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MARCH 2025

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A cautious optimism

The latest Federated Farmers Farm Confidence Survey shows that the much talked about “green shoots” of 2024 have led to a glimmer of hope in the agriculture sector in 2025.

A rise in commodity prices, lower interest rates, and a general ease in regulations have seen farmer confidence jump from -66% in July, 2024, to a net positive score of 2%, the largest one-off improvement since 2016.

What Federated Farmers president Wayne Langford describes as a “shift in mood” can be mainly attributed to a blanket rise in farm profitability.

Fifty-four per cent of farmers reported profits, compared with just 27% last year, and 23% expect better economic conditions this year – the highest confidence level since January 2014.

When the National Government came into power, cutting red tape faster than a combine harvester in a field of wheat and promising to “back New Zealand farmers”, the relief in a sector that had been villainised and hog-tied by regulation from the previous government was palpable.

But is it really all rainbows and unicorns?

The survey is more than just an interesting measure of the temperature in the room.

If farmers are confident, they hire staff, spend, and invest in their farming business, and the economy grows.

But the confidence level is still precariously low – a 2% gain is hardly anything to crow about.

Not only is it low, but that confidence is a fragile thing.

Much of our gains are closely tied to global conditions, and issues like volatile weather and increasing input costs still exist.

Then there is the banking sector.

Federated Farmers believes that unless the Government monitors the banking sector closely, farmers are likely to continue paying disproportionately high lending rates and being forced to reach climate change targets that banks have no right to ask of them.

Then, there is the elephant (or cow) in the room.

The National Party recently announced that it would not only impose a farming tax on agricultural emissions but also commit to an even more ambitious climate target than the previous government.

According to Federated Farmers, all that means is less stock and more pine trees in a country whose sheep numbers have dropped from 22 per capita in 1982 to below five in 2024.

So far, any calls for a split-gas approach for international targets, where short-lived methane is treated differently from long-lived carbon dioxide, have been ignored.

Organisations like the Methane Science Accord argue that the Government is not backing farmers but setting targets to fix a problem that doesn't exist while bringing the primary sector to its knees.

Meanwhile, David Seymour isn't alone in believing that the Government should withdraw from the Paris Accord.

Many farmers echo his views, seeing the global political stage in regard to climate change mitigation versus adaptation as a rapidly changing landscape that could disadvantage New Zealand farmers.

If farmer confidence is to continue to rise, the Government must engage more deeply with the sector, ensuring that emission targets are realistic and science-led.



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Photo: Supplied.

ACL Lays path to Greener future

ACL is making small but significant changes to become more environmentally friendly and sustainable. A key part of this effort is the “Green Cone Project,” led by individuals like Jock Cockburn and Emma Prichard.

When Jock first started working at ACL, he noticed a lot of rubbish being thrown out without any recycling plan. He took the initiative to clean up the yard, using old equipment to set up a recycling station. This not only kept the area tidy but also gave

drivers a responsible way to dispose of their waste. Jock's actions prove that even small efforts can have a big impact.

ACL has also recently switched to LED lighting in all its offices, reducing energy use while improving the work environment. The brighter, more efficient lights are especially helpful for staff who spend their days in front of computers.

Another step forward is battery recycling. Staff can now drop off used batteries in a dedicated container,

ensuring they're disposed of properly instead of ending up in the rubbish. The company has also introduced a food recycler, turning banana peels and other scraps into fine dust that can enrich gardens or be donated to the council for parks and reserves.

The ACL yard is being reorganised to simplify recycling, with old tires and scrap materials now being reused creatively. For example, digger tracks are being transformed into vegetable gardens, which Jock says have been a huge hit with staff.

On the energy front, ACL is installing solar panels on the roof to help power its operations. On sunny days, the company will even be able to feed excess power back into the grid.

“These steps might seem small, but they're helping ACL move toward a greener, more sustainable future, one baby step at a time,” Emma said.

Gene tech bill 'a slap in the face'

ANISHA SATYA

A bill which will deregulate gene editing technologies has further reaching consequences than the Government has considered, farmers and researchers have said.

The contentious Gene Technology Bill is in its final week of receiving public submissions.

Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said the bill would help the agriculture sector in his state of the nation speech.

"Enabling gene technology is about backing farmers, it's about embracing growth, and it's about saying yes instead of no."

"I [want] New Zealand's scientists working on high-yield crop variants, and solutions to agricultural emissions, that don't drive farmers off their land and risk the very foundation of the New Zealand economy."

He also announced the restructuring of the Crown research institutes and said they'd prioritise commercialisation.

"I want us to commercialise our brilliant ideas, so that our science system makes us all wealthier, because we are going for growth."

Minister for Defence and Space Judith Collins broke news of the bill in August last year.

"New Zealand has lagged behind countries, including Australia, England, Canada and many European nations in allowing the use of this technology for the benefit of their people, and their economies."

She mentioned that New Zealand's biotech sector – think plant



Above – Researcher Jack Heinemann.
Right – Duncan Humm.



modification, vaccine development and cell research – generated \$2.7 billion in revenue in 2020.

"The changes [will] allow researchers and companies to further develop and commercialise their innovative products."

"It can also help our farmers and growers mitigate emissions and increase productivity."

The Government has pitched the bill as a long-needed overhaul of old rules, but researchers fear they've swung too far in the other direction.

University of Canterbury professor of genetics and biology Jack Heinemann is amongst the academics calling the bill "radical".

In a submission to the Health Committee, he and other academics allege the bill will lower the burden on regulators but "substantially" risk the health of people and the environment.

"We would be outliers in the international scene."

There are lots of different "tools" that can be used to alter the genes of plants, animals and bacteria – an example you might've heard of is CRISPR editing, where bad genes can be cut out of DNA and replaced with good ones.

Most countries have strict protocols around what tools they allow, and how they can be used, Heinemann said.

But this bill would "deregulate" the largest number of tools, and the precautions needed with them, of any country in the world.

"When tools and techniques become deregulated, there will be no record of what's being made, what organisms are affected, or where the contamination could come from, making it impossible for our primary sector to be sure its products aren't contained with GMO

[genetically modified organisms]."

Heinemann was an investigator in the Corngate scandal, so understands the importance of preserving New Zealand's GMO-free image.

"Right now, trade is simple for New Zealand."

"We don't have any authorised GMOs in the environment, so all primary producers ... don't have to prove they're GMO free, and they're known to be GMO free anywhere they're sold."

With the free reign experimentation the bill would allow, non-GMO farmers would be forced to either pay for routine testing, or label their produce as 'potentially containing GMOs' – even if they've done nothing to it.

"The cost falls on them to show they're GMO-free."

And he said the idea "that other countries won't care, is wrong."

"Europe and Brazil have 'zero tolerance' policies – if they detect or suspect an unauthorised GMO in a shipment, the whole shipment is condemned."

As the director Centre for Integrated Research in Biosafety, Heinemann submitted a proposal to parliament voicing his and his colleagues' concerns about the bill.

Mt Somers farmer Duncan Humm said the bill is a "slap in the face – to farmers, agronomists and experts".

"We've got to think of what New Zealand has achieved while other countries have gone down that [gene editing] road."

"We are the best of the best in a lot of areas and we haven't had to use that tech."

The NZ Farming content curator said farmers cannot afford to experiment with their income and livelihood.

"There's no hardcore evidence to suggest anything is practical or feasible with this technology."

"So it seems like one hell of a gamble on something that's completely unproven."

"Agriculture in New Zealand is worth something like \$56 billion in exports, so why would you gamble all of that on something that might not work?"

That's not to say farmers don't want change, Humm said.

"I know a lot of people who do all their own agronomy and doing a lot of innovative things, especially on the regenerative [farming] front."

He felt those for the bill were in the minority, and generally had interests in the horticulture sector.

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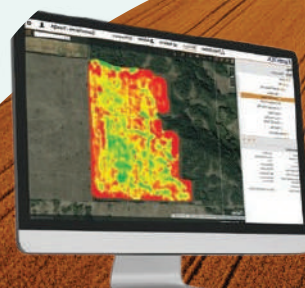
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Saving lives, one lily at a time

The Rakaia flower stall making a big impact

CLAIRE INKSON

A modest flower stall tucked off the main highway in Rakaia is playing a quiet but important role in saving lives – one lily stem at a time.

Bakker Bulbs, one of New Zealand's largest bulb exporters, has been selling freshly cut lilies at their farm gate for the past four years, with all proceeds supporting the Canterbury West Coast Air Rescue Trust.

Year by year, the stall's success has grown, with the farm raising an impressive \$11,000 for the trust last year alone.

Shirley Geeson, who runs Bakker Bulbs with her husband and company director, Adin, is hopeful that as word spreads, sales will continue to rise.

"Word is definitely getting around," Geeson said.

"We've even had a bus stop by on their way back from garden tours."

The flowers, typically available at the stall until April, weather depending, are often too open or too short for commercial sale, which would otherwise result in them being discarded.

"We figured, why not offer them at the gate and raise money for a good cause?" she said.

The Geesons are passionate about the helicopters that serve rural communities like their own.



"If something happens out here, we need a quick response, and those helicopters need funding to keep operating. Every little bit helps."

Having moved to Mid Canterbury from West Otago 25 years ago, the Geesons began growing lily bulbs in Rakaia after recognising that the

area's soil and climate was better suited to their crops.

"The soil here has great drainage," Shirley said.

"We haven't had a wet winter for years, so harvest is easier than in the heavier soils down south as lily bulbs must be harvested from May until

the end of July.

"The bulbs come out of the soil much more easily here."

Geeson, had been a chef, and Adin had worked for a tulip grower in Tapanui, before being approached by a Holland-based company to grow lily bulbs.

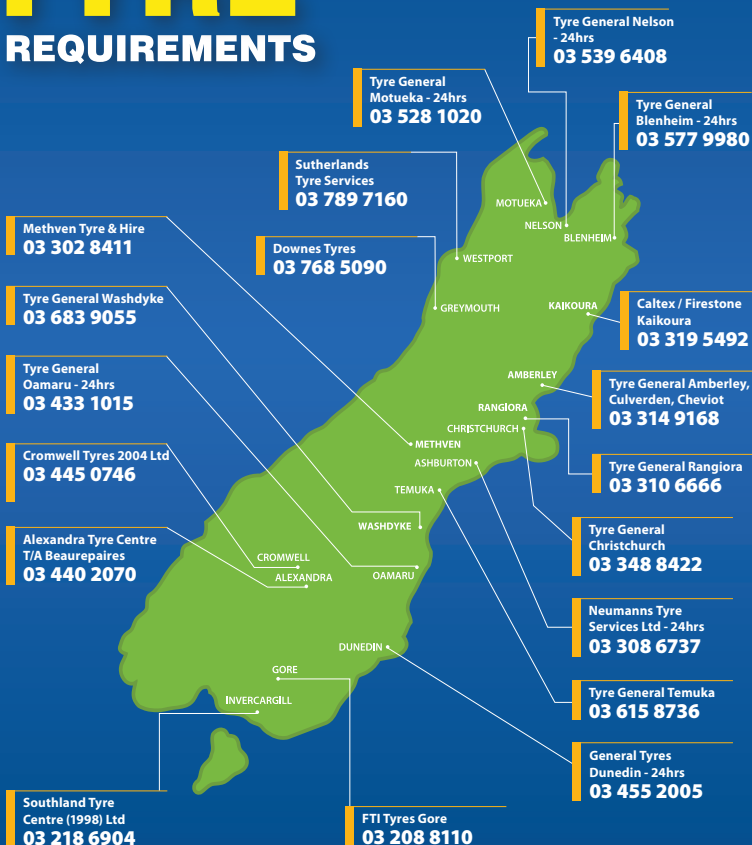


Bakker Bulbs, which is owned together with a Dutch bulb nursery in the Netherlands, now exports over 100 shipments of bulbs annually to markets around the world.

Some of the highest-quality bulbs, along with those that don't meet export standards, are kept for their cut flower business.

Lily bulbs are planted in spring and harvested by machine in winter. "We harvest them while they're

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dormant, process them in the shed, grade them by size, pack them in peat, and chill them down before they're shipped globally."

From January to April, cut flowers are hand-harvested and sold to a local wholesaler before reaching the shelves of stores like New World.

The 465-hectare of owned and leased land is planted in 60 hectares of bulbs on a seven-year crop rota-

tion to mitigate disease.

When the ground isn't being used for lilies, the Geeson's winter around 60-100 cattle and 2000 sheep.

"We fatten them up, and they help clean up the paddocks."

As well as the stock, the Geesons grow arable crops of wheat, barley, clover and seed peas.

Harvest time sees the staff increase from seven fulltime employees to around 60 people, with many backpackers from around the world

joining the team. "We have Dutch students from Holland and do their work experience here."

Bulb harvest starts in May and goes through to the end of July.

Geeson said the current season for flowers had been hard, with a lack of wind circulating through plants and dewy mornings making botrytis a challenge.

"There haven't been many mornings where we have gone out, and the flowers have been dry."

Photos from left:

- From January to April, Bakker Bulbs lilies are hand-cut and sold to a local wholesaler.
- Bakker Bulbs sells lilies that are too open or too short for commercial sale at a roadside stall to raise money for the Canterbury West Coast Air Rescue Trust.
- Bakker Bulbs employs seven fulltime employees, but that increases to around 60 during the bulb harvest in winter.
- The current weather conditions for lilies has been challenging, with a lack of wind and dewy mornings creating issues with botrytis.

PHOTOS CLAIRE INKSON

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Dairy leads uplift in property



Claire Inkson
RURAL
EDITOR

The rural property market – especially dairy – is experiencing a resurgence, according to Ashburton-based Bayleys real estate agent Mike Preston.

His comments come on the heels of a successful Bayleys Rural & Lifestyle conference, which brought 120 agents together for their annual Country Day in Christchurch on January 30.

Preston was recognised for his excellence at the conference, winning the prestigious Bayleys Winning Way Pitch award for his sale of 394 Fords Road near Ashburton, an impressive 218-hectare, fully self-contained dairy farm supporting 520 cows.

“Winning the award was a real highlight,” Preston said.

“It reinforced the importance of truly listening to our clients and tailoring our approach to what matters most to them.”

The award-winning sale set a record per-hectare price for the region, highlighting the continued strength of the rural property market in Ashburton and Canterbury.

“When I had the opportunity to pitch for the listing, I was committed to following our proven process and doing what was best for the vendors.



“After securing the listing and executing a targeted campaign, we successfully sold the property for a record per hectare sale price for the region and exceeded expectations.”

This year marked the first time the conference was held in the South Island, with agents travel-

ling from across New Zealand to participate.

Preston describes the conference as “an awesome experience”.

“It was great to connect with the team, share ideas, and really hone in on how we understand and connect with our clients in the rural



Above – The sale of 394 Fords road set a record per hectare price for the Mid Canterbury region.
PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Left – Ashburton-based Bayleys real estate agent Mike Preston, who won the Winning Way Pitch award at the Bayleys Country Day earlier this year.

market.”

The theme focused on execution, personal accountability, and the decisions that drive success.

With a business update, personal development sessions, and a motivational keynote from Emma Gilmour, the event provided an opportunity for growth and collaboration.

A team-building painting activity also reinforced the “Altogether Better” ethos, emphasising teamwork and connection in an industry often marked by isolation.

“One of the most rewarding parts of the day was the painting challenge – it was definitely left field, but it pushed us to think creatively

and work in a totally different way,” Preston said.

The rural property market, particularly in Canterbury, was a major topic of discussion during the event.

Preston, along with fellow Canterbury agent Ben Turner, has seen strong results, particularly in the dairy sector.

In the November to January period, the Bayleys Country team sold 27 dairy farms across New Zealand, totalling \$238 million in sales.

Nearly half of that came from dairy farms sold in Canterbury, with Turner alone closing seven dairy sales valued at over \$100 million.

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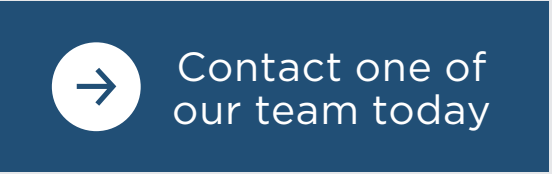
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Goats 101 at Mayfield Field Day

CLAIRE INKSON

Farm consultant Graham Butcher from Rural Solutions describes the upcoming NZ Cashmere Field Day as a “beginners’ course in goats”.

“It will be an overview of how to feed and manage goats, what to do with goats and what they can do for you,” he said.

Scheduled for March 17 at John Harrison’s Mayfield property, the event will also cover market trends and New Zealand’s infrastructure for the goat sector.

A key topic will be using goats for chemical-free weed control, which can be particularly beneficial for hill country farmers or those restricted from using sprays.

“When integrated into a farming system, goats complement existing livestock by consuming vegetation that other animals won’t touch, leaving clover behind for sheep,” Butcher said.

Goats require different care from sheep, with more varied feeding options, but Butcher said most farmers who run goats see improved pasture quality and increased clover growth.

“Most people with a significant number of goats find their pasture quality improves, and clover volume increases as well,” he says.

Studies show that goats spend over half of their grazing time in spring and summer on seed heads, which they prefer to graze first when entering a new paddock.

Goats also target weeds like thistles, ragwort, and even gorse,



QUICK INFO

- Cashmere Field Day
- March 17
- 1.30pm-4pm
- Temora Downs, 46 Chapmans Road, Mayfield
- For more information, contact Graham Butcher: gbutcher@ruralsolutions.co.nz

Mayfield farmer John Harrison began running goats August last year and has been pleased with the results.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

making them an attractive option for land management.

Some farmers are turning to goats to make use of unproductive land rather than opting for blanket forestry.

“It’s about finding a stock mix that uses as much feed as possible on the farm.

“Goats eat feed that nothing else

will touch,” Butcher said.

John Harrison, who integrated goats into his operation last August, has seen great success.

“They save time on thistle control, and they are a way to make money without impacting stock rates,” he says.

Parasites can be an issue, so Harrison avoids grazing lambs

right after goats.

“We clean up the paddock with cattle or deer afterwards.”

In terms of profitability, cashmere wool outperforms sheep wool.

While the quantity produced is lower, it is valued at around \$150 per kilogram.

“It’s good money, but it’s a

shame you only get half a kg off a goat.”

Harrison runs about 130 does and 80 kids on his 650-hectare property and finds handling goats easier than expected.

“I had my doubts, but with good fencing and a hot wire, they don’t push it.

“It’s a piece of cake.”

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Conservation for Profit - Opportunities in the Voluntary Carbon Market

Written by Maria Captein, Field Technician for Verity NZ based in Methven.

When you hear the words 'carbon credits', you wouldn't be blamed for assuming that means the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). But did you know that there are other carbon crediting schemes out there where investors are looking to fund positive climate and biodiversity initiatives?

The ETS was designed by the government to fast-track New Zealand's emissions offsets and help the nation achieve its climate goals, and exotic forest species like pine trees are good for quickly sequestering carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and achieving these goals. However, we have all seen the impacts of mismanagement of slash on the East Coast and other negative effects of these exotic monocultures, and there is a growing movement of New Zealanders wanting to see more biodiverse forests and restored natural landscapes.

Our research shows that only about eight percent of land registered in the ETS is native forestry, the rest is in exotic trees. With such poor uptake for natives in the ETS, with its rigid parameters and the prohibitively high implementation costs for native planting, the Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM) is now more appealing than ever for New Zealand farmers as these carbon credits increase in integrity and value.

There are a few similarities between the VCM and ETS criteria for afforestation. You must be the legal owner of the land. Both native and exotic trees are eligible for carbon crediting. And you cannot claim credits on regulated or mandatory plantings.

Differences between the VCM and ETS

There are several key differences between the VCM and ETS that demonstrate its potential for enabling natural regeneration and native forestry projects in New Zealand.

More eligible species. Any tree or plant species that sequester carbon can be entered for crediting in the VCM, even wetlands and soil which act as carbon sinks over time can be included and generate revenue.

No minimum width requirement for afforestation. There is no minimum width requirement, provided the areas are contiguous and combined are greater than one hectare. Hello to gaining income from riparian margins and native shelterbelt strips!

No look-up tables for smaller areas. In the VCM, carbon sequestration is quantified through repeated, actual measuring for land of any size greater than a hectare. For areas under 100 hectares, the ETS typically uses generic look-up tables which for indigenous forests are not differentiated by region, and which broadly brush all indigenous forest species under one



Eligible land for a VCM native carbon project: regenerating grey scrub in the Canterbury high country.

combined measurement. This means that in the VCM, faster-growing native species like kākūka will be accounted for as they grow, not as an average with other species. It also means climate, soil and rainfall data can be more accurately modelled to represent actual growth conditions, resulting in a more accurate picture of carbon sequestration.

No canopy cover or plant spacing requirements. While the ETS says you can only enter trees that can reach 30% or more canopy cover per hectare at maturity, the VCM allows you to account for carbon from all regenerating woody species, no matter their height. If you can speed up the regeneration through aerial seeding or seedling planting, you will be able to claim more carbon credits. This has big positive implications for extensively grazed, marginal hill country land that you could just retire and walk away from, generating passive income from slow natural regeneration.

No tree height restrictions. Trees and shrubs less than five meters tall at maturity can be included in a VCM project. This includes grey scrub and matagouri. The carbon sequestration of each proportion of species in your project area will be modelled and measured for crediting.

Different pricing structures. Both the ETS and VCM have a floating price on the market. For the ETS, one NZU is the carbon credit unit representing one tonne of carbon dioxide sequestered. The VCM structure includes standard carbon credit pricing but will also pay a premium for additional biodiversity, climate or community benefits generated by your native regeneration project. These additional premiums are called co-benefits which get traded alongside the carbon credit, and include a project creating more jobs for the community, protection of rare or endangered native species, or improving climate change resilience. There are also new initiatives being

developed to reward long-term environmental stewardship.

Different market factors. VCM credits are traded on an unregulated commodity market, therefore basic economics define pricing - supply and demand. The ETS is subject to government adjustment where pricing may not reflect true economics at all.

More than just sequestration. Unlike the ETS, the VCM gives credits for avoidance and reduction activities as well as sequestration. So, if you change your land management activities to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, this can be measured against the most likely scenario if you didn't make that change. The VCM can also account for other greenhouse gas emissions as carbon equivalents.

Additionality. While the ETS has set criteria for eligible projects, a key requirement of the VCM is to demonstrate a change in land use or promotion of plant growth to enhance carbon sequestration or reduction.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who buys these credits? Under the ETS, NZUs can only be bought or sold by other members of the ETS, which is currently limited to New Zealand companies/industry. In VCM, there is a large international market including Fortune 500 companies, airlines and global industry bodies, who are looking to offset their business impacts through green investments.

How can it benefit me as a farmer, and is there a cost? The VCM allows you to gain carbon credit income from native regeneration projects that don't meet ETS criteria, so there is great potential for new, passive income streams on your farm. We often hear farmers say that the high cost of establishing native species is the biggest barrier to doing these types of projects. As part of Verity NZ's innovative financing, we pay all the upfront costs for your project (everything from seeds to seeding to labour and new fencing), and we set up an agreement to recover our implementation costs from the carbon credits your land begins to generate.

Can I benefit from carbon credits without having to retire my land? While permanently removing stock from the land is the most common way to demonstrate additionality under the VCM for afforestation projects, there are completely different methodologies available like wetland sequestration/enhancement and improved land management practices. Verity NZ's pilot VCM project at Black Hill Station above the Rakaia Gorge uses intermittent grazing of the high country as a means to establish native trees from aerial seeding ('hoof and tooth' method).

How much are carbon credits worth for native regeneration projects?

The December 2024 price for VCM carbon was NZ\$40.52 for one tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent. This is less than the ETS NZU value of NZ\$63.75, but as shown above, not all native regeneration projects are eligible for entry into the ETS. For Black Hill Station, only 74ha were assessed as eligible for entry into the ETS, but 1,146ha were able to be entered into the VCM. This represents a significant opportunity for high country farmers with much more potentially eligible land under the VCM.

Give us a call!

Get in touch with our team in Methven for further information. The VCM is the perfect solution for farmers who want to implement native restoration and planting projects to increase biodiversity to leave behind a positive legacy and steward the land for the future. We can discuss your goals for native regeneration and conservation, how we assess your land for eligibility in the VCM, how Verity NZ pays for all up-front project establishment costs (including fencing and seeding), our funding structures and how we can be your one-stop-shop from seed to carbon credit.

Verity NZ are proudly 'conservation for profit', helping farmers earn income through the Voluntary Carbon Market for native restoration and other sequestration projects.

Young Farmers are the future of New Zealand agriculture, so each issue we shine a spotlight on a Young Farmer. Today we chat to Olivia Caddick.

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

Hinds Young Farmers, since March 2024.

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

The highlight of joining Hinds Young Farmers has been meeting new people in the rural community and getting involved in social events outside of work.

I've made lifelong friends and will forever be grateful to my boss for encouraging me to join.

Young Farmers is a fantastic organisation that connects like-minded individuals in the farming industry, helping you engage with the rural community.

3 How did you become involved in agriculture?

I was drawn to agriculture from a young age, growing up on a lifestyle block before my family moved into town.

I've always loved animals, whether it was our family french bulldog or st bernard. This passion continued when I started studying a Bachelor of Commerce in Agriculture.

4 What is your job now?

I currently work as the 2IC on a dairy support farm just west of Ashburton in Carew.

The farm spans 300 hectares, is fully irrigated, and runs approximately 12,000 stock units, primarily focused

on heifer grazing, wintering cows, cereal barley and lamb finishing.

My job provides a good mix of tasks – each day is similar, yet never the same.

My boss has provided me with many opportunities to learn and grow on the farm, and I'm working towards a managerial role in the future.

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

I believe the future of New Zealand farming is strong, thanks to our sustainable farming systems.

With technology constantly advancing, the next generation of farmers is learning to incorporate these innovations into their operations.

I would like to see more cost-efficient and sustainable farming practices that benefit both the environment and the industry.

6 What are your future plans?

My future plans include managing the farm I'm working on and, eventually, owning my own farm.

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

My biggest inspiration has been my boss. His hard work and dedication to building his farm and creating the life he has today have motivated me to set my own goal of owning a farm one day.



Hinds Young Farmer Olivia Caddick future plans include managing the farm she works on, and one day owning her own property.

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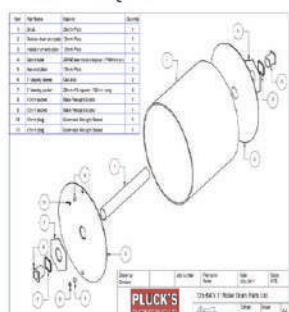
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Two bites and your seedlings are gone

Stop slugs decimating autumn sown crops – advice from the experts.

Vulnerable seedlings are a very tempting snack for voracious slugs.

Ash Pace, UPL NZ Ltd. Regional Manager Central South Island, says the often-underestimated pest can leave a soul-destroying path of destruction in a very short time.

“Seedlings are just one to two bites for a slug, and the plants are history.”

“It’s money spent on sowing, fertiliser, irrigation, fuel and labour wasted if you don’t think about your slug control programme pre or when planting. Slugs are right up there with grassgrubs in terms of potential damage.”

While slugs may have a low profile, they can consume more than 50% of their own body weight. (Compare that with just 2%-4% of body weight daily for sheep and cattle, and you can see the problem.)

Ash says as soon as you begin scheduling re-grassing spray-out, that’s the time to get pest protection in place.

His advice is backed-up by Methven-based PGG Wrightson Arable Representative Tom Adams, who says across the area he covers, slugs are a widespread problem.

“The conditions here suit slugs, plus when you’ve got minimum till or direct drilling, that’s creating an ideal environment for them, unfortunately. It’s a battle right through the year.”

Tom says he feels farmers’ frustration when a crop gets hammered. “It’s no fun looking at patchy crops where seedlings have failed to establish because of slug damage.”

He says multiple factors come into play in slug control.

“The way paddocks are managed



White clover slug damage during establishment.

definitely affects slug pressure – things like cultivation, and heavy stocking – where the animals’ hooves are compacting the soil – definitely helps. A lot of the risk also comes down to moisture – dew, rainfall, and irrigation.”

But Tom says monitoring is the real key to tackling the pest.

“You need to be able to detect slugs early. And that’s not just a quick look over the crop. You have to be proactive, use slug mats and develop a robust programme.”

Tom says BioGro certified Ironmax Pro® slug bait is a product he has confidence in. “All farmers want to look after their land while controlling slugs effectively. With Ironmax Pro there’s no compromise. It’s a product that’s sustainable and environmentally friendly without losing the efficacy that you get with market leading Metarex Inov®. That’s a big deal.”

He says farmers are increasingly factoring

Ironmax Pro into their chemistry rotation to future-proof their programmes.

“Slugs will even actively seek the baits out. They prefer feeding on them to eating seedlings.”

Tom says his is a traditional, often multi-generational cropping area, and farmers take a lot of pride in their production and in their paddocks. “Naturally, they want the best-looking, best producing crops.”

“But they’re also very practical. If a crop has to be re-drilled, that’s a big expense.”

Ash says Ironmax Pro and Metarex Inov have significant advantages over old-school coated baits. “Coated baits only have a lick of the active on the outside. With these baits, active is all the way through – a bit like a cookie dough. So, not a bite is wasted.”

He says the products’ superior spreading ability (ballistics) also means savings for growers and farmers by enabling effective

cover in fewer passes; using less fuel, and saving on labour. “It saves a lot of extra refills. If you can get things done more effectively and in less time, why not?”

The baits also have a consistent shape, so spread is reliable. “Coated bait is irregular in shape. That means, potentially, the spread can be too.”

Ash says Ironmax Pro® and Metarex Inov and are super-attractive to slugs. Colzactive® technology is responsible for the palatability. Created by the research and development team from French company De Sangosse, global leaders in slug and snail bait technology, Colzactive comprises specially selected oil seed rape extracts. The De Sangosse R&D team evaluated 20 different plant species, identifying 50 potential molecules for their attractiveness to slugs, and ultimately selecting two molecules slugs found irresistible.

The baits are manufactured with the finest durum wheat using a unique wet manufacturing process, making them very rainfast, so they continue to perform in damp conditions. “Particularly on Mid-Canterbury systems which rely a lot on irrigation, that’s ideal.”

Grey field slugs (and their close relation brown field slugs) are significant pests in New Zealand. Slugs can live for up to 13 months and can produce 300 to 500 eggs each over their lifetime.

Talk to your local technical specialist for more details on Ironmax Pro or Metarex Inov or contact Ash Pace, UPL NZ Regional Manager Central South Island, on 021 987 735.



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The adolescent career crossroad

ZOE TOPP

It is a time that all of us inevitably come to on the journey of life. As individual for each of us as our personality.

The end of the era of high school and the step into the future of what comes next.

For some youth the decision of what comes after high school education is simple.

The path ahead is clear and they are grounded and sure about the next steps and their pathway to their career of choice.

However, for many this is not the case.

The thought of deciding what to pursue after high school ends is overwhelming pressure that fills them with dread and anxiety.

For some high school itself is just not the right fit and many are choosing to leave formal education during Year 11.

The thought of further credit chasing and exam sitting pressure for another two years to try and attain Level 3 NCEA and finish Year 13 is often too daunting a task to endure.

It is important to remind ourselves that each and every one of our children is a unique individual with their own strengths, weaknesses and passions; and that success looks different for each of us.

I encourage a gap year post high school for those youth truly unsure about what they wish to pursue.

To work a fulltime job gives them some life experience and time to



The best outcomes for a successful career pathway are when the youth is given the opportunity to align their passions, existing skills and strengths of character with a future income, says career pathways coach Zoe Topp
PHOTO RURAL GUARDIAN

decide about the next step in life before they rush into signing up for an expensive course of study they may or may not actually want to utilise for their future.

Whatever year of high school they decide to finish their secondary education at there is an abundance of options for their career

pathway forward.

Most areas now offer community college courses to help them get their NCEA qualifications. There are polytechnic courses in all our major cities that take students from as young as 15 with options to trial multiple trades and industries to help them gain firsthand experi-

ence in a range of roles.

There are apprenticeships in trades, entry-level roles within many industries with the option to climb the ladder within the company as their skills develop, and online correspondence courses.

That's all good and well to have all these options available I hear you say.

But what if my teenager has no idea what they want to do after high school when we ask them and seem to have no direction for what lies next?

I always advise my youth clients from 16 to get their licence and a part-time job in an industry that interests them to gain work experience within that type of work.

So how can you support your teen when they seem lost for what the next chapter looks like, other than seeking external support from a career pathway coach such as myself?

You can carve out time to sit down with them and build a CV together.

Take the opportunity to get to know your teen on a deeper level. Guiding them through some self-reflection about their existing skills, passions, hobbies, strengths and weaknesses.

By working through this process together you can co-create a better picture of the career pathway that may best suit your teen.

Bear in mind not to project your desires for their future on to them.

Throughout these conversations you must think of yourself as the facilitator of the conversations,

guiding them to figure out what is right for them.

The best outcomes for a successful career pathway are when the youth is given the opportunity to align their passions, existing skills and strengths of character with a future income.

It is empowering for your teen to see it written down in front of them the core strengths they already hold, especially if they struggle with anxiety or confidence.

Once you have established a clear outline of their unique self; whether this be in the formal way of creating a CV together, or as simple as a handwritten list on paper – take this information and work through with them researching job roles that stand out to them where these passions, skills and strengths of theirs can be valued and utilised as future career options.

Support them through researching what qualifications are required for the future job roles that resonated with them and aligned with their personal strengths.

Research different providers of these pathways and see what options feel right for them.

This is how you guide your youth to a career pathway they will thrive in and feel content – setting them up for a successful future in whatever line of work they choose to pursue.

Zoe Topp has a Bachelor of Teaching and Learning, is an Extended DISC Practitioner and owns Bloom Coaching – Career Pathways

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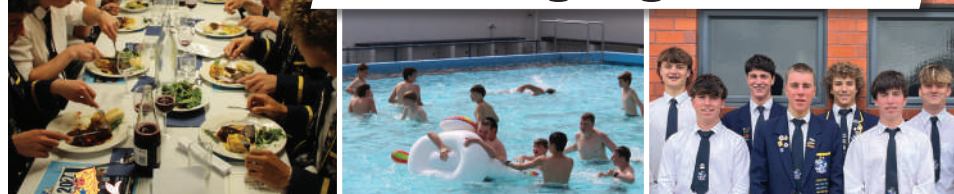
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Navigating through the empty nest

MARINA SHEARER

One moment, your life is a whirlwind of parenting duties and the chaos of a bustling household.

Then, almost imperceptibly, your children start to spread their wings.

One by one, they venture out into the world, chasing their dreams, and before you know it, the house grows quieter, emptier.

The “empty nest” phase – something every parent knows will come eventually – arrives with startling suddenness.

During the frenzied years of raising children, this stage feels like a distant milestone, almost unreal.

Yet, in what feels like the blink of an eye, it’s here.

Parenting, as you once knew it, is over – though the occasional request for financial assistance remains a lingering reminder of your ongoing support role.

This phase can stir a complex mix of emotions.

On the one hand, there’s immense pride in seeing your children grow into independent adults.

On the other, there’s a quiet ache – a void left by the absence of the daily rituals that once defined your life. It’s not just the physical absence of your children that hits hard; it’s the change in your identity as a parent.

For years, your life revolved around sports games, school events, and family dinners. Now, you’re left asking: What’s next for me?



Whether your children have left for boarding school, university or the workforce, navigating a newly empty nest can stir a mix of complex emotions, says Thrive for Life director Marina Shearer (right).

The empty nest is also an opportunity – a time to rediscover yourself and reconnect with interests that may have taken a backseat during the parenting years.

It’s a chance to reignite passions, pursue new hobbies, or even

rekindle the connection with your partner in a way that wasn’t always possible amidst the busyness of raising a family.

It’s a time to reflect on your journey and set new personal goals, whether that means travel-

ling, volunteering, or exploring a second career.

This transition isn’t without its

challenges, but it holds the promise of a fresh chapter.

The key lies in embracing the change with an open heart and mind.

The empty nest isn’t an ending; it’s a new beginning – a chance to build a life that can be every bit as fulfilling as the years spent raising your children.

And though the nest may be quieter now, the bonds with your “baby birds” remain unbreakable, even as they soar to their new independent heights.

As you step into this new chapter of your life, take comfort in knowing that raising an independent, self-sufficient child was always the ultimate parenting goal.

Their ability to step confidently into adulthood is a testament to your success as a parent.

You’ve given them the tools to navigate life on their own, to thrive without constant guidance and to create their own paths.

This isn’t just the end of one phase – it’s the celebration of all you’ve accomplished in preparing them to spread their wings and soar.

Embrace this moment with pride, knowing your parenting journey has truly fulfilled its purpose.

Then find something to fill the gap and give you a new experience and opportunity.

Marina Shearer is a Thrive for Life director



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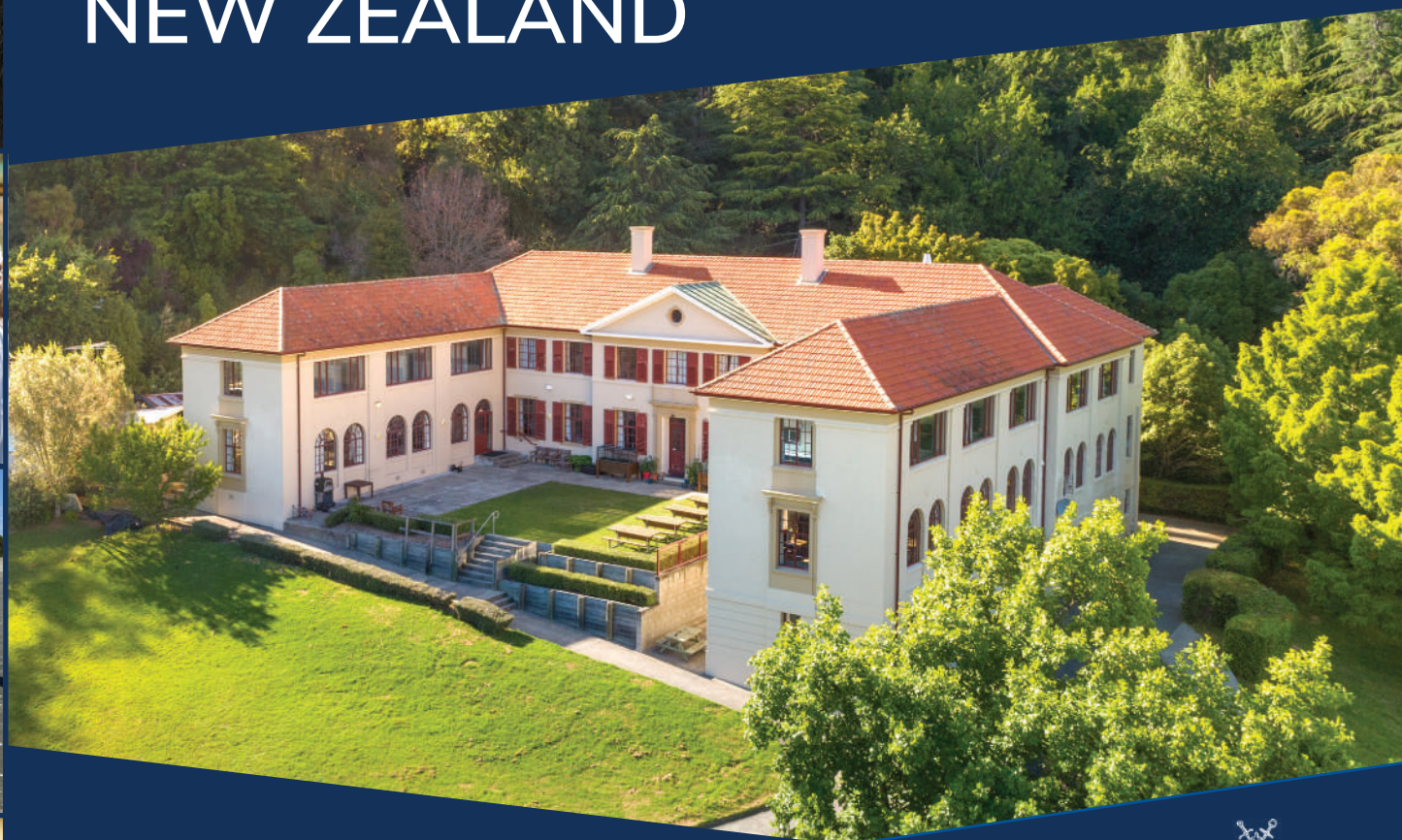
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Nelson College has created a supportive, stimulating environment where boys enjoy home comforts, while building independence and lifelong friendships.

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Taps turning off for funding



Anisha Satya
REPORTER

The clock is ticking for local catchment groups as their main source of funding dries up.

Mid Canterbury is home to nine catchment groups – teams of people, often farmers and conservationists, who work to improve the water quality and biodiversity in their area.

Through projects like replanting waterways, nitrate testing and pest fencing, these groups aim to better the environment around them.

In 2021, the Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective [MCCC] was created to unite the nine groups – they could share knowledge, resources and pitch for funding as one big group.

“We were very aware that we have a lot of capability in Mid Canterbury,” co-ordinator Angela Cushnie said, “but not a lot of capacity.”

“It’s the same people, particularly in a voluntary capacity, doing a lot of the heavy lifting.

“By co-ordinating different efforts and collaborating with industry, irrigation schemes, and different entities, we streamlined processes a bit more.”

In early 2022, the collective



Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective co-ordinator Angela Cushnie said catchment work wouldn’t stop if funding dried up, but it would slow down.
PHOTO ASHBURTON GUARDIAN

received \$30,000 from the Ashburton Water Zone Committee to set the collective up for success – that mostly paid for Cushnie’s role.

Later that year, they secured almost \$1 million of national funding for our region.

“There was an opportunity to apply for some MPI [Ministry of Primary Industries] money for the Essential Freshwater Fund.

“It was \$950,000 to invest in our district across a three-year time

period.”

The Essential Freshwater Fund has funded \$131.5 million worth of waterway restoration and protection throughout New Zealand.

But those funds are drawing closer to their end date; the money must be spent by October this year.

Which leaves the collective, and the catchments underneath it, in limbo – what happens when the funding runs out?

“The answer, at the moment, is



Duncan Barr said the MCCC was exploring corporate sponsorships, grants and national funding to keep the collective afloat.
PHOTO SUPPLIED

that we don’t know,” MCCC chairperson Duncan Barr said.

The collective made a submission to Environment Canterbury [ECan] last year, but no luck.

“The response was basically, ‘we appreciate what you do, but there’s no funding available.’

“So we’ve exhausted that avenue.”

Barr said conversations about a sustainable funding model for catchments around the country are

being had.

“[The] Aotearoa New Zealand Catchment Collective [ANZCC] put a proposal to central government for funding just before Christmas.

“Obviously, with the budgetary constraints going on ... it’s up in the air.”

Barr said corporate sponsorships and other grants are being explored at the moment, and while the MPI grant was a huge help, getting funding from locals with “skin in the game” would result in “fair and equitable outcomes” for everyone.

There’s an appreciation of catchment groups in New Zealand, but fame doesn’t pay for the labour.

“A lot of scientists, a lot of bureaucrats talk about the good work catchment groups do, ‘maybe they should do more, maybe they should do this or that.’

“So our good work is being recognised, but still we have no long-term sustainable funding model available.”

Catchment groups have improved their communities and their land, Barr said, but the work is only beginning.

“Looking at catchment specific issues, like consents, the importance of catchments working together is greater now than it’s ever been.

“Collective data will be so important for individual consents, and I don’t think people are aware of that yet.

“The need for the collective, for farmers and other groups to work together, is greater now than it’s ever been.”



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Harnessing generational knowledge

HARRY MILLAR

A passionate group of Greenstreet residents has come together to form the Greenstreet Catchment Group, a community-driven initiative dedicated to improving their local environment, advocating for real-world resource management solutions, and preserving the deep-rooted knowledge of the area for future generations.

The group, made up of local landowners, farmers and residents, aims to address the challenges affecting the Greenstreet catchment, particularly flood management, restrictions on water use for ecosystem enhancement, and catchment wide vision for preserving and expanding biodiversity.

By working collectively, members hope to not only enrich the local environment but also provide a unified voice when engaging with key stakeholders on resource management issues.

One of the key strengths of the Greenstreet Catchment Group is its ability to tap into the wealth of generational knowledge within the community.

Many members have lived and worked in the area for decades, if not generations, giving them a unique understanding of the land, waterways and natural processes.

By integrating this local expertise with modern environmental science and best practices, the group is creating a powerful foundation for sustainable change.

"We want to ensure that our



One of the key strengths of the Greenstreet Catchment Group is harnessing generational knowledge. PHOTO SUPPLIED

children and grandchildren inherit a landscape that is thriving and resilient," said Stacey Stewart, a founding member and chairperson of the group. "By coming together as a community, we can share knowledge, support each other, and take practical steps to protect our environment."

Community-driven solutions

The Greenstreet Catchment Group is already working on a number of initiatives, including:

Solutions for re-thinking water use: The group is actively working with key stakeholders to develop solutions which enable water to

be used for the protection and enhancement of exiting ecosystems via augmentation.

Engaging with regional authorities on river management: Working with Environment Canterbury to share flood management strategies built on experience and many years of interpreting the North and South Ashburton.

Biodiversity projects: Assessing the opportunity to enhance habitats for native wildlife and promoting ecological diversity across the catchment.

Education and advocacy: Hosting community meetings and working with policymakers

to ensure local voices are heard in resource management decisions.

A call to action

The group welcomes all residents, farmers, and stakeholders who share a commitment to enhancing the Greenstreet catchment.

Through collaboration and proactive engagement, they hope to foster a more resilient future for the land and the people who depend on it.

Those interested in joining or supporting the initiative are encouraged to attend upcoming meetings or contact the Green-

street Catchment Group via facilitator Harry Millar (027 774-7770).

As climate and environmental challenges continue to shape rural communities, the Greenstreet Catchment Group aims to illustrate that local action can make a significant difference.

Their efforts to date serve as a powerful example of how communities can come together to safeguard their environment while honouring the knowledge and traditions that have sustained it for generations.

Harry Millar is the Greenstreet Catchment co-ordinator

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MHV board chairperson Cole Groves said ELI is trying to make their case on "technicalities of law".
PHOTO SUPPLIED

Losing resource consent risky

ANISHA SATYA

Irrigation is back in the spotlight as another Mid Canterbury provider prepares for their resource consent to go to court.

Last year, Ashburton Lyndhurst Irrigation Limited (ALIL) had a consent for agricultural discharge revoked after Environment Canterbury lost a historical case in the High Court.

The Environmental Law Initiative (ELI), who took that case to court, have lodged another claim against ECan, this one regarding a consent for the Mayfield-Hinds-Valetta (MHV) scheme.

ELI alleges that ECan "made multiple errors in the course of considering MHV's consent application, including a failure to properly [account for] the potential effects of the discharges on local drinking water supplies."

MHV board chairperson Cole Groves said it was "frustrating" to see their resource consent on the chopping block so soon after its neighbour.

"[It] is disappointing from our point of view, because that's being appealed, so an outcome hasn't occurred yet."

Despite the decision on ALIL's consent not being final, ELI have said they'll use it to back up their argument against MHV.

Groves said that for the 204 farmers supplied by MHV, the legal battle won't change anything. If ECan lose, the cooperative will just operate on an older consent - which is worse for the environment.

"The consent conditions on our old one actually allows more room for farmers to potentially intensify," Groves said, "and that's not what we want."

ELI said their points will focus on nitrates in drinking water for MHV's hearing.

They said ECan failed to notify commu-

nity drinking water operators and private well owners when the consent was granted, alleging they wouldn't have investigated the effects such discharge could have on the environment.

"ECan also did not have information about the costs for drinking water suppliers to mitigate those effects."

The commissioner who granted the consents said both ALIL and MHV presented "commitments to staged nitrogen reductions" in their water management plans, which they believed would "remedy the cumulative effects on aquatic life" over time.

Groves said MHV has worked to improve water quality by supporting farmer projects and running one of the "biggest community-led water testing programmes" in New Zealand.

"We test around 145 wells to get a real clear picture on water quality and nitrate movement."

"That's funded through our scheme, farmers pay for that through their water charges."

Groves said MHV farmers know they must put in the work to better their environment and manage runoff.

"We're obviously judged on water quality, we don't have a single shareholder that doesn't understand that."

"We could be spending money that we're having to spend with lawyers on environmental improvement, rather than on a court case, especially when there's the appeal."

While the old consent is less considerate of the environment, Groves said MHV would continue pushing farmers to "continue on the environmental journey that we're on at the moment."

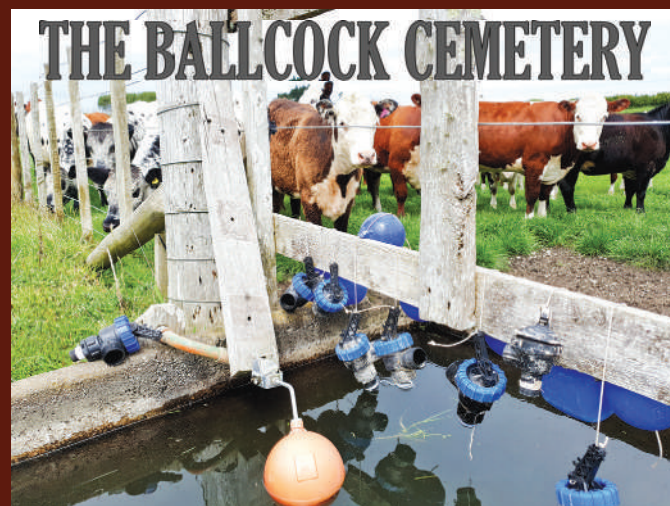
The hearing will take place on May 19 and 20 in Christchurch.

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SOUTH ISLAND AGRICULTURAL **FIELD DAYS**

March 26-28, 2025 | Kirwee | 8am to 5pm



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SOUTH ISLAND AGRICULTURAL FIELD DAYS

March 26-28

What you need to know before you go

When: 8am to 5pm, March 26-28

Where: 1191 Courtenay Road, Kirwee

Tickets: \$20 plus booking fee

Tickets are available through Fliicket and attendees are encouraged to pre-purchase tickets online before arriving at the event via a link on the SIAFD Facebook page or website.

This will help skip any on-the-day ticket queues.

Your tickets do not need to be printed, they can be scanned from your mobile device.

Children under 16 are free and still require a ticket for entry, unless they are under one. This helps understand how many are onsite at any one time.

Those 16 and over are classed as an adult.

At the gate the preferred method of payment is by card.

All major cards and paywave accepted.

Parking: Free

Best place to keep up to date:

The SIAFD website has an interactive site map as well as an exhibitor list, and the Facebook page will have up to date news and information.

Website: www.siafd.co.nz



The South Island Agricultural Field Days are back this year on March 26-28.
PHOTO THE RECORDS BY HEATHER AND DOUG

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SOUTH ISLAND AGRICULTURAL FIELD DAYS

Machines in motion: SI Agricultural

CLAIRE INKSON

The wheels will be turning, and the diesel will be burning as the South Island Agricultural Field Days (SIAFD) return to Kirwee for 2025, putting machinery in the spotlight once again.

"Our big thing is always our demonstrations so that people can see machines in action," SIAFD chairperson and North Canterbury dairy farmer Andrew Stewart says.

"We are the only field days that run demonstrations."

The event will run for three days from March 26-28, and is one of the longest-standing events of its kind, having been established in 1951.

After outgrowing the previous site in Lincoln, the SIAFD moved to Kirwee in 2015.

"We are lucky we own the land; it means we can expand the site as needed."

This year, the SIAFD will feature an arena dedicated to machinery demonstrations, giving farmers better access and the opportunity to "get under the hood" before the equipment is put through its paces.

"People can have a good look at the machine before or after it does its demonstration."

On-site crops will be harvested



using the latest farm machinery, after which the fields will then be cultivated, providing a firsthand look at the equipment in action.

Another highlight will be the Top Tractor Shootout, where the newest model tractors and telehandlers go head-to-head.

"They will perform tasks and jobs that people would do with that tractor day to day on the farm."

"The tractors are judged on which performs best and ranked at the end."

A new KidsZone will keep children occupied while parents

explore the sites, and an agri-kids challenge will allow children to show off their farming skills.

But it's not just tractors for the adults – there's also a cowboy challenge, a fencing competition, food trucks, a bar, and retail stalls to explore.

"There is a big lifestyle section with clothing and equestrian supplies."

"There is something for everyone."

Following a wet event in 2023, the site has had extra gravel laid on the walking tracks to make access

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Field Days return for 2025



Far left – Machinery is a key focus of the South Island Agricultural Field Days. PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Left – A new Kidzone will keep children entertained at this year's event so parents can explore the sites.

Below – It's not all tractors. There will be food trucks, a bar and a large lifestyle section.

Right – Around 650 exhibitors will have a site at this year's event.



to over 600 exhibitor sites easier in bad weather.

But Stewart is hopeful for better weather this time around.

"Last year, the weather was a bit average, and we struggled for a couple of days. Hopefully, we'll have a good run this year.

"We've got a simple layout, so it'll be easy for people to find their way around."

This year, technology has taken a step up, too.

"We're using a programme called Map My Show, which is a live app on the internet.

"People can look it up, see what they want to visit, and find exactly where the sites are."

The event is powered by a dedicated committee of around 30 volunteers, a group Stewart describes as "a good bunch" and key to the event's success.

"Everyone has normal jobs and lives, and then we all just come together to make the event run," Stewart said.

"It's a big undertaking, but we make it work."

With an expected 30,000 attendees, Stewart says exhibitor book-

ings are strong, reflecting a sense of confidence across the sector.

"On the whole, the milk price is good, the grain price is good, the meat price is good."

"It's still tough for some, but I don't think it will be a bad turn-out," he said.

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SOUTH ISLAND AGRICULTURAL FIELD DAYS

March 26-28

Innovation rewarded at SIAFD

CLAIRE INKSON

Kiwi innovation in agriculture is set to take centre stage once again at this year's South Island Agricultural Field Days (SIAFD) with the Agri Innovation Awards.

"We aim to showcase cutting-edge developments in agriculture and help businesses bring their products to market," says SIAFD committee member Henry Williams.

To qualify for the awards, products must be New Zealand-made for the agriculture sector and developed within the past two years.

They can either be in the commercialisation phase or still under development and developers must have a site at the field days to display their products.

A panel of three judges, including farmers and rural professionals, will assess the entries and select the winning product on the Wednesday morning of the event.

"The judges will listen to a presentation from each entrant, ask questions, and then discuss the pros and cons to determine the winner," Williams said.

The winning entry will receive \$1000, with a \$500 prize for the runner-up.

However, the true value of the award lies in the exposure the prod-



Rogersdown product manager Carl Ahlfield (left) and Lincoln University professor of soil science Keith Cameron with the 2023 Agri Innovation Award for EcoPond.

ucts receive before, during, and after the event.

"Signage will be placed at the winner's site, and we will promote

their product through our social media and website," Williams adds.

At the 2023 SIAFD, the winner was EcoPond, an effluent treatment

system that reduces methane emissions by 99%.

It was developed by Rogersdown in collaboration with Lincoln

University.

The runner-up was Ruts Plus Limited for their innovative Pivot Rut Filler.





SOUTH ISLAND AGRICULTURAL FIELD DAYS

Cowboy challenge spurs excitement

CLAIRE INKSON

Yellowstone fans saddle up. The Cowboy Challenge is bringing the spirit of the American west to Kiwi farmers at this year's South Island Agricultural Field Days (SIAFD).

NZ Cowboy Challenge Association (NZCCA) secretary Jordan Edwards promises spectators can expect a fast-paced and lively competition.

"The whole idea of taking the challenge to the SIAFD is to make it really engaging and exciting so people watch and think, I could do that."

The SIAFD are held in Kirwee on March 26-28, and it's the first time the competition has been held at the event.

The Cowboy Challenge is an equestrian competition with its roots in American soil that hit Kiwi shores in 2010 and has been growing steadily ever since.

The competition is based on testing riders for challenges they would face daily on a ranch.

"It's designed to replicate everyday life on the farm."

"Ultimately, you can transfer those skills when you're out mustering or working on the farm," Edwards said.

The NZCCA is trying to promote the sport, and Edwards said the field days are the perfect opportunity to reach people in the primary sector.



"It's about trying to get the sport out to those farmers because that's our demographic."

The competition caters to a wide range of abilities across five categories: rookie, youth, intermediate,

and open.

There is also a "hi points" challenge for different horse and rider combinations.

National awards are given to riders with the most points for each

division, as well as horsemanship, sportsmanship, most improved rookie, youth good sport award, and a new award for best youth rider under 12.

"We have a wide range of compet-

itors, from the [age of] four through to people in their 80s."

Challenges are run by either clubs or individuals, with around 30 challenges happening each year across the country.

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March 26-28

ent at SIAFD ... yeeeeee haw y'all

Left – The Cowboy Challenge is different to the usual equestrian sports seen at most rural shows.
PHOTO NATE CARTER

Right – The Cowboy challenge promises to be fast paced and fun entertainment for spectators at the South Island Agricultural Field Days.
PHOTO NATE CARTER

Below left – The Cowboy Challenge is designed to mimic the obstacles riders face in daily farm life.
PHOTO ARROW FLIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

Below right – The Cowboy Challenge helps riders improve their horsemanship.
PHOTO NATE CARTER

Edwards said a good way to see if the competition is for you is to sign up and help at events.

“You learn how the day runs and what the course and the obstacles look like.

“It will completely open your eyes to what the cowboy challenge is.”

The skills gained in the competition aren’t just for the arena – they’re valuable on the farm as well.

“It improves overall horsemanship and builds a better connection with your horse.

“That partnership and the trust and bond you build between you and your horse can take you wherever you give your horse a chance to use its brain, overcome obstacles and think about where it’s putting its feet.”



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SOUTH ISLAND AGRICULTURAL FIELD DAYS

'Eye in the sky' coming to field days

ANISHA SATYA

Artificial intelligence [AI] has made its way into milking sheds as a tool for the rural sector, and farmers can check out this new agri-tech at the Herd-i site at the South Island Agricultural Field Days.

Agri-tech company Herd-i has made a system which detects lameness in cows and, according to a local farmer, it's "bloody accurate".

The technology consists of a camera and a computer programme – when a cow exits the milking shed, the camera films it, and the programme analyses the way it walks.

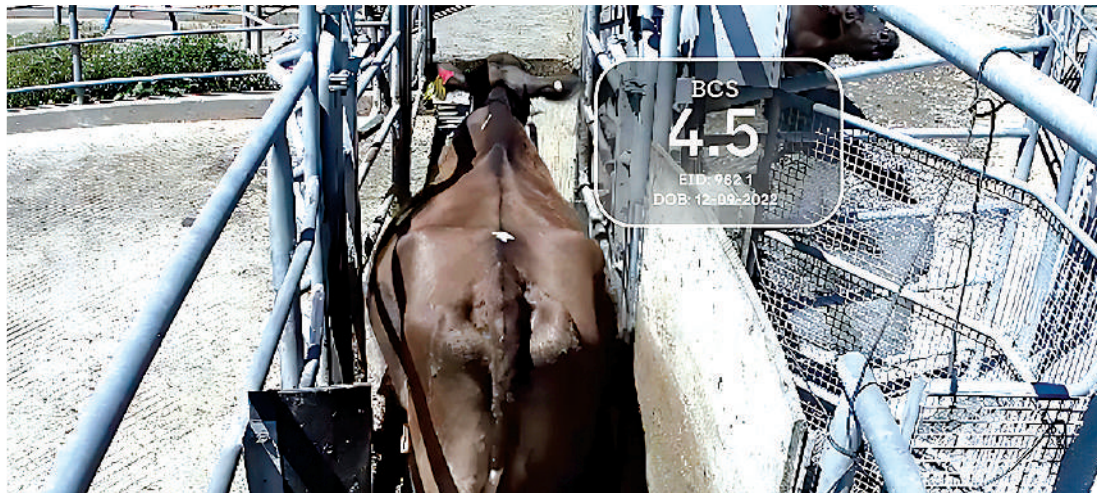
That video gets compared to data from thousands of other ones, and produces a lameness score.

The comparison data is all human-generated, said Herd-i chief executive Liz Muller.

"We use vets trained in the Dairy-NZ lameness scoring system, they look at videos of cows and assign a lameness score to them.

"As the system captures and scores more cows, it learns from the data points and becomes more accurate over time," that's the artificial intelligence part.

"Basically, we use cameras to identify when a cow is starting to walk differently, which is the early signs of an animal health problem."



Herd-i are looking for 100 farmers willing to trial the new Body Condition Scoring system in their sheds.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

Lameness, a condition caused by hoof lesions which makes it difficult and painful for cows to walk, can cause the animals to produce less milk and take longer to calf.

But identifying lameness has been a tricky and time-consuming practice thus far – traditionally, cows are assessed for it in herds, not individually.

Carew farm manager Hein Cronje said Herd-i condenses all the important information into an easy-to-read overview.

"With this system, the overse-

er/manager can sit in front of the computer and [see] what's going on, monitoring small changes from one milking to the next with each individual cow.

It takes 40 minutes for a herd to make its way through the shed, but instead of standing watch the whole time, he can focus on other jobs and watch the videos Herd-i records after milking.

He said Herd-i also functions as a staff training tool.

"On all the previous farms I've worked on, my frustration was

that you'd fetch the cows out of the paddock and you'd see some that would be lame.

"But no-one would do anything about it, because junior staff don't know what to do about lame cows, as in the past it's been more of a senior staff requirement.

"With Herd-i we can teach the younger staff what to look for using the videos as training."

Kintore Farm has been a testing site for the tech for over a year now, and is helping with Herd-i's next endeavour – body condition scor-

ing. It's a work in progress for now, but Cronje said technology like it is "where things are going" for farming.

"Some farmers are old school, they still believe in their pen and paper and if it works for them, that's fine.

"But for me, I can quickly use this technology to see where we are, and where we're headed, picking up lame cows feet before it gets any worse as Herd-i detects changes very quickly."

Muller said the farmer feedback for their product had been "really good" so far.

"As a general rule, dairy farmers are really embracing technology and AI, more than the general population.

"[They] understand that farming is becoming more complex, with more compliance requirements and challenges around staffing.

"The technology is just there; it's like an eye in the sky, it does the work for you."

Herd-i are looking for 100 farmers willing to trial the new Body Condition Scoring system in their sheds. They'll get free installation of the system, and pay half price for a year of the standard subscription.

"We've put out something pretty simple to start with, and want feedback from farmers on what more [they're after]."

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March 26-28

Even kids can get in the SIAFD zone



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

The South Island Agricultural Field Days (SIAFD) has made attending this year's event much easier for families by introducing a dedicated Kidszone.

The new area is designed to give children a fun, engaging space to play while their parents can enjoy the event's wide range of demonstrations and exhibits.

Luke van den Broek, director of Colliers Rural Valuation, the area's sponsor, said they recognised many young children would be attending this year and believed the Kidszone would be a welcomed by both kids and their caregivers.

"We know there are going to be a lot of young children attending, and we think the Kidszone will be appreciated by parents and children alike," said van den Broek.

The Kidszone promises to be a vibrant and entertaining space for children to play and explore.

The area will feature a variety of fun activities, including a bouncy castle, face painting, a large sandpit filled with toys, and a creative zone where kids can express their artistic side by colouring.

There will be a dedicated parents' tent for parents with small children, providing a safe space for little ones to be changed or simply crawl around.

Additionally, food trucks will be available in the area to ensure that tummies are full throughout the



Left – Face painting will be on offer in the Kidszone at SIAFD.

Below – A bouncy castle is sure to be a favourite with children at this year's event.



day. The best part? Children under the age of 16 can attend the event for free, making it an affordable day out for families.

Parents will only need to register their children to receive a ticket, which can be scanned at the gate for entry.

Van den Broek said he had fond memories of attending the event as a child.

"I grew up rurally on a dairy farm, and when I was growing up, it was quite common to take the day off once a year to go to the field days," he said.

"It was always a chance to get off the farm and experience something different."

Van den Broek said the event was particularly important following the challenges farmers had faced over the past two years.

"We are aware that farmers have faced a lot of challenges recently, and we think field days are a great opportunity for farmers to get off farm with their families and enjoy a day out," he said.



Luke van den Broek, director of Colliers Rural Valuation, the Kidszone sponsor, said the area would be appreciated by parents and children enjoying a day off the farm after a particularly challenging two years.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

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SOUTH ISLAND AGRICULTURAL FIELD DAYS

Pint-sized pubs put the 'Engli

CLAIRE INKSON

At this year's South Island Field Days, My Little Pub is bringing something unique to the table – a slice of quintessential English pub culture designed to fit right in your backyard.

The idea for the innovative business was born during the Covid-19 lockdown when co-founders Steve Rosling and Gary Altenburg found themselves without their usual pub to visit.

Having spent years designing and fitting out pubs around New Zealand and experiencing many memorable moments enjoying a pint in traditional British pubs while in the UK, the pair saw an opportunity.

Altenburg's niece Breianna Bennetts loved the idea and joined the business, and My Little Pub was born.

"It just made sense to condense all of our experience down into a Little Pub that someone could have at home," says Bennetts.

The first My Little Pub was T. O'Loughlin's, built in December 2020 as a surprise for Altenburg's father-in-law, Terry O'Loughlin, and designed by Altenburg on a napkin.

"Gary is very much a doer, so without overthinking, he decided just to build one and see what happened."



The first Little Pub, painted in the colours of County Clare, where O'Loughlin's family hails from, was adorned with old family photos.

"Terry says he is the best son-in-law for doing that."

The pub quickly became a hit, not

just with Terry but with everyone who saw it.

"When we unveiled it to Terry, he was absolutely blown away."

"It was, and still is, the talk of the town."

Five years later, My Little Pubs can

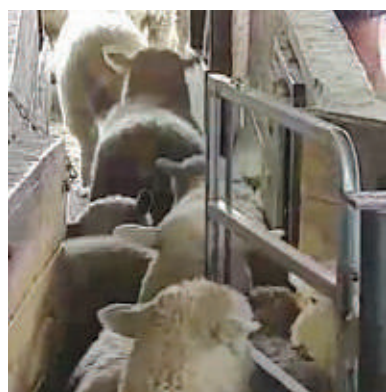
be seen in backyards as far south as Invercargill and as far north as Waiheke Island.

While the cost of a My Little Pub can range from \$120,000 to \$250,000 depending on size and customisation, the company is introducing a

more affordable option.

"It's called the Little Inn, which is due in the next couple of months. It will be around the \$80,000 mark, making it a bit more accessible," Bennetts said.

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March 26-28

sh' into your backyard



Left – Breianna Bennetts (left) and Gary Altenburg founded My Little Pub with Steve Rosling after seeing an opportunity for tiny pubs when bars were closed during lockdown.
Above – Each pub is designed to reflect the personality of the customer. PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Each pub is fitted out with memorabilia and custom made stained glass windows.



My Little Pubs feature hand painted signs unique to each customer.

to buy their own My Little Pub, the company also offers a hire service for special events, with a new pub in the pipeline for Christchurch.
“It’s bright red, which will be a new and exciting one.”
While the business has grown, the ethos behind My Little Pub remains the same: creating a space for people to connect in their own backyard.

“We are trying to bring a sense of what a real pub is to New Zealand, and the fact that it is in your own backyard is even better.”
Each My Little Pub is custom-built, reflecting the owners’ personal stories.
“Everyone has their own story, that’s part of the heritage side of it,” Bennetts said.
“Every person has a back story

– they may have lived in the UK, or some pubs are tributes to a son who passed away or a dedication to their husband. “We try and weave their stories into the pub.”
Although each pub is unique, the bones of it stay the same.
“The proportions of everything we have kind of figured out.”
“We build the furniture, and we build the base, and we have a guy in Christchurch who sources all the memorabilia for us.”
Sizes of pubs vary, with the biggest being six metres, and because pubs are less than 30 square metres with

no services, most do not require a building consent.
“It can change a bit between councils, but generally, they are unconsented.”
Stained glass windows are custom-made and signage is hand-painted.
“We go through with it with the customer, figure out what name they want, what year they want to establish, and what quirks they want written on the windows.”
“Then we build a graphics package with our designer and make it all up for them.”

The concept of My Little Pub is well suited to rural communities where the nearest hotel can be miles away.
“Little Pubs are a space to bring people together when there aren’t places available to do that, and people can do that at home,” Bennetts said.
She said the most satisfaction came from working with people who are hospitable and like to bring people together.
“We have so much fun with our clients; they feel like they become part of our family.”

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SOUTH ISLAND AGRICULTURAL FIELD DAYS

March 26-28

Fourth generation Waikuku farmer

The Farmers Fast Five: Where we ask a farmer five quick questions about agriculture, and what farming means to them. Today we talk to North Canterbury dairy farmer and South Island Agricultural Field Days chairperson Andrew Stewart.

1 What did your journey into farming look like?

I was born into a family farm, I am fourth generation.

We have been farming in Waikuku in North Canterbury for just over 100 years.

2 Tell us a little bit about your farming operation?

We are a town supply dairy farm in Waikuku, milking pedigree holstein friesian cows.

The cows have been bred for type and production using 90% North American genetics.

We have just purchased a neighbouring property which has allowed us to up stock numbers, currently milking 480 cows in the spring and 300 through the winter.

We are a self-contained unit with runoffs providing silage and maize and also carrying all young stock.

We also run a contracting business which makes all the supplementary feed.

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

tackled those challenges?

With winter milking we have need to have up-to-date facilities to protect environmental issues.

We have invested into more infrastructure such as a barn to house the cows over the winter and upgraded the feed and effluent storage.

This took a few years to design a system that works for us without over-capitalising the farm.

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

Our family has always been involved with agricultural events and organisations.

We are a part of our local A&P association and involved with the holstein friesian breed society.

We show and sell our top animals and are proud to see how well they do for their new owners.

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

Keep up with new technology and don't be afraid to try new systems and approaches to farming.

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Andrew Stewart is a fourth generation dairy farmer in Waikuku, and South Island Agricultural Field Days chairperson. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

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Power to the people

ANISHA SATYA

Two newly-built solar farms in Willowby, Ashburton, are giving power back to their communities.

Since Christmas Eve, the farms have generated 1,446,451 kilowatt hours of energy – that's enough to power 180 houses for an entire year.

It's considered a "medium-sized", community scale solar farm, Lightyears Solar co-founder and general manager of development Matt Shanks said.

"With these community-sized ones, you could have [a farm] on the outskirts of every town in New Zealand."

The panels span an eight-hectare stretch of leased lifestyle land, and should generate 7.2 megawatts of electricity, enough to power 1800 homes annually.

Since the panels are raised off of the ground, livestock can still graze the paddock.

"They've been running around the paddock since the sparkies have come in, and seem to be getting on fine."

Lightyears Solar has built three farms in the country so far – one here, one in Masterton and another in Waiuku, near Auckland.

Ecotricity, who buy the farm's energy and trade it on the market, see it as a chance to break the oligopoly on power in New Zealand.

"Historically, energy generation has been kept to really big sites, like hydro sites or wind farms, and are owned by only a few players – the 'gentailers,' solar group man-



Ecotricity solar group manager Luis Porto said small solar farms help disrupt the traditional model of energy generation. PHOTO SUPPLIED

ager Luis Porto said.

"But solar comes to disrupt that traditional model, because you can set it up in any scenario – from a household, to a commercial rooftop or a paddock."

"There's not enough electricity in New Zealand, full stop, and you can see that through electricity pricing," Shanks said.

"We've got the ability to create new solar farms and increase the availability of electricity in New Zealand, while also doing it from a renewable source."

There are two separate solar farms on the site, one owned by Lightyears Solar, and the other is owned by RCR Green Development.

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A different kind of rural round-up

CLAIRE INKSON

A muster is coming to Methven, but it's not sheep or cattle they will be rounding up.

The fourth annual Ute Muster is returning to the Methven Show on March 15.

Whether your truck is a trusty farm ute that's seen better days, a tradie work-horse or a show-stopping classic, event organisers are encouraging people to enter.

"They can be in any state; they don't have to be clean, and they don't even have to go. They can arrive on the back of a trailer," event organiser Craig Elliott said.

Last year's event saw around 70-80 vehicles enter, from new company vehicles to American pick-ups and everything in between.

"Hopefully, we get a good variety, and the more, the merrier."

There are 10 categories, meaning all utes are catered for, including Best Presented, Pre-1985, Shepherds Ute and American Pick-up.

There is even a category for the dirtiest ute.

Entering could pay off, with \$6000 worth of prizes up for grabs, and winners have the chance to showcase their vehicles in the grand parade.

But that's not the only reason to enter.

"It gets you a close park for the Methven Show," Elliott points out.

A ute tug-of-war debuted at last year's event with some initial reluctance by vehicle owners to enter.

Once they watched the action of a Toyota Hilux in competition with a Volkswagen Amarok, people were

QUICK INFO

- **Where:** Methven A&P Show
- **When:** March 15
- Vehicles can enter the showgrounds from Gate A, 54 Barkers Road, from 8am and must be parked ready for judging by 10.30am.
- Prizegiving and barbecue at 12.30pm.
- Enter on the day or in advance via Showday Online.
- The \$30 entry fee includes a driver's gate pass (extra adults to pay at the gate).
- The \$30 fee per vehicle covers all categories.
- **Categories:**
 - Best presented/cleanest
 - Best paint job
 - Pre-1985/vintage
 - Tradies Ute
 - Best sign written
 - Best accessorised
 - Best modified
 - Shepherds ute
 - American pick-up



Methven Ute Muster organiser Craig Elliott is encouraging anyone who has a ute to enter.
PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

keen to give it a go, and Elliott expects this year's competition to be popular.

"Now that they have seen what it's all about, they'll probably be lining up."

Elliott believes the popularity of utes in New Zealand comes down to their practicality, Kiwi's love of the outdoors and our often-inclement weather.

"They are just so versatile; they

can go anywhere.

"In New Zealand, we can have four or five inches of snow in the wintertime, and at least with a 4WD ute, you know you can go wherever you want to."

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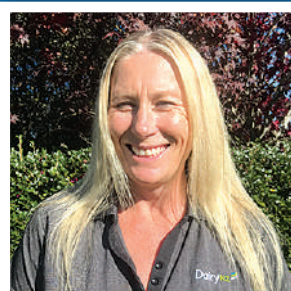
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Left – Ashburton farmers Kim and Will Grayling will offer leadership insights. PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Right – DairyNZ senior people specialist Jane Muir says people are a farms greatest asset.

Far right – Mid Canterbury farmer Jeremy Duckmanton will share his experience using technology to drive productivity.



It's all about people

CLAIRE INKSON

People are your biggest asset.

That's the message from DairyNZ, and the 2025 People Expos will be tailored for farmers who manage or employ people, providing essential insights for building strong, productive teams and a successful farm business.

Starting in Oamaru on March 11 and followed by Ashburton on March 13, the DairyNZ events, held in partnership with the Dairy Women's Network, are offering farmers the chance to boost their farm productivity, leadership skills, and team dynamics.

This will be the event's third year in the current format.

"This year will be more strategic and link the overall business and economic climate with what that means for our on-farm teams, and how business owners and managers respond to get the best from those teams," DairyNZ's senior people specialist Jane Muir says.

The Expos aim to equip farm owners and managers with the knowledge they need to optimise leadership and technology, which will increase productivity and create a better work environment for their teams.

"This year we have a strong focus on productivity.

"Productivity is much more within our control than profitability."

Leadership and technology are central themes at this year's expos, with Muir emphasising their impact on farm performance.

"We are trying to get farmers to understand how leadership and technology impact the performance on-farm."

Sessions will explore how farm managers can harness these tools to improve business productivity while fostering a positive and supportive workplace for staff.

The rapid pace of technological change in the dairy sector is another key topic.

"We are also looking at how rapidly the sector is changing because of technology and the capability of people leading and working in business to manage that."

Farmers will gain insights into leveraging new technologies while maintaining strong leadership to navigate these changes effectively.

Improving productivity is often within the control of farm managers, and Muir said that focusing on productivity within existing work hours can lead to greater overall success.

"If you can lift profitability within the hours you are working, then maybe you can have more time to do the things you want to do."

For some farmers, that can mean spending more time on their business instead of in it.

"That can mean making better decisions that lead to higher profitability."

The People Expo offers not just high-level strategies but also practical tools for farmers.

"There is no one right way of doing things," Muir said.

"Every farm is unique, but the People Expo is about giving people inspiration and support."

The events will feature keynote speakers, including economist Shamubeel Eaqub, who will discuss global and national economic trends, and James Allen from AgFirst, who will examine the future role of agri-tech and AI in farming.

Providing a Mid Canterbury farmer perspective will be Jeremy Duckmanton, who will share his experience using technology to drive productivity and Kim and Will Grayling from Singletree Dairies, who will offer leadership insights.

The Oamaru and Ashburton People Expos will be held from 9.30am to 2.15pm, and the events are free to attend, with lunch provided.

Registration is available online at dwn.co.nz/people-expo-2025.

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Reflecting on a salmonella spring

SUNITA McGRATH AND
KATE IRVING

In spring we saw a huge surge in salmonella cases on dairy farms across the south.

This was a real kick in the guts for farmers that were already having a tough time due to the extreme wet weather.

Such cold, rainy conditions led to large amounts of dirty surface water, limited feed and increased stocking densities, and unfortunately caused higher stress than normal and more infection pressure.

This culminated in a higher than usual number of salmonella outbreaks in both cattle and sheep.

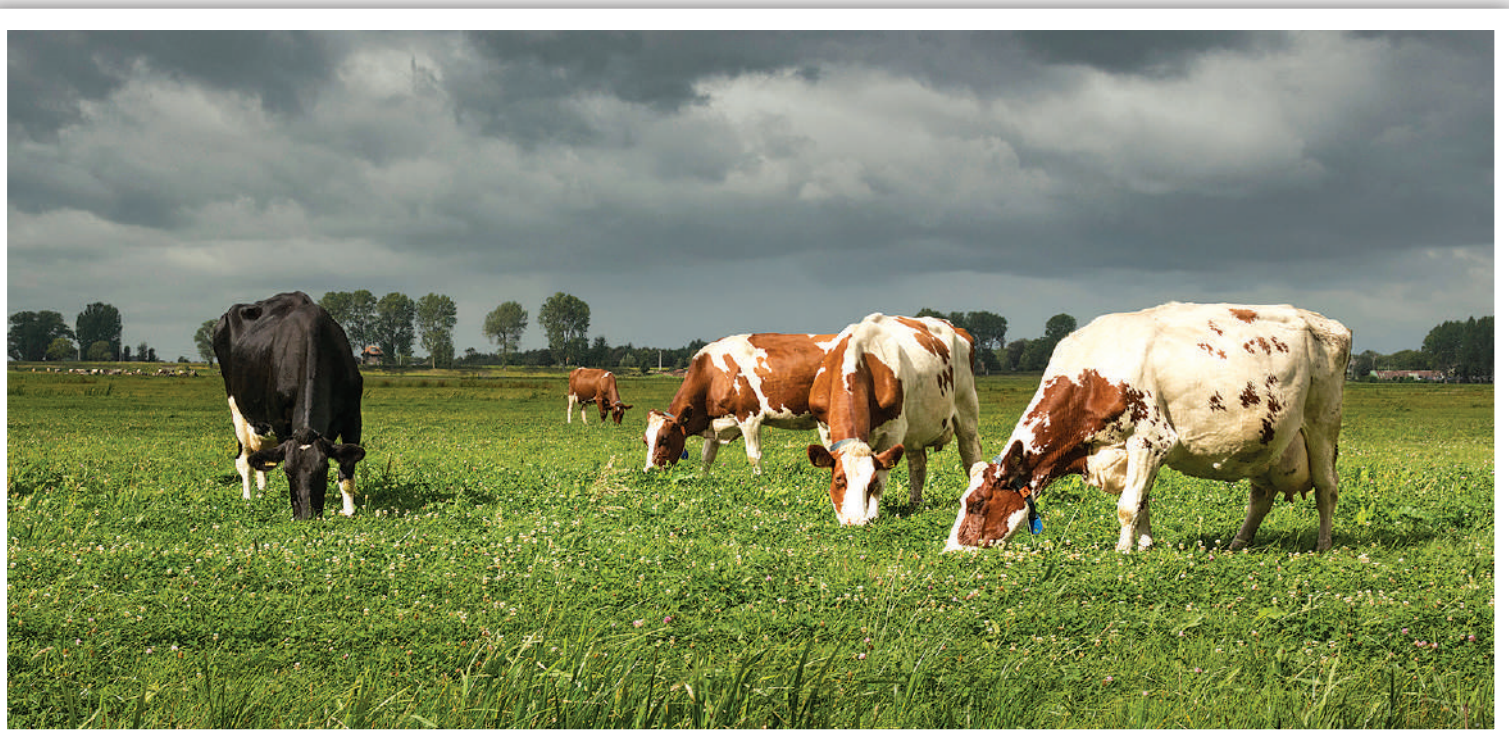
Salmonella in cattle is not usually common. In a typical season here in Southland and South Otago, our vet clinics may only see one or two significant outbreaks and the odd individual case.

A farm might only have a salmonella case once in 20 years. Because of this, many stock are unvaccinated against the disease.

When salmonella does strike, it does so without warning and spreads rapidly. Highly infectious, it is usually spread by a small number of carrier animals to the rest of their herd, transferring through faeces.

Symptoms include a sudden drop in milk production, a high temperature, diarrhoea and rapid loss of body condition.

Affected animals get a particular 'look' - with a tucked-up belly and a sadness in their eyes.



They get very sick, very quickly and death is likely. A delay of just 48 hours in diagnosis results in a hopeless case for survival.

In cattle, salmonella has a high mortality rate of 8-10% and up to half a herd can be affected and require treatment.

Early identification is so important, as well as isolating suspected cases. Fast, aggressive treatment is necessary to save affected animals and stop an outbreak from escalating.

Salmonella is also a health risk to farmers themselves.

It can pass from animals to humans, so hygiene in sheds and around stock is very important.

The disease can also be transferred through contaminated milk, so avoid drinking unpasteurised milk from the vat.

Preventative vaccination is the key to reducing the likelihood of a severe and expensive outbreak.

The cost of the vaccine is a small amount compared to having the disease. Vet care, treatments, animal losses and lost milk production can add up to the tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars, and

massively impact a farm.

In most cases, the cost of vaccinating every year would be repaid if an outbreak happened once every 15-20 years.

For a large outbreak, where 15% or more of stock are affected, this would be repaid if an outbreak only occurred every 30-40 years.

For dairy herds, the recommended timing for giving the salmonella vaccine, Salvexin+B, is mid-late lactation (before drying off) as there can be a drop in milk production for the first day or two afterwards.

So, as we head towards the end

of the dairy season, consider talking to your vet about vaccinating against salmonella.

It is much better to vaccinate before problems occur and this past spring has hit home that the risk of an outbreak is real.

We're sure those farmers who have experienced it never want to deal with it ever again!

As vets, we certainly saw how devastating it can be.

Sunita McGrath (BVSc) and
Kate Irving (BVSc)
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Farmers shift to flexible milking

CLAIRE INKSON

Farmers across Canterbury and North Otago are embracing flexible milking, with over 40% of farms adopting alternative milking frequencies to boost efficiency and sustainability.

Flexible milking refers to milking intervals that fall between the more traditional once-a-day (OAD) and twice-a-day (TAD) milking schedules.

The most common forms of flexible milking are milking three times in two days (3-in-2) and ten milking's in seven days (10-in-7), a system used by Mid Canterbury farmer John Totty.

"The staff think it's brilliant.

"It gives them a lot of flexibility about actually having a social life and getting out with friends and family."

Totty, who runs 994 jersey and jersey-cross cows over two neighbouring properties in Staveley, moved to 10-in-7 milking in 2020.

While fears of loss of production are a barrier for some farms, that hasn't been a concern for Totty.

"We went up in production per cow – not by a massive amount, but we have gone up every season since."

Totty said the system has also resulted in a decrease in lameness in cows by around 50%.

"It means less time for cows walking on the lanes, which means your lanes last longer, and it's less time for them on concrete; concrete isn't great for their feet."



Mid Canterbury farmer John Totty says moving to flexible milking has meant his cows are in better condition, are happier and milking better, and production is up. PHOTO SUPPLIED

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"The course was brilliant - it was some of the best learning that I have ever had, I certainly feel more equipped to work with farmers and other vets in hoof trimming and treatment, as well as in a lameness advisory role. The experience has been invaluable to my future career."
Kate Mackersey, Massey University Vet Student

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When using flexible milking, grazing rotations can be challenging, but Totty said they manage it well.

"We still do everything in a 24-hour periods, and think about everything as a normal rotation and normal allocation just like any farmer would."

Totty said it's "just simple maths".

"It's nice and easy to do and manage."

The only down side was the need for an upgraded milk cooling system because of the larger volume of milk per milking.

"We had to play around with plate coolers to cool the milk down to industry standards."

Totty said the flexible milking system was better for cows' all-round health and well-being, giving the animals more time to rest and socialise.

"Our cows are in better condition; they are happier, milking better and production is better."

DairyNZ launched a three-year research project called Flexible Milking for Healthier Cows in 2019 to give farmers the confidence to adopt a flexible milking frequency.

Milking can make up more than half of the labour hours on New Zealand dairy farms.

Implementing a flexible milking model can provide farm workers with more family time, which could improve staff retention and job satisfaction.

Cutting down on milking hours also frees up time for farmers to concentrate on other tasks or make more informed decisions regarding farm management.

"Let's say you have an extra hour of less milking per day on average," DairyNZ senior scientist Paul Edwards said.

"You might use that time to do a farm walk or sit down and analyse some data rather than just making a gut call on something."



Edwards also points out that flexible milking can positively impact dairy farm workers' sleep patterns.

A pilot study by DairyNZ showed that farm workers using a 3-in-2

milking during spring slept nearly half an hour longer per night than those on nearby farms using a TAD milking model.

"Even if half an hour doesn't sound like a lot, when you are only getting five-and-a-half hours of sleep, it is a lot."

Edwards said that while sleep may not be the first thing people think of when improving farm performance, it can have a considerable impact.

"It plays into that story of less

fatigue, less mistakes and better execution of decisions."

Edwards said farmers considering adopting a flexible milking model should first consider what they are hoping to achieve by changing.

"Make a plan to ensure you can realise those goals."

"There is nothing more dangerous than just changing milking frequency and nothing else about how you farm or go about your day."

Things like grazing rotations, staff rosters and mating will need to change.

"You need to think about some of these things and make sure you have a plan."

Above - Milking can make up more than half of the labour hours on New Zealand dairy farms, so implementing a flexible milking model can provide farm workers with more family time.

Left inset - DairyNZ senior scientist Paul Edwards said farmers should consider what their objectives are before they consider changing.



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CLAIRE INKSON

Farmers and shearers need to look after themselves better. That's the message from Blenheim massage therapist Nicola Smith.

"I appreciate what farmers and shearers do; it's so physically taxing."

Smith knows first-hand, having been raised on a 15,000-acre farm in North Canterbury.

"I spent my school holidays either cleaning water troughs or rousing in the shearing shed."

"I grew up with sheep and cattle."

Smith owns a massage clinic in Blenheim with a clientele dominated by farmers and vineyard workers who appreciate her skill and understanding of the challenging physical nature of agriculture.

"I can appreciate the movements and how they use their body to do things, which then helps me understand why they are sore in certain places."

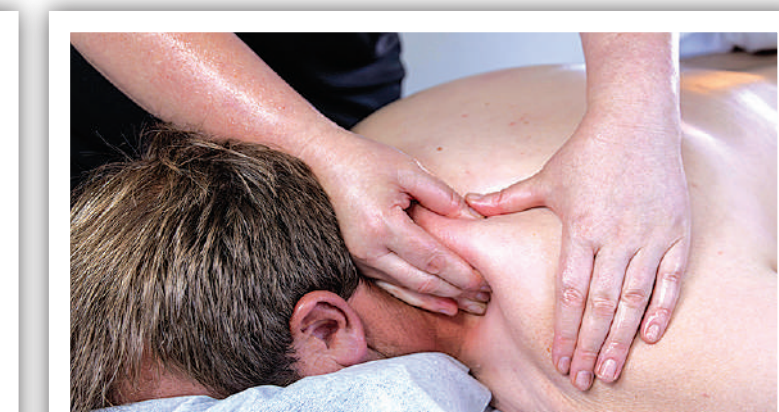
Smith said she gets effective results for her clients because she works on the root of the problem rather than just the symptom.

"My farming experience has given me a good idea about how their body is moving and causing the pain patterns they are feeling."

Around 30-40% of Smith's clients are men, which is a good sign that attitudes to wellbeing amongst the male population are improving.

Smith's success lies in creating a calm, neutral space that appeals to both men and women.

"When I opened, I didn't want to



Left – Nicola Smith's 14 years experience as a massage therapist, coupled with her hands-on farming childhood, means she has an understanding of the physical demands of agriculture. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Above – Nicola Smith believes farmers and shearers need to take better care of themselves.

create a barrier for men by making my clinic a fluffy beauty salon-type space.

"Nothing is excessively feminine or masculine; it's just neutral."

Smith said clients often share their problems and challenges before a massage so that after, they seem considerably lighter and less stressed.

"They come, drop all the stuff they have going on in their mind, and then they lay down and rest."

"But by unloading their stress

first, they find the massage more relaxing."

Smith was recently recognised for her work in the rural space and business acumen when she won the Rural Health and Wellbeing category at the NZI Rural Women New Zealand Business Awards late last year.

Smith said she entered the awards for the experience but didn't expect to win.

"I wasn't expecting anything."

"It was the first competition I en-

tered, and I wanted to see what the process was like, and then I'd know next time what kind of information they want."

With major rural businesses making the finals, Smith dealt with a fair amount of imposter syndrome as a small business owner with no staff.

"It was pretty unreal to be up there with the other businesses that I was."

"All of the other businesses were so massive or had marketing degrees or people doing their marketing."

"And then there was just me."

When not in the clinic, Smith still gets her hands dirty on the 1500-acre block she leases with her fiancé just out of Blenheim.

"On my days when I'm not at work, I'm usually busy helping out

on the farm in some respect."

Sometimes, getting off the farm to the clinic can be a challenge.

"We live half an hour from town, and we have a ford at the end of our road that floods every time it rains."

A bigger challenge, though, is work-life balance.

"It's hard finding the balance between being in business, being in a relationship and being in a [work] partnership."

Smith often has to cook for shearers or workers before heading to work for long hours on her feet in the clinic.

She has a farmer's attitude to work, though.

"My childhood gave me a good work ethic."

"Just because it's 5pm doesn't mean you finish for the day."

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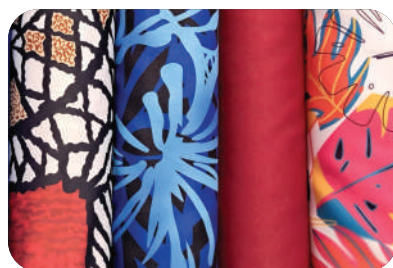
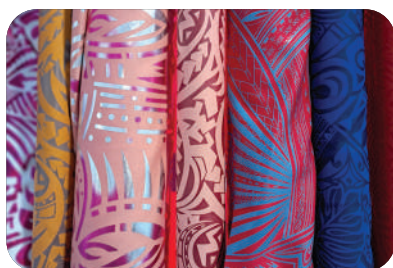
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Can we control our insomnia?

KATHRYN WRIGHT

How do you control insomnia?

Clue? You don't. The more you struggle against your lack of sleep, the worse it gets. What you resist persists.

I was putting together another project about sleep, and I began to outlay all of the standard information like cutting out screen time, caffeine, making sure your room is a certain temperature etc. etc., but then I remembered something important.

I have struggled with insomnia. Whenever anyone suggested to me that I try chamomile tea, I had the strong urge to bop them in the face.

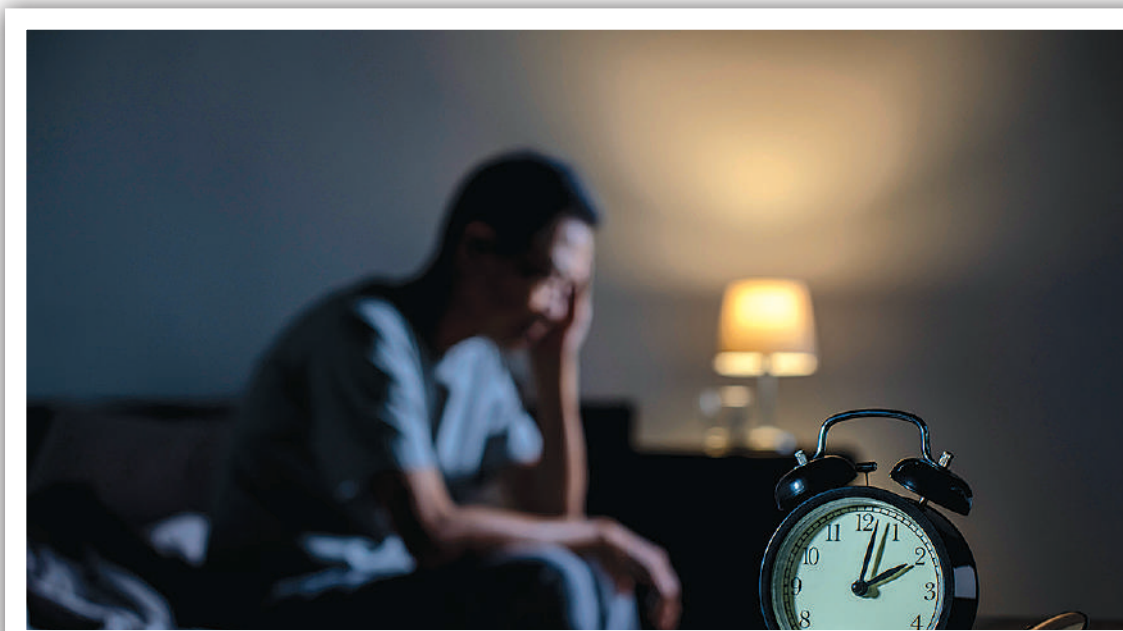
So, I am not going to insult you with any of these suggestions – if you have insomnia or have trouble sleeping, you've already tried these things, haven't you?

Firstly, I want to tell you that the most common form of insomnia is psychological insomnia – that is, not caused by anything physical.

It most commonly begins when a trigger takes place such as a big life change, or even smaller daily events, then the thoughts show up.

Thinking about things endlessly in bed during the night has the effect of amplifying the issues you are facing.

Then, we start to incorporate things to try and "fix" the problem such as self-medicating, changing your surroundings, sleeping in a



separate room, listening to dolphin music, or whatever the latest recommendation is.

How much is all of this costing you?

The cost could be financial, or it could be costing you time, emotions, relationships, energy, or your health.

When you are in bed at night and can't sleep, pay attention.

On purpose. Non-judgmentally.

This is focused attention – when you are awake in bed during the night, take notice of where you are and what you are experiencing right now.

Observe and make space for your thoughts. Notice your "thinking mind" and know that it is separate to you, and that your thoughts are like clouds in the sky – constantly changing, rarely consisting of anything tangible.

Notice your breath as it rises and falls. Scan every part of your body and just notice the sensations. This is the beginning of becoming less reactive to what you are thinking.

Acceptance is not about liking, or being ok with your insomnia, but rather dropping the struggle against it.

Only when you can do this,

will you become untangled. Your attempts to fight, avoid or control your sleep are telling your survival brain that there is a threat – undermining your intention and making things worse.

Your brain is constantly trying to predict the future (usually worst-case scenario), and so, you are caught in an endless tug-of-war.

These thoughts are products of your mind – not the truth.

Try seeing your unhelpful night-time thoughts as students in a classroom – welcome each "student", stand back and make space for them.

Examine each one – what physical sensations arise?

What does each thought look like? Breathe into and experience each one, instead of fearing them.

Do not try to "get rid" of them or it will make things worse.

Look at the big picture.

Often, when we lie awake worrying instead of sleeping, it's because there's something on your mind. Look carefully at the major factors in your life – work, relationships, physical health and mental wellbeing (preferably during waking hours).

Is there something major there that needs to be addressed?

Seek professional help if the problem seems too large – you are a human, and your brain is simply trying to solve a problem that needs to be seriously addressed.

Live your life. Paradoxically, only when you learn to accept and make space for your sleep struggles can you make the conscious choice to not let them run your life.

Once you are at this stage, ask yourself what's important to you – connecting with friends and family?

Getting fit and eating better?

Doing more study?

Live your values and shift your focus away from your sleep struggles and on to what matters to you.

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ROSEBANK LIFECARE EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS



*New resident:
I can't find
a downside*

*They're very good here,
I can't speak highly
enough of them*

‘

Yvonne Harrison moved into a villa at Rosebank Lifecare in September last year. After working for Rosebank as a carer from their opening in 1992, Harrison knew in part what to expect.

However, she has been blown away by the experience, she said it has truly been amazing.

"I can't find a downside. They're very good here, I can't speak highly enough of them."

Harrison made the decision to move because she was craving more support than she had living independently and wanted some more security.

"Every time my children come to see me, I want them to see me and not be saying this needs fixing, that needs fixing."

"Time is precious today, and everybody's busy."

Harrison's daughter, Jo Hooper, said that the move to Rose-

bank Lifecare has provided their family peace of mind.

"It's just nice for us to know, that she can push a bell and somebody can come," said Hooper.

The community feel at Rosebank is something that has stood out above all else for Harrison.

"The lady over there the other night she'd made a pav to go out, and she brought me over a piece for tea. And I make something,

and I take her over something. It is a nice wee community," she said.

The first day Harrison moved in, staff and neighbours alike came over to introduce themselves and say hello.

"It was so welcoming," said Hooper.

There is always something running for the residents, with a fortnightly roster of events for people to choose from.

"There's always something on; we had the Melbourne Cup Day. We all wore our fascinators and watched the cup and had a drink and a nibble. So, that was really nice."

"Pre-Christmas they had a bus, and we would get on it at quarter to ten at night and go look at the Christmas lights."

Hooper said that all and all, "It's lovely, and it just feels like her home."



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ROSEBANK BRAND NEW

For over 30 years Rosebank Lifecare has been providing retirement and assisted living care to the Ashburton community.

It began with its care facility, which offers permanent residential care, convalescence services and respite care, and expanded to include the retirement village 15 years ago.

But the care at Rosebank Lifecare is about to take yet another leap, with the introduction of their new care suites on March 8.

Already showing a high level of interest, the new care suites will be a perfect blend of comfort, independence and support.

Designed specifically for individ-

uals who want the option of independent living, with tailored care to suit their specific needs, these suites are the perfect option for someone looking for a little more privacy.

The new boutique care community will consist of 22 suites, a mix of one-bedroom and studio-style layouts.

Each suite features a private ensuite with heated tiles, a spacious kitchenette and a courtyard surrounded by landscaped gardens.

There is a warm and welcoming lounge, which will function as a community space, with a kitchenette and the ability to host events for residents, as well as family and social



PHOTOS JOANNE MCCLOY PHOTOGRAPHY



VIEWING

There will be an open viewing on Friday, March 14, at 11am and 2pm.

To learn more about the care suites or tour the grounds contact Karen Marriott-Haugh on 0274 181 222, or email sales@rosebanklifecare.co.nz



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INTRODUCES CARE SUITES

events.

The boutique care community will offer different levels of care depending on individual needs.

Rosebank Lifecare understands that your needs will likely change over time, that's why they can tailor care specifically to the life stage and independence level of each resident.

As you get older or your needs change, a higher level of care can be implemented, without the need to move.

The new suites will also offer an occupational weekly payment option unique to Ashburton's retirement landscape.

This option will include accommo-

dation, care packages and care assistance in the weekly occupation fee.

Rosebank Lifecare manager Sue Prowse said that they are pleased with the progression that has been made.

"During the past 33 years of operation we have seen many changes, as what started as a small resthome has grown to include a hospital, convalescent services followed by a retirement village.

"However, what hasn't changed is the dedication of the people working at Rosebank and the commitment they have for doing their best to provide for the residents' needs, whatever level of care that is."



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Brad Staley: In bo

CLAIRE INKSON

Get ready to saddle up, Ashburton

It's time to lace up your boots and dust off your hat because country musician Brad Staley is riding into town, ready to rock the stage.

Staley will perform at the Farming Family Trust Summer Session event at the Ashburton MSA on April 5.

"I come from a rural background, so any chance to play for a crowd of hard-working, heel-stomping farmers is a win for me and the band," Staley says.

Growing up on a military base near Lake Tekapo, Staley's rural childhood shaped his love for country music.

"We were always hunting, fishing, and four-wheel-driving, and country music is all about that."

By age five, Staley could sing every word of Garth Brooks's No Fences album.

"I've always loved country music, but not the pop stuff. I'm all about Johnny Cash, George Strait and George Jones."

Staley picked up the guitar at age nine and, by 14, performed in a duet on New Zealand's Got Talent.

Though passionate about music, he completed an accountancy degree as a "fallback plan".

After finishing his studies, the pull of music was strong, but he questioned whether giving up the stability of an accountancy career for music was the right move.

He reached out to his friend and

fellow musician Kevin Atkinson for advice.

Atkinson's words were simple: "Come to the dark side. Drive it like you stole it, and don't hold back"

Staley calls it the best advice he's ever received.

"It was straightforward, but it made perfect sense to me."

His parents were supportive, but realistic.

"They were always honest with me, but as long as I was in boots and all, they had my back."

Staley formed the Brad Staley Trio, performing at venues and events across the country.

The trio recently played at Beer



Brad Staley grew up on a military base near Lake Tekapo, and believes his rural childhood shaped his career. PHOTOS SUPPLIED



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Fest in Christchurch and opened for Jon Toogood in Timaru, both major career milestones.

While the band line-up has changed over the years, today, it consists of bass player Dean Armitage, drummer Callan Carne and Staley.

Last year, he gained a massive

following, amassing over 75,000 streams and 25,000 followers on Spotify.

But the journey hasn't been without challenges.

"The biggest obstacle early on was convincing people that being a musician is a 'real job'"

He faced scepticism, especially

in New Zealand, where standing on stage every weekend isn't always seen as a sustainable career.

"It's hard when people don't see it as a legitimate career path," Staley admits.

New Zealand country artists also face the challenge of developing a unique sound when American and

Australian country music dominates.

"We're influenced by America and Australia, and while we don't consciously try to sound American, it's what we listen to."

Despite the heavy American influence, Staley's dream collaboration is a bit closer to home.

"Jimmy Barnes. He's an incredible



Far left – Brad Staley has played at events and venues across the country, including the recent Christchurch Beer Fest, and opening for Jon Toogood in Timaru.

Left – Brad Staley began playing the guitar at age nine.

man, and I love his songs."

After performing in a tribute show to Barnes in Christchurch, Staley realised many of his favourite songs were either by Barnes or his band, Cold Chisel.

"His voice is phenomenal, and he's held on to it for so long. There's so much power behind it."

Staley's songwriting process often begins with a collaboration with a fellow country musician from America.

"He'll throw out an idea or suggest a theme, and then I go off and write the lyrics. Sometimes it takes two minutes, sometimes two months."

Once the lyrics are done, Staley writes the music.

"I pick up my guitar, and whatever comes first is usually what sticks."

When he's got the verse and chorus, he takes it to his bandmates.

"I bring it to the guys, and we build the rhythm together. Dean lays down the bass, Callan adds the drums, and we go from there."

Looking ahead, Staley's dreams are simple.

"To have the crowd sing the chorus back to you without you even having to do a thing. It's happened in small pubs, and it messes with your brain. That's what we're chasing."

For more details on the Summer Session event and to buy tickets, visit the Farming Family Trust Facebook page.



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Bacon and egg sweetie pie

A variation of the traditional bacon and egg pie using filo pastry for a lighter base, and cheese and sweetcorn to add extra flavour and texture. Delicious served hot or cold.

Servings: 4

6 eggs
1C cream
1 tin sweetcorn (or equivalent fresh, cooked corn kernels)
1 red capsicum, diced
1 spring onion, finely chopped
300g bacon, chopped into 1cm pieces
200g tasty cheese, grated
A small handful of finely chopped parsley
180g frozen filo pastry
Salt and pepper to taste

26cm flan or pie dish.

- Layer filo in the dish spraying a little oil or brushing melted butter in between each pastry sheet. Turn each sheet about 45° to the previous one to get an even covering. You'll need about 6 layers of pastry.
- Whisk eggs together with cream and all the remaining ingredients in a bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Pour the mixture onto the pastry and pop pie into the oven.
- Bake for 35-45 minutes depending on your oven.
- Allow to cool for a few minutes before serving.
- Serve either directly from the pie dish or if your pan has pop-out base transfer to a large board or plate to serve.

- Heat oven to 180°C. Lightly grease a

Recipe courtesy of NZEggs

Farming can be tough on joints

Earlier this year I had a call from a farmer who was having significant problems with osteoarthritis in several joints: notably his hands and shoulders. I have many farming clients and not many reach 50 without some joint issue. In many cases it started with some accident, often involving livestock.

In his case, his hands were extremely painful. He found it difficult to close his hands and they hurt all the time. Shoulder arthritis can be very niggly as the shoulder joint is 'open', meaning it relies on ligaments, muscles and tendons to stay in place. This means there can be a lot of referred pain in shoulders.

There are essentially two ways osteoarthritis begins. Firstly, damage to the joint from trauma. Secondly, over time cartilage is lost which can lead to joint bones touching. While cartilage has no nerves, bones certainly do. Regardless of the cause, cartilage loss occurs with a trifecta of dysfunctional processes: An



overproduction of destructive enzymes, free radical damage of cartilage-secreting cells (chondrocytes) and associated inflammation.

I started my client on an intensive programme for 3 months. We started with a double dose of my joint formula. This provided 1600mg of both high-grade chondroitin sulphate and glucosamine sulphate and 400mg of the latest 100% water soluble curcumin (from turmeric) extract.

I had a review with him after 3 months. He said the improvement had been significant to the point he now has full use of his hands and wrists. His sore shoulder had improved to the point he hardly noticed it. Once again, this testifies to the power of nutritional medicine for osteoarthritis, and indeed with many chronic conditions.

Combining high doses of chondroitin with supporting glucosamine and curcumin from turmeric can be very beneficial, especially when combined with an anti-inflammatory diet. Email me for 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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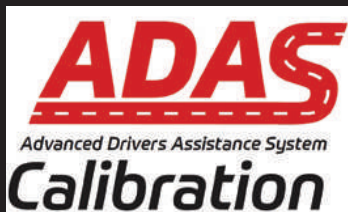
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