

# RURAL GUARDIAN

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AUGUST 2024

TO EVERY FARM IN THE SOUTH ISLAND



## WHEAT IMPORT 'MADNESS'

High import rates of wheat are worrying New Zealand grain experts like Arable Food Industry Council chairperson Brian Leadley (pictured). Read Anisha Satya's revealing grain drain story, including why one industry leader calls it madness. See P12-13.

## FARMING THROUGH THE FOG



**SPECIAL FEATURE**

**Page 17-26**

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# FROM THE EDITOR

WITH Claire Inkson – OPINION

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# Check in with your neighbours and yourself

In 2016, the Hurunui District was in the grips of two years of drought. North Canterbury is always dry over the summer, but this was different.

The paddocks turned from summer-dry brown to depleted silver-grey. It was as if all life had been sucked out of the ground.

We sent stock down south to graze, an expensive and soul-destroying process. It felt like the sky had forgotten how to rain and the situation felt relentless.

As with any adverse event, one positive outcome of such a dark time was how the community came together.

Like generations before us, we learned what it meant to be resilient.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, resilience is the ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.

It doesn't mean we don't fall or stumble. It means that if we fall, we get back up, and sometimes we need some help to do that.

As we looked around at our community, it became clear that farmers under stress needed to be given the opportunity to get off the farm and talk to each other about their struggles.

Often, when things are hard, you feel like you don't have the energy or mental bandwidth to talk to other people or socialise, but that is precisely when it is most important to connect and reach out.

On the small scale, we organised dinners with the neighbours and social nights out with friends.

On a larger scale, with help from the Rural Support Trust and Agribusinesses, we held drought shout events and nights away to get

farmers off the farm.

Through that drought, we learned coping strategies and practical things we could do to help our community get through.

Even in the eight years since, we have become much better as a country at talking about mental health in general, especially in the rural space.

We have people like Kathryn Wright, Craig Wiggins, Wayne and Tyler Langford, and Matt Chisholm who keep the conversations open and accessible.

We have organisations like the Rural Support Trust and Farmstrong providing practical strategies to help farmers cope better with challenging times.

While none of this will change the weather, commodity prices, the rate of inflation or any other wolf that might be prowling outside the farm gate, it equips us with some tools to navigate those challenges in a healthier and more positive way.

Like most farmers across the country, Hurunui is once again doing it tough.

As I write this, the district is dealing with the effects of another drought after a drier-than-normal autumn that has left many farmers short of feed going into winter.

Right now, New Zealand farmers are especially vulnerable to adverse events due to the broad challenges facing almost the entire agriculture sector.

It's an important time to check in on our neighbours and friends, and take a proactive approach to wellbeing and caring for ourselves mentally and physically so we can remain resilient.



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# acl

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ACL's team of skilled operators' clearing trees as part of the company's dairy lane work.

## ACL's animal health dairy lane drive

Ask ACL rural contracting manager Warren Mackenzie why dairy lane construction and maintenance is important, and his answer reveals so much about the organisation's ethos.

"It's all about animal health," Warren said of a major dairy focus for Ashburton Contracting Limited, which has been in operation since 1995.

"We're focused on the welfare need of a farmer's cows.

"If cows get sore feet walking over stones and boulders (to and from the

dairy shed) then their milk production can go down."

That's why Warren's ACL team is here and ready to help farmers throughout Mid Canterbury and beyond. They want to ensure the animals avoid those sore feet and lameness scares, which remains one of the most production-limiting animal health diseases in New Zealand dairy cattle.

Warren and his crew offer quality advice and professional service, backed by 30 years of experience and industry knowhow. They know what works. They know what doesn't.

They know that building robust lanes for dairy farming requires a comprehensive understanding of construction principles, potential problems, and the right products to use.

They're available anytime to talk to farmers about dairy lanes, covering anything and everything from construction to capping, and more.

Capping is the process to improve and maintain the lanes or tracks within a farm to enhance their durability and stability, especially those used for transporting cows, milk tankers, and equipment.

"And we can get on to the farm, talk to the farmer about what they need and offer a free and very accurate quote for any work they want done.

"Access lanes, leading into the cow shed where there is high traffic, do wear out over time. They just have to be refreshed and we're here to provide the best advice and service around that and all aspects of dairy lanes."



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# Mount Hutt students shine in contest

CLAIRE INKSON  
CLAIRE.INKSON@THEGUARDIAN.CO.NZ

Mid Canterbury kids have held their own at this year's prestigious FMG Young Farmer of the Year contest.

The contest, held in Hamilton on July 13, saw James Clark and Jack Foster from Mount Hutt College come in second in the FMG Junior Young Farmer of the Year section.

As Year 13 students, this was the pair's third and final year entering the junior section of the competition, which Clark described as a "great experience".

"You get to meet some really good people and do some cool things. You get to meet some people who are high up in agribusiness companies and get to network, which will probably help us later in life.

"It opened my eyes to a whole lot of different sectors rather than just the arable side of things I would normally see on the farm."

The duo competed against 13 schools from all over the country, participating in challenges that evaluated their practical skills and agricultural knowledge.

Shamus Young and Hayden Drummond from Otago Boys High School secured the top spot. Despite not winning, Clark was pleased with the points they earned in the practical skills section, which he considered to be the most enjoyable part of the competition.

"We got to fix a fence, plumb up a water

trough and build a little box. All the practical stuff was the best part."

Clark said the pair found the speech element of the competition the most challenging.

"We are just a couple of teenage boys who don't like English or speaking in front of people.

"So that was probably the hardest thing for us."

Clark encouraged any other high school students who might consider entering the event to "give it a go".

"It's a great way to experience agriculture; if you get decently far, there are great prizes.

"It's a very profitable competition if you do well."

Clark will be eligible to compete in the main contest next year and intends to enter for a chance at the 2025 FMG Young Farmer of the Year title.

"I don't know how far we will get because it's a hotly contested contest, but we will give it a crack."

Mid Canterbury also had success in the AgrikidsNZ section of the event, where primary school children competed in a range of challenges, including modules, quizzes and an AgrikidsNZ race.

Longbeach Primary School Students Henry Pottinger, Edward White and George Lash came in second, with a trio from Te Waotu School taking out the grand champion title.

## GRAND FINAL HAMILTON • SEASON 56



James Clark (left) and Jack Foster from Mount Hutt College come in second in the FMG Junior Young Farmer of the Year section. PHOTO SUPPLIED



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Left – Grand finalists (from left) Archie Woodhouse, Caleb Eady, George Dodson, Zac Thomas, Gareth Mc Kerchar and Zayne Jones.  
Below – George Dodson spent months preparing for the FMG Young Farmer of the Year Competition and came away with a win after three days of gruelling challenges.  
PHOTOS SUPPLIED



# Preparation pays off

CLAIRE INKSON

Canterbury dairy farmer and member of the Darfield Young Farmers Club George Dodson has won the top title and been named 2024 FMG Young Farmer of the Year in the 56th season of the competition.

Dodson was announced as the winner at the FMG Young Farmer of the Year Awards evening in Hamilton on July 13 after three days of practical and technical challenges, which included an exam, an interview, heavy machinery, livestock, quizzes and public speaking.

Dodson, who competed against

six other finalists, said the win meant “everything” to him.

“I’ve put so much time and effort into preparing for this, especially over the past few months.

“It’s probably one of the biggest dreams of my life.”

Dodson said that he still didn’t expect to win even after making it to the finals.

“I didn’t think I was going to be the one to take it home, so to get over the line was unreal.”

Dodson is 2IC on a dairy farm between Darfield and Dunsandel after managing a dairy farm in Southland at just 20 years old.

Dodson’s family and friends were vital in helping the 23-year-

old prepare for the competition.

“My dad put hours and hours and hours into helping me prepare.

“I had mates come for quiz nights at my place every week for the last three months with practice buzzers, which is the story everyone loves because that’s what got me over the line.

“I ended up dominating the last round of the quiz.”

Dodson said he found the technical day the most difficult part of the competition.

“I haven’t gone to uni, so that’s where I thought I was going to struggle compared to some of the other guys that have been to Lincoln and that sort of thing.

Dodson said he had no experience putting together a business plan and hadn’t taken an exam since high school, but he was pleased with his performance.

“I managed to get it done to a reasonably high standard, so I was stoked.”

While Dodson found the first part of the Farmllet challenge difficult, he got back on track in the second section.

“I managed to finish with a couple of minutes to spare and completed all the stuff they wanted completed.”

It’s the second time Dodson has been in a regional final, but this year was the first time he made it

through to the grand final. He is optimistic about making the most of the year ahead with the title under his belt.

“I’m looking forward to the opportunities to network, get myself out there and give back to Young Farmers because what they have given me is incredible – even before winning this title.

In addition to holding the prestigious title, Dodson also won the Agri-Knowledge Award and took home over \$90,000 in prizes.

Northern representative Caleb Eady came in as runner-up in the competition, and Aorangi Young Farmer Gareth Mc Kercher finished in third.



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# Doors and More for fire safety

Farmers, listen up. Having fire extinguishers in tractors and harvesters could be a lifesaver.

That's the word from someone who knows. He's Nigel Brough, the owner of Ashburton business DAM Doors and More, which can meet all your needs around doors and locks, plus fire extinguisher servicing, sales and training.

Their team has two decades of experience, and they offer after-hour calls by arrangement. But it's servicing and selling fire extinguishers for farm machinery that is a big focus because it is vital in an agricultural district like Mid Canterbury.

Brough and his crew know that using farm machinery unsafely or failing to maintain it, could increase the risk of starting a fire.

That's why they think all farmers should have fire extinguishers on tractors, harvesters, trucks, and other equipment.

"It is important to have fire extinguishers in tractors and harvesters due to birds and other animals nesting and electrical faults," Brough said.

"Having an extinguisher in the cab accessible if a fire breaks out could save your life."

And if you're not sure what you need, then give the DAM team a ring because they can come out to your farm and work directly with the customer and their budget expectations.



"We do onsite advising in regards to what the farmers' requirements will be.

"Individual needs can be different per machine, building and storage facilities and the placement of the extinguishers."

And what is the go in term of on-farm fire extinguishers?

"In today's market, our customers are utilising a powder extinguisher as this covers almost any fire that breaks out.

"We also supply foam, water, and carbon dioxide gas for other applications."

They can also provide different sized extinguishers and safety signage.

"This tells the person who will be using it, that they have the appropriate extinguisher, and it makes the extinguisher more visible

"We can also offer fire training for staff on farm to teach you how to use an extinguisher.

"Our annual extinguisher servicing also allows you to know that all your extinguishers are up to date, and your health and safety can be checked off for another year."

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# Record number of cats culled

CLAIRE INKSON

**R**acks of culled feral cats, wild pigs and even wallabies hung proudly in the winter sunshine at the third annual North Canterbury Hunting Competition in Rotherham.

The quintessentially rural event took place on June 30 amid a sea of Red Band gumboots, Stoney Creek jackets, and more than the occasional mullet as a fair amount of Speights went across the bar.

The event has attracted its fair share of controversy for its cat category in the past, but organiser Mat Bailey says there hasn't been any significant backlash this year.

"I think more cats are entered than anything else, so we are pretty happy with that.

"We haven't had the backlash like last year. I think the country warmed up to the idea, and we have had people wanting to sponsor the event because we have done that."

Bailey said the protesters at previous events had given the competition a good publicity boost and he welcomed their presence.

"If they hadn't made a fuss, maybe a couple of cats would have been shot, but as soon as they poked the bear, everyone was into it. So it's sort of backfired on them, but it's good for conservation."

A convoy of hundreds of utes rolled up throughout the day, depositing over 1500 entries that included deer, chamois, possums, goats and even rats.

Three-hundred-and-41 feral cats



North Canterbury Hunting Competition organiser Mat Bailey said the committee was happy with the number of cats entered. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

were culled, with one farmer entering 65 cats to claim a \$500 prize.

Around five protesters from Christchurch Animal Save showed up later in the day after allegedly initially going to a venue in Ashley by mistake.

They were met by a group of children at the gate, holding a baby possum.

Protester Sarah Jackson took the possum, instructed the children to "Google what compassion means", and accused them of being "conditioned".

"We are here to protest this blood sport that glorifies the killing of animals.

"They are hiding behind conservation," Jackson said.

She said the group supports non-lethal methods of pest control and that other issues should be considered first before condemning animals.

"There are humans at both ends of the spectrum profiting from that, and they should be looked at first, like cat breeders.

"Human activity and animal

farming are responsible for habitat loss and species extinction."

Children under 14 were not allowed to enter the competition, but a kids' carrying competition in which children could pull a dead animal over obstacles was a massive hit, as was the helicopter-dropped lolly scramble.

There were \$55,000 of spot prizes, including a late model Toyota Hilux, given out.

With around 120 deer donated to charity Hunters4Hope, Bailey said there was "bugger all waste" at the

event. "Last year, Hunters4Hope took around 50 deer, and this year, they hope to make as many as they can to process for the Hope Community Trust that will go to food-banks.

"The antlers get sold, and the money goes back to the school, and possums get taken for fur."

In addition to the event's proceeds going to support the Rotherham School and community, the donation of venison to Hunters4Hope means around 12,000 meals for food banks from the competition.

The organisation donates 500 kilos of mince to foodbanks every month, and the hunting competition means there is enough meat to sustain a steady supply during the quieter season.

Hunters4Hope founder Steve Hill, who runs the organisation with Adam Kriesel, says the prizes at this year's event have encouraged more entries.

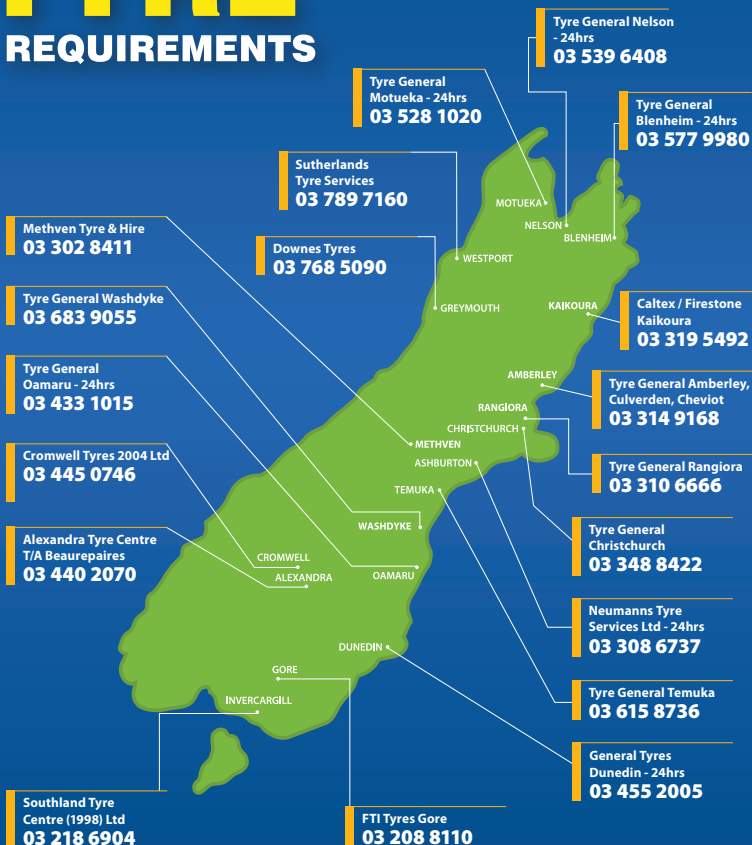
"High Peak Station have come on board and donated two overnight guided meat hunts to two hunters who donate their deer to Hunters4Hope at the competition."

The event concluded with a late afternoon prizegiving.

Protesters claimed in a Facebook post that children threw rocks at them and that the road was blocked when they tried to leave, which Bailey denies.

"They made all that up and we don't really care about their feelings. Welcome to the country," Bailey said.

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# Working hard to cut red tape



**Nicola Grigg**

Associate Minister for Agriculture

After recently returning from parental leave to my roles as Associate Minister of Agriculture, Minister of State for Trade, and Women I have thoroughly enjoyed getting across the issues in my portfolios once again.

One of my agriculture delegations is horticulture, so I have spent the past couple of weeks visiting growers and farmers around the Selwyn District to understand what barriers they face and how we can address them.

We are just over six months into the term and our Government is already well under way with the monumental turnaround job our country needs.

Finance Minister Nicola Willis delivered her first budget in May, which displayed our determination to control government spending, and invest in the things that mean most to Kiwis – including health, education and law and order.

In the agricultural space, the Government has prioritised work to minimise the administrative burden on farmers caused by duplication, red tape and regulatory



“**New Zealand farmers are the world’s most carbon-efficient producers of high-quality food and fibre, and it is in no-one’s interest to see this production filled by other countries with higher emissions profiles**”

blocks to things such as irrigation, water storage, flood protection schemes and stock exclusion rules.

We all know that Labour launched a wave of red tape on farmers – there were, in fact, more than 20 changes to legislation and regulation introduced since 2017, including climate change rules that threatened 20 per cent of sheep and beef farms with closure

by 2030. This was unacceptable to us and we are working at pace to unpick the damage already done.

Our focus is to get more value back to the farm gate, more money into farmers’ pockets, so that farmers can continue to adapt, evolve and innovate within their businesses for the long term.

We are replacing the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 and we have

committed to delivering a better RMA system for our primary sector and rural communities.

We want to save our farmers money – and countless hours of paperwork – so, we have committed to address issues raised around stock exclusion rules, we’re proposing to remove the problematic and contentious low slope map and for regional councils and farmers to determine

where stock need to be excluded, based on risk.

Regional councils also tell us there have been significant improvements in winter grazing practices, with farmers changing where they plant fodder crops and how they manage winter grazing. The national requirement for farmers to obtain prescriptive and expensive winter grazing consents is being removed in time for the 2025 season, and instead being managed through good practice and regional council plans. Winter grazing rules would have required over 10,000 farmers around the country to get a resource consent just to feed a winter crop to their stock.

We have also announced that an independent panel of experts will review agricultural biogenic methane science and targets.

The independent review – which will report back to the Government by the end of the year – will provide evidence-based advice on what our domestic 2050 methane target should be, consistent with the principle of no additional warming.

New Zealand farmers are the world’s most carbon-efficient producers of high-quality food and fibre, and it is in no-one’s interest to see this production filled by other countries with higher emissions profiles.

*Nicola Grigg is Associate Minister of Agriculture, Minister of State for Trade and Minister for Women*

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# The next gen of a Kiwi favourite



The new Mitsubishi Triton has plenty of deck space and can now fit a conventional 1200x800mm pallet  
PHOTO DUNCAN HUMM

I've been looking forward to getting my hands on the new generation Triton for quite some time to see how Mitsubishi would evolve.

Their previous model that had well and truly earned a reputation for being tough, reliable and often considered to be dollar for dollar the best all-round performing double cab 4x4 ute.

This new model definitely has the potential to continue that legacy, and I think what they have presented is a great blend of proven engineering in a modern package that will serve owners well.

Now they've been released to the market for a few months it's interesting to see the internet isn't full of owners unhappy with their purchase. The only thing that seems to be bought up is a niggly with the camera that monitors if the driver's

attention is being distracted.

Good thing is dealers are doing a software update to let you glance away for up to nine seconds instead of three and if you don't like it then it can be turned off completely.

I was expecting all the driving aids to be quite overbearing given that it now holds the title of the safest ute on the market with 5-star ANCAP rating.

All the sensors to keep you in your lane read the road well, even on Mid Canterbury's rough and often poorly-marked ones!

Other utes in class pull you away from lines or hold you too close to the centre line rather than to the left, whereas the Triton gives a vibration through the steering wheel much like you get when holding a game controller.

The sensitivity can also be customised easily in settings, so it can

be set up however you like.

Handling wise the Triton is a huge improvement over the previous generation, really smooth around town, comfortable on the open road, planted and predictable at high speed on winding shingle roads and around the farm it is everything you need.

One of the main things I look for in any vehicle is the leg room and spaciousness. The Triton's larger cabin ticks the box nicely, I can stretch the legs out straight easily and my knees aren't banging against the door or centre console.

Around the farm getting in and out with gumboots on is easy too.

To nerd out on some of the finer points I think are quite interesting: As well as the now typical 3500kg towing for the class you can have a 1000kg payload and a total combined weight of 6250kg which

is 365kg more than the previous generation and so much so if you were to utilise it all you'd actually need a class 2 driver's licence because a class 1 is limited to 6000kg TCW.

Engine is a new 2.4L bi turbo diesel that makes 150KW and 470Nm of torque, matched with a six-speed auto transmission.

Further on safety, the cabin has eight airbags, including one in the front centre, so passengers won't bang into each other in an accident.

The steering wheel is improved so that lock to lock is now only 3.4 turns and with the Electric Power Steering (EPS) will change with the speed the vehicle is moving, so it will feel light at slow speed and get heavier as speed increases to give more control.

The turning radius has increased

over the previous model, but given the wheelbase is now 130mm longer, it is only by 5%, it will turn tighter than other comparable utes.

Deck space will now fit a conventional 1200x800mm pallet and easier to reach as deck height has been lowered to 820mm.

There's plenty of tie-down hooks and grooving to add load dividers made from 4x2 timber.

In conclusion if you're after a quality ute that will do everything you need it to do with no fuss but also with the refinement to match in-class competitors at a sharp price point then you should definitely consider looking at one if you're in the market. It's hard to go past the 10-year or 160000km powertrain warranty too.

Feel free to get in touch with me, as always, if you want to talk about this vehicle in more detail!

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# Delivering maximum yield when the pressure from slugs is on

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**M**aximising yield, and ensuring stock have enough feed is absolutely vital to profitability. So, any challenge to achieving that needs to be firmly nipped in the bud.

Often unnoticed, slugs steal profitability covertly while actively competing with stock for forage crops, and potentially having a devastating impact on emerging seedlings. As Tom McDonald, Regional Manager Lower South Island for sustainable agricultural solutions provider UPL NZ Ltd., points out: "No farmer or grower needs those extra mouths to feed. In effect, those slugs are nibbling away at your back pocket."

Up north, a Te Awamutu contractor has been taking the slug challenge by the horns and Tom can see the similarities with Mid Canterbury.

Darcy Finch who, with his wife Rachael, operates busy Finch Contracting employs up to 40 staff at peak season and provides a complete service for farmers from cultivating, drilling, and fertilising to harvesting, baling, and cartage.

And the early adopter's team

are not going to let slugs get in the way of providing great results for their clients. That's especially the case when it comes to the extensive, high value, maize crops which are an integral part of the region's landscape and economy – much like Ashburton, Tom says.

"It's typically drier in Mid Canterbury but, when you factor in our irrigation, the environment for slugs is similar." Slugs are dependent on moisture for their survival, activity and growth with moisture forming up to 80% of slugs' body weight.

Darcy Finch says he saw an ad for Ironmax Pro<sup>®</sup> and rang his rep. "They assured me that it did a good job and was nontoxic. Nontoxic is a nice-to-have, and if you're getting the same performance, it's a win/win for everyone."

"We've had no issues with the product, and it flows well, which is important with our metering systems."

Darcy uses Ironmax Pro<sup>®</sup> on crops ranging from chicory and turnips, to grass and maize. "Slug pressure can vary a lot even from one paddock to another on a single property and with direct drilling and strip till,



Lachie McCully, one of the Finch Contracting team, pouring Ironmax Pro<sup>®</sup> into the hopper.

particularly, slugs are something you really need to think about."

That vigilance is something Tom says is critical.

"You might think it's been a bit dry, and slugs shouldn't be an issue but that could be a costly assumption – especially where seedlings and crop establishment are concerned."

"We always advise; monitor and measure! I've seen slugs decimate 200 hectares of young plantain and the problem came out of almost nowhere. Slugs

can cover a lot more ground than people think. We put out a slug mat that night and there were 180 slugs under it the next morning." Travelling up to 13 metres in one night, slugs are voracious feeders and can consume more than 50% of their own body weight.

Grey field slugs (*Deroceras reticulatum*) and their close relation brown field slugs (*Deroceras invadens*) have a mottled colour and their night feeding habit, Tom says, enables

them to escape attention.

In New Zealand's relatively clement climate slugs are active year-round and can produce 300-500 eggs in their 13-month lifespan.

Tom says changes in agricultural practices have also, inadvertently, cut slugs a break.

"Cultivation was never a complete fix because you've usually got areas around the edge of the paddock, or around waterways and troughs which are perfect for slugs. From there, they can move out at night to feed on crops. But strip till and low till have shifted the goal posts – in favour of the slugs."

Manufactured by De Sangosse, the world leaders in molluscicides, Tom says Ironmax Pro<sup>®</sup> has all the benefits of their market leading Metarex<sup>®</sup> Inov product.

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# Kings of corriedale 2.0:

CLAIRE INKSON

Robin and Pip Wilson have been refining one of New Zealand's first sheep breeds, the dual-purpose corriedale, for over 30 years.

The Wilsons founded their corriedale stud, Wilfield, in 1992 near Kirwee with a focus on breeding what they have dubbed corriedale 2.0 - the sheep of the future.

"We always had a passion for corriedale sheep, but some breeders were on a different wavelength than we were.

"We wanted more money from our sheep," Robin said.

North Otago farmer James Little initially bred the corriedale sheep in the late 1860s by crossing lincoln and leicester rams with merino.

In 1903, the breed was officially recognised in New Zealand as corriedale, named after Littles' sheep station.

With its mid-micron wool, drought resistance and quality carcass, the versatile breed took off globally, eventually being farmed in Australia, North and South America and Central Europe.

wool prices saw the breed's popularity drop off as the finer-wooled merino took centre stage.

The breed also had a tendency towards wool blindness and a susceptibility to foot rot.

Careful breeding by the Wilsons, using a scientific approach, has virtually eliminated those issues.

Using Sheep Improvement Ltd, the performance recording and genetic evaluation database, and gene marker technology for extra muscling, cold tolerance, worm and foot rot resistance, Wilfields' corriedale is taking the breed into the future.

"We have introduced foot rot resistance through DNA testing at Lincoln University with Professor Jon Hickford. "It's the best use of science in the sheep industry we

have seen here."

Footrot resistance is a win-win, Wilson said.

"The good thing is that all sheep farmers benefit from it because they don't have to put their sheep through a footrot trough, which is incredibly hard on animals.

"The sheep don't want to go through it, so it's hard for dogs and farmers.

"Putting that gene in your flock costs buggar all.

"We charge a premium for sheep with a 1:1 score here, but when you work it out over all of their progeny, it's less than a dollar per sheep."

Wilfield corriedales are known for being open-headed, fertile, meatier, and finer-wooled, qualities that paid off at the recent Corriedale

World Congress in Peru.

"About nine countries were represented at the conference, and around eight countries had sheep there. Part of the conference is a show.

"The best wool sheep of the show was a ram born and bred here and exported about 12 months ago. And the best sheep of the show was a ewe whose father was born and bred here."

The Wilfield property is 140 hectares, with the sheep stud income supplemented by cropping.

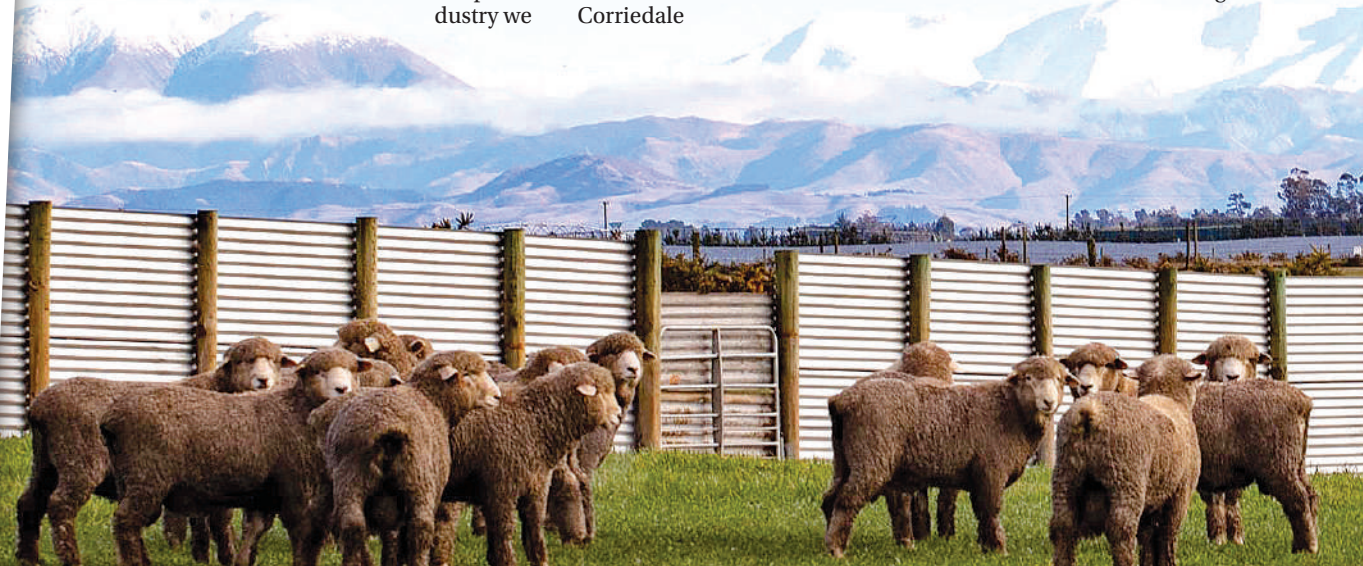
"We are very intensive, around 18 stock units per hectare. And we grow a bit of crop, primarily radish for seed."

Wilson said with the challenges facing the agriculture sector, it's a tough time

The breed had its issues, though. Falling



Wilfield Sheep Stud corriedales have a finer wool than traditionally associated with the breed. PHOTOS CLAIRE INKSON



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# A sheep for the future

to be a stud breeder.

The corriedale stud is complemented by a suftex ram stud, which was introduced to the business 10 years ago when the Wilsons began crossing texel rams over suffolk ewes, which Wilson said has been "going nicely".

Despite the success of the corriedale and suftex studs, the current economic climate in the agriculture sector remains challenging.

"It's a difficult time to be involved in the sheep industry with it being down.

"If it stays down for another 12 months, people won't want rams.

"It puts our business in jeopardy," Wilson said.



Left - The corriedale stud is complemented by a suftex ram stud.

Right - Robin Wilson and wife Pip have been breeding corriedales for over 30 years.

Below - Wilfield Corriedale are known for being open-headed, fertile, meatier and finer-wooled.



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# Grain drain: Call for NZ-grown



**Anisha Satya**  
REPORTER

**P**asta, pies, bread and Weet-Bix – all New Zealand wheat food products we love but they may not be as Kiwi as first thought.

That's because a high percentage of wheat for those New Zealand favourites comes from Australia. Worryingly, on a wider international scale, it is also now cheaper to import wheat from halfway across the world – like Canada, for instance – than freight it from the South to the North Island.

"Which is madness, really," Federated Farmers arable chairperson David Birkett said.

Madness is perhaps an understatement.

Closer to home, New Zealand imports about 60% of its total annual wheat needs from Australia

In 2022, we imported 621,323 tonnes of wheat from our friends across the ditch. By comparison in the same year, New Zealand produced about 400,000 tonnes of wheat. Canterbury supplied almost 80% of it, according to the Foundation of Arable Research.

So, despite having good grain, local grain and lots of it, New Zealand is importing more than half of its

total annual wheat needs.

Luisetti Seeds' managing director Ed Luisetti reckoned most Kiwis would not realise they were often consuming a foreign product when it came to wheat.

Luisetti manages an Ashburton warehouse where grain is cleaned and prepared for domestic and overseas shipments.

"Weet-Bix, you'd think Kiwi kids are Weet-Bix kids," he said, reciting part of the product's advertising jingle from the 1990s.

"You'd think Weet-Bix would be New Zealand wheat, but, no, that's all Australian.

"Likewise, McDonald's hamburger buns. You'd be thinking that's all New Zealand wheat, but that's all Australian wheat, too.

The wheat woes don't stop there, as Foundation for Arable Research's general manager of business operations, Ivan Lawrie, explained.

"Even the daily bread that's consumed," Lawrie said.

"People assume it comes from New Zealand grains. But in the North Island, they (grains) won't be (from the North Island)."

Once all the costs are considered, it's cheaper to import Australia wheat, which was calculated at \$570 tonne in a 2022 report.

Lawrie said freighting across the Cook Strait cost "between \$100 to \$130 per tonne of wheat".

"By adding that to the local price, we are no longer competitive with Australia importing to the North Island," Lawrie said.

Tack on the expense of land, farm



maintenance and New Zealand's cost of living, and it's not a pretty picture for growers.

"All in all, to be fair, New Zealand is very expensive," Lawrie said.

Arable Food Industry Council chairperson Brian Leadley, who is co-director of Bradley Fields Limited with his wife, Rachael, in Dromore, agrees.

He said some local grain gets turned into flour and then food domestically, but about three quarters gets turned into animal feed.

It's a reality that arable farmers have grappled with for years and a narrative that has failed to change

since dairy went big, he said.

"That's always been there around cost and it's increasingly there around reliability," Leadley said.

"We see that with weather events affecting sailings."

Ships from our neighbours are more reliable and constant than those crossing our own strait, and there's domestic competition, he said.

"While we want to send grain, there are other food products wanting to go both ways – food, clothing, vehicles."

Growing the grain and getting it into the hands of suppliers was

one issue. But a bigger one loomed, Leadley said.

"The largest portion of grain is grown in the South Island.

"The largest population of people is in the North Island.

"Immediately, we move into a logistics issue with freight."

And back to David Birkett, the Federated Farmers' arable boss, who has a farm in Leeston, said it was all about innovation and making the most of difficult situations.

But some forces are out of a farmer's control, like freight costs, weather, and contract availability, he said.

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# wheat on Kiwis' plates



Left – Arable Food Industry Council chairperson Brian Leadley wants more security for himself and fellow wheat growers.

Right – Luisetti Seeds' managing director Ed Luisetti said consumers deserve to know where their flour comes from.  
PHOTOS ANISHA SATYA

“For example, one of the companies this year put a contract out. It was open for two hours, and then it closed.”

On top of that, Birkett felt the wheat characteristics that contractors wanted – protein quality, for example – were not given to farmers early enough.

“It’s been a perennial problem where we’re not getting that information before we’re ready to plant,” he said.

“And people have to plant without knowing what their price is.”

“Having that information in a timely manner, would go a long

way, and would help to create some stability within the market.”

And, yes, getting it cheaply and efficiently over Cook Strait was a logistical nightmare, but “equally, global shipping is under a lot of challenges at the moment.”

“If we can be more resilient,” Birkett said, “and rely more on the domestic economy, that’s gonna be a better thing for reliance.”

Farmers say it’s about educating people about the wheat they consume, which is why they are asking the public to adopt a shopping local stance. Fortunately, customer surveys have shown a clear prefer-

ence for locally grown grains, and a willingness to pay for them.

Next step was to grow the market through greater consumer demand, with increased awareness one method to do that, according to Leadley.

“A lot of flour products are recognised as bread,” Leadley said.

“But there’s a lot more that you can look at – your cereal foods, your bakery goods, your pasta and noodles. It’s all coming from those things.”

“They’re a huge part of the Kiwi diet.”

“We’re trying to look for ways to promote a New Zealand brand,

## BENEFITS

Costs can be volatile, but locally grown wheat benefits New Zealand in more ways than one.

That’s the view of Ed Luisetti, the managing director of the family-owned and operated Luisetti Seeds, which has factories in Rangiora and Ashburton and was established in 1932.

Luisetti are recognised for their expertise in retailing and wholesaling grain and seed throughout New Zealand, and around the world.

“We’ve carried out a carbon footprint analysis for local versus imported wheat,” Luisetti said.

“AgriLink did that work for us.”

“It actually showed that Australian wheat flour has a carbon footprint 20% higher than New Zealand wheat.”

Luisetti also felt that the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic should remind everyone of the need to provide for itself.

“It’s about self-sufficiency for the country,” he said, thinking back to 2020 when New Zealand became reliant on imported products through the worst of the pandemic when supermarkets became short of many items.

Arable Food Industry Council chairperson Brian Leadley also remembers it well.

“Bread shelves went empty at that time,” he said.

“I don’t think anyone went out of bread, but their choice of loaf definitely did.”

“If [local wheat production] gets too small, we become solely reliant on imported products.”

some packaging that would help you pick it out.”

That’s why the food council met with associate minister of agriculture Nicola Grigg to voice their concerns and offer advice, especially regarding Cook Strait freight challenges.

“We met yesterday to tell her, ‘Hey, look, these issues are there and while it affects our industry, we recognise it affects all Kiwis.’”

“Will much change? We don’t know, but we know that it would benefit our industry.”

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# Taking time to tell our story

ANGELA CUSHNIE

I have often thought there are a multitude of synergies between our number one sport and farming.

Anyone who knows me well will have heard the many and varied rugby analogies that have been trotted out over the years to help bring context to conversations about the benefit of catchment communities working together.

In a recent interview All Blacks coach Scott Robinson (Razor) shared a vital skill that makes him a strong leader: "I'm a storyteller. It's my greatest strength."

Razor expanded on this, talking about needing a story to explain 'this is where we're going'.

In a farming and catchment community context the value of team culture and storytelling is equally as powerful, and is proving to deliver game-winning outcomes across New Zealand in terms of improving water quality, enhancing biodiversity and supporting community wellbeing.

In the Foothills Catchment Group column published in April this year, John Totty summed this up by saying "the goal is to effect change on a larger scale than what any of us could do alone".

Taking time to tell our story about what is happening inside farm gates, and at a catchment level, is allowing those who do not understand the complexities of farm systems to learn more about the journey of change that many landowners have been on for several years now.

Through this awesome opportunity provided to MCCC by Rural Guardian, for the past nine issues our catchment groups have been telling their stories about the history of their catchment, the challenges and opportunities being faced today, and the vision for the future through the multi-generational lens that is land and water stewardship.

For over 160 years Mid Canterbury has innovated and adapted to market requirements, irrigation management, mother nature, technology and science.

Each new decade brought about a range of challenges which were tackled and overcome thanks to a can-do attitude and strong community leadership.

The formation of Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective, and the coming together of nine catchment groups between the Rakaia and Rangitata rivers is a modern-day testament to that strong leadership, which is still evident today.

In addition to significant stakeholder engagement and collaboration opportunities, we now have seven water monitoring programmes under way, several case studies, predator control and biodiversity enhancement projects, catchment actions plans being developed and rural wellbeing discussions happening in a safe, supported and respectful way.

On-farm risk assessment and mitigation management has been a significant focus recently as landowners continue to explore ways to reduce their environmental footprint.

MCCC is working alongside science providers such as Plant and Food Research and AgResearch to ensure practical solutions are identified and implemented.

Our ongoing focus will be to bring ideas, action and science together to improve our environmental footprint, support catchment groups' initiatives and champion community wellbeing.

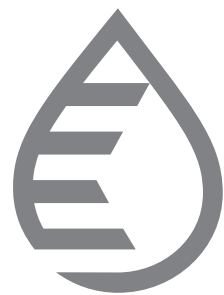
If you are keen to find out more, please phone 027 603-3457 or email me at co-ordinator@mccatchment-collective.nz.

*Angela Cushnie is the Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective co-ordinator*



Hekeao Hinds Lowlands Catchment Group members John O'Connell, Phill Everest and Angela Cushnie alongside recent plantings which are part of the Windermere Drain Enhancement Project. This has been a significant stream enhancement research trial which has benefited from the input of many invested stakeholders over several years.

PHOTO ANNIE STUDHOLME



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# New landcare group chief into it boots 'n' all

BRIDGET RADFORD

Supporting the Hurunui community during what is a challenging time for the rural sector is one of Ian Knowles' top priorities as he takes on the role of chairperson of the Hurunui District Landcare Group.

Knowles, who farms a hill country property at Waipara, takes over the position from Cheviot farmer Ben Ensor who has led the group since its inception in 2016.

While the Hurunui District Landcare Group (HDLG) was formed as an advocacy group for Hurunui's dryland farmers rallying against a flawed environmental regulation. It has transformed into a catchment collective with a focus on helping the region's farmers and communities understand evolving regulatory requirements and protect and enhance their natural resources.

A green drought and uncertainty around regulations coupled with a tough economic environment has made for a very difficult year for many of HDLG's 300 members and Knowles says the group has been focused on looking after their farmers and communities and helping to protect their social licence to farm.

This has been reflected in the types of events and workshops HDLG has been running in recent months which have focused on mental health and wellbeing and business management.

"While we haven't moved away from our environmental work, our focus has been on what's in front of our members and helping them to keep themselves and their businesses going."

HDLG has been working alongside other organisations such as the Rural Support Trust to ensure no-one is missed during what is a difficult time for many in North Canterbury.

Knowles says one of the biggest challenges facing the HDLG is the change in the funding which no longer allows its staff to work one-on-one with individual members.

Knowles says while they are working to deliver the same good service through catchment groups, smaller groups of farmers, special interest groups and workshops, they are also looking for both short and long-term funding options.

HDLG has joined the recently formed Aotearoa New Zealand Catchment Collective (ANZCC) which will be advocating for long-

term base funding for catchment groups as its priority.

Ensor was instrumental in getting ANZCC off the ground and is now on the organisation's committee.

He says the motivation behind the formation of ANZCC was the lack of secure, long-term government funding available for community catchment groups.

Many community catchment groups ran out of funding on June 30 and this lack of security does not provide confidence or surety about the long-term future of these groups.

Ensor said it was difficult to keep co-ordinators, project managers and employees employed when there is so much uncertainty around funding.

He says over the past five years, the growth and success of community catchment groups has been exponential, primarily due to the way they work.

"They are community and grass-roots led and this is the reason why they work so well and why they've been so effective."

While it is difficult to quantify the softer benefits of community catchment groups, such as community and social engagement, fundamentally, all groups are helping land managers understand regulations and what management strategies they can implement on their land to help protect their natural resources.

He says many groups have been testing water quality and other variables within their catchment, and while ANZCC respects that this data belongs to individual groups, they would like to have conversations with groups about how this information could possibly be used in some way to provide evidence and feedback to funders.

As well as securing long-term funding, Ensor says part of ANZCC's role will be ensuring regulators have a clear understanding of what community catchment groups are all about and how they work.

"It's providing a voice at a national level and being available to have conversations with government and regulators."

Ensor says ANZCC is a natural evolution of community catchment groups.

"It is important that we represent ourselves at a national level, rather than have other organisations do it for us. It's about filling the vacuum."

*Bridget Radford is with the Hurunui District Landcare Group*



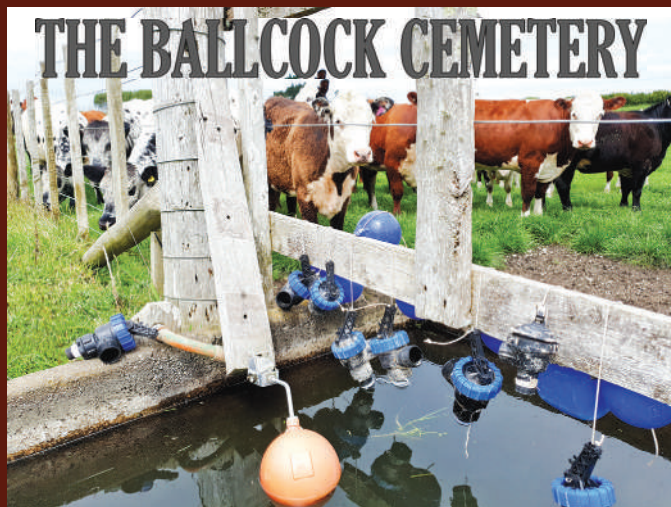
Ian Knowles, who farms in Waipara, has taken on the role of chairperson for the Hurunui Landcare Group. PHOTO SUPPLIED

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# \$30,000 raised for air rescue

ANISHA SATYA

Most Mid Cantabrians will have had contact with the rescue helicopter, whether personally or knowing someone who has needed its services.

So when it came to deciding where to donate tens of thousands of dollars raised locally, the Mid Canterbury Vintage Machinery Club knew exactly where to hand over the cheque.

Forty-five machine enthusiasts took a bus up to Christchurch last weekend and not to check out vintage kit.

The Canterbury West Coast Air Rescue team greeted members as they pulled into the hangar.

In April, the club held its third Wheat and Wheels Rally.

Tractors, combine harvesters and farm machinery old and new took to the fields on Anthony Hampton's farm near Ashburton.

"We started the rallies in 2013, but we only do them every three years and then there was Covid, so this is the third one we've had," Hampton said.

Hampton, rally chairperson and club treasurer, said around \$50,000 was made from the rally, and a raffle held for a refurbished 950s Ferguson FE-35 tractor.

A total of \$30,000 was left over to donate after operational costs.

The club chose to send the funds to the air rescue service.

"It's a very good cause.

"There are probably no [Ashburton] families that haven't had



Mid Canterbury Vintage Machinery Club treasurer Anthony Hampton (centre) hands a cheque off to air rescue crewmates (from left) Scott Deakin, Adrian Hurst, Wayne Ledgerwood and Andy Shearer.

PHOTO ANISHA SATYA

contact with it through a friend or relation.

"The funds are raised in Canterbury, and they stay in Canterbury."

As a thank you, the club was invited to tour the two helicopters running out of the Christchurch hangar.

The club were treated to a morning tea and hot cuppa as they explored the choppers.

Juliet Fitzpatrick, a critical care paramedic, has been working with air rescue for 10 years. She says the service wouldn't be possible without donors.

"You combine medicine with aviation and it's outrageously expensive."

She said the funds could go towards new helicopters, or new kit for the current ones.

"Sometimes we like to have dedicated bits of equipment, like a

ventilator or a new monitor.

"It's good for people to have this tangible thing and say 'we paid for that'."

The club also visited the airport fire service at Christchurch Airport and the Wigram Airforce Museum before returning to Ashburton.

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# Turning the tides on perceptions



**Anisha Satya**  
REPORTER

Employers who can't support their workers' mental health should go back to the drawing board, according to wellbeing support group Rural Support Trust Mid Canterbury.

Mental illness is not the taboo topic it once was in rural communities, wellness and mycoplasma bovis co-ordinator Frances Beeston said.

"Mental and physical health, you've gotta look after both of them. And I think there's more awareness and acceptance now to own mental health challenges."

Beeston has worked with the trust for six years, where she serves as a middleman for farmers and workers who need help, but aren't sure where to start.

The organisation has existed nationwide since the 1980s, and works to connect people with medical, legal, and financial support amongst other things.

Beeston worked 20 years as a dairy farmer before joining the trust, and knows firsthand what help farmers need.

"Farmers are the type of people who don't go until it's gotten too bad."

She said conversations around mental health have been made easier by representation in the media.

"People like your Doug Avery and Mike King have helped advocate for that space."

"Guys and girls coming out of university these days are so much more educated about their wellbeing, and work-life balance too," she added, saying those students will fast-track the culture shift once out in the workforce.

While the rhetoric has improved,



Rural Support Trust Wellness co-ordinator Frances Beeston has worked with the trust for six years.

PHOTO ANISHA SATYA

the infrastructure has not, Beeston said.

She feels long waits with the health system and under-prepared employers are the biggest push-backs for farmers who work up the courage to deal with issues.

"I do see guys and girls that are tarred with a brush because they own their mental health and wellbeing, and they talk to their employer about it."

"And the employer doesn't know how to handle that and then they think 'well, I don't want to employ

them'.

"I would rather employ someone that owns their mental health and wellbeing. Because to me, they're probably looking after it, rather than being in denial."

The trust was present at last week's Ruralco Instore Days, located in the middle of the event.

Their placement was deliberate, Ruralco chief executive Tony Aitken said.

"We wanted to put them at our prime spot, in the middle of the marquee where they were available

to everybody."

"It's farmers looking after farmers, and community looking after community."

Ruralco has partnered with the trust for several events over the past few years, including A&P shows.

The two groups will run a ladies night later this year.

"We've had a lot of comments around women that are supporting their partners, but no-one's supporting the 'supporter'."

Tyler Langford, a Tākaka farmer and rural mental health advocate,

will be speaking at the event.

Beeston asks people with concerns about farmer friends to get in touch.

"Ask if you can pass their number on to Rural Support and I'll always give them a ring."

*Beeston is also the regional leader for Rural Women New Zealand.*



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# Hurunui farm break returns

CLAIRE INKSON

As the Hurunui District finds itself in the grips of another drought, Foxdown Farm in the Scargill Valley will again open its gates for a farm break event to give the community a much-needed night of respite from on-farm stress.

"It's not just for farmers; it's for everyone in the rural community," Foxdown farm owner and event organiser Andy Fox says.

"It's a farm break, so it's for farmers and everyone who interacts with farmers - trucking

companies, stock firms, banks, and all those people who get it in the neck when their clients are under pressure."

This will be the fourth event at the farm in a fully kitted-out shed that moonlights as a storage space to display Fox's car collection.

The last event was held in 2017 and featured entertainment from James Reid from the Feelers and The Peterson Brothers.

This year's event will be held on September 6 and run from 6.30pm until midnight.

Tickets are \$10 and include all drinks, food, transport and enter-

tainment.

Around 300 people are expected to attend Foxdown Farm Break.

Comedian Ben Hurley will provide entertainment on the night, with Richard Loe as MC.

Free buses to and from Foxdown will depart from Waiau, Hawarden, Amberley, Greta Valley and Cheviot.

Fox said breaks like this one are much needed as the sector faces the most challenging time since the 1980s.

"It's that perfect storm of a whole lot of things that contribute to a lack of profitability in sheep

farming, particularly with low product prices and high interest rates in a drought."

Fox said he gets a lot of satisfaction from seeing people getting off the farm and enjoying themselves.

"In a rural community, there are lots of things that aren't good for us.

"But one of the strong aspects of living rurally is community.

"I'm just a small cog in the rural community as we make it better for ourselves."

Fox encourages people to check in on their neighbours and to invite anyone who might find the

current conditions challenging to come and enjoy a night out.

"Look over your fence and if you see that someone might be struggling because things are so tough at the moment, call them and ask if they want to come along to Foxdown on the 6th.

"It's hard to see how hard things can be for people from the outside sometimes."

For information on purchasing tickets, event information and transport schedules, follow the Hurunui Adverse Events Facebook page or phone Andy Fox at 027 519 9642.

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# Caring for our tamariki duri

Nicky Buist

**1. When things are tough at home financially, how do we let children know and understand without worrying them?**

Parents can involve their children in day-to-day conversations around the cost of living and 'what should we buy and why'. This is a great way to teach young people the value of money and to prioritise putting our needs over our wants. Children who are encouraged to talk about money will learn a sense of responsibility and independence and tend to do better with finances when they grow up.

When things are tough financially for a family it is important to keep the focus on learning skills rather than sharing stress which may cause children to worry. Prioritising how the budget is spent together will help children to understand that everyone in the family can help.

**2. How do we model coping strategies to stress for our children?**

Children are always watching their parents to see how they respond and react to different situations. Adult responses tell children if something is safe or scary.

The best way for adults to teach coping strategies is to consider how they themselves cope with challenging situations. Finding ways to keep ourselves calm and regulated will help us to demonstrate that problems can be overcome and that even things that appear scary and challenging are achievable with the right support and emotional tools.

**3. How do we teach children to self-regulate their emotions?**

The same way as we help ourselves to self-regulate.

Breathing exercises, reading, music, walking a pet or talking to someone are some great strategies that can work to calm your nervous system and your emotions. Sometimes it could be helpful to model some strategies at the time of distress (slow rhythmic breathing, looking at a picture book, hugging a favourite teddy bear). It is also helpful to talk about their big emotions and practise the strategies that work when

they are calm in order for them to connect how they felt at the time and how they were able to make themselves feel better.

**4. How important is it for children to be off devices, so they can have the opportunity to be 'bored'?**

In general the idea of "everything in moderation" is a good one! Research suggests too much technology use can cause social and behavioural problems because it minimises the amount of time spent interacting with others. It can cause physical and mental health issues in children, such as obesity, depression, behavioural issues and anxiety.

As adults we may need to look at our own habits to model more healthy use of technology. If our cell phones are constantly within reach or we spend the majority of our day behind or on screens, we are simply teaching children that this is normal.

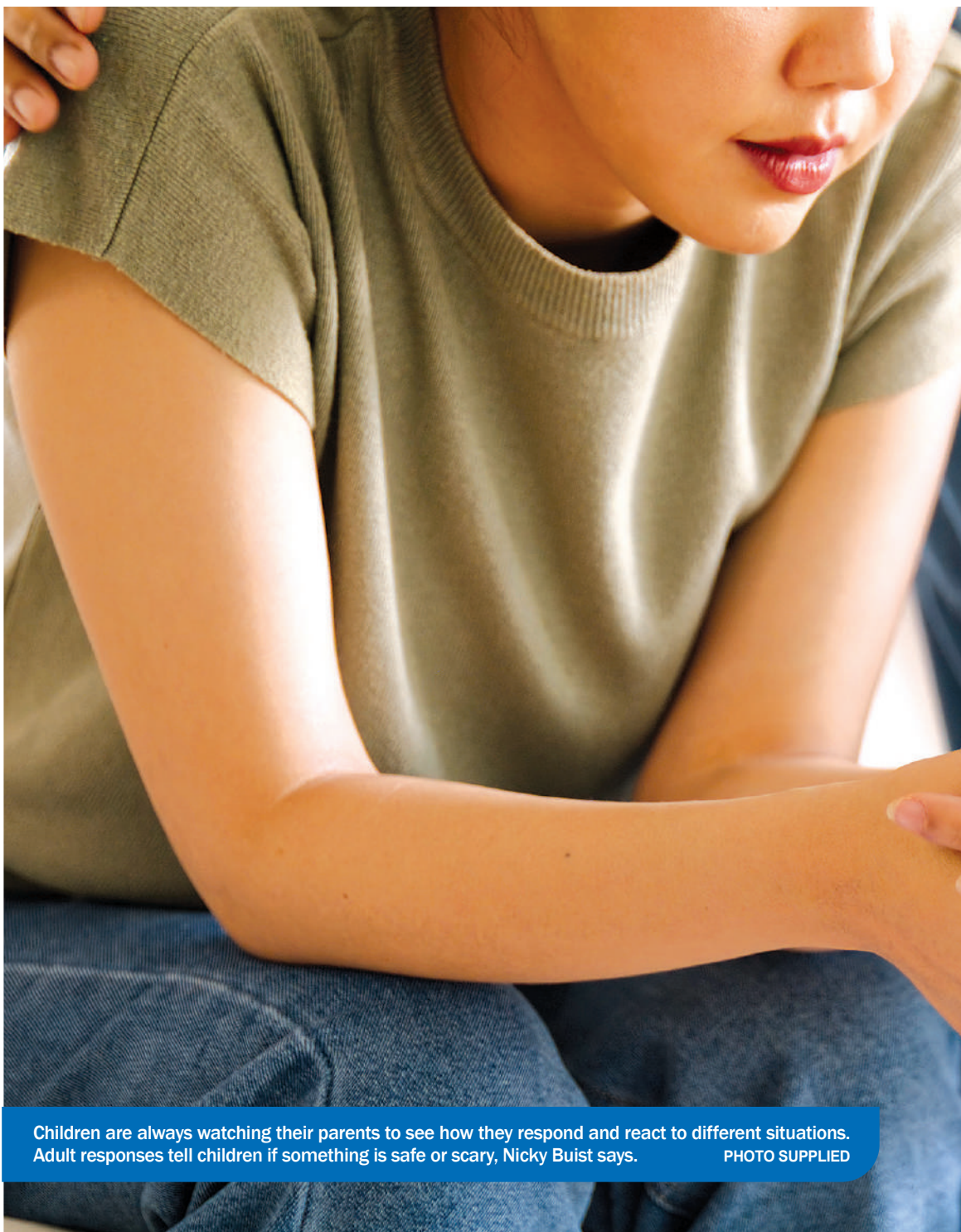
**5. When should we be concerned about our children's well-being? What are some signs to watch for, and some steps we can take if we are worried?**

Most commonly in children we might notice if things were unbalanced, when they are restless, tired or overwhelmed.

They may struggle to regulate their emotions and in young children we might see more crying or angry outbursts. In older children you may notice them spending more time alone and appearing more sad or angry. They may sleep more and eat less than usual and refuse to go to school or stay involved in clubs/hobbies.

Younger children may respond more openly to unpacking their worries while they play with a favourite toy or during bedtime cuddles. Older children and teens sometimes find it easier to chat in the car, or when you are walking side by side. If your young person is finding it hard to communicate their problem you could suggest they talk to a teacher, or friend, or ask if they would like to speak with your doctor or counsellor.

*Nicky Buist is a counsellor and child behaviour specialist*



Children are always watching their parents to see how they respond and react to different situations. Adult responses tell children if something is safe or scary, Nicky Buist says. PHOTO SUPPLIED

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# ng tough times



## A . B . C .

Parenting is a tough job, we are all learning day by day, alongside our children as they grow. Be AVAILABLE, Be BRAVE and Be CURIOUS (ABC).

### BE AVAILABLE

- Connect with your children everyday (away from distractions)
- Look at them to show you are listening
- Increase 'family time'

### BE BRAVE

- Limit tech time
- Stick to commitments and promises
- Talk about your own fears and emotions

### BE CURIOUS

- Notice the positive things they do
- Ask questions and get involved
- Point out the strengths you see in them
- Find new opportunities and have fun together

*If you are worried about your child, in emergencies or out of hours please contact CAF Emergency Freephone 0800 218 219 (option 2) or go to your local A&E department for support.*



Parenting is definitely a tough job and we keep learning with our children – Be AVAILABLE, Be BRAVE and Be CURIOUS.

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Left - One hundred and 10 people attended the Big Ball, which raised \$4500 for the Rural Support Trust.

Below - Associate Minister for Agriculture Mark Patterson, Federated Farmers president Wayne Langford and Northland MP Grant McCallum have a laugh in the photo booth at the event, PHOTOS SUPPLIED



# Big Ball showcases sector unity

CLAIRE INKSON

Young rural professionals, foresters, fishers and farmers seized the opportunity to relax and raise awareness for rural mental health at The Big Ball at Lincoln University over Matariki weekend.

Future Farmers NZ and Rural Change organised the ball, which took place on June 29, in partnership with Future Foresters, Young Fish, The Food and Fibre Youth Network, and Tasman and Pendarves Young Farmers.

Event co-organiser and Future Farmers board member Eve McCallum noted that it was a unique opportunity to unite various farming groups.

"It's not often in the primary sector that you get that sort of cross-group collaboration, and everyone comes together for one event."

McCallum said that, due to the divide in the rural sector and the differing views of political parties, there was a lack of consensus and collaboration in the primary industry.

"People aren't united, so we wanted to show from the younger groups in the industry that you can collaborate and that it's an awesome tool to get in the room together."

The Black and Gold cover band from Christchurch provided the entertainment, and Federated Farmers president Wayne Langford and Associate Minister for Agriculture Mark Patterson were special guests and speakers on the night.

One hundred and 10 people attended the event, which raised \$4500 for the Rural Support Trust.

McCallum said that while the money they raised wasn't a huge amount, it was a start, and if it

goes to funding a few counselling sessions for farmers, the event organisers will be "stoked".

"We decided that the Rural Support Trust was a fantastic charity that needed money.

"It's an incredibly tough time in our industry for many different reasons, and they do amazing work supporting farmers across the country in droughts, as well as the work they did up north with the flooding."

The ball also had mental health benefits for those who attended as an off-farm break.

Having grown up on a dairy farm in Northland, McCallum understands how isolating and stressful farming can be and the importance of time out.

"The opportunity to come off the farm and get together for a night and have a bit of fun - the power of that can't be underestimated."

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# Fear of other people's opinions

KATHRYN WRIGHT

I see how much pain it can cause people to worry endlessly about what other people think or might be thinking about them. Welcome to FOPO: Fear Of People's Opinions.

There are evolutionary reasons why we think this way - in order to survive back in the Palaeolithic times, we needed to be on top of our game and to fit in with others, or we could face certain death.

To be accepted and to be a part of our clans, we needed to be liked, and to be able to offer some kind of value, whether that be through material possessions like weapons and warm skins, or food, medicine, knowledge, hunting prowess, caring for others, or some other skill.

We needed to constantly check and compare ourselves to others to simply stay alive - the most common cause of death was murder by other humans.

Unfortunately, our brains haven't evolved much since then, so we still get this fear of other people's opinions, but it is rarely a life-or-death situation.

The single biggest predictor against the pain that FOPO can cause, is to deepen your understanding of who you are.

Knowing yourself well can ensure that what other people may or may not think of you is no longer a threat. Just to clarify, that is WHO you are, and not how well we achieve, who we are with, what we have, and where we are.

To develop this concept, you actually need to look outside of yourself, which may seem a little counterintuitive. When you are stuck in FOPO, your attention is directed inwards, and with that can come self-judgement, shame, resentment, jealousy, and a general feeling of lack.

Try shifting your attention away from self-judgement to learning about what you might need to give depth to your life - purpose, mean-



ing, everyday value.

What are your hobbies and interests that you can get so involved in that time seems to melt away? Why do you enjoy them so much - what is it about these activities that gives you satisfaction?

What about the people you love - how do you learn more about who you are when you are with them? What are your hopes, dreams, and goals in your work life and personal life? Why do you have these goals?

You will naturally evolve as a person over time - it's what we're supposed to do! See if you can give yourself the space to really lean

into your experience of the outside world and figure out what matters to you. What was it that you were put on this Earth to achieve?

Asking yourself if you are living true to your purpose, rather than living up to other people's expectations will be what organises your self-identity.

If you can allow purpose and meaning to become your internal motivators, instead of external factors like people's opinions and their approval, FOPO will release its grip over you and your life. It will also allow you to feel as though you have more autonomy over what happens

in your life and what path you take, which is particularly helpful when you are in some kind of situation where you feel as though you have little influence or control.

There is always something you can do to fulfil that need for meaning in your life.

FOPO may be an evolutionary response, but targeted, focused attention on to what matters to you can get you out of that thinking spiral.

*Kathryn Wright is a registered counsellor MNZAC  
www.kathrynwright.co.nz*

Above - Knowing yourself well can ensure what other people may or may not think is no longer a threat.  
PHOTO SUPPLIED

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# Connection is key for mental health

CLAIRE INKSON

Mid Canterbury mental health advocate Craig “Wiggy” Wiggins emphasises how important it is to catch up and connect with your mates when you’re navigating tough times.

He has been working to provide mental wellbeing support to rural communities since the Covid lockdown in 2020 when he noticed farmers feeling disconnected from their friends and neighbours.

“We started up Zoom meetings for farmers called Whatever With Wiggy because we realised that farmers were really isolated now the front gate was actually locked shut, and they couldn’t get off their land,” Wiggins said.

After losing friends to suicide, Wiggins realised the value of connection and took the Zoom calls further to create a wellbeing campaign called Lean On A Gate Talk To A Mate.

The campaign aims to create stronger people through stronger communities by developing a support network throughout New Zealand and giving people the tools to know how and when to help someone who is struggling.

Wiggins also runs AgriConnect, a campaign that aims to empower rural professionals with the ability to understand when someone needs help and the tools and avenues to access help if they are worried about a client or colleague.

“In the rural service industry, they can see their clients under a lot of pressure and struggling at times, and they have their own issues as well.

“They are under pressure to meet targets and KPIs.”

Wiggins said farmers often open up to rural professionals.

“There’s also a trust between a farmer and a stock agent or agronomist that can mean a farmer will talk to them when something isn’t right.”

Wiggins runs AgriConnect sem-



inars around the country.

“Rural service industries are under a lot of pressure at the moment, and we will do whatever we can to help them.”

Getting through the hard times Connection is essential when navigating tough times in the agriculture sector, Wiggins said.

“It’s the age-old adage of sharing the load and making sure that you talk to people within your tribe.

“You’ll find you aren’t the only

one in that boat at the moment.”

Wiggins says the best thing you can do to improve your mental health is to help someone else.

“Get involved in your communities as much as you can and stay connected within those communities.”

Wiggins suggests joining a sports club, getting involved with volunteer organisations such as A&P societies, joining a book club, or even meeting friends for a meal.

“If you just keep looking at the inside of your four walls, nothing ever changes.

“You’ll never know what good stuff is out there.”

Facing your financial worries head-on is essential.

“Don’t hide away from your financial advisors or your bank manager.

“Try to talk to them about how you think things are going.

“Be as proactive as you possibly can.”

## TRUST EVENTS

### Family day on Ice

Craig Wiggins is also co-founder of the Farming Family Trust, which began in response to the impact on the Mid Canterbury community following the Mycoplasma bovis outbreak.

The trust is holding a family day on ice on August 18 at 9am at the Staveley Ice Rink.

The free event is open to all children in Mid Canterbury, and a BBQ lunch will be provided.

### Coffee & Burger catch ups

- Hinds – August 20, 11-1pm, Southern Rugby Club, 103 Peters St, Hinds
- Dorie – August 21, 11-1pm at Dorie Hall, 1356 Mainwarings Rd
- Thompson Track & Methven Highway – August 28, 11- 1pm, Thompsons Track intersection with State Highway 77
- Mayfield – August 29 - 11-1pm in front of PGG Mayfield, 1995 Inland Scenic Route 72

Follow the Farming Families Facebook page for more information.

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# The rural athlete mindset

LAURA HANCOCK

In a society where mindset, health and wellbeing, and resilience are common discussion topics I would like to challenge all who work in the food and fibre sector to rethink how they see themselves.

Our mindset is a 'way of thinking', a set of beliefs that we hold about ourselves.

Our beliefs and how we think directly influence how we feel and how we behave.

Research has shown that our mindset plays a significant role in determining our day-to-day and life outcomes.

If we can understand our mindset, and be able to adapt it, this can have positive effects on our health and wellbeing and can reduce our stress levels.

## Resilience

Increasing our health and wellbeing is known to help us build resilience, meaning we are better able to deal with the unique challenges of the food and fibre sector, adverse events, stresses of isolation in rural communities and personal problems.

If you asked most people in the sector what the tools of their trade are, the answer you would get would be machinery, tools, and equipment.

It is common knowledge that those tools of the trade need maintenance to be kept in good working order and safe so that they will not be an injury risk when used.

Those tools of the trade need to be fit for purpose, now and for the future.

I see our most essential and valuable "tools of the trade" to be our bodies and minds.

## The physical

The physical capacity and capabilities of individuals in a workforce are the most important resource of any business.



Laura Hancock is encouraging those in the food and fibre sector to rethink how they see themselves. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Maintaining good physical health, mental health and movement health, looking after the "tools of your trade", is essential to ensure that individuals are able to perform well every day, now and for the future.

At the heart of the work I do is my desire to see a paradigm shift in thinking in the food and fibre sector. I hope to see a mindset shift to where individuals acknowledge that THEY are the most essential tool of their trade.

## Athletes

One group of people who are well known for adopting this mindset is athletes. Athletes acknowledge that their bodies and mind are the most essential and valuable tools of their trade.

An athlete's capacity for income and longevity of career relies upon

their ability to feel well, move well, and perform well.

Injury risk is multifactorial, meaning the more factors you stack on top of each other, the higher the risk for injury.

Therefore, movement health, physical health, mental health,

having healthy eating habits, sleeping well, breathing well, taking time for recovery and managing stress are all important factors for any athlete to focus on and maintain, to ensure that

they reduce injury risk and can perform well every day and into the future.

If you look up the definition of athlete we can see it as a person possessing natural skill or who trains in activities that require physical strength, agility or endurance.

An athlete is characterised by dedication, focus, intelligence, and work ethic.

Athletes are paid to use the tools of their trade, their body and mind, to perform daily. To me, these descriptors sound exceedingly like any farmer, grower, shearer, wool-handler, forestry worker, fisherman, or food and fibre sector worker that I know!

If you use the tool of your trade, your mind and body, to perform daily; you are an athlete.

If you are working in the food and fibre sector, no matter what your current fitness level; you are an athlete.

And in the food and fibre sector, it is time to adopt a rural athlete mindset.

Kristen Dieffenbach, associate professor of athletic coaching education at West Virginia University and sports psychology consultant, said:

"Calling yourself an athlete can play an important role in how you see yourself and how you ultimately perform. Everyone should think of themselves as athletes. It's

your shoes on, show up, try hard and complete your tasks, then you are an athlete.

Bill Bowerman, the co-founder of Nike said:

"If you have a body, you are an athlete."

With the productivity, profitability and sustainability of agri-businesses relying upon the performance of their workforce making sure that all individuals feel well, move well and perform well should be an integral part of any business's injury risk management and health, safety, and wellness policy.

This idea is becoming more commonplace across the sector, with new farm plans including a section for planning health and wellbeing strategies.

## Health strategy

If the food and fibre sector takes a proactive approach, developing integrated health strategies which support workers' physical, mental and movement health, this will in turn have a knock-on positive effect on growing happy and healthy rural communities.

At the heart of any new strategy is a change in mindset.

If you work in the food and fibre sector, I hope for you to be empowered to value your body and mind as the most essential tools of your trade, and to think like an athlete.

“Calling yourself an athlete can play an important role in how you see yourself and how you ultimately perform. Everyone should think of themselves as athletes. It's not reserved for people who get a paycheck from it

not reserved for people who get a paycheck from it.”

Dieffenbach also suggests trying to acknowledge that you are living an 'athletic lifestyle' through your commitment.

If you get up every morning, put

When you look after yourself like an athlete, you will feel better, move better and perform better. This is the 'rural athlete' mindset.

Laura Hancock  
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# Who is supporting the supporter?

GEORGIE KING

Nine years ago Tyler Langford found herself in a position she never imagined.

Her husband, Wayne, was struggling to get out of bed, hold a conversation about their young kids' activities or do what needed to be done on their farm in the upper South Island, Golden Bay.

Now almost a decade on, Tyler reflects on these years and the feelings and emotions that depict this time in their life.

She noticed that there was little to no conversation about what she might need in her capacity as Wayne's support person.

Everyone was quick to ask about Wayne - but few really asked how Tyler was.

Not one to seek attention or special treatment, Tyler reflects that she was experiencing immense challenges while trying to keep her own mental health in check and simultaneously looking after their farming business and young family.

"The hardest lesson to learn was that it was not about me.

"This situation was not a reflection of the type of wife I am, mother or farmer.

"It was not about me, it was about Wayne."

People in supporting roles often reflect on themselves in a negative light wondering what they have done wrong to create this depth of emotion and desperation in their partner or family member.

Taking steps early to acknowledge that these feelings are deeply rooted in an individual and often aren't a result of the actions of someone close to them is an essential part of learning to cope and manage the situation that they have found themselves in.

During these challenging times while Wayne navigated intense emotions, Tyler was conscious of the impact this change in Wayne's disposition could have on their young boys.

"Use truthful and simple lan-



Left - Tyler Langford found there was little or no support for her as she helped her husband Wayne navigate depression. PHOTO SUPPLIED

guage when talking to your children," Tyler said. "They observe and pick up more than you know. "Don't cut them out or hide from them."

Open communication and asking the children how they're feeling will help confront any confusion or misunderstanding.

Tyler acknowledges that the

days of working through Wayne's anguish were the hardest she has faced.

"The journey feels like a long dark tunnel at times, you can bare-

ly see the light. But remember that tunnels have walls to lean on and you can stop to take a breath."

As a support person, don't be afraid to reach out for help or talk to a professional.

There is a high chance you are experiencing uncomfortable and upsetting conversations - it is important to allow yourself time to offload, to process and return to the realisation that this situation hasn't arisen because of you.

Organisations like Rural Support Trust are there to talk to and can suggest avenues for advice and help for the support person as well as the person struggling.

Tyler and Mid Canterbury Rural Support Trust have worked together before to bring rural mental health to the forefront. Co-hosting with Ruralco, Mid Canterbury Rural Support Trust is hosting a free ladies night to increase awareness of the struggles support people experience.

The aim is to get ladies off farm for an evening with friends and like-minded people while providing a safe place for open and honest conversation to ensure everyone feels heard and supported.

Tyler will be talking alongside local counsellor Anna Arrowsmith to discuss the challenges faced by a support person - and to offer tools and insights into navigating this stressful and trying time.

The Ruralco and Mid Canterbury Rural Support Trust ladies night is in Ashburton on September 25 from 7pm and registration is essential.

Details are on the Mid Canterbury page of the Rural Support Trust website [www.rural-support.org.nz](http://www.rural-support.org.nz).

Georgie King is the Mid Canterbury Rural Support Trust co-ordinator

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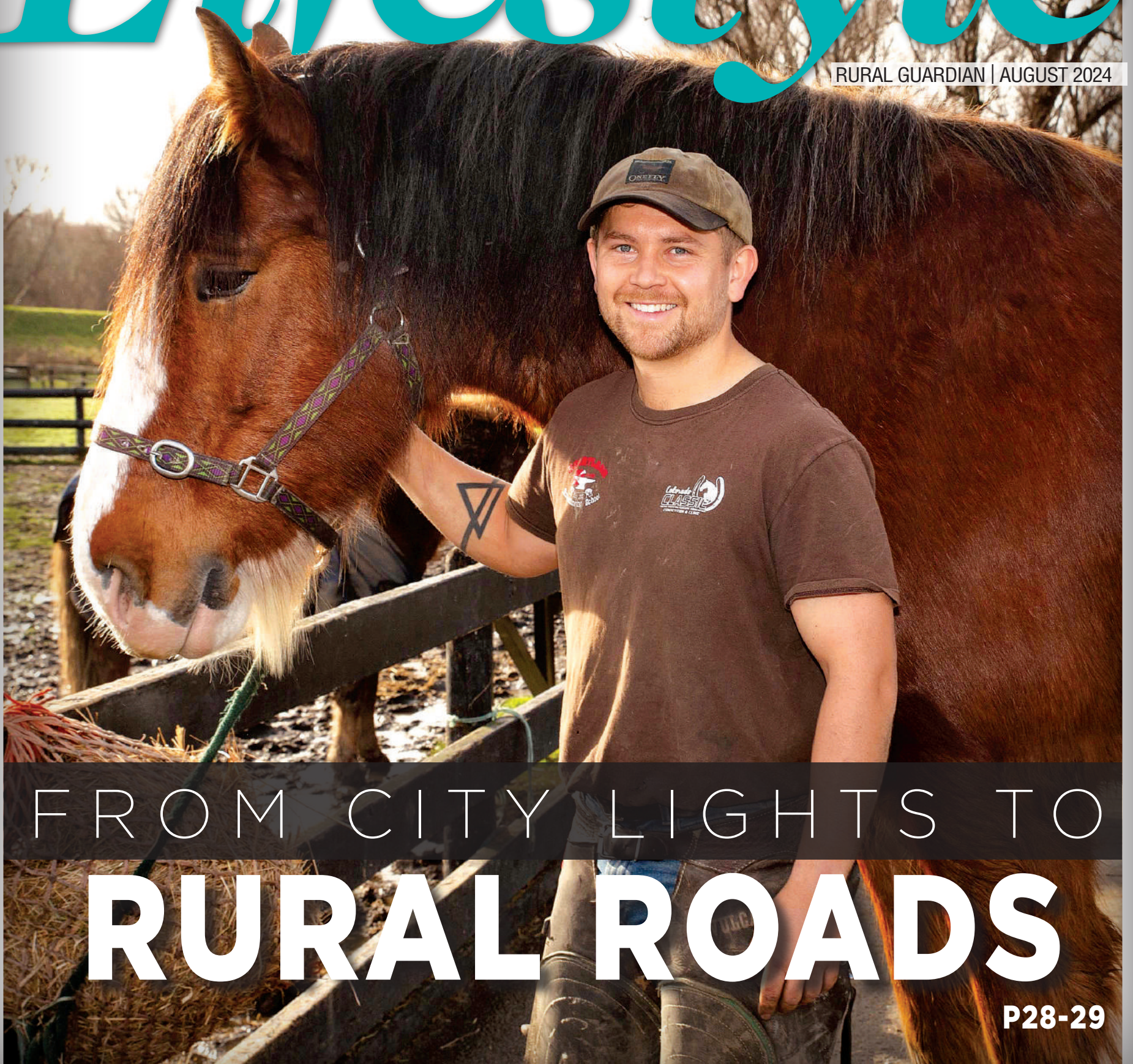
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# If the shoe fits, the horse gets it

CLAIRE INKSON

Rhys Smith made his dream a reality last year when he traded his suit for a set of chaps and a pair of cowboy boots and left his corporate job to study farriery at Heartland Horseshoeing in the American midwest.

"I had a corporate job, but it was never something I really wanted to do. It was just a convenience thing. It paid well, so I was happy enough to do it."

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, Smith re-evaluated his career and realised his office job was not fulfilling.

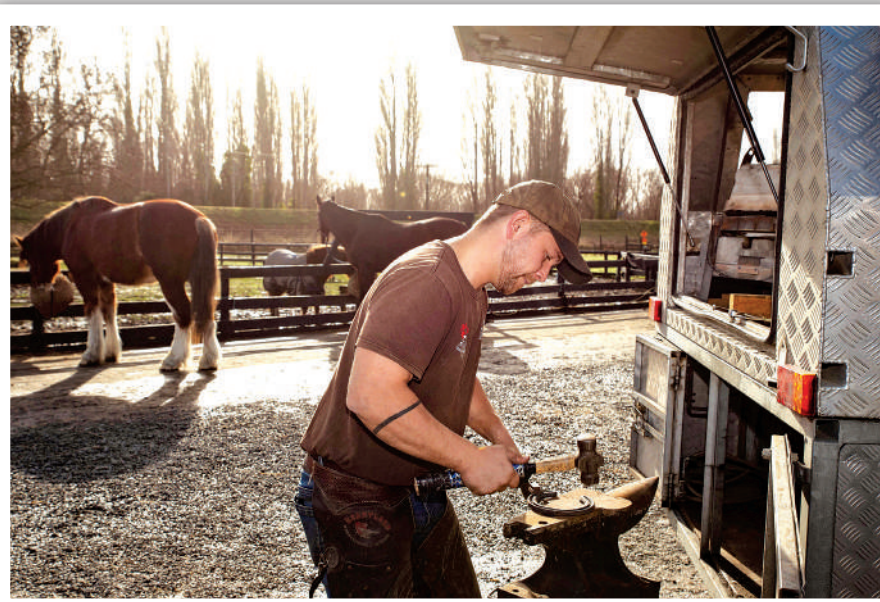
"After Covid I thought 'What am I actually passionate about?', and I thought, well, horses.

"I've been around horses my whole life and I've always been happy around them," he said.

The Christchurch-based Smith considered pursuing a career in horse dentistry or schooling before ultimately choosing farriery.

He initially put his dream on hold for four years due to the lack of clear career paths in the farrier industry in New Zealand, where many farriers were not taking on new recruits.

"It's hard for farriers to take on apprentices, because there is no funding for them.



After eight months of gruelling training by one of the world's best farriers, Smith hopes to raise the standard of the industry in New Zealand. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

"They have to outlay a lot of cost, and there's the risk that people won't be physically fit enough or want to keep pursuing it."

Smith returned to the corporate world but found himself dissatisfied with office work.

After speaking to his farrier, he learned that his best options were to receive training in the UK or America.

In March of last year, he decided to board a plane for America, where he enrolled in a horseshoeing school in Lamar, Missouri.

Training also involved travel to Kansas and Oklahoma.

The town of Lamar, Missouri, was described by Smith as a classic mid-west town full of cowboy hats and boots, with only a Walmart and a rodeo arena as attractions.

The school was located on a 30-acre property with a Yellowstone-style bunkhouse, a training barn with forges, and a classroom.

The remote location had no cellphone service or televisions, providing a unique learning environment.

The school's graduation rate was around 35 per cent, with approximately 20 students who were repeatedly warned that the course was not for the faint-hearted.

"The first thing they said to us was 'We are going to set unrealistic expectations of you, and we are going to expect you to hit every one of them.'"

The school's owner, Chris Gregory, comes from a military background, so Smith said the school was regimented with a "you get out what you put in" ethos.

"There was no sympathy around there. You just worked hard. I liked that mentality; it worked for me."

Gregory is world-renowned for his farrier skills, and being trained at Heartland Horseshoeing School is a notable achievement for anyone who finishes the gruelling course.

"It's not so recognised over here, but if you are in the horse industry in the States, and you say you are from that school, it carries some weight; you are known to be one of the better ones –especially if you can say Chris trained you."

After eight months of hard-core studying at the school, Smith returned home to begin his business, Vulcan Farriery and Blacksmith, which services North and South

Canterbury.

Smith says his background in horses has given him an advantage.

"Most of the time, horses can't tell you what's wrong, but if they are playing up, generally there is a reason: they're sore.

"Some people just believe the horse is being naughty, but that can be because they don't understand the horse; they are just there to put the shoe on and leave."

With farriery being an unregulated industry, Smith said there are some unqualified and unskilled farriers working that can cause permanent damage to horses.

"There are definitely some guys out there that are just in it for the money and not too stressed about what they are doing."

He said most owners don't understand the long-term benefits of having a good farrier.

"It's easy to say a horse can compete for 10 years and then it will break down.

"But if you look at the Olympics, for example, a lot of horses are 20-25 years old, and that's because of the standard of work."

Smith said he hopes to bring the highest standard of work to his business with the training he has invested in.

"I'm always learning, there's a hell of a lot to learn, and every horse is different.

"When it comes to the attitude towards the horse and the industry, though, I'd like to think I'm changing the game a bit."

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# Campaign for Wool expands education

CLAIRE INKSON

The Campaign for Wool NZ has expanded its educational outreach to include students from preschool to tertiary levels.

The tertiary programme, Wool Dynamics, is designed to assist architecture and design students in utilising existing wool products and creating new, innovative concepts.

Campaign for Wool NZ general manager Kara Biggs describes the pilot study programme as a “milestone” for the organisation.

“We’re answering the call of wool growers, who need consumers to understand better wool’s performance properties, as well as educators, who want pathways for learners passionate about the fibre, and our students, who value sustainable systems so highly when designing for the buildings, structures, products and textiles of the future.”

Rather than being a paper, the programme is modular, meaning tutors and lecturers can choose the resources they need.

“There are about 40 of these different types of resources and they can choose depending on what they need, whether it’s sustainability, history or even the architecture of wool sheds.”

Biggs said this gives the potential for every architecture and design student to be exposed to wool over their course of study.

“We all know that wool is a super fibre, but it’s about getting students to solve problems with wool because wool performs better.”



Biggs says this could look like an architecture student choosing wool for sound absorption in walls or wool carpet in a commercial building for its fire-retardant properties.

Campaign for Wool NZ developed the Wool Dynamics programme, which was authored by Auckland University of Technology Professor Frances Joseph from the School of Future Environments and Peter Heslop, MSc in Textile Technology.

The programme will be launched this month in six major architecture and product design schools through an online education portal hosted by the Campaign for Wool NZ.

CFWNZ will monitor and evaluate its tertiary pilot programme

throughout 2024 and plans to fully implement it across New Zealand in 2025.

The Campaign for Wool has also expanded its schools programme to offer a remote option to schools difficult for the organisation to access with its mobile wool-laden shipping containers.

“There are some schools, especially urban schools, that cannot fit a 20-foot container on their site or smaller schools with only 10 or 12 kids, so it doesn’t make sense for us to spend all that money getting to them.”

“So we are trying to make the Wool in Schools programme accessible to everybody.”

Biggs said the organisation has created a classroom kit supported

by digital resources.

These schools will be encouraged to hold a Wool Week, where pupils can discover the New Zealand wool industry and learn about the fibre. It’s a way we can ensure that all tamariki have the opportunity to interact with wool.”

A pilot programme for early childhood education is being trialled with a wool-focused module.

“We’ll be giving the little ones simple play-based activities to learn more about where wool comes from and what it is – colouring-in sheets, counting, drawing and so on.”

“Young Kiwis are increasingly becoming key wool ambassadors and influencers as the tide continues to turn on the use of synthetics,

plastics and petrochemicals,” Kara says.

“These strategic extensions to our CFWNZ education programme will serve to stimulate a greater appetite for change. We are so excited to see how tomorrow’s innovators grasp the enormous opportunity that a super fibre like wool provides when creating the homes and consumer products of tomorrow.”

Biggs says that with the development of different wool products and the focus on educating the next generation, she is optimistic about the future of New Zealand wool.

“Each thing feels quite little when you look at it in isolation, but when you look at it all together, there’s so much going on.”



Above – The Campaign for Wool, through the Wool in Schools and Wool Dynamics programme, will see students from preschool through to university exposed to wool education.

PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

Left – Campaign for Wool general Manager Kara Biggs is optimistic about the future of the wool industry.

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# A cabin in the hills for those

CLAIRE INKSON

A North Canterbury family have found on-farm accommodation to be a welcome income stream as the agriculture sector faces challenging times.

Alistair and Genna Bird, whose 560-hectare sheep and beef property lies on the foothills of Oxford, built their Canopy Camping Escape, The Grange, four years ago.

Although the Covid lockdown initially left the building vacant, Genna says the accommodation has "saved their bacon" over the past couple of years.

"It's no secret; it's hard at the moment."

"We had to sit down and think, right, how will we make this work so we are still here farming in a couple of years?"

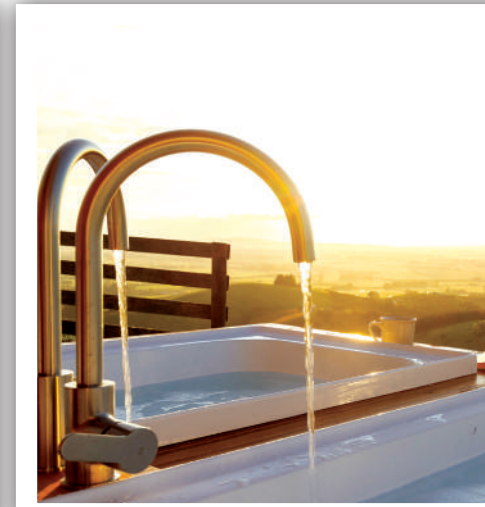
"It's not like we are sitting here on some landmine of inheritance or anything like that."

The couple had initially tried a tiny house on wheels but found it wasn't robust enough to withstand the elements.

They decided to build something more permanent.

"We thought we'll go in boots and all and build something purpose-made and get all those consents and scary-sounding stuff," Genna said.

"In the end, I'm pleased we paid that extortionate amount of money because when it gets snowy and windy up there, we know it's engineered for it."



Above – A double bath is the perfect way for guests to relax and enjoy the view of the night sky.'

Left – The Grange Cabin is designed to blend into the landscape.

Alistair and Genna took their time choosing a site for the cabin, weighing up the best view with the amount of wind exposure.

"Sometimes, we tried a spot because it had a great view but was too windy."

"Those things usually go hand-in-hand."

Alistair hired a digger and cleared the site himself.

The build was undertaken by a local builder, taking just a few months.

Genna said they had timed the build well.

"Despite it being vacant for a while with Covid, I'm pleased we built then."

"Building materials are a lot more expensive now."

The cabin contains a bedroom,

an open-plan living room, a kitchen area and a bathroom.

The kitchen bench tops are made from wood milled from the farm.

"We had trees that had to be chopped down anyway because they were hanging over the road and the powerlines, and it wasn't good enough wood to sell."

"So, we thought, why not use it for the joinery?"

The building is designed to complement the landscape with wood cladding and a natural colour palette.

"Our farm is the backdrop to Oxford, so we wanted it to blend in, so that was the idea with the colour, shape, and the way it's snuggled into the side of the hill."

The building's water is fed and filtered from a nearby spring and



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# times you need to recharge



Right - The cabin is kept cosy with a wood fire.

PHOTOS LISA SUN

heated by a gas califont while the toilet is composting.

"Learning about composting toilets was also a journey because there are so many different types.

"But it works way better than I ever thought it would."

A wood fire keeps the cabin cosy, while a generous solar power system runs most appliances.

"We had to make sure the solar batteries and inverter were big enough; that was a huge learning curve.

"Because I didn't want just to use a broom to clean, I wanted to be able to use a vacuum cleaner, and we wanted guests to be able to use a toaster without blowing the inverter."

A small porch provides the per-

fect spot for guests to sit with a glass of wine and enjoy the scenery, while a double outside bath is positioned to give the best night-sky view.

The Canopy Camping Escapes company suggested the baths, and although Genna took a bit of convincing to invest in the fixtures, she said it was worth the expense.

"They told us

people were looking for ways to relax and that was a foreign concept to me.

"If I want to relax, I just put my feet up and look out the window, but I have to accept that it is worth spending money on something someone else will value."

Adjusting to having strangers on the property required both a shift

in mindset and planning around critical times in the farming calendar, such as lambing, but Genna said the process has been relatively easy overall.

"It's been a mindset change for me because you can feel vulnerable with other people coming in because it's your living space as well as your working space.

"With lambing, we generally lamb on the flats, which people don't have to drive through."

The couple is upgrading the farm track, which will allow them to shut off the drive up to the cabin if necessary.

"We improved the track and fenced it off as part of maintaining the farm, with the added bonus that it's good for guests driving up the hill."

Genna said guests were generally respectful of the farming operation.

"We don't get people wandering around opening gates."

Genna said it had given the couple a sense of security seeing the bookings for the accommodation rolling in.

"With sheep and beef farming, we're not used to being able to say even a month out what our income for the next month will be.

"Whereas as bookings, you can accurately see what's ahead."

Genna said it has "blown her mind" how busy the cabin has been.

"It was a massive trust exercise, but it's definitely paid off.

"It's been worth it."

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# Tiny house tips

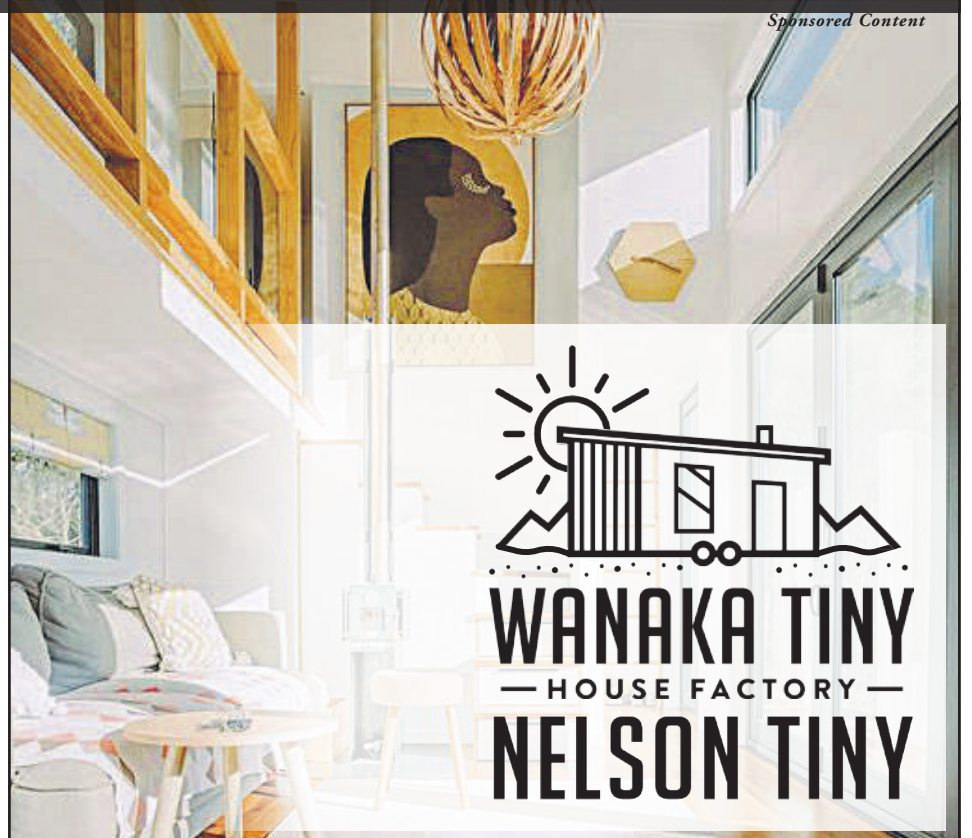
CLAIRE INKSON

Tips from tiny home owners Alan and Kirsten Howard-Smith:

- Before building a tiny house, spend some time at a tiny house Airbnb or glamping spot to see if tiny living is for you.
- For affordability, work with a company that provides a customisable range of designs instead of starting your design from scratch.
- Wander through a couple of designs before choosing the one you want. Sometimes when you see the design in real life, it may not appeal to you.
- When customising your design, draw out the space on sand at the beach or chalk on concrete so you can get a feel for the space as you plan.
- Check your council has regulations in place when dealing with tiny homes. Not all councils have policies in place so it may take some time to work with the council on your plans.
- Work closely with your insurance company as the transportable nature of tiny houses can make them tricky to insure, and not all insurance companies have had a lot of experience insuring tiny homes.
- There are lots of You Tube channels about

tiny houses, but the ones overseas may not be easily replicated in New Zealand and design costs will be markedly different. When looking for inspiration, look to local You Tube and Instagram tiny house accounts.

- Make sure your tiny house is anchored well to cope with New Zealand's windy conditions.
- Choose a detachable trailer so the house is jacked up and the load isn't resting on the tyres.
- Ventilation in a tiny house is crucial and you will need to be aware of condensation more in a smaller space.
- Be aware that while there is less space to clean, cleaning will need to be done more frequently due to the small space.
- If you are a couple, be prepared that you will be in much more constant proximity than in a traditional home. Some couples cope well with this, but it can be a strain for some people. Try to design your home so it has separate areas for times when you need space.
- Choose a reputable company and get a solid agreement in place from the beginning.
- A covered outside deck is a great way to provide more living space in the warmer months.



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Tiny houses have seen a resurgence in recent years, but consumers should be aware that not all tiny homes are created equal.

The Wanaka Tiny House Factory sets itself apart from its competitors by delivering custom-built, quality homes designed for the South Island climate.

"We specialise in South Island conditions," Wanaka Tiny House Factory director Thomas Schattovits says.

"We know how cold temperatures can get, how windy it can be in coastal locations, and how to protect our houses from corrosion."

While some imported products on the market are cheaper, they are often not built to comply with New Zealand building codes and are only designed as temporary accommodation.

Wanaka Tiny House Factory homes are robust, compliant, well insulated and ventilated.

"We build to code or above," Schattovits said.

With factories in Nelson and Wanaka, the Wanaka Tiny House Factory can deliver homes right across the country.

Homes can be custom-built to suit the client's needs and range in size from 16 to 50 square meters.

"We have a very good process, and building a custom tiny house with us is not outrageously expensive. Our houses are all unique."

"Clients can choose colours, textures, kitchen layouts, and even the size of the bedroom."

Schattovits said the company will help the client through the consent process, although often, building consent isn't required, making the process easy.

"Many of our models are mobile and not used for year-round accommodation, so they do not require any consent process."

The tiny houses can be lifted in on a crane, transported on a truck without any special machines, or, in some cases, depending on the client's specifications, put on wheels for easy transportation.

Wanaka Tiny House Factory homes are perfect for staff accommodation or for those wanting to add another income stream to their farming businesses by adding an Airbnb to their property.

"We are not the cheapest option but the most comfortable one."

"If you have well-paying Airbnb guests, our houses will make a difference; they are noticeably better."

"If you have a lake view or a mountain view, that's where you put one of our tiny houses, and it will do well."

The Wanaka Tiny House Factory are currently running a Winter special with free upgrades worth \$4000.

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# Living a tiny life in a big way

CLAIRE INKSON

With building prices skyrocketing, many people are turning to tiny houses as an alternative to traditional, larger-scale homes.

In the primary sector, some farmers are looking to diversify their income streams by building tiny houses on their land to provide glamping accommodation for guests wanting to escape to the country.

The uses for tiny houses go beyond agritourism, though.

Farmers are now utilising these clever, transportable and compact homes to accommodate staff and additional family members.

Tiny houses can also provide a temporary solution in rural and urban settings while property owners save to build a traditional home.

When Alan and Kirsten Howard-Smith moved to Wanaka from Auckland two years ago, they weren't ready to build a permanent dwelling until they were sure the move south was right.

A tiny house provided the perfect solution.

"It was a good launching pad to see if we like Wanaka and Wanaka liked us on a fulltime basis," Kirsten said.

"It gave us time to determine the larger house we wanted to build eventually."

The Howard-Smiths tiny home is three metres wide by nine metres long and features two upstairs bedrooms connected by a walkway.



Above - The Howard-Smiths tiny house has two upstairs rooms at full standing height connected by a walkway.

Left - A covered deck provides extra living space in the warmer months.

PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Kirsten said it's essential to research before building a tiny house.

"There are some horror stories out there with unsuccessful builds and companies going under."

The couple decided on the Wanaka Tiny House Factory for their build due to their excellent reputation and ability to customise and build a bigger house than

some other tiny house companies offered.

"We wanted a slightly larger model with stairs rather than a ladder.

"Being able to stand upstairs was also really important to us. We didn't want to be grovelling around on our hands and knees."

Location was also a deciding

factor.

"The company is only 20 metres from our section, which was really helpful.

"We weren't going to have large transport costs on top of everything else."

Kirsten said that building a tiny house requires the same processes as building a regular home, such

as choosing windows, flooring and insulation.

"It's a good practice run for building a bigger house because you still make the same decisions, but some are more constrained.

"You're limited by what kind of appliances you can have in the kitchen, for example, which is great in a way."

Kirsten said that due to its small scale, changes in the design of the tiny home during the planning process can have unexpected consequences.

"By percentage of volume, each change has a large material change inside a tiny house."

Kirsten said a good tiny house company would work with you to ensure the space works best for you and how you move within a confined space such as a kitchen and your preferred "work triangle" to maximise ease and efficiency.

"A good designer will help prevent you from making mistakes, so you don't end up constantly bumping into things."

Living in a tiny house is not for everyone and it requires a different mindset than living in a traditional house.

"You have to adopt the approach that everything in the house has to be beautiful, useful or significant to you."

"The thing I like about it, too, is showing the next generation and the other people around us there are different ways of living. You don't need always have to live in a McMansion or something big."

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# Fleece to soil

CLAIRE INKSON

A Hawkes Bay company is creating a market for low-value wool clippings by creating sustainable mulch squares and mats for trees and gardens.

Wool.Life managing director Gareth Meltzer says the company aims to encourage people to replace synthetic and imported weed mats with mulch mats manufactured in New Zealand from 100 per cent New Zealand wool.

“We have this amazing fibre that does great things from a planting point of view; as it breaks down, it releases nitrogen, so it acts as a fertiliser and blocks weeds as the plants grow.”

The matting also provides moisture and heat retention in the soil and insulation to protect against frost damage.

“Moisture retention is a biggie; it is about 30 per cent by weight.

“When you have this climate of hot summers and wet winters, or whatever it might be depending on where in the country you are, moisture retention is essential.

“We had a customer in Northland who made it through January and February just on dew and the matting.”

Meltzer took over the Wool.Life business in 2022 with two business partners after it went into liquidation three years into operation.

“We saw the opportunity to create a market and take what is an outstanding natural fibre and get it in front of people.”

What was supposed to be more of a side hustle has become a legitimate business with significant customer demand.

“We have got two channels. One is business-to-customer, a direct offering to consumers via the website.

“Then we do a commercial offering as

well.”

The mats are produced by a company in Auckland, which allows Meltzer to concentrate on the marketing aspect of the business. The mats are available in squares or rolls and can be tailored to fit the customers’ specific requirements. In addition to using low-value clip, Wool.Life also make use of strong-wool yarn that was originally intended for carpet but didn’t meet the specifications or was leftover from a production run.

“If you didn’t have post-industrial recycled products like ours in terms of mulch matting, previously that would have ended up in the landfill.”

Getting the product in front of consumers is a priority.

“We attend field days, local events, and talk to the community.

“Social media is an amazing tool to get in front of people.”

Educating consumers about the value of New Zealand wool is crucial when competing with synthetic and imported alternatives. This remains a challenge, as Chinese wool and jute mats, as well as coconut alternatives, offer cheaper options for consumers.

“The advantage of using woollen mulch weed mat is that you look after the whenua (land).

“We actually care about our land and soil, and using wool mulch mat will do that, whereas synthetic material just chokes the soil.”

Meltzer said that innovation in the wool sector is good for businesses, with opportunities for businesses to collaborate and grow.

“A rising tide lifts all ships.

“Instead of having 100 per cent of a tiny pie, I’d rather have 10 per cent of a massive pie.”



Above – Wool.Life managing director Gareth Meltzer says the company aims to encourage people to replace synthetic and imported weed mats with mulch mats manufactured in New Zealand from 100 per cent New Zealand wool.

Below left – Wool.Life mulch mats provide moisture, heat retention, insulation and frost protection.

Below right – Wool.Life mats are available in rolls or squares, and can be custom-made to clients’ specifications.

PHOTOS SUPPLIED



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# Sleep Disturbances

## Part 1

Magnesium supplements are often used for sleep disturbances. This can be anything from helping to go to sleep, or to go back to sleep when waking. Sleep can also be disturbed by night muscle cramps or Restless legs. As an example, I have one client who had suffered from Restless Legs for many years. I put her on my Magnesium formula and just two weeks later she reported that most of the problem had resolved.

I have just spoken to another client who would wake in the early hours and found it difficult to get back to sleep. She started taking my Magnesium formula when she woke and this has helped her get back to sleep.

Unfortunately, Restless legs, and to some extent cramps, are problems for which there are few medical options. Cramp is more straightforward and is usually triggered by dehydration, very low salt intake and most frequently sub-optimum Magnesium levels.

I assess Magnesium levels mostly

by symptoms and then recommend Magnesium doses to match these.

If someone has Cramp or Restless legs, I add Magnesium based on the severity of symptoms. I generally start with a higher dose for the first week and then reduce doses as symptoms abate.

The prestigious British Medical Journal (Open Heart, January 2018) commented that most people have insufficient Magnesium in their diets and recommended supplementation with 300mg of Magnesium daily to maintain good heart health.

I have recommended Magnesium for these problems for many years. Magnesium can be very effective, but results are based on the type of Magnesium supplements, the dosages and the timing of those doses. Each form of Magnesium is absorbed differently. Most supplements have only one form. I use three different forms of magnesium: Marine Magnesium from seawater, Magnesium Glycinate and Magnesium Citrate.



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](mailto:john@abundant.co.nz). Join his all new newsletter at [www.abundant.co.nz](http://www.abundant.co.nz).



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# Moroccan lamb shanks

### Lamb

- 4 Quality Mark lamb shanks
- 2 onions, chopped
- 5 garlic cloves, crushed
- 3t fresh ginger, grated
- 1T ground coriander
- 1T ground turmeric
- 1T ground cumin
- 1t white pepper
- 1t mixed spice
- 2C Campbell's Real Stock beef stock
- 1/2 C tomato paste
- 400g chopped tomatoes
- 3/4 C plain unsweetened yoghurt
- 1 carrot, finely chopped or grated
- Grated zest of 1 lemon
- 1C dried apricots

### Couscous

- 1 1/2 C couscous (cooked)
- 1C flaked blanched almonds, toasted
- 1/2 C fresh coriander leaves roughly chopped

### To slow cook lamb

Preheat oven to 140°C conventional bake. Bring lamb out of the fridge an hour before cooking.

Cut through the tendon that connects the meat to the bone at the bottom of the shank - this will allow the meat to bunch up nicely.

Brush the shanks with oil and season. Heat a little oil in a large frying pan over a high heat.

Sear the shanks, two at a time, to brown all over. Set aside in a large casserole dish with a lid.

Reduce the heat to medium, add a little more oil to the pan along with the onion and cook, stirring for 5 minutes to soften. Add the garlic, ginger, spices and pepper and cook for another 2 minutes.

Continue stirring so the spices don't stick and burn.

Turn up the heat, add the stock and tomato paste, bring to a rapid simmer and scrape up any bits of caramelised meat stuck to the bottom.

Add the tomatoes, yoghurt, carrot, lemon zest and stir.

Pour over the shanks, cover and cook in the oven for 2 1/2 to 3 hours. Add the apricots halfway through cooking.

Remove from the oven and gently remove the shanks from the sauce (careful as they will be very delicate) and set aside covered in foil.

If the sauce needs thickening, transfer to a saucepan, add 1/4 C water mixed with 2t cornflour and simmer for 5-10 minutes until thickened.

### To make couscous

Cook according to packet directions. Just before serving, stir through half the almonds and herbs.

Recipe courtesy of Beef + Lamb NZ

## FARMING for Hospice

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# Melissa's chevy labour of love

CLAIRE INKSON

When Melissa Hannan rolls up in her '59 Chevrolet Parkwood, a rare gem in the car world, most men wonder where the bloke who owns such a beast of a vehicle is.

"If there's a guy in the front seat, males go up and talk to him like it's his car. It doesn't bother me; I can laugh about it."

But she does get a certain amount of satisfaction in setting them straight.

"My friend and I went out in it a couple of weeks ago, and we stopped at a café and saw a couple of guys walking around it."

"When we jumped in, they were pretty shocked. They were mind-blown that these two girls were getting into this massive car. They weren't expecting that!"

Not only does Hannan own the car, but she also imported it, restored it, and, as a qualified mechanic, got it ready to roll on New Zealand roads.

Hannan describes the car as her "pride and joy."

"I have had it for about nine years now. I brought it in from the States as a project."

"It wasn't going and the windows were smashed; there was no motor."

Hannan said she was initially shy about the amount of attention the vehicle attracted, but she was becoming more confident about sharing its back-story.

"Now I can say this is mine and I built this."

"So many people will buy cars that have been already built, but for



Melissa Hannan imported, restored and made her 1959 Chevrolet Parkwood roadworthy herself. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON



me, bringing the car in, being able to build it and being the only owner here has made mine special."

Hannan spent six months getting the car on the road, and after chipping away with modifications every year, the vehicle is at a point where she is happy with it.

"I've been from Auckland to Wellington, Milford Sound and the Caitlins."

"It's my road trip vehicle. "It's the most reliable car I've ever owned."

The car is rare in New Zealand, with one other in Christchurch

Hannan is aware of.

She has taken the vehicle to beach hops and Muscle Car Madness in Christchurch, through which Hannan has met like-minded people.

Having moved to Christchurch from Auckland three years ago, the car community in the South Island has been welcoming, she said.

"All my friends down here are through the car community. Some I've been lucky to meet through social media."

While Hannan works in a predominantly male-dominated field, she

that if you are not strong enough, there's normally a tool for the job."

With 16 years of experience, Hannan wanted to use her skills for good.

When she isn't working as a mechanic at her day job at Car Solutions in Christchurch, she runs Girls N Gasoline, teaching classes to women in essential vehicle maintenance.

The classes, which are limited to eight women, include lessons on checking and topping up oil, engine coolant, power steering, brake fluid, and air filters and how to change them.

"We teach them how to jump-start a car, change wiper blades and light bulbs, jack up a car, check tyre pressure, and change a wheel."

"It's just basic stuff you need to correctly maintain your vehicle and ensure nothing goes wrong with it."

Hannan runs the classes in cities and regional towns throughout the country.

She often receives positive feedback from women following the class, who tell her how much more confident they are in their vehicles.

"I love being able to empower women and teach them something."

"The classes are fun, and I enjoy spending time with these ladies and getting to know them."

"I try to make it fun and enjoyable for them and myself because I don't want to feel like I'm working when I'm doing this on my weekends."

finds her male co-workers supportive of a female in the workshop. "You get familiar with people and they just accept you." Lacking the physical strength for the job can sometimes be a challenge, but Hannan says there's always a solution. "There are so many tools now



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# Hub to focus on demonstration

ANDREA DIXON

I recently attended the South Island Dairy Event (SIDE) and then in mid-July, we held our winter field day at the Southern Dairy Hub (SDH).

Both occasions led to some fantastic interactions with farmers and some insights into what is driving and concerning them right now.

The theme at SIDE really resonated with me, because it aligns so well with our focus at the hub - excelling through change.

There is a lot happening in today's environment, not least changes to regulation and how we meet the needs of our markets.

It was inspiring to hear about the importance of putting people first and focusing on resilience in high stress environments and the ability to cope and adjust to change.

I'm always in awe of farmers and what they juggle. I know first-hand from running a working farm and, in my case, also a research farm, just how complex farming systems are.

In the coming year, the hub will have a greater focus on demonstration. This means that we'll continue our long-term research trials, but also begin to offer our farmers more regular and timely insights to apply on farm.

We'll be conducting more short-term research trials and showcasing more on-farm demonstration.

This will provide guidance, insights, data and research in real-time and on a more regular basis, that, I hope, will help our southern farmers with greater practical information to help with their on-farm decisions.

We know that there is a significant - and growing - range of technology available to farmers, and many systems that don't talk to each other yet. Data integration is a



Southern Dairy Hub general manager Andrea Dixon says she understands just how complex farming systems are. PHOTO SUPPLIED

quickly evolving space and, at the hub, we will be demonstrating these opportunities to our farmers as it evolves. Watch this space!

The hub will become a hub in practice - a place of collaboration, where we share information from sector groups, the regional council, and organisations doing the mahi.

We're all working together for a common goal: to help our southern farmers access the information they want and need to make decisions on-farm.

A recent example is at our July field day, where we heard from DairyNZ, Environment Southland, Fonterra, Recycle South, and a raft of local farmers - all coming together to share their insights with each other. We all took away something new.

I welcome research and demonstration ideas from southern farmers, as my goal for the hub is that we always provide timely, topical and, ultimately, useful information. So, check out our website or get in touch. I'd love to hear from you.

*Andrea Dixon is the South Island Dairy Hub general manager*

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# SI Dairy Event embraces change

The annual South Island Dairy Event will return in 2025, but with a significant change – the conference will now be held in autumn instead of winter.

SIDE is traditionally held in late June, but SIDE governance group chairperson Glenn Jones said winter is becoming increasingly busy for dairy farmers. The committee hopes the change of date will be more convenient for farmers wishing to attend.

“We’re just trying to capture a few more people and we feel that April is more accessible for most people.”

The event is also heading back down south, with the 2025 conference moving to Timaru.

The event organising committee has two new names sharing the role of chairperson for next year’s event, with Abby Rawcliffe and Myfanway Alexander taking on the position.

Jones said the committee hoped to keep building on the momentum of this year’s conference.

“The level lifted a lot this year, so we want to build on that success,” Jones said.

This year’s conference, with the theme “excelling through change”, was held on June 25-26 at Lincoln University.

Ashburton dairy farmer and 2024 event chairperson Jonathan Hoets said the turnout for the conference, which was last held at the university in 2015, was “awesome”.

“We’ve had over 400 registrations and 150 attending the dinner.”

Hoets expressed his delight at the growing popularity of BrightSide, a part of the conference dedicated to the

younger generation entering the dairy sector.

“It’s fantastic to grow BrightSide and see young people coming through, seeing the benefits and learning some things.”

Country radio presenter Jamie Mackay was the master of ceremonies and Lincoln University vice-chancellor Professor Grant Edwards opened the conference.

Edwards said the university, which now has a record number of 5000 students, was “delighted” to host the event.

“Returning to Lincoln for the milestone 25th edition of SIDE is very important as a reflection of the commitment to the conference’s heritage and the valuable relationship between the university and the dairy farming community.”

Edwards said the conference provided an unparalleled opportunity for farmers and others involved in the industry to network and exchange knowledge with people who share the triumphs, tribulations and challenges associated with the industry.

“It’s appropriate that those who seek to advance their knowledge and skills and to evaluate new technologies should gather together.”

The event included workshops, a gala dinner, a trade expo area and keynote speakers focusing on resilience and embracing change.

Mental health advocate Craig Wiggins was on site with the Carr Family Foundation rural health van, which was staffed by a registered nurse who provided free health check-ups.

Hoets said he hoped attendees found inspiration from the conference.



South Island Dairy Event chairperson Jonathan Hoets said he hopes attendees gained inspiration from the event. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON



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# as it flies south for autumn



broadcaster Jamie Mackay welcomes event attendees to the South Island Dairy Event.  
PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON



Professor Grant Edwards said Lincoln University was delighted to be hosting the event.  
PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON



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# A crash-course in calving

NADINE SAVAGE &  
LAURENCE COHEN

While we hope most cows will successfully calve unassisted this spring, it pays for farmers to be prepared to step in when necessary.

Generally, cows should take only 30 minutes to one hour to calve, while heifers can take around two to three hours. If your girls are not making progress within these timeframes, you may need to intervene.

As large animal vets for West Coast Vets, we have had plenty of experience navigating calving difficulties and have some top tips to help your assisted calvings go more smoothly this season.

The most important thing to remember is if you are assisting a cow to calve and have made no progress after 10 minutes, call your vet for a hand. Time is of the essence to give both cow and calf the best chance of a good outcome.

Before you step in, make sure you are wearing gloves to prevent spreading any bacteria and use plenty of lube to make things easier and protect the cow. Then, try to determine if the calf is coming forwards or backwards, and where the legs and the head are.

If you can see legs but are unsure if they're front or back ones, look out for a C or Z shape. The joints of the front leg bend in the same direction, forming a C shape, while the joints of the back



It's all hands on deck when a cow needs help calving.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

leg bend in the opposite direction, forming a Z shape. If there are two front legs and no head, the calf's head may be bent backwards.

In a head-back situation, head ropes could be used to re-position the calf into the proper birthing position - two front legs followed by a forward-facing head. Care

must be taken to never place the rope around only the jaw, as the calf may still be alive and the pulling pressure can break the jaw. Instead, place the rope behind the ears and then through the mouth. Getting the rope behind both ears is the biggest factor in getting a calf's head facing the right way

again.

Leg ropes or chains can be used to assist a cow that is having trouble moving her calf. Always loop the chain above the calf's fetlock and place a half hitch below it, as this reduces the chance of breaking the calf's leg. Use gentle traction and don't pull on both

legs at once. Switching between alternate legs can help move the calf through the birthing canal.

Once the calf has been born, always look for spares and tears. Even if she has had twins, it is worthwhile checking for a third... you never know! Also, check the cow for any damage. Moving the calf's head or legs to correct its presentation can mean sharp teeth or hooves scratch across the uterine wall, and using ropes or chains and pulling can cause injury. Don't forget to consider a pain relief post-calving to help the cow recover.

It's important to closely monitor recently calved cows to ensure they are recovering. Normally, the placenta will be delivered within six hours of calving. However, if only a small part of the placenta comes away, the cow may need a vet check.

If her uterus prolapses, call your vet straight away as this is an emergency. It's vital to try keep her calm and clean until they arrive. If she is down, don't give her any metabolics yet, as if she jumps up and runs away the uterus can tear and cause her to bleed out.

Our final tip: Vets love warm water, especially on those cool spring mornings! Grab a couple of buckets if you've called your vet out and they'll appreciate it.

Nadine Savage (BVSC) &  
Laurence Cohen (BVM&S)  
West Coast Vets, Greymouth

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# Dairy farmers' perfect tool

Dairy farmers have the perfect tool at their disposal this calving season to set their herds up for future productivity – the rumen in their replacement heifer calves.

Raising healthy replacement heifer calves that efficiently turn feed into milk is fundamental to the future of New Zealand's dairy herd, says SealesWinslow quality and technical manager Paul Drew.

"Farmers have a single fundamental tool at their disposal that can help them grow the most efficient dairy cows possible and that's the rumen in their replacement heifer calves," says Paul.

The rumen is a vital part of a calf's stomach, responsible for fermenting solid feeds and forages and turning them into usable energy. For a calf to thrive, its rumen needs to develop quickly and effectively. Paul says the key to achieving that is getting enough starch into their diets to kick-start the development of gut microbes.

"These microbes are essential for fermenting feed and producing volatile fatty acids, which are crucial for energy production."

"Feeding a starch-rich diet from early on helps grow the calf's rumen from a small, underdeveloped organ into a fully functional part of the stomach that can efficiently digest and absorb nutrients, enhancing the animal's future milk production and profitability."

Cows with fully developed rumen functions become feed-efficient machines which supports

## FEED TIPS

Tips to get the most out of starch in your calf-rearing programme:

- Introduce solid feeds early: Start with small amounts of high-starch feeds like a good quality calf pellet or muesli, alongside milk.
- Choose high-quality feeds:

Check the labels and look for feeds with a high starch content and avoid low-quality fillers.

- Monitor growth: Track your calves' weight gain regularly to ensure they are growing at the desired rate and make changes to the feeding programme accordingly.

initiatives like Fonterra's Scope 3 emissions that are targeting a 30% reduction in on-farm emissions by 2030.

Fonterra has signalled it expects to achieve 7% of that reduction through farming best practices such as feed quality and improving herd performance.

"By focusing on starch-rich diets, farmers have a golden opportunity to rear replacements that become super-efficient at turning feed into milk, enhancing both production and profitability while contributing to the industry's sustainability efforts," Paul said.

Starch is a powerful energy source. The by-products of starch fermentation in the gut, particularly volatile fatty acids, provide up to 75% of the energy needs of a fully developed cow.

"By feeding your calves high-starch feeds, you ensure they

get the energy they need to grow strong and healthy," Paul said.

Starch not only fuels growth but also enhances the structure of the rumen wall. The rumen wall needs to develop finger-like projections called papillae, which increase the surface area for nutrient absorption.

"Calves fed with starch-rich diets show significantly better development of these papillae, allowing them to absorb more nutrients and grow faster which all adds up to better efficiency," he said.

"Calves fed with high-quality feed with a good starch content reach target weights faster and reduce the overall amount of feed needed.

"By incorporating starch-rich feeds into your calves' diet, you help fire up the biggest tool you have to grow a more productive dairy herd."



PAUL DREW

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# Keeping the bovines bouncy in winter

ANISHA SATYA

New season, new issues - Farmers will be keeping a watchful eye on dairy cows as calving kicks off.

A cow's body demands more nutrients than usual after giving birth - they burn fat for energy and draw calcium from their bones into their milk.

Dairy Vets Ashburton's Will McLean said keeping on top of deficiencies and metabolic diseases is the key concern for farmers at this time of year.

Ensuring cows receive a constant and balanced supply of protein and minerals is essential to keeping them healthy through this period, he said.

"One of the biggest things farmers will be looking out for is milk fever."

Milk fever, or hypocalcaemia, occurs when a cow has lowered levels of calcium in their blood.

"When a cow calves, she's suddenly got a huge demand for calcium. Cows are sort of genetically programmed to put it all into their milk.

"If the diet's been a little off balance coming into calving, they'll be 'downed cows' - they won't be able to stand up."

McLean said a calcium IV should be given to downed cows with milk fever.

"If it's an uncomplicated milk fever, they'll stand up after that."

Cows with clinical milk fever - a mix of obvious symptoms - might indicate the rest of the herd is suffering from subclinical milk fever, which is identifiable with blood tests, but not obvious from a cow's behaviour.

Dusting paddocks with a calcium-rich powder, like lime flour, helps to manage subclinical cases.

Other issues, which are often brought on by milk fever, are ketosis and mastitis.

Calving ketosis happens when a mother uses up extra body fat to produce enough milk for her calf.

"Essentially, not enough energy is going through

their system."

Ketosis can make cows sluggish and slow to eat, or erratic and disorientated.

Propylene glycol, which helps them generate the sugar needed for energy, can be given in a drench or mixed with feed to counteract ketosis.

Mastitis, inflammation of the mammary glands caused by infections, is a risk year-round but increases while cows recover from pregnancy and prepare for high milk production.

"Calving's a bit of stress on [cows], so their immune systems are not quite as sharp as usual," McLean said.

"Bugs that they've picked up over the dry season might present themselves at calving."

Cows producing consistently watery, clotted or discoloured milk, or who have swollen udders, need quick attention to diagnose and resolve the problem.

McLean said farmers are well aware of the issues

that come around this time of year, and that most will have a calving box on hand.

"They might have one in the shed, or in the ute, or they might have multiple on the quad bike."

McLean said all calving boxes should contain calving ropes, gloves and lube - to assist in birthing - and metabolic IV bags, energy drenches, iodine, oxycontin and pain relief to help the mother before and after birth.

"Farms in Mid Canterbury are generally bigger than anywhere else in the country," he said, which makes health assessments trickier.

"It's hard to keep track of every individual cow in a large mob."

Disease prevention will save farmers time and money in the long run, he said, so keep a constant eye on your herd.

"We really want to push people checking every six hours."

"The more checks, the less problems you're gonna get."

McLean encourages farmers with large numbers of downed cows to get in touch with their local vet.



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