream on top, or the environmental benefits of glass bottles.

He's recently partnered with a couple who now run the delivery side of the business, leaving Irvine to focus on the production side.

Irvine said the company had just won a contract to supply Canterbury University with milk.

The sustainability of his family's dairy farm helped him win the contract over Synlait.

A bioreactor on the farm removes nitrates from the water – to the point that the water in the creek entering the farm has higher nitrates than when it leaves the farm.

"It's something we're quite proud of."

Irvine said his parents had also planted more than 15,000 native plants around streams and shelter belts.

Plans for Canterbury's Choice include investigating a range of flavoured milk in glass bottles – and exploring export opportunities and opportunities to supply milk for cheeses and butter.

Irvine said he was fortunate to have the ability to scale up production but said he paid his parents more than Fonterra for the milk he used.

"I don't know how I lost that negotiation."

Irvine said his dad was very firm and never gave anything for free – at 18, even money for a haircut came off Irvine's farm wages.

"It made me appreciate and know the value of money," he said.

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# ELBOWDEEP

OPINION with Craig Hickman. Brought to you by Power Farming Ashburton

# Fighting farm emissions

Much has been written about Fonterra's plan to reduce their scope three, or on farm, emissions, a lot of it critical of their decision to measure the reductions on an intensity basis rather than a gross basis.

In 2019 the Government established emissions reduction targets which included a gross reduction in methane of 10% by 2030, with a reduction range of between 24% and 47% by 2050. The targets also included a

reduction in longer-lived gasses to net zero by 2050. Fonterra's goal of reducing on farm GHG emissions by 30% per kilogram of milk solids produced by 2030 is even more ambitious than the government targets.

When you manufacture anything, be it cheese or laptops, the end product carries with it the sum total of all the greenhouse gasses emitted in the production process; scope one and two are those emissions associated with the manufacturing and transport of the product, and scope three are those associated with the purchase of components or ingredients.

In Fonterra's case over 90% of the emissions associated with their products are from scope three or ingredients, in other words milk. This is not to say the cooperative is ignoring its scope one and two obligations, Fonterra have lifted their target for reducing these emissions from 30% to 50% by 2030.

The reasons for wanting to reduce these emissions are market driven, customers are demanding lower carbon products and there is a real possibility that not taking action could be used against us in the form of non-tariff trade barriers.

Measuring the emissions on an intensity basis, CO2 equivalent per kilogram of milk solids, makes a lot of sense at the farm level because it is a drive for more efficiency on farm, something most dairy farmers strive for every day. Greater feed conversion efficiency, less feed wastage, more targeted use of fertiliser and focusing on the genetic improvement of your herd are all things that save dairy farmers money and, by happy coincidence, reduce the amount of emissions associated with each kilogram of milk solids produced. The farm I manage has reduced its emissions per kg by 15% over the past three years by focussing on these efficiencies and employing technology like automatic cup removers and in-bail teat spraying to slash my herd's somatic cell count by a third.

The criticism levelled at this intensity-based measurement is that New Zealand is committed to lowering total gross emissions, and some detractors feel the only way to achieve



New Zealand's dairy cow numbers are declining. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

that is with fewer cows.

The truth of the matter is New Zealand's dairy cow numbers are declining, as of June 2023 there were 6.1 million dairy cattle in New Zealand, the lowest number since 2011 and well off the peak of 6.7 million in 2014. Our milk pool is at best remaining static, if not slowly shrinking, along with cow numbers.

If New Zealand dairy farmers continue to do what they're best at and concentrate on producing milk more efficiently, and the amount of milk produced remains static, then two things have been achieved; the emissions associated with Fonterra's ingredients have been reduced and total emissions have also been lowered.

While there are tensions between total emissions and emissions intensity, there's no reason why a reduction in one can't lead to a reduction in the other, keeping our international customers happy, while meeting or exceeding the Government's expectations.



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### WHAT'S INSIDE

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- Passionate about cooking – P16
- Spectacular lamb rumps – P17



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# Preparing rural children for boarding school

For many rural children, the end of the Christmas school holidays will also mark the beginning of a new chapter as they start high school and embark on the journey of boarding.

While some children cope well with being away from home, it is a big adjustment for many.

St Andrew's College (StAC) head of boarding, Matt Parr, says that preparing children for boarding school at home is essential for a smooth transition.

"Start the discussion as soon as possible.

"Have conversations at home about what boarding is going to look like, and be realistic that homesickness is going to be a reality."

Getting children used to being away from home and in different environments before beginning boarding school can make the adjustment easier.

"Any exposure they can have to staying at other people's places or going on sports trips is a good step in the right direction.

"Just sleeping in different places is good preparation."

If homesickness does rear its head, Parr recommends sharing some of your own experiences to



St Andrew's College boarders in the dining hall.

show that you acknowledge and relate to how your child is feeling.

"Ask questions about what they are worried about and what their

fears are.

"Get them to verbalise what

they are actually going to miss and what homesickness feels like."

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Matt Parr, St Andrew's College Head of Boarding.

Parr said that while boarding staff try to make the environment as supportive and welcoming as possible, it will never be home, and parents need to acknowledge and understand that.

"Don't shy away from telling kids that."

Parr said listening to children's concerns when they call feeling upset is essential and advises helping the children shift towards a more positive mindset and "future focussing".

"Ask them what they are looking forward to seeing at the weekend."

"Ask them what was one thing that went really well today."

"It's trying to get them to self-regulate those thinking patterns for themselves."

Parr also said parents should choose the time they call carefully, as a phone call just before bed can leave children upset and unable to sleep, whereas a call after dinner and before prep time can mean children are distracted and less likely to feel sad.

With some children coming from small rural schools to large schools in the city, the sheer size of the campus and the population of students can be overwhelming.

Parr says that StAC, like many schools, has smaller units within the school to make the size less daunting.

"They have their tutor group and their class, and then it expands into houses."

Parr said it is important for parents to understand these structures.

"From a parent's perspective in terms of preparing their kids, knowing

the structures within the school, and knowing the support mechanisms from a pastoral point of view is a good thing to learn.

"Then you can have those conversations at home."

Parr also recommends taking advantage of any shadow days or sleepovers on offer for Year 8 before they start high school.

"Do whatever you can to get them into the environment in advance. Let them become familiar with it and some of the people they will be meeting and talking with."

Parr said that parents' own boarding experience can be a barrier when helping children adjust.

The old-school approach to "toughing it out" that many parents would have experienced in their own time away from home has been replaced with a more holistic and supportive approach.

While the old method was to limit contact and keep children in the boarding house for extended periods in "full immersion", the new approach is gentler.

Parr encourages Year 9 boarders to call home daily and aims for a level of care similar to what children would experience at home.

"Nationwide in boarding, the bar has been lifted."

"It's no longer a place just to rest and stay."

"It's a place where you have to add value, grow students and support them."

# Focusing on the needs of boys



Senior boys at Nelson College.

Guided by our three core values: Manaaki, Pono and Kairangi (Care, Integrity, and Success), Nelson College strives to provide a strong character education, lead the conversation on positive masculinity, and guide students as future fathers, workers, teachers, and leaders.

Students thrive in many environments for many reasons, and our region is blessed with some great schools and high-quality educators. Because we're in the business of building boys, what we do know is that the single-sex environment allows focused attention on the unique needs and challenges of boyhood, while collaboration with Nelson College for Girls offers a balanced experience.

The Association of Boys' Schools of New Zealand 2017-2021 report shows that school-leavers from single-sex schools have higher achievement rates, with university entrance rates almost 18% higher than

their co-ed counterparts. If Nelson College intends to prove this rule, it's made its point! 60% of our Year 13 students consistently achieve university entrance - double the national average!

For students taking a different path, the purpose-built Gibbons Trade Education Centre's trade-trained tutors provide practical workshop experience and maintain strong business and industry connections, positioning students for lucrative and in-demand careers.

There's no denying our sporting legacy, and that Nelson College is a crucible for producing sporting greats. This commitment to excellence extends far beyond the field and court, it extends to every classroom and to our boarding houses, and every boy is given the chance to shine. With flourishing arts and music programs, and diverse co-curricular activities, your son will soon find his niche.



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# Passionate about cooking

Greg Piner's passion for cooking was ignited in his parents' kitchen on the West Coast when he was just ten years old.

While they were out, and Piner was left to his own devices, he would spend his time cooking imaginative dinners for the family.

"I started cooking them dinners, and they would get home and just be blown away."

As Piner got older and his skills in the kitchen progressed, he worked as a cook on his parents' fishing boats.

Despite the shortage of ingredients and the basic facilities, Piner's cooking made an impression on the crew.

"All the guys that worked on the boats loved what I cooked, and they couldn't believe I was cooking that stuff out at sea.

"They couldn't believe what I was producing."

Having found his passion, Piner went on to study cooking at Tai Poutini Polytechnic in Greymouth.

While studying, Piner entered a cooking competition in Auckland and won Junior Seafood Chef of the Year at just seventeen years old.

Piner's career as one of New Zealand's top chefs was set in motion.

His resume includes executive chef positions in some of New Zealand's best restaurants, working in top restaurants overseas, and a string of awards

and brand partnerships, including his current role with Silver Fern Farms.

"One of the biggest highlights of my career was becoming the Ora King brand ambassador, which was quite cool.

"And the other highlight was going to Melbourne and winning the Asia Pacific Challenge with my teammates."

These days, Piner has dialled back his time in the kitchen for a more family-friendly work-life balance.

In addition to his partnership role with Silver Fern Farms, Piner works as executive chef at Marbecks in Dunedin.

"It's a café restaurant and food store, a bit like a gourmet supermarket.

"It's really cool because I get to focus on family life as well now. I go and create new dishes and work with the guys, and then I can be home or be able to do school pick-ups and drop-offs.

"Family is my priority.

"I have these two amazing jobs where I can work days, spend time with my family, and then go away and do events and be creative. It's perfect.

"So my life has changed a bit in that respect."

Partnering with Silver Fern farms was a natural fit for Piner, who believes New Zealand beef, lamb and venison are some of the



Greg Piner says it's a privilege to represent farmers with his recipes.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

best in the world.

"The environment definitely has a massive effect on the quality of the meat, and obviously the way the animal is treated."

Piner says he has spent time

visiting farms and meeting farmers and is always impressed by the level of care stock receive.

"I can hand-on-my-heart say those farmers put in some hard yards for those animals.

"It's our job as a Chef to represent all their hard work, to put that on a plate and be proud.

"I'm proud to represent those farmers, and it's a privilege to use such an amazing product."

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# Spectacular lamb rumps



## MEAT TYPE

LAMB

## COOKING TIME

11-30

## SERVES

3-4

## PREPARATION TIME

10

## Ingredients

• 1 pack Silver Fern Farms Lamb Rumps

• 2 eggplants

• 100g Italian parsley, chopped

• 1 block Danish feta

• 1 lemon

• 50g tahini paste

• 25ml pomegranate molasses

## Method

Remove Silver Fern Farms Lamb Rumps from the fridge and packaging

and allow to bloom at room temperature for 10 mins.

Coat lamb with oil and season with salt and pepper.

Place eggplant on grill or embers and blacken off until soft. Remove and scoop out inner flesh, combine in bowl with tahini paste, salt and pepper. Squeeze in lemon and half the parsley.

Cook lamb on grill for 2-3 mins each side for med-rare, remove from heat, cover loosely and rest for 5 mins before carving across the grain.

Plate lamb on top of eggplant mixture. Crumb feta on top and drizzle with pomegranate molasses. Finish with parsley and season.

– By Greg Piner in partnership with Escea

Recipe courtesy of Silver Fern Farms

## Chondroitin Sulphate for sore joints (Part 2)

A significant research study (Wildi et al, 2011) that confirmed the benefits of high dose Chondroitin sulphate (CS) for joints affected by osteoarthritis. This week we dig a little further. I have no doubt that the correct dose of high grade CS is the most important natural compound to help joints affected by osteoarthritis.

As an example I have been helping a man with osteoarthritis in both knees. The pain levels had become quite debilitating. We started with a booster dose of 1600mg of high grade chondroitin with the same amount of glucosamine and 400mg of high potency curcumin (from turmeric). After 3 months the pain level had significantly reduced and is now mobile again.

More recent research from the British Medical Journal (May 2017) compared high grade Chondroitin with common anti-inflammatory medication and found that 800mg of CS was beneficial. Researchers commented "This compelling benefit-



risk profile, in light of the known clinical risks associated with chronic usage of NSAIDs and paracetamol, underscores the potential importance of pharmaceutical-grade [chondroitin sulfate] in the management of knee [osteoarthritis], especially in the older population requiring long-term treatment," write the researchers.

The question is how can it help? What does it do to arthritic joints? Researchers have found that CS has multiple benefits. Firstly it helps regulate inflammatory processes within the joint capsule. Secondly and more importantly it helps specialised cells that reside in cartilage called chondrocytes. CS improves the ability of chondrocytes to secrete and repair cartilage.

This comes as no surprise as CS is an important component of cartilage. I have worked with so many people with osteoarthritis that I am genuinely surprised if we cannot get an improvement within 3 months.

John Arts (B.Soc.Sci, Dip Tch, Adv.Dip.Nut.Med) is a nutritional medicine practitioner and founder of Abundant Health Ltd. For questions or advice contact John on 0800 423559 or email john@abundant.co.nz. Join his all new newsletter at www.abundant.co.nz.



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John Arts, Founder, Abundant Health



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# Mt White Station – a sweet high country collaboration

By Sharon Davis

While farming is still the heart of a 40,000 hectare Canterbury high country station, tourism and honey production have been blended into the mix for a sweet collaboration.

Mt White Station has four full-time farm staff managing 18,000 head of stock, including breeding hinds, Hereford cows, merino wethers and half-breed ewes.

While some areas are intensively farmed, farm manager Sam Radford said a lot of the farm still ran on traditional farming methods with horses used for much of the shepherding work during summer.

The farm runs from braided rivers to rugged mountain tops at the foot of the Southern Alps.

Radford said the attraction of the station was its vastness and topography – and the challenges that come with that.

Bee and honey manager Tim Prior said the farm runs 1100 hives with Italian honeybees. The bee-keeping side of the business is large enough for the farm to run its own honey label from honey

produced on-farm.

There is an extraction facility on-site and all the honey is processed on the farm.

Mt White Station honey includes a honeydew from the beech forest, a multi-flora Manuka and various grades of Manuka honey, including a new high-potency Manuka label that was due to launch before the start of December.

Prior said the station had plans to more than double the number of hives.

There are four bee keepers on farm and up to seven in the peak summer season.

It takes the bee keepers between three and four weeks to work through the hives on the farm, Prior said.

Tourism is the baby at Mt White. The station has only been welcoming guests for 18 months, with a focus on corporate clients and Kiwi families.

The purpose-built elegant Shearer's Lodge can accommodate up to 28 and caters for larger groups and corporate clients, with the old shearers' quarters set up as an overflow for even larger groups.



Mt White Station's three managers Tim Prior (left), Kyla Nitschke (centre), and Sam Radford work together to make the farm a success.



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Bee hives on Mt White Station.



Lake Letitia at Mt White Station.

Next door there is a fully-equipped kitchen in the cook house that allows guests to choose catered or self-catered options, along with a vegetable garden and a newly planted berry patch.

The two solar-powered

remote backcountry huts, which can accommodate 12 each, provide a unique experience for families and smaller groups with most of the comforts of home in a rugged and natural setting.

The Esk and Terrace huts are

between 17 and 27km from the road and visitors can bike, hike (with luggage transfers) or get dropped off for their stay.

The station is well-equipped with 16 e-bikes available to rent and about as many stand-up paddle boards and canoes free-

of-charge for guest to use on the chocolate-box setting of Lake Letitia.

Visitors can join a farm tour or bee-keeping tour to learn more about Mt White Station.

Tourism manager Kyla Nitschke said bee-keeping and

tourism tied in well together, with many visitors buying honey to take home as a keepsake.

The bee tour, which takes visitors from hive to processing plant gave the station's tourism a bit of a unique edge, she said.



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# Craft beer with a difference

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

A garage hobby has become a niche business, making its name in the rural event space.

Eventbrew, founded by husband and wife team Nick and Bronwen Rutland, is a bespoke craft beer company that creates custom beer for events.

"I love brewing quality craft beer that people can enjoy on any occasion," Nick says

"Growing the brewery from producing 50 litres of beer to 150 litres has been rewarding."

Nick began his craft brewing journey nine years ago after attending a brewer course while the couple lived in Wellington.

"I got a bit of a taste for it, literally.

"And then my friend had some brewing kit that he had purchased but never really used and literally threw it at me and said you can have it."

Nick spent the next few years perfecting his brewing process, moving from bottles to brewing beer in kegs.

The couple moved to Christchurch, and Nick continued brewing.

It wasn't long before the word got out, and friends asked Nick to provide the beer for their wedding.

The beer went down a treat and gave the couple the idea to make

the brewery an event business.

"In the process of doing the beer for the wedding, we realised that people wanted to buy our beer," Bronwen said.

"But in the process, we also watched our friends do the whole do-it-yourself setup of the bar and beverage service.

"For most people, a wedding is the first time they've organised an event."

Bronwen, who has experience as an event manager, saw the opportunity to not only create beer for events but also provide an end-to-end beverage service to take the hassle out of serving alcohol for couples on their big day, as well as other events.

"We realised there was a market out there for two things.

"Craft beer that we can label for an event to make it special to them and to take the hassle out of the beverage catering side.

The Rutlands kitted out their garage to make a dedicated, licenced brewery and registered the business.

They brew beer for events and can label and name the beer to make it memorable for event organisers, a service that has already proved popular for weddings.

Ingredients for the craft beer are sourced locally.

Malt and yeast are sourced from Gladfield Malt, and hops are purchased from Nelson Hops.

Eventbrews' first official gig was the 2023 FMG Young Farmer of the Year Grand Final in Timaru.

"I knew the team organising the event, and they also had a bit of a passion for craft beer themselves. "They just sort of threw it our way and said we need to work out the bar situation; why don't you handle that and brew some craft beer for us at the same time?"

With around 800 attendees expected at the Grand Final, the Rutlands spent six months preparing for the event.

"We set up the bar, all the glassware, and staff and ran it all night.

"We also looked after all the alcohol management and alcohol licencing.

"It was good fun."

With a lot of events held in random places, licencing can often be a headache for inexperienced event organisers.

The logistics come naturally for Bronwen, who has handled events management for organisations like Ravensdown and South Island Agricultural Field Days.

"I love problem-solving and making things happen."

The Rutland hopes that Eventbrew will tap into a unique market looking for custom-brewed and labelled beer and an end-to-end event beverage service.

"We are trying to serve a market

where people want to brand beer for people holding a special event or for businesses marking an occasion.

"If you go to a caterer, they

provide everything related to food.

"As a beverage supplier, we handle anything liquid, is how I like to think of it."



Nick Rutland began brewing beer 9 years ago as a hobby. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED



Nick and Bronwen Rutland founded Eventbrew, providing custom labelled craft beer and beverage services for events.



Eventbrew's first big event was the 2023 FMG Young Farmers Grand Final, held in Timaru.

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Delegates from around the globe attended The 2023 Asian Seed Congress in Christchurch in November.

# Asian Seed Congress an overwhelming success

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

New Zealand has successfully hosted one of the seed industry's biggest global conferences.

The 2023 Asian Seed Congress was held at Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre on November 20-24, the first time New Zealand has hosted the annual event in its 28-year history.

The congress saw over 1000 delegates from around the globe

attend for business meetings, entertainment, trade exhibitions, technical sessions, and farm tours through Mid and North Canterbury.

The congress is organised by the Asia and Pacific Seed Alliance (APSA), with the New Zealand Grain and Seed Trade Association (NZGSTA) steering the National Organising Committee with the Ministry for Primary Industries.

NGSTA general manager Thomas Chin describes the event as an "overwhelming success".

"It was an opportunity to showcase and profile the New Zealand seed industry to customers and prospective new customers.

"It sent a strong message to people in those markets that New Zealand is ready and able to produce seed at a high quality, trust and reliability level.

"It was an opportunity for New Zealand seed companies to reconnect with customers after COVID and look for new opportunities to sell more seed

into Asia and further afield."

The Congress was the largest seed event ever to be held in New Zealand and the largest convention to be held at Te Pae, with the broadest reach of delegates from around 30 countries from around the world.

Chin said the Congress was an opportunity to not only showcase New Zealand's seed industry, but also the country as a whole.

"We are not in the tourism business, but we definitely wanted to introduce these

delegates to New Zealand, and the point was to give them a 'wow' event and something that was memorable for them."

Chin said he has had positive feedback from delegates, with many saying they are planning to return to New Zealand.

"Not only that, but people were staying on post-conference to get out and about and see the countryside.

"It's not just about selling New Zealand seed, but selling New Zealand."

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NZGSTA president Charlotte Connoley and APSA president Dr. Manish Patel (centre) with delegates at Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

# ‘Godfathers’ of the New Zealand seed industry

Two Mid Cantabrians were recognised for their contribution to the New Zealand seed industry at the Congress gala dinner.

John McKay, managing director of South Pacific Seeds in Methven, and the late Ross Smith, from Smiths Seeds in Ashburton, received the 2023 APSA Awards.

Thomas Chin describes McKay and Smith as the “godfathers of the vegetable seed export business to Asia”.

“These two gentlemen were instrumental to the development of the export trade to all parts of

Asia, so much so that their peers acknowledged them.

“They have put New Zealand seed exports to Asia on the map.

“It’s a tremendous effort on their part.”

McKay said he wasn’t expecting to win the award and that working with businesses in Asia had been an “absolute pleasure”.

“I grew up on a farm in Methven, and if I hadn’t had the chance to start in this business, I would have been on the farm all my life.

“And now I’ve had this wonderful opportunity to meet and work with these people; it’s

been amazing.”

McKay joined South Pacific Seeds in 1991, growing the business to be the largest production company for vegetable seeds.

McKay is regarded as instrumental in establishing the hybrid vegetable seed production industry into New Zealand crop farming systems.

McKay also served several years as an industry advisory member of the Seed Industry Research Centre at Lincoln University, which has grown to be at the forefront of seed industry research in New Zealand.

Smith, who passed away in July last year, received the award posthumously.

His son, Grant Smith, accepted the award on his behalf.

Smith says the award for his father was “well-deserved”.

“It’s recognition of the work he’s put in over many, many years not only in our company, Smiths Seeds but in his working life previous to that, before we started our own company.”

Ross Smith founded Smiths Seeds in Ashburton in 1990 with sons Grant and Michael after spending the early part of his

career developing seed exports for companies such as Pyne Gould Guinness and Elders.

Smith was responsible for introducing Asian vegetable production into New Zealand after bringing brassica seeds back from Thailand in 1980.

Smith also served as president of the NZGSTA during the 1980s and, during his tenure, championed the bid for the 1987 FIS Congress to be held in Christchurch.

This resulted in delegates from around the globe visiting New Zealand and showcasing local seed expertise.

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# New Zealand hosts Rabobank Masterclass

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

Twenty-eight farmers from 12 countries visited Quartz Hill Station in Canterbury as part of the 2023 Rabobank Global Farmers Masterclass (GFMC).

The GFMC is an agri-learning program in which leading farmers from around the globe meet to address food insecurity.

The program kicked off on November 27 in Hamilton and finished on December 6 in Queenstown.

The masterclass program featured presentations from top agricultural thinkers and business experts, interactive workshops, and visits to various agribusiness operations in the North and South Island.

Event facilitator and Rabobank senior analyst Emma Higgins says the masterclass participants were a selection of top farmers worldwide.

"They have been selected on the basis of how they operate and what they are looking to achieve in the sustainability field.

"And obviously, they are top performers as well."



Quartz Hill Station owner Dan Harper addresses the Rabobank Global Farmers Masterclass delegates.

The visit to Quartz Hill Station included a four-wheel drive farm tour presented by station owner Dan Harper, lunch on top of the farm, speakers and dinner at the station wool shed.

Farmers attending the event are from a diverse range of farming operations, including dairy, sheep, beef, and banana and cocoa growers.

Five New Zealand farmers participated in the GFMC, including two from the South

Island - North Otago-based sheep and beef farmer Grant McNaughton and Northern Southland-based livestock and cropping farmer Michael Wilkins.

The first GFMC was held in 2012, and it has been held in Australia, the Netherlands, Brazil and Zaire.

"We've hosted part of the program before, but never in its entirety.

"We are really proud to host this from start to finish and also



The trip to Quartz Hill Station included a four-wheel drive tour and lunch on the high country station.  
 PHOTOS: CLAIRE INKSON

proud to show off the country as well."

Higgins said one of the major benefits of the GFMC is the connections made between event participants.

"We are connecting members from all over the world together, with the idea of making those enduring connections that will help them in life, across their businesses and personally as well."

Rabobank New Zealand manager for country banking

Bruce Weir said he was 'rapt' when New Zealand was confirmed as the location for the 2023 event.

"Not only does GFMC provide a chance for the New Zealand business to host some farmers and growers from right across the globe, but it also gives us an opportunity to highlight some of our country's outstanding agricultural operations and to demonstrate why New Zealand is a global leader in farming best practices."

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# Social licence questioned

By Sharon Davis

As a backbone of the economy, our farmers have traditionally been valued by society and had strong support and a robust social licence.

But, with the growing focus on sustainability, the agricultural sector's contribution to issues such as greenhouse gasses and degraded water quality has eroded public support and the underlying social licence to farm and feed the country.

The unofficial metric of public opinion and trust in farmers has slipped.

Social media has also changed how we communicate. It only takes one photo of bad practice to go viral and stir a furore - and fuel the view that all farmers are bad news for the environment - without looking at the good work farmers do at balancing the needs of taking care of business, their staff and community, and the land they rely on.

While some people argue that farmers have lost their social licence, Mid Canterbury Federated Farmers president David Acland said farmers still had a social licence but had lost the confidence of being in control of it.

"We need to be confident and open ourselves and show New Zealand how we do operate. Farmers need to take back

control of their social licence."

The Open Farms programme that connects farmers and classrooms is one example of a way to take back control of the social licence.

Acland acknowledged the need to decrease the impact agriculture has on the environment.

However, he believed that all human behaviour had an impact on the environment and said everyone had a part to play.

"It's about how we minimise that impact."

Acland likened the latest raft of environmental regulations for farmers as a pendulum that has swung too far in the opposite direction from the 1980s.

"In the 80s there was a push for farmers to increase production and get the most out of their investment."

In the 2000s farmers had to contend with new agricultural land and water plans. And in the last six years there had been an "accelerated drive for change" that had swung the pendulum to the other side - to the point that it was "out of kilter with the rural community".

"Violent swings are no good for anyone. It needs to centre," he said.

Acland said he hoped the change in government would be more collaborative and supportive of the agricultural industry rather than having the

adversarial approach that existed under Labour.

Canterbury was a long way ahead of other regional councils when it came to water issues. Some recent regulations had felt like "relitigating a whole lot of stuff that had already been worked through over the last 10 years", Acland said.

Hinds dairy farmer Phill Everest has hit his farm's target for reducing nitrogen losses 10 years ahead of requirements.

"We've always tried to be good custodians," he said.

He disagreed with the suggestion that farmers in the 80s chased an increase in production at the expense of the environment.

In Everest's view, farmers turn sunlight, water and the environment into wool, meat and wheat. He said it made no sense for farmers to deliberately degrade the environment.

"I've never met a farmer who tries to drive himself broke."

However, he did agree that technology and understanding developed over time - and you come to realise that "some things aren't as good as you thought they were at the time".

Everest and his wife Jos love the outdoors and have a strong environmental focus - but farming isn't just about the environment, or profit.

You have to think about the staff and the surrounding community as well, he said.

Everest believes New Zealanders, as a whole, have become more removed from farming and had less understanding of what was involved.

Social media could focus on the bad, it could also bring out the good, he said.

"Maybe we don't sell our story as well as we should. We like to fly under the radar. We farmers are poor at that."

Everest has introduced a number of initiatives to reduce nitrogen leaching from the farm.

He said farmers needed to develop tools so we have "a better overall environmental footprint".

Everest uses Overseer to monitor water to gauge the effects of farm management changes.

However, he said there was a 10 - 60-year lag time for the effects of on-farm changes to show up in deep ground water.

"It's not an instant fix but we have to work at it now. Tools like Overseer give confidence that what you are doing will result in better outcomes for the community," he said.

Springston dairy farmer Alex Irvine said a lot of people had lost touch with how dairy farms operate now.

Fonterra and Synlait had picked

up the "environmental ball" and were being strict on farmers with penalties if farmers did not meet the regulations.

Sustainability is taken seriously on his family's farm.

A bioreactor removes nitrates from the water on a creek on the farm - to the point that the water in the creek entering the farm has higher nitrates than when it leaves the farm. "It's something we're quite proud of."

The Irvines have also planted more than 15,000 native plants around streams and shelter belts.

Irvine believed South Island farmers were more compliant and farms were better monitored by councils than in some areas of North Island.

He had heard talk of "old school farmers" who had not yet fenced off waterways and the farms were not being checked by the authorities.

Irvine said it was usually a small number of farmers who let everyone down, whether it was with compliance around fencing waterways, or other regulations.

He said social media played a role in forming public perception and social licence.

A post of a negative on-farm incident was often generalised and interpreted as happening on all farms - especially when there are strong personalities behind social media accounts.

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# Protecting farming legacy

By Sharon Davis

Farmers from a high country station are concerned that conservation efforts spanning more than two decades are not enough.

A recent report found that several Ashburton high country lakes were at an ecological tipping point, despite catchment farms meeting or exceeding the latest regulations.

Philip and Anne Todhunter from Lake Heron Station, which borders the top end of Lake Heron, worry that regulation is not the answer.

The 19,600-hectare high country station has been run by the Todhunter family since 1917.

They run 11,000 merino sheep and a number of breeding cows, with various tourism bringing in extra income.

Since taking over the farm

27 years ago, the couple have spent hundreds of thousands on conservation and fencing waterways that impact Lake Heron, or feed into the Maori Lakes.

They started this 20 or more years ago, well ahead of any regulations - because they believed it was the right thing to do.

"Our time here is fleeting in the vast scheme of things. We don't want our legacy to be the degrading of the land here - or

downstream.

"We're not extractors of the land and environment, but custodians of it," Anne said.

Philip said there was a strong connection to the land for family farmers.

"When land has been in a family for generations, there is a very strong attachment, understanding and appreciation of the land.

"Lake Heron Station has fenced

off streams since 1997.

"We don't bring in dairy grazers for the winter for biosecurity and environmental reasons."

They have also fenced off sensitive tussock areas and replanted riverbanks.

Philip said the nature of farming was to earn money from the land, alongside preserving the naturalness, biodiversity and landscapes - as well as controlling weeds and pests.

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“We’ve made a huge investment in the water quality – but the water quality in the lakes continues to decline, which is a concern,” said Anne.

The pasture systems and minimum nitrogen use all contribute to farming with a “light touch”, he said.

While they are not the only farm in the lakes’ catchment, Philip and Anne are concerned that regulation is not the answer.

Regulation is a blunt tool and it’s not always fit for purpose. Too often, regulations lack nuance and don’t necessarily end up with the best environmental outcomes, said Philip.

In some instances, farmers have anticipated certain regulations and have modified areas before the regulations to protect them came into effect.

The regulations - such as stock exclusion zones - come with unintended consequences, he said.

“When you exclude stock you then get an issue with wilding pines, elderberry and weeds such as broom, gorse and willows.”

There were also ongoing costs of weed control – a cost that would not be needed if a low level of grazing was allowed to keep the weeds under control.

“Regulations can affect the profitability of the farm.”

Sometimes the effects of stopping an activity are minimal, while the cost is enormous.

“As soon as you put a fence up, you create an effect – and rivers are dynamic and will change their course.”

Philip said New Zealand was at risk of becoming a country of no, with layer upon layer of bureaucracy.

“As a country, we are not good at investing in good long-term fixes. We tend to be reactive.”

As a leasehold farm, Lake Heron has consent from Land Information NZ to clear a small amount of matagouri, with input from the Department of Conservation - and have to apply to the Ashburton District Council for consent too.

Philip said some of the non-government organisations and lobby groups needed to better understand the consequences of their lobbying.

“The costs of consenting can be so onerous that funds are diverted away from conservation initiatives,” he said.

The Todhunters plant grass with the winter crop mix in exposed areas. It helps the soil and acts as a catch crop for the nitrogen and urine from the sheep.

“Lake Heron Station has a cooler climate and a short growing season. We are very limited in what we can produce, and we don’t have the opportunity for irrigation. We make the best of what we have rather than try to bang it into shape.”

Philip said high country farming currently wasn’t profitable – but he was hopeful of that changing.

A tourism income stream had helped this year, and long-term wool contracts had also helped



Anne and Philip Todhunter from Lake Heron Station are concerned that the water quality in the Ashburton Lakes area is deteriorating.

“insulate” the business.

“Good stewardship comes at a cost, whether it is on private or public land. But if it is not done the landscape suffers,” said Philip.

“We’re trying to make a difference in our own place. It is the only thing we can control,” Anne said.

One of the streams through Lake Heron Station is one of the region’s most successful salmon spawning sites.

“They (the salmon) wouldn’t keep coming here if the stream was degraded,” they said.



Batches mirrored in the reflection of Lake Clearwater with Mt Harper in the distant clouds.

## Water quality issues

The Ministry for the Environment’s Ashburton Lakes lessons-learnt report found the lakes were shallow, with slow flush rates, which made them vulnerable to land use changes.

According to the report “90% or more” of the water quality issues in the Ashburton Lakes was due to leaching and run-off from adjacent farms.

Additional minor sources (less than 10%) were potential seepage of human wastewater at Lake Clearwater and Lake Camp, and waterfowl waste at Lakes Emma and Emily.

The quality of the lakes had continued to fall, despite farms in the catchment areas meeting or exceeding regulations.

Allowing farmers to average nitrogen losses across the farm, had allowed grazing intensification (and leaching hotspots) near the lakes.

Of the eight lakes monitored for the report, Lake Denny had the worst trophic level index, meaning it had the poorest water quality. Neighbouring Lake Emma was next poorest followed by Lake Heron and the Maori Lakes, with the front Maori Lake in slightly better condition than the back Maori Lake.

Lake Camp had the best water quality, followed by Lakes Emily and Clearwater. However, none met the freshwater management goals for trophic levels.

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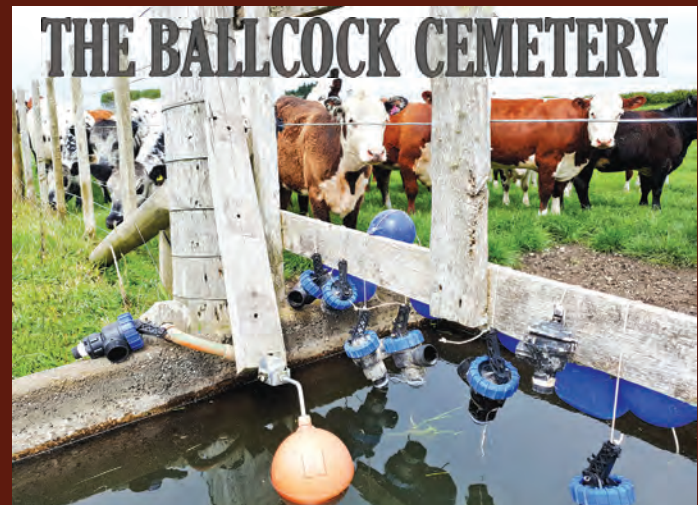
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# A vintage tractor addiction

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

Lauriston farmer Anthony Hampton describes his penchant for collecting and restoring Massey Harris tractors as “a disease with no known cure.”

Hampton began collecting Massey Harris tractors after spotting a neglected tractor in the paddock of a farmer who had just built a new home.

“I said you’ve got really nice stables and a nice house, and in between, you’ve got this old piece of junk laying in the paddock.”

The farmer told Hampton if he was that worried about it, he could take it away himself.

After a week of mulling it over, Hampton took the farmer up on his offer and collected the tractor.

Forty years and countless tractor restorations later, Hampton is the proud owner of an example of every model tractor Massey Harris released in New Zealand.

And a few more. Massey Harris tractors were manufactured in Racine in the United States, with the company founded in 1847 by Daniel Massey in Canada, as an agricultural implement business.

In 1891, Massey merged his business with competitor Alanson Harris to form Massey Harris.

The first Massey Harris tractors were produced in 1918.

In 1950, Massey Harris tractors sold well compared to counterparts such as Case, but lagged behind John Deere, their major competitor.

While known for their self-propelled combines, Massey Harris tractors had a reputation for being robust but lacking in power and features.

In 1953, Massey Harris bought out tractor manufacturer Harry Ferguson’s company in an effort to improve their performance.

It wasn’t until 1958 that the name Massey Ferguson was rolled out.



Hampton with his Grandfather’s Allis-Chalmers tractor.

PHOTOS: CLAIRE INKSON

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By the 1960s, Massey Ferguson claimed to be the biggest tractor manufacturer in the world.

While Hampton uses modern Massey Fergusons on his cropping farm, it's Massey Harris tractors that fill every spare bit of shed space on his property.

Hampton's large farm shed is so full of Massey Harris tractors it's hard to move around.

As well as the main shed where the tractors are stored, other sheds on the property

host Massey Harris tractors in various states of repair as they await their turn to be lovingly restored.

"It doesn't matter how many sheds you have; you never have enough," Hampton said.

Hampton sources parts from Canada and paints and restores each tractor himself.

When asked how many vintage tractors he owns, Hampton said he lost count long ago.

Hampton is treasurer of the Mid

Canterbury Vintage Machinery Club, whose display is always a firm favourite at the Ashburton A&P show.

"I like to take them along to A&P shows and rallies, that sort of thing.

"I can't take the whole lot, but I try and give a different one an outing each time."

The Mid Canterbury Vintage Machinery Club holds an annual Wheat and Wheels Rally, with the next scheduled

for April 6 and 7 on Hampton's property.

This year's rally celebrates 100 years of the Farmall tractor, but the event is about much more than farm machinery.

"All makes are welcome, and it's not just tractors.

"There will be traction engines, classic trucks, cars, motorbikes and anything old."

The rally will include a bouncy castle for kids, food and craft stalls, a military display, vintage

harvesting demonstrations and machinery parades.

"We are getting community organisations involved as well.

"Lauriston School will be running a food tent, Lauriston Fire Brigade will be running a bar, Methven Lions will be doing the gate and the parking and Methven Search and Rescue are going to be the night-time security.

"There's something for everyone," Hampton said.



Anthony Hampton with the Massey Harris tractor that started it all.



Anthony Hampton uses modern Massey Ferguson's for his day-to-day farm work.

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# Ford Ranger Raptor, the low-compromise utility

It's usually quite an easy thing to compare different utes against each other.

They all have attributes making you able to justify a buying decision made with the head in a way that will appeal to the accountant or bank manager.

For the most part, they will be able to do what you need them to do at work, but then with the mod cons or features that suit what you want for your life after work.

The Raptor is the opposite of that. If you start with almost every conceivable way a ute could be used for an adventurous lifestyle, then this vehicle is built to do anything you ask of it, with seemingly endless amounts of opportunity to customise how the ute will perform, both on and off road.

But then it also still has the ability to be that vehicle anyone can hop in and enjoy without changing a thing.

All the clever and easy-to-navigate management options would be nothing without a solid hardware foundation that does the hard yards.

Beginning with the engine, a grunty, three-litre V6 petrol pumping out 292kW (392hp) at 5650rpm and 583Nm of torque at 3500rpm means there'll never be that feeling like it needs more,

especially if the Raptor is in Baja mode, where the anti-lag tech will keep the turbos cranking.

The power is delivered to a 10-speed automatic transmission which is calibrated to near perfection with a boost profile for each gear.

To get that performance to the ground, the Raptor has running gear to match.

Suspension has been redesigned from the previous generation, tough, lightweight aluminium upper and lower control arms, long-travel front and rear suspension and refined Watt's link equipped coil-spring rear suspension have been designed to deliver more control in any situation.

In the name of research, I tried the Raptor out on every type of surface I could. Of note was a wet grass airstrip that even at high speed it felt very stable, predictable and very safe.

When it came time to stop, the disc brakes all round, ABS and stability control do the job really well!

It is good to see an advanced permanent four-wheel drive system with an electronically controlled on-demand two-speed transfer case.



This means the driver has the choice of two-wheel drive only, automatic all wheel drive if it senses too much wheel slip (4A), full 4x4 high and 4x4 low.

In any range the front and rear diff locks can also be used (for example 2WD with rear diff lock in a paddock is good fun!).

Most of all from a road safety point of view, it's a weak point with some other brands of ute where you need to manually select 4x4 in anticipation of a loss of traction.

Knowing I'll be in 4x4 to avoid something going wrong is a feature I've had in my own vehicle

for a while, and it really makes a difference.

Jumping to some more highlights of the tech side, I was really impressed with the cameras around the Raptor, they really came into their own while I had it.

When off road, having the ability to have the cameras on screen is actually a game changer, being able to see all the blind spots in any direction primarily meant I wouldn't have explaining to do when returning the Ute back to Chris at Gluyas Motor Group!

In town in tight spaces it is very useful to zoom in on a corner of

the Ute to make sure nothing was going to get bumped.

I also enjoyed being able to change how the exhaust sounds, four different modes from super quiet to the throaty (off road only) Baja, all from a button on the steering wheel.

One of those things that can change with your mood, or the task at hand.

With the Ute tax coming off around the time this goes to print, the pricing will be much more appealing to buyers in this class at \$95990 + ORC, and peace of mind with a really good five-year, 150,000km warranty.

It has to be said that returning new vehicles I get the opportunity to try out is always quite hard, but dropping this Raptor back has probably been the hardest one to hand over.

I loved it, and even everyone in my household agreed too!

Feel free to get in touch with me if you'd like to know more about anything in more detail.



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