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JULY 2025

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HER UTE & HER RULES

Pages 32-40

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More front page than footnote, thanks

Every time we run a feature focused on women — whether it's the centenary of Rural Women New Zealand, a focus on women in leadership or our now-viral Girls in Utes series — I can almost feel the whispers coming: "Careful, it's a bit heavy on the women this month."

Let me make one thing clear. I won't apologise for that.

In fact, I'll double down.

Because for too long, women's stories in rural New Zealand have been confined to the margins.

We've been photographed at bake sales, mentioned in passing as mere "farmers' wives", or asked how we juggle the kids while the real work happens somewhere else.

But here's the truth: the real work is happening in the kitchen, in the calving shed, in the driver's seat of a ute, and behind the desk at the farm's office.

It's happening in gumboots and heels, in boardrooms and back paddocks, in moments that rarely make the mainstream narrative.

So yes, our pages this month are filled with women.

That's not an accident. That's a correction.

We've just wrapped up our Girls in Utes feature — something that started as a fun photo feature and quickly grew into a national talking point.

Shared widely across social media platforms like NZ Farming and NZ Farming Mums, picked up by ABC Radio in Australia, and praised by readers from Gore to Gisborne, it proved what I already knew: people

are hungry for authentic, grassroots stories that celebrate who we really are.

And yes, a lot of "who we really are" happens to be female.

We're also honouring 100 years of Rural Women New Zealand — a milestone not just of longevity, but of legacy.

These women have held up rural communities through floods and droughts, advocacy and activism, suppers and submissions.

If we gave them every page in this edition, it still wouldn't be enough.

I'm proud to lead a farming paper that doesn't just tick boxes for diversity but hands over the microphone.

And I say this as someone who grew up a farmer's daughter, now navigating the field of modern media — I will refuse to reverse when someone tells me I've gone too far if I feel it matters to our rural sector.

Here's the kicker: This isn't just about women, it's about telling the whole story.

Click bait may generate clicks, but it doesn't generate trust.

When rural journalism reflects the full spectrum of who we are — tough, tired, tender, tenacious — everyone benefits.

Why? Because you can't be what you can't see.

Our daughters see possibility. Our sons see balance. Our communities see truth.

So no, there won't be fewer women next month. Or the month after that. Not while I'm in the driver's seat.

And if that ruffles feathers? Well, good. Change often does.



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Feds urge Govt to keep promise

CLAIRE INKSON

“Please, please, please help the next generation.”

That’s the message from Pendarves Young Farmer Penny Stilgoe – and it’s one echoed by the incoming generation of farmers across the country, as Federated Farmers ramps up pressure on the Government to stand by its promise to help young Kiwis get their foot on the farming ladder.

Federated Farmers said that on the eve of the 2023 election, National pledged that, if elected to Government, they would allow young farmers to use their KiwiSaver to buy their first home, farm, herd, or flock.

“They made that campaign promise in Morrinsville, but 18 months later there has been no action,” says Federated Farmers dairy chairperson Richard McIntyre.

“The announcement was incredibly popular, particularly among the next generation of farmers, but also with older farmers who are looking for succession pathways. “There are a lot of people out there waiting for these changes to be made, so it’s important they follow through and deliver on their promise.”

While National MP Suze Redmayne has since submitted a Members’ Bill that would address some of the challenges young farmers face, McIntyre says it falls short.

“It’s great that Suze has put forward a bill – but it’s one of more than 70 others in the Members’ Ballot. It’s effectively a raffle and



Pendarves Young Farmer Penny Stilgoe says KiwiSaver restrictions make it hard for older farmers to exit the industry and nearly impossible for new farmers chasing the dream of owning their own farm.

PHOTO ASHBURTON GUARDIAN

the bill may never be drawn.”

McIntyre says young farmers are being held back by outdated KiwiSaver rules that don’t reflect the realities of farm ownership or rural employment.

“These rules are holding young farmers back years in their career progression as they scrimp and save every dollar to get on the ladder, particularly for sharemilkers and contract milkers.

“I understand that KiwiSaver is about saving for retirement, but for these young farmers, owning a farm, herd or flock is going to be what sets them up for their later

years.

“These are ambitious young people who are trying to build a future in farming, who just need the Government to get out of their way and allow them to access their own savings to invest in their future.”

Stilgoe says current KiwiSaver restrictions make it hard for older farmers to exit the industry and nearly impossible for new farmers chasing the dream of owning their own farm.

“It’s really hard for young farmers coming through, and those older farmers leaving the industry.

“And then we are competing

against foreign buyers or larger corporates, and that takes away from the family nature of kiwi farming like we have known it.”

She adds that many young people now feel owning their own herd or property is out of reach – and that could be putting them off a career in agriculture.

“There are more rules and regulations coming in and part of that is to give us a point of difference and ensure there is a future for our market.

“But at the end of the day, there is no point having a market there to sell our product if there is no one to

make that product in the first place because none of us can afford to do it.”

Stilgoe also points out that young farmers are not only restricted from using KiwiSaver to buy a farm – but that even using it for a house deposit is often complex and near impossible due to on-farm living requirements.

“With current restrictions, if you live in on-farm accommodation, it’s hard to buy a house with your KiwiSaver if you aren’t going to be living in it.”

She and her partner, both agricultural contractors, are currently spending the New Zealand winter working on farms in England in the hopes of saving enough to buy a house.

“We are trying to keep farming and putting food on the table and build a life for ourselves and our future families, but it’s challenging,” Stilgoe said.

Meanwhile, Federated Farmers have upped the ante, launching a nationwide petition at Fieldays calling on the Government to urgently change KiwiSaver rules to support young farmers.

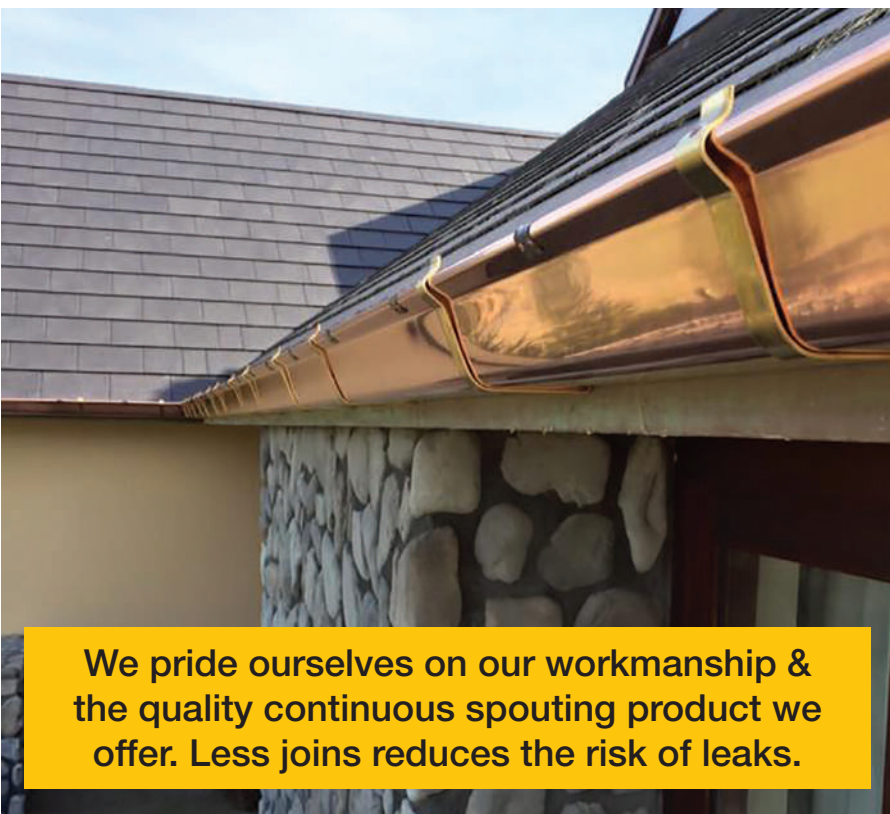
“On the campaign trail of the 2023 election, Todd McClay stood up in front of young farmers in Morrinsville and made a promise that he would make it happen,” McIntyre said.

“That’s why Federated Farmers has launched this petition: to hold the Government accountable and send a clear message that it’s time to follow through on their promise.”

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North Canty's wild long weekend

CLAIRE INKSON

There were no tweed jackets, no jodhpurs, and not a shiny Range Rover in sight.

Instead it was mullets, Red Bands, Double Brown beer, sausies on the barbie, and a proud line-up of dead animals had Rotherham keeping it real this Matariki weekend.

It's hunting, Kiwi-style — and North Canterbury didn't hold back.

Now in its fourth year, the annual North Canterbury Hunting Competition shows no signs of slowing down.

Organiser Mat Bailey says the event drew a whopping 1642 entries this year.

"We have been surprised by the number of entries we've had," Bailey said.

The total number of animals weighed in this year was 1472 — including 326 feral cats.

A big part of the attention (and controversy) has come from the feral cat category — a lightning rod for protest from horrified cat lovers that has even garnered international media attention.

"We like to stir the pot," Bailey said.

And stir it they did, with a viral social media campaign featuring Bailey patting a very not-feral cat named Sprinkles — played by Bailey's mates cat Kevin — while encouraging hunters to target ferals.

Bailey doesn't mince words about his feline feelings: "They bring nothing to the table."



It's tongue-in-cheek, a bit of bait for the protesters — who, this year, were noticeably absent, save for one lone soul quietly filming.

While Bailey admits to being slightly disappointed the protesters stayed home, he sees their absence as a sign public awareness is shifting.

"Killing feral cats is normalised now, and no-one really cares they are being killed."

But it's not all about poking the

animal rights bear.

The event has become a major fundraiser for the local school and community, and a large number of deer is donated to Hunters 4 Hope, a charity that feeds those in need.

Even Dame Lynda Topp, patron of Fish and Game and trustee of Hunters for Conservation, made an appearance.

This year's event also threw support behind the Canterbury West



Above — North Canterbury Hunting competition organiser Mat Bailey was impressed with the 1642 entries this year as the annual event shows no sign of losing momentum.

Left — Adam Kreisel (above) and Steve Hill from Hunters 4 Hope with Fish and Game patron and trustee of Hunters for Conservation Dame Lynda Topp. PHOTOS CLAIRE INKSON

Coast Westpac Air Rescue Trust, with hopes of helping fund a new heli-pad in Rotherham.

"They are quite active in our region, and they are looking at putting another heli-pad in," Bailey says.

Rescue helicopters in New Zealand utilise specific lighting systems on helipads to ensure safe night-time landings — including

some more complex pads with pilot-activated lighting.

"Every medical chopper pad needs to be able to be lit from the chopper — there's quite a bit involved. It's not just a bit of concrete."

For Rotherham, it's just another Matariki weekend done the North Canterbury way — practical, proud, and unapologetically local.

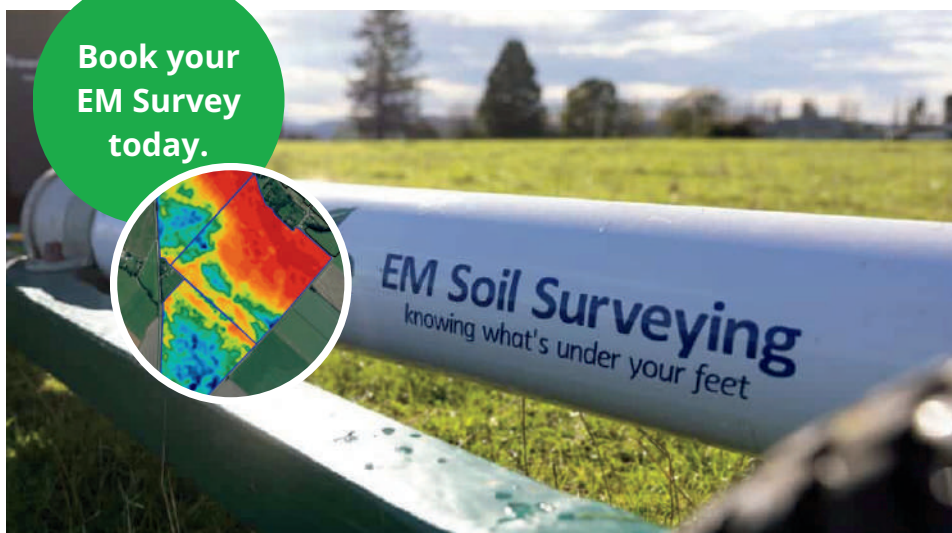
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RMA consultation process begins



Anisha Satya
REPORTER

A feedback period on legislation that has “severely impacted” Mid Canterbury’s farmers has begun.

Consultation on the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) amendments will run for almost two months, allowing councils, lobby groups and locals to provide the government some on-the-ground insight.

The Government has made a list of the changes it wants to make in three different spaces: infrastructure and development, the primary sector and freshwater.

Minister responsible for RMA reform Chris Bishop said the legislation had made it hard for the agriculture sector to produce “high value products”.

“The primary sector underpins New Zealand’s economy and standard of living.

“When farmers, and foresters do well, New Zealand does well – but for too long, New Zealand’s primary producers have struggled against overly restrictive, confusing and duplicative regulations.

“We’ve already repealed Labour’s botched RMA reforms and made a series of quick and targeted amendments to provide relief to farmers, such as repealing the permitted and restricted discretionary intensive



Above – Minister responsible for RMA reform Chris Bishop.
PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Below – Mid Canterbury-based ECan councillor Ian Mackenzie.



Above – Federated Farmers National Board Member Mark Hooper.

Below – ECan chairperson Craig Pauling.



Above – ECan deputy chairperson Dr Deon Swiggs.

winter grazing regulations.”

Canterbury holds 27,000 consents – more than the rest of Aotearoa combined – and uses 70% of the country’s irrigation, Ashburton farmer Ian Mackenzie said.

The Environment Canterbury (ECan) councillor felt Mid Canterbury was well-qualified to advise the Government on RMA reform.

“Mid Canterbury has been hugely affected by the cost of getting consents; We do hold a high portion of [them].”

The insistence on short-term consents is expensive for farmers, and leaves them feeling uncertain, he said, and this consultation period is a chance to deal to that uncertainty.

“Organisations like the irrigation schemes, Federated Farmers, and

hopefully the district council, you’d expect them to put in very well-researched submissions on behalf of the wider community.

“But there are a lot of very smart and highly-qualified individuals within the district, who should be putting in their own individual submissions, which would be highly educational for the Government.”

Federated Farmers’ national member Mark Hooper said this consultation was mostly about the National Policy Statements as opposed to the RMA itself.

“A national policy statement is, effectively, secondary legislation: It sits under the primary legislation, which is the RMA.

“They’ve made it very clear that they’re doing a complete rewrite of the RMA, but that’s not going to be

out until probably early next year.”

Hooper said individual submissions were just as important as group ones.

“Select committees like to hear what the impacts of a rule change are on individual farms, and hear people’s stories.”

ECan chairperson Craig Pauling said that while clear national standards could provide regulatory certainty, Canterbury was a unique region that required a “locally informed” resource management approach.

“We have braided rivers, coastal environments, and highly productive farmland. We also have a unique partnership with Ngāi Tahu as mana whenua.

“We want to make sure that any decisions made by central govern-

ment value existing land uses, such as food production, and enable new opportunities and resource uses, while safeguarding the region’s environmental and cultural health for future generations.”

Deputy chairperson Dr Deon Swiggs said the council unanimously agreed change was needed.

“We need greater regulatory clarity and certainty, as well as better alignment between central, regional and local government. We are taking a strategic approach so that we can be clear, to government and our communities, about what we need and want for Waitaha Canterbury.”

The consultation closes on July 27. The Government’s proposals are on the Ministry for the Environment’s website.

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Weekend help turns into career

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

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

I am member of the Tararua Young Farmers Club. I joined the club in November 2024 when the club was started.

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?

Being new to the area, joining Young Farmers was a great opportunity to meet and make some lifelong friends. It has also enabled me to get involved and help out other people in the district, helping me to connect in with the community where I live.

3 How did you become involved in agriculture?

I don't come from a farming background, so my journey in agriculture started when a friend from uni asked if I'd be keen to help with docking on the farm she was working on. It was then that I got the bug for farming and I've never looked back.

4 What is your job now?

I currently work as a shep-

herd on a 800-hectare sheep and beef breeding farm in Pahiatua. We run 8500 stock units and finish all of our own young stock.

We I started in this role I was very green to the job, but I am grateful to have been offered plenty of learning opportunities which have enabled me to become more confident and competent in my role.

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

The future of farming will likely involve a lot more technology, like precision agriculture, where sensors and data analysis help farmers make more informed decisions about things like irrigation and fertiliser use.

I'm looking forward to seeing the improvement of technology like Halter being used on beef cattle to improve pasture quality on steep hill country.

In New Zealand, I'd love to see agriculture become even more innovative and sustainable.

This could involve more research into things like regenerative agriculture, which focuses on improving soil health and carbon

sequestration.

I'd also like to see a greater emphasis on value-added products and niche markets, allowing New Zealand farmers to get a premium for their products.

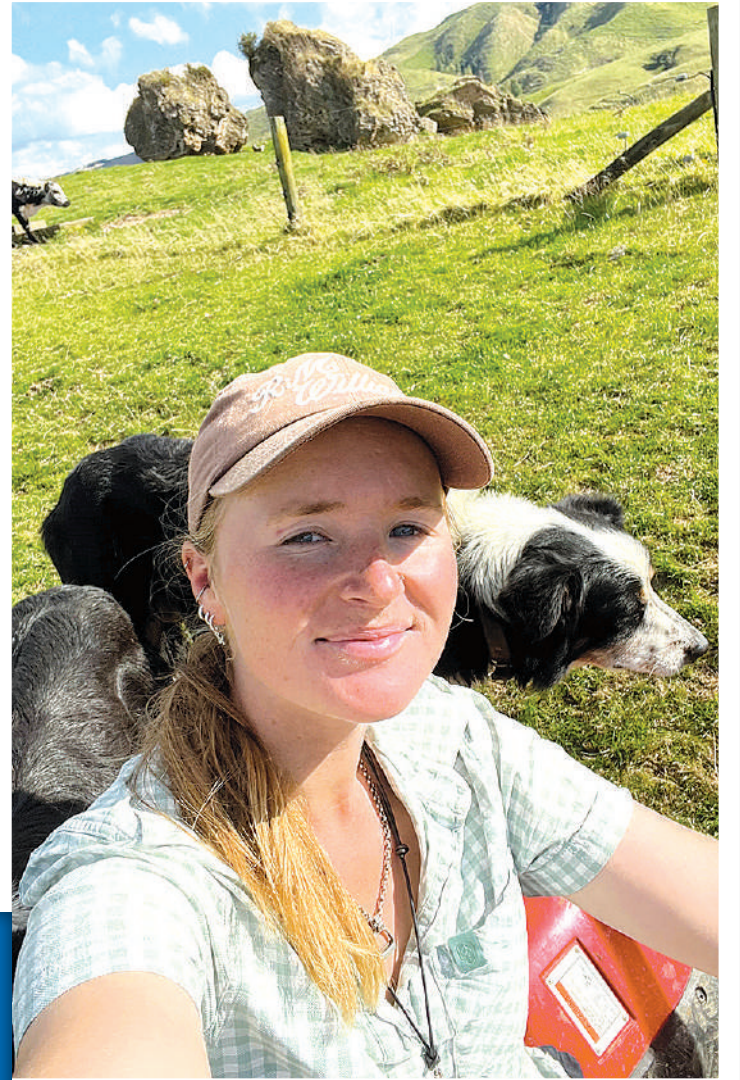
6 What are your future plans?

Once I have established myself more in the industry I would like to travel overseas and experience other agriculture systems across the globe before returning to New Zealand to and working towards owning my own farm.

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

My biggest inspiration in agriculture is my close friend and fellow Young Farmers member Marianne Lynch.

It's awesome seeing another young female succeeding in the industry and she is always pushing me to strive towards my goals.



Right - Hannah Mackay, shepherd on a Pahiatua sheep and beef farm, is forging her path in agriculture through hands-on experience and a passion sparked by a uni friend's invitation. PHOTO SUPPLIED

A couple of things are changing about ammunition and the Firearms Registry

From 24 June, 2025, changes came into effect relating to ammunition and the Firearms Registry. These help us ensure ammunition is only being sold to current firearms licence holders, and they support the smooth uptake of the Registry over the coming years. Here's what you need to know.



1. When buying ammunition, the sale will be recorded by the firearms dealer or ammunition seller

The firearms dealer or ammunition seller selling you ammunition, must record the ammunition sale in the Firearms Registry using the online Dealer Transactions form. This is a record of the sale, not a registration of ammunition.

As the licence holder, you do not need to record the ammunition you purchase. The Arms Regulations say the firearms dealer or ammunition seller needs to record the sale. This is at the time the ammunition is dispatched or handed over, or immediately after. As a licence holder, you should expect that when you purchase ammunition you'll need to assist the dealer or ammunition seller with information required for the online Dealer Transactions form, for example, your firearms licence number.



2. The first time you buy ammunition, you'll need to register all your firearms – if you have not done so already

Licence holders have an activating circumstance when they purchase ammunition from a firearms dealer or ammunition seller – if they haven't already had one. This means you will need to register all the firearms and arms items in your possession within 30 days of purchasing ammunition, if you haven't already registered your firearms.

Once you have entered your details into the Firearms Registry, you must keep your information up to date when buying or selling arms items.

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The Farmers Fast Five: where we ask a farmer five quick questions about agriculture, and what farming means to them. Today we chat to North Otago dairy farmer Sarah Crossen.

1 What did your journey into farming look like?
I had no family connection to dairy farming, I grew up on a sheep, beef and arable farm just south of Timaru. I went Dairy farming in 2016 as a relief milker then started full time farming in the 2017/2018 season.

2 Tell us a little bit about your farming operation.
I am on a dairy farm in Peebles, north of Oamaru with 1200 cows.

3 What challenges have you faced in your farming business, and how have you tackled those challenges?
Weather events like flooding have made me more resilient. Also being a female in a male dominant industry when I first started was challenging. Often you would get overlooked by contractors entering the farm because "you're just a female you possibly couldn't be capable of knowing what's happening on farm".
I got through this by showing up with a can do attitude.

4 What has been a major highlight for you in your farming journey?
My favourite memory would be keeping calves alive in a very wet spring and seeing those calves come back to the milking herd.
My proudest achievement would have to be getting into the top 5 for Canterbury North Otago Dairy Manager of the Year in 2023.

5 What advice would you have for the next generation of farmers?
Give anything a go and ask questions - have a can-do attitude.



Sarah Crossen says weather events, such as flooding, have made her more resilient.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

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Ute 2.0 tax – what’s the deal?

The recently announced Investment Boost tax deduction may have had some farmers eyeing up a new ute — especially with the recent Fieldays specials fresh in mind.

But it’s the proposed Fringe Benefit Tax (FBT) changes, since unveiled by Inland Revenue, that might have them slipping the chequebook back into the top drawer.

FBT applies to non-cash benefits provided to employees or business owners — like the use of a company vehicle — and Federated Farmers says the proposed changes could hit rural businesses hard.

The group is calling on Revenue Minister Simon Watts to urgently scrap the plans, warning they could cost farmers thousands of dollars each year.

“This could very quickly become a ‘Ute Tax 2.0’ and it seems to be being pushed through by stealth,” says Federated Farmers transport spokesperson Mark Hooper.

“Farmers will be incredibly concerned that the Government are consulting on new rules that could add thousands of dollars of additional tax payments each year.”

Hooper says the changes would unfairly punish the legitimate use of work vehicles and hit productive Kiwis in the back pocket.

“The previous Government’s Ute Tax was bad enough, but at least that was a one-off cost.

“These new FBT charges would be annual and cost farmers an arm and a leg each year.”

But the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) has addressed those concerns, saying much of the commentary is based on misunderstanding, particularly when it comes to double cab utes.

Deputy Commissioner (Policy) David Carrigan says it’s a myth that utes have always been exempt from FBT.

“Unless the use of the vehicle meets all the requirements for an exemption from FBT, then a double cab ute is, and always has been, subject to FBT. That is the current law,” Carrigan said.

IRD says compliance with the current FBT rules — especially around utes — is low, and it wants to simplify the system and encourage more consistent adherence.

Chartered accountant Andrew Puklowski, partner at Leech & Partners, says the devil is in the detail — not just for the FBT proposals but also the Investment



Federated Farmers transport spokesperson Mark Hooper says the changes to Fringe Benefit Tax would unfairly punish the legitimate use of work vehicles and hit productive Kiwis in the back pocket. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Boost.

“This investment boost essentially accelerates depreciation claims on new assets. It is a timing benefit rather than a permanent tax saving.

“While it’s generating excitement, it’s important to understand that over the life of an asset, the total tax deductions remain the same—only the timing changes.”

Puklowski says there’s a widespread misconception that all utes are automatically exempt from FBT simply because they’re used for work.

“Under current rules, a vehicle must meet specific criteria to qualify for a work vehicle exemption.”

Those rules include being sign-written with the business name, having private use explicitly pro-

hibited (except for commuting), and not being classified as a car.

“It is likely that many utes don’t strictly comply with the rules as they stand, meaning they may already be subject to FBT if there is any private use at all,” Puklowski said.

The current system bases FBT on a vehicle’s availability for personal use — not actual usage.

“It also doesn’t distinguish between minor and significant personal use.”

Proposed changes aim for a fairer and more transparent system.

One major change is increasing the deemed value of a vehicle benefit from 20% to up to 26% of a vehicle’s cost.

That means a \$50,000 ute could now carry a taxable benefit of

\$13,000 per year, up from \$10,000.

The new system would also introduce discounts for genuine business use: 100% discount for vehicles used solely for work, 65% for predominantly business use, and no discount at all for unrestricted personal use.

However, small businesses would be excluded from applying these discounts if the vehicle costs over \$80,000.

Puklowski says the idea of simplifying the rules has merit.

“Vehicles used predominantly for work will attract less FBT, while those with more personal use will pay more, creating a more balanced system.”

But he says the \$80,000 cap on small business vehicles “feels arbitrary” and risks adding to the

already significant regulatory burden faced by small businesses.

“It could result in unfair outcomes where small business owners face full FBT liability on high-cost genuine work vehicles, while larger businesses with identical vehicles benefit from discounts.

“We hope the submission process will address these concerns before the proposals become law.”

For now, farmers and business owners might want to press pause before signing off on any big-ticket vehicle purchases — or chat with their accountant first.

“Business owners should seek professional advice before making vehicle purchases to avoid unexpected tax consequences,” Puklowski said.

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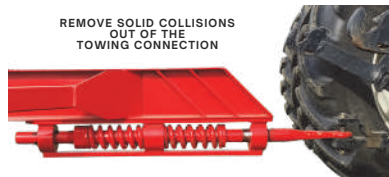
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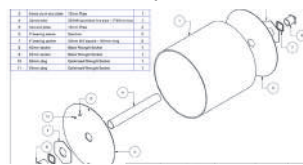


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People a core focus for new

Mid Canterbury is known for its wheat and dairy, but it's apples that are taking the stage in a new project. Construction of the 250-hectare farm in Pendarves is well under way, and the team behind it is promising huge community benefits. Anisha Satya reports.

A major boost to Mid Canterbury's community and economy is coming ... in the form of apples.

Pendarves' Torea orchard will devote 250 hectares of its coastal farmland to apple trees, starting this July.

The farm could create 450 jobs at peak season, and will need around 30 permanent staff once the trees are producing commercially viable fruit.

FarmRight pipfruit general manager Red Martin said the groundwork's already been laid.

"We've started putting the infrastructure in, which includes cultivation, trellis and irrigation prior to tree planting."

Two separate varieties are being planted on the farm: The self-named Rokit variety, and exporter T&G's



new premium apple, Joli.

The orchard will be a 50/50 split of the fruits, Martin said.

All of the Rokit-bearing trees will get planted this year, starting in July.

The Joli variety will be fully planted in 2026, and the orchard's first commercially viable back will be ready by 2028.

That's when the farm will start needing manpower, Martin said.

"The permanent workforce will

probably be around 30," he said.

"Numbers will ebb and flow throughout the year, peaking at 450."

Farmright, who manage the orchard on behalf of the NZ Superannuation fund, plan to provide more than just the jobs.

"One of the biggest challenges in labour intensive industries in NZ anywhere is the availability of beds," Martin said.

By 2026, the group will have built

onsite accommodation, with extra offsite housing coming in the following years.

"We'll put 100 beds on-site, and 200 beds off-site, so 300 in total for the development."

On top of that, they'll provide training for the job, and transportation for those without vehicles.

"One of the focusses is working with people, growing the team and providing careers as opposed to just

employing people."

FarmRight chief operating officer Gavin Tayles said the group has talked with local industry about sharing manpower over quiet periods.

"As the development becomes more well-known, we're starting to, through word of mouth, get enquiries."

The orchard will convert what was once dairy farming land, he said.

"Primarily we're looking for those

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apple orchard project

natural resources; the location, the climate, the soil, the reliability of all of it.”

Rockit and Joli apples were suited to the area in a way most apples wouldn't be.

Martin said both the land and fruit were specifically picked.

“We've gone coastal to reduce and mitigate frost risk, and the general climate for the area is really good for growing pipfruit.

“And being close to a fantastic community.”

The project is being funded by the NZ Superannuation Fund, who make investments to ensure there's money for pensions in the future.

Rural portfolio general manager Ed Tapp said Torea Orchards “rounds off” the NZ Fund's apple portfolio.

“We've already got exposure in Tasman and Hawke's Bay.”

While he's not ruling it out in the distant future, the Fund isn't looking for further development beyond Torea Orchards at this point.

But this project will boost Mid Canterbury on the whole, he said.

“It creates not just direct employment but other opportunities; it needs a lot of service industries around it as well.

Ashburton will be the main service town for employees, where they'll “get their groceries, go to church and [take up] sporting opportunities.

“We can develop that wider horticultural knowledge in the region.”

T&G Global's chief operating officer apples, Shane Kingston, said the Joli variety has been a decade in the making, with the first fruit coming out



Some of T&G's Envy apples in an orchard. PHOTO SUPPLIED

of the North Island in 2027.

“Launching a new apple like JOLI” requires extensive research and development, as well as rigorous trialling.

He said T&G is working with various interested growers in Canterbury to get more Joli in the soil.

“Canterbury provides an excellent opportunity for diversification due to its flat land availability, fertile soils, reliable water sources, drainage, adequate winter chill, favourable rainfall, and sufficient growing degree days.”

Rockit general manager commercial and general counsel Tom Lane said Canterbury was becoming a “prime region” for horticultural production.

“Canterbury offers stable weather conditions, good water supply, and the prospect of brilliantly coloured fruit for our markets across the globe.”

Rockit plans to get 600 hectares of its trees in Canterbury, having planted 20 of those on a Temuka farm in 2023.

APPLE EXPORTS ON THE RISE

According to Produce Report, data from China's customs suggests that China's fresh apple exports increased from around \$199 million in 2019, to \$282 million in 2024.

New Zealand apples make up well over half – 67.7% – of China's total apple imports for 2024.

And fruit exports are sprinting ahead in Southeast Asia's fastest-growing market, Vietnam, where apples, kiwifruit and cherries earned us \$172 million in exports.

Apple production took a hit in 2023, with Cyclone Gabrielle severely damaging or destroying around 2100 hectares worth of orchards. Some 322,108 tonnes of New Zealand apples were sent global that year.

In 2024, that number climbed to 335,363.

The numbers can be dizzying, but they represent a sector that's resilient and aware of the risks that come with growing in New Zealand.

“JOLI™ branded apples have strong adaptability that allows them to perform well across multiple regions,” Kingston said, “ensuring a diversified and resilient supply base across Aotearoa New Zealand.”

He also said Joli apples have been engineered for Asian consumers.

“Our premium [apple] is a vibrant large red apple, bursting with juiciness and providing a full-balanced sweetness, making it

ideal for sharing.

“This innovation has resulted in an outstanding new premium apple with a flavour profile that consumers across Asia are actively seeking out.”

Lane said South Island Rockit apples would be smaller than their northern counterparts.

“Fully mature fruit coming from the South Island is likely to be smaller than the apples that are harvested in Hawke's Bay and Gisborne, and with the countries we export to each having their own preferences when it comes to fruit size, being able to deliver a range of sizes is very useful.”

We'll have to wait a few years before we see the fruits of these apple growers' labour.



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Sir Graeme says 'you can't be green if you are in the red'

JANINE HOLLAND

It's been said before, but coming from Sir Graeme Harrison it packs a punch.

He's spreading the message on behalf of farmers who don't have his resources to invest in environmental initiatives.

Harrison owns Mt Alford Station and is a founding member of the Foothills Catchment Group.

Since purchasing Mt Alford 10 years ago, the 76-year-old has been on a mission to enhance and grow native bush, tussock and wetland areas.

He subscribes to Clint Eastwood's advice on ageing. "Never let the old man in."

In the 1960s the land was pretty bare with pockets of remnant bush.

By the 1980s, much of Mt Alford was burnt off and regenerating natives emerged in the 1990s. Previously dominated by exotic forestry, Harrison now mixes it up with areas of natives interspersed amongst beef and sheep production.

He describes himself as a rational optimist.

"I've arrived at optimism after looking at all the evidence."

Listening to esteemed ecologist Dr David Norton on Radio NZ several years ago seeded his strategy.

"He was talking about areas of natives inside exotics. I came home and found his research online and that's what we are doing."

Pinus radiata has been removed from former forestry blocks that are wet and wind traps.

Douglas fir has been retained as it sequesters 40 tonnes of carbon annually and does exceptionally well in the high rainfall climate.

Harrison closed off areas to livestock to recharge carex secta, protect podocarp and broadleaf remnants and a 33-hectare montane reserve, and created three red tussock wetland areas where only sheep graze.

All up 376.6ha of the 2300ha farm is now regenerating with more than 48ha in protected wetlands.

Seed is collected and propagated, many parts of the farm now no longer need planting as the bush itself is taking over.



Sir Graeme Harrison owns Mt Alford Station and is a founding member of the Foothills Catchment Group.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

But protecting and adding to what is there means tackling pests which is "a never-ending battle".

Ongoing maintenance of 150 wasp baiting stations and last year 1193 possums, 316 deer, 48 pigs and 31 goats were taken out.

All this comes at a cost, not just capital and labour, but opportunity cost.

Harrison has bought neighbouring land to provide more flat areas

for production.

"The viability of the farm has been challenged by not having more finishing land."

He is conscious his efforts are beyond the reach of many farmers, and says we need to simplify environmental investments. "We have got to make it easier and incentivise it."

While Harrison's vision is very much his own, being part of a

catchment group with other farmers has been valuable.

Getting together with his neighbours, joining field days, accessing information and listening to speakers, helps cement he is on the right path.

After years of working in the notoriously difficult meat industry, Harrison is convinced the way forward relies on working together.

"I used to have to deal with

pretty challenging circumstances and collaboration is the best, not confrontation."

As well as biodiversity protection and enhancement, the Foothills Catchment Group continues to build on the water quality data set they started three years ago.

Janine Holland is communication contributor for Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective.

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Getting ahead before the freeze

CLAIRE INKSON

As Jack Frost comes knocking at the farm gate, it's time to turn attention to preparing for winter — especially for irrigation systems.

"In winter, the biggest risk is freezing of the pipeline," says IrrigationNZ principal advisor Nick Adams.

Protecting irrigation infrastructure, he explains, is all about identifying and managing risks — a mindset most farmers already apply across their operations.

"What's the likelihood of water freezing? And if it's going to freeze every day for a month, your solution needs to be more robust."

Proper winterisation is essential to avoid damage that can be both costly and time-consuming to fix.

This includes draining irrigation lines where possible to prevent freezing, which can lead to expansion and cracking, particularly in metal pipes that don't flex.

"If you don't need your pipeline over winter, don't leave any water in it," Adams said.

Insulating exposed components can also help prevent water from freezing.

"Anything above ground is vulnerable. Wrapping exposed pipes with lagging can help shield them from the cold."

Cords should be unplugged, covered, and stored indoors.

Pumps, too, benefit from shelter.

"It's rare to see frost under a haystack, for example, but out in the open, frost forms easily," Adams said.



Left - Preparation is key when winterising irrigation systems to prevent costly damage.

Below - Protecting irrigation infrastructure is all about identifying and managing risks, says IrrigationNZ principal advisor Nick Adams.

"A roof or cover can do a lot to reduce frost damage.

"Even placing covers over air relief valves is worth considering."

It's not just ice that poses a problem — strong winds from winter and spring storms can wreak havoc on unanchored systems.

Adams recommends acting early.

"Once your pivots are packed up for winter, move them into shelter rather than waiting for a wind warning and scrambling to secure them.

"If you've got a regular pack-up spot, having tie-down points there

makes things easy."

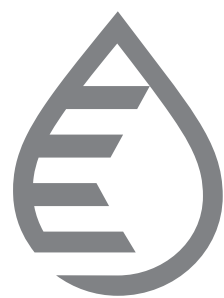
Winter also offers a great opportunity for maintenance and repairs.

"Hopefully, you've noted any issues that arose during the season — things that are tough to fix while the system is running," Adams said.

He suggests compiling a maintenance list throughout the year and contacting suppliers or field technicians early.

"Reach out to suppliers well in advance.

"That way, they can schedule work in before the busy season — and you might even get a better rate."



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Now's the time to sell dairy farms

CLAIRE INKSON

It's a dairy boom — but not as we know it.

A wave of confidence is returning to the South Island dairy property market, and farmers considering selling are being encouraged to catch the upswing.

"With interest rates easing, and high commodity prices, it's going to be the availability of land that's going to be the real challenge," says Mike Preston from Bayleys Real Estate Ashburton.

The latest Bayleys Insight Report reveals a 73% increase in dairy farm sales and a 90% lift in total land value sold across New Zealand in the year to March 31, 2025, signalling a sharp recovery from years of subdued activity.

Much of that rebound has been centred in Mid Canterbury.

Preston describes the current conditions as a "perfect storm", with a strong influx of buyers, both from within the region and beyond.

"It shows the strength of Mid Canterbury as a strong dairy area on the back of our good soils, irrigation and climate.

"We are probably the best in New Zealand at our ability to turn grass into milk."

His message to those on the fence about selling? Don't wait.

"If farmers are considering selling up, now is the time.

"There's going to be a lot of people wanting to expand or diversify into dairy. It's going to be a pretty interesting spring/summer."

Preston notes several existing Mid Canterbury dairy farmers have



Left - Bayleys Ashburton rural real estate Mike Preston believes it's the most promising outlook for dairy property in years.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

been actively buying land.

"They understand the strength of the country and how good it is.

"A number of transactions pre-Christmas were all family operations looking for expansion."

Meanwhile, some arable farmers — worn down by successive poor seasons — are eyeing dairy as a potential lifeline.

"It's certainly on their radar and has been for a while now.

"There are a couple I know of looking to try to do something, especially if they have a larger block where they can convert some of it and still have some arable and get them supporting each other.

"Obviously the dairy farmers next door are getting paid well, and

they look over the fence, and that's pretty frustrating for them."

A similar trend is playing out in Southland.

Bayleys agent Hayden McCallum expects a 5-7% rise in values for quality dairy farms over the coming year.

Improved inflation conditions, easing interest rates, and strong

payout forecasts are luring buyers — and banks — back to the table.

"We've cleared most of our top-tier listings," McCallum said.

"There are buyers who missed out earlier in the year and are now actively looking before values climb higher."

But will this resemble the wild dairy days of the 2000s? Preston doesn't think so.

It's a more measured, cautious kind of boom.

"It's not like the 2000s where you could buy a farm, put a shed on it and call it a dairy farm.

"It's certainly a lot tighter controlled, and there is still a large number of hurdles."

Conversion, he says, isn't cheap — making existing dairy units more attractive to most buyers.

"A dairy farm that is ready to go and literally just put the cups on is going to be more appealing, because the cost of converting land has become quite expensive in some situations."

And not every block is suitable for conversion.

"What we are seeing is that while some properties would appear to make an excellent dairy farm, there is still a number of boxes that need to be ticked, such as water and effluent consents — so it's not a given."

Still, Preston believes it's the most promising outlook for dairy property in years.

"The confidence is there, and we are definitely getting phone calls from existing farmers and new buyers wanting to know what's coming up."

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ANISHA SATYA

From handmilking to automatic cups, small sheds to rotating platforms – technology and dairying go hand in hand.

The New Zealand's dairy sector has come a far way from its humble, single-digit herd beginnings in the 1800s.

Machinery and innovations has played a massive role in that growth by speeding up jobs and collecting data about the cows, their home, and the environment beyond.

According to Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand, half of the country's farmers were machine milking by the 1920s.

Kiwi farmers weren't scared to invent either, with Waikato farmer Ron Sharp designing the herringbone shed in the 50s, and Taranaki farmer Merv Hicks creating the rotary milk platform two decades later.

But while technology's been around for a while, it's uptake has only really begun in the last 20 years.

MorrisonAgri's director and chemical sales representative, Robert Morris, started his dairying career straight out of high school.

"Everything was very manual for me 20 years ago," he said.

"There was automation about - while it was there, it wasn't opted for 20 years ago."

He worked some stints abroad in the UK and Australia, experiencing the breadth of dairy systems - from one with automatic milking and



Herd-i body condition scoring AI is a timesaver for farmers.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

washing, to a more "labour intensive" farm.

Since his beginnings, automation has "really gone the distance," and there's no looking back, he said.

"We need automation now, because with the amount of dairy farms or jobs about, our skilled labour just isn't enough."

Cup removers that use flow sensors, teat sprayers that prevent diseases, automated plant washers, automated feeding - the machines are everywhere.

That tech focuses on processes, but more recent tools are helping farmers collect data about their cows' health and progress.

Morris mentioned collars on cows, like the NZ-born, US-ac-

claimed Halter, which use sound and "electronic pulses" to move cows around a property.

"That also ties into the rumination and the health alerts, heat detection as well.

"It gives data to the farmer to make decisions from an office rather than having to be in ten places at once."

Another company embracing data collection, and also artificial intelligence, is Herd-i.

Their technology uses vet-supplied data to determine how healthy their animals are.

"The cameras and machine learning models can identify lameness before it is easy to spot using the human eye," chief executive Liz Muller said.

"This saves farmers the cost and milk loss associated with using antibiotics to treat lameness, and also helps prevent re-occurrence of lameness."

She said working with AI is the "next obvious step" in dairying tech.

"Kiwi dairy farmers have really embraced 'game changing' technology over the past 100 years - they have replaced horses with tractors, a bucket and stool with milking machines, manual records with a smart-phone, tailpaint with collars..."

"The best dairy farmers adopt innovation on farm at a faster rate than the general population adopts technology..."

AI systems are not meant to



LIZ MULLER



ROBERT MORRIS

replace farm staff, Muller said, but instead free them up for more important jobs.

Morris agreed that the tech's there to help, not harm.

"Dairy farmers, I believe, do love automation that is reliable.

"They are very good businessmen at the end of the day."

And the cycle continues - innovators will innovate, and their farmer client base will run their kit through the wringer.

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ANISHA SATYA

There are a few nice-to-haves when it comes to dairying: automatic washing systems, new quad bikes, and a season of stable pasture growth.

But you can't dairy farm without good people.

Whether it's skilled migrant workers, or locals brought up in the ways of the trade, it's people that make dairying a successful industry.

A DairyNZ report from 2022 places a fifth of the country's dairy cows in Canterbury – our wide plains and abundant irrigation make for a good farming fit.

The primary industries made up 29.4% of the Ashburton District's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2024, about \$931 million.

And our area has seen population growth over the last decade, largely due to immigration – in 2024, net international migration (people arriving from overseas minus those leaving NZ) was 630, and in 2023, it was 1200.

Migrant workers have become an important part of the local economy, workforce and community, Filipino Dairy Workers New Zealand chairperson, Kristine Asuncion, said.

"Just look around Mid Canterbury: it's grown remarkably not just in population, but in diversity, resilience, and opportunity.

"The number of businesses that have been established or expanded to serve our growing, multicultural community is a direct reflection of



Chairwoman of Filipino Dairy Workers New Zealand Kristine Asuncion. PHOTO SUPPLIED

that."

She said migrant workers are a vital piece in the region's dairy sector, and its succession story.

"They didn't just come here to fill jobs, they came to contribute, to belong, and to raise families in our region."

Those families have made the move, and the cards are now in Mid Canterbury's hands as to whether they'll stay.

That was one of the reasons

Asuncion, who's also the region's Federated Farmers sharefarmer chair, helped run the recent Future Ready farming event.

Around 50 farmers attended and heard speakers of a range of topics, from first homes to wills, and understanding payrolls.

Representatives from DairyNZ, the Rural Support Trust, Tavendale & Partners and more attended the gathering.

Asuncion said her first five years



Solicitor Ruth Garcia (right) spoke on the importance of setting up a good foundation before buying property. PHOTO ANISHA SATYA

of share farming were isolating.

"Farming, as beautiful as it is for us, can be very challenging at times.

"At the time, [my husband] Abner and I were young and naive, and were not aware of the support available at the time.

Connecting today's cohort of farmers with lawyers and advocates meant the cycle wouldn't repeat, or at the very least, there'd be support with times got tough.

"A well-supported dairy worker is more likely to settle long-term, invest in the local economy, enrol their children in local schools, and participate in community life.

The ripple effect is powerful: our schools stay open and diverse, our small businesses thrive, and our towns remain vibrant."

When migrant families can see a future here, they help create one, not only for themselves but for the generations to come."

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Hope on-farm, uncertainty beyond



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

With Fonterra's milk price forecast for the 2025/26 season in the double digits, the uplift in the rural property market looks set to continue as farmers consider expansion or conversions to cash in on what some are calling a potential dairy boom.

But how confident should farmers be that the good times will last?

"When we zoom out and look at the global supply and demand fundamentals, there is a reason for that optimism spreading into the new season based upon the fact that there isn't a tidal wave of milk around from global exporters, and broadly demand seems to be holding up really well from our key markets as well," says Rabobank senior analyst Emma Higgins.

Higgins says there's been significant discussion around conversions, especially in Canterbury and, to a lesser extent, parts of the South.

"As always, there will be conversations happening in local government about what those conversions look like, and whether they are in the right place."

But it's not all milk and honey.

Higgins warns that the global backdrop New Zealand dairy farmers are operating in is one of heightened uncertainty due to



Rabobank senior analyst Emma Higgins warns that the global backdrop New Zealand dairy farmers are operating in is one of heightened uncertainty. PHOTO SUPPLIED

geopolitical challenges and overall global volatility.

"The way I'm trying to communicate this with clients is that the world trade system that we have been operating under for the last 40 years is like a jigsaw puzzle we have been playing with and trying to put together."

Higgins says that what has happened in the last six months is like seeing that jigsaw puzzle being thrown up in the air.

"We don't know if all of the picture is there, and the pieces are present."

"And we are trying to put it back together at a rate of knots."

Higgins says the global trade environment is changing fast, with new headlines about trade negotiations or agreements emerging almost daily.

"And that's a really difficult operating environment when it comes to creating certainty. That's the piece that we are really watching when it comes to demand—how some of that certainty flows through to the demand picture."

She also points to historical-

ly-high commodity prices as adding another layer of complexity and uncertainty for the sector.

"We have seen butter prices nudge up to \$8000 per tonne, and whole milk powder prices sitting at roughly \$4300 per tonne, which we haven't seen since 2020."

"So how these high commodity prices translate through to the end consumer amidst this global uncertainty and a very cautious consumer environment remains to be seen."



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ANISHA SATYA

“Things are moving extremely fast.”

It seemed volatility was the only constant between speakers at this year’s DairyNZ Farmers Forum.

Economists to government officials shared their perspectives on the industry, what might impact it and what those on the ground should brace for.

Long-term strategy advisor Roger Dennis spoke on the importance of foresight, and having a well-rounded understanding of world issues.

He said getting outside of the farming circle would help farmers prepare for changes in the world they wouldn’t notice themselves.

“Things tend to be prioritised when they’re important and urgent.

“Don’t try and react, try and be proactive.”

Climate change, biological advancements, AI progression and geopolitical volatility were four key areas to watch.

Economist Brad Olsen echoed that sentiment of watching the world.

“Hope for the best, but plan for the worst, is not a bad strategy for these sorts of situa-



Left - Economist Brad Olsen.



Left below - DairyNZ chief executive Campbell Parker.

tions.”

While local milk prices and low global dairy supply was good for now, things could flip in an instant.

“Things are alright at the moment, but give it a couple of years.”

Ministry for Primary Industries deputy director general Diana Reich said amongst the ministry projects, an Indian free trade agreement was a top priority, though it’d be a tough sell due to dairy system differences.

DairyNZ’s Mark Storey, David Burger and Bruce Thorrold spoke on the economic outlook, and how new science and government per-

missions could reduce emissions and boost earnings.

The forum wrapped up with a farmer panel that bought the groundsmen up to share their thoughts on the next dairy season and beyond.

Probiotics used to help with mastitis challenges



Many farmers are using probiotics to help reduce antibiotic use for mastitis treatment. Chris Collier of Probiotic Revolution stumbled upon this breakthrough by chance. “One autumn I spotted a mob of lame cows by the cowshed of an organic farm and because there can be an association between acidosis and lameness, I suggested a 5-day treatment with a high dose of Calf Xtreme that had been used on calves. There were two mastitis cows in the group that also came right. Consequently, we formulated Bovine Boost to support cow’s natural immunity to health challenges.

John McCarty who farms at Eltham, had good results with Bovine Boost on a small sample of 5 cows in 2018. Emboldened with these results John decided to use Bovine Boost instead of dry cow therapy at drying-off. “If we saw great results during the season, why wouldn’t it boost immunity to help a potential sub-clinical case at drying-off” John explains. To make this simple and easy a separate mob was created for 5 days, and the dose was added to the water-trough twice daily. The only dryperiod mastitis John got was in untreated low somatic cell count cows. “We monitored the treated cows closely the following season and there were no issues with them, so we’ve stuck to the probiotic approach

since then.”

Another important step in the journey to boost immunity to help health pre-calving is to add probiotics to a transition diet or as a trough treatment. “This time we are not just boosting immunity, but research suggest we are cutting down on sub-clinical ketosis.” Chris explains. “And research also points to an association between calving mastitis and ketosis.” Probiotic Revolution has formulated its products based on evidence that suggests they are stimulating cow’s appetites and reduced weight losses after calving. “Instrumentation on one farm in New Zealand using Probiotic Revolutions products showed an interval from calving to first heats of as low as 24 days. This compares with a national average of 42 days.

Probiotic Revolution has made some major modifications to their milker supplement - Rumicell based on research done at Lincoln University and overseas trials. “We have always advocated the use of Rumicell to increase feed conversion efficiency, and the Lincoln trial showed us we had improved our product and allowed the price to come down to an affordable 12 cents/cow/day. In addition to paying for itself in production farmers such as John McCarty are using it to support herd health and reduce antibiotic use.



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Dorie farmer Vaughan Jones was the overall winner in the Ashburton Winter Feed competition, and also took out the fodderbeet section.

PHOTO PGG WRIGHTSON



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Winter feed winner swears by doing it old-school

CLAIRE INKSON

Vaughan Jones has done it again. For the third time, he's taken out the prestigious Ashburton A&P Association's Winter Feed Competition with his standout fodderbeet crop.

Jones credits a mix of old-school farming values and good support for his continued success.

"I have created a formula we replay every year, and I get consistent results," he says.

"Timing is very important, and I've had good support from Dan Copland from PGG. He's a very good agronomist."

Jones handles all his own drilling and cultivating—something he believes gives him the edge.

"Doing your own drilling, that's where you beat your competition. Contractors go twice the speed I do with the same gear.

"You can't do anything to make up for lack of seed population."

Jones sees the competition as a chance for connection as well as assessment.

"It's good comradery with the added bonus of getting a yield assessment thrown in," he says.

"You drive around, have lunch, have a good laugh with the reps, and it's on a casual basis — not a

formal basis—so people can just relax.

"It's good for the A&P Association, that's another association that's at risk of being forgotten."

Jones runs a substantial farming operation on two fronts: a 300-hectare dairy farm in Dorie, milking 1100 cows, which he purchased in 2013 after his parents converted it the year prior; and a 270-hectare cropping farm near the coast.

He calls it a "window of opportunity"—and a fragile one.

Jones said a change of government and rollback on eased regulations could hit the industry hard. "If National doesn't get in again, we are in deep," he said.

Regardless of political winds, one pressure remains constant: labour.

While many look to automation as the fix to the labour shortage, Jones isn't convinced.

He remains skeptical of automation as a catch-all solution.

"Automation is not automatic," he says.

In fact, technology often adds complexity for his team.

"Technology puts more pressure on staff, because you have to upskill them," he explains.

It also isn't always cost-effective. "It's funny, we've just put an auto-drafting gate in. I've had more contractors come out to fix it than

living room at four in the morning, so they don't have to get up and draft."

And that detachment, he said, carries a long-term risk.

"The biggest risk to farming is a generational loss of desire—a reluctance to get your hands dirty."

For that reason, trends like flexible milking aren't part of Jones's system.

He prefers a traditional approach, which he believes is better for the animals.

"Cows are creatures of habit. Constantly changing milking times will not benefit the cow."

Rather than relying on milking schedules to maintain condition, Jones focuses on feed management.

"Because I'm milking twice per day, I only have a 10-hour window to feed them properly. Then another 10, because there is four hours standing in the cow shed.

So, I have ten and ten to correct it — or eight and twelve. So, the pressure is on me to manage it well."

His advice for young farmers entering the industry is simple — and consistent with the philosophy he lives by:

"Don't stop working. It's money for jam if you work hard and get your hands dirty."

"The biggest risk to farming is a generational loss of desire — a reluctance to get your hands dirty"

But despite his growth, Jones says arable farming remains a tough game.

"I treat vegetables different to cropping. With carrots, onions and potatoes — those guys are always harvesting. It's the same as dairy. But crop farmers — it's twelve days a year. It's a horrendous business model."

With commodity prices and property sales on the rise, some are comparing the current climate to the dairy boom of the 2000s.

But Jones is skeptical.

He believes a more hands-on approach to farming is needed.

"We did it 15 or 20 years ago with the dairy boom. Dairy owners are now going to have to get their hands dirty."

He recalls the words of the late Roger Letham, an Ashburton farmer turned real estate agent, who told him, "The best fertiliser on a farm is the owner's footprints."

Jones agrees.

"The eye of the owner sees so much — it's called full sensory learning."

I have had on the property in the last six months.

"It cost me \$10,000, but that \$10,000 I could have paid for a worker's partner to stand there and draft my cows. And that would be more accurate. And somebody gets the money who wouldn't normally, so everyone's better off than sending money to some autodrafting company in Australia."

Jones says too much automation can distance the farmer from their land.

"They're farming from their







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The Southland Rural Support Trust Brunch on Us event last spring. PHOTO SUPPLIED

WEATHERING THE STORM

KATRINA THOMAS

What are the biggest challenges facing rural people in your region right now - on-farm or off-farm?

Contracts and Employment - change of season for dairy.

Ensuring contracts are being signed before new employees start on farm - Federated Farmers have the resources.

Winter Grazing - compliance and regulation - new policing by MPI's Animal Welfare.

Succession Planning - the importance to start early and allow for changes.

Economic - Global Dairy Trade, interest rates - looking positive for now.

Ongoing consequences from an extremely challenging Southland 2024 wet spring which brought ongoing animal health challenges, increased feed costs, culminating in

high levels of physical and mental fatigue among farm staff and workers.

Climatic difficulties affected all major farming sectors in Southland.

What does support look like in practice for your region?

Calls to 0800 787 254 are picked up by a Southland Rural Support Trust (SRST) facilitator, who passes details onto our wellness coordinator to contact.

Calls may come from an individual client or from friends, whānau, rural professionals (RP's) and community members.

We suggest that anyone thinking of calling on behalf of someone they are concerned about get their permission first to contact SRST, otherwise they can be surprised and react negatively.

Last year the SRST dealt with 93 cases, with 75% of clients being in

the 21 to 50 years age bracket. The dairy sector contributed over 50% of cases with sheep and beef farming making up another 32% of cases.

Our Wellness Coordinator, Rachael, discusses the situation with the client and work through possible options which might work for them.

Often this can be done over the phone allowing a quicker referral to support.

More complex situations, particularly where multiple parties are involved, can require visits to work through the situation and steps forward.

The SRST has a wide range of experts covering many fields of expertise to whom we refer people.

Wellness promotion is part of our work too.

We are often present at major rural events, and we will do presentations for groups and organisations

to lift awareness and encourage good wellbeing habits.

Can you share a recent moment or story that captures the spirit of your team's work?

During the 2024 Southland Wet Spring farmers were so busy doing what they could to manage the situation that the SRST realised that getting messages of support to them by usual methods wasn't going to work.

For the first time, a dedicated radio campaign (NZME - The Muster on Hokonui & Hokonui Radio) was used to let them know they were not alone dealing with the awful weather, and to get messages of support to them.

The data on the reach showed it was well worthwhile.

What upcoming events, workshops or initiatives are you planning or involved in?

Brunch on Us is a Spring catch-up in some districts around Southland. It is supported by a range of businesses as well as the farming community.

The details and locations for 2025 are in the planning stage so watch out for the dates and locations.

What message do you most want to get across to people in your region who may be finding it tough but have not reached out yet?

Establishing contact can often be the most challenging aspect for individuals experiencing stress.

Connecting with someone who comprehends their situation can and link them to specialised support and can provide significant relief.

Katrina Thomas is the Southland Rural Support Trust's social media administrator

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HARVESTING HEALTH IN N. CANTY

STUART WRIGHT

What are the biggest challenges facing rural people in your region right now – on-farm or off-farm?

Farming life has complex challenges many of which are out of the farmers control such as weather events, rising costs and price uncertainties, regulations, technology, isolation just to name a few.

Within our area farmers in the past 12 months have had to deal with drought and floods.

As with any adverse event, one positive outcome of tough times is how the communities rallied together and reached out to Rural Support Trust (RST) when they needed to, and they attended RST and industry partner events.

What does support look like in practice for your branch?

North Canterbury Rural Support Trust is a charitable organisation set up to work with individuals and rural communities in times of need.

The Trust consists of around thirty volunteer facilitators, area representatives. All understand the unique nature of rural living and farming and the issues that affect this.

No issue is too big or too small and making the call earlier rather than later is recommended.

North Canterbury Rural Support Trust can be contacted on 0800 787 254.

The Trust has an informative social media and website where you can see social events/news that assist in bringing farming communities together on a regular basis. One on one, the Trust offers a free, confidential, and independent service.



The North Canterbury Rural Support Trust Cockies Classic golf tournament in Rangiora.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

A trained facilitator will listen; help plan a way forward and connect with appropriate supportive professional agencies.

Along with the generosity of supportive sponsorship from local businesses and the generosity of private donors we can hold com-

munity related events throughout the year.

We also actively speak to community leaders or groups directly about what the main points of concern are within their areas.

We are planning two Brunch on Us events in August in Darfield and on Banks Peninsula, along with an annual golf tournament in Hawarden on July 3rd, "Cockies Classic".

We often have a presence at events that are planned by primary industries partners.

NORTH CANTY RURAL SUPPORT TRUST

The North Canterbury Rural Support Trust is part of a nationwide network supporting farmers and their families through tough times.

The trust has access to networks, services and government funding and can help people navigate their financial and personal challenges, or assist during climatic adverse events like drought, flood, or heavy snow.

Free and confidential assistance is available through the Trust's Facilitators who, like you, are rural people who have themselves faced the challenges rural life brings.

Contact is one-on-one at a place that suits you.

The North Canterbury Rural Support Trust is a charitable trust that encompasses the five District councils of Kaikoura, Hurunui, Waimakariri, Selwyn and Christchurch, including Banks Peninsula. We also support farmers on the Chatham islands.

Call North Canterbury Rural Support Trust on 0800 787 254

Calling from a cell phone? Select option #3, #4, #1

Calling from a landline? You will immediately be directed to the duty co-ordinator

Can you share a recent moment or story that captures the spirit of your team's work?

We recently held "Harvesting Health" event with four guest speakers which was very well attended by our rural community.

People stayed on afterwards chatting and comments were "This was a great opportunity to get off farm, listen to good speakers, have a good feed and chat".

Jack Cocks provided the farmers with an incredibly inspiring story.

What upcoming events, workshops or initiatives are you planning or involved in?

What message do you most want to get across to people in your region who may be finding it tough but haven't reached out yet?

Very simply, please call or email us.

Farming can be a hugely rewarding, however it can be tough and often stresses cannot be prevented or controlled.

Call 0800 787 254 for a free, confidential chat.

Stuart Wright is the North Canterbury Rural Support Trust chairperson

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MID CANTY: STRONGER TOGETHER

MATT MARR

Mid Canterbury Rural Support Trust:

What are the biggest challenges facing rural people in your region right now – on-farm or off-farm?

Mid Canterbury is a special place, full of hardworking, resilient people – but that doesn't mean life is always easy.

At the Mid Canterbury Rural Support Trust, we're seeing a wide range of challenges affecting our rural community right now – from the farm gate to the family home.

Each season brings something different, and every person's situation is unique.

Recently, well-being and employment issues have been the most common concerns.

Many people are feeling the pressure, whether it's from financial strain, staffing challenges, personal stress, or uncertainty about the future.

While Mycoplasma bovis was a major concern in recent years, that's thankfully eased as cases have dropped.

What does support look like in practice for your branch?

Support starts with a free and confidential call to **0800 787 254**. You'll be speaking with someone local who understands the realities of rural life.

Whether you're a farmer, a farm worker, or someone connected to the land in another way, we're here to listen, talk things through, and offer practical support.

You don't need to be in crisis to reach out – sometimes a conversation is all it takes to feel a bit more grounded and find the next step.

Can you share a recent moment or story that captures the spirit of your team's work?

During the very dry late summer and autumn of 2024, high country farmers in particular were doing it tough.

Our team hit the road, visiting as many farms as we could.

We brought along some kai – meals and baking – and took the time to sit down for a cuppa and a yarn.

The feedback was clear: sometimes the biggest help isn't just food or advice – it's being seen, heard, and supported.

We also saw an incredible outpouring of generosity from across the community, which made a real



Mid Canterbury is a special place, full of hardworking, resilient people – but that doesn't mean life is always easy, says Mid Canterbury Rural Support Trust chairperson Matt Marr. PHOTO SUPPLIED

MID CANTY RURAL SUPPORT TRUST

The Mid Canterbury Rural Support Trust supports the rural community to be resilient and empowered.

The Mid Canterbury Support Trust is part of a nationwide network of rural support trusts that can assist individuals and communities during and after extreme weather and other adverse events.

When circumstances beyond your control lead to a rural crisis, be it climatic, environmental, financial or personal, the Mid Canterbury Rural Support Trust is ready to assist.

Free and confidential help is available through the trust's co-ordinator.

Our experienced team of facilitators are rural people with local knowledge who have faced the challenges that rural life brings.

The trust covers the Mid Canterbury area between the Rakaia and Rangitata rivers, from ocean to the main divide, and the south side of the Rangitata Gorge.

Call Mid Canterbury Rural Support Trust now on 0800 787 254

If calling by mobile please select option 3, then option 4, and then option 2 to be connected to Mid Canterbury.

ing it tough but haven't reached out yet?

It can feel hard to ask for help – but you don't have to do it alone. A quick call to 0800 787 254 could make a real difference.

94% of the people who contact us feel less stressed afterwards. That says a lot.

Whether you're facing a big challenge or just feeling a bit overwhelmed, we're here for you – and we're locals, just like you.

Matt Marr is the Mid Canterbury Rural Support Trust chairperson

difference.

What upcoming events, workshops or initiatives are you planning or involved in?

We're hosting a community breakfast at Hotel Ashburton on 15 July. This is a chance for people who support our rural sector – from professionals to volunteers – to

come together. We're honoured to welcome Dame Sophie Pascoe as our guest speaker.

Her story of resilience and overcoming obstacles is sure to inspire.

Tickets are limited – you can find the link on our Facebook page.

We're also keen to be part of other events across the district.

If you're planning something where our presence could help – whether that's information, a speaker, or just someone to talk to – get in touch.

What message do you most want to get across to people in your region who may be find-

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RURAL SUPPORT TRUST SOUTH CANTY: IT STARTS WITH A CUPPA

JILLY HAYWOOD

What are the biggest challenges facing rural people in your region right now – on-farm or off-farm?

At recent events we asked rural people what was worrying them, using a simple dot system. The challenges are vast and varied.

For some, it is economic pressure, compliance demands, or weather events. For others, it's uncertainty around trade agreements or the complexity of succession.

Some farmers are well-equipped to weather certain storms.

Others are dealt a tough hand, with pressures stacking up.

What's common is that constant pressure affects decision-making.

Rural life is full of variables — and many are outside our control. It's not just one thing; it's the sheer volume of moving parts, all demanding attention at once.

What does support look like in practice for your branch?

Support often starts with a phone call, either directly, or from someone who's concerned.

Recently, a rural professional reached out after visiting a client who was struggling.

The drought was biting hard, feed was running out, capital stock was being sold below value, and long hours on the tractor were taking a toll.

We visited and sat round the table with time to listen.

From that cuppa and conversation, we helped the farmer make a plan.

We connected them to a counsellor and helped them access the Business Advice Fund and we kept checking in.

That same farmer later reached out to help a neighbour, and hosted a Rural Round-up to bring their community together.

That's what support looks like: one connection at a time, creating a ripple effect that strengthens the whole community.

Can you share a recent moment or story that captures the spirit of your team's work?

In July, we brought back Farm Break.

With incredible help from sponsors and 60 volunteers, 450



South Canterbury Rural Support Trust committee members (from left) Innes McMillan (chairperson), Shirley Wright (trustee), Abby France (trustee), Matt Chisholm (television personality), Jenny Bevin (former secretary), Jilly Haywood (co-ordinator) and Mark Adams (trustee).
PHOTO SUPPLIED

people came together for a night of laughter and connection.

Free buses, great food, and entertainment from The Bitches Box and a bucking bull, created a real buzz.

The essence of our work is strengthening connection, lifting spirits, and reminding people they're not alone.

What upcoming events, workshops or initiatives are you planning or involved in?

We've got a few catchups on the calendar — including Brunch on Us and an Agri Services Breakfast.

Our current focus is building readiness for adverse events; strengthening networks, maintaining links with Civil Defence and other agencies, and making sure support can be mobilised quickly.

We're reconnecting with farmer contacts, who can give us an assessment of the effects of a weather or adverse event in their district, and growing an 'army of volunteers' ready to respond, whether

to large-scale events or personal crises.

What message do you most want to get across to people in your region who may be finding it tough but haven't reached out yet?

Please don't think you're the only one finding things hard. We talk to people every week who are juggling challenges.

A small conversation can make a big difference, whether you need someone to listen, help you make a plan, or point you in the right direction (always confidential). Don't carry it alone.

We have an amazing, credible network to lean into. We may not have all the answers, but we'll walk alongside you to figure them out.

If you are worried about someone else, you can contact us about that too. Sometimes a quiet check-in is all it takes.

Jilly Haywood is the Rural Support Trust South Canterbury co-ordinator

SOUTH CANTERBURY

The purpose of South Canterbury Rural Support Trust is to assist in the building of strong and resilient rural communities.

Our trust members are local people with extensive rural knowledge and experience, we offer aid, assistance and advocacy to the South Canterbury rural community.

We are a charitable organisation that is in place to assist rural communities when they need the helping hand of those who understand and have the tools to assist.

Rural communities face a range of unique challenges and we will facilitate you receiving the support you need when hardship comes your way. We draw on our network of rural professionals, health services and providers, local and central government agencies, Civil Defence and industry advocacy groups to

provide assistance.

Our trust is a part of a nationwide network that helps when large climatic events or natural disasters occur that affect the livelihoods of those living in rural communities.

Free and confidential help is available to you or those in your community when there is a need, all you need to do is reach out.

Our experienced team are rural people that are passionate about supporting our community when times are tough and building resilience so that we are better equipped with the tools we need for when we face the challenges that farming life brings.

Call South Canterbury Rural Support Trust now on 0800 787 254

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OTAGO RURAL SUPPORT TRUST: BACKING OTAGO'S FARMERS

TOM PINCKNEY

What are the biggest challenges facing rural people in your region right now - on-farm or off-farm?

Like most regions in NZ Otago farmers are faced with pressures from outside the farm gate, most particularly for those in Otago that rely on irrigation for their farming systems the uncertainty around their ability in the future to have a sustainable business is a real concern.

Of course, there are many other areas of regulation that are being piled on farmers at the moment which just add to the pressure.

Farmers are used to unfriendly weather conditions and the ups and downs of product prices and input costs, but it is the ever increasing 'red tape' that mean farmers have to spend more money and time on unproductive activities that is so frustrating.

What does support look like in practice for your branch?

In Otago we have two wonderful co-ordinators Joc Kinney from Hyde and Gareth Isbister from Oamaru who provide face-to-face support.

We also run various events throughout the region either to raise awareness of the trust or to give the rural community ideas and motivation on how to look after themselves and their neighbours on a day-to-day basis, such things as The Time out Tour with Matt Chisholm sharing his powerful life story and how he has overcome the dark times.

For the last few years, we have run Skiing for Farmers at Coronet Peak (inspired by Surfing for Farmers which we also support).

We frequently organise and sponsor coffee carts to park in a convenient rural area to encourage farmers to get off farm for a yarn with their neighbours if only for an hour or so.

We have for a number of years had a presence at the Wanaka show offering free haircuts, which has been very popular.

Although or most important role is that response to an 0800 call, or as we describe it 'the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff', we are doing more the things described



Otago Rural Support chairperson Tom Pinckney wants farmers to know that the team is here to help and to never hesitate to reach out for help. PHOTO SUPPLIED

above which we think of as the 'fence at the top of the cliff'.

We will of course never know how many we have helped or even saved by this 'positive intervention'.

Can you share a recent moment or story that captures the spirit of your team's work?

At the Wanaka show I was approached by a dairy farmer who said "I have had tragedy in my family, and I don't know where I would be without you guys" it doesn't get much more powerful or meaning-

ful than that.

What upcoming events, workshops or initiatives are you planning or involved in?

We are planning for Skiing for farmers, not only at Coronet Peak in Queenstown but also at Ohau so our more North Otago farmers don't have to travel so far.

We are also planning a series of coffee carts; we will also be mailing out more of our collateral to RD addresses.

What message do you most want to get across to people in your region who may be finding it tough but haven't reached out yet?

We are here to help, so please don't hesitate to reach out on 0800787 254 if you or someone you know needs help, in the meantime, exercise and socialise, they say that is why golfers live longer than others!

Tom Pinckney is the Rural Support Trust Otago chairperson

OTAGO

We know that living and working rurally can be a challenge and sometimes things can get a bit too much.

If this is you, or if you're concerned for someone, then please get in touch.

The Otago Rural Support Trust is a charitable organisation set up to assist rural individuals and their families to get back on their feet following challenging circumstances such as financial, personal or climatic adverse events.

The trust has trained and experienced rural co-ordinators who are called on to provide one-on-one support in a free and confidential environment.

Our co-ordinators are happy to travel to where they are needed, so will meet at a place that suits you.

Our trustees, administrator and two co-ordinators are all farming and/or rural professionals connected to the farming industry, offering a wide range of experience and knowledge in dealing with challenging rural situations.

Please don't hesitate to contact us any time for a confidential chat about you, your business, the weather, your finances, or a neighbour, partner, friend, family member, or worker.

Call The Otago Rural Support Trust now on 0800 787 254

If calling from an Otago landline you will automatically go through to our administrator.

If calling from a mobile please then select option 3, then option 5.

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TOP OF THE SOUTH: HELPING HANDS AMID RISING PRESSURES

SARAH WHITE

What are the biggest challenges facing rural people in your region right now - on-farm or off-farm?

Top of the South is no different to other rural areas where isolation and access to services are always an issue. As with many areas, we have our fair share of droughts, floods and earthquakes. Rising production costs and regulation requirements are all making farming challenging.

Marlborough and Nelson/Tasman are very urban-based areas and there's often a disconnect and lack of understanding of the challenges rural folk face, particularly during an adverse event. We've seen market challenges in the hop industry, which are mainly in Nelson/Tasman. However, land diversification has helped spread risk.

Viticulture is facing challenges including falling international wine demand. With at least 31,000ha of vines in Marlborough, this is very concerning. We have very good quality soils, but it's now hard—if not impossible—to find spare land that isn't already planted in vines. That's tough on young farmers. I've talked to several who've moved to other areas where land is cheaper



Rural Support Trust Top of the South co-ordinator Sarah White with deputy chairperson Chris Bird firing up the barbecue at a community event.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

and more available.

I have an education background, and I believe one of the biggest challenges the industry faces is attracting and retaining youth. There needs to be a clear, attainable

training pathway in all schools—not just rural ones—and it needs to be promoted as a career that can take you places, not just something you 'fall' into. It's very short-sighted to believe farming will always

be run by the sons and daughters of current farming families. I'd love to see 'outsiders' encouraged and supported, right through to equity partnership opportunities.

What does support look like in practice for your branch?

People contact us for a range of issues—financial pressures, relationship problems, mental health struggles and everything in between. They may come through on the 0800 phone where I'll have a chat and see how we can support them. Some cases are straightforward; others are more complex. It might just mean linking them to available resources or involving one of our facilitators, who have farming/growing backgrounds.

We attend as many industry get-togethers as we can, so rural professionals know who to call if they're concerned about someone. We also sit on a couple of adverse event groups that meet regularly in peacetime — and more often during events — so farmers have a 'voice' within Civil Defence.

Can you share a recent moment or story that captures the spirit of your team's work?

One of the most successful tools we've been involved in is the Business Advice Fund. Farmers and growers under financial pressure, often during drought, have benefited from this fund. We co-funded it initially, but it's now fully funded by the main banks (Rabobank 50%).

If a farmer's bank agrees, they can access up to \$6,000 for a consultant. It's proven to be a winner—providing something tangible. I've had numerous recipients thank me, saying it's been a game-changer. If we can add something at the top of the cliff, rather than being the ambulance at the bottom, that has to be a good thing!

What upcoming events, workshops or initiatives are you planning or involved in?

We're working on a couple of farmer 'vs' grower events at the moment. We're happy to attend or do a BBQ/talk at events or workshops if it means we're seen. We haven't been as exposed to grower events as we'd like, so that's a current focus.

We support Surfing for Farmers each year and encourage those in Marlborough to give it a go—it's a great initiative. In Nelson, there's a rider's group for those keen to get together on their mountain bikes.

What message do you most want to get across to people who may be finding it tough but haven't reached out yet?

We really are here to help. Sometimes things can seem so overwhelming you can't see a way forward. As the old adage goes, "a problem shared is a problem halved." Pick a quiet time to ring. Our support is confidential and free—and it's also for farm workers, not just owners. If you can't pick up the phone, ask someone you trust to do it for you. Often, that first step is the hardest!

Sarah White is regional co-ordinator, Top of the South Rural Support Trust

TOP OF THE SOUTH RURAL SUPPORT

On any normal day, we know that living and working rurally can be a challenge. We, at the Top of the South Rural Support Trust, aim to give coordinated and personal support to rural people in the Nelson/Tasman/Marlborough regions.

The Top of the South Rural Support Trust is part of a nationwide network, working with rural individuals and their families, aiming to help solve problems relating to adverse events, financial pressures, animal welfare, or personal challenges including physical and mental health.

The trust covers all aspects of rural agribusiness; dry stock, dairy, cropping, horticulture, forestry, poultry, viticulture and rural contracting. We support all rural people - owners, managers, staff, and contractors.

In a natural disaster, such as a storm or flood, your local Rural Support Trust will be there alongside their rural communities, working with Civil Defence, government and emergency services.

Our trust is also well connected with other rural networks- rural professionals, health providers, local and central Government agencies - making the trust well placed to support rural communities.

If more than a cup of tea and a yarn is needed, we can connect with the professionals who can provide further support.

We can talk over the phone or come to you for a free and confidential chat, anytime, anywhere.

The Trust's 0800 help line is overseen by experienced co-ordinators who will help choose the right person to assist in resolving the challenge at hand.

The Trust facilitators are located throughout the region - they are rural people with local knowledge and experience who will listen and work beside you to achieve positive outcomes for you, your property and family.

Contact us today on 0800 787 254, or complete the contact form on our website to email us in confidence.

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Surfing for Farmers is just one of the many events and initiatives the West Coast Rural Support Trust is involved with.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

SUPPORT RAIN, HAIL OR SHINE ON THE WEST COAST

BECKY MARTIN

The West Coast Rural Support Trust has a small, dedicated team of Trustees, coordinator & support people dotted up & down the region.

All farming or from farming backgrounds – we understand the struggles rural people come across.

The West Coast is so geographically sparse with small pockets of communities, isolation can be a significant factor for increased stress & a barrier in getting or knowing what support is available.

Access to services can be a real challenge.

This occurs predominantly in the health sector and for employment related education & support.

If you reach out to us we can help with a confidential chat with you, and if you need further advice or support, we can assist in connecting you to people or organisations to best help you.

When the weather rolls in with a vengeance or your having personal

struggles, you may find us popping in with a hamper of goodies.

We support our rural farming communities when there are adverse events by working alongside emergency management organisations & people on the ground.

We work closely with our local rural professionals, local companies & often partner with Dairy NZ & FMG for planned events or to support our communities when needed.

We have a close relationship with Westland Milk Products & will often support events they are involved in or hosting.

They support us in sharing our events amongst the suppliers and are able to work alongside us with dairy farmers who need support.

During the spring of 2024 – it was extremely wet, EVERYWHERE.

We worked with local businesses, rural professionals & our Rural Support team to host “Spring Fever Shout” events up & down the West Coast.

This was implemented very quickly with a lot of effort from

many people. It was a chance to get out & connect with other farmers going through the same tough times.

Moana has just held their annual Swinging Udders event.

Where almost 100 attendees got together for a meal, guest speaker & spot prizes.

The most important message we want to extend to our Rural Farming people is; no matter who

you are or what the situation is, we are hear for you!

No judgement & completely confidential support.

UP & COMING EVENTS THAT WE ARE SUPPORTING

West Coast Dairy event
July 8th – Greymouth at Regent Theatre.

Interactive discussions, excellent guest speakers followed by

dinner & drinks at the Woodstock Grill. A collaboration between Westland Milk Products, Dairy NZ, Rural Support Trust & support from other industry partners.

Registration needed for catering.
Dairy NZ Calving Smart
10th July – Ikamatua Hotel, 10am–12.30pm.

Becky Wright is the West Coast Rural Support Trust co-ordinator

WEST COAST RURAL SUPPORT TRUST

West Coast Rural Support Trust is a charitable organisation set up to work with the rural community when times are tough on the farm or in the family.

West Coast RST is part of a national network of 14 trusts across the regions of New Zealand.

We are rural people with a wide range of experience and knowledge in dealing with challenging situations.

Our facilitators are trained to help find options to manage all types of rural challenges.

The trust is linked to agencies to work alongside during and adverse event and can provide you with information and assist you in getting emergency or on-going help during and after an adverse event.

OUR SERVICE IS FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL.
Call West Coast Rural Support Trust now on 0800 787 254

If calling on mobile then please select option 3, then option 3 to be connected to the West Coast co-ordinator.

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TOOLS MORE THAN TALK

CLAIRE INKSON

“A community is judged on the way it treats its weakest,” says Mid Canterbury-based mental health advocate Craig “Wiggy” Wiggins.

Wiggins’ grassroots wellbeing initiative, Lean on a Gate, may have been born during the isolation of Covid, but it’s more relevant than ever — because it’s focused on tools, not just talk.

In what has become a crowded space of mental health messages, Lean On a Gate stands out by doing more than just raising awareness, Wiggins says.

“That’s the difference with Lean on a Gate.

“We want to train people to as how to have strong communities.”

While some mental health advocates charge hefty fees to share their personal journeys, Wiggins says his approach is about community empowerment—not commercial gain.

“Rather than just charging a fee to tell our story about our own journey, we want to empower communities to be better and stronger in their own right.”

Through Lean On a Gate, a number of tools and initiatives have been created to support rural wellbeing—most notably AgriConnect.

AgriConnect equips rural professionals who are at the coal face of farming — such as agronomists, stock agents and vets — to spot the signs that someone may be struggling.

It gives them the knowledge and resources to connect people with the right help and take practical steps.

AgriConnect isn’t just a one-off event, Wiggins said.

It’s designed to spark the cre-



Wiggins’ grassroots wellbeing initiative, Lean On a Gate, may have been born during the isolation of Covid, but it’s more relevant than ever — because it’s focused on tools, not just talk. PHOTO SUPPLIED

ation of long-term, local support networks.

“We know the rural service industries are at the fulcrum of the pressure.

“They get to see when people aren’t going so well, whether it’s a client or a colleague, and they are right in the middle of it — they see those subtle changes.”

Another key partnership for Lean On a Gate is with Clubs New Zealand.

Together, they’ve launched Club Connect — a series of events hosted in clubrooms around the country, aimed at equipping locals with the knowledge and confidence to support each other.

“There are events going on all the time with Lean on a Gate.

“People just need to keep an eye on our Facebook page and website.”

Wiggins is also a familiar face at rural events and A&P shows across

the country, thanks to the Carr Family Foundation health check-up van—a mobile clinic providing free, basic health checks to the rural community.

“The health van has been amazing this year, there is a real need for that service where people can just come in, get a quick health check, and know their numbers a bit more.”

While its main focus is physical health, Wiggins says the van has opened doors for mental wellbeing too.

“When people have a bit of care given to them in a place where they are comfortable, they tend to open up inside to the van nurse, and outside to me too.”

Wiggins encourages anyone who’s worried about a neighbour, colleague or friend to take that first step and reach out.

“If you think somebody is struggling, or even if you are struggling yourself, reaching out is the most important thing we can do.”

For more information or to find an event near you, visit: www.leanonagate.co.nz

CHUR METHOD

What Is the Lean On a Gate CHUR Method?

The CHUR Method is a simple, practical way to support someone who might be doing it tough. Here’s what it stands for:

C – Connect: Reach out and check in — a friendly “how’s things?” can open the door.

H – Hear: Listen without judgment. Sometimes being there is all they need.

U – Uplift: Share a kind word or a small act of support. Little things can lighten a heavy load.

R – Reassure: Remind them they’re not alone and help them find the right support if needed.

A simple chat can change someone’s day — or even their life. So next time you’re wondering how to help, just CHUR.

NATIONAL HELPLINES

The services listed in this section are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week unless otherwise specified.

Need to talk? Free call or text 1737 any time for support from a trained counsellor

Lifeline – 0800 543 354 (0800 LIFELINE) or free text 4357 (HELP)

Youthline – free text 234, call 0800 376 633, webchat at youthline.co.nz, DM on Instagram @youthlinenz, message on Whats App 09 886 56

96.

Samaritans – 0800 726 666

Suicide Crisis Helpline – 0508 828 865 (0508 TAUTOKO)

Depression Helpline – 0800 111 757 or free text 4202 To talk to a trained counsellor about how you are feeling or to ask any questions

Anxiety NZ – 0800 269 4389 (0800 ANXIETY)

Healthline – 0800 611 116 Health advice from professional healthcare providers

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THE BIG DAMPENER

KATHRYN WRIGHT

The rain and freezing fog usually arrive right about now, and sometimes doesn't let up until spring. Day after day, it can be cold and wet, and a lack of sun can mean that all duties on-farm feel hard.

In severe cases, there can be an exponential loss of stock, particularly newborn lambs, and sometimes severe flooding resulting in damage to infrastructure and fencing.

But the hardest thing to pinpoint and to solve can be the dampening of spirits.

Farmers that I speak to can get pretty downcast about poor weather – exasperated by low commodity prices, high interest rates, and a general feeling of gloom around the future of farming.

Who can blame us? It can be so dismal. So, what can we do?

I've read a lot of advice about this, and mostly I think we're getting it right.

The number one thing you can do if you're struggling is to talk to someone.

It doesn't have to be about your "feelings and emotions"; just shoot the breeze with someone you like well enough.

About seven minutes of meaningful connection will instantly pick your mood up.

Secondly, ensure that you are addressing the basics – are you getting enough sleep? Are you eating well? Are you moving your body? Do you try to find other ways than alcohol to offload stress?

But how can we be ok with something that we are inherently not ok with?

Our minds are built to try and solve problems – but when something is unsolveable, like endless rain and fog, sometimes the best

solution is to accept the situation the way that it is without trying to change it.

The situation will be the way that it is, if you have feelings of anger and frustration around it, or if you do not.

By accepting what is, your feelings of frustration, anger, helplessness or whatever comes up for you WILL reduce.

This does not mean being fine with or resigning yourself to the situation.

When we drop the struggle of frustration over how things "should" be, we are more likely to be able to accept the facts of the situation.

This in turn will make it more likely that you can move forward in the way that you choose.

This is an active response that feels counter-intuitive at first, but if nothing else has worked so far to help with your difficult thoughts over the situation, what have you

got to lose?

"Showing up" for this experience means doing what has to be done and not denying whatever thoughts, emotions and feelings arise – it may feel uncomfortable at first, but it will help your mind to be clear enough to actually deal with your sodden winter reality, instead of pushing things away or getting angry at your family/workers.

Acceptance doesn't have to mean being ok with something.

It doesn't mean that you like it or want it.

Accepting something that we cannot control is to have willingness to experience what just is.

Know that you are doing a good job – a hard job with sometimes very little thanks, and a long spell of poor weather feels like a kick in the teeth.

Often, there is comfort in knowing that there is a shared or common experience of suffering.

There are a lot of you all in the same predicament. You are not alone in your frustration.

Finally, remember why you do what you do.

You're a farmer and you probably became a farmer because you are passionate about the outdoors/animal care/not being stuck in an office/caring for the land/farming lifestyle/raising children on a farm/etc.

Whatever the combination is for you, there are important values underpinning the reasons why you farm.

Never lose sight of this.

You're still here and you're still trying to make the best of the situation because there are more important things at play for you – your life values as a farmer, a parent, a neighbour or friend.

Kathryn Wright
Registered counsellor MNZAC
www.kathrynwright.co.nz

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HERS NOT HIS

Girls And Their Utes

In rural New Zealand, a woman's ute is more than just a vehicle — it's a steel-clad sidekick. A mud-splattered multitasker.

Where city women sling on a handbag, rural girls chuck it all in the tray and hit the road.

The ute is where practicality meets power, where grit meets gumboots.

It's the rolling embodiment of the Kiwi "get stuck in" attitude — the same energy that built sheds, wrangled stock, raised kids, and still made it to the rugby club fundraiser with a pav in the backseat. It's no wonder we love them.

Need to tow a float, a trailer, or a boat at the weekend? The ute's got it.

Need to collect the kids, the dogs, a hay bale or two — plus swing by the vet and the bottle store? No worries.

We grew up on tales of Barry Crump bouncing through the bush in a battered Toyota, and we still say "Bugger" when things go sideways.

But the modern ute isn't just a boy's toy anymore. Women are behind the wheel — and behind the wheel of the sector, too. You'll find more girls in gumboots than ever these days, backing trailers like pros and keeping the country fed.

So here's to the girls in utes.

The ones shifting stock, shifting expectations, and making shifting gears look easy.

The ones who laugh at potholes, ignore the mud on the floor mats, and wouldn't be caught dead without a tow rope, a coffee, or a tube of lip balm in the console.

For rural women, the ute isn't just a vehicle — it's a lifestyle.



CLAIRE INKSON

NAME: Claire Inkson

WHERE AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?

I'm not farming — just wrangling deadlines and chasing stories instead.

I'm a farmer's daughter turned editor of Rural Guardian — so I'm still in gumboots more than heels. I've spent most of my life on a farm in North Canterbury — so my rural roots run deep.

WHAT YEAR, MAKE AND MODEL IS YOUR UTE?

She's a 2024 Ford Ranger XLT, and I'm unashamedly in love.

Big thanks to Gluyas Motor Group in Ashburton — they matched me with the perfect set of wheels for rural reporting and rugged back roads.

She's sleek enough for turning heads in town but built tough for gravel, dogs, and gear in the tray.

She's not just a ute — she's a sidekick, a work horse and all round legend, and she always sparks a conversation when I roll up at a farm gate.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FEATURE OR QUIRK?

She's a princess on the road and a queen in the mud.

Effortlessly smooth on the highway, but throw her at a dodgy track and she eats it for breakfast.

She's got grunt when I need it, comfort when I want it, and somehow still looks stunning even when she's covered in dog hair and dust.

And I love that the console fits my entire life — notebook, lip balm, and emergency snacks. She's a girl after my own heart.

WHAT'S ALWAYS ON YOUR PLAYLIST?

Taylor Swift (embarrassingly) when the sun's shining — nothing like a bit of Karma with the windows down. But when the day calls for something tougher, it's Stevie Nicks and Fleetwood Mac all the way. There's a special kind of magic in driving through the high country with The Chain blasting and the hills rolling by.

WHAT'S THE ULTIMATE ROAD TRIP SNACK?

Coffee and Diet Coke — preferably together, definitely in large quantities. I call it balanced journalism fuel.

WHAT'S ALWAYS ROLLING AROUND IN THE BACK SEAT OR TRAY?

Gumboots, a Swannndri, at least one camera (usually two), and sometimes an alaskan malamute on the back who thinks he's in charge. Which, to be fair, he probably is.



PIP MURPHY

NAME: Pip Murphy

WHERE ARE AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?

I'm located in Alexandra, I'm farming dairy, sheep and beef out Maniototo area.

I am also studying for my vet nursing diploma.

I'm a solo Mum of two boys and I admin a club called Chics Off Road 4x4 (New Zealand and Australia).

I manage the Otago region organising trips for women to get out their four wheel driving/camping and en-

joying each others company and empowering ladies that we too can do these things one track at a time!

WHAT YEAR, MAKE, AND MODEL IS YOUR TRUSTY UTE?

I drive a 2017 Toyota Hilux TRD.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FEATURE (OR QUIRK) ABOUT YOUR UTE?

My favourite feature of my ute is the leather seats makes for a quick clean-up with kids and mud.

WHAT SONG IS ALWAYS ON YOUR

PLAYLIST WHEN YOU'RE BEHIND THE WHEEL?

There's always some Chris Stapleton playing.

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE ROADTRIP SNACK WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON THE FARM OR HEADING TO TOWN?

Droëwors (like beef jerkey mixed with salami in a stock) and mini biscuits! Usually Mallowpuffs.

WHAT'S ALWAYS ROLLING AROUND IN THE BACK SEAT OR TRAY?

Tetravet, a headlamp, horse halters and ropes and spare clothes!



Girls in utes? You beaut.

At Rabobank, we support the women driving farming forward.

As a specialist agri-bank we're proud to support the Dairy Women's Network and champion the incredible women making a difference in rural communities every day.

Find out more about the rural initiatives we support at rabobank.co.nz





HERS NOT HIS

Girls And Their Utes

JENNIFER SAUNDERS

NAME: Jennifer Saunders

WHERE ARE AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?
Bay of Plenty and Waikato- Dairy and Beef

WHAT YEAR, MAKE, AND MODEL IS YOUR TRUSTY UTE?
2022 Sr5 Hilux

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FEATURE (OR QUIRK) ABOUT YOUR UTE?
My other half had it custom painted hot pink for me, never seem to lose it in a parking lot.

WHAT SONG IS ALWAYS ON YOUR PLAYLIST WHEN YOU'RE BEHIND THE WHEEL?
Ain't Going Down Till the Sun Comes Up - Garth Brooks

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE ROADTRIP SNACK WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON THE FARM OR HEADING TO TOWN?
Coke no sugar and beef jerky

WHAT'S ALWAYS ROLLING AROUND IN THE BACK SEAT OR TRAY?
My working dog Scout and my french bulldog, Max (who identifies as a blue heeler) and probably a standard or two.



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HERS NOT HIS

Girls And Their Utes

JESS MCKEE

NAME: Jess McKee

WHERE AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?

Howdy, My name is Jess. I contract milk 230 dairy cows, just outside of Matamata in the mighty Waikato!

WHAT YEAR, MAKE, AND MODEL IS YOUR TRUSTY UTE?

I've got a filthy 2015 Holden Colorado, she's kissed more posts than I can count but she goes like the clappers, she's solid as all hell, will tow anything and loves muddin' on farm.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FEATURE (OR QUIRK) ABOUT YOUR UTE?

As soon as the temp drops under 5 degrees, the 'rado becomes my get the cows vehicle. The heater on her would singe the skin off a muddy pig and she never misses a beat. I've had that thing stuck more times than I care to mention, but a bit of mud from every place I go sits lovingly on her like a tattoo you'll never regret.

My favourite thing about this Ute is the looks I get from the number plate and the constant jokes I make when Im reversing, cause theres nothing like yelling WANNA DO IT REVERSE COWGIRL every time I have to back out of or into something!

WHAT SONG IS ALWAYS ON YOUR PLAYLIST WHEN YOU'RE BEHIND THE WHEEL?

This beast runs on country music

more than it runs on diesel, and you'll always hear a banger country tune coming from the stereo. Picks of the week on the country playlist include Randy Travis, some Lainey Wilson and a bit of Riley Green.

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE ROADTRIP SNACK WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON THE FARM OR HEADING TO TOWN?

Theres always a four shot long black or a purple V slinging around in the drink holder and enough pie wrappers to feed the ants when they make camp.

WHAT'S ALWAYS ROLLING AROUND IN THE BACK SEAT OR TRAY?

The woofs love a ride on the tray, where they have to find a spot to ground themselves between standards and reels, empty metabolic bags, bits of wire, fencing tools and some empties that keep piling up.

On the inside she smells like shit, has enough vet drugs to warrant a vet licence and enough needles and syringes that a cop would give me a side eye if I was pulled over. You can find a bog roll in the glove box, and tampons in the ash tray for cases of emergency when one of the kids gets a blood nose. I reckon there's probably 100 bucks of coins floating around in there somewhere too and a few AB gloves just in case.

I swear I'll cry when this thing dies, but with only 240,000 clicks on her, she's got a lot of life left



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HERS NOT HIS

Girls And Their Utes

RACHEL WORTH

NAME: Rachel Worth.

WHERE AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?

We are farming in the Catlin's in South Otago. We are sheep and beef farmers.

WHAT YEAR, MAKE, AND MODEL IS YOUR TRUSTY UTE?

We have a 2020 Mitsubishi Triton black edition.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FEATURE (OR QUIRK) ABOUT YOUR UTE?

Even though you can't see it in the photo I love the snorkel, makes her look tough as.

What song is always on your playlist

when you're behind the wheel?

We love anything country but my favourite song at the moment is Lady Gaga - How Bad Do You Want Me.

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE ROADTRIP SNACK WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON THE FARM OR HEADING TO TOWN?

Favourite snack for road trips has got to be chips and dip and maybe some fruit if we are feeling healthy!

WHAT'S ALWAYS ROLLING AROUND IN THE BACK SEAT OR TRAY?

Probably always find a dog in the back or some stray bullets after a hunting trip with my girlfriends!



EMMA ASHWORTH

NAME: Emma Ashworth

WHERE AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?

I live in Cheviot, North Canterbury and work on a stud sheep and trading cattle farm.

WHAT YEAR, MAKE, AND MODEL IS YOUR TRUSTY UTE?

I drive a 2014 Toyota Hilux.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FEATURE (OR QUIRK) ABOUT YOUR UTE?

I love the colour matching bullbars and everyone seems to know it's me.

WHAT SONG IS ALWAYS ON YOUR PLAYLIST WHEN YOU'RE BEHIND THE WHEEL?

Anything, but country plays the majority of the time.

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE ROADTRIP SNACK WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON THE FARM OR HEADING TO TOWN?

Love some snakes or the odd raspberry liquorice with chocolate.

WHAT'S ALWAYS ROLLING AROUND IN THE BACK SEAT OR TRAY?

The dogs are usually rolling around in the box somewhere.



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HERS NOT HIS

Girls And Their Utes

COLENE McBRIDE

NAME: Colene McBride

WHERE ARE AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?

I run a leased dairy farm in Okato, Coastal Taranaki, milking 165 ayrshires, friesians & dairy reds (collective name for normandes, milking shorthorns, fleckviehs & viking reds - a herd of licorice allsorts!

I work for my parents, who run the home farm right next door.

June 1 saw me start my 21st season.

WHAT YEAR, MAKE, AND MODEL IS YOUR TRUSTY UTE?

She is a 2020 Ford Ranger FX4, 2litre BiTurbo who goes by the name of Fexxy.

From rounding up the cows on a morning that the Honda won't start, to stacking the tray full at the local Farm Source of animal feed to keep the critters happy, to firewood and pine cone duty, to road tripping to check out all the beautiful out-of-the-way spots New Zealand has to offer, she doesn't miss a beat.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FEATURE (OR QUIRK) ABOUT YOUR UTE?

I'd have to say my favourite



feature is the comfort ... doesn't matter if you are driving 15km down a bumpy farm track or 500km along tarmac, gravel and dirt, she's a comfy wagon to drive ... I also like being able to tell people I have a jelly fish launching button (2020 onwards Ford Ranger drivers will know what

I'm talking about haha).

WHAT SONG IS ALWAYS ON YOUR PLAYLIST WHEN YOU'RE BEHIND THE WHEEL?

Recently its been Hurt by Dead Poets Society ft The Warning, but generally I just stream The Rock FM if service allows.

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE ROADTRIP SNACK WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON THE FARM OR HEADING TO TOWN?

Can't beat a bag of Natural Confectionary Company snakes! Or good ole Werthers Originals!

WHAT'S ALWAYS ROLLING AROUND IN THE BACK SEAT OR TRAY?

In the tray - dog leads. In the back seat - hiking boots, just in case you spy a track you want to have a look at whilst on the road!



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HERS NOT HIS

Girls And Their Utes

MEL HILL

PHOTOS SUPPLIED

NAME: Mel Hill

WHERE AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?

We have a lifestyle block in Toko Taranaki.

I'm a district nurse and love working in our rural communities and my husband is a stock truck driver.

WHAT YEAR, MAKE, AND MODEL IS YOUR TRUSTY UTE?

Padrick the Pajero is an oldie but a goodie. He's a 1997 classic.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FEATURE (OR QUIRK) ABOUT YOUR UTE?

A quirk about him is his faulty heating system so I'm well rugged up on our frosty Taranaki mornings. You'll see me chugging along with my woolly merino gloves and possum fur hat.

WHAT SONG IS ALWAYS ON YOUR PLAYLIST WHEN YOU'RE BEHIND THE WHEEL?

My favorite playlist is my kids and Jack Russell singing as Padrick's stereo doesn't work either!

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE ROADTRIP SNACK WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON THE FARM OR HEADING TO TOWN?

We always have classic Whittakers chocolate in his glove box and plenty of dog treats for any dogs we come across on our adventures.



WHAT'S ALWAYS ROLLING AROUND IN THE BACK SEAT OR TRAY?

The backseat always has spare loo rolls, tie downs, a spade and an assortment of tools and on special occasions a bridesmaid or two.

BRIDGET MOFFITT

NAME: Bridget Moffitt

And the places the Surf has taken me.

WHERE ARE AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?

I'm dairy farming in Elgin, Ashburton, but I'm more interested in the machinery/vehicle side of farming.

WHAT SONG IS ALWAYS ON YOUR PLAYLIST WHEN YOU'RE BEHIND THE WHEEL?

The gambler - Kenny Rogers and East side of sorrow - Zach Bryan

WHAT YEAR, MAKE, AND MODEL IS YOUR TRUSTY UTE?

A 1993 Toyota Hilux Surf

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE ROADTRIP SNACK WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON THE FARM OR HEADING TO TOWN?

Fabulicious raspberry twisters

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FEATURE (OR QUIRK) ABOUT YOUR UTE?

Some days the radio won't play and the next day the radio will play but the speakers won't work!

WHAT'S ALWAYS ROLLING AROUND IN THE BACK SEAT OR TRAY?

Phone chargers, gumboots, and long lost containers from the kitchen.



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HERS NOT HIS

Girls And Their Utes

KRIS DAVISON

NAME: Kris Davison

WHERE ARE AND WHAT IS YOUR JOB?

I am based in Surrey Hills and I cover the Mid & South Canterbury area delivering Mighty Mix Dog Food.

WHAT YEAR, MAKE, AND MODEL IS YOUR TRUSTY UTE?

She is a 2024 Toyota Landcruiser V8

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FEATURE (OR QUIRK) ABOUT YOUR UTE?

My favourite feature is the power. When she is fully loaded and with towing a trailer she has got plenty of go.

There is no bells and whistles in it but I wouldn't want to be driving anything else.

WHAT SONG IS ALWAYS ON YOUR PLAY-

LIST WHEN YOU'RE BEHIND THE WHEEL?

This is very hard to answer, there are so many to choose from.

At the moment, Keeping Your Head Up - Birdy.

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE ROADTRIP SNACK WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON THE FARM OR HEADING TO TOWN?

Mandarins and a protein bar if I get caught short.

There is a bag of Oddfellows floating around in the glovebox too.

WHAT'S ALWAYS ROLLING AROUND IN THE BACK SEAT OR TRAY?

Brake fluid for the trailer, windscreen cleaner concentrate, gloves for handling the diesel pump and an adjustable crescent spanner.



KATIE DAVIES

NAME: Katie Davies

WHERE ARE AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?

I farm beefies in the Bay of Plenty.

WHAT YEAR, MAKE, AND MODEL IS YOUR TRUSTY UTE?

I drive a 2013 Toyota Hilux.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FEATURE (OR QUIRK) ABOUT YOUR UTE?

My favourite feature is I love that her tyres eat mud.

Her quirk is that the fuel light is bro-

ken and never fixed.

WHAT SONG IS ALWAYS ON YOUR PLAYLIST WHEN YOU'RE BEHIND THE WHEEL?

Iris by the Goo Goo Dolls.

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE ROADTRIP SNACK WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON THE FARM OR HEADING TO TOWN?

Coffee and an egg muffin.

WHAT'S ALWAYS ROLLING AROUND IN THE BACK?

My gumboots and recovery kit.



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HERS NOT HIS

Girls And Their Utes

JORDAN BARLOW



Jordan Barlow and daughter Natalia with her 2006 Hilux.

PHOTOS SUPPLIED

NAME: Jordan Barlow

WHERE ARE YOU AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?

Darfield. I'm not farming but I use my trusty ute to get my two horses around!

WHAT YEAR, MAKE, AND MODEL IS YOUR TRUSTY UTE?

I drive a 2006 Toyota Hilux SR5

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FEATURE (OR QUIRK) ABOUT YOUR UTE?

That it is a manual! (and the camo pink seat covers).

WHAT SONG IS ALWAYS ON YOUR PLAYLIST WHEN YOU'RE BEHIND THE WHEEL?

Zach Bryan - Something in the Orange

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE ROADTRIP SNACK WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON THE FARM OR HEADING TO TOWN?

Pork crackle

WHAT'S ALWAYS ROLLING AROUND IN THE BACK SEAT OR TRAY?

What's not rolling around in there? The mess of three small children!

CHARLIZE SMITH

NAME: Charlize Smith

WHERE AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?

I farm just outside of Oxford on a dairy farm.

WHAT YEAR, MAKE, AND MODEL IS YOUR TRUSTY UTE?

My ute is a Sr5 2008 Toyota Hilux.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FEATURE (OR QUIRK) ABOUT YOUR UTE?

My favourite feature is the sisterhood sticker!

WHAT SONG IS ALWAYS ON YOUR PLAYLIST WHEN YOU'RE BEHIND THE WHEEL?

The song that is always on is Morgan Wallen's new song Dark till Daylight.

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE ROADTRIP SNACK WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON THE FARM OR HEADING TO TOWN?

Ultimate snack in the ute is a block of honeycomb Whittaker's chocolate.

WHAT'S ALWAYS ROLLING AROUND IN THE BACK SEAT OR TRAY?

A thing that's always rolling around in the back seat is a can of tetravet, you never know when you will need it!



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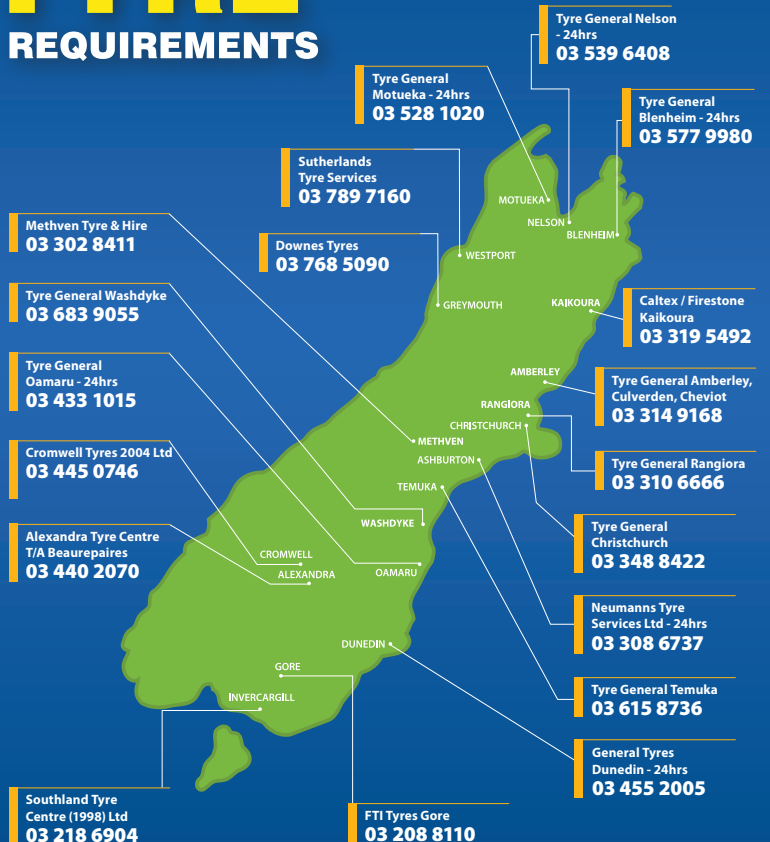
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A recipe for a legacy

100 YEARS OF RURAL WOMEN NEW ZEALAND



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Get a cluster of rural women together over a cup of tea (or wine, for that matter), and they usually end up changing the world.

That's exactly what happened in 1925, when a group of women were left to their own devices while their husbands attended a Farmers Union conference.

What they saw was a unique set of challenges facing rural women — isolation, limited access to health-care, and a general lack of support.

So, they decided to act.

By the time the conference ended, 16 women had founded the Women's Division of the Farmers Union (WDFU), later renamed Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ).

They got straight to work.

The group's first secretary, Mabel Johnson, handwrote and sent out 2000 letters inviting rural women across the country to join.

Just one year later, 100 women gathered for the organisation's first conference.

"When we talk about honouring our heritage as an organisation that's 100 years old, it's important to look back at the journey that we have had



Left - The first conference of what was then the Women's Division of federated Farmers in 1926. PHOTOS SUPPLIED

and remember why we were set up in the first place," RWNZ national president Sandra Matthews said.

Funding was a challenge from the beginning — but the solution came straight from members' kitchens.

"The fundraising legacy started with a cookbook," Matthews said.

"They sold 11 editions from that first idea of a cookbook and around 60,000 copies."

In 1933, RWNZ launched a regular publication that would go on to become the Country Woman magazine.

"During the war, they kept producing that at a loss so members could stay informed with what was happening around the country around World War Two."

It was during the war that Rural Women found their strength.

Affiliated with the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) since 1935, the organisation began producing woollen goods for the Merchant Navy.

"They also raised around £5000 in one month to fund a Spitfire, and that plane was inscribed with WDNZFU."

"One month to raise £5000 — that was just unheard of back then."

In the 1950s, RWNZ purchased properties and converted them into resthomes to provide respite care for rural women, with fees subsidised for those in need.

The 1960s brought a tide of cultural and societal change, and RWNZ embraced it.

"They started to champion equal pay — which is an interesting topic at the moment," Matthews said.

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Left – The founding members of Rural Women New Zealand.

Right – The organisation successfully fundraised for a Spitfire aircraft to help the war effort during World War Two.

Below – Advocacy became a focus for Rural Women New Zealand in the 1960s.



They advocated for improved maternity care, family planning, access and rural safety – everything to do with women’s rights and wellbeing.

“And we are still advocating for those today.

“That was the ‘60s, and we are still talking about it, we are still trying to get equality in those areas today.”

In the 1970s, the focus widened again: mental health, GP shortages, domestic violence — issues still critical in rural communities today.

The organisation also began fundraising for research into a vaccine for leptospirosis, sparking an ongoing partnership with Massey University.

“In the 1970s, RWNZ started fundraising for leptospirosis research for a vaccine, and we are still in partnership with Massey

University today – we still research and fundraise around that.”

It was also in the 1970s that a new guiding principle began to emerge.

“The 1970s was also when the organisation started talking about the concept ‘service simply given’ – something that remains at the heart of the organisation today.

It means you are in service to the community, and you don’t question why you do it, you just do it because you know it’s the right thing to do, and you don’t ask for reward.”

Over the past century, RWNZ has played a crucial role in supporting rural communities in times of crisis.

“In the aftermath of the likes of the Christchurch earthquakes and Cyclone Gabbrielle, RWNZ was in there boots and all right at the start to support the rural communities



that were being affected.”

In 2014, the organisation sold Access Home Help, releasing funds that continue to sustain its work today.

Those funds now support community grants, school garden

initiatives, long-term rural support programmes, and operational costs.

“What I’ve found reflecting and gathering information around what RWNZ has done over the last 100 years is that it’s pretty amaz-

ing – and we haven’t sung it from the rooftops.

“One of the things the centennial can do is show people out in rural communities and primary industry understand the impact and importance of RWNZ,” Matthews said.

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100 years

A 'REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENT'

NICOLA GRIGG

As the Minister for Women and Associate Minister of Agriculture it gives me huge pleasure in congratulating Rural Women Zealand on reaching 100 years of supporting and uplifting rural women.

This is a remarkable achievement that cannot be understated.

I want to personally thank all women across the country who have contributed towards their mission.

Rural women are the backbone of the New Zealand economy and the country. To put it simply, New Zealand wouldn't be the same without them.

Anyone who is lucky enough to have a rural woman in their life should join me in celebrating them.

When I visit people who work in the primary industries around the country, I am utterly inspired by the work going on in our communities, particularly by our rural women.

They are integral to the success of the sector and raising the next generation of up-and-coming leaders.

I am enormously privileged to have grown up on a sheep and beef farm in Mt Somers, right here in Mid Canterbury, so rural New Zealand will always have a special place in my heart.

I am now in the position of being able to bring a rural woman's



Nicola Grigg (third from right) visits the Rural Women New Zealand site at National Fieldays in June. Pictured (from left) Sandra Faulkner from Federated Farmers, National MP Dana Kirkpatrick, Rural Women New Zealand national president Sandra Matthews, National MP Catherine Wedd and Rural Women New Zealand board member Annette Marr. PHOTO SUPPLIED

voice to Parliament and champion the women who live and work rurally.

It is the best part of my work as a parliamentarian.

I am delighted that Budget 2025 includes a \$250,000 investment into Rural Women New Zealand to

recognise the valuable work of the organisation.

I'd like to thank all members who juggle multiple roles in supporting your communities and shining a light on rural issues.

Thank you for helping drive the direction, resilience, and wellbe-

ing of our rural communities.

I look forward to seeing all the great things that are achieved in the future.

It was wonderful to chat to the amazing team at Rural Women New Zealand at Fieldays this year.

They continue to inspire me,

and everyone around them.

Once again, a huge congratulations.

Nicola Grigg is Minister for Women and Associate Minister of Agriculture






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RWNZ to celebrate

100 YEARS OF GRASSROOTS IMPACT



CLAIRE INKSON

Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) will be blowing out the candles this July as the organisation celebrates 100 years of grassroots community support and advocacy.

Celebrations will take place all year across the country, with each branch marking the milestone in its own unique way.

“Canterbury will be celebrating at a grassroots level to reflect the strength of our local branches and the vital contribution of our heritage members,” says Winchmore branch’s Frances Beeston, a Canterbury regional leader who was elected to the RWNZ board last year.

Local highlights include the Regional Centennial Conference on July 24 in Ashburton, and a Mid Canterbury Centennial Garden Party on November 7 — just two of many events planned to honour the organisation’s legacy.

The centennial is also a timely opportunity to welcome new members into the fold.

“Younger women often think they need to wait until later in life to join, but now is the time,” Beeston said.

RWNZ offers meaningful leadership experiences, personal growth, and strong community connections.

“Whether you’re passionate



RWNZ Canterbury regional leader and national board member Frances Beeston said the RWNZ centennial year is a great time for new members to become involved. PHOTO ASHBURTON GUARDIAN

about wellbeing, rural resilience, environment, rural health care, or education, there’s a place for you to get stuck in and make a difference.”

Beeston says RWNZ members are known for being supportive and inclusive, describing members as “a welcoming bunch”, and you

don’t have to be farmer, or even live rurally to join.

“It’s for those who are rural at heart – meaning they could be a farmer or work in the rural service sector or were raised on a farm or went and visited a friends farm as a child, or maybe you just love animals and rural New Zealand and you want to be a part of it.”

Beeston joined RWNZ after aging out of the Hinds Young Farmers Club, and found a vibrant, like-minded community in the Winchmore branch — known for its active spirit and younger membership.

“After Young Farmers, I missed having a network that ‘got’ rural life — and RWNZ gave that back to me.”

She encourages women to find a group that suits their stage of life and interests.

“Not every group looks the same – there are branches, dinner groups, interest groups, online, - some are more social, others are service- or advocacy-focused.”

And if there isn’t a local branch that feels like the right fit, Beeston said there’s always the option of starting something new or connecting regionally or online.

“It’s about having a voice. Whether that’s through local initiatives or national advocacy, RWNZ gives rural women the opportunity to make a real difference — not just in their own communities, but across New Zealand.”

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Canterbury RWNZ Centennial Celebrations - 2025-2026

2025

- July 4 - Kick-Off Function (South Canterbury)
- July 24 - Regional Centennial Conference (Ashburton)
- September 11 - Anama Branch Social Function
- October 17 - Garden Visit (Darfield)
- November 1 - South Canterbury Centennial Garden Party
- November 7 - Mid Canterbury Centennial Garden Party
- December 9 - Amuri Centennial Garden Party

2026

- February - Lynnford Branch donates a commemorative seat to Longbeach School
- February 18 - Winchmore Branch Ladies' Dinner
- June 27 - South Canterbury Gala Evening



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100 years of

CHAMPIONING RURAL COMMUNITIES

CLAIRE INKSON

For 100 years, Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) has been quietly yet powerfully shaping the heart of rural life — and now, the organisation is preparing to celebrate a century of connection, advocacy, and grassroots action.

“It’s a real milestone — not just of longevity, but of the place Rural Women New Zealand holds in our communities,” says RWNZ national president Sandra Matthews.

“In a country where rural communities are often called the backbone of New Zealand, I see Rural Women as the supporting backbone — the ones behind the scenes making sure our rural towns and families thrive. That’s part of our mission.”

A major national event is planned for July 2026 to cap off the centennial celebrations, but the momentum is already building.

A centennial book is underway, documenting the organisation’s key milestones and including photos of members from across the decades — a tribute to the women who’ve shaped RWNZ over the last century.

“There’s also a centennial video going out to all the regions,” Matthews said.

“It will be used nationally too, pulling together images and stories that tell the powerful journey of Rural Women over 100 years.”

One of the most meaningful projects, Matthews said, is the Ancestry Project, which honours the organisation’s roots.

“We’ve got some incredibly dedicated members who have traced relatives of the original 16 women who founded RWNZ,” she explains.

“They’ve been interviewing them, gathering historical insights, and pulling it all together into something really special.

“We’re aiming to release it toward the end of the year.”

In true Rural Women style, there’s also a tangible and beautiful way to mark the occasion: a lilac-hued floribunda rose named ‘Rural Women’, developed by Matthews Nurseries.

The rose will serve both as a living tribute and a fundraiser for local branches.

Centennial events — regional and national — are planned across the country, with updates shared via the RWNZ website and branch Facebook pages.

Matthews says the centennial is not just a celebration of the past, but a vital opportunity to shape the organisation’s future.

She’s encouraging both current and potential members to contribute ideas about what RWNZ should look like in the decades to come.

“We want to be here for another hundred years — another two hundred, even. I couldn’t imagine a world without Rural Women.”



“It’s a hugely important organisation that supports so many charities, builds connections, and stands up for the needs of rural people throughout Aotearoa.”

Rural Women New Zealand national president Sandra Matthews encouraging both current and potential members to contribute ideas about what RWNZ should look like in the decades to come. PHOTO SUPPLIED

A taste

CLAIRE INKSON

When I sat down to choose a recipe for this month’s Lifestyle section, I decided to stay on-theme and take a leaf of culinary wisdom from the kitchens of Rural Women New Zealand.

While there aren’t any current RWNZ cookbooks in print, a bit of nostalgic treasure hunting on Trade Me turned up two gems: the 1965 WDFC Cookery Book (back when the group was known as the Women’s Division of Federated Farmers) and the more recent 2010 edition, *A Good Spread*.

Both copies arrived in great condition, but the real joy came from the handwritten notes scrawled in the margins.

You can always tell the best-loved recipes by the smudges of cocoa and dustings of flour clinging to the pages.

As someone who bakes every week for my kids’ lunchboxes, I picked two simple, quick recipes I knew they’d enjoy.

With kind permission from RWNZ, I’m sharing them here.

You really can’t beat the classics.

CHOCOLATE CRUNCH

From WDFC Cookery Book, 1965

I chose this one because — what else are you supposed to do with the annoying last Weetbix crumbs at the bottom of the box? I also left out the coconut (not a fan), and it still worked beautifully.

6oz butter
1t vanilla essence
1C Weetbix (crushed)
1C flour
1/2 C sugar
1T cocoa
1t baking powder
1C coconut (optional – I left it out)

- Melt the butter with vanilla.
- Combine all the dry ingredients in a bowl. Pour the melted butter mixture over the dry mix and stir until well combined.
- Press into a greased swiss roll tin. Bake at 180°C for 30 minutes.
- Ice while hot and cut into squares.

GINGER CAKE

From *A Good Spread*, 2010

I actually made cupcakes instead of a whole cake — it’s just easier to grab and go. They turned out soft, moist, and perfectly sweet without any icing, but a lemon glaze would definitely take them up a notch if you’re feeling fancy.

295g flour
175g sugar
1t baking soda

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Chocolate Crunch - a great way to use up the last bits of Weet-Bix. PHOTOS CLAIRE INKSON



Ginger Cake can be adapted to cupcakes for an easier option for kids on the go.

- 1t ground ginger
- 1/2 t mixed spice
- 175g butter (melted)
- 150ml milk
- 3T golden syrup
- 2 eggs
- 1t baking powder

- Make a well in the centre and pour in the melted butter, milk, golden syrup, and eggs.
- Mix everything together, then beat for one minute. Stir in the baking powder last.
- Pour into a greased tin (or cupcake cases). Bake at a moderate temperature - about 180°C - for an hour if making a cake.
- If baking cupcakes, bake until golden and springy. Start checking around 15-20 minutes.

- Sift flour, sugar, baking soda, and spices into a bowl.

Relief from joint pain (Part 2)

Our bodies have extraordinary defence and repair processes. I recently took a chunk out of my shin. After a few minutes the bleeding stopped, and a clot formed. Over the next week the area became red as inflammation opened blood vessels to bring in a variety of compounds to heal the damaged tissue. The inflammation subsided and new skin is forming.

Our joints have healing processes that are unique to joints. If cartilage is damaged, specialist cartilage cells called chondrocytes are stimulated to make a cocktail of compounds including chondroitin to secrete new cartilage to repair the damage. Joint pain from osteoarthritis can significantly reduce quality of life through pain and restricted mobility.

There is a downside to this healing process as inflammation brings more fluid into the joint capsule. This is the cause of the pain, swelling, heat and redness that can be part of osteoarthritis. This inflammation often causes more discomfort and lack of mobility that



actual cartilage loss. This is why reducing inflammation is the most important part of nutritional therapy for joints.

Late 2023 I was contacted by someone who had serious knee osteoarthritis and was advised he would need a knee replacement. I started him on a programme that included 1600mg of chondroitin, 1600mg of glucosamine and 400mg of 100% water soluble curcumin (from turmeric). After a few months he reported some improvements.

Now two years later his knees are much more comfortable giving him improved mobility.

This programme works because these compounds stimulate the cartilage repair processes while reducing inflammation and protecting the joint from further deterioration. This often means a real improvement in quality of life. I would estimate that over 80% of people with osteoarthritis would benefit from a similar programme. Feel free to request 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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John Arts comments:

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John Arts, Founder, Abundant Health

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The Voluntary Carbon Market - Not Some Quack Scheme

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



Beech forest on farmland in Mid Canterbury. The ultimate goal of land restoration is to have climax tree species coming back.



Regenerating grey scrub in Mid Canterbury. Land like this across New Zealand is eligible for carbon and co-benefit credits in the Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM).

Thank you to those who called into our stand at the Mystery Creek Fielddays in June. It was great to meet you all and hear your visions for native regeneration on your land.

We often get asked how the Voluntary Carbon Market works, with some farmers voicing concerns about carbon developers chasing a quick buck through quack carbon credit schemes, or making up their own methods to trade carbon credits for short-term gains.

I'm here to shed some light on how the Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM) is a **globally certified, fully validated and verified international trading standard**, and how Verity NZ connects farmers with this market to trade **high integrity** carbon and co-benefit credits from their naturally regenerating

marginal land or degraded native bushland.

A report by Sam Mander in 2022 (Carbon Sequestration Potential of Indigenous Woody Vegetation on New Zealand Farmland and its Offsetting Ability for Carbon Footprints) showed that New Zealand has 340,000 hectares of indigenous shrubland (exclusive of mānuka and kānuka). Most of these matagouri shrubs, coprosmas, hebes, ribbonwoods and grass trees will not grow to 5m in height, so they are excluded from

meeting the forest definition in the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme (NZ ETS). Land like this represents a **huge opportunity** in the VCM because **woody vegetation of all sizes** is eligible for carbon crediting.

There are four major international carbon registries in the VCM. Each has their own approved methodologies for different projects to become certified, so it is about finding the right fit for the project. Some offer **certification** for projects with forestry and improved

land management, others for natural regeneration and biodiversity values, and others for community-led initiatives to improve livelihoods and culturally important species. Scientists can also create and submit their own methodologies, like a freshwater wetland restoration standard for example, where restoring and revegetating degraded wetland areas - which then sequester carbon and reduce other greenhouse gas emissions - can be quantified and measured and those carbon credits traded.

Verity NZ chooses the **right methodology** to register the project under, with most of our projects being natural regeneration projects under the Afforestation, Reforestation and Revegetation (ARR) category.

After the project is accepted by the registry, Verity NZ hires an **internationally accredited, independent, third-party auditor** to verify the project will do what it claims it will do. This is a requirement of the registry to make sure the credits they trade are fully verified and that the reductions in emissions claimed are **real, measurable and additional**. For example, if we say we have 1,500ha of land being retired on one farm, the auditors will do a site visit and confirm the size, current and historic land use, risks and the likelihood of successful regeneration. Verity NZ pays for all auditing and verification costs for the project.

Once the project is verified and fully registered in the international registry, Verity NZ will measure the vegetation growth in the project area every two years. This difference in carbon stocks present over time (mainly from sequestration) forms the basis for the carbon credit amounts, this is what the profits are based on. Measurements involve soil tests for soil carbon gains, and vegetation plots to quantify how much the trees and shrubs have grown. Remote sensing is used to compare project areas to control plots that show how the land performs without the natural regeneration, stock exclusion and pest control occurring. Having this **real, measured field data** supported by remote sensing data provides **high integrity carbon credits**.

Carbon credits from the VCM are traded on the international carbon offset markets. An example of a large, **registered international project** in the VCM is the Tond Tenga (Tree Aid) project in Burkina Faso. This 12,000-hectare project gains carbon credit income for local landowners by restoring degraded woodlands and shrublands, in turn tackling poverty and the effects of climate change by growing trees, improving people's incomes, and restoring and protecting land. It is estimated to remove 3.7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent from the atmosphere during the project's lifetime.

In New Zealand, we can

demonstrate that restoring degraded pastureland into vegetated areas through natural regeneration, and enhancing degraded forests through stock exclusion and pest control also provides community, biodiversity and environmental benefits across New Zealand, creating world-class projects. These additional community and environmental benefits from our projects also attract investors such as Fortune 500 companies who will buy the co-benefit credits for the good work the project does.

Why aren't more businesses in New Zealand doing what Verity NZ does?

Operating at scale and meeting all the VCM registry requirements for legal compliance, registration and validation, and stakeholder engagement is hard. You need to have the local expertise to put a project together, model the predicted carbon stocks and carry out the field work to monitor and measure the carbon pools in the project areas for many years.

Our point of difference is that we have investors ready to fund the up-front costs of our projects, so we can partner with landowners who have the right type of land available to regenerate but who may be lacking funds to begin implementation themselves. We often hear this is the biggest barrier to farmers growing natives on their land or restoring degraded native forests. Then we use our expertise to register and trade the credits on your behalf, keeping you updated at all stages of the project development and lifetime.

Verity NZ partners with farmers to design, register, implement and monitor carbon credit and co-benefit projects across New Zealand. What makes us unique is that we pay all upfront costs to get your project off the ground. That includes fencing, pest control, and aerial seeding with native seeds. We recover our costs once the project starts to generate credit income. We use our unique investor funding model and the Voluntary Carbon Market to achieve this.

Get in touch with our team in Methven for further information. The Voluntary Carbon Market is the perfect solution for farmers who want to implement native restoration projects to reduce soil erosion, increase biodiversity, leave behind a positive legacy and steward the land for the future. Verity NZ is the genuine one-stop-shop, seed-to-credit company who will deliver for you.

