

RURAL GUARDIAN

South Island wide 

JUNE 2024

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RURAL CREATIVE SPACE

P6-7



OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

P18-19



A FAMILY LEGACY

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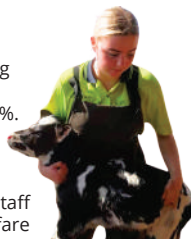
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Take a break before you break ...

I often see memes on social media that say things like, “What’s a day off? I don’t know, I’m a farmer” or “Farmers don’t just work until the sun goes down; they work until the job is done”.

Every time I see these, I shake my head because they seem to highlight how we glamourise the industry’s pressure and workload.

These memes perpetuate the myth that to be a successful farmer, you have to work yourself to the bone and that taking time out is somehow a sign of weakness.

That narrative is not only wrong, it’s dangerous.

In 2022, the ACC reported 22,630 farm-related injuries. That equates to 60 farmers injured per day in New Zealand.

A study conducted by Farmstrong in 2019 showed that 58% of farmers with work-related injuries reported that stress contributed to their accident, and a quarter identified stress as a significant contributor to the injury.

Taking a break from the farm is vital. It can not only improve our wellbeing but also make us better farmers.

“Breaks off the farm are a necessity, not a luxury,” counsellor Megan Hamilton of Heatherlea Counselling says.

“Coming from a farming background myself, I know first-hand the rewards time away from the farm afforded myself and my family. My husband would come home thinking more clearly, with a better perspective on things.”

Taking a break can help with decision fatigue, restore motivation, relieve stress and prevent burnout.

Time off-farm can enhance relationships with our significant others, create memories, and cement bonds with our families.

Hamilton says that shorter breaks can be just as valuable if longer holidays are off the table due to time constraints.

“Holidays are an antidote to stress, promoting mental wellbeing.

“It may not be easy to find the time for an extended break, but this is where even a mini break can be a beneficial option.”

While it may feel like there is never a right time to plan a holiday, scheduling a break from the farm in the calendar planned around non-peak times gives us something to look forward to, even if it’s only a short weekend getaway.

We need to schedule daily and weekly breaks too.

Short snippets of time-out improve our quality of life and focus.

A walk, some time with a book, kicking the rugby ball around with the kids or an at-home movie date with our partners all help our wellbeing.

Weekly activities like a round of golf, watching the kids’ sport, or taking up initiatives such as Surfing for Farmers or Rural Riders contribute to reducing stress levels, social connection and a level perspective.

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Campaign for Wool defends Sam Neill appointment



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Campaign for Wool New Zealand is defending its its ambassador appointment of Kiwi movie legend Sir Sam Neill despite his previous “generation of inbreeding” farmer-aimed comments.

Neil joins three other New Zealand ambassadors at the organisation, alongside fashion and textile designer Liz Mitchell, architect Stephen McDougall and commercial interiors specialist Robert Mcfarlane. But Neil’s appointment may be seen as controversial in some quarters after comments in his memoir published in March last year took aim at his former Christchurch high school, Christ’s College, where he ridiculed some boarding house students.

In the memoir *Did I Ever Tell You This?*, Neill wrote: “School House was pretty easy to remember and spell, and just as well, because many of the boys there were a product of product of generations of inbreeding. Canterbury farming families, for some reason, like to marry among their own.

“The gene pool is very small. You would think that a cursory examination of how they bred their corriedale sheep would’ve been helpful in this regard. Sadly no.”

Wool New Zealand general manager Kara Biggs said Neill was an “excellent choice” for the charity organisation, which was funded by wool growers through a voluntary per-kilo contribution and via several commercial partners.

“We are grateful to Sam for stepping up to promote New Zealand wool to his global audience,” Biggs said.

“We are hugely positive about it and we feel that the warm reaction from our board, supporters and, most importantly, the strong wool growing community, is testament to how well he is loved and admired.”

Neill, who has starred in over 150 movies and television shows in a celebrated career, was knighted in 2022

In a press release announcing his appointment as an ambassador, Neill said some of the best days in his life were spent working in woolsheds as a young fellow.

“There are very few experiences you can have that are more New Zealand by nature. Today, I am a sheep owner, and my suffolk sheep produce strong wool.

“Every time we shear, I am reminded about what a great product that is – durable, warm, sustainable, and biodegradable, but somehow undervalued. And it comes from happy sheep. There is nothing like it.”



Sir Sam Neill has been appointed Campaign for Wool New Zealand’s ambassador despite his negative comments about Canterbury farmers in his recent memoir. PHOTO ROSS COFFEY

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New state-of-the-art building open for business



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

The new Landpower building in Yaldhurst was officially opened by Associate Minister of Agriculture Nicola Grigg in a ceremony that followed a tour of the site for Landpower customers.

With Landpower now holding the Claas franchises previously

held by Carrfields, Claas harvesters and tractors were on display for the event, and Claas chairperson Cathrina Claas-Mühlhäuser attended from Germany for the opening on April 23.

Claas-Mühlhäuser was impressed with the building's functionality and said that Claas and Landpower "rely on each other".

"Both markets are tough markets with extremely professional and extremely demanding customers.

"Nobody is buying a piece of Claas equipment just because we are a family company.

"We need to be just as technically innovative as the rest of the crowd."

Claas-Mühlhäuser said that while neither Claas nor Landpower was the biggest in the business, they both focused on quality, dealt with challenges and changes within agriculture and found ways to improve.

"My dad always said you have to be hard-headed even if not everyone shares your vision.

"You have to keep running to be a leader. Development is not a luxury; it's not something that just happens."

Landpower chief executive officer Richard Wilson said Landpower was delighted to have Cathrina at the opening.

"We have proudly represented

Claas since 1987, and our long-term relationship has allowed us to provide the world's leading machinery to our New Zealand customers."

Grigg said the investment in the new building was a positive sign for the arable sector.

"Seeing this collaboration between two family-owned businesses on opposite sides of the world providing our farmers and growers with access to the world's best technology and service is really encouraging."

The facility is a one-stop shop, combining three previous sites across Canterbury: the Templeton retail store, a parts distribution

centre and a support office.

The new site also includes a training facility, an area reserved for equipment demonstrations and six workshop bays. A parts centre holds over 30,000 part lines.

Company founder Herby Whyte, who began the business nearly 55 years ago, said the building represents the next investment phase into the company.

"I have always had a long-term view, and this building is our base for the future; we will be bringing more staff into the region for training and career progression and showing our commitment to Canterbury agriculture", Whyte said.

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Farming is in Gisborne shepherd's blood

Young farmers are the future of New Zealand agriculture, so each issue we shine the spotlight on a Young Farmers Club member. Today we have a chat to GEORGE ELLETT.

1. What is the name of your club, and how long have you been a member?

I'm part of the Gisborne Young Farmers Club. It's a relatively new club, we held our first meeting at the end of March this year.

2. What has been the highlight for you of joining Young Farmers? What are the benefits and experiences that you feel have helped you most?

A highlight would definitely be the weekend trips while I was part of the Lincoln Young Farmers. When you've got great bunch of humans squeezed into three vans on a roadie going around a few different farms talking to the managers or farm owners about how they operate and systems in place, followed up with a few cold beverages, it's a recipe for wholesome trip.

A benefit of a young farmers club that I have found is that you not only meet some pretty cool new

people that have similar interests, both in and outside of work, that you get along well with, but there is always something different going on, with midweek meetings helping break up the week and events, fundraisers, or trips to look forward to and plan.

3. How did you become involved in agriculture?

I've always wanted to go farming from as soon as I can remember, growing up on small dairy farm in Karaka kick-started that dream, but have gone down the sheep and beef road and haven't looked back.

4. What is your job now?

I've recently started a shepherding role on a farm just out of Tiniroto, about an hour from Gisborne.

The farm is 1300ha, running 7000 ewes and 400 cows.

Throughout the farm there are patches of native bush and pop-



Gisborne Young Farmers club member George Ellett says his biggest inspiration is farmers who have spent years developing their farms to provide world class food and fibre.

lars/willows through most of the gullies, with a bit of hunting in the back few paddocks, it makes it not a bad spot to work.

5. What do you think the future of farming will look like, and what would like to see happening in New Zealand agriculture going forward?

I think the pressures from outside

views on the environmental impacts of farming are going to carry on increasing.

But the food and fibre products that we are producing here in New Zealand are going to be in very high demand in overseas markets compared to other countries because of how well our on-farm animal health and environmental

systems are.

Going forward it would be great to see wool utilised more. It's a natural fibre that's grown on the land here in NZ and can be manufactured into so many products.

There are some cool ideas out there, like the company Floating Peaks creating plant pots, weed mat protectors and pole protectors from wool.

Creating more household products from wool would be awesome!

6. What are your future plans?

In the coming years I'm going to carry on progressing myself and developing my skillset and knowledge. The end goal is to own and run a beef and sheep farm.

7. Who has been your biggest inspiration in agriculture, and why?

My biggest inspiration would be the farmers who have spent their years of life dedicated to improving their herds and the land that they farm on to provide world-class food and fibre.

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The woolshed is filled with artworks by Corina Hazlett and her students.
PHOTOS CLAIRE INKSON



The back of the woolshed still has the original stands and pens, and Hazlett often takes students through to show them how a woolshed works.

Artist's rural-inspired creative



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

A North Canterbury woolshed built over 100 years ago has a new lease of life as an art studio. Children and adults from all over North Canterbury are coming through its doors to brush up on their art skills under the skilled eye of artist Corina Hazlett. Hazlett and husband Jim bought the property in 2013. The couple developed the park-like gardens and renovated the homestead, which was initially built

as a farm cottage in 1882. "This property had a woolshed, and I thought I could convert that and have a space not in the house. "I started with just one or two adult classes and one children's after-school class. "It just grew from there, and now I have around eight classes a week and have a massive waiting list," Hazlett says. The woolshed retains much of its rustic charm despite being lined,

and with a heat pump to keep students warm. "It's an old woolshed, so it's still got that wool smell. "It's even got possums and I don't hide any of that. "We even had a possum come through the roof during a teenager's class." Situated in Balcairn, the woolshed is surrounded by farmland, which Hazlett said adds to the appeal for students.

"I've been so close to hiring something more accessible in town, but people love coming out to the country. "People are fascinated with the view and seeing sheep and cattle running around. "I take that for granted, coming from a farm." With the front of the building converted to a studio, the back is still a working woolshed with the original stands.

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Corina Hazlett grew up on a farm in Omihi, and was inspired by her mother, also an artist.



Fitness guru and entrepreneur Kate Ivey will be one of four speakers at the refill Your Cup Event. PHOTO SUPPLIED

space

"I often take the kids out the back and show them what it looks like, where they shear the sheep and where they go out.

"It's giving them an understanding, and I love that as well."

Hazlett says that while the woolshed has been repurposed, its new life as a studio means it is a piece of history being preserved.

"If we can use it, it's kind of being looked after; otherwise, the whole thing would probably fall down."

Hazlett has her roots firmly planted in the country, having grown up on a sheep and beef farm in Omihi.

She gravitated towards art after following in her mother, Glenys Crofts' footsteps, who also painted.

A passion turned into a career when Hazlett and her husband Jim were farming in Waiau.

She was looking for a way to earn extra income while still being available for the couple's three children, who were then in primary school.

Since then, her art has been showcased in exhibitions around the country.

In addition to her standard art classes, she has worked with the Department of Corrections, teaching art in prisons and running art therapy classes for children.

"What I love about children is that they haven't been educated into thinking something they are creating is wrong. They just think everything is fabulous.

"I love that for children with disabilities or have gone through trauma, it gives them a safe voice, and so they can draw from their subconscious and can paint what they are feeling."

Hazlett says that while some people feel nervous about picking up a brush and learning to create art, there is no wrong way to paint, and it's important to relax and enjoy the process and not be too critical of your work.

"It's up to me to put people at ease, to help people put the fun in it and not to be judgemental about their work.

"We can all be critical of ourselves and I don't think you ever grow out

of that.

"The best thing about art is that it's subjective and puts everyone on a level playing field.

"You don't need to be sporty or academic. Anyone can create art."

Hazlett's works tend to be abstract, with what she calls a touch of realism and are colourful and bold.

"I love colour; that's probably why I've gone down the acrylic route instead of watercolour or oil.

"I like the quick dry of acrylics and I like to mix mediums up."

Hazlett's husband, Jim, who owns JEH Grazing and Livestock, supports her work but does not share her passion for creating art.

"We had a family paint and sip over lockdown. It was so much fun, but that's the only time he has ever picked up a paintbrush. He's not that creative."

"His business is ticking over and growing; he's really busy with that."

Hazlett will be one of four guest speakers at a Hurunui Landcare and Refill Your Cup event at the Omihi Community Hall on May 29.

Refill Your Cup comes back to Hurunui

By CLAIRE INKSON
CLAIRE.INKSON@THEGUARDIAN.CO.NZ

An event hosted by Refill Your Cup and the Hurunui Landcare Group is being held to give Hurunui women a chance to take a break from on-farm pressures and connect and network.

"It's a chance for people to get out, listen to inspirational speakers and catch up with their neighbours and friends," event organiser Bridget Radford says.

The event will be held at the Omihi Community Hall on May 29 and is a collaboration between Refill Your Cup, which was set up in 2018 to create events for rural women who often take on the emotional burden when things are tough on the farm, and the Hurunui Landcare Group.

This year's event will feature four keynote speakers: fitness

guru and entrepreneur Kate Ivey, agricultural economist and consultant Carla Muller, artist Corina Hazlett, and rural general practitioner Anthea Prentice.

The event will be free, running from 9:30 to 2 p.m. to coincide with school pick-ups for busy mothers, and will include a catered lunch.

Radford said that with the challenges facing the primary sector, both groups felt another event aimed at women was needed.

"With production prices and high interest rates, it's pretty tough at the moment.

"It's not just the drought. "So this an opportunity for some positivity in these tough times."

The event is open to everyone. To register, email admin@hurunuilandcaregroup.co.nz

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FARMVIEW

WITH Duncan Humm, NZ Farming – OPINION



Southern style tech and innovation

I had the opportunity to be invited down to Gore recently to attend Thriving Southland's AgriTech and Innovation Day.

The event brought together over 300 farmers and a stack of exhibitors to learn about tools and ideas to help farmers keep moving their businesses forward or inspire some fresh thinking by seeing some innovative tech in action and hearing from people at the cutting edge or leading in their respective fields.

I was most interested to hear from Mike Casey aka The Electric Orchardist who is on a mission to make his Cromwell cherry orchard fully electric, among a few other farm level innovations.

Unfortunately, he had to do his presentation via zoom as his flight was cancelled. However, it was really interesting to delve into the economics of his farm and how

going electric was now proving itself to be a viable reality, particularly when it came to locking in some certainty-of-future energy costs and resilience by not being as reliant on the national grid or fossil fuels to operate.

Leading on from what's happening on their own farm Mike is part of a group called Rewiring Aotearoa, that is providing some great leadership and advocacy to policy makers that will hopefully help unlock new earning potential for farmers who might be in a position to export some surplus energy into the grid and profit from peak demands when spot pricing is high.

As Mike pointed out there are a few barriers that could be easily broken down so anyone exporting to the grid is paid properly when they do, or even open up opportunities for community sharing of

power, which would also give rural areas greater energy resilience while also driving down the cost of energy to consumers.

The big take away though was the point Mike made that on-farm energy generation could meet the projected increased demand for New Zealand basically without having to invest any more money into poles or wires, which is estimated to be over \$8000 per household if we carry on down the path of large-scale power stations many miles from where power is consumed.

Food for thought!

Between showers of cold southern rain there were some experienced drone operators there demonstrating the capabilities of the latest agricultural machines, quite a few large options for spraying and spreading and, along with

smaller drones for photography, surveying and the appealing barking drone for mustering livestock that is about the same price as a half decent huntaway!

The operators were really good to talk to about their operational practicalities and limitations while they showed them flying.

As someone that uses a pretty common consumer drone around the farm, it was really thought-provoking as to what might be possible in the near future.

Following on after a great lunch was a panel discussion on GMOs that was quite timely given there's legislation being drafted to liberalise them here in New Zealand.

I was hoping to hear and report on some reasoning as to why it will be of benefit to farmers and our country, but didn't come away convinced the opportunities would

make farming any easier or, most importantly, vastly more profitable behind the farm gate.

To wrap up the day, a farmer panel chaired by Kate Scott and consisting of myself, Corrigan Sowman and James Goodwin talked about the key drivers of the hews and whys we all look for with the technology we choose to utilise in our lives and businesses, the common theme was making it work for us to achieve better life balance for our families and to help us progress things like farm succession by continuing to innovate and stay viable.

I can't congratulate the Thriving Southland team for putting on such a great event, I highly recommend keeping an eye on their website and socials as they publish content from the day and showcase all the other cool things they have going on.

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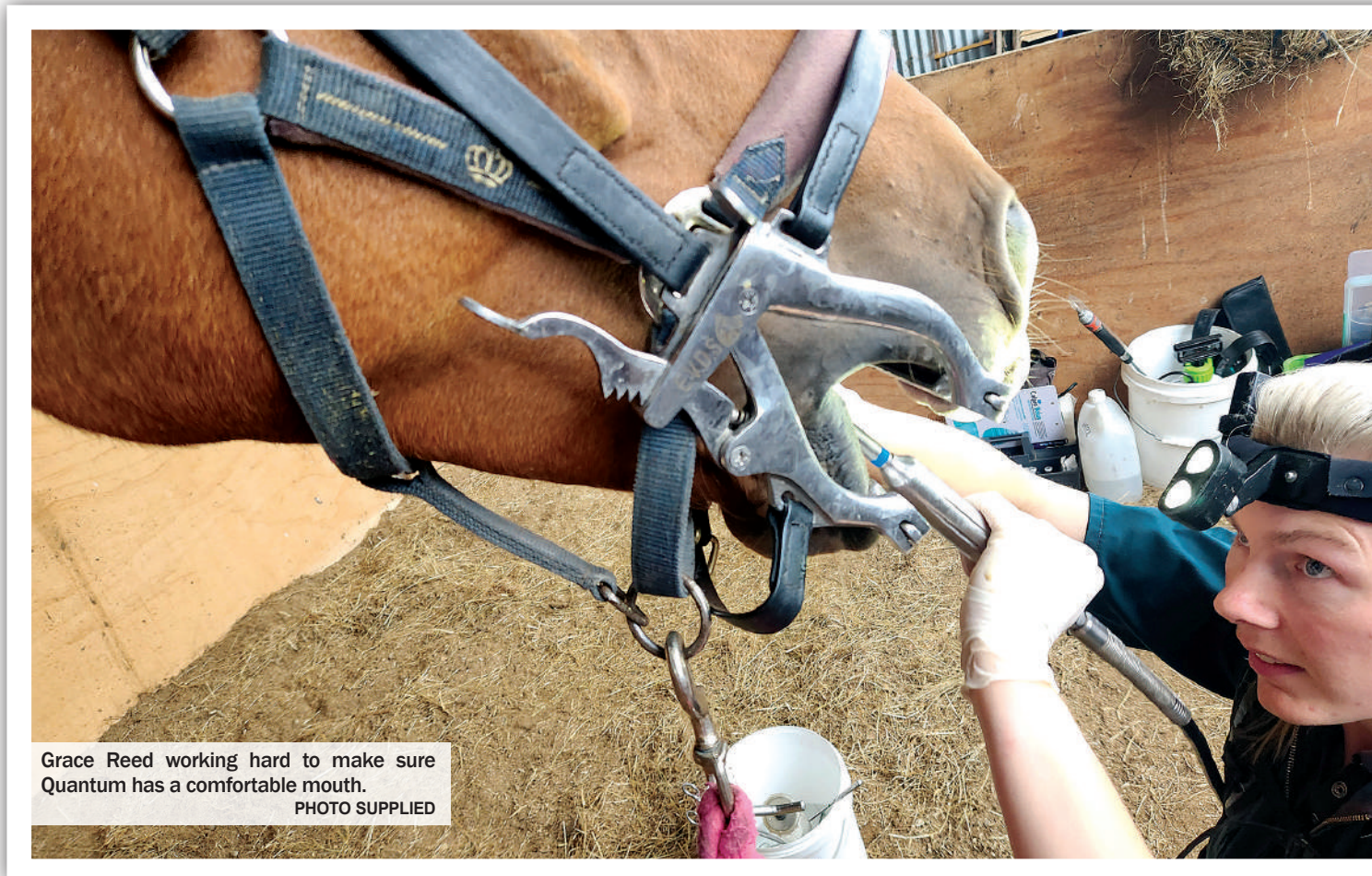
Their teeth are constantly erupting and, if they wear in an uneven way, sharp edges can occur, causing painful abrasions and ulcers in the mouth. These can lead to difficulty eating, resulting in a loss in condition, or they may start resisting the bit and becoming more difficult to ride.

To help prevent these problems from happening, regular dental check-ups are necessary. While the prospect of going to a dentist can be daunting (for horses and owners alike), getting your horse's teeth done can be a stress-free experience.

VetSouth's equine team says reducing stress for both owner and horse is key to making horse dentals go smoothly. Home visits are a great way to reduce stress for your horse.

"Visiting your horse at their own home, using precision equipment, and carefully sedating them (just enough to make them slightly sleepy) are some of the ways vets can help to keep your horse relaxed," Grace Reed, equine vet from VetSouth, said. "Or you can bring your horse into our purpose-built facilities at the clinic where we have experienced technicians to assist with dental examinations."

She explains that during a dental exam, a full mouth oral speculum is used to safely open your horse's mouth, before it is rinsed out with



Grace Reed working hard to make sure Quantum has a comfortable mouth.
PHOTO SUPPLIED

an antiseptic solution to wash out bits of grass or other feed, giving the vet a clear view.

They then use lights and mirrors to see the inside of your horse's mouth from all angles - examining their teeth, gums and the inside of

your horse's cheeks.

To reduce sharp points, they use motorised power equipment (known as a powerfloat). This precision equipment fits comfortably into your horse's mouth and is quiet, so it causes minimal discomfort.

VetSouth recommends getting your horse's teeth checked every six to 12 months depending on their age, dental history and oral conformation. This can be done at the same time as their annual vaccinations or at your horse's annual

health check.

If your horse has regular dental checks, you can be sure their mouth is comfortable, meaning they will get full nourishment from their feed and be comfortable with the bit when you are riding them.



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RURAL GUARDIAN | JUNE 2024

WINTER ESCAPES

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Clifftop escape with a bird's eye view



Claire Inkson
RURAL
EDITOR

Woodpecker Hut sits on a five-acre bush-clad property on the West Coasts' Great Coast highway, halfway between Greymouth and Westport.

The hut, owned by Liz Henderson and Sonia Minnaar, co-founders of Canopy Camping Escapes, remains one of the company's most popular destinations.

"We get domestic guests throughout the year, with an increase in international guests through the summer and shoulder seasons," Henderson says.

The hut was built in 2015 over the course of a year by a West Coast builder Henderson describes as "a real craftsman".

"We used lots of recycled timber and materials from Christchurch buildings that were demolished in the earthquakes.

"We think this gives the hut lots of personality."

Woodpecker Hut consists of two huts, joined by a covered outdoor kitchen.

The hut is rustic and cosy, with waney edge weatherboard and a native timber lining.

Woodpecker Hut is the perfect



Above – Woodpecker Hut is self-catering, with an outdoor kitchen.

Left – Woodpecker hut is on a 5 acre, bush clad property on the West Coasts' Great Coast Highway.

Below – An alpine hot tub is perfect for a night-time soak.

PHOTOS SUPPLIED

place for a winter getaway. One of the rooms is a bedroom featuring a king-sized bed and views of the ocean, and the other is a lounge with a wood-burning stove.

An alpine wood-fired hot tub off the deck is perfect for a night-time soak and the bathroom consists of a hot shower, sink and flushing toilet, with hot water supplied by gas califont.

With its clifftop location, the hut is not suitable for children, but is ideally suited to couples wanting a

romantic weekend away.

For those wishing to explore or go out for dinner instead of self-catering in the hut, Punakaiki, the site of the Pancake Rocks, is a short seven-minute drive away.

The hut is connected to mains power, and while there is cell-phone coverage, there is no wifi.

"It's a chance to reconnect with nature through beautiful surroundings and slow down through experiences like a hot tub under the stars," Henderson said.



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Filling

500g Quality Mark beef steaks cut into 3cm pieces, eg cross-cut blade steak
2T seasoned flour (a simple seasoned flour is made with flour, salt and pepper.)
500g pumpkin seeds removed, peeled and chopped into 2cm chunks
1 onion, chopped
1 carrot, sliced
1/2 C red wine
1 C beef stock
1/2 400g can chopped tomatoes in juice
1 bay leaf
1T red wine vinegar
25g butter, softened
2T white flour

Pastry

2 sheets short crust pastry
2 sheets puff pastry

Egg wash

1 egg yolk
1T milk

To make filling:

- Preheat the oven to 160°C.
- Roll the beef in seasoned flour.
- Heat a frying pan over medium-high heat, add a dash of oil and brown beef in batches.
- Transfer beef to an ovenproof casserole dish as you go.
- Lower the heat and add another dash of oil to the pan.
- Add the onion and cook until soft, then add the pumpkin and carrot slices.
- Pour in the red wine, allow to bubble and reduce slightly.
- Add the stock and tomatoes and stir well. Season.
- Add to the casserole dish with the bay leaf.
- Cover meat with a piece of baking paper, cut to fit.
- Cover with lid and cook for 2½ hours, until the beef is tender.
- Remove from the oven and thicken the sauce with a small amount of butter and

flour paste (mix together 25g softened butter with 2 tablespoons flour until you have a paste).

- Discard the bay leaf, add a splash of red wine vinegar and leave beef to cool completely.

To assemble:

- Preheat the oven to 190°C.
- Place the shortcrust pastry sheets, one on top of the other, and roll a little more to fit a 23cm pie tin, leaving the overhang.
- Lightly prick the base with a fork.
- Spoon in the cooled filling.
- Brush the edge of the pastry with egg wash.
- Roll flaky pastry out to fit pie.
- Place the pastry top on, cut away excess pastry and crimp the edges.
- Make a few slits in the top with a knife for the steam to escape.
- Brush the top with egg wash and place in the oven.
- Cook pie for 45 to 50 minutes until the pastry is well browned and the filling piping hot.

Slow cooker option

- Cut beef, pumpkin and carrot into 2.5cm pieces.
- Finely chop 1 small onion.
- Roll the beef in seasoned flour and brown in oiled pan.
- Place chopped vegetables and bay leaf in the preheated slow cooker and stir.
- Add the beef.
- Combine the wine, 1/2 C beef stock and crushed tomatoes, season and pour over the beef and vegetables.
- Cook on low for 8-9 hours or on high for 4 1/2 to 5 1/2 hours.
- Thicken with a little butter and flour paste if necessary.
- Follow instructions in To assemble to create the pie.

Recipe Kathy Paterson, courtesy of Beef + Lamb NZ

Magnesium and Hypertension

The Women's Health Study is one of the most influential medical studies. This followed nearly 30,000 Female Health professionals who are over 45. It is still going now after 30 years. One of the many observations was the relationship between Magnesium and Hypertension (high blood pressure). The study showed that Magnesium intake was inversely related to hypertension; that those with low Magnesium had higher chances of developing hypertension. Indeed, it seems as if Magnesium can help many conditions including cramp, heart rhythm, mood, sleeping any many more.

This should not surprise because of the special role of Magnesium in governing muscles and nerves. Calcium is the mineral that causes muscles to work and nerves to carry impulses. Magnesium helps return muscles and nerves to a resting state.

How does Magnesium help hypertension? Our blood vessels have a special type of muscle called smooth

muscle. Just as Magnesium deficiency can cause cramp or tightness in our skeletal muscles, so low Magnesium causes smooth muscle to lose its natural suppleness. This can impede blood flow and forces the heart to pump harder to circulate blood.

The main mechanism is that Magnesium is a powerful calcium channel blocker (many hypertension medications are calcium channel blockers). This allows the smooth muscle in blood vessels to relax thus allowing for enhanced blood flow.

The challenge is to get the right forms of Magnesium in the right doses. My preference is to use three different forms of Magnesium: Natural marine Magnesium from sea water, well proven Magnesium Citrate and probably the most effective, Magnesium glycinate. We then need to get the right doses. This is where 1-a-day supplements can be difficult as you cannot modify the dose. My Magnesium has a dosage range of 1-4 capsules so can be customised to a person's needs, your needs.



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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Escape into LOTR territory

By **CLAIRE INKSON**
CLAIRE.INKSON@THEGUARDIAN.CO.NZ

Just over an hour from Ashburton, Mt Potts Lodge is a hidden gem in the crown of Mid Canterbury.

Nestled beneath the ruggedly beautiful Potts Range, the lodge provides the perfect place to unwind and get away from it all.

"When you get to the top of the hill, it's this big wide vista that just blows you away," lodge manager Jen Hussey said. "It surprises people how it's such a wide open space with beautiful braided rivers."

Hussey, who runs Mt Potts Station with husband Scott, recently took over management of the lodge and is looking forward to sharing the spectacular location with guests.

"It's a magical place; it's just beautiful," Hussey said.

Accommodation is comfortable and cosy, with options for families, corporate events or romantic getaways for couples.

Two houses, Silver Birch Cottage and Stag Hill Cottage, provide fully self-contained options that are perfect for families or groups.

The lodge's flagship accommodation is seven semi-self-contained hotel-style studios.

Each studio has underfloor heating to keep guests warm on crisp winter nights and a deck that allows spectacular high-country views of the Two Thumb Mountain range.

Rustic bunkrooms provide a comfortable



but affordable third option for guests, and powered and unpowered campsites are also available for those wanting a truly outdoor escape.

There is plenty for guests to see and do during their stay.

Mount Sunday, a 40-minute walk or five-minute drive from the lodge, is a popular attraction for Lord of the Rings fans, with the rocky outcrop being the filming location for Ederas in the movie.

The Ashburton Lakes are a short 10-minute drive from the lodge, and the Rangitata River is a dream for keen fishermen looking to catch trout.

The landscape is well suited to horse riding, with horses available to ride at the lodge or for guests to bring their own.

For those more interested in hiking,

guests can take in the landscape on foot, with trails up Mount Potts, Mount Sunday, or the Ashburton Lakes.

The original Mt Potts woolshed was converted into a cozy and rustic lodge in the 1960s.

It now operates as a restaurant and bar open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner Tuesday through Sunday.

"People walk up Mount Sunday, then they can come back and have coffee and cake or a meal. We offer breakfast for those up early to watch the sunrise," Hussey said.

The lodge restaurant also takes bookings for weddings, corporate functions, and special events such as Mid-Winter Christmas dinners.

"It's a majestic place, especially in winter when it snows; it's incredible."



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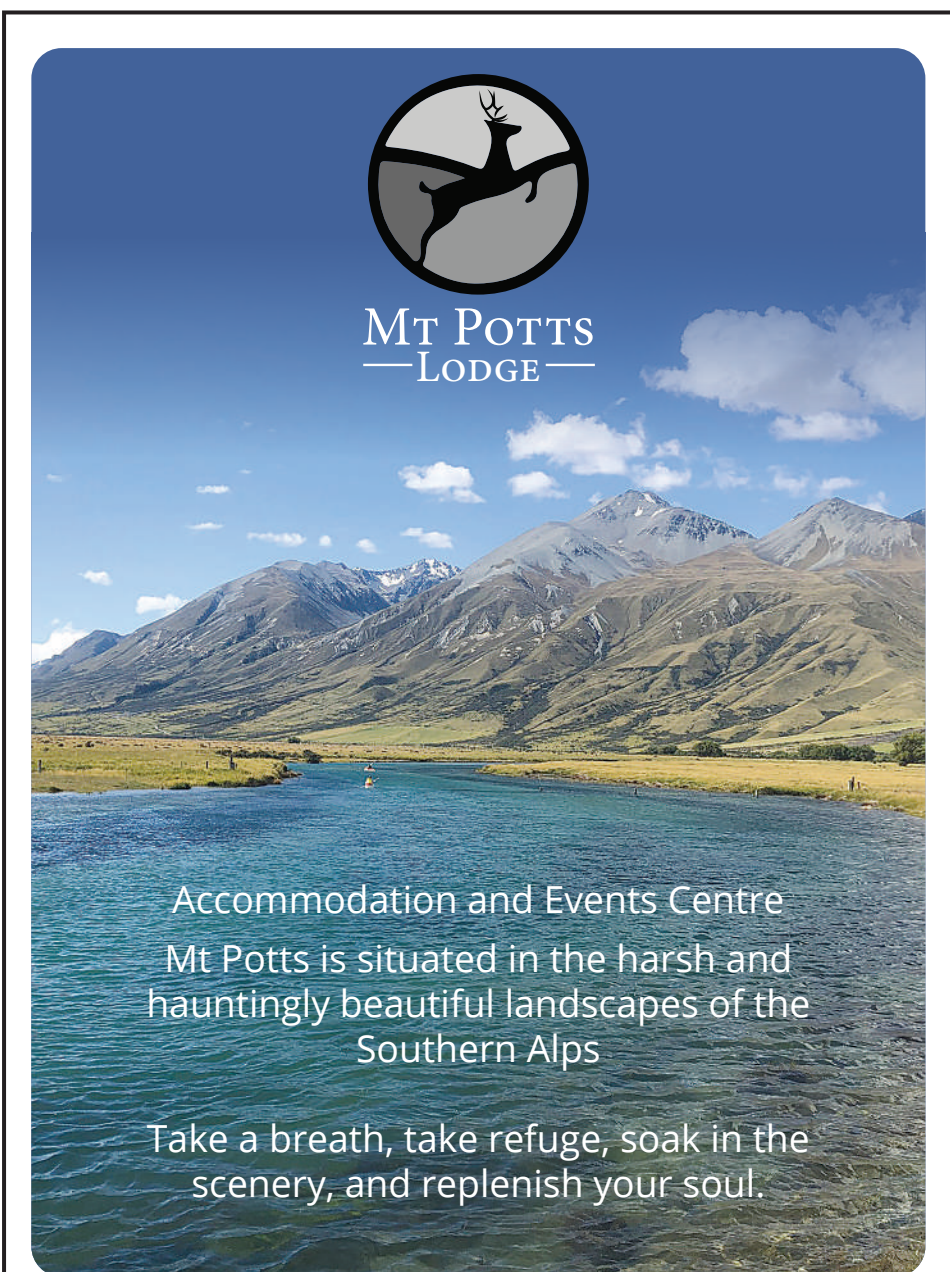
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Stepping back into Canterbury's pa



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Papanui Road in Christchurch is home to some of the city's most beautiful historic homesteads, and Merivale Manor is no exception.

Once the family home of one of the city's early settlers, the manor is now boutique accommodation. The main house features 10 period-style suites for those wishing to escape to the garden city.

"It's got a good feel to it; you walk in and you feel comfortable," manager Gin Leslie says.

"It doesn't feel pretentious at all."

The manor, built in 1882, was designed by esteemed architect Samuel Farr.

Farr was the architect behind some of Christchurch and Canterbury's most iconic buildings, such as Christchurch Normal School, and homesteads such as the Glenmark Estate, which, like many buildings of the era, was destroyed by fire.

Merivale Manor has survived two fires since its construction and escaped the Christchurch earthquake with relatively minor damage thanks to previous restoration work completed in 2004.

Known initially as Domus Textorum, the manor was then named



Te Wepu by owner Henry Webb, a Māori transliteration of Webb, a common practice at the time.

Webb, whose business had failed in Australia, moved to New Zealand to take over management of his wife Augusta's family-owned shipping company, Peacock and Co.

The couple initially settled in Lyttelton, where Webb served as a member of the Canterbury Provincial Council and a local member of parliament.

In 1881, he purchased what was originally a 50-acre farm block on Papanui Road, a popular area for the city's prominent citizens, to build a

homestead for the couple's growing family.

The original eight-bedroom house was built in Farrs' signature Italianate style, with architectural embellishments and a wrap-around verandah with ornate detailing.

Webb remained actively involved in the community until his retirement in 1893 and lived at Te Wepu until he died in 1901.

Following his death, his wife Augusta subdivided the property, eventually selling the house in 1911.

Between 1911 and 2004, the building spent most of its life as a boarding house.



In the 1950s, it lost its road frontage when a brick house was built in front, which stood until its demolition in around 2003.

In 2004, restoration was begun on the homestead. Over the years,

additions to accommodate boarders were removed, and the house's original footprint was restored.

New studio rooms were built on the property adjacent to the driveway, and in 2005, the building was


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Far left (P16) – Merivale Manor was known as Te Wepu when occupied by the Webb family, who built the house in 1882. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Main photo – Merivale Manor was restored in 2004 to its original footprint, and in keeping with its era. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

P17 photos – The inside has been lovingly restored too. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

mill hotel,” Phil said. “It’s got all of Karen’s knick-knacks, flowers and ornaments. People just look around it and feel at home.”

Maintenance of such an old building is a constant labour of love.

“One day you’re the plumber, the next day you are the sparky, then you’re the builder or the landscaper. “We have a good schedule though and we try to keep to that.”

A short walk to Merivale Mall, Gin said Merivale Manor is popular with visiting farmers looking for a break or with children at the nearby boarding schools.

“We get a lot of retired farmers from down south and people visiting family in hospital because it’s so close to St Georges.”

With so many heritage buildings lost to the Christchurch earthquake, fire, or simply the ravages of time, Merivale Manor is a precious slice of Canterbury history that guests are lucky enough to experience first-hand.



braces the building’s heritage.

Managers Phil and Gin Leslie have been caretakers of the property for five months while the Peats run a retreat in the North Island.

“It doesn’t feel like a run-of-the-

opened as Merivale Manor.

Owners Wayne and Karen Peat, an interior designer, bought the business in 2014.

Since then, the house has been redecorated with a charm that em-

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A BUSH PARADISE *off the beaten track*



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Rockwood Station, located near the sleepy township of Windwhistle, in Selwyn, is just over an easy one-hour drive from Christchurch airport.

A working 567-hectare sheep and beef property running 3300 romney ewes and 150 angus cows plus replacements, station owners Ben and Cheryl Richards diversified by adding a glamping business to the operation in 2018.

With things tough in the sheep and beef industry, the added income stream of the accommodation has been welcome.

"It's been a good source of extra income.

"We put our own money in, but we've recouped most of that and pretty much paid it off," Ben Richards said.

Accommodation on offer for



guests, run through the glamping site Canopy Camping, features two unique sites - The Summer House and The Carriage.

The Summer House began as a working-man's hut on a neighbouring farm before being transported to Rockwood Station on the end of a digger and extended and renovated.

"We developed The Summerhouse first in 2018, more as a nice place for us to have a drink, but a chance conversation with someone who has a glamping site suggested we should list it with Canopy Camping," Richards said.

Situated on Rockwood Stream, a tributary of the Hororata River,



Above - The Summer House is located on the edge of Rockwood stream.

Left - The Carriage is entirely generator and solar powered, right down to the outdoor chandelier.

The Summer House consists of two rooms. One room has a bedroom and kitchen, and the other has a separate lounge.

A bathroom, complete with a bathtub, is accessed from the deck outside.

The Summer House is heated by a Wagner log fire inside and guests

can enjoy the outdoor fireplace as well.

The Carriage was added to the glamping business in 2020 after Cheryl chanced upon a 1953 goods train carriage for sale on Trade Me.

"Cheryl jumped at the chance to buy it as we had another good site. After renovating, landscaping and

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Below left – At the carriage, a double outdoor bath, heated by gas, is a perfect spot to soak under the stars.

Below right – A Wagner fire keeps The Summer House cosy.

PHOTOS SUPPLIED



planting, we had our second site, which is also popular.”
 The 15-metre long, two-metre wide Carriage has two bedrooms, one with an ensuite.
 A second bathroom, complete with a bath, is situated at the end of the Carriage and is accessed via a covered outdoor area.
 The Carriage is entirely off-grid, powered by a combination of solar and generator. It has limited cell phone coverage and no wifi, meaning guests have a truly unplugged experience.
 Both huts are self-catering, with kitchen and barbecue facilities.
 There are around 100-acres of bush and a walkway for guests to

explore, but Richards keeps the farm separate from the glamping business.
 “There is a walkway guests can take and they see bits of the farm, but we don’t do farm tours; we have too much going on.”
 Richards is a fifth-generation farmer in the Windwhistle area.
 His ancestors arrived in the country on the Sir George Seymour, one of the first four ships to bring settlers to New Zealand shores.
 His great-great-grandfather Henry

Phillips settled at Rockwood in 1851 after living in Phillipstown, Christchurch, a suburb named after the family.
 Rockwood was sold in 1877 but returned to the family’s ownership in 1973 when Richards’ father purchased the property.
 The 1910 homestead where Richards and his wife Cheryl live, the original 1850s cob cottage, and a graveyard of deceased relatives, located not far from the glamping sites, are a reminder of Rockwood

Station’s long farming history.
 Richards said it’s the location that makes Rockwood such a special place for guests.
 “You come up the valley and it feels completely cut off from the world, even though it’s just over an hour’s drive from the airport.
 “There’s lots to do with the hot pools, golfing at Terrace Downs, and some good walks.”
 “There’s bush and nice established trees from ancestral planting; it’s a nice setting.”

Richards said he understands the importance of farmers getting off-farm and taking a break.
 “In situations where they are under multiple pressures, not just financial but with all the rules and regulations brought in by the previous Government, it eases your mind just to get away.
 “You need to get away and break that cycle of pressure. It can get pretty depressing if you’ve got four or five things against you, and that’s still happening for many farmers.”



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"We have 15 staff working

across our three sites. This gives us the flexibility to bring in extra resources as they're needed for an installation," Lynda said.

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The Whitcombe group achieving great results

By PAUL ENSOR

The Whitcombe Landcare group was established in 1992 by landowners on the south side of the Rakaia from Cleardale at the foot of Mt Hutt, to Lake Heron station in the headwaters.

We are the newest group to join the Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective (MCCC).

The Whitcombe Landcare group collectively has over 65km of river frontage to the Rakaia River and vastly varied land types from irrigated farmland to extensive high country native ecosystems that we are very proud of.

We have 11 active members with significant multi-generational ownership and stewardship and a great working relationship with our neighbours, the Department of Conservation.

Achievements of the catchment group over the years have included establishing long-term vegetation monitoring sites on each property, extensive weed surveys that enabled successful funding applications to control weeds such as cotoneaster, elderberry and sycamore.

A significant number of waterways have been fenced off in the catchment with the help of Fish & Game and ECan.

A project to control wilding pines in 2006 was successful to eliminate a significant portion of wildings in the catchment to the point now where we are almost free of wildings.

Recently group members have volunteered 80 hours of their time to control wildings on conservation land to remove an estimated 2500 wildings.

The group is also using the MCCC water

testing capability to better understand the water quality within the catchment.

The number of visitors into the catchment and its surrounding conservation land has risen significantly over the years, partly due to the establishment of the Te Araroa trail, but also more hunters and recreators are enjoying the opportunities in the area.

The Landcare group wants to ensure that visitors are aware of their impact while enjoying our pristine natural environment. For example, making sure that the growing number of 4WD vehicles enjoying the riverbed are not impacting the rare native birds that nest there.

The Landcare group is refreshing its vision and strategy to ensure that all projects we undertake deliver on our aims to enhance the natural environment of the Upper Rakaia catchment in a societal, environmental and economically sustainable way.

Becoming weed and pest free are priorities for the group, but we are also thinking beyond this to understand what success would look like in 50 years' time for the catchment.

The group is excited to grow our knowledge of the catchment to enhance our stewardship of the land.

We aim to keep improving our practices so our part of New Zealand's treasured environment will benefit.

For more information, please contact catchment group facilitator Megan Fitzgerald, 027 262-1602 or email megan.fitzgerald@tambo.co.nz

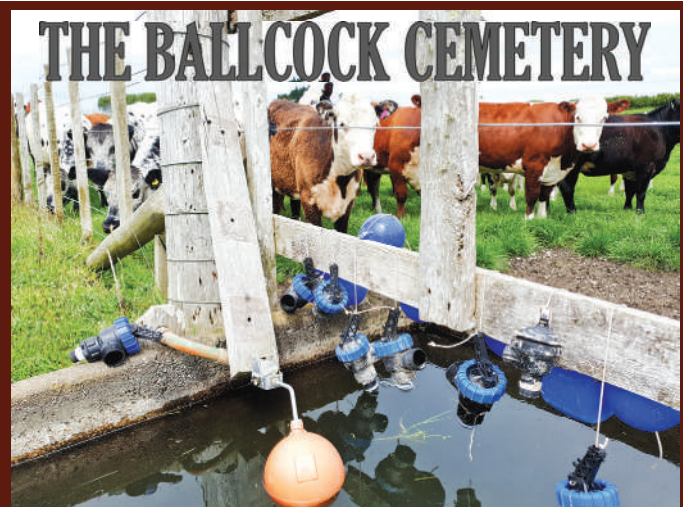
Paul Ensor is chairperson of the Whitcombe Landcare Group

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Regional council 'needs clear directive'



Minister for Rural Communities Mark Patterson spoke to Mid Canterbury farmers at the woolshed on Mount Somers Station as part of a wider woolshed tour to hear the concerns of farmers.

PHOTO SHARON DAVIS



Sharon Davis
Reporter

Local farmers have welcomed the Government's proposed changes to the Resource Management Act but they are concerned that Environment Canterbury is slow to pick up on the signals of change.

The first RMA Amendment Bill aims to make urgent changes to the resource management system to improve resource management laws, give greater certainty to consent applicants and support development in key sectors - including farming.

This includes repealing intensive winter grazing regulations, amending stock exclusion rules for sloped land and suspending the requirement for councils to identify new Significant Natural Areas for three years.

Mid Canterbury Federated Farmers' president David Acland welcomed the "pragmatic" changes and said he looked forward to seeing them filter through.

Rural communities and associate agricultural minister Mark Patterson spoke to about 50 Mid Canterbury farmers at Mount Somers Station last week as part of a nationwide woolshed tour.

He acknowledged that farmers

had been under "huge pressure with a confluence of events" including adverse weather, high interest rates and really low returns.

Patterson said the Government was committed to cutting as much as it could from compliance costs, with the latest changes to the RMA seen as a way to get gains from the low-hanging fruit.

The intent was to target changes that could take effect quickly to give certainty to councils and consent applicants while legislation to replace the RMA was developed, he said.

While local farmers said the changes were "encouraging" they wanted to know if the Govern-

ment planned to give a clear direction to regional councils.

Patterson said farmers and councils were operating "in a grey area" until the new legislation came through.

There had been a mixed reaction from regional councils. Some wanted to bed things down under the old rules while others had pulled back not wanting to waste ratepayers' money, he said.

Patterson said he had received "very strong feedback" from the woolshed tours that ECan had been "unfriendly to farmers" with lots of impractical hoops to jump

through and very high compliance costs.

However, when pushed, Patterson said the Government wanted to move away from a "one-size-fits-all model" and did not plan a prescriptive response while giving regional councils as clear a signals as we can.

Kerry Harmer from Castle Ridge Station said the Government needed to give regional councils clear direction.

"The way consent conditions are looking at the moment, there's a whole community going to disappear.

"ECan is pushing beyond national rules, we need input from

Government to pull back on ECan rules."

ECan is not going to change unless given a clear directive, she said.

Patterson said regional councils were "getting very clear messages" and the Government was committed to finding "local solutions for local problems".

When asked when the new regulations would come into effect, Patterson said they would be introduced to the House next month and would likely come into effect "towards the end of the year".

He said this was an opportunity for farmers to show they can "get it right" and do what is needed to protect the local environment.

"There will be plenty of people out there looking for bad practice over winter."

Patterson said the changes were not about winding back the need to care for the environment but about making it more practical to do so.

Federated Farmers vice-chairperson Colin Hurst said there was a "real onus" on farmers to get winter grazing right this year.

He was critical of flawed stock exclusion rules and said "fencing waterways in some cases is basically banning farming".

"We need to be empowering farmers and supporting them to make further improvements on their properties instead of tying them up in needless red tape."

Harmer said the red tape that was being imposed by ECan "pushing over and above the national rules" could have unintended consequences.

Like how farmers had been told to fence areas for sheep in its consents.

"The merino industry is going to disappear. The only thing you can run is cattle," she said.

The lack of profit in sheep and wool was another hot topic for discussion with Patterson, along with rural health care, high rural banking costs, wilding pines and freshwater storage and management.

"ECan is pushing beyond national rules, we need input from Government to pull back on ECan rules"

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Farmer fumes over 'hypocrisy'

BY JONATHAN LEASK

Mid Canterbury farmer Daryl Butterick says he's shocked by the "hypocrisy" of Environment Canterbury's chairperson.

Peter Scott, the chairperson of Canterbury's regional council, has stood down pending an investigation following recent media comments about his "illegal" farming activity.

Scott said in a radio interview that two of his consent applications for irrigation had been delayed by another government agency for six years.

He was waiting on clearance "to irrigate a piece of land that they didn't know existed on my property before I can get my farm environment plan and my land use consent".

"I'm carrying on and ignoring the fact that I haven't got one so I'm actually operating illegally, and I'm the chairman of Environment Canterbury."

Neither ECan or Scott would comment further while an investigation was under way.

But Butterick said the hypocritical situation was unreal, considering Canterbury farmers watched a stream run dry as they waited for approval to divert water into it.

"We've been playing by rules with this consent review and getting hammered by them, and here was the boss trundling along doing his own thing."

Locals have been critical of the Ashburton/

Hakaterere River consent review, which was aimed at keeping more water in the river, but it appears more like "one rule for some", he said.

In early February, the Greenstreet farmers wanted to divert water from O'Shea's Creek into Greenstreet Creek to keep the aquatic life alive. But they had to wait for council chief executive Stefanie Rixecker to use emergency powers to do so on March 21.

Had they just gone and opened the gate without asking permission, they would have put their consents in jeopardy, Butterick said.

In relation to the ECan chairperson's issue, the regional council found a parcel of land on the farm owned by Scott was potentially Crown land, but he continued to farm it. It's understood he has since sold the farm.

An Environment Canterbury spokesperson said the council was aware of the status of Scott's consents.

"Sometimes consent applications can be delayed when information

is required from third parties - as is the case here."

The ECan spokesperson said they would advise against people operating illegally while waiting for consent.

"I have sympathy, but I wouldn't advise them to [operate illegally]."

LDR is local body journalism co-funded by RNZ and NZ On Air



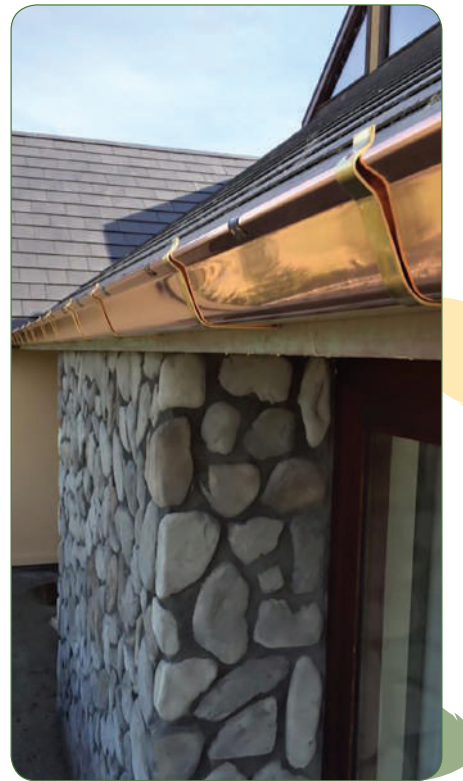
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Maggie Rayner is a familiar and welcoming face at the cellar door. PHOTOS CLAIRE INKSON

A family legacy



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

ulous.
“They organised all the wineries and vineyard workers to come and prune the vineyard.
“I was babysitting; it was my nana day, and I looked out the window, and there were cars parked all the way down our long driveway and all the way along State Highway 1.
“The whole community came out to help.”

The vineyard encompasses around 80 acres in four blocks, each with a unique terroir.

“We have four vineyard sites, with heavy clay loams, river terraces and limestone hills.

“With those four blocks, plus the block at the winery, we can make a huge range of wines.”

Sauvignon blanc and pinot noir are the biggest varieties grown by Torlesse.

Some wine is exported to the UK and Canada, although most is sold locally.

Torlesse began offering platters at their cellar door around four years ago. With the business open seven days a week and tour buses stopping at the winery regularly, the Rayner family is kept busy with both domestic and international tourists.

“The highlight for us is making good wine and selling it to the public who you know will enjoy it. That’s the beauty of having a cellar door.
“You are dealing directly with the public and you get their reaction to trying your wine, which is fabulous.”

This season’s harvest has been challeng-

Torlesse Winery, one of the Waipara Valley’s pioneering wine labels, has been producing wine in the region for more than 30 years.

Owned by the Tomlin, Pharis, Fabris, Blower, and Rayner families, Torlesse began producing wine in Waipara in 1991 and opened its cellar door in 2000.

The Rayner family have run the operation since its inception, and for regular visitors to the winery, Maggie Rayner is a familiar and welcoming face.

“I think what makes Torlesse special is that we have been here so long and have put our heart and soul into the business, and it’s family orientated and family run.”

It has been a challenging year for the Rayner family, with Maggie’s husband, renowned Torlesse winemaker Kym, passing away in July last year.

“He had such a sense of humour.

“He had great conversations with customers, whether it was Aussie Rules or politics, or was this or that.

“He would just keep topping up their glasses; he had a great personality.

“We still get people that come in and ask, where is the old guy?” Maggie said.

With Kym’s sudden passing, the community stepped up to help keep the vineyard wheels turning.

“The North Canterbury Wine Growers’ Association were fabulous-



Pete Rayner plunges fermenting cabernet grapes.

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Above - Fermenting cabernet grapes.
Left - Pete Rayner checks fermenting pinot noir.
Below - All wine is fermented, blended and bottled on site.



ing, with drought conditions meaning higher quality wine but a lower yield.

“My husband always said viticulture won’t make you rich; it’s a lifestyle.

Every vintage is different and some are better than others.”

All wine is fermented and bottled on site in an expanded and modernised building behind the cellar door that began its life as a farm woolshed.

The cellar door is a purpose-built space that opens onto an outdoor area where guests can

enjoy the sun with a glass of wine and look out over the vineyard and a picturesque olive grove.

The Rayners’ sons, Pete and Ben, have been involved in the winery since they were children and have stepped up to become an integral part of the business from vineyard to bottle, working alongside Maggie to keep Torlesse moving forward.

“We are very lucky.

“We are a close-knit family; we are so lucky they live here.

“Some people have family living all over the world, but mine are here; I get to see them every day, and that’s fabulous.”

Pete Rayner says the key to Torlesse’s success is their gentle approach to winemaking.

“We handcraft everything, from the plant to the fermentation process.

“We are self-sufficient, so we bottle everything on-site.

“Everything from plant to bottle, we 100 per cent craft ourselves.”

Pete says the small scale of the operation is

an advantage.

“We are able to do a lot of varieties.

“We’ve got one the biggest ranges in the Waipara Valley, so we can do niche batches rather than just big commercial ones.”

Torlesse makes bigger batches of sauvignon blanc and pinot noir, but smaller batches of less mainstream varieties.

“That’s our point of difference,” Pete said, and he enjoys the variety each harvest brings.

“Every year brings different fruit, different flavours and different challenges.”



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Getting prepared for Moving Day



Sharon Davis
REPORTER

Moving Day, traditionally on the first day of June, is a big day on the dairy farming calendar when sharemilkers and other farmers move between farms, along with their mobs of cows.

Moving farms is a lot more complicated than moving a household as it includes a farm-load of equipment and animals.

Good planning and communication is the key to reducing the stress of Moving Day – which usually involves moving to a new job, on a new farm with a new home – and often even a new school for children.

Most farmers will need help from trucking companies and other contractors for the move. With hundreds of farms and thousands of cows on the move, it's essential to arrange the help you will need well in advance and clarify what each contractor will do, when and where they will be needed, where they are going, and the costs involved.

A lot of farmers rely on family and friends to help out on Moving Day. Asking for help early and being clear on the help you need will take the stress out of the day.



It's also important to communicate with the person leaving the farm you're moving to and to ask to be kept up-to-date with any last-minute issues that might arise.

Preparing stock for moving usually starts several weeks in advance, including booking transport (if necessary) and a feed transition plan for cows moving on to new feed.

Supplementing feed with extra magnesium to combat the extra stress of the move is also recommended.

Ospri regional partner Fiona Caldwell said farmers needed to ensure the animals being moved were fit for either transport or

walking from one farm to another.

All cows moving farms need to be tagged and registered and both the dairy farmer and the grazer had responsibilities under Nait, she said.

Ideally each animal should be scanned off a property and scanned in at the new property, with the movement sent through to Nait.

If the person in charge of animals (PICA) changes, the person in charge needs to fill in an animal status declaration.

"It's important that the parties communicate and know who is going to do what, and who is responsible for replacing any lost

tags."

Caldwell said farmers can contact Ospri if they have any queries.

Farmers using third-party software, such as Minda, to record stock movement should use the same process to record movement off one farm and on to the next – and check that the information is transferred to Nait.

Some farmers might need a new Nait location and farmers should complete a change of PICA, she said.

"If you're taking over an existing Nait it's a good idea to get it updated and make sure it is all correct. Don't be afraid to contact the Ospri support centre," Caldwell said.

MOVING DAY TIPS

- Plan your move well in advance and give friends and contractors plenty of notice.
- Draw up a list of all the things you will need to do in preparation for the day and once at your new property.
- Put someone in charge of buying takeaways or food from the grocery store to keep everyone fed and hydrated. Moving Day can involve long hours.
- Well-labelled boxes make it much easier to find the things you need. Pack very important items separately and take these in your car when you move.
- Get in touch with your insurer – you might need a separate transit policy for the move.
- Don't forget to tag animals and register any movements with Nait. Accurate records of animal movements is important.



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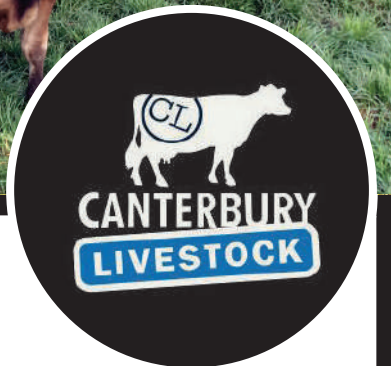


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Left – Southern Dairy Hub general manager Andrea Dixon says a large-scale research farm comes with unique challenges.

Right – The Southern Dairy Hub is the largest research farm in New Zealand and one of the biggest globally.
PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Seven years of trusted research

By CLAIRE INKSON
CLAIRE.INKSON@THEGUARDIAN.CO.NZ

The Southern Dairy Hub (SDH), near Wallacetown, is entering its seventh year of operation. At 349 hectares and running nearly 800 cows, the hub is the largest in New Zealand and one of the biggest operating globally.

SDH general manager Andrea Dixon, who was appointed to the role last year, says running a commercial-scale research farm has its unique challenges.

“Being a research farm does create complexities and add cost, which is why we hugely appreciate our sponsors and supporters helping us achieve what we need to.”

The dry stock property was purchased and converted to dairy in 2016 for \$19.5 million, with DairyNZ and AgResearch contributing \$5 million each, and Southern Dairy Development Trust and local farmers and businesses contributing \$1.25 million.

The balance was met with manageable debt.

The SDH was established in response to Southland dairy farmers’ need for research into the region’s unique challenges.

“The opportunity here is to ensure we, the dairy sector, continue delivering the highest quality milk both environmentally and sustainably to the international market with 95 per cent of what we produce being exported,” Dixon said.

“Back in 2017, we did a workshop with southern farmers to understand what the biggest challenges were, and one of those challenges was the soil aspect of Southland because the ground conditions are very different to any other region.”

Dixon said one of the key initiatives SDH took from the workshop was to further understand what best practice looks like for wintering in Southland.

“We started with a fodderbeet and kale trial because back in 2017, a lot of farmers were using fodderbeet.”

The research found that fodderbeet may still have a place in wintering systems due to a lower methane footprint.

This winter, Dixon said SDH would look to improve the profitability of fodderbeet winter grazing while maintaining the environmental footprint achieved by the farm in the earlier kale and fodderbeet system comparison.

“We have paired the fodderbeet trial this season with grass and baleage because that’s what a lot of farmers are using at the moment.”

“It’s important we understand the sweet spot between cow comfort and minimising the area used for wintering and not needing to re-grass every paddock.”

At the start of calving, cows are fed Vitalise CalMag supplement to prevent milk fever and grass staggers.

“It’s easy to deal with because it gets mixed into our feed, and that feed gets delivered on-farm and goes into the silo.”

“We feed it to cows through calving, right through until November or December.”

“The benefit of feeding it the way we do it is that we know the cows are getting that supplement because it comes right through the feed.”

“It’s an important supplement because milk fever and staggers can result in death but also reduced production, and it takes them a wee bit to get back on to a rising plane to get in calf.”

“So we need to manage those things with minerals.”

Dixon said that the scale of the research farm means more accurate data can be collected.

“The SDH is on a commercial scale, whereas many research farms are low scale, with only 15-20 cows. Having a larger scale farm helps with the reliability of the information coming out.”

“It’s quite a complex operation because of the research requirements. It requires a lot more attention to detail regarding recording information because our vision is

to be the most trusted research.

“And that comes from the accuracy of data.”

Cows are divided into four farm-let systems of around 200 cows, which are mainly crossbred.

“The idea is that we have a cow that is most reflective of the southern cow.”

Cows are milked off 300 hectares, with a 49-hectare support block.

“It’s about understanding that balance around care and comfort, environment, sustainability and profitability.”

Dixon said that while the farm is predominantly research-based, there is a clear focus on increasing the demonstration aspect to lift stakeholder engagement.

“We have worked hard over the last year to communicate more. We have information coming out regularly through Facebook, our website and newsletters.”

The farm holds three field fays a year, the next one being June 20 at 11am.

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From left:

- 2024 SIDE chairperson Jonathon Hoets.
- Keynote speaker Dan Pronk.
- Keynote speaker Jeremy Hill.

PHOTOS SUPPLIED



SIDE embraces change for its 25th

By **CLAIRE INKSON**
CLAIRE.INKSON@THEGUARDIAN.CO.NZ

The South Island Dairy Event (SIDE) is coming to Lincoln University from June

24-26 for the event's 25th year. SIDE event chairperson Jonathan Hoets says the conference is about embracing change, not just learning new strategies or

techniques. "We've spent a fair amount of time tailoring the event to the climate we are in with the theme excelling through challenges." Hoets said the event is "by farmers for farmers", with all members of the SIDE committee directly involved in primary industry. "We sourced advice from other farmers on how to shape the event, and in certain areas this year, we have steered away from animal health and are focusing more on business development."

The event has grown to be New Zealand's largest dairy conference and was established in 1998 as a platform for South Island-based farmers to increase their dairy farming knowledge and skills.

"We believe that empowering dairy farmers is crucial to creating positive opportunities for growth," Hoets said.

"By attending SIDE 2024, participants will have the chance to learn how to improve their businesses while adapting to changing consumer demands and regulatory requirements."

Keynote speakers at this year's event include Dan Pronk, an ex-Australian SAS medic, Fonterra's chief science and technology officer, Jeremy Hill, and Siobhan O'Malley, founder of Hemprino and Meat the Need.

On the first day of the conference, June 24, attendees can choose to attend a field trip to the Lincoln University Research Dairy Farm (LURDF) to learn about the latest research topics, such as plantain and EcoPond.

The second day will feature workshops on various topics, including leadership, succession planning, successful winter grazing systems and preparing your business for a natural disaster.

"The workshops are very hands-on and interactive this year, and there are a lot of networking opportunities.

"There will be rural professionals there as well who are very specific to dairy farming, so farmers can ask questions and look at very specific products they have in store."

And dinner will round out the evening. BrightSIDE is back again this year, focusing on those entering or new to the dairy industry.

Attendees will spend the morning at SIDE listening to keynote speakers before heading off for a practical day at LURDF.

"BrightSIDE was formed a few years ago, and it's our way of giving back."

Farmers can register for the conference and BrightSIDE on the SIDE website.

"We encourage farmers to come along and get immersed in the experience," Hoets said.

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Katrina Roberts hopes winning the award will showcase the importance of female farm vets and advisors. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Dairy woman of year announced

By CLAIRE INKSON

2024 Fonterra Dairy Woman of the Year Katrina Roberts says the win is “still sinking in”.

Roberts, a herd health veterinarian based in Waikato, was announced as the winner at the Dairy Women’s Network (DWN) conference Enhance, Elevate, Evolve in New Plymouth on May 2.

Roberts, who works for Anexa Veterinary Services, has been providing farm consultancy for the past 20 years, and her expertise is often sought after by vets and farmers alike for research, keynote speaking and project management.

“I am very much about the award showcasing the important role of a female dairy vet and farm advisor on dairy farms.

“For me, winning the award gives me the ability to demonstrate the benefit of that relationship.”

This was Roberts’ first time attending the annual DWN conference and she said she could not believe the level of positivity and optimism at the event, not just from the organisers but also from the attendees.

“I feel the award is a great opportunity to stop and acknowledge these women putting in the mahi.

“Women in the agriculture sector are usually working pretty hard and we multitask a lot, juggling many balls and wearing many hats.

“It’s really for those just getting up and doing the job to be celebrated and recognised.”

As part of winning the Fonterra Dairy Woman of the Year, Roberts will receive a scholarship to be part of the Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme.

The scholarship covers the programme fee, travel and accommodation, mentoring, and access to DWN and Fonterra platforms to share research.

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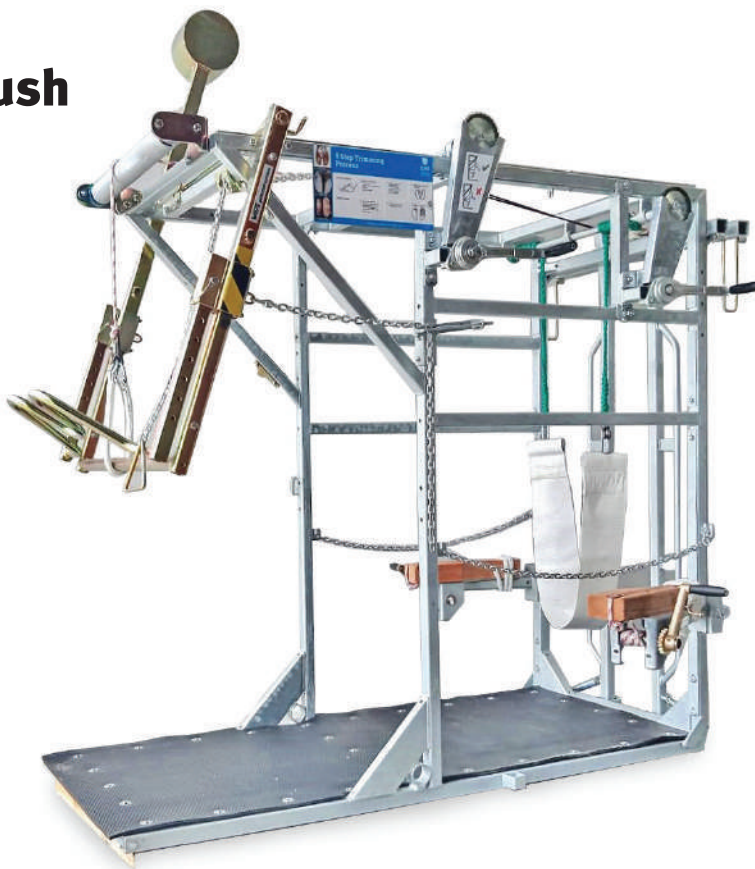
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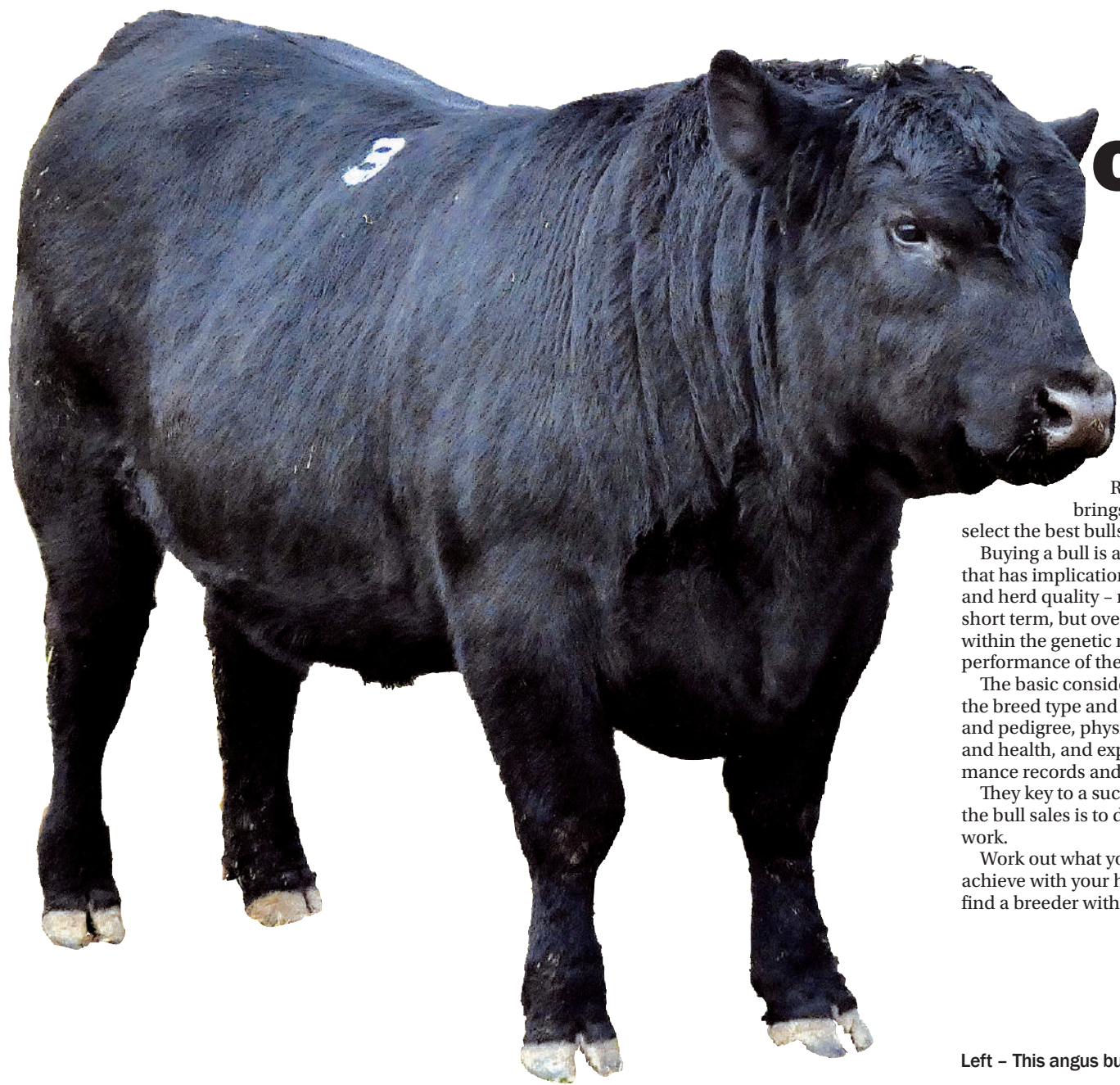
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Things to consider at bull sales

As online and farm-based bull sales ramp up around the country, the Rural Guardian brings you tips to help select the best bulls for your herd.

Buying a bull is a big investment that has implications for breeding and herd quality – not only in the short term, but over generations within the genetic makeup and performance of the herd.

The basic considerations include the breed type and size, parentage and pedigree, physical appearance and health, and expected performance records and genetic profile.

The key to a successful day at the bull sales is to do your homework.

Work out what you want to achieve with your herd and then find a breeder with bulls that will

help you meet those goals.

It's a good idea to contact the breeder and arrange to visit the stud prior to sale day. This will give you a chance to ask about performance records, what diseases the bulls have been exposed to, and ensure they are certified free of TB, BVD, IBR and EBL.

Select bulls with a good temperament so they are easy to manage. If buying more than one bull, it's recommended to buy from the same mob to reduce fighting.

The bulls you buy should not be more than 100kg heavier than the cow to avoid injuries. Consider ease of calving and birthweight – or whatever criteria are important to you – when assessing the bulls on offer.

Rank the available bulls against your criteria to come up with a shortlist of suitable prospects – and stick to your list to ensure you buy the right bulls on sale day.

Left – This angus bull from Mt Possession Station sold for \$88,000 in 2021.

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