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NOVEMBER 30 2024

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Has strong wool had its day?

Annette O'Sullivan recently released *Woolsheds - The Historic Shearing Sheds of Aotearoa New Zealand*, a gorgeous tome of a book that is a bitter-sweet reminder of a strong wool industry that once proudly fuelled the nation's economy, but now languishes.

It's hard to imagine a time when the industry was so robust that it warranted the building of the large and sometimes even architecturally-designed woolsheds featured in the book.

Longbeach in Mid Canterbury is a prime example. It has 28 stands where an astonishing 30,000 sheep were shorn each year when it was built in the early 1880s.

The nation's wealth was grown on the backs of a sheep flock that peaked at 70 million in 1982.

In 2024, numbers now sit at around 23.3 million, a 4% decrease from the year before.

While the value of wool isn't the only culprit of dropping sheep numbers - land use change, meat prices and drought all have their obvious role to play, but it all points to a changed agricultural marketplace.

We all know the properties of wool that make it an unquestionably sustainable and environmentally-friendly super fibre.

Arguably, though, the days of marketing and selling strong wool predominantly for textiles are over, at least at scale.

Niche businesses like The Clip, Honest Wolf, and Grumpy Merino, run by resourceful farmers, are none-the-less doing their part for the fibre.

By focusing on sustainability, quality, and traceability, they have collectively raised the perception of wool from the warm but itchy, ugly cardigans and orange and brown blankets of our childhoods to

something bespoke and coveted.

These success stories demonstrate the potential for small-scale, sustainable businesses to drive small but effective change in the industry.

But suppose wool could return to being the powerhouse it once was.

In that case, we would need wool products that could be produced at scale to meet a unique gap in the market where the sustainable, fire-retardant, breathable, and biodegradable qualities of wool trump synthetic fibres.

We need innovation.

The good news is that there is hope for the industry, and it's right in our homes - but beyond just carpet.

Campaign for Wool New Zealand has worked to showcase wool's potential beyond traditional uses, such as in acoustic tiles, furniture and insulation.

A partnership between Wool Impact with global architectural firm Gensler aims to integrate strong wool into high-end construction materials.

Floc has developed acoustic wall panels, and Wise Wool has created Cloud, a 100% wool mattress product with bounce-back qualities.

The domestic market is picking up.

According to Wool Impact, the domestic use of strong wool is expected to double by 2026, driven by increased demand for sustainable and innovative products.

By 2028, New Zealand could see 40,000 tonnes of clean wool used annually in local manufacturing.

With innovation in sustainable products and new markets, wool is poised for a resurgence, and there is hope for a revitalised, diverse industry in the not-too-distant future.



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From stop-go to supervisor

It's been some journey for Sama Soialo.

She started working for Ashburton Contracting Limited (ACL) as a stop-go operator, but now, less than a year later, she's steering her career towards traffic management leadership.

It all began when Sama first spotted an opportunity on Facebook and decided to apply, initially viewing the role as a temporary option.

"I started with stop-go work during sealing season until around January or March," she said.

"Then I began working with Pete,

another site traffic management supervisor (STMS). That's when they encouraged me to get more qualifications to expand my skills."

The progression wasn't automatic, with Sama dedicating herself to rigorous training and assessments. On-the-job mentor Pete played a crucial role in her development.

"You go through a lot of courses, both in the classroom and hands-on assessments like setting up a makeshift site. If you get everything right, you pass," she said.

That dedication paid off, with Sama now holding a fulltime STMS role with ACL, a company that's been serving the

Ashburton community since 1995.

And it's a job that offers daily challenges, which she enjoys.

"The great thing about traffic management is that each site is different," she said.

"You're never in the same place or doing the same thing every day."

And Sama fully understands why traffic management is so important for everyone.

"Well, traffic management isn't only to just keep us (ACL workers) safe. It's to keep the public safe," she said.

"I get lots of people who say they don't understand why we have so many signs and so many cones. But we have a legal

document that tells us that doing what we are doing - and putting up a certain amount of signs or cones - is the safest way to have a site set up."

Apart from that safety focus, which is hugely motivating for Sama and her team, she also loves the camaraderie, especially with truck drivers who return her friendly waves on the job.

"Sometimes, it's just nice to have that little interaction," she said with a smile.



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'Anxiety' around bus funding cuts



Anisha Satya
REPORTER

Mid Canterbury rural advocate has called the Government's proposed bus route funding cuts counter-intuitive. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is reviewing school bus routes nationwide, which could see funding cuts to rural transport for students. The Methven Bus Group, who provide buses for Methven Primary, Lauriston School, and Our Lady

of the Snows Schools students, expect to lose around 17% of their funding. Lauriston School board of trustees chairperson Craig Wiggins said the Ministry of Education's claims of "overfunding" the routes has no ground. "The fact of the matter is, we've got a lot more people requiring bus runs now," he said. Funding cuts won't necessarily mean buses get cancelled, Wiggins assured readers. "We'll do our best to make it work, but at this stage, we don't know how that affects which runs." The ministry's reshuffle of proposed routes look great on paper, but don't work logistically, he said. Many students will no longer be eligible for a ride, as school

enrolment zones won't line up with transport entitlement zones. "The way the funding's been mapped, they have a formula that requires at least four students to be at a location before they pick them up. "It is just laying information on a map and designing entitlement zones around the numbers." Funding cuts would disproportionately affect migrant children, who now make up a sizable portion of Mid Canterbury's students, he said. Some migrant workers struggle to convert foreign licences, lack the resources to learn to drive in New Zealand, or only have one qualified driver in the family. "And that person will be the breadwinner and can't get time off

to bring the kids to school." The proposal comes as a surprise considering the Government's pledge to increase school attendance, Wiggins said. "Now they're trying to take the ability away from these people to get to school. "If you want attendance to come up and carbon footprint to go down, the worst thing you can do is cut funding to rural buses." National MP for Rangitata James Meager has received letters from the bus group and wider community about how funding cuts would harm local students. "The particular challenges faced by farming families working non-traditional hours, and migrant workers who may not hold New Zealand licences, need to be care-

fully weighed. "Our region presents unique challenges. We cover a vast geographical area, with many students travelling long distances on rural roads, and have a high proportion of agricultural and migrant worker families who rely heavily on these services." He said he'd work with Minister of Education Erica Stanford to ensure rural needs were considered. "My focus is on finding a solution that both ensures responsible use of public funds and maintains reliable access to education for our rural students. "It's crucial that any changes to school transport support, rather than hinder, our Government's broader goals of improving educational access and attendance."

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Rural Women celebrated at awards

CLAIRE INKSON

The NZI Rural Women's Awards have once again shone a spotlight on female entrepreneurs.

This year's supreme award went to Catherine Ward of Pahi Coastal Walk on the Coromandel Peninsula, who said she never expected to win the coveted top spot.

"It's overwhelming, but it means a lot for the team.

"We have been doing a good job, and it just reinforces that we are on the right path."

The winner was announced at an awards dinner in Wellington on November 22, when seven category awards were also presented.

Ward was also the winner of the Love of the Land category for the three-day, two-night coastal walk that began as a hobby but quickly developed into a thriving business that has provided employment opportunities for other local rural women.

Ward said the awards evening was buzzing with positive energy.

"The category winners were all treated like celebrities; the atmosphere was really inclusive and supportive."

Ward said Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) were nurturing and supportive throughout the entry process.

"It's an amazing exercise, almost an audit of your business, but they make you feel good about yourself.

"They don't pick your business to pieces.

"It was a good chance to reflect on where we started, where we are



Left – Supreme Winner and Love of the Land category winner: Pahi Coastal Walk – Catherine Ward, Coromandel pictured with Christina Chellew (left) and Kerrie Lawrence (right) from NZI who are the Premier Partner for the Awards. PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Below – Emerging Business winner Hemprino – Harriet Bell and Siobhan O'Malley from Staveley pictured with award sponsor Ministry for Women CEO Kellie Coombes. PHOTO GRANT MAIDEN

and everything in between, and reminding us to put some of our grand ideas into place."

Newly elected RWNZ national president Sandra Matthews said what stood out about Ward's business was the flow-on effect its success had on the community.

"As the business has grown, the impact on the community has been significant, and other local businesses providing bike hire, hospitality, and artisan products have all benefitted from the walk's visitors."

Matthews said the awards had the highest numbers of entries to date, signalling a flourishing and diverse rural female entrepreneurship.

"We were particularly impressed by this year's entrants who showcase that it is possible to build new businesses, create new income

streams and build economic resilience in their rural communities."

Harriet Bell and Siobhan O'Malley were one of five South Island category finalists for their sustainable merino-hemp clothing brand Hemprino, which won the Emerging Business category.

Bell said this was their third attempt at entering the awards, and the win reassured them that the business was on the right path.

"With farming and young kids, we have a lot going on.

"We give a lot of time to the business because we are so passionate about it.

"It's nice to be recognised that what we are doing is heading in the right direction."

Bell said the award was significant because it recognises women in the primary sector.

"Our industry has come a long



way in the last 20 years, and there are so many great women-led businesses out there."

Bell lives on a property in Staveley with her husband Clint, whose family farm is just down the road, and two children, Fred, 3, and Hugh, 4 months.

She says it's a team effort, and she couldn't run Hemprino without her husband's support.

The award winners for each category are:

Love of the Land: Pahi Coastal Walk – Catherine Ward, Coromandel

Creative at Heart: Botanical – Amy Burke, Tasman

Emerging Business: Hemprino – Harriet Bell and Siobhan O'Malley, Staveley

Innovation: Repost – Dancy Coppell, Mapua

Rural Champion: Tairāwhiti Contractors Ltd – Katareina Kaiwai, Tokomaru Bay

Experience Rural: Nest Tree-houses – Liz Hayes, Hukatarama Valley

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Chch Show weathers the storm

CLAIRE INKSON

Despite a chilly, windy, and at times drizzly weather forecast, this year's Christchurch Show defied the odds, with organisers declaring the revamped and scaled-back event a success.

Karl Howarth, event manager for Event Hire, the company responsible for organising the Show after it was initially cancelled in April, said they were "extremely happy" with the numbers through the gates over the show's three days, November 14-16.

"We are finalising the numbers, but we are confident we saw between 55-65,000 people over the three days, so we hit our target even with the poor weather on Saturday."

The layout of this year's event saw food trucks scattered between trade sites and more audience entertainment interspersed throughout.

Farm machinery displays were down on other years, and traditional agribusinesses that typically occupy larger sites catering to farmers, such as PGG Wrightson and Ravensdown, were noticeably absent, but have indicated to organisers that they will return next year.

Canterbury A&P Association president Bryce Murray said the committee was "thrilled" with attendance.

"It's amazing how many people came; we are really pleased," he said.

The show ran from Thursday to



Saturday, differing from the traditional schedule of Wednesday to Friday, a change Murray said may be a one-off this year.

"We may go back to Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday and leave Saturday for the races."

Despite the board's earlier decision to cancel due to the Association's financial woes, Murray was determined that this year's event

would go ahead and is optimistic about the show's future.

"It's really good everyone pulled together to make it happen; the support has been amazing.

"The show was never going away; we just had to sort things out to make sure that happened.

"The budget has been done right through to 2025, and we are in the black all the way through."



Above – Show president Bryce Murray, with wife Janet.
PHOTOS CLAIRE INKSON

Left – Mt Somers Deer Farmer and co-founder of NZ Farming Duncan Humm is interviewed by Jamie Mackay from The Country.

Below – Olive Lidgett (left) and Emma Cowan with Valais sheep, known as the world's cutest sheep breed.



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Jon Pemberton: It's in his blood

The Farmers Fast Five: where we ask a farmer five quick questions about farming and what agriculture means to them. Today, we chat with Southland farmer, AgProud founder and Nuffield Scholarship recipient Jon Pemberton.

1 What did your journey into farming look like?

I've always been on the farm, a fourth-generation farmer from Canterbury. My grandfather was progressive — he did what he called "repair and planning" in the '80s, introduced innovations like a wee mobile centre pivot, and had the first herringbone shed. But the '80s hit hard; we lost an uncle to mental health issues because of it, and the farm couldn't support three families. That led to a shift in farming practices, with many innovations being abandoned due to the loss of subsidies.

I always wanted to be a farmer. But long story short, left school in the sixth form, drove tractors for the summer, then ended up going down and doing the conversion on the sheep farm my parents had bought down south. They were part of the '99 dairy boom in Southland.



Jon Pemberton says the best advice for the next generation of farmers is to not rush into things. PHOTO SUPPLIED

I spent some time overseas and then got more involved in the fam-

ily business. In 2010, they leased the farm for three years, and then it was sold. In 2003, we bought our first farm.

2 Tell us a little bit about your farming operation.

We still own our first farm, a 400-cow property near Brydone that backs on to the Mataura River. We are also entering our fourth season of a four-year lease on an 800-cow farm.

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

Family succession. I don't hide that it didn't go so well. But probably the best thing we did was ripping the scab off and dealing with it early. It was tough, but we wouldn't have it any other way, and it's been far better for the family as a whole. My message would be: For those going through a rough

one, stand back and look at what's best for family relationships, not necessarily the business.

On top of that, it's just the usual stuff with farming. We've had mastitis outbreaks, lameness issues that took over unexpectedly, and a major failed sexed semen programme a couple of years ago, which affected cashflow for 18 months.

The year after that failure, we had a flood. We were already down in cow numbers, but that probably helped since we couldn't graze parts of the farm for a while.

Honestly, it's nothing different from what anyone else deals with. You talk to your neighbours, and they've been through similar things. You can handle one or two challenges, but three at once can get frustrating.

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

Probably getting the Nuffield Scholarship and the community engagement through off-farm roles, especially AgProud and National Lamb Day. Also, being part of Thriving Southland's start-up.

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

Don't rush into things too quickly. It's such a different world now. You need a wide range of skills beyond just physical work. The scale of businesses is much larger, and they have to be to survive. As a result, you spend more time managing people than you did 20 years ago. Learning to navigate that can be challenging.

Sometimes, it's better to learn under someone else's guidance because figuring it out on your own — managing staff and dealing with all the associated challenges — can be a very costly way to learn.

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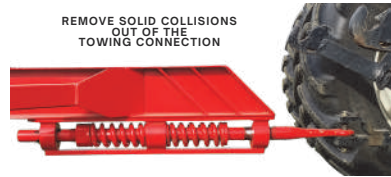
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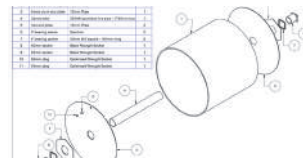


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Water is a polarising topic at the best of times. But, according to one expert, it's water's own surface tension that we should be taking a closer look at, specifically, its impact on insecticide spray efficacy.

UPL NZ Ltd.'s Adjuvant Product Manager, David Lingan says water surface tension is something we all probably learned about in school, along with Petri dishes and Bunsen burners, and fairly much left it there.

But in delivering an effective insecticide spray programme, he says, addressing it is crucial.

"Water tension is that strong cohesive connection between water molecules, and resistance to stretching." David says that tension can derail the impact of even the world's best insecticides. "Water tension means the insect-to-active contact can be significantly decreased. So, the insecticide's efficacy is reduced. That's good money wasted.

"Where a super spreader comes in is that it breaks the surface tension and enables the active to cover and spread on the plant's surface more effectively."

"Insects are highly mobile. They're not easy to pin down. You're not going to get the best from an insecticide, if it doesn't come in contact with the target insects or get ingested. Ultimately, that's going to impact your bottom line."

Forecast warmer temperatures bring with them the risk of increased insect population pressure, especially white butterfly, diamondback moths, aphids, and



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fall armyworm.

David recommends using the super spreader Du-Wett, an organosilicone blend, to deliver better spray coverage. "That way you're going to save yourself a lot of time, money, and potentially re-sprays. Most importantly, there's going to be a better outcome."

"Using Du-Wett means actives get into even dense forage brassica crops and you get better performance on waxy foliage. It maximises spread and coverage of the plant, giving you the protection your crops need."

David acknowledges that everyone is

cost conscious. "That's absolutely fair. And anything added to crop protection can be a hard sell. But Du-Wett will easily pay for itself because you get coverage that gets the most from sprays, and from the time and effort you're putting in to getting a decent yield from a crop."

He says contractors themselves have said they can actually see the difference between using Du-Wett Super-Spreader and not.

Particularly with helicopter and any low water volume applications, David says Du-Wett's saving on water use can provide quantifiable reductions in time

and fuel used.

"With rising fuel, labour, and spray costs, and added to that water costs or restrictions, it's something you've got to weigh up."

David also says that the old-school approach, which was 'more water gets more coverage' when spraying isn't supported by outcomes or hard science. "It all comes back to water's high surface tension actively working against good coverage and optimal performance.

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David says it's recommended that Du-Wett be used at 200 mL/ha for most insecticides, except for Attack® (use at 300 mL/ha) and chlorpyrifos (use at 250 mL/ha). Water volumes are 50-250 L/ha for ground applications and 50-100 L/ha for aerial applications. Optimum spreading and wetting from Du-Wett will occur between pH 5 and pH 9.

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Wiggy launches new support tool

CLAIRE INKSON

We are often told how important it is to take a break and get "off-farm", but for many farmers, that is easier said than done, even in times of crisis.

Farms can't run alone, and finding someone with the proper skill set to keep the wheels turning when farmers need to get away can be challenging.

Rural mental health advocate Craig 'Wiggy' Wiggins and journalist Rob Cope-Wil-



Craig 'Wiggy' Wiggins (above) and journalist Rob Cope-Williams are launching a new initiative to help farmers take a break from the farm when needed. PHOTO SUPPLIED

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liams have devised a solution: Replace A Mate.

"We want to make sure that farmers can be replaced temporarily when needed because we all know that a situation can change in the blink of an eye."

"Where do you find somebody to walk onto your farm if you suddenly have a sick kid, husband, or wife?"

The new initiative aims to create a database of people with farming skills, such as semi-retired farmers, stock agents, rural professionals or agricultural university students who can step in and relieve a farmer in times of need.

"It can be as simple as someone to feed your dogs, or it could be actually stepping into the management role."

That database will be assigned to a map so farmers can see who is available in their area and what skills they have to perform the tasks needed to keep things running smoothly on the farm in their absence.

A farming app will provide an efficient, simple means of communication and information sharing between property owners and those stepping in to help.

"The Resolution Farming planning, mapping and recording app has got right behind us."

"If someone is going to a farm to help out,

with just their email address, the app can give them all the health and safety information, including where all the water troughs and pipes are and everything they might need."

Farmers can monitor stock movements through the app for peace of mind while away.

"It's easy for the farmer to see what's happening and assign more tasks if need be."

"With the technology available, it's not that hard anymore."

Wiggins said he hoped those who join Replace A Mate would do so on a volunteer basis, donating their time to the cause.

"It's a volunteer type thing, although the farmer could throw in a mutton or two."

"If it's a longer-term thing, then that's up to the farmer and the mates to sort out."

Replace a Mate isn't just for times of crisis—it's for farmers who need to take a break and recharge.

Wiggins said that in time, they hope to make that easier, too, with a register of holiday houses available for an escape.

"Once we get Replace A Mate up and running, we want to have a page where you can give a farmer some time off-farm and list your holiday batch."

Replace A Mate will be operational at the beginning of 2025, when information and links will be available on Wiggins' website, www.leanonagate.co.nz.



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As a team isn't dependent on just one person's schedule, they are often more available for

showings, open homes and responding to inquiries. This flexibility can help ensure no potential buyer gets missed.

Teams have a larger network of potential buyers, agents and other contacts, which can lead to faster and better offers. They may also have access to more resources, professional photographers, home staging and marketing tools.

Teams can often invest in more marketing due to pooled resources, meaning your property is more likely to receive premium exposure across online and offline platforms.

Selling a property sometimes involves unexpected issues, and a team can combine their experience

and insights to overcome challenges more effectively. Whether it's pricing strategy, negotiations, or buyer feedback, teams can address problems with collective expertise.

With more than one person on the job, there's more accountability and transparency. Teams are motivated to keep each other on track and communicate clearly with clients about the process.

In short, a real estate team can offer a more comprehensive, efficient, and professional approach to selling a property, potentially saving you time, money and stress. At Bayleys Mid Canterbury, we adhere to the motto - altogether better.

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Fostering children's independence



Thrive for Life director Marina Shearer says it's our job as parents to raise independent, self-confident, highly functioning adults. PHOTO SUPPLIED

CLAIRE INKSON

Sending your child off to boarding school is a big moment – one that can stir up a whirlwind of emotions for both kids and parents alike.

While the transition is often tough, the life skills and independence they gain are invaluable.

As a professional coach, Marina Shearer, founder of Thrive for Life, explains that “parenting isn't about holding on forever”.

“It's about preparing your child to thrive on their own.”

Shearer, who said she founded Thrive For Life during lockdown to help students “be their best no matter what stage they are at”, has a very real understanding of the best way to prepare students for boarding.

That's not just because of her extensive training but also because of her personal experience, having sent her own three children to boarding school in Christchurch.

Shearer said that often, children are transitioning from a small rural school to a large high school, and that can be an adjustment.

“It's going from little to big – at one point, you're a big fish in a small pond, and then you're a little fish in a big pond.”

Shearer said the first term is the toughest, and if students and parents can get through that, things become markedly easier.

“If we can just grit our teeth and make it through the first term, everything will be ok.”

There are also academic challenges, social change and dealing

with forced independence, and the separation can often lead to homesickness for children and even grief for parents.

Shearer notes that mothers, in particular, may feel the loss of their “parenting purpose”.

“The hardest part for mothers is when the last child leaves home.

“It's like losing your purpose, and it's ok to grieve that change.”

Shearer said it's important not to put your own separation grief on to your child, but rather lean on other parents who are in the same boat.

radar turned on when it comes to alcohol, vaping and drugs.”

After the first two weeks, most boarding schools allow children to return home every weekend if they wish, which Shearer said provides an opportunity for parents to spend some quality time with their children so they can be sent back to school re-energised.

“When they come home at the weekend, have a lovely, caring family weekend together.

“Build them back up and re-charge their batteries.”

Shearer said boarding school



The hardest part for mothers is when the last child leaves home. It's like losing your purpose, and it's ok to grieve that change ... Grieve with other mothers, not with your child. It's not your child's responsibility to manage your grief

“Grieve with other mothers, not with your child.”

“It's not your child's responsibility to manage your grief.”

Shearer said it can be more challenging for parents to ensure children stay on the straight and narrow from a distance, so it's essential to have conversations on the dangers of alcohol and drugs.

“Parents lose influence, and peers take over as being the strongest influence.

“Parents need to have their

was a great way for children to have access to opportunities not always available in smaller, rural schools and to learn independence and self-management – skills that will make their transition to adulthood easier.

“Through our children's lives, we should be thinking, how is this moment empowering my child to be independent?”

“Our goal is to raise independent, self-confident, highly functioning adults.”

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From paddock to paradise



Anisha Satya
REPORTER

A Mid Canterbury farmer is on a mission to restore flood-prone farmland to its natural state.

The perfect farm sports hectares of flat land with fertile but sturdy soil, the kind that bounces back

after heavy rain, or being trampled by livestock.

But what if your paddocks used to be a wetland?

Around five and a half hectares at the Cloud8 Dairy Farm in Coldstream are classed as a "wet area," MHV Director and joint farm owner Campbell Tait said.

After securing and surveying the farm last December, Tait and the co-owners knew that land wasn't suitable for farming.

"[It] has limited productive value, so its best use is actually in nature conservation."

Through MHV, Tait and other volunteers have started the journey

towards restoration, aiming to plant the wet area with natives and improve the quality of water flowing into the Dowding and Harris drains.

The realisation of the project drew closer after it received around \$15,000 in funding from the Water Zone Committee.

Tait said that money would go towards fencing and purchasing more native plants, and now all that was needed were volunteer planters.

"The best time to plant a tree was yesterday, and the next best is today."

"I've been reaching out to high schools, and other community

groups that might be interested in doing planting days."

The project will become one of several feeding into community-led research through the Hekeao Hinds Science Collaboration Group.

Soil content, water contaminants and nitrate levels are some of the things which could be monitored to help farmers and conservations make better decisions for their land in the years to come.

Tait said this project is a chance to get everyone involved in caring for local land, especially Arowhenua. "I want-

ed to involve them in the project too, because we can learn things about how we go about establishing natives, and what plants we use."

Outside of improving the Harris drain's water quality and restoring native habitat, Tait said planting trees is good for the soul.

"It's a really enjoyable exercising, planting."

"It takes your mind off of your regular work, and that doesn't matter if you're a dairy farmer thinking about calving, or if you're in town and have a job, just getting out to see waterways is quite therapeutic."

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MHV Director and joint farm owner Campbell Tait (centre) joins volunteers to dig holes for planting at the Cloud8 Dairy Farm. This area floods in the wet months and can't be easily farmed.

PHOTO SUPPLIED.

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Planting now for the future



Group members cleaned up a section of Carters Creek in Tinwald earlier this year. Another working bee is planned for 2025. PHOTO SUPPLIED

WILLY LEFERINK

Carters Creek Catchment Group is 18 months old! We are residents who live between Lake Hood and Tinwald, working together to improve the creek that flows next to our properties and ends up in the lake. Some of us live in town or at Lake Hood, others are on rural properties. What we have in common is we all agree that the creek needs fixing.

What's wrong?

It floods properties regularly, both within Tinwald and in the rural area.

High levels of eColi, nitrate and phosphorous mean it's not safe for recreation or fish/aquatic life.

As the creek flows into Lake Hood, it's also contributing to algae blooms seen in the lake in the last couple of years.

If we fix the flooding, it will be a safer creek to live next to, and by tackling water quality issues we're helping the future of Lake Hood by reducing the likelihood of more algae blooms.

Most people in the district have visited the lake at least once.

It's a popular recreation spot for

swimming, water skiing, kayaking and rowing.

We want it to stay healthy for future generations to enjoy.

What is the group doing?

District councillor Leen Braam has offered his services free of charge as a landscape designer and local resident to put together planting plans for a couple of key areas along the creek.

the creek, rather than neglect it and forget about it.

Flood fix

Earlier this year, the group encouraged more than 100 submissions from residents asking Environment Canterbury for a flood investigation project in its Long Term Plan.

We were successful but unfortunately have to wait until 2027 for

“ If we fix the flooding, it will be a safer creek to live next to ...

By planting the creek banks, this reduces the impact of contaminants running off into the water.

Planting also stabilise the banks and provides shade to cool the water temperature, which is needed so aquatic life can thrive.

Leen has started work on the first planting plan, which focuses on the area next to the railway lines in the middle of Tinwald.

Our group plans to use planting plans to show the community how the creek could look in ten year's time if we put resources into it.

We want to inspire people to love

the project to commence.

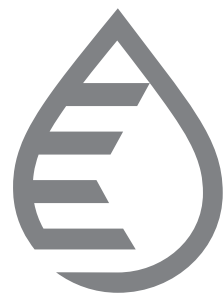
In the meantime, we are gathering information to help the river engineers design the best fix for flooding issues experienced in the catchment.

In May, we held a working bee on several Grove Street properties to remove old vegetation blocking the creek.

We plan another one next year.

Let us know if you can help or have a section of the creek we could work on.

Willy Leferink is chairman of the Carters Creek Catchment Group



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Mid Canty's supreme winners

CLAIRE INKSON

Ashburton's Eugene Cronin says the recognition for his irrigation work is pretty satisfying.

Eugene and Sarah Cronin are the Supreme Winners at the 2024 Zimmatic Trailblazer Sustainable Irrigation Awards, recognised for their innovative approach to sustainable irrigation and water management.

The announcement was made at an awards evening in Wellington on November 6.

"It's nice to see recognition for the work we are doing and the work that the wider industry is doing," Eugene said.

He is a farm supervisor for Dairy Holdings and is sharemilking under the name Kilmurry Farms at Falstone Farm, north of Ashburton, for David and Sonia Molloy, supplying Synlait.

In addition to the Supreme Award, the Cronins also won the Irricon Resource Solutions' Sustainable Irrigation Management Award category.

Judges noted Cronin's deep technical understanding of soil moisture and irrigation management.

Head judge and Irrigation NZ chairperson Keri Johnson praised his passion and expertise.

"Eugene demonstrated an advanced level of understanding of soil moisture and irrigation management. His depth of technical system and infrastructure knowledge is outstanding," she said.

"You can see the passion he has for what he's doing. His great use of data and ability to share it in a meaningful way, truly sets him apart."

Cronin uses soil moisture measurement technology, which he says matches the crop's demands with soil moisture data and its growth stage. He also uses an app for monitoring and recording the irrigation and maintenance schedules.

"On-farm data is the vehicle we use to monitor soil temperature and moisture, and that's a

big part of daily life on this farm."

Cronin said that efficient and sustainable water use was important to the dairy industry's future.

"In order to have the social licence to farm intensively, we have to be environmental stewards, and part of that is using water efficiently."

Cronin said that publications contain a lot of information, much of which is free, and he encourages farmers to "read what's out there".

"The biggest gain you will get is doing the basics of irrigation right."

Cronin credited farm owners David and Sonia Molloy for their support and said he was grateful to the sponsors for supporting the awards and to the other contestants, who were of a high calibre.

"It made us feel even more privileged to be in the top spot."

Cronin was one of three category winners, each receiving a prize pack that included travel vouchers for a 2025 irrigation study tour.

Ashburton farmers Ben and Shannon Johnson also received the Irricon Resource Solutions NZ Irrigation-Driven Improvements Award.

Although yet to be confirmed, it's looking likely the tour group will visit farming operations in the United States.

Cronin is looking forward to seeing what technology is being utilised by American farmers and bringing new ideas back home.

"I'm looking forward to seeing what other styles of irrigation are out there and what new innovation is available to use on our farms here in New Zealand," Cronin said.

The Zimmatic Trailblazer Sustainable Irrigation Awards were launched in 2020 to showcase outstanding achievements in sustainable irrigation and are held bi-annually, alternating between Australia and New Zealand.

The awards shine on farmers who demonstrate leadership in responsible irrigation techniques, innovative water management strategies, and environmental stewardship.



Mid Canterbury dairy farmers Eugene and Sarah Cronin have won the prestigious title of Supreme Winners at the 2024 Zimmatic Trailblazer Sustainable Irrigation Awards. PHOTO SUPPLIED

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Jingle bales ...

CLAIRE INKSON

Grinch's beware: the countdown to Christmas is on, and rural Southland is going all-out for the fourth annual Southland Catchment Groups Christmas Competition.

Facilitated by Thriving Southland, the umbrella organisation for 37 Southland catchment groups, the competition encourages farmers to create their own large-scale Christmas display – rural style.

“The idea came about when a

few catchment group members decided we needed something light-hearted to spread a bit of cheer,” Thriving Southland lead catchment co-ordinator Rachael Halder says.

Competition is fierce as farmers get creative with everything from hay bales to fence palings and farm machinery to create a Christmas scene that will have the big man in red's belly shaking like a bowl full of jelly when he flies over Southland this Christmas Eve.

“Some people go very grand and use a lot of bales and the boys

love to stack bales as high as they can, so that's always fun.”

And to ensure Santa – and locals – don't miss any festive creations, Thriving Southland has created a map to guide people to the fast-growing number of displays.

The map will be on the Thriving Southland website.

“Before they break for Christmas, people will have the opportunity to cruise around the countryside, and see parts of Southland they haven't seen before, and see all the awesome displays people have made.”



The competition has fostered a strong sense of community, with farms collaborating with their neighbours to create displays that tell a story over multiple paddocks.

“We have had neighbours and families pull together to do the displays.

“We had a couple of farms do a theme where Santa had crashed into the hedge and lost his presents along the way.”

Southland farmers should check the Thriving Southland website for competition details.

Farmers can enter by emailing Thriving Southland with a photo of their creation and the name and location of the display.

Entries open at the end of November and close on, December 20, when the displays will be judged and winners announced.

Local businesses have got on board to provide prizes for competition winners.

“We love to recognise those people that have gone over and above, and local businesses have been really kind and generous,” Halder said.



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Far left - The higher the better: Stacking the bales for the Christmas displays is all part of the fun. PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Left - The soldiers stand guard.

Above right - A map will guide people to the location of the displays.

Below - Southland farmers are getting creative this Christmas, spreading Christmas cheer, rural style, across the region.

Bottom - Southland is getting into the Christmas spirit with The Southland Catchment Group's Christmas Competition.



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Family's workhorse made into a han

CLAIRE INKSON

For the Briggs family, their 1974 Bedford J1 is more than just a farm truck — it's a symbol of resilience and the grit and determination it takes to rebuild after financial loss.

Once the reliable workhorse on their farm in Mid Canterbury, the truck became a casualty of Roger-nomics in the 1980s.

Like so many others during that difficult period in New Zealand's farming history, the Briggs family was forced to face financial ruin, losing the family farm.

"We got tipped up with Roger-nomics and lost the lot," Gavin Briggs recalls.

In 1984, receivers came in, and the truck, which Briggs's father Les had purchased in 1981 and kitted out with a spray unit, was sold to a neighbour down the road.

"To his credit, he kept in the shed. He went shearing in the end, so the truck got bugger all work."

Meanwhile, the Briggs family began climbing back to financial success.

With the farm gone and two children under five, Briggs retrained as a fitter-welder and sold fertiliser on the side to make ends meet.

A trip to Australia to visit family by Briggs's father, Les, changed everything.

"He was flying over to see the in-laws and looked out the window and saw this rotor irrigator going around and around."

Les was inspired.

He immediately saw the potential for an irrigation system that would be



a game-changer over traditional irrigation systems available in New Zealand at the time.

"We imported one and then made one for ourselves.

"A cocky got wind of it, and it just sort of snowballed from there."

In 1989, the family founded Rainer Irrigation, a business that now employs over 70 staff and specialises in the design, supply, installation, and servicing of irrigation and effluent systems.

The business has been a Mid Canterbury success story, but that success has been hard fought for.

"You're constantly switched on to what you are doing.

"We are only just getting to a point in our lives now where we can skive

off and do what we want," Briggs said.

Despite this, he was initially reluctant when the neighbour down the road rang three years ago and asked Brigg if he wanted the truck back.

That was until Briggs's son Sam found out about the truck and its family connection.

"He said, 'go and buy the truck.' Five hundred dollars changed hands, and the truck was once more back in the Briggs family.

The Bedford then went to Geraldine Auto Restorations, where Briggs said they stripped the entire vehicle, including the chassis, back to bare metal and restored the truck from the wheels up.

The process was an expensive one. "Get advice on how much it will

cost.

And then double it," Briggs advises anyone embarking on the same restoration journey.

The result is a truck that has been lovingly restored down to the finest detail, complete with a fabricated well-side deck and stamped rear tray.

The Bedford has the number 46 lovingly painted on the side, a nod to its place among 70 vehicles under the Rainer umbrella.

The truck won't be put to work — instead, it's a vehicle that will be displayed at shows and events for the public to enjoy and as a reminder to the Briggs family, including Les, who is still going strong at 90 years old, of all they have achieved.

"It's a really enjoyable drive; it



takes me back in time to a period in my life where it was enjoyable until it hit the fan, but that was out of everyone's control.

"But we have brought her back, and I think we've done alright," Briggs said.

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Some show pony



Top left - The truck prior to its restoration when it was used for farm spraying. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Above - Gavin Briggs with the 1974 Bedford J1 that has just undergone an extensive restoration and takes pride of place back in the Briggs vehicle fleet after 40 years in a neighbours shed. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

Below - The Bedford at the Rainer Irrigation site at the Ashburton Show this year. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

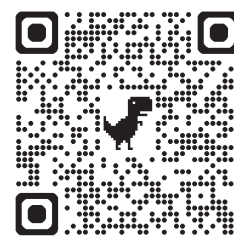


The wellside back and stamped tray are unique to the truck. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

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Toyota Hilux Hybrid: Power, Efficiency, and Built for New Zealand's Rural Life

Toyota New Zealand is taking a bold step forward with the introduction of the Hilux Hybrid, a ute that combines legendary toughness with cutting-edge hybrid technology. Designed with the unique challenges of rural New Zealand in mind, the Hilux Hybrid doesn't just meet expectations – it sets a new standard.

At its core, the Hilux Hybrid retains all the features that have made it a Kiwi favourite for generations. With an impressive **3.5-tonne towing capacity**, this ute can handle even the toughest jobs. Whether you're towing a horse float to a weekend competition, hauling a trailer full of livestock across the farm, or transporting heavy equipment, the Hilux Hybrid is up to the task. Its belt-driven motor generator, paired with the 2.8-litre diesel engine, enhances throttle response and smooths out acceleration, making towing easier and more efficient than ever.



Built to perform in demanding conditions, the hybrid system is designed to withstand the harsh environments rural drivers often face. From muddy paddocks to gravel roads, the Hilux Hybrid ensures stability and reliability, no matter where you're heading. Even with heavy loads, its 500Nm of torque and 150kW of power deliver the performance needed to get the job done. And with fuel consumption now at 8.7L/100km, it's more economical than ever – a win for your wallet without compromising on power.

But the Hilux Hybrid isn't just about rugged performance; it's packed with features to make your life easier. Inside, you'll find modern conveniences like a wireless phone charger and multi-terrain driving

modes that make every journey smoother, whether you're heading to the paddock or navigating city streets. Toyota's custom accessory options, such as tow bars and alloy load lids, ensure your Hilux is ready for any challenge, and all accessories are covered under Toyota's factory warranty.

The 48v hybrid system isn't just a technical upgrade – it's a practical enhancement that rural drivers will appreciate. By reducing engine load, the hybrid system supports smoother low-speed handling, perfect for manoeuvring heavy trailers or tackling tight farm gates. Its idle-stop functionality improves fuel efficiency, especially in start-stop situations, while maintaining the same rugged capability that's made the Hilux an icon.

With its proven reliability, hybrid innovation, and ability to handle everything from towing horse floats to navigating back-country roads, the Hilux Hybrid

is the ultimate choice for New Zealand's rural drivers. It's built tough for the farm, efficient enough for long distances, and advanced enough to meet the demands of modern driving.

Toyota New Zealand is also making it easier than ever to get behind the wheel of this groundbreaking ute. With their **Choice Deals Hilux Hybrid Offer**, customers can choose from **\$1,500 worth of accessories, 2% finance, or 4 years/60,000km free servicing** on new Hilux Hybrid purchases made before 31 December 2024. It's an offer designed to give you maximum value and flexibility, tailored to your needs.

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Dusty no more

Dustin Wright is hoping to save the proceeds of his business to buy his own ute, although his parents aren't too keen on that idea.
PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

CLAIRE INKSON

At just 15 years old, Dustin Wright is already making a name for himself in the Hurunui district with his new ute cleaning business.

Wright began learning the skill at home when Hawarden-based Wright helped his father, truck driver and farmer Ian Wright, clean his work trucks.

"I started cleaning trucks with my dad, and I enjoyed it so much I decided to start my own business, Dusty's Detailing."

Wright honed his skills by helping the car detailer at the local sales yard and workshop, Arthur Burke, and learning the tricks of the trade.

"I've learned a lot about cleaning methods and how to use chemicals properly."

The business, which operates over school holidays and weekends, has quickly gained traction.

Most of his clients are local dairy farmers, and the work isn't for the faint-hearted.

Some farm utes require five to six hours to clean.

"Some of the utes I clean haven't been touched in years," Wright laughs. "One had green mould all over it."

Local farmers have been impressed with his efforts, though, and he is already getting repeat customers. Some have even said it's like getting a brand new ute after his hard work.

The business has given Wright a taste of marketing, as he has had to set up social media pages for the enterprise, learn how to deal with customers, and negotiate pricing.

"I need to charge what I'm worth but also want to keep my services affordable."

He has taken his business to the city, cleaning housemasters' cars at the Christchurch Boy's High School hostel Adams House, where he boards.

Wright intends to save his business proceeds for his first car, which he hopes will be a ute, although his parents aren't too keen on that idea.

It's not the first time Wright has shown determination.

Despite facing challenges with dyslexia, he is passionate about trucks and has contributed articles for Little Truckers magazine since he was in primary school.

"It's a bit challenging, but I enjoy sharing my experiences."

Wright is realistic about the future of his new venture and attending truck shows with his dad has him dreaming of driving a big rig himself.

"I see this as a holiday job for now. I want to drive logging trucks when I finish school."

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Inefficient combines cost

CLAIRE INKSON

Farmers could be losing money before their crop even leaves the paddock due to inefficient settings on their combine harvesters, Foundation for Arable Research (FAR) technology manager Chris Smith says.

"In Western Australia, they extrapolated the data they were getting from combines, and they estimated there was around \$AU320 million being thrown out of the backs of combines of seed in 2021 and 2022 alone."

To mitigate this, a team of Australian experts set up workshops to help farmers and contractors run their harvesters more efficiently.

Now, after a successful pilot programme last year, they are bringing that knowledge to Kiwi shores for the second time.

This season's workshops will again be run by the same Australian team of experts, funded and facilitated by FAR.

The team will be led by Peter Broley of Primary Sales Australia, who has been holding workshops in collaboration with the Grains Research and Development Corporation across the Tasman.

"They now have a season's worth of experience working in New Zealand conditions and crops," Smith says.

The workshops will cater to combine harvesters of all brands used in the South Island - Case, CLAAS, New Holland and John



Combine specialist Kassie van der Westhuizen advises on how to set up a machine for optimal performance during harvest. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Deere.

"The biggest thing that appealed to me is that they are brand agnostic because they don't work for any of these companies; they can make suggestions the compa-

nies may not."

There will be one Mid Canterbury course for John Deere only on December 10 in Valletta, and all model workshops in South Canterbury on December 9, North

Otago on December 10, and Darfield on December 11.

Smith says that adjustments made to combines following last season's workshops led to some instant harvesting gains and cost

savings including limiting crop losses, faster harvesting speeds, lower diesel consumption and better harvest samples.

"Getting the settings correct can make a dramatic increase in productivity and maintain harvest samples. One grower took 70 hours off his combining, and another reduced fuel consumption by 30 per cent as well as producing a clean sample."

Last year's workshops focused more on grain; this year, the focus will shift to seed quality.

"We will be looking at machine losses, and trying to get a cleaner sample."

Smith hopes to facilitate online groups where growers can share information about combine settings and their effect on limiting crop losses.

"If we can get WhatsApp groups going, we can growers talking to each other about settings, they can help each other, and we can get a New Zealand set of figures because there is no set of figures for New Zealand crops."

Smith emphasised that the workshops are not geared at "telling farmers how to combine" but at addressing the challenges growers face.

"The growers here are experts on growing crops; it's about growers talking to growers as well."

FAR is funding the workshops, making them free for attendees.

Those interested can find out more information and register at www.far.org.nz/event



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HortNZ head warns of rising prices

CLAIRE INKSON

Horticulture New Zealand's (HortNZ) new chief executive, Kate Scott, says "unworkable rules" are one of the sector's biggest challenges, particularly for vegetable growers.

"In some parts of the country where regional councils have already gone through their plan change processes under the previous version of the national policy statement for freshwater, there are some highly unworkable rules, which means that vegetable production is constrained."

Scott said that the cost and ability of some growers to get consent could substantially reduce the number of vegetable growers able to operate, which will, in turn, hit consumers in the pocket.

"It will have a massive follow-on impact for the whole community, and what we might end up paying for fresh vegetables because of the costs of production associated with that."

Access to and storage of water also remains a continual challenge for the horticulture sector.

"How do we make sure that growers can access water not just for irrigation but also for frost fighting, which is equally important to ensure crops reach maturity? It's a really big issue."

It's not all doom for the sector, though. Scott says she feels optimistic about the future of New Zealand's horticulture industry.

"There is a huge amount of opportunity in the horticulture sector, and part of my attraction to this role is I think horticulture has got a really big role to play alongside pastoral farming to ensure that New Zealand can be prosperous and can deliver and meet all of our environmental obligations as well."

Scott has a background in planning and has a degree in Geography and Political science, and is no stranger to leadership positions.

In 2007, Scott founded the environmental science and planning business Landpro. Although she is no longer involved in the business on a day-to-day level, she remains an executive director.

Scott is chairperson of the New Zealand Rural Leadership Trust and is deputy chairperson of catchment group Thriving Southland; and was a Nuffield scholar in 2018 and was a recipient of the Rabobank Australasian Emerging Leader award last year.

Scott said she has spent the last 25 years helping farmers balance sustainable environmental outcomes with profitable business. She has a good set of skills for a role when the stakeholders in the sector are varied and complex.

"The role I have had in the environmental space has been about how we connect with farmers and growers."

"I have also had the opportunity to farm in my own right, and that brings a certain knowledge and understanding of the challenges facing farmers and growers every single day."

"Having that knowledge and empathy allows you to connect more fully."

Balancing environmental impact and profitability is an achievable goal.

"We have to evaluate the effects of a particular activity and weigh up the economic, environmental and social aspects to reach a good outcome."

"In my view, you can have a win-win for business and a win-win for the environment, and we just need to keep working hard to achieve that."

Scott was appointed chief executive of HortNZ on October 17, succeeding Nadine Tunley.



Horticulture New Zealand's new chief executive is optimistic about the sector, but warns unworkable rules could constrain vegetable production. PHOTO SUPPLIED

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Awards well worth the effort

CLAIRE INKSON

Dairy farmers are encouraged to get a moo-ve on and enter the 2025 New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards (NZDIA).

“Just put yourself out there and give it a try.

“It’s a good way to progress,” Says NZDIA Canterbury/North Otago regional manager and Ashburton dairy farmer Jonathan Hoets.

Hoets and wife Stacey won the Canterbury/North Otago Share Farmer of the Year in the 2023 awards.

The couple have entered the awards before, using the entry process to improve their farm management skills.

“Our main goal was to use the awards as a free way to get someone else to look at our business, pull it apart and see where we can improve.”

Hoets sees the awards as a gateway to industry leadership, one of his long-term goals.

“The awards exposed me to industry leaders, and I had conversations with directors of Fonterra and DairyNZ and saw where the industry is going.

“I am on the board of DairyNZ now, and I’m sure entering the awards had something to do with that.”

The Awards encompass New Zealand Share Farmer of the Year, New Zealand Dairy Manager of the Year, New Zealand Dairy Trainee of the Year and Fonterra Responsible Dairying of the Year categories across 11 regions, three of which



Jonathan and Stacey Hoets won the Canterbury/North Otago Share Farmer of the Year in 2023. PHOTO SUPPLIED

are in the South Island.

Entries for the NZDIA close at midnight on December 7, and farmers can enter online via the NZDIA website.

NZDIA general manager Robin Condon said the awards are not

only a prestigious programme with hundreds of thousands of dollars in prizes, they are a learning platform where people can secure their future, learn, connect and grow, both personally and professionally.

“The awards promote best

practice within the dairy industry and give entrants the chance to challenge themselves, connect with others, earn a regional or national title and to share in substantial regional and national prize pools.”

Regional finals will run over

March 2025, with winners announced at an awards dinner event for each region.

Regional finalists will be running for the national awards, which will be announced at a gala dinner in May 2025 in the Bay of Plenty.

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Trailblazing vet survives 50 years

CLAIRE INKSON

Not many female vets can say they have nearly 50 years of experience in the industry under their belt, but Oxford-based author and vet Cathy Thompson has never been one to follow the status quo.

"When I became a vet, only 20% in the industry were female.

"Now it's the other way around," she said.

With 30 of her 50 years in practice spent on dairy farms in Taranaki, she has some stories to tell and said she "got quite good at jumping fences".

"I have been in some dodgy situations.

"I've been chased up a post by a cow, been lowered down a well to a cow, and broken my wrist being thrown off a bull.

"I've always tried to learn from my mistakes."

Those stories, a catalogue of photos of her experiences and a wealth of knowledge gained from decades of hands-on experience inspired Thompson to write a book, *The Practical Guide for Cattle Veterinarians*.

That book, a compilation of photos, anecdotes, and health and safety tips and tricks, was released in 2017 when Thompson finally retired.

She was not going to spend her retirement sitting still.

"I thought I'd better do something, and everyone was interested in my stories and tips, so I thought I'd better write it down."

Thompson said she often shared



photos of cases with farmers and student vets.

"The students always enjoyed the photos, but they also enjoyed the stories and the easy way I do things."

The book was a huge success and still remains the go-to book for dairy vets seven years on.

Unexpectedly, it was popular with farmers, too, which prompted Thompson to write a second book in 2020, *The Veterinary Book for Cattle Farmers*.

"Lots of farmers wanted to buy the vet book, so I thought I'd better write a farmer book for them."

The book was sponsored by Shoof, whose website disclaimer for the book reads, "WARNING: This is the real world of veterinary procedures. Definitely not suitable material for children or townies. Not suitable for the coffee table, but essential for the real dairy or beef farmer to have on hand."

The success of both books is a testament to Thompson's respect

in her field, but that respect had to be earned, especially in the early days when farmers weren't used to female vets.

"Farmers had never had a female vet, especially one that did large animals.

"They would be gobsmacked."

Once Thompson proved herself, she became the vet dairy farmers called on in Taranaki.

Thompson said that being a successful vet has more to do with people skills than just an affinity

with animals.

"To be a good vet, it helps to get on with all sorts of people.

"Loving animals alone is not enough as you have to do some relatively nasty things to them, and of course, if their owners don't like you, they won't usually let you deal with their animals."

Being a slight build meant that Thompson sometimes had to use ropes to get the job done, but she could usually do everything her male counterparts could, saying she was "tougher than she looked".

"I was good with ropes and had a few shortcuts to make things easier, and I shared that in the book, too."

Being a vet is hard, physical work, which is why it's unusual for vets, especially women, to have a career as lengthy as Thompson's.

"Just surviving and getting on well with most farmers over so long in clinical work is something I'm really proud of.

"I have learned a lot from supportive vets in all the clinics I have worked in.

"And my farmers, who I have learned so much from."

Thompson points to winning the Golden Glove for outstanding contribution to the vet industry and being Pfizer Dairy Practitioner in Residence in 2001, teaching "real world" practice to vet students in their final year at Massey as career highlights.

One of her major contributions, though, is blazing the trail for a new generation of female vets.

"Apparently, I am to blame for a lot of female large animal vets being out there."

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Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR



The Southern lights captured by Southland farmer Ben Dooley earlier this year.

Social media pages across the rural South Island have been ablaze with colour this year as aspiring astro-photographers capture the Southern Lights in breath-taking technicolour.

Known as the Aurora Australis, this celestial phenomenon is typically rare – but this year, it has been gracing the Southern skies with much more regularity.

University of Otago postdoctoral researcher Johnny Malone-Leigh says solar storms, when the sun ejects charged particles into space, are to blame for the stunning atmospheric displays.

When the particles reach Earth, they can interact with our magnetic field and atmosphere, which Malone-Leigh says is similar to what happens inside a neon light.

“In a neon light, you have neon gas in a little tube.

“You put electricity through the tube, and the electricity excites the neon, and the neon glows.”

Malone-Leigh said the same thing happens in our atmosphere: The electricity generated from a solar storm “excites” the oxygen and nitrogen in the atmosphere and causes it to glow.

“The colour depends on the atom and the altitude.

“Greens and deep reds are normally caused by oxygen, whereas pinks and blues are more often

nitrogen.”

The further south you go, the more likely you are to witness the aurora.

“The closer you get to the poles, the more activity you get.

“The most auroras happen in the sea between Antarctica and New Zealand.”

Climate change is not the culprit for the increase in solar storms and the resulting aurora.

Instead, the increase is all part of the sun’s natural cycle, which lasts around 11 years.

Currently at its peak, solar activity and geomagnetic storms are on the rise.

“We are seeing more of them now because stronger solar storms are coming off the sun.”

The stronger the storm, the stronger it hits our magnetic field and the stronger and more visible the aurora will be across the country.

While it’s easier to spot the au-

rorra in winter because nights are longer, Malone-Leigh said that’s not the best time to view the lights.

“People think it’s common during winter, but it’s actually more common around the Equinox.”

Equinox – when the day and night are equal in length – occurs in New Zealand in March and September.

Those wanting to catch the event need to keep an eye on the KP index, which is available on aurora apps and often shared on aurora groups on social media.

Or, if you are from Southland, Otago University’s Arora Alert website.

The KP index measures the strength of geomagnetic activity in the Earth’s atmosphere, ranging from 0 (low activity) to 9 (high activity).

“When you have a high KP of 8 or 9, that indicates there are big magnetic field variations globally, meaning you’ll have a greater chance of seeing the aurora.”

Malone-Leigh said the aurora is not generally visible in New Zealand below KP 5.

“KP 6-7, you might see a weak aurora towards the Southern horizon.

“At KP 8, we start seeing big Auroras, and at KP 9, you have a good chance of seeing the aurora even from the North Island.”

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CLAIRE INKSON

Design historian Annette O'Sullivan and esteemed photographer Jane Ussher have immortalised 15 of New Zealand's most iconic woolsheds, including Longbeach in Mid Canterbury, in her just-released hardcover book *Woolsheds*.

"These are amazing buildings and they are disappearing, and they need to be recorded," O'Sullivan said.

The book features seven woolsheds in the North Island and eight in the South Island.

With so many buildings to choose from, O'Sullivan had a careful selection process when deciding which woolsheds to include in the book.

"I had quite a strong idea of criteria.

"They had to be original and have long family histories – that was important.

"I also wanted to represent New Zealand, a spread of North and South Island – but the main areas of sheep farming."

O'Sullivan said that while some sheds in the book "are not absolutely beautiful," she chose them for their historical significance or unique features.

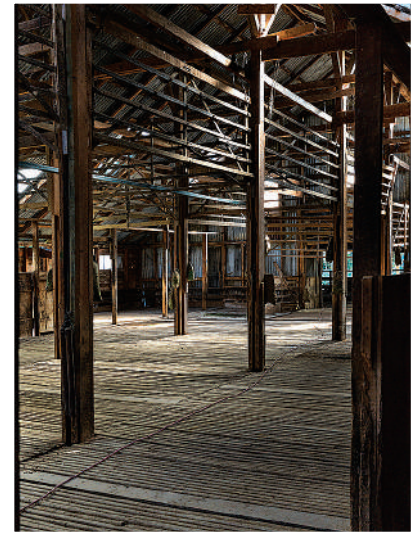
The book is more than 300 pages long, beginning with a history of New Zealand's wool trade and ending with a chapter called *The Custodians*, which pays homage to the owners of the farms and woolsheds featured.

In between, each woolshed has a chapter that includes an in-depth history of the shed and the farm it belongs to, completed by stunning photographs that capture the authentic beauty of buildings.

"I see the book as a whole lot of short stories that you could pick up, put down and read the chapters independently.

"And I wanted to tell the history of the wool industry through the objects in the shed."

O'Sullivan said that woolsheds



Above - The side view of Longbeach Estate Woolshed in Mid Canterbury.

PHOTOS JANE USSHER

Left - The rear of the shed at Longbeach Estate. The gates have been nailed up for a family wedding.

Below - The woolshed at Terrace Station in Mid Canterbury. Its corrugated iron roof replaced the original shingle roof in 1895.

Below inset - The shearing board at Terrace Station.

are about more than just agricultural history.

"It's economic, social and cultural history.

"Some woolsheds were used as venues and community sites for weddings and concerts, so I also put those histories in the book."

O'Sullivan said that some stations were like villages and woolsheds were the hub of the community.

"They supported a big workforce.

"You walk into them and get a sense of the history.

"A lot of things are still there; they are like museums in a way."

O'Sullivan said that wool bale brands, many of which still hang on the walls of sheds, were an early marketing tool.

The ornate Longbeach brand, one of O'Sullivan's favourites, is hidden beneath the book's dust cover.

"The design of the Prince of Wales feathers above the letter G represented John Grigg, the first of six generations at Longbeach in Canterbury.

"His flock of southdown sheep was imported from Sandringham Estate, giving him permission to use the royal symbol for his brand.

"The provenance of the station represented in the brand is still used in its marketing today."

O'Sullivan said that besides documenting history, she wanted to promote the wool industry and



tell its story.

"I'm a big fan of wool and it's unbelievable that it's not a valued product.

"The story often gets sidelined; it's not popular history."

O'Sullivan said obtaining funding to produce the book had been impossible until the farming community saw the project's value and rallied around it.

"Federated farmers set up a

Pledge Me page and promoted it, and they raised around \$30,000.

"It was the happiest day when they got behind it," O'Sullivan said.

Woolsheds: The Historic Shearing Sheds of Aotearoa New Zealand by Annette O'Sullivan and Jane Ussher went on sale November 7.



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CLAIRE INKSON

A young rural mum who experienced complications from a double mastectomy will be the face of a campaign to get the doors of the South Island's largest patient accommodation facility open.

Kylie Raine, who lives on a lifestyle property near Kaikoura with husband Brendon and their boys Jackson, 8, and Zach, 7, stayed at Rānui House in Christchurch following her initial surgery last year.

"I hadn't even heard of Rānui House until a breast cancer nurse put me in touch with them," Raine said.

Raine had a double mastectomy after she was told she had the BRCA gene, a gene which dramatically increased her chance of developing breast cancer, a disease prevalent in her family.

A post-surgery report showed changes in the cells in Raine's breasts, meaning the surgery had been timely.

Raine was in for a difficult recovery, though, as her body rejected first one of the implants, and then the expander used to keep space while her body healed before another implant could be inserted.

She is now on a waiting list to have the other implant removed.

"For most people, this would just be a straightforward operation, and they would leave with perky boobs and a low chance of cancer.

"But now I've grieved the loss of those perky boobs and just want the complications over with, so I'm going completely flat."

Her initial stay at Rānui House was two weeks. "That was fine, but then, after all my complications, I kept having to go back, sometimes for closer to three weeks."

Raine has stayed at Rānui House for 44 nights across five different visits.

Despite having a farm to maintain and his work as a truck driver, Raine's husband was reluctant to return to Kaikoura and leave her at Rānui House, but he felt reassured by the safe, welcoming environment close to the hospital.

"The staff were invested in my journey and would check in each time and ask how my appointment went and how much longer I

was staying for, and it was just across the road from the hospital, so I could walk to appointments," Raine said.

The best part for Raine, though, was that there was space for her family to come and stay.

"The kids are obsessed with Rānui House; they call it their second home."

Raine and her family will front the Time Together Campaign, which seeks to attract funding to expand Rānui House's accommodation to nearly triple its size with the addition of an apartment complex.

The Bone Marrow Cancer Trust, which owns and operates Rānui House in Christchurch, will open Rānui Apartments next month to help meet demand, 14 years after the land for the development was purchased.

In 2023, Rānui House served 1011 patients and their whānau for a total of 8004 bed nights. Some families stay for weeks, others for months. However, 664 families were turned away because the house was full.

Bone Marrow Cancer Trust chief executive Mandy Kennedy said Rānui Apartments can't come soon enough for families like the Raine family.

"Every day, we are in the unfortunate position of having to turn families away because we are full. It's heartbreaking."

Kennedy said that construction costs have escalated dramatically since the land was purchased for the apartments 14 years ago.

"Like many major building projects, the closer we get to the end, the thinner the line gets between being in the red and the black.

"We have received incredible support to get this far and we ask our community to give generously to help us get the doors of Rānui Apartments open."

Raine said that while she is normally a very private person, she is so grateful to Rānui House that she is eager to help with the campaign.

"I'm not an out-there type of person, but giving back meant so much because Rānui House has been my safety net for the last year; they have really been there for me.

"Everything about Rānui just makes those tough times so much easier - it's our light at the end of the tunnel."



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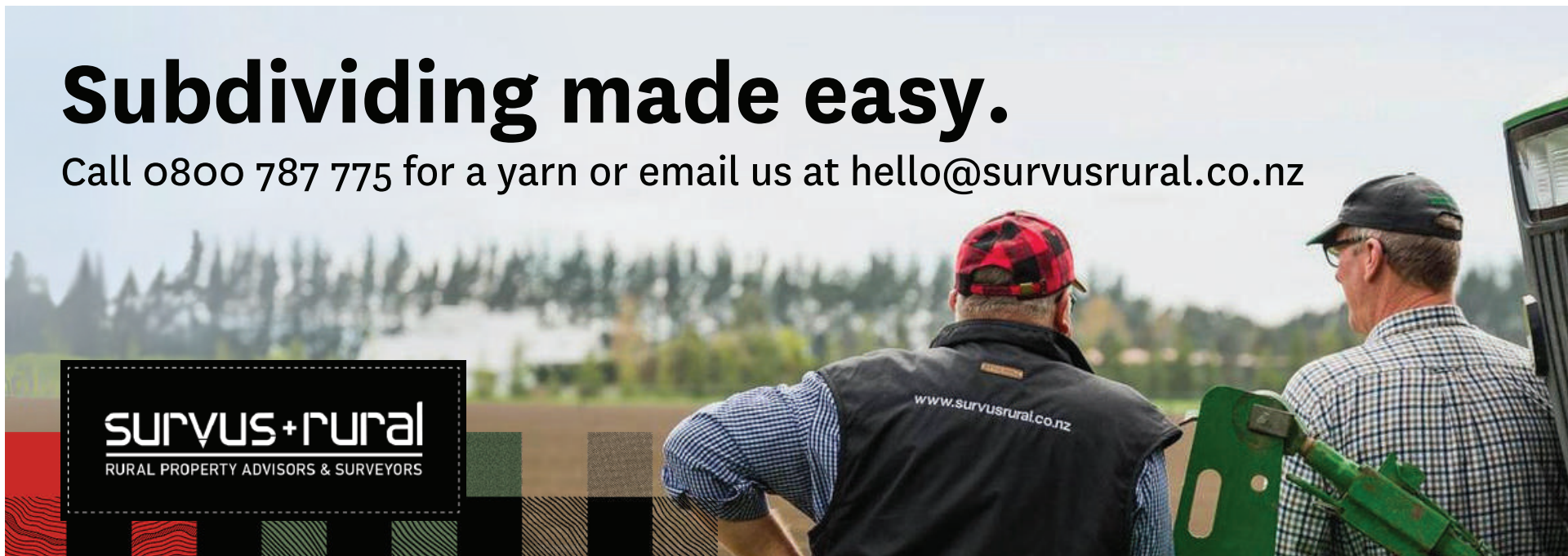
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Left – Cube Contained, photographed on the edge of Lake Tekapo
PHOTO SUPPLIED

Right – Michael and Tammy Wells relaxing in their garden on the outskirts of Christchurch.
PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

Far right – Michael's work is shown at garden festivals and outdoor exhibitions around the South Island.
PHOTO SUPPLIED

CLAIRE INKSON

They say true farmers never retire, and that can certainly be said for former Canterbury dairy farmer Michael Wells.

He may not be farming anymore, but he definitely isn't sitting still.

Michael has turned skills gained from a lifetime of fixing and fabricating tools and equipment on the farm to creating corten steel sculptures.

"I come from that typical farming background where you either fix it, make it or repair it," Michael says.

It all began 25 years ago when Michael's wife, Tammy, bought a sculpture for their garden at their home on the outskirts of Christchurch.

Michael had a very classic farmer reaction to the purchase.

"My response was – 'I could have made that.'"

Michael found that creating steel sculptures was more challenging than he thought, so he started making barbed wire balls.

Michael retired from farming in 2015, but he kept himself busy.

"I did a bit of farm managing, then played around creating the garden, making sculptures and playing golf."

When Covid hit, Michael took advantage of the time in lockdown to take his art to another level, creating Corten steel sculptures and developing the extensive gardens.

Corten steel, otherwise known as weathering steel, oxidises to natural earthy tones that blend with the landscape.

"It has a sacrificial layer on it, so when it rusts, it protects the layer underneath."

Michael experimented with patterns and shapes, creating pieces often featuring repeating curves and peaceful symmetry.

"Not coming from an engineering background, you have to learn fairly quickly what does and doesn't happen with steel."

After lockdown, Michael had his first success when the couple hosted a golf party in their garden and sold four sculptures.

That gave Michael the confidence to display sculptures for sale in the Hurunui Garden Festival at Karetu Downs, where he now exhibits yearly.

"I am trying to create something different from what everyone else has done; that's the hard part."

"It's my take on it, and I try to do it at a reasonable cost."

Moving the heavy and often oversized pieces can be challenging, so Michael often uses the old farm tractor.

"After all my years of farming, you get very clever at getting an end result with something that doesn't want to move that easily."

"So you just think outside the square, but I don't think Osh would be overly happy."

The Wells' garden is the perfect backdrop for Michael's pieces.

"We both believe a garden makes a sculpture and a sculpture makes a garden."

"They both go hand in hand," Tammy said.

The couple started opening the grounds to tour groups by appointment after giving the garden a facelift for their son's wedding two years ago.



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Many of the plants came from cuttings from family and friends.

"Once we got it looking nice, we thought, let's keep it nice; there's a reason for it now.

"And the \$15 we charge per head for groups helps pay for the sprays and the other costs."

An old pig shed at the bottom of the garden has been repurposed as a charming retreat and gift shop for tour groups.

A piano in the shed was saved from the dump, and an ornate decorative fireplace was salvaged from the farm cottage.

"We both believe very much in using what you've got.

"Everything deserves to carry on having a life, although in a different capacity perhaps," Tammy said.

While the garden is time-consuming, the Wells still enjoy maintaining it.

As a keen golfer, Michael's pride and joy is the meticulously maintained lawn.

"I sit on the mower and contemplate what has been or what is about to be," Michael said.



Above - Michael's sculptures are often curved and have symmetrical lines.

Left - The pig shed has been cleverly repurposed using recycled materials into a retreat and gift shop.

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Banana nut MUFFINS

Servings 12 (16 muffins)

For the muffins

350g plain flour
1/2 t baking soda
3t baking powder
1t cinnamon powder
1/2 t salt
1/2 C vegetable oil (canola or sunflower)
1C caster sugar
3 eggs
1/2 C plain yoghurt
1t vanilla paste
1C milk
2 large ripe bananas (approx 1C)
1C walnuts, roughly chopped

For the topping

1 small banana, sliced (optional)
Handful of walnuts, roughly chopped

- Heat oven to 195°C and line a 12-hole muffin tin with paper liners.
- Whisk together the flour, baking soda,

baking powder, cinnamon, and salt together in a large bowl then set aside.

- In a separate bowl add the oil, sugar, eggs, yoghurt, vanilla and milk. Whisk until fully combined and smooth. Add the mashed banana and chopped nuts and mix.
- Pour the oil mixture into the dry ingredients and use a spatula to gently fold together but don't overmix - it's fine if there are still a few small streaks of flour left.
- Divide the batter evenly between the muffin liners and each with a few slices of banana and a sprinkle of nuts. Bake for 15 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.
- Remove from the oven and leave to cool in the tin for 10 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to continue cooling. The muffins keep for 4-5 days in an airtight container.

Recipe courtesy of NZ Eggs

Good news for sore joints Part 2

Last week I had several positive reports from people with sore joints. One person reported significant improvements in an ankle. She said that she can now walk for several kilometres, something previously impossible.

I am genuinely surprised if we cannot make joints affected by OA more comfortable in 6-12 weeks. Knees tend to respond faster followed by hips, shoulders and then the small joints of the hand and foot. OA in the spine, especially the lower back, is much more variable but to the complexity of tissue around the spine.

Healing sore joints goes through three phases. The first are the short-term improvements from reducing joint inflammation in the first 6-12 weeks. Chondroitin sulphate, curcumin from turmeric and marine omega 3 are very anti-inflammatory. Most arthritic pain



is from inflammation. The intermediate period (3-6 months) is when other biochemical changes to the joint commence. This is mostly due to chondroitin sulphate, but glucosamine has a supporting role.

The most important of these is stimulating cartilage secreting cells (chondrocytes) to repair damaged cartilage. Additionally, this is the time where the reduction of destructive enzymes and free radicals becomes obvious.

Both chondroitin and 100% water soluble curcumin (from turmeric) are very anti-inflammatory. The final healing period is from 6 months and can continue for years. Healing is much slower, but the cumulative effect of therapy continues to improve joint function. Please contact me if you would like a copy of my Osteoarthritis programme.

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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- Bettaflex is a joint support formula to promote healthy joint cartilage function.
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- Try Bettaflex for 3 months and see for yourself.

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- Chondroitin and glucosamine are building blocks of cartilage.
- Supplementation with correct levels can support healthy cartilage function and cartilage repair processes.
- New BioSolve® bioavailable curcumin helps joint function while gentle on the stomach.
- Research indicates that chondroitin is highly effective at 800mg daily.

John Arts comments:

"My latest Bettaflex formula includes BioSolve® bioavailable curcumin for faster results. The normal dose is 2 capsules daily but I recommend an initial higher dose for 1-3 bottles to saturate joint tissue."

John Arts, Founder, Abundant Health

Cautions: Do not take with anti-coagulant/platelet medication. If in doubt please consult your healthcare professional. Not suitable during pregnancy or lactation.



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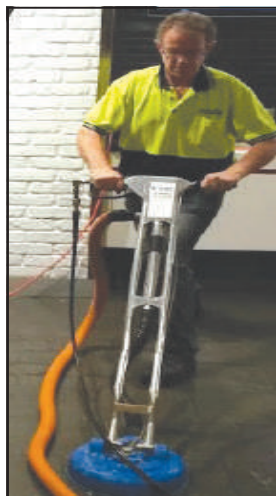
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A Quick Buck?

I have become aware of the lack of understanding regarding the Voluntary Carbon Market with members of the legal profession which has made me realise that there is a good chance that most landowners possibly don't understand it very well either.

There appears to be some confusion over the differences between the NZ ETS and the VCM. At the risk of repeating myself on certain points I am going to attempt to outline the differences between the two markets. I have seen the results of people trying to fit the VCM into their understanding of the ETS - the results aren't helpful.

Regulated Carbon Market (Compliance Market)

Purpose:

The regulated carbon market exists as part of government-mandated programs to help countries or companies meet emission reduction targets set under international agreements (like the Paris Agreement) or national laws.

Key Features:

- **Mandatory Participation:** Companies or governments are required by law to participate. Natural binders they must either reduce their own emissions or purchase carbon credits to offset emissions that exceed their allocated limits.
 - **Cap-and-Trade Systems:** A common example of a regulated market is a cap-and-trade system, where a cap is set on total emissions, and companies are allocated a certain number of allowances (credits) based on the cap. If they emit more than their allowance, they must buy additional credits from others who have reduced their emissions below their allocated limit.
- Government Regulation: These markets are heavily regulated by governments or international bodies

Voluntary Carbon Market (Voluntary Market)

Purpose:

The voluntary carbon market allows individuals, companies, and organizations to purchase carbon credits voluntarily, to offset their carbon emissions. These purchases are often driven by corporate social responsibility (CSR) goals, sustainability commitments, or a desire to be seen as environmentally responsible.

Key Features:

- **Voluntary Participation:** Unlike regulated markets, participation is not mandatory. Organizations or individuals choose to participate to meet their own sustainability goals.
- **Flexible Standards:** There are multiple options available for use, Verra, Cercabono etc, these still require third-party verification of carbon offset projects.
- **Broader Project Types:** Projects in the voluntary market can cover a wider range of activities, including forest conservation, renewable energy, methane capture, and reforestation, among others. These projects might not always meet the criteria for the compliance market.
- **Corporate and Consumer Driven:** Many companies purchase credits in the voluntary market to demonstrate their commitment to carbon neutrality or to offset their environmental impact even if they are not legally required to do so.



The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, consist of seventeen global goals designed to address a broad range of challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. These goals are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and are intended to be a universal call to action to improve the lives of people and the planet.

Here's a brief overview of the 17 SDGs:

- 1. No Poverty**
End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- 2. Zero Hunger**
End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
- 3. Good Health and Well-being**
Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- 4. Quality Education**
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- 5. Gender Equality**
Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- 6. Clean Water and Sanitation**
Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- 7. Affordable and Clean Energy**
Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.
- 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth**
Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
- 9. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure**
Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.
- 10. Reduced Inequality**
Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities**
Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and

sustainable.

12. Responsible Consumption and Production

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

13. Climate Action

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

14. Life Below Water

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.

15. Life on Land

Protect, restore, and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, manage forests sustainably, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.

16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable institutions at all levels.

17. Partnerships for the Goals

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Key Points:

- The SDGs are interconnected and aim to leave no one behind. Achieving one goal often supports others.
- They are global goals that apply to all countries, regardless of their level of development.
- Progress toward these goals is tracked and monitored regularly through indicators.

The SDGs aim to create a balanced approach to development that fosters prosperity while protecting the planet and promoting peace.

As carbon project developers we test our projects against the SDG's. These are transparent, easily quantified and independently verified by independent 3rd party auditors.

To operate in the VCM, project areas must be baselined. To ensure your project produces high integrity, high value credits this should involve LiDAR mapping, soil core sampling and physical measuring.

Without this baselining being carried out there is no way to measure the volume of carbon sequestered as a result of the project implementation. If a carbon project developer doesn't carry out baselining or get external auditors to visit the project areas, there is a potential for any credits generated being heavily discounted as they have very low integrity.

There have been a number of instances where "cowboys" have been caught out attempting to claim credits which can not be verified. This has resulted in landowners receiving a reduced income or none at all. If these low integrity carbon project developer companies are allowed to continue to operate there is a very real chance that any credits generated in New Zealand will be discounted on the global market.

The verification process is complex and costly. Unfortunately, there are still carbon project developers operating in New Zealand who inform landowners that they don't need to carry out this step. If they are operating in the VCM using accredited bodies such as Verra, Gold Standard, Cercabono etc then this step must be completed. There are a limited number of companies who perform this 3rd party verification service. It can cost up to \$50,000 USD to get this done which is why companies try to miss this step out. If you want to guarantee that your actions are actually making a difference and you will receive the highest possible value for your carbon credits then you have to make sure the carbon project developer is completing this step and working to an approved methodology.

Both the regulated and voluntary markets trade in units of CO₂e. 1 tonne of CO₂e = 1 carbon credit.

Where they diverge rapidly is that land can be entered into the ETS without any baselining of initial vegetation. To give an example of what I mean by this is a property I have seen recently had existing vegetation cover of indigenous vegetation. To establish exotic trees on this property, the project area was mulched with approximately 5 or 6 metre cleared rows with 1 metre of vegetation left between the rows. Exotic trees were planted in these cleared rows. If baselining was completed prior to the vegetation clearance being done and then it was remeasured every year moving forward, how many years would it take for genuine additional sequestration to occur?

Using high integrity science driven methodologies and reporting methods these sorts of negative effects are identified and accounted for. It is these sorts of unintended outcomes that need addressing urgently. We can't run around patting ourselves on the back, thinking we are leading the world in climate mitigation whilst using methodologies that allow for this sort of activity not being accounted for.

We also have an obligation to continue to produce high quality protein for export. The blanket planting of farms in monoculture exotics and the resulting loss of production is counter intuitive to SDG's 1 and 2 as well as the resulting loss of biodiversity which goes against number 15.

Unfortunately, carbon farming has become the latest "goldrush", we must be careful not to lose sight of the goals. Whether land is registered in the regulated or voluntary carbon market, we must ensure that our actions are creating genuine positive intergenerational outcomes. It is not all about box ticking and making a quick buck.