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SEPTEMBER 2024

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WITH Claire Inkson – OPINION

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LETTERS

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- No more than 100 words.
- We reserve the right to edit or not publish.
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The power of unity

Amidst the challenges faced by the primary sector under the previous government, a silver lining emerged in the form of a more unified approach from industry bodies like Beef + Lamb, DairyNZ, and Federated Farmers.

Despite the unique challenges facing each segment of the agriculture sector, working collaboratively makes way more sense when effecting change at a government level.

This unified approach works.

There is also a greater alignment between these organisations and the farmers they represent.

Federated Farmers, in particular, following pressure from their members, have proved their worth and grown teeth.

There was definitely a time when many farmers I know were questioning how effective the Feds were, particularly as advocates for the sector.

There will no doubt be farmers reading this who feel the Feds have got it wrong in some instances (their stance on gene editing, for example). Still, the prevailing sentiment among most farmers I engage with is that Federated Farmers are now well and truly earning their keep.

Recently the organisation had another win for the sector by successfully lobbying for the government inquiry into rural banking.

The scope of the inquiry ticks off most of their concerns, and credit has to be given to Wayne Langford, Richard McIntyre and the team for pushing relentlessly for the inquiry on behalf of their 13,000 or so members.

Here's hoping the inquiry provides some answers and brings some change.

Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) is another organisation that I can see moving into the advocacy space and beginning to

gain some clout.

RWNZ was once known for knitting and scones, but change is afoot with a new chief executive, Marie Fitzpatrick, at the helm.

She is a force of nature keen on advocating policies affecting rural women and children.

They deserve to be taken seriously, and hopefully we can see more collaboration with them from the likes of Federated Farmers in the future.

With a current government that appears to be more farmer-friendly and our industry bodies working together and generally more active in the advocacy space, do we still need organisations like Groundswell or the Rural Advocacy Network?

We absolutely do.

They are our watchdogs on the porch and our canaries in the coal mine.

They are there to ensure that the current government keeps its promises and meets its deadlines and that our industry bodies listen to and align with the farmers they represent.

Even though this government supports farmers more than the previous one, changes still need to be made, such as in Freshwater Farm planning and Significant Natural Areas.

This emphasises the importance of ongoing advocacy and engagement from all stakeholders in our sector.

It's not just central government that needs to be on notice. Regional and local councils should still be held accountable.

To ensure we stay on track, we must continue applying the lessons we learned before the election. This means maintaining the pressure, ensuring that our industry organisations continue to listen to farmers and advocate effectively on their behalf, and collaborate to maximise our farmer voice.



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And they're good at what they do, handling jobs and work from Mid Canterbury and beyond for the wider ACL company, which has honed a fine reputation for contracting work and so much more since the firm was established in 1995.

"This side of the business is a bit separate from the main workshop," ACL Paint and Panel workshop manager

Mike Johnston said.

"Our focus is on the big stuff — earthmoving trucks, trailers, stock crates.

"Anything large is what we specialise in."

Mike's words underscore his paint and panel team's commitment to larger vehicles, leaving smaller car repairs to other shops. Their expertise is tailored for hefty utes and massive machinery.

They've got the biggest paint spray booths going around, resulting in high-quality results for trucks, diggers, graders, harvesters and they even did a tank once.

"We will do the larger vehicles, likes utes and that, but we don't get involved in passenger cars."

The team's services also extend beyond ACL's own sizeable fleet.

"We do a lot of outside work too," Paint and Panel's shop supervisor Keith Fryer said, highlighting their work for clients such as B R Jones Contracting and Kiwi Concrete in Christchurch.

"We've got ongoing projects for these companies, maintaining their concrete trucks and keeping them clean and looking good."

And getting work done at ACL is a straightforward process for any customer.

"For any queries or quotes, people can just talk to me," Mike said.

"Keith and I coordinate and provide accurate estimates and get the jobs lined up."

And rest assured, the dedication of Mike and his team ensures that every truck, trailer, or heavy machinery leaving ACL Paint and Panel is in pristine condition.

Whether it's routine maintenance or major tidy-ups and paint and rust repairs, ACL Paint and Panel remains a trusted name in keeping the giants of the road running smoothly.

And that's the mantra that Mike, Keith, and the team all live by.



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Protecting our ag sector

In a recent issue of Rural Guardian, North Otago farmer Jane Smith sought convincing on why it's worth spending millions of dollars to find a way to reduce emissions from New Zealand livestock through AgriZeroNZ.

Chief executive of AgriZeroNZ, Wayne McNee, responds:

The answer is quite simple: to protect our farmers' livelihoods and the \$42.7 billion industry they have worked so hard to create.

As an export-reliant country, reducing emissions is no longer a choice, but a requirement from our global customers and trade partners to protect our sector's future.

AgriZeroNZ is focused on providing farmers with practical solutions to help them reduce emissions, without compromising on profitability and productivity.

Contrary to the claims, we are not about reducing animal numbers or getting them off pasture.

Quite the opposite, in fact.

I've discussed this with Jane previously and I welcome this opportunity to clarify why AgriZeroNZ exists for Rural Guardian readers.

Farmers are the backbone of our economy.

They work tirelessly to support our country and feed the world, but international customers that pay a premium for our high-quality grass-fed milk and meat products (eg, Tesco, Sainsbury's, McDonald's, Nestlé, Danone, Mars and others) are all pushing deep into their supply chains to get emissions reductions with ambitious, global, science-based scope three targets.

When these companies meet with their suppliers, our processors and co-ops, the conversations are acutely focused on New Zealand's contribution to their scope three emissions. Not on New Zealand's relative contribution to global emissions or warming.

It's widely acknowledged that our farmers are among the most emissions efficient in the world.

Customers know this, but that doesn't change the fact that they want our farmers to help them deliver on those targets. Otherwise, they will go elsewhere for their meat and dairy products, or even

YOUR SAY

The Rural Guardian welcomes views and feedback on any articles we publish, as Wayne McNee has done in this case.

Please offer your thoughts by emailing the Rural Guardian editor: claire.inkson@theguardian.co.nz

Note: The editor will decide if we publish your offerings. The editor also has the right to abridge all content.

use non-meat and dairy alternatives.

Furthermore, global competitors are catching up, with access to mitigation tools that aren't well suited to our pasture-based farms. Some even say they are already more efficient than us.

We can debate the science of methane until the cows come home, but the reality is we need urgent action. Or we risk losing high-end customers, market access and potentially breaching trade agreements.

AgriZeroNZ was set up last year to deliver a step-change in investment to accelerate development of emissions reduction tools specifically for our pastoral farms.

Our shareholders represent some of the biggest players in the ag sector and they have made a signif-

icant commitment to help farmers by investing in AgriZeroNZ.

To date, we've committed over \$33 million across 10 high-impact opportunities, including pasture, probiotics, methane vaccines and inhibitors.

We're scanning the world for solutions and we have 77 other items on our radar for review.

The companies we're investing in are also making commitments to bring the tools to New Zealand and we are supporting them through the regulatory pathway to gain approval for use on farms.

We understand farmers care deeply about this and we welcome ongoing input.

That's why we're establishing a group of farmers to advise us on matters, ranging from implementation of tools and new tech to incentives and farm adoption.

I encourage farmers to register their interest to join our Farmer Focus Group via the contact form on our website.

We're also being very transparent on our progress and where the funds are being spent, with regular updates published on our website and social media channels.

Based on what we've seen around the world, I'm optimistic farmers will have two or three tools to choose from before 2030.

They will protect - and enhance - our fantastic farming reputation and the future competitiveness of our exports.

That's a sound investment for us all.



Wayne McNee

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Hamish Frizzell
Managing Director

Are you a rural landowner looking to unlock the potential of your property but unsure about the potentially complex regulations and processes involved in land development? Or are you wondering where your river boundary actually is? And who owns what? At Survus Rural, with our extensive experience in rural land development and innovative thinking, we can help you with the challenges faced by people like you. We understand the unique challenges faced by farmers and agri-business owners. This understanding has led to the establishment of our dedicated Survus Rural division, comprising of a passionate team of strategists, planners, surveyors and engineers, along with a team of specialist support partners, with decades of experience in the local rural landscape.

Our Services

We offer a comprehensive range of services tailored to meet the specific needs of rural landowners. Whether you're looking to subdivide to create new titles to transfer your land to your family or release equity from the sale of land, undertake an AMF river claim, or create easements for power, water, stock droving or whatever, we have you covered. Here is a brief outline of some of the things we specialise in:

- Rural Subdivisions



- Boundary definitions and removal of 'Limitations'
- AMF and accretion river boundary claims
- Easements for any purpose
- NPS-HPL advice
- Succession planning

Navigating Regulations

Understanding national and local rules, and adapting them to suit your goals is a crucial part of the process. The introduction of the NPS-HPL (National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land) in 2022 is one of the most restricting and limiting pieces of legislation to come out of the previous Labour Governments regime, when it comes to subdividing most rural land. Our experts can help you navigate these complex regulations to achieve the result you want and ensure compliance, and offer advice

on how to present your land for optimal sale value. Whether it's about providing visual aids such as fencing and entranceway design to enhance appeal, complying with the requirements of regulatory organisations and NZTA, or seeking advice to minimize risks and costs, Survus Rural are here to help.

Expert Network

We have established a dependable network of rural property partners to provide specialized services, ranging from well drilling, earthworks, civil construction and water system design, to agricultural consultants, rural realtors, specialist agri-business and property lawyers and accountants, and financial advisors and mortgage brokers. These partnerships enable us to provide support to our clients throughout the land development process. This

ensures a seamless and stress-free project from initial enquiry to completion, knowing you are getting the best possible advice at a fair and reasonable price.

Free Consultations

As a family-run company, we take pride in offering personalized service to our clients. We understand that no one knows your land like you do. That's why we offer free on-site consultations to ask the questions, discuss your needs and explain the necessary processes. If you're considering subdivision, we can help you generate layout plans, concept plans, and investment proposals for construction and subdivision, covering all fees and likely costs, including legal fees, all at no initial cost.

If you're contemplating rural subdivision, but have no idea where to start, or even if it is possible, start with an initial enquiry with us, where our expert team is ready to help. Our expertise can help you make informed decisions and maximize the potential of your rural land. With the right guidance and support from industry experts like Survus Rural, you can unlock the true value of your land while minimizing risks and maximizing returns. Give us a ring or drop us an email – we'll make sure you get what you need and none of the services you don't.

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FARMING FAST FIVE



FMG 2024 Young Farmer of the Year says his parents are his biggest inspiration. PHOTO SUPPLIED.

George Dodson

Where we ask a farmer five quick questions about farming, and what agriculture means to them. Today we talk to FMG 2024 Young Farmer of the Year George Dodson.

1 What did your journey into farming look like?

I grew up on a dairy farm in Southland, then we moved to Rolleston when I was 11 and the equity partnership my parents were in split up.

I became a city kid for a few years till I got a job on a farm rolling paddocks at 16.

I progressed from there to milking etc then fulltime after finishing high school.

I fell in love with the industry and the pathways and I've kept going up and up ever since.

My parents are my inspiration: Mum because she looks after our family and family is everything, and my Dad because his hard work inspired me and continues to inspire me every day.

2 Tell us a little bit about your farming operation.

I'm 21C on a 435-cow, 113-ha dairy farm working for Andrew and Hayley Slater near Darfield.

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

The biggest challenge is just progressing through the industry.

I took my first job in management at 20 and that was a very steep learning curve, but taught me a lot. I always try to have a good support network.

Mentally, family and friends, partner etc

are important.

Physically, sport is a huge one for me, getting off farm and blowing off some steam and having fun.

Also professionally; Dad, and previous farm owners are there for when I need advice.

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

The biggest highlights were getting third place in the Canterbury North Otago New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards for Dairy Trainee of the Year in 2022, and second place for Dairy Manager of the Year in the Southland Otago awards in 2023.

And then also getting second place in the 2024 Dairy industry Awards for Dairy Manager of the Year for Canterbury North Otago.

Obviously the biggest one, and the one I am most proud of, is the FMG Young Farmer of the Year 2024.

One highlight I'm hoping for in the future is to buy a farm with my parents and live the family farm dream.

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

Always strive to learn and get better at everything you do.

You don't have to go to university to be successful, but always prioritise education and ensure that you and your reputation is your biggest asset.

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"And the more you grow and harvest directly with your animals, the lower your costs of production for every kilogram of milksolids that leaves your farm."

Not all pasture seed is equal, however. Some options are higher risk than others, so it really pays to dig into these differences before you sow this spring.

With a better dairy payout forecast for this year, Mark says farmers have more flexibility to pick proven pasture performers for spring sowing, and in doing so, they will strengthen their business both in the short and medium term.

"Even if it means renewing only one paddock really well, with proven pasture genetics, you'll be better off doing this than risking sowing multiple paddocks with uncertified seed this spring.

"Uncertified seed, while cheap, is unlikely to deliver value for dairy pastures. In fact, it might do the opposite. There is no knowing what it contains, or how it will perform," he says.

At the other end of the spectrum, with least risk and highest lasting value, is certified seed of top proprietary perennial ryegrass like Array, Maxsyn, and 4front.

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spent on pasture renewal this spring."

Quality, germination, purity and endophyte are guaranteed and the long term value inherent in these advanced genetics has been demonstrated time and again.

What if you can't afford to sow as many paddocks in these high-value perennials as you'd like this spring?

Mark says in these cases, value might best be achieved with a hybrid like Forge.

"This can grow 1-1.5 tonnes more dry matter per ha per year than tetraploid perennials for two to five years, and has exceptional cool season growth with higher palatability for improved animal performance."

It's not a perennial and it will need to be replaced, but in the medium term, it will help you get through the next few years with reliable, quality, cost-effective feed, he says.

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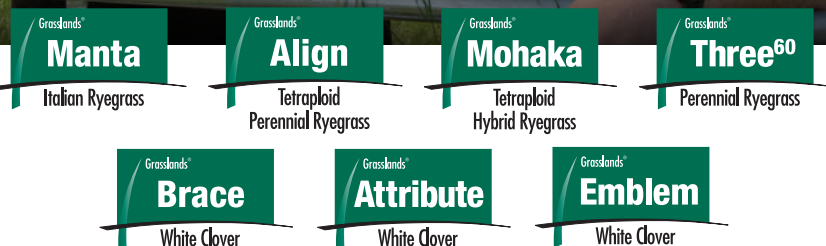
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Terms of reference welcomed

CLAIRE INKSON

Rural banking has been a pain point for the primary sector, but there has been a positive reaction to the terms of reference announced by the government for the upcoming banking inquiry.

The terms of reference, which will set out the issues the inquiry will investigate, covered most of the concerns around banking facing the rural sector.

Mid Canterbury Federated Farmers president David Acland said the involvement of the Parliament's Primary Production select committee is 'critical'.

"It's important because it means we get that representation of primary industry at that level."

Federated Farmers has been particularly vocal about rural lending and the higher interest rates charged to the sector when pushing for the inquiry.

"That's been our main focus, the margin banks put on us as risk, and why that margin is bigger."

Richard McIntyre, Federated Farmers national board member and banking spokesperson, expressed his satisfaction with the comprehensive nature of the inquiry, stating that it will 'leave banks with nowhere to hide.'

"This inquiry is well placed to shine a bright light on parts of our rural banking system that, until now, have been allowed to operate in the shadows."

McIntyre said Federated Farmers' concerns about just how 'rural' this inquiry would be had been well and truly put to bed with these terms of reference.

"Everything we hoped to see included is in there, including questions about rural banking competition, transparency mechanisms, credit risk models, and open banking.

"There are also some very specific questions about the return on capital banks are getting from rural lending and the level of interest rates charged to the sector."

McIntyre said that Federated Farmers will be engaging in the select committee process and making a comprehensive submission on behalf of their members.

"Federated Farmers have been leading the charge to get this rural banking inquiry over the line, but there's still a big job to be done," McIntyre says.

"We need to make sure the rural voice stays front and centre during this process so we can find some genuine, practical and rapid solutions that will improve the lives of farming families."

Rural Women New Zealand chief executive Marie Fitzpatrick said the organisation welcomes the inquiry and is pleased to see it will canvas the full range of issues rural communities are experiencing.

"This includes constrained access to lending, high interest rates and the ongoing closure of rural bank branches and ATMs.

"Our members are also concerned there's an over-reliance by banks on digital services as opposed to personal banking services, which is leaving rural communities without adequate support.

"This is especially the case when some rural communities continue to experience poor or non-existent digital connectivity."

Fitzpatrick indicated the organisation will also be making a submission.

"We encourage our members and other rural communities to make their voices heard."

Groundswell NZ has also come out in praise of the scope of the inquiry, particularly around emissions policy.

"Groundswell has been campaigning

for Parliament's banking inquiry to include emissions policies, and now the terms of reference published today cover both the Reserve Bank's approach on greenhouse gas emissions and banks' environmental and sustainability policies," Groundswell NZ co-founder Bryce McKenzie said.

Mackenzie said that despite the voting public rejecting policies like the last Government's Farming Tax, the banking sector has been moving towards de facto enforcement of the same kinds of emissions policies.

"On top of overcharging farmers by 2% on average and denying credit to even high-equity farms, now banks are wanting farmers to comply with emissions policies based on outdated models.

"Farmers are in a tough spot at the moment.

"These interest rates and the restrained access to credit hit young farmers particularly hard," Mackenzie said.



Mid Canterbury Federated Farmers president David Acland said the involvement of the Parliament's primary production select committee is critical.

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As we know, Mid Canterbury gets dry. Really dry. But Ida Valley, Central Otago, takes that up another notch.

There, the Shannon family, sisters Jo and Vicki, are relishing their new challenge, having moved from the North Island. They are also always looking for ways to improve their farm's performance and get a better return.

The flat, very dry area, like most of the region, is at the mercy of the elements with very hot summers and literally freezing winters. Ida Valley is just 35 km from Ranfurly, the town credited by the Alexander Turnbull Library with New Zealand's lowest ever temperature at minus 25.6, back in 1903.

With the farm the Shannons own, and a bit of extra land leased, Jo and Vicki have a substantial 500 ha of country that's fairly tough by anyone's estimation.

The family run Perendales as the main mob, with a terminal mob of Perendale ewes crossed with Hampshire and Texel rams, along with South Devon cattle.

Having enough feed for the animals is critical and Jo and Vicki have both open minds and eyes when it comes to finding high-performing, cost-effective solutions.

Jo says the family use mixed pasture in some paddocks, in part to maximise stock feed

but also to use plants with root systems that will break up the soil's hard, shallow pan.

The Shannons took part in a trial of corn starch-based, super absorbent, Zeba from sustainable agricultural solutions provider UPL NZ Ltd. and were won over. "It's an amazing product," Jo says.

Zeba stores water, then releases it through natural transfer processes when plants need it. Each Zeba granule holds up to 400 times its own weight in water.

A high cation exchange capacity means Zeba is able to positively interact with soil nutrients. It also keeps both water and nutrients where the plant roots need them most, so crop growth is maximised, and growth checks minimised.

Initially, 5 ha were trialled on the property. 3 ha treated and 2 ha untreated. Jo said they could definitely pick the difference.

The Shannons then extended their use of Zeba and Jo reckons they've been repaid for their confidence.

"We'd recommend it to anyone. It worked and gave plants a chance to get established. Without it, we just wouldn't have the crops we have now." Jo says they planted summer crops in October to fatten lambs. Thanks in part to Zeba, the feed lasted to April. "We'll use it again."

UPL NZ Otago Southland



Rape, sunflowers and Italian rye growing at the Shannon Farm.

Regional Manager Tom McDonald says the product can decrease the amount of water needed for irrigation – providing greater yields for less cost when rainfall is a limiting factor.

"Basically, Zeba helps address a whole lot of concerns around the environment and water use and availability."

Tom says while relatively new to New Zealand, Zeba has performed well in arid areas of countries including Australia, South Africa, and India. And, he says, the Shannon's experience and other New Zealand data is compelling. "With increasing climate uncertainty, Zeba is a product that's in the right place at the right time."

Zeba activates when rain falls,

or irrigation is applied, and has the capability to hold that moisture in reserve. "It increases soil's nutrient and water holding capacity and it is easy to apply, down the spout, at sowing. You could see it as an insurance policy. Much like the way you'd choose to use treated seed over untreated. It gives you that extra bit of certainty."

As it's biodegradable, Zeba leaves no residues behind.

Tom says Zeba will recharge when there is additional moisture before eventually breaking down. "It recharges with extra rain or irrigation, but performance will diminish in 3-4 months."

Zeba also offers a direct contribution to soil aeration and bulk density, which in turn is the ideal environment for

root and beneficial soil microbe development.

Tom sounds a note of caution that Zeba is not all things to all paddocks or all farming systems. "Where Zeba especially comes into its own is when you're looking at crop establishment, particularly for high-value crops where you only really get once chance – like lucerne." He says the product is also a good fit for brassicas, cereals, and fodder beet.

"We've also had impressive results in the establishment of kale, following a crop of cereal on a property other than the Shannons. You can see a real difference between the part of the paddock where Zeba had been used and the successful kale establishment. The other part of the paddock is basically just weeds."

Tom says the reduction of soil degradation and water conservation are cornerstones of how UPL is working to help farmers and growers towards a more sustainable agricultural system. "It's what drives us. And Zeba is a perfect example of how that's applied - reducing agriculture's water footprint, optimising yields, and keeping costs down."

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Young Farmer's rising Young star

Young Farmers are the future of agriculture, so each issue we shine a spotlight on a Young Farmers member. Today we chat to Shanice-Marie Young (right).



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

My club is Te Puke Young Farmers and I became a member in 2022.

What has been the highlight for you of joining Young Farmers?

Getting to connect with the amazing people that I get to meet along the way and gain lots of new friendships and awesome memories with like-minded people.

What are the benefits and experiences that you feel have helped you most?

There are a lot of benefits to being a member of the Young Farmers club it's hard to pinpoint one thing! I have now in my short time had a fair involvement but a highlight would have been holding the Events Coordinator position on the Waikato BOP Regional Committee and running the Waikato BOP NZYF Tournament day. This was a big success for me, putting myself out there and putting on an awesome event with the help of some awesome people!

I also helped run the Waikato BOP FMG Young Farmer of the Year Regional Final and watched some amazing people go head-to-head to find our number one to represent the region at the Season 56 Grand Final. I also became the chair of the Te Puke Young Farmers since November 2023

Watching myself grow into someone I didn't know I could be but just by putting myself out there in a group of strangers has been amazing. I now have some great achievements in my life thanks to young farmers that I'll never forget and be thankful for as it's a big part of my growth with myself and my future.

How did you become involved in agriculture?

I became involved in the dairy industry because I had a passion for the lifestyle and I loved being outdoors and getting to work with the cows and ride dirt bikes every day! I got myself a Farm Assistant job and started from there. I have learned what I know today from my bosses throughout my career and my coursework for dairy farming too.

What is your job now? Tell us about your role and what your journey has been like so far

I'm currently on a 1000-cow farm in the Bay of Plenty. I started down home in the Wairarapa but after Covid, I moved up to the Bay of Plenty to upskill myself in the industry. Since then, I have been in the finals for Bay of Plenty Dairy Trainee of the Year and competed in the Season 55 FMG Young Farmer in Year regional contest as well as completing my Primary ITO in Level 3. Since I started my farming career, herd sizes have ranged from 350 to 1000 cows. It is all about me growing and learning to become a better farmer for our industry. I have now been in the industry for 6 years.

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

When looking at the future of farming, a lot of technology is coming into play: from grazing to animal health to breeding. I think being adaptable is a great attribute to have in the farming industry as times change a lot. Adapting to technology will also be better for farmers' mental health and well-being - accurate data is available quickly so holidays and time off farm is more accessible.

What are your future plans?

To complete my ITO level 4 and Farm4Life scholar hub and have these qualifications behind me and slowly move up the ladder in the dairy industry to contract milking. I also want to enter myself in the BOP Dairy Manager of the Year and FMG Young Farmer of the Year contest again. I would also love to grow our Te Puke Young Farmers Club and plan some epic events for 2024/2025 season!

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

Someone who inspired me to do dairy farming was Farm4Life/Tangaroa Walker. I watched his videos and saw the amazing things happening on-farm which made me want to push more to get into the industry and learn the ropes.

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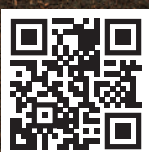
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Focusing on advocacy and growth

CLAIRE INKSON

Rural Women New Zealand will celebrate its 100th anniversary next year, and chief executive Marie Kirkpatrick states that the organisation is focusing on advocacy and growth as it looks to the future.

"We want to ensure we are doing everything right so that when new members join, they have a seamless experience and stay for life.

"We want people to stick around, so I'm doing a lot of looking under the hood at the moment.

"We want to lay the groundwork for positive and sustainable growth."

Fitzpatrick said that rural communities succeed because of the humans that live in them and the connections between them.

"I'll be encouraging people to become members and lean into building your communities and supporting your communities as best you can."

Fitzpatrick has been in the role since July 1, when she took over the position from Gabrielle O'Brien, who had held the position for three years.

Fitzpatrick brings several years of experience in the public sector to the position, including her recent

tenure on the leadership team at Fisheries New Zealand and in the Ministry for Primary Industries.

She also co-founded Good Bitches Baking Charitable Trust.

Fitzpatrick enjoys working with and supporting volunteers on the front line and felt the role of chief executive was a perfect fit.

"I like doing good things and making things better for people on a daily basis in the local community.

"When I saw this role, I thought very rarely that you would match a job description perfectly, but I thought, this is me."

Fitzpatrick believes that advocacy is an essential aspect of the role and that her career in the public sector has provided her with the experience to achieve results when lobbying the government on key issues.

"There are ways you can amplify a voice by making sure you are going through the right pathways or make your case in a way that's more powerful."

Fitzpatrick stated that consulting the Rural Women New Zealand manifesto is a great starting point for determining the priorities of rural communities.

"It's logical things, like health-

care equity, access to education, resources, community cohesion, inclusion and connection."

Fitzpatrick said that climate change and the current state of the economy meant things were "grim" in rural communities.

"When you put climate change, a challenging economic environment and drought together and layer them up, it makes for a much bigger challenge for people living in rural communities."

Fitzpatrick said that although other organisations, such as Federated Farmers, had considerable clout, Rural Women New Zealand had a unique voice in the community and was being listened to.

"We have recently hired a fantastic policy advisor because we need to strengthen in that space.

"We are having all sorts of meetings with ministers, so there has been a shift in that.

"This Government really wants to talk about rural communities, so we have a good opportunity to grow some credibility in that space as well."



Rural Women New Zealand chief executive Marie Kirkpatrick says the organisation will be focusing on advocacy and growth.

PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

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From station to board table

CLAIRE INKSON

Paddy Boyd has never shied away from a challenge, whether in his role as long-term manager of Haldon Station in the Mackenzie Country or his new position as board chairperson of Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ).

It was a position Boyd didn't want, but he was passionate about the industry, so he grudgingly accepted.

"I always look at the why, how, when and the benefits and the risks."

"I put those in front of me whenever I'm doing anything and I look at all those in tandem."

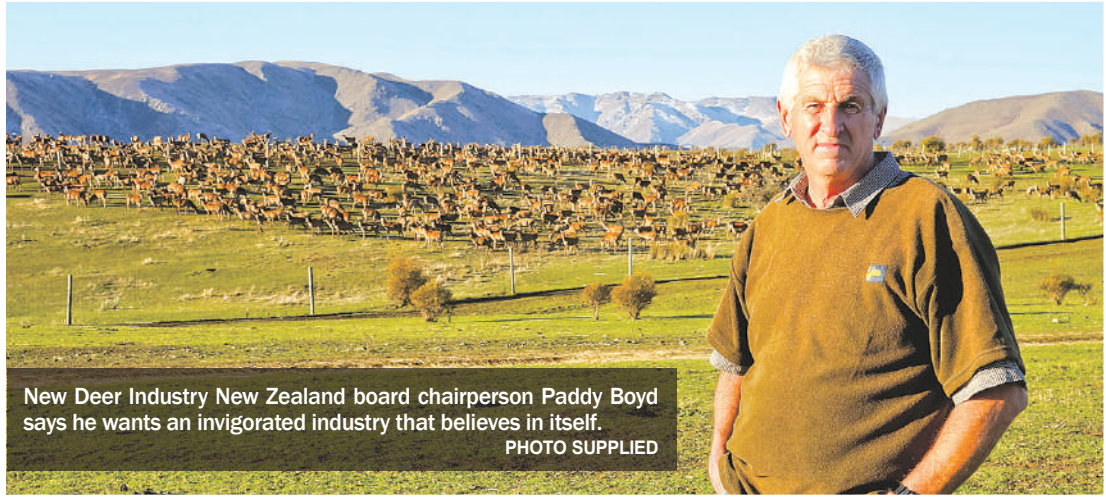
Boyd is a pioneer of the deer sector in New Zealand, being involved in the live capture of deer via helicopter in the 1970s that turned an animal that had been a pest into a valuable farming industry.

Boyd intended to stay at Haldon Station for three years, but 42 years on, he is still at the helm.

He says he is still actively involved in the management and overseeing the running of the 22,000-hectare station.

"I'm 68, but I'm not at the end of my life, I assure you."

"I've tagged and drenched every fawn born this year."



"I still put a hand on every one that goes into the truck when it goes the works."

The station initially ran sheep and beef before Boyd added the deer breeding operation into the mix.

Boyd said running the station has been challenging, as the drought-prone property receives an annual rainfall of just 30 to 38cm.

"I don't call them challenges, I call them opportunities."

"And we are evolving all the time,

that's what I love about it."

Introducing 550 hectares of irrigation to the property, which is mostly pivots, has meant that stock can be finished on the property, which Boyd describes as a "turn-around" for the operation.

"It took a lot to get it across the line because, in a natural landscape, consenting processes are really hard."

Boyd previously won the industry's 2014 Deer Farmer of the Year award and Haldon Station won

the Canterbury Farm Environment Awards supreme award in 2005 for "a very strong performance in all areas of profitable and sustainable land management".

In addition to a busy career running Haldon Station, Boyd has served as a board member on the DINZ board since last year and has held several industry governance roles over the years.

He currently sits on the National Velveting Standards Body and the Project Steering Group as the

farmer representative on the newly minted North American (venison) Retail Accelerator Programme.

Boyd said he was a good fit for the DINZ chairperson role because he has always advocated for the producers and levy payers.

"The industry belongs to them because they fund it."

The DINZ board comprises four exporters and four producers, who Boyd said had a good working relationship and a good range of skills.

However, having a farmer's voice around industry board tables was important.

"I have always been a strong believer in having the farmer's voice represented at the highest levels of industry and decision-making," says Boyd.

"Our farmers form the backbone of our industry, but many shy away from speaking up at events."

"If I can represent their voices at the table while moving the industry forward and setting us up for a strong future, then I will have done my job."

Boyd said he wants a strong, invigorated industry that believes in itself.

"If we get that in my time as chair, I've achieved everything I wanted to."

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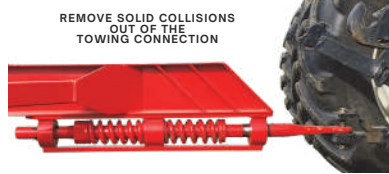
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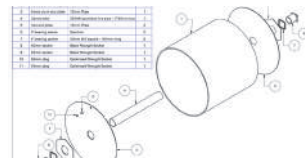


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Grass-roots start to amazing museum

HISTORY: Museum that tells the 'Southland farming story' has an interesting backstory of its own, writes **Kem Ormond**



Where is Thornbury, you may well ask... I will put my hand up and admit I had to look it up. Thornbury is a small township on the east bank of the lower Aparima River, in western Southland, just 32km from Invercargill.

I also have to confess I'm a real enthusiast when it comes to museums, old farm machinery and anything to do with our pioneering families. Regardless of whether it involves a large tractor, a small scythe or a butter churn, I love them all. I have collected kitchen memorabilia for years but, alas, tractors proved too large!

I was interested to find out how many tractor and machinery museums we have in New Zealand. Turns out we have a lot and, hopefully, during the year I will find the time to write about a few as I think they are so worth a mention, along with acknowledging the many volunteers that run them.

Thornbury Vintage Tractor Museum is now on my to visit list and, hopefully, sooner than later. I love the story about how this museum started and how it has evolved into what it is today.

The collection actually started prior to 1956 when a man called Jack Mackenzie, who was travelling along a country road, stopped to relieve himself in the long grass.

He happened to glance down into the river and saw an old tractor on the edge of the bank. It was a 1914 Avery tractor in desperate need of restoration.

To cut a long story short, it was salvaged and with the help of friends and keen tractor enthusiasts, who managed to get it up and running, then it was proudly driven down the road in the Thornbury Parade to celebrate Queen's Elizabeth II Coronation.

This started the ball rolling and soon a local carrying company donated a section and, with Jack being a builder, it wasn't long before a shed was erected, then Jack and his friends started sourcing old tractors that they could restore. Locals started getting involved, clearing out their old sheds and dropping in some real treasures to be added to what was becoming



You need to plan ahead when visiting, as there is so much to see...



the start of a tractor museum.

From 1956 until about 2009, it was really just a collection of old vintage tractors, farm machinery and family mementos dropped off by families in the district. The group applied for more funds to buy more land and, as the collection grew, more sheds were built. Since the 1960s, seven museum buildings have been erected.

When the time came for the museum to apply for funds to expand, the reply from the funding organisations was: "We don't want to fund a collection, you really need to tell the Southland farming story."

Where to start?

They say it takes a village to raise a child and you could say it takes a village to build a museum... plus, some extras if you want to turn it into something special that will tell the "Southland farming story".

And that is what happened. Many hands, some good guidance, and a lot of fundraising meant that, on February 17 this year, the Thornbury Vin-

tage Tractor and Implement Club celebrated a significant milestone: the opening of its latest edition to its Rural Heritage Centre was the *History of Southland Farming* display.

The display offers a comprehensive and engaging exploration of Southland's agricultural past such as the shearing shed, freezing works, the Port of Bluff, Stock and Station Agents, fencing, sheep, farming, animal health, rabbits, drainage surveyors, early settlers, and the clearing of the bushland.

They recreated the "Southland farming story", with fantastic visuals, a rich collection of items and artefacts, and with panelled information, scripted by the late host of *A Dog's Show*, John Gordon. The display finishes with a tribute to Gordon, who died before it was finished, acknowledging that he was a vital link to making the dream happen.

As museum member Fraser Pearce said: "John paints a lovely picture with his words which are easy to read and somewhat poetic even

for us blokes."

You need to plan ahead when visiting this museum, as there is so much to see, such as their fully restored 1914 Avery tractor taking pride of place, a rare 118hp superheated Garrett Steam engine, one of only three remaining in the world, a huge array of tractors and farm implements, a blacksmith shop complete with horse-drawn implements, a selection of steel-wheeled tractors, a Willett display, and a working workshop – I have hardly scratched the surface – and then there is their new *History of Southland Farming* display.

The Southland community has a lot to thank for the vision and hard work of many locals who have preserved this history for years to come, history that could have easily been lost. ■

Clockwise from main, a new visual display of shearing in Southland; a 1914 Avery tractor; Tom Parkes (yellow hat) and Tom Fowler (blue overalls) work on a tractor restoration; tractors of every colour are proudly displayed at the museum.



The museum is open every Sunday from 1.30 to 4.30pm and on public holidays. It is happy to show organised groups around.

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The stealthy disease

CLAIRE INKSON

Rural Women New Zealand and Massey University have partnered to raise funds for continued research on leptospirosis and to increase awareness about the disease's risks to rural communities.

Dr Julie Collins-Emerson, who was one of the founding members of the Leptospirosis Research Group at Massey University, says that although infection rates of the disease have spiked in Northland after the flooding following Cyclone Gabrielle, South Island communities are still at risk.

"It's always been here. It's in beef and dairy cattle, sheep and deer.

"It's definitely an issue in the South Island," Collins-Emerson says.


Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection that can be transmitted to humans through the urine of infected animals or contaminated water.

It can cause flu-like symptoms and, if left untreated, may lead to liver and kidney damage, meningitis and chronic fatigue.

Early treatment with antibiotics can prevent long-term complications.

Research from Massey University suggests that 70 per cent of those who contract the disease will need to be hospitalised, and half of those patients may experience long-term effects.

Rural residents are 14 times more likely to contract leptospirosis than



SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of leptospirosis:

- Fatigue
- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Muscle aches and pains
- Nausea
- Diarrhoea
- Abdominal pain
- Sensitivity to light
- Cough

PREVENTION

Preventing leptospirosis:

- Vaccination of stock and working dogs
- Hygiene – avoid contact with urine and wash hands after handling livestock
- Wear protective clothing, eg, covered footwear, overalls and rubber gloves
- Cover cuts and grazes with waterproof bandages
- Manage effluent and control waterways
- Control rodents

those living in urban areas.

It is notifiable, with around 170 people diagnosed each year. However, actual infection rates are thought to be much higher than this, as scientists suspect that many people are being misdiagnosed.

"Diagnosis can be quite difficult because the disease can mimic the flu, so a lot of people just think they have the flu," Collins-Emerson said.

Additionally, current testing requires two blood tests, which Collins-Emerson said can discourage people from completing the test

correctly.

"It can be inhibitory for people, particularly if they have already gone on to antibiotics.

"They may already feel better, so they don't return for the second test, so it never really gets diagnosed."

Collins-Emerson said a joint effort between healthcare professionals and rural communities is required to raise awareness of the disease and more education is needed across the board.

"It's everybody's job to be aware

of the risks.

"If you are exposed to animals or an environment where there might be a risk of infection, be careful and be aware.

"But we also know there needs to be more suspicion raised in the medical profession, particularly when overseas doctors come for short periods of time.

"It's not the typical thing they will be looking for."

Red eye in cattle and early abortion in cattle and sheep can be indicators of the disease in animals,

and the disease can also be difficult to diagnose in stock and often be asymptomatic.

"The troubling thing is that sometimes there are no obvious signs for animals at all, which creates more risk for people.

"Sometimes you can have animals which are infected, and are infecting people, but the animals have no clinical signs."

Rural Women New Zealand has made raising funds and awareness for leptospirosis their national project until June next year.

The organisation has raised a quarter of a million dollars since the 1970s to help fund research into controlling the disease, and Rural Women New Zealand national president Gill Naylor said they are committed to continuing to support raising the profile of leptospirosis.

"By making leptospirosis our national project until June 2025, we can again mobilise our members across the country.

"This is especially important as New Zealand has one of the highest rates of leptospirosis in countries with temperate climates in the world."

Naylor encourages anyone feeling unwell who has been working in an environment where they could have been exposed to the disease to get tested.

"It's a specific test that needs to be done; unless you are aware that you have been exposed to the risk, you won't know to ask for a test."

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New faces from the dairy sector to lead Rural Support Trust

CLAIRE INKSON

Michelle Ruddell, the incoming chairperson of the National Rural Support Trust, a key organisation in the agricultural sector that provides crucial support to rural communities, has expressed her excitement about taking on the role.

Ruddell feels her current position as the Northland Rural Support Trust chairperson has prepared her well for the new responsibility.

"It's offered me experience, and the challenges, particularly of the last two years with Cyclone Gabrielle, have really highlighted the importance of Rural Support in our communities.

"The work we have done here in Northland has enabled me to step into this national role."

Ruddell is a dairy farmer near Whangārei, where she runs a split calving operation with her husband Troy and three teenage children.

She was a finalist in this year's Dairy Woman of The Year Awards and has been involved in the Northland Rural Support Trust since 2021.

Ruddell will retain her position as Northland Rural Support Trust Chairperson and will step into the National role when chairperson Neil Bateup steps down on September 1.

"I have a huge respect for Neil.

"Rural Support wouldn't be where it is without the work that Neil has put in.

"The selflessness he has given to the role is enormous."

Ruddell said seeing more women in leadership positions in the agricultural sector was heartening.

"I'm excited and looking forward to connecting more with women in

those roles.

"We've got Trish Rankin, Dairy Women's Network chairperson, and Tracey Brown taking over at DairyNZ.

"I'm looking forward to working alongside and learning from those women."

Ruddell hopes to create a more cohesive and effective Rural Support team in all regions and an organisation that is sought after and recognised nationally as a rural health hub.

"I want to get to where we are supporting our communities, connecting our communities, and we are informed to share with our communities how to thrive in the face of tough times and challenges."

Mid Canterbury Rural Support chairperson and dairy farmer Josh Dondertman will step into the role of National deputy chairperson.

Dondertman is contracting milking on a dairy farm near Dunsandel with his wife Becs and three young boys.

Dondertman said he is proud to be appointed to the role and is passionate about the rural industry and its future.

"I'm aware there are a lot of potential issues with the social side of communities that are disappearing.

"So looking at how we continue to grow that space is something I'm really passionate about."

Dondertman said he hopes to share what he has learned from his experiences with Rural Support in Mid Canterbury with other regions.

"I believe what we do in Mid Canterbury is a fantastic model.

"It's about ensuring we have that clear direction, working off our values and vision,

and then bringing the right people on board to drive the boat faster."

Dondertman said the organisation had become more effective in supporting farmers in recent years.

"I was in North Canterbury in around 2015 when our farm got M Bovis, and they weren't super supportive then, but that's definitely changed.

"But that brings its own challenges because there is so much workload, and volunteers are very hard to come by."

Dondertman said the trust has great brand awareness at the moment, but maintaining that, attracting more volunteers, and keeping the momentum could be a challenge.

"It comes back to networking; that's why it's so important to collaborate with other agencies so they can help with providing information so we know who in the community needs help or support.

"It's tricky getting the right people to help, but it's great there are so many people out there normalising the conversations."

Dondertman said that, having experienced droughts and M Bovis, he understands the challenges facing farmers when things feel overwhelming.

"It's a miserable place to be.

"You think you are the only one affected when there are actually heaps of other people affected, and it's okay to chat with those people or find someone to help you through it.

"The whole reason I got into Rural Support was after going through that and hitting those dark places, I wanted to stop other people going there, or at least give them some options."



Left - Mid Canterbury Rural Support Trust chairperson Josh Dondertman will step into the role of national deputy chairperson. PHOTO SUPPLIED



Incoming National Rural Support Trust chairperson Michelle Ruddell takes over from Neil Bateup on September 1. PHOTO SUPPLIED

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Above – Sarah Reed with children Hank, Alba and Greta
Right – The colour palette of The Grumpy Merino product line is subtle and inspired by the natural New Zealand landscape.

PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON
PHOTO BRENDAN HOLT



Above – The farm runs around 3500 Merino ewes, 2100 Merino hoggets, and 800 Angus cattle and produces 30 tonnes of wool annually.

PHOTO BRENDAN HOLT

Below – Born out of lockdown, The Grumpy Merino became a way for the Reeds to market and sell their own wool.

PHOTO ELISE RUTHERFORD



A lockdown success story

CLAIRE INKSON

The 2020 lockdown was the catalyst for the development of many new enterprises as New Zealanders used the time to think and re-evaluate their lives.

It was during this time that Sarah Reed, whose children were getting older and more independent, decided to embrace a new challenge.

“We were mid-Covid lockdown; we were not allowed to leave the farm.

“It seems crazy now to think about it.

“I just thought, right now, I need to do something for myself.”

The something became The Grumpy Merino, a bespoke wool business with a family legacy at its heart.

The Reeds operate The Grampians, a 3500-hectare farm of irrigated flats, river terraces and rolling hills near Culverden.

Their three children, Hank, Greta and Alba, are the fourth generation of their family to live on the farm.

In addition to their main property, the Reeds lease an extra 350 hectares in Waikari.

Jono and his father manage the farm, which includes an angus cattle stud, Grampians Angus, which sells around 60 bulls annually in an on-farm sale.

Meanwhile, Sarah is responsible for the farm’s administration.

The farm runs around 3500 merino ewes, 2100 merino hoggets, and 800 angus cattle and produces 30 tonnes of wool annually.

After seeing other family-operated wool product companies, Sarah decided to start manufacturing and selling her own products using Grampians wool.

The Reeds had been providing wool to Devold and Sarah realised that customers cared about where the wool came from.

“It was evident the consumer wanted to know the story and see the processing, and that was part of the education, the promotion behind what we were doing with Devold.

“I thought we could do something for ourselves, our own line.”

While Sarah was determined to offer something different from the wool products already available, she was inspired by New Zealand companies like Perriam that had paved the way for small wool family-led businesses.

“One piece of advice I was given quite early on was to align yourself or idolise a brand you aspire to.

“I always looked to Christina Perriam as my role model. She is a woman in business with a family history and family merino.

“What she has developed is insane.”

After much research, The Grumpy Merino now produces a range of blankets, throws, yarn,

children’s vests, and headbands all sold through the company’s website.

Jono’s father, Graham, classes the wool.

Once the lines are baled, they are tested in Napier before being scoured in Timaru.

After that, the wool goes to Wild Earth Yarns in Christchurch to be made into knitting yarn or to Auckland to be woven into blankets.

The colour palette of The Grumpy Merino product line is subtle and inspired by the natural New Zealand landscape.

All blankets are packaged sustainably in a cloth bag, which features the company logo and a map of the farm from the wall at Jono and Sarah’s homestead.

Sarah is optimistic about the future of wool.

“I think people know the importance of it and how it is renewable.

“It isn’t produced in a factory with chemicals; it is literally

grown, which is pretty special.”

Sarah said Kiwis tend to take for granted how easy wool products are to access in New Zealand.

“We can go into pretty much any store and find some kind of merino gloves, hats, or scarves.

“We undervalue wool because we are exposed to it all the time.

“But if you look at other countries like America or Canada, they just don’t have access to wool products like we do.

“I just hope that when it comes to the New Zealand market, wool is valued and appreciated.”

Sarah advises anyone developing their own wool brand to “do the research first.”

“We were cautious as soon as we started this process of not overlapping or stepping on someone else’s toes.

“We tried to be respectful and develop something different because the market is getting quite saturated.”

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Transitioning into fatherhood

KATHRYN WRIGHT

There are few more significant moments in life than becoming a parent. Suddenly being in charge of a new life comes with so many wonders, but it also comes with challenges.

As a new father, you will naturally question almost everything you do – “am I doing this right?” and “what do I do now?”

This is a pretty normal process, but there are certain considerations that are different for dads.

When children come along, it often coincides with a time in your life that you are reassessing your priorities – even without children, it’s normal to start thinking about your goals for the future.

This is a tangible shift away from your youth, which may have been

dominated by peers and hedonistic pleasures.

There can be some mixed feelings about this, not limited to feeling a loss of youth, and an excitement about the future. It is no coincidence that this is often when parenthood happens.

If you are a new father – or fatherhood is impending – think about when you held your baby in your arms for the first time, and what you may have silently promised to yourself about what sort of parent you want to be. Is it important to instil the importance of family?

Or that you will love and support your child no matter what? That you will travel and educate them from a young age?

Or that you will raise your child to be a caretaker of the land? That

you will teach them that respect for other people is of the utmost importance?

Whatever it is, these parenting values are unlikely to shift much over the course of their upbringing.

When things get tough in the parenting game, you can fall back on to these values by firstly remembering what they are, and then reaching a solution that aligns with these values.

Another viewpoint is to think ahead in time and imagine that you can hear your adult children talking about what sort of father you were.

What would you LIKE to hear? Would you like to hear something like “dad always had time to listen to me, no matter what”, or what about “dad always taught us the value of hard work, but when he

took time off, he was fully present with us”, or “no matter what phase I went through, dad accepted and loved me”.

Do these ideas align with what you are actually doing (or intend to do)?

It’s never too late to change – even if you are a fair way into this parenting thing. It’s never too late to ask these questions and to commit to change.

If you are on a farm, it can be tough to find time off and spend with your family, but it is seldom about the amount of time you spend with your children, but the quality of it.

One of the five top regrets of dying (in Bronnie Ware’s great book), is that people wished they hadn’t worked so hard, and that they had valued their children’s youth more

– this was almost exclusively from men.

Children can be so full of wonder and fun and will appreciate any moments together that you can manage, even if you are working. It’s about being present and focused – even if that’s a 10-minute game of Uno.

It can also be a struggle sometimes to find that work-life balance, and it might be something that you will always need to work at as the pressures of life bear down.

What do you want to be able to look back on and feel proud of as a dad?

Happy Father’s Day.

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



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Giving calves the best possi

KERYN CRESSWELL

As a large animal vet for VetSouth, I see a lot of calves and many different calf rearing systems.

I believe the main trick to rearing great young stock starts straight after birth.

The key is getting them off the paddock or calving pad and into the calf shed and fed colostrum quickly.

The more often calves can be picked up, the better, but a minimum of twice daily is recommended.

Calves are born with poorly developed immune systems and require the antibodies from colostrum to protect them from infection.

However, the antibodies can only be absorbed by the gut for a short time after birth, so it is important that calves are fed at least 2 litres of gold colostrum within six to 12 hours of birth.

The sooner they get it, the more antibodies they can absorb and the healthier they will be.

Colostrum quality is determined by both antibody content and bacterial load.

Gold colostrum has high antibodies and low bacteria.

The appearance of the colostrum is not an indicator of quality – it may look creamy and yellow, but still be low in antibodies or full of bacteria!

The best way to estimate antibody levels in colostrum is to use a Brix refractometer.

A small handheld instrument, a refractometer is quick and easy to use. To ensure newborn calves obtain sufficient antibodies, fresh colostrum with a Brix reading of 22 or greater should be fed.

Lower quality colostrum can be fed to older calves.

There is no practical way to measure bacterial load on-farm, but this can be minimised by ensuring all utensils used in the collection,

storage and feeding of colostrum are kept clean and the colostrum is correctly stored.

For overnight storage, colostrum should be refrigerated, but for longer term storage, it should have a preservative added or be pasteurised and frozen.

Frozen colostrum will keep for up to a year, but antibody levels will decline over time.

Once new calves have been given adequate colostrum, keep them well fed over the following weeks with milk.

There are pros and cons to both fresh milk and milk powder, so pick whichever best suits your system – calves can be raised successfully on either.

Fresh milk contains more fat than most milk powders, so it's often a better energy source.

If feeding milk fresh from on-farm, it's important to remember the diseases that may be transmitted to calves through milk, such as Bovine Viral Diarrhoea, Mycoplasma Bovis or Johnes's.

Pasteurisation or acidification of the milk can kill these organisms and make it safe for your calves.

Milk powders have a higher protein to fat ratio than fresh milk, which encourages intake.

If feeding powdered milk, ensure a good quality powder is used.

Cheaper powder formulations may use protein sources that don't meet the amino acid requirements of calves, whereas better quality powders will be nutritionally similar to fresh milk. Make sure to mix the milk properly and feed it at the correct temperature in the right intervals to avoid ruminal bloat.

How calves are fed pre-weaning affects their future health, milk production and fertility. Getting early nutrition right will give them the best start to life and ensure they become great youngstock!

Keryn Cresswell (BVSc)
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In 2013 PPP launched the new electronic eye sheep jetter. The new model sheep jetter has proved to be very successful not only in NZ but also exporting to Australia,

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PPP sell direct to end users or farmers can purchase through their farm merchandise stores.

PPP manufacture two models, the Lincoln and the Saxon. Typical the Lincoln is the standard go to model in NZ with the larger Saxon sold more into Australia with much larger breeding ewes and the likes of the Middle East with horned sheep.

When it comes



Anisha Satya
REPORTER

PASTURE TIPS

Hinds dairy farmer Cole Groves has three quick tips for farmers managing their pasture this spring:

Monitor your grass

"This time of year I'm doing weekly farm walks. I mean, most people are, but during calving you're fairly busy."

"You think 'oh yeah, I'll get it done this week,' and the week disappears. If you wait two or three weeks, a lot can change."

"I'm not [on] a big farm, so I can get around in an hour, good way to listen to a podcast."

Limit pugging and weather damage to your paddocks

"Try to limit the damage if wet weather is coming - potentially having an area you can sacrifice if you need to stand cows off."

Stick to your deadlines

"Get to your balance date so you can set up a second round: Everyone has got a different balance date, but actually holding on to it sometimes can be a challenge."

After a biting Mid Canterbury winter, spring has finally arrived. With calving well under way, maintaining a good quality pasture is the next big focus for dairy farmers.

Hinds dairy farmer Cole Groves said pasture can determine the health of a herd.

"Grass is key. You make money off of grass." His small farm of 425 cows has his undivided attention year round. In spring, he said it's important to keep to a schedule.

"This time of year, we're sticking to our rotation planner."

"We don't want to graze the whole farm too quickly at this time of year, because we're not growing enough grass to replenish what we need."

A rotation planner helps farmers chart how often they need to shift herds from paddock to paddock. It ensures animals get enough feed and enough grass is left over after grazing for a field to spring up again, ready for a second round of munching.

At some points in the year, like the beginning of spring, the soil is cold and grass doesn't grow back quickly after grazing. Dairy New Zealand said short-term restrictions can be put on herds, if it means there will be enough grass for future rotations.

Cows struggle to graze below 50 millimetres, about a matchstick or AA battery. And the shorter a field is grazed, the longer it

takes to grow back, so mismanagement could cause a growth delay and set back either your balance date, or your animals.

Ensuring a good amount of pasture residuals (pasture left after grazing) is important in

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to herd health 'grass is key'



Hinds dairy farmer Cole Groves said pasture can determine the health of a herd. PHOTO SUPPLIED

the long term, and should be prioritised if a farmer must pick between restricting feed or letting cows fully graze a paddock. Groves said most farmers are prepared for slow-growing paddocks.

"Dairy farmers probably have more supplementary feed up their sleeves than other farmers. "We're pretty well equipped." Pastures are mostly affected by weather,

with some mornings bringing sun, and others a damaging frost. "Sometimes you get a false sense of hope. "You can get 10 days of good weather, but then if you get a bit of a snap frost in September, it brings things back. "And we need the soil temperature to be rising for grass to grow." Soil temperatures need to stay around 7°C to promote grass growth, Groves said, so fertilisers can come into play. "We use one called Cold Start, or an Ammo

36 which has got nitrogen and sulphur." These fertilisers help speed up paddock growth and "get the grass humming", but plants struggle to absorb them if it's cold and frosty out. "Sometimes you get a false sense of hope." Overall, most dairy farmers are equipped to handle the highs and lows of seasonal farming in Mid Canterbury - some of them have done it for generations. "Everyone's got their different systems, it's just pretty critical that you manage it."

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Quad bike safety questions

CLAIRE INKSON

We can't fix the issue of quad bike accidents if more information isn't given about the cause.

That's according to safety practitioner and Wareing transport health and safety leader, Graham Neate.

"The regulator doesn't tell us what the causes of the fatalities are.

"Why did it roll over in the first place? That's what we don't know.

"We don't know if the terrain was steep, we don't know if they were speeding, we don't know if they were impaired, or if it was all three of these things," Neate said.

Worksafe reported four fatalities

attributed to quad bikes during a three-week period in July, prompting the organisation to release a statement this month urging rural New Zealanders to refocus on the risk of quad bike rollovers.

However, no details were given on the cause of the accidents.

"We need to know the cause so you can identify and deal with the issue.

"For example, if six out of 10 were drug or alcohol related, then that's what we need to target."

Neate recommends that operators wear helmets, but finds the lack of information about whether those involved in accidents were wearing helmets and whether the helmet was effective in preventing

serious injury frustrating.

"Riders should wear a helmet. If you get a broken arm or broken leg, it can heal not too badly, but a broken head can be quite serious.

"But we are never told in what percentage of fatalities riders wore helmets.

"We don't know if the helmet would have saved them.

"It would save head injury, but it's not going to prevent a broken back or drowning if the bike ends up at the bottom of a creek."

Neate agrees with the recommendation from Worksafe that crush protection devices should be installed on quad bikes.

He states these devices can prevent operators from being crushed

in certain situations.

"If they tip over backwards, or roll over, then it just gives the operator a degree of protection that can save a broken neck, for example, but also gives the rider the ability to climb out from under them; they are not trapped or pinned."

Neate said that when it comes to safety, the major factor is the operator, not whether the vehicle is a quad bike or a side-by-side.

"If you look at most incidents, it goes back to the operator.

"A safe operator won't roll a quad bike because what they do is safe.

"An angry, speeding operator, for example, has a much higher chance of an incident."

Neate said that every quad bike fatality is a tragedy.

"I call them 'if only' stories.

"People often say if only I weren't rushing, if only I'd worn a helmet.

"In hindsight, everyone wishes they had done things differently."

Neate said that if an accident is predictable, it's preventable.

"If you can predict one or more causes of rollover coming together on one day, then you know there is a higher chance of an accident happening, and you can reduce and control those issues, and then it's unlikely your vehicle will roll over.

"The same applies to any farm ute or vehicle."

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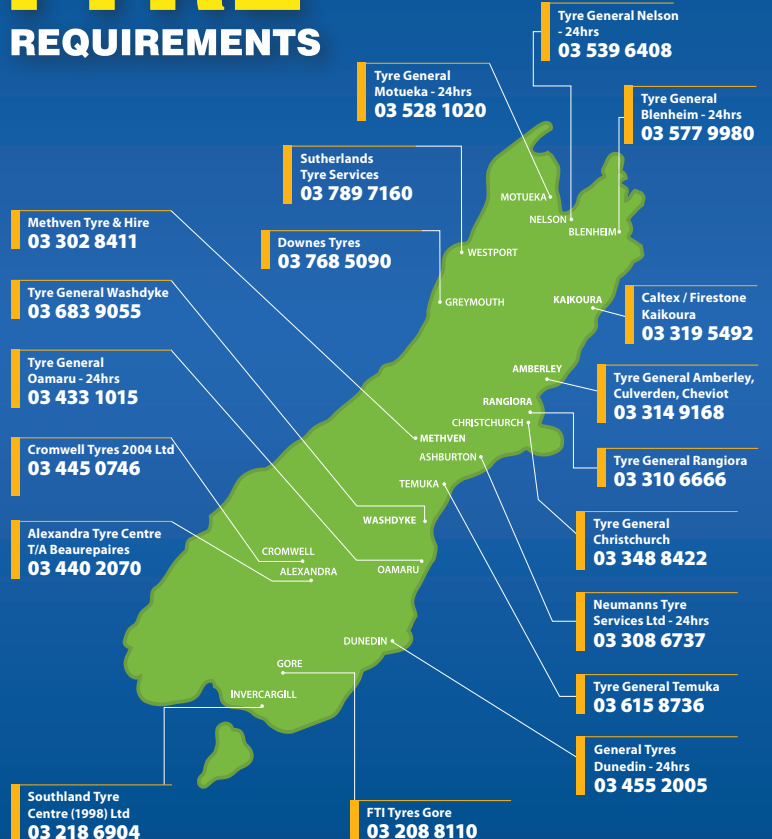
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Farmers, we're in the danger zone

With yet another round of collective hand ringing on farm safety out there in the rural media landscape it, as usual, gets me thinking about how can we get away from this ambulance-at-the-bottom-of-the-cliff thinking.

The current solutions are hopes and prayers and bolt-on Band Aid solutions to mask the capability, competency, complacency and skills gaps among farmers operating in dynamic and stressful environments.

My belief is many of the well-meaning solutions towards managing safety are proving inadequate and short-sighted.

We can't keep slowing things down, adding tools and shifting the problem away from the core of the issue, we need to think like high performance athletes and improve HOW we operate by improving and levelling up our collective capability and skills with how we handle things like ATVs & UTVs.

It may seem counter-intuitive to do so for some, but striving to be better at doing dangerous things more safely has to be part of the way forward.

How does a young farmer starting out handle a machine when things start going wrong if they've never had the chance to learn how to do dangerous things safely if they've always been stuck in the comfort zone without the opportunity for personal growth?

By the time this goes to print



hopefully WorkSafe will have released an anticipated report looking into studies from around the world showing how safety has been tangibly improved in other high risk industries, so there will no doubt be some fresh thinking on how we can improve our statistics.

As I've talked about in an earlier column, we also need more information coming back to inform us about the causes of accidents when they do occur, as one of the problems we have had

when talking about safety is that without information similar to TAIC (Transport Accident Investigation Commission) reports, I don't think operators are going to start thinking more consciously in those times when things could go potentially go wrong.

We need more education for people too about the pros and cons of each brand of ATV or Side by Side in terms of suspension, handling, loading and towing capacities is something that changes a fair bit.

So choosing the best machine for the job is very important as much as understanding how it will perform for you when and wherever you're using it.

In thinking about protection operators can add to their machines, it is important to note that all manufacturers of quads do not endorse fitting of roll-over protection devices in the market.

This is for many reasons, including how they may actually cause more harm to a rider in certain types of accidents while offering

protection in others.

Then for the structural integrity of the machine, mechanics report more wear and tear on frames and chassis on bikes fitted with CPD devices, so along with the expense could they also add risk should fatigue cause a breakage while operating.

Where they are fitted typically to the rear of ATVs if you check load ratings for the model you have, the weight could be around 30% of it's total allowed, which could affect handling and centre of gravity.

On Side by Sides it's good to see now that brands like Yamaha and Polaris have the frames around the cabs stickered to show they are rated to USA OSHA and global ISO3471 standards which mean there is an expectation for how they will protect operators in roll-overs provided seatbelts, helmets, and doors/nets are being used correctly.

It is also good to see on all Polaris models alongside the standards sticker they also have a placard operators can easily reference tyre pressures and loading limits, something worth having available at a glance when in the thick of it on the farm.

As recent tragic events have reminded us, any average day at work can easily become deadly, so make sure you're well and truly ready and capable to be operating in the danger zone.

Just how dangerous that zone is depends almost entirely on you.

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TeenAg gets a funding boost

CLAIRE INKSON

TeenAg, the high school version of Young Farmers Club, is set for a revamp, according to Young Farmers New Zealand chief executive Lynda Coppersmith.

“We have around 40 clubs active across New Zealand, and around 400-500 people have signed up as individuals on our membership platform. However, we don’t do anything with it; they just support themselves.

“So we thought, why don’t we make them into high school Young Farmers Clubs.”

TeenAg originally began with funding from the government, with a team from Young Farmers travelling around the country to support school clubs and facilitating teachers.

That funding was pulled around four years ago, and since then, Young Farmers have kept a membership page and sign-up portal but have yet to be able to invest in the programme.

That is set to change, as Young Farmers recently secured funding from an undisclosed industry stakeholder. This means the organisation can begin to “build out” its high school arm.

“We have had one big player in the sector who is really interested in getting high school students more excited about farming careers.

“They have agreed to give us some funding for three years.”

Coppersmith said they are looking to source more funding for the



Left - New Zealand Young Farmers Club chief executive Lynda Coppersmith sees TeenAg as a pathway to the FMG Young Farmer of the Year contest, an event that is instrumental in changing perceptions about agriculture as a career pathway. PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Right - Tom Batty from the Geraldine High School TeenAg club, competing in our NZYF Tournament: Goldpine National Fencing Final last month in Hamilton.



set-up phase of relaunching TeenAg, but the programme will always need to be run economically to be sustainable, and teaching staff will be required to facilitate.

“We don’t want to make it too onerous to support; it needs to be something that runs on the smell of an oily rag because funding can be very much hit and miss.

“So we want to set it up in our HubSpot system as more of an online support portal, where teachers and club leaders can find events, activities, resources, and opportunities to upskill.”

Funding isn’t the only challenge facing the programme.

Getting schools and teachers on board has proven difficult in some instances.

Sometimes, reluctance is due to a lack of staff to oversee the clubs,

but often, it is due to a pre-conceived notion of the industry.

Coppersmith said she has encountered situations where students have approached Young Farmers wanting to set up a TeenAg club in their school, only for the school to shut down the idea.

“We had a bunch of students approach us from a girl’s school, but when we approached the school, they said their girls weren’t interested in agriculture.

“There’s still a lot of work to be done as a sector to show schools that aren’t rural schools that this is an amazing career pathway for young people.”

Coppersmith said there were still some myths surrounding the image of farming as a career.

“I’ve had a number of conversations with people who have said

that their son or daughter is interested in going farming, but they have told them they are too smart and sent them off in a different direction.

“I’m passionate about the fact that farmers of the future will have to be skilled in many different things, including technology, science and the environment.

“It’s not a low-skill trade, it’s not now and it never will be.

“So how do we create that prestige, that aspirational view of farming as a career?”

Coppersmith said one avenue to change perceptions of farming is through the FMG Young Farmer of the Year contest.

“If we can create more of a path-

way to Young Farmer of the Year for these high school kids, they can get a taste of what they need to know.

“Junior Young Farmers is arguably our fastest growing section, and it’s become hotly contested.

“It’s a massive opportunity.”

Coppersmith said that setting teenagers up for success in the agriculture sector was a factor in reinvigorating the programme.

“Farming is hard; there is a lot of financial pressure.

“They will need to have some good mental skills to deal with that.

“How do we give them hope that they might own their own farm one day?”

“How do we give them drive?”

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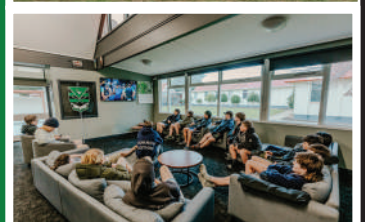


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Ag teacher shortage critical

CLAIRE INKSON

Despite the continuous demand for growth in the agricultural workforce, schools' ability to provide agriculture classes is becoming increasingly difficult.

Jackie Driver, the head of agriculture at Ashburton College, has indicated that New Zealand schools often face difficulties in offering agriculture courses for high school students due to a severe staff shortage.

"The barrier is the lack of teaching staff"

Driver said there is no dedicated training outside of general science and business for teachers wanting to teach in agriculture.

Driver herself was originally a chemistry teacher, but switched to agriculture 10 years ago after feeling a need for a change of direction.

"The vast majority of agriculture teachers have transitioned from another subject area.

"We are relying on people training to be science teachers and then going on to agriculture."

Her position at Ashburton College was vacant for around 18 months before she took up the role as head of department, having relocated from Morrinsville to be closer to her family. "If I hadn't moved down here, they could still be waiting to fill the position," Driver said.

While Ashburton College offers agricultural science and Primary ITO Trades Academy courses, Agribusiness is missing from the course list, mainly due to staff availability.

Driver points out that there



Agribusiness in Schools project curriculum director and secretary/treasurer for the Horticulture and Agriculture Teachers Association (HATA) Kerry Allen, seen here teaching agriculture students, says the agriculture teacher shortage is exacerbated by a lack of teachers across the board. PHOTO SUPPLIED

are also no dedicated courses at Teachers College specifically for Agribusiness.

"Agribusiness teachers tend to be business study teachers who have an interest in the area."

Agribusiness in Schools project curriculum director and secretary and treasurer for the Horticulture and Agriculture Teachers Association (HATA) Kerry Allen said the issue is exacerbated by a lack of

secondary teacher's training across the board.

"There aren't many teachers coming through teachers college generically, so it's really difficult to attract them to this space."

Allen describes the issue as a "chicken and egg" scenario: the lack of teachers leads to a lack of student demand.

"What comes first? Is it student demand, or is it student teachers?"

"But actually, lack of teachers is the barrier.

"We can't fulfil students' needs because we don't have those teachers."

Allen said that some teachers can successfully transition from other subjects to agriculture, but it can be risky.

"Some schools have had that sort of situation and failed miserably.

"It didn't work because the teachers didn't really understand what they were doing because they hadn't been trained in that.

"Students know when things aren't right; they just walk with their feet and then don't take that subject again."

Agribusiness in Schools, in conjunction with HATA, has been promoting agriculture and horticulture as subjects for student teachers and is seeking to attract individuals from outside the education sector to pursue a career change in the primary industry.

"They might be people that are already in the industry and are wanting a change of scenery, and they just need a post-graduate diploma.

"We put a lot of options out there as to how they can get that diploma."

Allen said that despite the organisation's best efforts in this area, it struggles to attract applicants, citing salary as one potential obstacle.

"Teaching pays less than what you can get in the industry.

"Some teachers might learn more than \$100,000 per year if they have extra responsibilities, but that's the top of the pay scale, and you only get that after seven years.

"That's a big comedown from working on a farm or in some part of the value chain."

Allen said that on top of that, agriculture and horticulture can be more difficult to teach than other subjects.

"Our content changes constantly, whereas maths content probably hasn't changed much over 100 years."

Allen said agriculture teachers also have resources to manage, which adds to their workload.

"The life of an agriculture and horticulture teacher can be much larger, and the resources to manage can be a barrier.

"You have glasshouses, plots, orchards and a farm potentially, but you are paid exactly the same as a maths teacher."

Allen said she has been "fighting these problems for 30 years", and has tried to lobby Teachnz to provide scholarships for agriculture and horticulture, but so far has been unsuccessful.

"They just keep putting us under science."

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Daffodils show income promise

CLAIRE INKSON

Daffodils could provide another income stream for farmers. The plant has been successfully trialled on seven properties throughout the South Island, including a high-density crop trial in Methven. Research has shown the plant has two naturally occurring compounds with commercial potential. One compound, galanthamine, is an active ingredient in Alzheimer's medication, and while it is not a cure, the alkaloid substance has been successful in slowing the disease and reducing symptoms. The other compound, haemanthamine, has been shown to reduce methane production in cattle during laboratory trials.

The plant has the potential to be an easy crop addition for high-country farming operations since sheep graze around it, which could make it an option for farmers on poorer soils. Our Land Our Water has funded trials for producing galanthamine in crops, with research conducted by Lincoln University. Both compounds can be extracted from the same plant, but the plants need to be grown in challenging conditions to produce them. University research director Professor Travis Glare said the focus is on maximising the production of the compound "so it's economical to grow them on the farm." "The last trial was to head towards what production in New Zealand would look like. "They already do this production in Wales

in the UK and we are looking for seasons a year of production to supply galanthamine." Glare said daffodil crops could provide alternative land use and be lucrative for high-country farmers. "It's not a one-year crop; we leave the bulbs in for several years. "It's another income stream, and we will need thousands of hectares of daffodils to supply the market." Trials into haemanthamine for reducing methane have only been conducted in a lab, but Glare said animal trials are taking place in Scotland, and Lincoln University will be commencing animal trials early next year. "We need to make sure there are no animal issues, that we actually see methane reduction in the animals, and that it doesn't contaminate the meat." Glare said farmers needed to be rewarded if they give methane-reducing feed additives to stock in the future. "The Government talks about these technologies that will solve our greenhouse gas issues, and this is one that will come into it. "I haven't seen anything yet where we have a scheme that says farmers will be rewarded for the methane they are reducing on the farm. "And that's a key point because they are going to have to pay for haemanthamine." AgriZeroNZ has got onboard and is partnering with Welsh research company Agroceutical Products, which has already researched galanthamine, to research haemanthamine in a joint venture that will see \$4 million invested in trials. AgriZeroNZ chief executive Wayne McNeer says the early-stage investment presents an exciting opportunity to bring the pioneering research to New Zealand. "It's been widely acknowledged that a technology-led approach is the best way to

support farmers to reduce emissions without compromising on profitability. "We're scanning the world for cutting-edge tools that could work on New Zealand farms and we're excited to leverage the knowledge and expertise of Agroceutical Products to benefit Kiwi farmers." AgriZeroNZ has invested over \$33 million in various emissions reduction tools and technologies for New Zealand farmers. This includes a methane-inhibiting bolus, novel probiotics, low methane pasture, and methane vaccines. Not everyone supports the investment in haemanthamine research, with Methane Science Accord co-founder and North Otago farmer Jane Smith calling it a waste of money to research a problem that "doesn't exist." "No evidence has been brought forward to show any rational reason why natural, biogenic methane needs to be decreased, yet another \$4 million is about to be wasted interfering with a completely natural occurrence in animals that will make absolutely no measurable difference to climatic temperatures." Smith supports the research into galanthamine for Alzheimer's as a "tangible solution to a genuine problem" but calls for crown scrutiny of AgriZero's investments, taking into account "some semblance of science and the trajectory of NZ livestock methane." "One would question if there is any return on this investment aside from headlines and hyperbole. "Yet another step towards the goal of depopulating livestock operations on New Zealand's hills, replaced by pine trees and now daffodils. "I am lost for words on how they would be able to harvest daffodils from our hills. Perhaps a real job at long last for boffins and bureaucrats?" Smith said.

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Above – The Arable Awards were held at the Wigram Airforce Museum in Christchurch for the second time.
 Left – Federated Farmers arable chairperson David Birkett said the Arable Awards are an important way to showcase the sector.
 Right – 2024 Arable Farmer of the Year Simon Nitschke (left) with Federated Farmers president Wayne Langford.



PHOTO SUPPLIED

It starts with a seed

CLAIRE INKSON

The third annual Arable Awards, a significant event in the arable farming industry, have once again shone a spotlight on the typically quiet sector, with 500 people attending the event at the Wigram Airforce Museum in Christchurch.

The event, held on August 15, was a collaboration between Federated Farmers, the Foundation of Arable Research, United Wheat Growers and the New Zealand Grain & Seed Trade Association (NZGTA).

Federated Farmers arable chairperson David Birkett said the event was an important way to showcase the sector.

“New Zealand farming, in general, punches above its weight, but this industry, particularly in Mid Canterbury, punches well above its weight and I don’t think that gets celebrated enough.”

The prestigious 2024 Arable Farmer of the Year award went across the strait to Simon Nitschke,

a farmer from Manawatū. He also received the Maize Farmer of the Year Award.

Nitschke operates a farm in Marton where he cultivates up to 200 hectares of maize grain and 100 hectares each of wheat and barley.

The judging panel commended Nitschke for achieving exceptionally high yields through his careful selection of cultivars, effective soil fertility management and efficient resource utilisation.

In addition to farming, Nitschke’s company, Arable Solutions, has made significant investments in top-of-the-line grain-drying facilities and provides various contracting services.

He is also actively involved in industry initiatives such as the Foundation for Arable Research (FAR) Arable Research Group and the Growers Leading Change programme.

“He can be described as an ‘all-rounder’ and a very worthy winner of the Arable Farmer of the

Year Award,” judges said.

In another event highlight, Greendale farmer Syd Worsfold was honoured with induction into the newly-established NZ Arable Hall of Fame.

With 40 years of experience in the industry, Worsfold holds the record as the longest-serving director of the United Wheat Growers and played a pivotal role as a founding member of the FAR board.

Worsfold has been described as someone who balances strong opinions with an open mind and is known for his willingness to support and mentor fellow growers.

Additionally, he has devoted countless hours each year to assessing frost damage claims, all while managing his own farm.

Waikato farmer Daniel Finlayson took out the Positive Environmental Impact award, and the Innovation Award went to Dr Soonie Chng from the NZ Institute for Plant and Food Research.

The Canterbury-based Liquid

Injection Arable Growth Group, a group of 10 farmers who have accelerated their production progress through farm trials and sharing knowledge, took home the Working Together Award, and Agronomist of the Year went to David Weith, a 30-year industry veteran from Timaru.

Cereal Grower of the Year went to Peter Hewson from Timaru, and Seed Grower of the Year was picked up by Scott Rome, who farms near Gore.

Birkett said the event was important in a modest industry that tended to “keep its head down”, and it was a chance to celebrate the people who had done exceptional work in the sector.

“When you look at what we achieve, particularly across all sectors of New Zealand, and not just domestically but globally, we have a great story to tell about the amount of product we produce in such a small area, the efficiency that we produce, and the way that we produce.”

Birkett said the event helped to lift the industry during challenging times.

“It helps to lift morale because, as we know, in the current agricultural climate, morale is a bit low at the moment.”

Raising the profile of the industry was a key focus of the event.

“We have a saying in the industry that everything begins with a seed.

“It’s about making sure people understand what we do because a lot of the public understands sheep and beef, but they don’t understand arable.”

NZGTA general manager Thomas Chin said the turnout for the event was “tremendous” and reflected heartland New Zealand.

“It’s a real celebration of the industry because we have people here from right across the sector.

“There are plant breeders, growers, researchers and suppliers.

“It’s great to see such a diverse range of people from the sector come to the event.”

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Working together for change

DAVID ACLAND

Coming up three years old, the Foothills Catchment Group is building a strong base of environmental knowledge to assist our future aspirations.

The dozen or so landowners who make up the group from Mt Somers to Mt Hutt recognise working together on environmental stewardship is the best option.

It's all about effecting change on a larger scale than what any of us could do alone.

One of our flagship projects is our water quality testing programme.

For two years now, the group has sampled streams flowing out of the hills to get a handle on how they are faring. With support from the Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective (MCCC), we have funded quarterly testing of seven waterways.

Facilitator Chris Gibbs independently takes water samples and sends them to Hills Laboratory for analysis. A new development this year has been the loan of a nitrate probe from MCCC.

This is allowing us to save on the costs of analysis as we see the 'real time' results. The combined data being collected will ultimately allow the group to understand the bigger picture.

While we need several years of sampling to fully analyse trends, it's a start, and a dataset that the group is very proud of.

We would like to acknowledge support we have received from



Chris Hibbs, facilitator of the Foothills Catchment Group, undertaking water sampling in the foothills area.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

the Hekeao Hinds Water Enhancement Trust which guided our monitoring approach and analysis.

Planting of waterways also carried on this year with work happening on individual properties and alongside Staveley Stream.

A native planting workshop held

at the Staveley Hall in June threw a spotlight on the excellent work landowners in the area are contributing to local biodiversity.

Planting of the catchment has been greatly assisted by donations of plants from Synlait's Whakapuāwai initiative.

Coming into our third year, it's

a good time to reflect on the different visions landowners hold for the Foothills and how we can help them create their desired future.

The group has now got to the stage where members are starting to think strategically about the various sub catchments along the Foothills, and how we can best

accommodate them.

The initiation of the Mt Harding Creek Catchment Group, downstream of our group, presents an opportunity for landowners at the Mt Hutt end to mutually discuss issues affecting the creek.

There are also areas of overlap with the Ashburton Forks Catchment Group for landowners at the Mt Somers end. It's a dynamic space and we are fortunate to have MCCC acting as a conduit and enabler for these conversations.

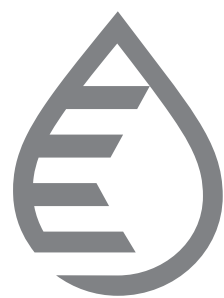
What we are seeing nationally is that catchment groups are becoming even more important. Across Government, supplier-led organisations, and within our markets, there is growing interest in how catchment groups deliver sustainable outcomes.

While we have been reliant on word of mouth to attract new members and tell our story, we now need to do better at promoting the Foothills Catchment Group to not only our own members, but the wider community and those landowners who are still considering joining us.

If we are to bring the next generation of catchment group members onboard, they need to understand why working together is the only way forward.

For any enquiries about the Foothills Catchment Group, please contact facilitator Chris Gibbs on chris@cgag.nz or 021 317-669.

David Acland, chairperson, Foothills Catchment Group



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'More than a farming issue'

Government promises RMA reform ... but when?

ANISHA SATYA

The Government has promised that the Resource Management Act, which has some farmers biting their nails, will undergo some alterations.

In a press release, Todd McClay said that the Government looked to make "time critical amendments" to section 107 of the act to grant councils and those applying for consents the "legal clarity and certainty they need to plan ahead".

McClay said that the consents being put on hold would cost the primary sector and prevent large irrigation schemes from operating.

He said the court decision might have knock-on effects that reduce the ability of farming communities to improve freshwater over time.

When the amendments will actually be made has not been shared.

The act, passed in 1991, governs how resources like freshwater and soil can be utilised sustainably, while ensuring enough of those resources are available for communities and commercial use.

Last year, prompted by the Environmental Law Initiative, the High Court found that Environment Canterbury had illegally granted the Ashburton Lyndhurst irrigation scheme a consent.

Judge Cameron Mander said that ECan had not applied sections

70 and 170 of the act, which limit council and prohibit the granting of discharge consents if it would excessively contaminate the water.

The sections originally applied to "point source discharges" like sewage pipes, but the ruling could loop animal runoff in the same category.

To the extreme, this could mean farmers needed consents to own animals on land in the vicinity of a river or creek.

ECan councillor Ian Mackenzie said the ruling put more than just farmers at risk.

"This is more than a farming issue. This is an issue that affects almost every New Zealander.

Most of those apply to urban authorities."

Mackenzie said changes need to be made soon because the ramifications of the ruling are irrational.

"Otherwise urban authorities, every individual household, would have to apply for consent to flush their loo.

"There's a degree of nonsense in that process."

He said the ruling's effect would become apparent very quickly.

"Geraldine town has already had a consent turned down under this ruling for waste, semi-treated wastewater, I think."

Mackenzie said the ruling should be of concern to people outside of rural communities.

"The press and misinformed politicians tend to try and paint it as a farming issue. This is not a farming issue.

"It's a New Zealand issue and it needs to be sorted."

Mackenzie said he expects the Government will reword section 107 to better define discharge sources.

"I think there was a suggestion that they'd bring further changes to parliament in October. Hopefully that'll be their timetable."

"The press and misinformed politicians tend to try and paint it as a farming issue. This is not a farming issue. It's a New Zealand issue and it needs to be sorted"

Right - Environment Canterbury councillor Ian Mackenzie. PHOTO SUPPLIED



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RDR used for more than just irrigation

ANISHA SATYA

The Rangitata Diversion Race supplies Aotearoa's biggest irrigation scheme, watering Mid Canterbury's paddocks to keep the local agriculture industry going.

But it serves a second purpose; energy supply.

The RDR operates all year round and spends the winter months providing electricity into the local grid via two power stations.

The Montalto and Highbank power stations sit at opposite ends of the RDR, and are owned by shareholder Manawa Energy limited.

Highbank station was part of the original RDR project and was commissioned in 1945. It can generate up to 28 megawatts, but doesn't always operate through summer as most of the water in the race is diverted to irrigation schemes.

Montalto station operates all year around, even through summer, but maxes out at 1.8 megawatts. Both stations work fulltime during winter, when no irrigation is needed.

Right now, the two stations supply over 30% of the district's electricity demand.

Chief executive of Rangitata diversion race management limited Tony McCormick said the power

stations were one of the RDR's great features.

RDR sources most of its water from the Rangitata river, and while the river usually sees lower flows in winter, McCormick said there's less water than normal this year.

"The Rangitata has been particularly low this winter - a story that seems to prevail across all of the South Island hydro systems at the moment" he said.

McCormick is confident the RDR will still be able to "supply enough water to enable the power stations to operate continuously."

The Guardian reported in May that the Highbank station would close for 18 months for an upgrade

in September.

The main hydroelectric plant will be replaced with modern tech and excess water would be provided to the Hinds-Hekeao Managed Aquifer Recharge Project to replenish declining groundwater levels.

McCormick said the upgrade is "still on the table, it's been delayed a month at least, because of the regional strains on electricity at the moment".

"That's a national issue."

EA Networks commercial manager Jeremy Adamson said local generation was reliable and consistent.

He said the power stations help the district avoid the transmission

losses that can occur when drawing electricity from the national grid.


"At times, in winter, the RDR scheme can supply more than half our electricity demand.

"Presently, I would estimate it's supplying energy for about 12,000 homes in the district."

Manawa Energy general manager of market operations Richard Spearman said the RDR was "truly is the lifeblood of Mid Canterbury".

"The year-round contribution of the RDR to Mid Canterbury's economy through both irrigation and renewable electricity generation reflects the amazing foresight of the pioneers who developed the scheme over 80 years ago."

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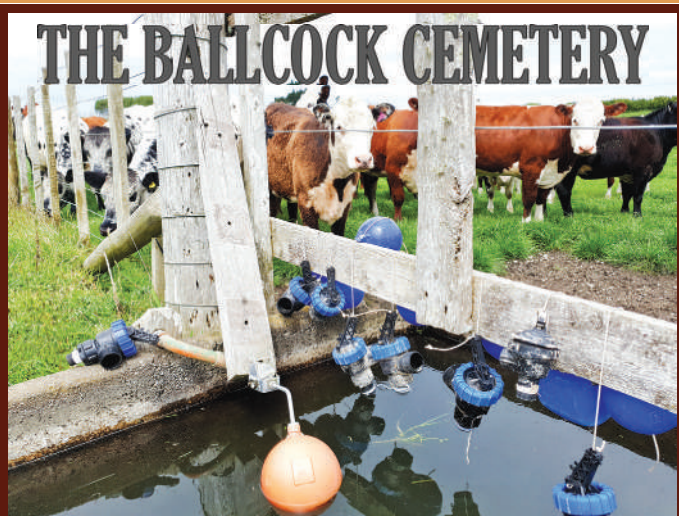


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ACCOMMODATION

The Canterbury Show must go on

CLAIRE INKSON

The Canterbury A&P show's future looks bright, with a new board and chairperson determined to keep it a calendar staple for years to come.

Newly elected Canterbury A&P Association Board chairperson Sir David Carter said the committee and board will look to the future to ensure the show's longevity.

"I'm absolutely confident we will get a credible show operating this year, but the real focus is restoring long-term survivability into the show."

Carter, who was elected to the board at the association's annual meeting earlier this month, is a former Minister of Agriculture and parliamentary speaker.

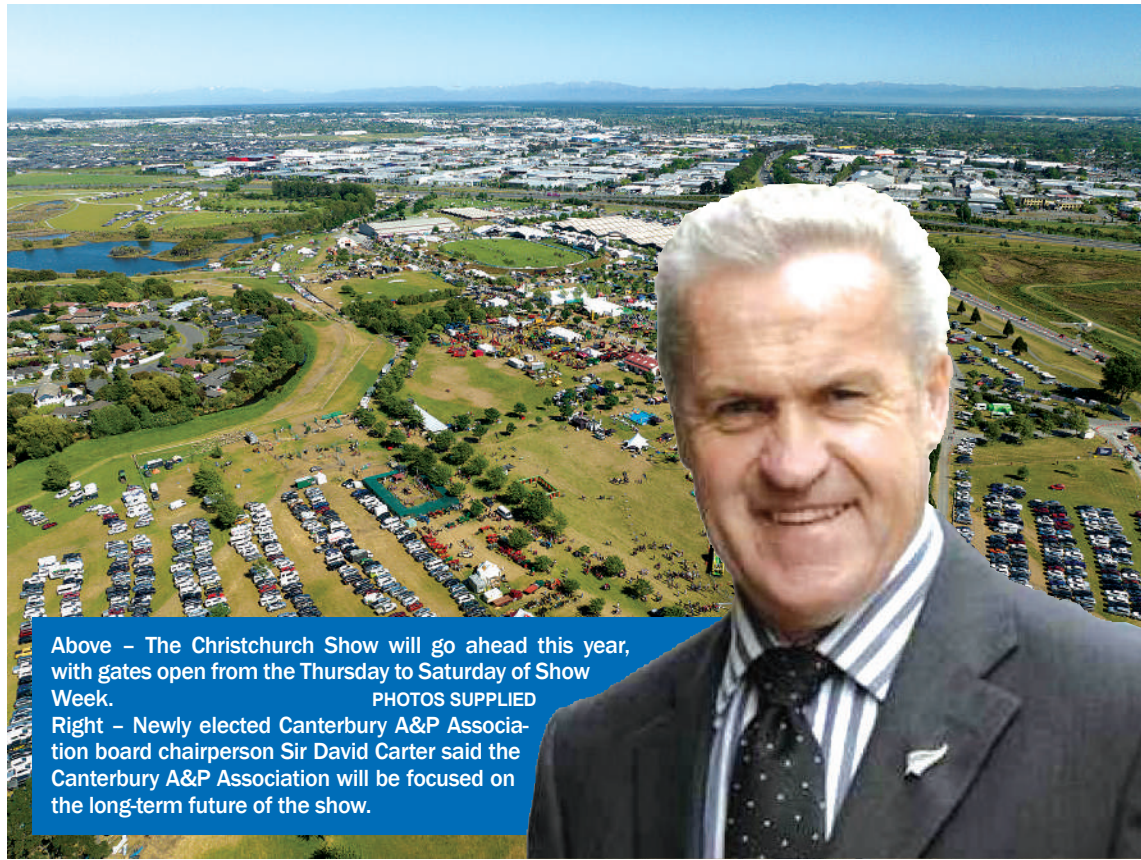
In 2021, he was appointed a Knight Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services as a member of parliament and as Speaker of the House of Representatives.

At the annual meeting, Hazlett operations manager Peter Engel and BDO senior manager-audits Ethan Hill were also elected to the board.

Bryce Murray and Brent Chamberlain will join them from the general committee.

The previous board cancelled this year's event for financial reasons before it was taken over by events company Event Hire and rebranded as the Christchurch Show.

"Our event partners Event Hire are underwriting parts of the Christchurch Show, and we can't



Above - The Christchurch Show will go ahead this year, with gates open from the Thursday to Saturday of Show Week. PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Right - Newly elected Canterbury A&P Association board chairperson Sir David Carter said the Canterbury A&P Association will be focused on the long-term future of the show.

thank them enough. They have stepped up and said the show must go on."

Carter said the show had been in a vulnerable position since it relocated from Addington to its current site on Curletts Road around 15 years ago.

"More recently, there has been dysfunction between the general committee and the board, and the board has attempted to do what it

can to ensure survivability."

The show would return to being called either The NZ Ag Show or The Canterbury Show in 2025.

"That will be finalised, but this year it is called The Christchurch Show, acknowledging it's effectively a joint venture between Event Hire and the A&P association."

Carter said he became involved when this year's show was can-

celled.

"I think the show is just too critical, too important to Canterbury for it not to be taking place.

"Historically, it's only been stopped by wars and Covid."

This year's event will retain its rural flavour, with tractor pulling, trade sites, livestock displays, stock judging, entertainment, and competition events.

Carter said it wouldn't be Can-

terbury Show week without the show.

"You've got the races at each end of the week, you've got races through the week, and traditionally, you had this three-day show that would tie them all together.

"It's the event that Canterbury is known for."

This year, the show will run from Thursday, November 14, to Saturday, November 16, instead of Wednesday to Friday to ease queues and parking pressure that attendees usually encounter on the show's last day.

The cost of tickets for this year's show is \$20, half the cost of last year's event.

"There was too much resistance at \$40, and it meant a couple with kids were paying \$80, and that was too high."

Carter said he was keen to move forward instead of looking back and trying to find where the mistakes were made and whose fault it was.

"Let's regroup, let's focus on the future, and let's work together to get it happening."

Carter is encouraging the community and businesses to get behind the event to ensure its success.

"We're asking the public to purchase early tickets, sponsors to sign up, and our trade exhibitors to get on board early and book a stand.

"To be a long-term success, the show needs to return to a strong financial position, but we can't do this alone.

"We need a lot of support."

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October 19

Ellesmere Agricultural & Pastoral Association
Ellesmere A&P Showgrounds 1650 Leeston Road, Leeston, New Zealand

October 25-26

Northern Agricultural & Pastoral Association (Rangiora)
Rangiora Showgrounds 158 Ashley Street, Rangiora, New Zealand

NOVEMBER

November 1-2

Ashburton Agricultural & Pastoral Association
Ashburton Showgrounds 66 Brucefield Avenue, Ashburton, New Zealand

November 2

Amberley Agricultural & Pastoral Association
Amberley Domain 6/50 Douglas Road, Amberley, New Zealand

November 8-9

Marlborough Agricultural & Pastoral Association
A&P Park 149 Maxwell Street, Blenheim, New Zealand

November 9-10

Southern Canterbury Agricultural & Pastoral Association
Waimate A&P Showgrounds 26 Hakataramea Highway, Waimate, New Zealand

November 14-15

Canterbury Agricultural & Pastoral Association (Christchurch Show)
Canterbury Agricultural Park 102 Curletts Road, Christchurch, New Zealand

November 23

West Otago Agricultural & Pastoral Society 2024 - ROYAL EVENT
West Otago A&P Showgrounds 138 Tapanui Raes Junction Highway, Tapanui, New Zealand. 8am to 5pm

November 23 - 24

Nelson Agricultural & Pastoral Association
Richmond A&P Park 358 Lower Queen Street, Richmond, New Zealand

November 30

South Otago Agricultural & Pastoral Society
Clutha Park Showgrounds 10 Glasgow Street, Balclutha, New Zealand

DECEMBER

December 7

Wyndham Agricultural & Pastoral Society
Wyndham 16 Balaclava Street, Wyndham, New Zealand

December 7-8

Motueka Agricultural & Pastoral Association

Association
Marchwood Park 62A College Street, Motueka, New Zealand

December 14

Tokomairiro Agricultural & Pastoral Society (Milton)
Tokomairiro A&P Showgrounds\ 270-284 Union Street SH 1, Milton, New Zealand

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CLAIRE INKSON

The Ashburton Show programme is action-packed this year, and the focus is on giving attendees value for money as they attend the annual event this November 1 and 2.

"We are fully aware there is a lot of financial hurt out there at the moment, so we are trying to provide a lot more for the same entry fee," show president Ben Stock says.

With an entry fee of just \$ 15, and free admission for school children, the Ashburton show offers an affordable and enjoyable experience for all.

"I think we remain one of the cheapest shows in Canterbury."

This year's event theme is Paddock to Picnic, showcasing Mid Canterbury as the country's food basket and extending beyond the show gates.

Attendees can expect a range of activities and displays that highlight the region's rich agricultural heritage and the journey of food from the farm to your table.

The Ash-burger bash is a new initiative this year where local bars and restaurants are encouraged to create a unique burger in the lead-up to the show.

Burger entries must contain seven locally grown products, and will be judged by locals as they try them at participating restaurants throughout Ashburton.

Luke Howden from Hokonui will announce the top burger on Saturday at the show and present the winner with a trophy.

An inter-office picnic basket competition in which offices put together



a show-themed picnic basket with local treats could win businesses a smoko shout.

Burgers are on the menu at the show as well, with 1000 burgers - sponsored by Anzco and cooked by Smoke restaurant - being given away to the 1000 paying attendees on Saturday.

urday.

"We want to play our part in the community by encouraging people to support local, see what's happening in their backyard and support it.

"We want people to make people aware of what's happening out there and champion it."

The show stays true to its roots, with plenty of rural events scattered throughout both days, including the New Zealand Gumboot Competition, a farrier demonstration, and a highly anticipated celebrity shearing competition.

"The shearing competition will

feature some local identities who are more than willing to make a spectacle of themselves.

"None of them have shorn sheep before, so it's a bit of a learning curve.

"Hopefully their friends will come along and give them a good ridiculing," Stock said.

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the Ashburton A&P Show



REMEMBERING VICTOR

The Ashburton A&P Show will remember immediate past show president Victor Schikker at this year's event, with a Geraldine House of Hops beer relabelled in Victor's honour.

The bar will also bear Victor's name, a tribute to the much-loved Mid Canterbury identity who died tragically in an ice skating rink accident earlier this month.

Show president Ben Stock described Victor as "just an all-round good bugger".

"He was very proud of his district and the A&P association.

"He was people's go-to for information; he was a lot of

fun to be around and a great storyteller."

Schikker was a livestock rep for PGG Wrightson and was due to celebrate 50 years of service to the company this coming January.

Schikker was a member of Mayfield Lions and had a long association with the A&P society. In the early days of his career as a livestock rep, he looked after the cattle classes.

He was also involved in the IHC calf scheme since its infancy.

"He was a good Ashburton identity who will leave a very big hole in many people's lives," Stock said.

Despite Mid Canterbury being predominantly arable and dairy, Stock said the show committee was excited to have Wool Impact featured at the event to promote the wool industry and innovation.

"They will display everything wool you can imagine, from business cards

to clothing and even coffins.

"They are a really energetic group of people pushing a great Kiwi story hard."

The animal tent, always a crowd favourite is back, but bigger and better than last year, and the clash of the colleges makes its Ashburton show

debut with a modular competition for high school ag students.

"We just want to build on what is already a great show.

"There are a lot of cool people and energy in our district, and they seem to come to the surface at times like this; it's really awesome," Stock said.



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Battle lines drawn at Ashburton show

CLAIRE INKSON

Teenage agriculture students will battle it out at the Ashburton Show when the Canterbury Clash of the Colleges makes its Mid Canterbury debut at the Ashburton Showgrounds on November 1.

Ashburton show president Ben Stock said he was excited to welcome students and their families from across Canterbury, North Otago and the West Coast to the event.

“The Clash of the Colleges is all about encouraging the next generation into the food and fibre sectors.

“Our region is New Zealand’s food basket and it’s essential we support the next generation into the sector.”

The annual event, in its third year, was previously held at the New Zealand Agricultural Show but was moved to Ashburton when the 2024 Ag Show was cancelled.

“With the difficulties the Ag Show has had, we obviously needed to secure a new location early this year,” Agri Futures general manager Daniel O’Regan said.

“We reached out to the team at the Ashburton Show, and they were keen to have us on board, and we hope we can help bring more people to the event.”

O’Regan said he is open to the event staying in Ashburton in the future, even with the Christchurch Show back on the rural calendar.

“We may go back to Christchurch, but at the same time, if it works in Ashburton, we’ll stay.”

Clash of the Colleges is run



Tangaroa Walker, a rural influencer, educator and founder of Farm 4 Life, will be the master of ceremonies at the event. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Agri Futures general manager Daniel O’Regan said he expected around 300 entries for the Canterbury Clash of the Colleges event. PHOTO SUPPLIED

by Agri Futures, an organisation established by The New Zealand Rural Games Trust to motivate, support, and empower young people to pursue careers in food and fibre.

O’Regan said he expected around 300 entries for the Canterbury event, which he said will be

“exciting and fast-paced” as the students complete 16 modules.

“The kids have five minutes at each module, and at each module, there will be two teams of four,”

“There are lots of different modules; we work with different companies and associations that help run the different modules.”

Modules include Artificial Insemination, Quad Bike Safety and Wheel Change, Tree Identification, Attaching an Insulator, Break Fencing, Irrigation set up, Offal Identification, Feeds and Weeds, Drenching, Mussel Buoy Knot Tying, Handpiece Setup, Wool Identification, Gumboot Throw-

ing, Sulky Racing, Thoroughbred Racing, and Springer Horse Riding. O’Regan said the modules vary in skill and intensity.

“There’s some fun stuff like a silky race, through to the more mundane where they have to identify the usual stuff you find on a farm, like a mower or spraying gear.”

This year, the scoring system has been adjusted so that physical modules like gumboot throwing and sulky racing will receive participation points only.

This change focuses on essential skills needed in food and fibre, and creates a more even playing field for boys’ and girls’ teams.

Tangaroa Walker, a rural influencer, educator, and founder of Farm 4 Life, will be the master of ceremonies at the event.

O’Regan describes Walker as a ‘legend’ of the primary sector in New Zealand.

“Tangaroa has been involved pretty much since we started, and he has the gift of the gab when it comes to talking to kids; he has the ability to speak their language.”

Canterbury Clash of the Colleges starts at 10 a.m. on the first day of the show and ends with a barbecue at 1 p.m.

Clash of the Colleges events are run in Auckland, Southland, Canterbury, and Palmerston North.

The Southland event is held on September 13 at Telford.

“We only have so much money, so we can only do four events.

“We try to reach out a little beyond each region to reach as many kids as possible,” O’Regan said.

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A hut IN THE hills

CLAIRE INKSON

Like many farmers, Andy Fox wasn't used to sitting still, so it was no surprise that he needed a project to keep himself occupied while he was forced to rest during a particularly severe bout of leptospirosis.

"He such an energizer bunny, and he was laid up on the couch," Andy's wife Kath says.

"One day, he said, I think we should open a hut.

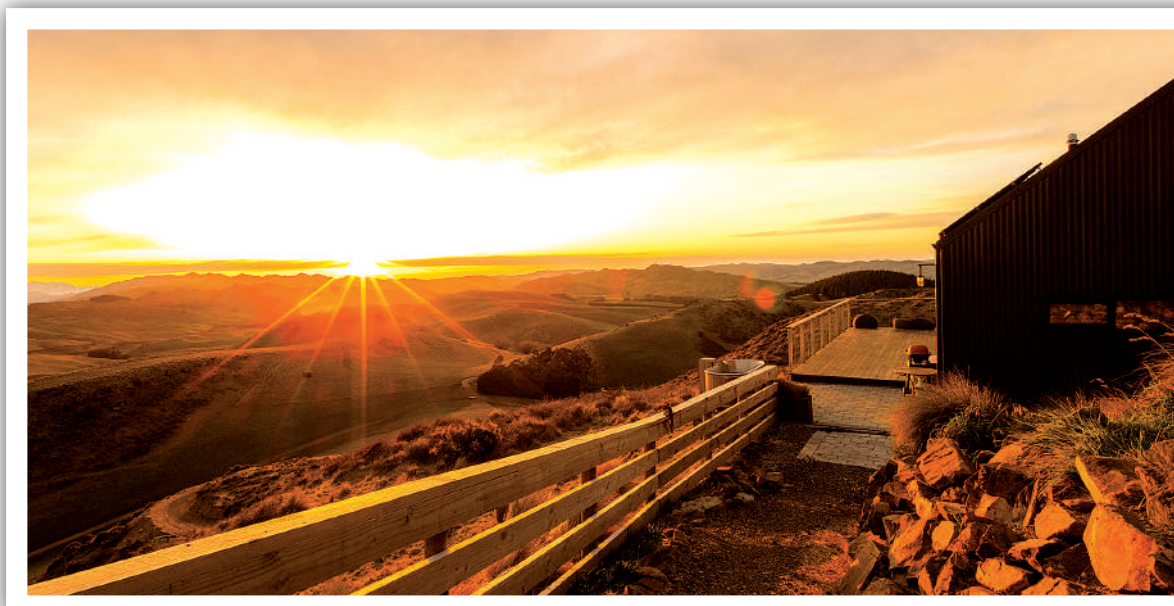
"Next thing he had called an architect and was buying stuff on Trade Me, and I thought ok, we are actually doing this."

The Foxes own Foxdown, a 1400-hectare farm in the Hurunui District that has been on the Fox family for nearly 150 years.

The 360-degree view from the top of the farm extends across the Wai-kari Valley to the Culverden Basin and inland Kaikoura ranges, making it the perfect location for a luxury glamping experience.

"The view up there, even for me, is amazing and constantly changing.

"What stands out about it for people is the epic view, the light chang-



ing every hour, and the weather."

Andy spent New Year 2019 in hospital recovering, but despite his illness, preparations for the build began that February.

"I prepared that site over winter, we poured the concrete in November, and it was weather-tight by the

following March," Andy says.

"It took 18 months to build."

The finished build was named Foxdown Hut and marketed by Canopy Camping.

The build was based around salvaged trusses recycled from a pump house in Christchurch.

While many glamping experiences are little bigger than a tiny house, Foxdown Hut is a generous 84 square meters.

The Foxes built the hut based on the kind of place they would like to stay in.

"I describe myself as outsidey but

FOXDOWN FARBREAK

The Foxdown Farmbreak Event will be held on September 6 at Foxdown Shed, 440 Foxdown Road.

7.30pm until midnight.

Tickets are \$10 and include food, beverages and buses to and from the event.

Tickets can be purchased through the Hurunui Community Adverse Events or by contacting Andy Fox on 027 519-9642.

not outdoorsy," Kath said.

"I like the great outdoors, but I want comfort."

There is a proper flushing toilet, a log burner to keep the hut toasty and provide a cozy ambience, and LPG gas hot water supplies the inside and outside bathrooms.



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Clockwise, from right – Andy has a vast collection of classic cars, including his beloved 1922 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON
 Far right – The outdoor bath has instant hot water, meaning it can be filled and ready to use in half an hour. PHOTO LISA SUN
 Below – Foxdown hut is bigger than most glamping escapes at 84 square metres. PHOTO LISA SUN
 Left below – Trusses salvaged from pump house in Christchurch are a feature of Foxdown Hut. PHOTO LISA SUN



“When you go to those places with outdoor baths that are heated by a fire, you have to plan your bath five hours in advance. “That’s just too much admin,” Andy says.
 Kath said most guests are looking for an experience, and a hot bath under the stars fits the bill for most people.
 “People need to be able to see themselves doing something there; it’s not enough to just have a whole lot of nice décor; they want to imagine what they’ll do when they get here.”
 There are walking tracks and mountain biking trails for guests to

explore, but the Foxes have found that most people are quite happy to relax and unwind.
 “Most people work really hard, especially the under 40-year-olds,” Andy said
 “They’ve parked the kids or a version of that. There’s been a lot of stress to get here; all they want to do is relax.”
 Most guests staying at the hut are domestic tourists who are usually under 40.
 “We never get older people, but when we were building it, we thought it would be for 40-60-year-olds.
 “But because Canopy Camping

does all of their marketing on Instagram, that’s the age group they attract.”
 The hut has been a success and has had high occupancy rates, but that has eased off slightly recently, which Andy puts down to difficult times as the recession hits people’s wallets.
 “Whenever you pick up the paper, it talks about economic recession, inflation and interest rates. “It’s a self-fulfilling prophecy. People think they are going to be poor so they stop spending, and that creates a slowing of the economy.”
 Kath, who works as a lawyer in

Christchurch, ensures the hut is kept to the highest possible standard but leaves the guests to Andy.
 “Andy loves people and genuinely loves welcoming people onto the farm, and I think they genuinely love talking to him because he knows so much about the area.”
 Guests wanting a more in-depth experience can choose to enjoy a farm tour with Andy or visit the on-farm museum, which is a testament to the generations of Foxes who have farmed the property.
 Car enthusiasts can explore Andy’s extensive collection of classic cars, amassed over a lifetime of passionate collecting.

The collection is housed in the Foxdown Shed, which also serves as an event venue.
 Andy said that while sometimes having people on the property can feel invasive, opening the farm gate has benefits for the sector.
 “In my parents’ day, everyone in town knew someone in the country.
 “But now that distance is getting greater, but we want them to buy what we produce.
 “So we have an open policy around visitors, because we haven’t got anything to hide, and farming has had a bit of bad press. Hopefully, we can improve that.”



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A RUSTIC RETREAT WITH A VIEW

CLAIRE INKSON

When hosting guests on your farm, success comes from sharing your piece of the world and providing a personal touch rather than solely pursuing profit, says Wendy Kier. "You can't just do it to make money on the side because things are tough.

"To make it successful, you also have to have a passion for it."

Wendy and her husband Alex run Fisherman's Hut, a Canopy Camping Escape on their 300-hectare property overlooking Lyttelton Harbour.

While many farmers consider adding a farm stay to their existing farming operation as an afterthought, the Kiers purchased the coastal property three years ago with diversification in mind.

Although the Kiers run 800 romtex and perendale ewes and 54 Angus cattle on the farm, their main focus is developing agri-tourism.

"We had a long-term dream. We didn't buy the farm to make money from farming."

The couple looked at their shared skillset and decided to build a business based on their strengths.

"About five years ago, we sat down and thought, what do we see for our lives? What talents can we combine?"

"Alex is a farmer and a very talented builder; he learned all the skills so he could build his own houses.

"I'm a graphic and interior designer by trade, so we thought, why not build huts?"

The couple spent approximately five years searching for a property that met all their criteria. Despite others questioning their decision to buy a desolate piece of windy land, it was exactly what they sought.

"We were looking for something unique.

"We didn't want just to settle. We wanted to find what was in our head, what we had planned."

The Fisherman's Hut, built in the Depression-era 1930s, was left derelict until the previous owners made some basic repairs and maintenance.

"They put in aluminium windows and just got it so you could stay in it.

"They put it up on Airbnb just as rough accommodation. There was no power, no heating, and just cold running water."



Below - The hut retains its rustic charm with recycled and reused elements.

PHOTO LISA SUN



The Kiers had a vision of turning a rundown shack into a comfortable yet elegant lodging. The couple began by reconstructing the hut using a combination of recycled, new and existing materials. They used flooring from a historic building in Addington and repurposed the original rustic kerosene tin cladding that had previously adorned the exterior.

"We thought the tins were amazing, very special.

"Although some were worse for wear, we pulled them off, rust-coated them, painted them, and put them back on again, so the hut just looks like it's always been there."

While the exterior had felt the exposure to the elements, the interior

also required extensive work.

"The interior walls were made from old packing crates off shipping containers.

"Although they were very cool, they were rotting, so we had to give the hut new bones, basically."

The hut was built in stages, with the final stage finished at the beginning of the year. It was first rented out through Airbnb but is now available through Canopy Camping Escapes. The hut includes two bedrooms, a cozy lounge, and a deck with an outdoor bath and water views. It is entirely off-grid and powered by solar energy. The bathroom is in a separate room two meters from the main hut, equipped with gas-powered hot

Left - An outdoor bath provides the perfect place to relax while enjoying views across the harbour.

PHOTOS LISA SUN

Below - Fisherman's Hut was restored in keeping with the building's history and to complement the landscape.



water and a composting toilet.

"It was built with a lot of love; it was very much a passion project."

A pack track on the property that leads to Little Port Cooper is a highlight for guests but has also caused a few issues for the Kiers.

"When we first moved here, trespassing was a huge problem.

"I think the rules in the past weren't clear if the track was open to the public."

Now, the track is only open to guests and staff, so the Kiers know who is on the property and where they are walking.

Because the property is a working farm, the Kiers do not allow guests staying at the hut to bring dogs.

"It's just about having really strict blanket rules to keep that control.

"You have to make it work the way you want it to work."

Although the hut is finished, the Kiers'

next step is to upgrade the

track to it.

"At the moment, we have to transport guests down and back because the track is very treacherous.

"The next stage will happen in spring when we will make the track more drivable for everyone."

Wendy said that a love of hosting is important when running accommodation like the Fisherman's Hut, which can be a challenge for farmers who value privacy and space.

"Alex will say he isn't a people person, and like most farmers he likes to be on the land by himself.

"But once he gets yarning, he can't stop.

"One of the things that brings people back is that they love us as hosts.

"That personal touch is important," Wendy said.

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TAPPING INTO TOURISM POTENTIAL

CLAIRE INKSON

With the tough times continuing in the primary sector, many farmers may be looking for alternative income streams to remain profitable, and many are turning to agri-tourism experiences.

Agri-tourism is a relatively new concept to New Zealand, so much so that Tourism New Zealand is yet to adopt the word, still using the much more narrow term farmstay.

Queenstown-based business and marketing consultant Marijke Dunselman is determined to see the industry grow and founded Agri-tourism New Zealand five years ago to uplift farming communities by promoting agri-tourism and fostering the industry.

Dunselman emphasises that while agri-tourism has seen significant growth globally, New Zealand has yet to fully tap into this potential.

"There is a clear and growing demand from both international and domestic tourists for agri-tourism experiences, surpassing the growth rate of other tourism sectors.

"People love going to a farm or a vineyard and doing a multi-day walk, for example.

"We need to focus on that area more."

Dunselman said that although the agri-tourism industry is growing in New Zealand, there needs to be specific statistical data to track that growth.

"I'm trying to get more specific stats, but on average, the number of international visitors has grown



Agritourism New Zealand founder Marijke Dunselman said the agri-tourism industry is growing faster than other tourism areas. PHOTO SUPPLIED

6 1/2% per year over the past 50 years.

"Tourism pre-covid was our biggest export earner."

Dunselman said lockdown proved the domestic tourism market was interested in agri-tourism experiences.

"People with walks or horse trekking did really well, and most farm accommodation was full."

When starting an agri-tourism business, it's important to do your research and seek guidance.

"For a lot of farmers, agri-tourism is an entirely new industry.

"There is a lot to learn."

Dunselman emphasised the importance of farmers being able to assess their property to determine

which activities would be suitable for their farm, taking into account human and financial resources. She also suggested that collaboration between farms is most effective when neighbouring farms share similar standards and ideas.

"You can develop more of an experience by working with other agri-tourism ventures in your area.

"You might have accommodation, but your neighbour might have a horse trek.

"That raises the product to a multi-day experience."

Farmers needed to decide the scale of the agri-tourism business they wanted to create and how much involvement they wanted in the operation and the guests.

Going through an agent means losing some of the profits but gaining more impact and exposure, as well as outsourcing the business' marketing to the experts.

"So some people just put a cottage on and run it through Airbnb, and that's the lower end.

"And then there is the option of getting more visible by going through agents and making it higher end by having food, for example - then you can generate very, very good income from it."

Health and Safety compliance often makes farmers nervous about having guests on their farms, but Dunselman said as long as the paperwork is in place, there should be no problems, as long as you consider that those guests may have no prior on-farm experience.

"You have to have a health and safety plan, just like you do for your farm.

"You have to see things from a visitor's perspective as they come on and may never have been on a farm.

"It's about identifying risks and developing a plan for managing those risks."

Dunselman said the most common mistake farmers make when considering agri-tourism is underestimating their farms' tourism potential.

Farmers often charge too little for experiences, but Dunselman pointed out that guests are willing to pay top dollar.

Additionally, she said that high-end on-farm accommodation retreats are consistently fully booked.

"People can make \$10 or 20,000 per year, but can make \$300 to 400,000 by doing it right the first time and learning about the industry.

"People don't know what they don't know."

Dunselman said the industry not only creates much-needed additional income streams for farmers, but also has the potential to grow rural communities.

For example, adult children returning home to the farm and looking to diversify the farming operation can have a flow-on effect.

"They set up an agri-business, and they employ a chef, they employ cleaners, and they all have families.

"They need housing and schooling, so it builds those communities up again."

Guests also spend money in rural communities as they explore the area during their stay.

"It has this multiplier effect.

"They don't just spend money with you; they also spend it in the community, and the more there is to do in the area, the longer they will stay."

Dunselman said that most farmers running agri-tourism experiences find it rewarding and describes it as a "happy industry".

"It's pretty tough for farmers out there and tourism is fun because you are dealing with people who are in awe of what you offer.

"People want to connect with farmers and people love it because it's very personalised.

"People love it because it's real."

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1/2 t ground cinnamon
1t paprika

To serve

4 poached eggs
2 English muffins, cut in half
4T harissa paste
1C well-packed baby spinach
4T hollandaise sauce
A pinch of paprika

To make patties:

Mix all lamb pattie ingredients together in a large bowl.
Divide mixture into 4-5 patties (depending how big you want the patties to be) and roll into a ball then push out flat to form a pattie.

The patties should be a similar size to the English muffins.

Heat a pan to medium-high heat, add a dash of oil and cook patties on both sides, approx 4-5 minutes per side.

To poach eggs

While the patties are cooking poach 4 eggs.

Break each egg into a separate pouring dish for easy pouring into the boiling water.

Add a dash of white vinegar to the pot of boiling water and create a whirlpool with a spoon before dropping your egg into the water.

Allow eggs to drain of any water on a napkin or chopping board before serving

To serve:

Toast muffins and spread with a layer of harissa. Top with 1/4 C of baby spinach, Moroccan pattie and a poached egg. Drizzle with hollandaise and dust with paprika.

*Recipe by Brooke Campbell
Courtesy of Beef + Lamb New Zealand*

Sleep Disturbances Part 2

Magnesium is an essential mineral needed for hundreds of applications in the body. Last edition we saw that Magnesium intake is low in Western diets exposing millions of people to diseases caused by low Magnesium. You can read this at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5786912/>.

Low Magnesium can be a cause or contributing factor in both muscle cramp and Restless Legs (RLS). Magnesium and calcium are needed for both nerve transmission and muscle contraction. Calcium is needed in the action stage by helping with the transmission of signals between nerves and with muscle contraction.

Magnesium is needed at the relaxation stage of the process. It helps nerves and muscle fibres return to a neutral position. Low Magnesium can cause RLS by preventing nerve endings to return to a neutral position. Adding supplemental Magnesium can help nerves and muscles function normally which can calm nerve and muscle spasms. The success of Magnesium therapy is based around



the types of Magnesium used, the doses and importantly the timing of doses.

While adding Magnesium can be very effective for both cramp and RLS, there other factors to consider. Dehydration and low salt and generally low mineral and vitamin intake can worsen both conditions.

Additionally, some medications notably cholesterol lowering (statin) medications are known to cause or worsen muscle and nerve problems. So much so that Statin Myopathy (muscle problems) and Statin Neuropathy (nerve problems) are diagnosable diseases. Those on statins need to be on a specific, personalised supplement programme that includes quality Magnesium, broad spectrum minerals, vitamins, antioxidants and Co enzyme Q10.

The main problem with Magnesium supplements is most a '1 a day' formulas using just one form of Magnesium. This makes specific doses very difficult. I prefer using three forms of Magnesium and doses that reflect individual needs to get the best results.

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



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John Arts comments:

"Abundant Health rapid absorption Magnesium Triple can really help tight or stressed muscles and for a good night's sleep. The 3 different forms of Magnesium mean you get fast results. The normal dose is 2 before bed." (John Arts, Founder, Abundant Health Ltd)



Caution: Adult use only. High doses of magnesium can cause diarrhoea and may interact with some medications. If in doubt see your health care practitioner before use.

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