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Pages 8-9

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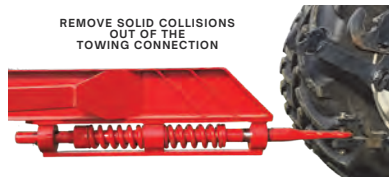
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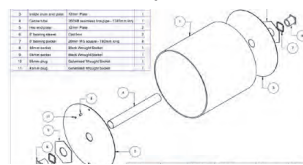


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When policy ignores the paddock

For this month's edition of Rural Guardian, I had the privilege of interviewing the 2025 FMG Junior Young Farmers of the Year, John Lundy and Harry Parish.

I left that conversation feeling proud and hopeful.

These young men represent a generation brimming with passion, grit, and a deep commitment to agriculture.

The following week, I attended Lincoln University's open day.

There, I saw hundreds of bright-eyed students, full of ambition and buzzing with ideas. They believe in this sector. They see a future here.

But what kind of future are we leaving them?

I worry for them, and for my own daughter as she begins her career path in agriculture.

Because while we often talk about the urban-rural divide, a more dangerous fracture is forming: one within the rural sector itself.

Recently, an opinion piece, no doubt written with the best of intentions, suggested those raising concerns about agriculture's direction were pushing a "no-hope" narrative. It urged us to embrace optimism, curiosity, and calm.

And I get that. We do need hope. We do need a vision for the future.

But here's the other side of the fence: frustration is rising in the paddocks.

Farmers are watching livelihoods eroded by policies dreamed up in offices far

removed from muddy boots, broken gates, and hard-earned experience.

The disconnect is real between policymakers, agribusiness leaders, and even some rural advocates, and those who are actually working the land.

We all want thriving rural communities.

But there's a big difference between talking about resilience and living through the slow erosion of small-town life as productive farmland disappears beneath carbon forestry.

More than 300,000 hectares of sheep and beef country have been converted since 2017.

When figures like that are laid bare, it's hard to see how campaigns like Federated Farmers' Save Our Sheep can be dismissed as being based on "high emotions".

Farmers don't feel heard. They feel patronised when their concerns are labelled "doom-laden."

Despair doesn't grow in a vacuum.

It grows with the pressure of rising costs, shifting goalposts, and the sense that decisions are being made about farmers, not with them.

And if we don't acknowledge that, the divide will only widen.

We cannot afford to swallow every narrative without question.

Recent history has taught us that much. Groups like Groundswell and Federated Farmers have acted as canaries in the coal mine. We would do well to listen.

At the same time, let's be clear: no one is rejecting the need for progress.

New Zealand farmers are among the most sustainable and efficient in the world.

That's a trajectory we should be proud of and continue to lead.

But progress cannot be imposed.

It must be built with trust, collaboration, and genuine respect for those on the ground. Because no policy, no strategy, and no international agreement will ever succeed without the support of the people it affects most.

Let's not leave our next generation wondering why we didn't fight harder for the future they deserve.



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Luci Keeps the Gears Turning at ACL

You might not think much about parts until something breaks down — but at Ashburton Contracting Limited (ACL), one woman is making sure the wheels keep turning, quite literally.

Her name is Luci Smith, and she's the go-to person in ACL's busy Parts Department.

Having been with the company for just over three years, Luci has become a vital part of the team. "I'd worked with smaller vehicles before," she says, "but coming

to ACL was a whole different ballgame. Trucks, diggers, construction gear — there's so much more to it."

And that's no exaggeration. Luci now supplies parts not only to ACL's own busy workshop but also to contractors, farmers, and fleet operators across Mid Canterbury. If it's got a diesel engine — or even a petrol one — chances are Luci can find the right bit for it.

Surrounded by shelves stocked with Castrol products and much more, she's built a deep knowledge of what keeps machinery running. Thanks to industry

training with Isuzu, Scania, and a nationally recognised certificate in automotive parts, she knows her way around just about anything.

"Sometimes someone comes in asking for a 'red filter,'" Luci laughs. "You just get the right info, do the digging, and nine times out of ten, we've got what they need — or can get it fast."

But it's not just about parts. It's the people and culture that make ACL shine. "There's always support to upskill — whether it's getting a forklift licence or attending national training courses," says

Luci. "And there's always a bit of laughter around the place too."

So, if you've got a truck, tractor, or trailer that needs attention — or if you're running a workshop and need a reliable parts partner — ACL's Parts Department might just be your best-kept secret. And at the heart of it is Luci, always ready to help you get back on the road or paddock.

Give her a buzz — chances are, she's already got what you need.

Kiwi wheat initiative to hit shelves

ANISHA SATYA

A little logo will go a long way for local grain growers and suppliers.

Despite Aotearoa producing 400,000 tonnes of wheat a year - a good chunk coming from Mid Canterbury - most of the wheat products we consume are made with grain from Australia.

Levy group the Foundation for Arable Research (FAR) and food advocacy group Eat New Zealand hope to change that with a new consumer-first certification process.

They've created a "New Zealand Grown Grains" logo which will appear on the packaging of wheat products that use... well, New Zealand-grown grains.

The design incorporates heads of wheat and a combine harvester as a nod to the work grain growers undertake.

The initiative is part of a five-year long industry campaign to make the country self-sufficient in the growing of milling wheat, used to make bread.

Lyndhurst farmer Roger Henderson said the announcement was great news for New Zealand, and specifically for Mid Canterbury.

"A lot of the grain that's produced in New Zealand is grown in Mid Canterbury," he said.

"We grow pretty good varieties, we've grown milling wheat the last few years and we've never had anything fall out of speck."

A lack of consumer awareness and high domestic shipping prices

are the biggest barriers for local grain uptake.

Consumer awareness is the easier of those two battlegrounds, he said.

"A certain amount of people in New Zealand... if they knew it was New Zealand grain, they'd buy it."

"We spend our money in town," fellow farmer and wife Jude added, "so it's great for the townspeople to purchase locally grown grain."

Luisetti Seeds' managing director Ed Luisetti said the news is "absolutely fantastic."

"It's wonderful for the arable sector, farmers and the wider industry."

"[the public] now have the ability to choose, and therefore support, the New Zealand arable industry."

He's been part of the use-local-wheat push over the last decade, spurred on by increasing world conflict and the country's risk of food insecurity.

"Most of the flour products, basically all the bread in the North Island, is made from Australian grain."

"We'd like New Zealand to be fully self-sustained in milling wheat."

He said the benefits will extend beyond the growers to local businesses and suppliers.

"Of course, we're heavily involved in the production of milling wheat seed."

"We hope that this will drive further milling wheat production."

"Look out for the harvester," he said to readers, "and be assured of top quality New Zealand grain."

FAR general manager of business



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



Lyndhurst farmers Jude and Roger Henderson won the feed wheat category at this year's Combined Mid Canterbury A & P Associations Wheat Competition. PHOTO ANISHA SATYA



FAR general manager of business operations Ivan Lawrie. PHOTO SUPPLIED



The new NZ Grown Grains logo. PHOTO SUPPLIED

operations Ivan Lawrie said initial industry reactions to the branding had been good.

"Across the board, there's a great deal of enthusiasm; from independent bakeries, foodies, a whole range of groups we haven't engaged with traditionally."

For growers to get certified, they simply have to prove they grow their grain in the country.

It's a bit different for millers, processors and end users.

"The only condition for that licence, initially, will be for the users to be auditable."

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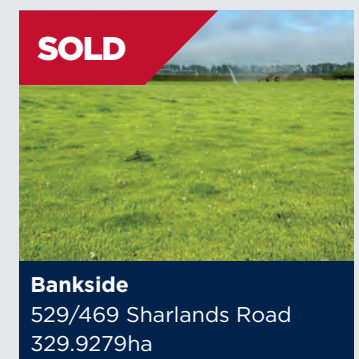
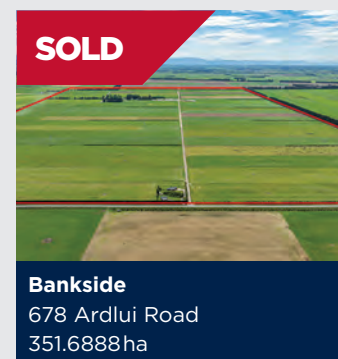
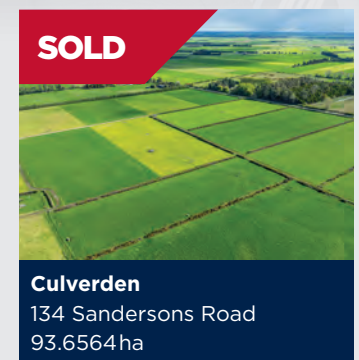
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 **TEAM LANE**
OCEAN TO THE ALPS

Fed Farmers, Groundswell sound taxonomy alarm



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Groundswell spokesperson Jamie McFadden has slammed the government's proposed New Zealand Finance Taxonomy as "the scariest thing I have seen yet," warning it could lead to farms being effectively shut down.

"It's breathtaking how impractical it is, and the impact it could have," he said.

"If this proposal goes through without any changes, and everything is followed to the letter as per the proposal, a lot of farms would be phased out.

"This isn't fearmongering. It's written in the proposal. It's fact."

So, what is a financial taxonomy?

At its core, a financial taxonomy is a classification system - used to label financial activities like investments or loans.

Think of it like a supermarket categorising food into aisles: fruit, dairy, snacks.

A financial taxonomy works similarly, but for economic activity.

It tells banks, investors and governments what counts as a "green" or sustainable investment (like a wind farm), and what doesn't (like a new coal mine).

It's designed to help guide where money should go based on environmental or ethical goals.

"Taxonomy is a way of classifying something - it's a common way of categorising plants and animals," McFadden said.

"But this proposal will apply taxonomy to businesses - that's anyone involved in economic activity.

"But they are going to start with farming and forestry first."

The NZ taxonomy proposal is currently being developed by the Centre for Sustainable Finance and the Ministry for the Environment.

The aim is to create a consistent framework for defining what qualifies as "green" or



Federated Farmers banking spokesperson Mark Hooper calls the proposed New Zealand finance taxonomy "fundamentally flawed".

PHOTO SUPPLIED

"sustainable" within financial markets.

Under the draft proposal, farms could be classified as green, amber, or even "red" - a rating McFadden warns could lead to financial institutions pulling support and farms being "phased out."

"I have looked at those rules, and some of them are cost prohibitive to try and meet, some of them you can't practically meet at all.

"The majority of farms would be gone if this proposal was put in place as currently drafted."

McFadden believes the Government should step back from the proposal entirely.

"What will happen to those farms if they are phased out? Is it all going to go into forestry? Because what else are sheep and beef farms going to be used for?"

"The NZ taxonomy proposal conflicts with the direction the current government is trying to take which is to cut back on forestation.

"This needs to be stopped."

He said the taxonomy would require farms to meet criteria across a wide range of activities, including emissions reductions, fertiliser use, methane inhibitors, and even grazing restrictions.

"The proposal is saying they expect the taxonomy to be initially voluntary, and in the words of the proposal their expectation is that it will become mandatory after a grace period."

McFadden said the move is yet another reason New Zealand should exit the Paris climate agreement.

"We are going to keep getting



Groundswell spokesperson Jamie McFadden describes the proposed taxonomy as "the scariest thing I have seen yet".

PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

these nonsense policies because we are part of the Paris agreement."

Federated Farmers is also calling for the taxonomy to be scrapped, warning that it risks serious harm to the rural economy.

"This framework is fundamentally flawed," said Federated Farmers banking spokesperson Mark Hooper.

Hooper said the taxonomy would make it harder for productive and legitimate farm businesses to access finance, insurance or investment - not because they're unviable, but because they don't meet an arbitrary 'green' benchmark.

"It has been created without meaningful input from working farmers, it imposes unrealistic standards, and it risks cutting off financial services to legitimate,

productive rural businesses."

He also criticised the makeup of the Technical Advisory Group.

"There are no hands-on farmers involved with the Technical Advisory Group.

"Instead, it's full of shiny-shoed bankers, sustainability advisors, and forestry lobbyists.

"If you're designing a finance framework for agriculture, farmers must be at the table. This is a total governance failure."

Despite the high stakes, Hooper said there has been no economic analysis of how the taxonomy could impact farm businesses, landowners or rural lenders.

"For a framework that could fundamentally alter access to finance, this is an unacceptable oversight."

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Ash Pace, UPL NZ Ltd. Regional Manager Central South Island, says his recommended solution is Li-1000.

Li-1000 is a multipurpose adjuvant - a surfactant, penetrant, and drift retardant, all in one. Ash says the non-ionic, low foam, surfactant enhances the activity and penetration of herbicides and other crop protection products. "Li-1000 is the perfect partner, particularly for spray-out, knockdown herbicides such as glyphosate, enhancing activity and penetration. Glyphosate remains an important part of pastoral and arable farming practice, especially when fast turnaround for a new crop, or re-grassing is needed. And that's quite often!"

Ash says Li-1000 is widely used in both ground and aerial spraying and has passionate advocates in both.

Where he says helicopter spraying really comes into their own is on hillsides that are slow to dry out and other less accessible parts of a farm. "In those situations, helicopters are fast and efficient. Also, you don't have vehicles churning up the soil in a wet paddock or risk a spray rig over-turning on the side of a hill."

Someone who knows the aerial spray industry better than most is Helicopters South Canterbury CEO and pilot Richard Geary. Helicopters South Canterbury was founded back in the 1990s and Richard,



Richard Geary from Helicopters South Canterbury uses Li-1000 in their spray programmes for effective drift control.

who has 20 years under his belt, heads an experienced team, with an impressive fleet of helicopters.

Based near Timaru, the company operates primarily in South Canterbury, Mid Canterbury, and the Mackenzie Country, though Richard doesn't rule out going further afield, if there's the demand.

Helicopters South Canterbury caters for everyone from tourists to hunters, but agriculture is their bread and butter. Precision and high standards are critical, and margins for error are very slim.

Richard says every variable is always factored in; from the safety of staff to the ability to deliver an effective and efficient service to the farmers, who rely on the company for everything from mustering, to spraying gorse, broom, and brushweed, and applying other crop protection products.

Spraying out old pastures, often over challenging terrain, is a staple for the busy company.

When using Roundup, Helicopters South Canterbury use Li-1000 for drift control 95% of the time. "There are often sensitive crops nearby, like fodder beet or emerging grass, and Li-1000 gives us that extra bit of certainty and security."

Richard and his team discuss jobs with clients in depth before they commence spraying and make notes not only on what is required, but also on any adjacent crops or other potential issues. Their focus: Delivering jobs better!

"Li-1000 trumps everything else as a drift retardant and works well as a penetrant." Richard says that factors including rotor wash (the downward movement of air caused by the action of the helicopter's blades) mean helicopter spraying, while often the most practical and cost-effective solution, is heavily reliant on effective drift control. "Li-1000 is great product."

There's a fair bit of science behind its effectiveness.

Ash explains systemic and translaminar products require time to enter the plant and are subject to wash off. Due to its unique properties and multiple modes of actions, Li-1000 produces a more uniform spray pattern for reduced drift, increases droplet spreading and retention and increases leaf penetration through the cuticle and translocation throughout the plant. Glyphosate and other crop protection products are then taken into the plant faster. That, in turn, improves uptake and translocation for better performance.

Ash says optimising spray programme efficacy is everything. "When you're paying good money, you want to get good value and, with Li-1000, you can also adjust rates a bit, according to conditions."

Helicopters South Canterbury also uses other UPL adjuvants including All Clear® 2X tank cleaner, and Du-Wett®, which delivers better spray coverage, and Slikka®, a super-penetrant used on gorse and brushweeds.

Richard says it's reassuring to know that there is solid research and testing behind UPL's products. "I can use their products with confidence knowing how much work has gone into them."

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For more advice on enhanced drift control with Li-1000 talk to your technical advisor or contact Ash Pace, UPL NZ Regional Manager Central South Island, at 021 987 735.



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Making global capital work for NZ farmers

Jo Kelly

There's been a lot of talk lately about a sustainable finance taxonomy. We get it — the term sounds bureaucratic and technical. But let's be clear: this isn't about compliance, tax, or telling farmers how to run their businesses.

The Centre for Sustainable Finance (CSF) is working with experts — including farmers, scientists, and finance leaders — to develop a **voluntary framework** that attracts global investment into sustainable agriculture and forestry in New Zealand. Why? Because international investors want environmentally responsible products, and NZ is a small, optional market. We have lots to lose if the frameworks they're using to invest globally aren't relevant here.

What the Taxonomy is — and isn't

A taxonomy is simply a classification tool, like an energy efficiency label. It doesn't dictate what people can do or buy, but it helps guide informed choices. The NZ Taxonomy helps investors and banks understand which

farming and forestry activities are delivering on sustainability, enabling more credible sustainability claims and offering a common language for global capital markets. Crucially, it's entirely optional — there are no penalties for opting out.

For farmers already taking steps or planning investments in sustainability, being "taxonomy aligned" could expand access to financial products and new markets.

Built for NZ, by NZ

We started with agriculture and forestry because they're foundational to our economy and can't simply adopt offshore standards. This work is grounded in value — developed with input from real farmers and will be shaped by feedback received during the recent public consultation.

Transition, not perfection

Getting to net-zero on-farm is tough. That's why the taxonomy includes a 'transition' category — covering actions like improving nutrient management, electrifying vehicles, or planting trees for sequestration. These are already underway on many farms and

deserve recognition as 'taxonomy aligned'.

We've also heard that **resilience matters** — from weather extremes to new pests. The next consultation phase, starting in September, focuses on activities that support rural resilience and adaptation.

Climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience criteria for agriculture and forestry will be submitted in December 2025 to the Minister of Climate Change.

Why this matters

Global markets are demanding sustainability. Sustainable finance taxonomies are used, or under development, in 53 markets, including Australia and Singapore. If we don't define our own criteria, international frameworks will fill the gap — adding cost and complexity. By developing a voluntary, NZ-specific taxonomy, we increase transparency and unlock more capital for rural NZ.

This isn't about green tape. It's about making sure Kiwi farmers and foresters get their fair share of the world's growing appetite for sustainable investment.

Jo Kelly is chief executive of the Centre for Sustainable Finance.



Jo Kelly, chief executive of the Centre for Sustainable Finance. PHOTO SUPPLIED

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Young guns still buzzing after



2025 FMG Junior Young Farmer of the Year John Lundy(left) and Harry Parish. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Two bright young talents from North Canterbury have taken out one of New Zealand's most prestigious youth farming titles, while a seasoned competitor from Waikato has finally claimed the top honour at the 2025 FMG Young Farmer of the Year Grand Final in Invercargill.

John Lundy and Harry Parish, both Year 12 students at Rangiora High School, were crowned the FMG Junior Young Farmers of the Year, battling it out against 13 other school teams from across the country in early July.

Their sharp knowledge, steady teamwork, and well-rounded agri-skills saw them come out on top after a fiercely close competition.

"We've put in a lot of work and talked to a lot of people. We didn't quite make the Grand Final last year, but we did this year, and we've taken it out," said Lundy, still buzzing from the win.

"It's still sinking in, but I'm really excited about it."

The pair's path to victory started with a casual conversation.

"He pretty much just asked me at school one day if I wanted

to do the high school version of Young Farmers, and it pretty much just went from there," said Parish, who brings strengths in dairy and science, while Lundy shines in practical skills and sheep and beef.

They competed in last year's regional final, narrowly missing the Grand Final.

This year, they not only won regionals but went on to take out the Module and Farmler sections nationally and edged out their rivals by just six points in the Face Off buzzer quiz.

The win is especially significant for Rangiora High School, with Parish noting, "As far as I'm aware, we're only the second team from our school to make a Grand Final, so we're very proud."

Preparation was key.

"We thought we better do a bit more for the nationals," said Lundy.

"We talked to industry experts and local farmers. When the tips and tricks sheet came out, we homed in on that stuff."

"We also looked at previous years: building, fencing, water."

"You know they're going to come up."

Both students were quick to credit their parents and teachers for their support.

"Our parents got us to Invercargill and helped us prepare, that's where the majority of our support came from," said Parish.

The pair can no longer compete at high school level but have their sights set on the senior title in the future.

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FMG Young Farmer win



Event MC Te Radar (left) congratulates Harry Parish (middle) and John Lundy on winning the 2025 FMG Junior Young Farmer of the Year title. PHOTO SUPPLIED



John Lundy (left) and Harry Parish say the win is "still sinking in". PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

"We've got ten or twelve years to think about it," Lundy laughs. "There's definitely a lot more involved, but it's something we'll look at doing down the track."

A trio from Seddon School, Liam Underwood (11), Fred Maher (11) and Manawa Doonan (11) took out the title of

AgriKidsNZ Grand Champions, winning the Race Off module and member Liam Underwood taking out AgriKidsNZ Contestant of the Year overall.

While the juniors celebrated, the spotlight on the Saturday night shifted to the senior title-FMG Young Farmer of the Year - where

26-year-old Hugh Jackson from Waikato-Bay of Plenty claimed the coveted crown.

Jackson, a sheep and beef farmer from Te Akau, was named New Zealand's top young farmer after a nail-biting finish to the Grand Final.

It was his second shot at the title

and one he described as "now or never."

"It's been a lot of years in the making. I'm really relieved to get here," Jackson said after the win.

"It was a nerve-wracking last couple of hours, so to get that weight off my shoulders is massive."

Jackson impressed across the board, winning the Community Footprint module, AgriBusiness challenge, and AgriSports section.

Known for his passion for mental health and farming technology, Jackson hopes the title will give him a platform to showcase the talent coming through the sector.



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‘Surreal’ win for Young Plant Producer of the Year

CLAIRE INKSON

The 2025 Young Plant Producer of the Year, Jake Linklater, says winning the prestigious title “feels surreal.”

“I just feel a great sense of gratitude to all the organisers and judges, the competition, and everyone that helped get me there.”

Presented at an awards dinner in Christchurch on June 25, the accolade celebrates dedication and innovation in New Zealand’s plant production industry.

Linklater is the nursery manager at Nova Natives in Templeton, a social enterprise operated by the Nova Trust.

The nursery sits alongside the Trust’s addiction treatment and recovery programmes and is part of a broader mission to equip service-users with life and employment skills.

The Trust also runs a commercial vegetable-growing operation, Nova Fresh.

“Both social enterprises are operated with the clinical side of the Trust, where a lot of people within the rehabilitation programme come out and gain life and employment skills,” Linklater explained.

“They help with simple things like potting up plants, or they could be picking beetroot or winding cucumber plants up a string.

“It’s a pretty big operation here.

We have thirty hectares.”

This year marked Linklater’s second time entering the Young Plant Producer competition.

“It’s the last year I’m eligible to enter, being under thirty, so I thought I might as well give it another go. I didn’t want to look back five or ten years down the line and wish I’d given it another crack. And obviously now I’m grateful I did.”

The competition, organised by NZ Plant Producers (NZPPI), is hosted by the International Plant Propagators’ Society (IPPS) and supported by the Horticulture Charitable Trust and other industry sponsors.

It puts young professionals through their paces with challenges designed to test the full spectrum of skills required to run a successful nursery business.

This year’s five finalists faced two days of intense competition at Lincoln University, with assessments in finance and dispatch, biosecurity, plant propagation and identification, tool maintenance, agrichemical use, and irrigation.

Judges were looking for candidates with not only strong technical knowledge, but also leadership skills and a passion for plant production.

Linklater said the 2025 event was tougher than when he first entered in 2023 —particularly the



2025 Young Plant producer of the Year Jake Linklater is letting his win “settle” before he begins preparing for the Young Horticulturalist of the Year competition in October. PHOTO SUPPLIED

spreadsheet challenge.

“You had 45 minutes to answer the questions – and that’s what made it challenging was being pushed to work under pressure,” he said.

“I’m glad that was one of the first challenges we had to do on the first day and get it over and done with.”

As part of his prize, Linklater receives a 12-month mentorship programme and a \$4,000 fund to support his career development.

He’ll also go on to compete in the national Young Horticulturalist of the Year competition in November, which offers a prize pool of more than \$20,000.

“I’m just trying to let this one settle a bit, and then eventually move on to prepare for the Young

Horticulturalist competition.”

Linklater’s journey into horticulture wasn’t linear. He describes his entry as “sideways,” after a job at an aluminium factory failed to satisfy his “appetite for career and life.”

He first moved into arboriculture, then landscaping.

When he was made redundant due to lack of work, he started applying for nursery roles.

“When I was landscaping, every time I visited a nursery or a retail centre to pick up plants, I thought it would be quite cool to be able to follow that whole lifecycle from seed to dispatch.

“And watching them grow — the variety of plants involved, and all the colour in the nursery from year

to year.”

He landed a job at Southern Woods nursery, starting in dispatch and eventually moving into production.

But his real passion was always with native plants.

So, when a role opened up just over three years ago at nearby Nova Natives, he jumped at it.

Having found his calling, Linklater now encourages other young people who love the outdoors to give horticulture a go.

“Give it a go because you never know how much you will like something until you try it.

“There is a lot of good therapeutic elements to horticulture and growing plants that you don’t get in an office job.”

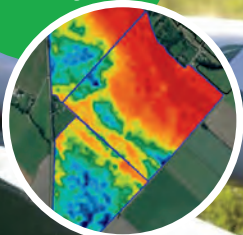
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Passion drives plant breeding progress

TONY LEGGETT

The dynamic relationship between plants and grazing animals continues to inspire Gemma Box, a passionate plant breeder who sees huge potential for shaping the future of New Zealand agriculture.

Growing up on a farm west of Christchurch, Gemma developed an early connection with rural life and the importance of its contribution to the New Zealand economy.

She became interested in scientific research and development after completing a summer research programme co-founded between PGG Wrightson Seeds and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, and continued to build on that momentum by returning as a summer intern throughout her university studies.

It is a pathway she strongly recommends for anyone interested in a career in research and development, highlighting the invaluable hands-on experience and industry insights it provides.

Her academic journey culminated in a PhD in animal science at Lincoln University, where she investigated photosensitivity in lambs grazing forage brassica over summer – further fuelling her passion for the complex and fascinating relationship between plants and animals.

She is now a key member of the PGG Wrightson Seeds breeding team as the driving force behind the company's innovative plantain



Plant breeder Gemma Box with colleague and mentor Alan Stewart at the PGG Wrightson research farm near Lincoln. PHOTO SUPPLIED

and chicory breeding programmes.

Her work is not only rooted in performance traits like yield and persistence, but also in the broader impact of forage crops on environmental and farming sustainability.

“What excited me most is the opportunity to breed cultivars that are not just good for today, but transformative for tomorrow,” Gemma says.

“With plantain, for example, we are exploring its potential in reducing nitrate leaching and contributing to lower methane emissions. That kind of potential impact is incredibly motivating.”

For Gemma, the long timelines

of plant breeding – often more than a decade to bring a new cultivar to market – only add to the challenge and sense of purpose. It is the strategic foresight and long-term thinking that she finds most inspiring.

“We’re not just breeding for what farmers need now, we’re anticipating challenges and opportunities 10-15 years down the track. That’s a powerful reason to keep pushing the boundaries and staying future focused.”

Collaboration is at the heart of her work. Regular discussions with others in her team, colleagues across PGG Wrightson Seeds, and scientists from government and

research institutions help shape the company's plant breeding strategy and ensure it stays aligned with both industry needs and emerging science.

Gemma sees plant breeding as a long-term investment, where thousands of ideas and genetic lines are considered, refined, and often held in reserve until the right moment emerges.

“Some material remains within the programme for years, even decades, until a change in climate, regulation, or farming practice makes it suddenly relevant. That’s the beauty of this work – it is full of hidden potential.”

The process is like a pipeline

with a wide entry point for novel ideas and germplasm that gradually narrows over years of rigorous testing to a handful of high-performing cultivars ready for commercial release.

Throughout her career, Gemma has valued the strong support of mentors and colleagues, which she credits as vital to her development as both a plant breeder and team leader.

She actively seeks out feedback and enjoys sparring session with mentors, using these collaborative exchanges to challenge her thinking and refine new ideas. As a mother of three young children, and recently returning to work after maternity leave, she is equally grateful for the understanding and guidance around achieving a healthy work-life balance.

She is passionate about role modelling science as more than a career, but a lifelong pursuit driven by curiosity, resilience, and purpose.

With her deep passion for agriculture, commitment to innovation, and an unwavering belief in the potential of forage crops to meet New Zealand's future farming challenges, Gemma is energised by what lies ahead.

“We have a real opportunity to make a difference,” she says.

“Being part of that journey – and knowing our work today will help shape the sustainability and productivity of future farming – is what drives me every single day.”

For anyone interested in plant breeding, visit pbra.org.nz for details of the upcoming Plant Breeder Forum on August 7, 2025.

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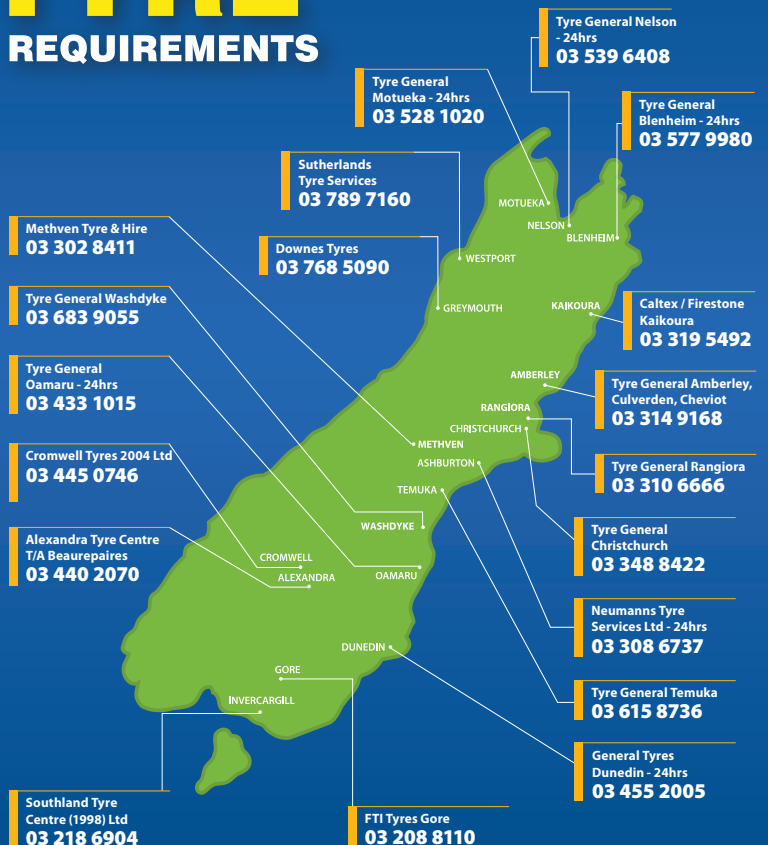
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The Farmers Fast Five: where we ask a farmer five quick questions about farming, and what agriculture means to them. Today we talk to Otago farmer Pip Murphy.

1 What did your journey into farming look like?

My journey into farming began with deep roots — both in the land and in family.

I grew up surrounded by animals and country values, and those early years shaped me more than I realised.

I started on dairy when I was 16 and I took a few different paths over time, but something about the rural lifestyle always pulled me back. It wasn't just about farming - it was about raising my kids the way I was raised: connected to the land, grounded in community, and proud of hard work.

2 Tell us a little bit about your farming operation.

Well, it's a touch peculiar.

I work a split operation across two separate farms in Poolburn, Central Otago.

On one side of the road, a 130-hectare with additional 160-hectare support block of kiwi cross/friesian 400-cow dairy farm with maize grown for feed out.

Directly across the road is the sheep and beef property home to a Poll Dorset stud and a couple of hundred beef cattle which are wintered on kale crop.

It keeps things interesting and gives me a real appreciation for different sides of the farming industry.

Both farms offer a good mix of hands-on variety but now the farms are on the market which is opening my door to whatever comes next within farming.

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

There've been plenty - from weather extremes to juggling motherhood. Sometimes the challenge is just showing up when life knocks you sideways.

I've learned to ask for help when I need it, to lean on community, and to never underestimate what I'm capable of - especially on the hard days.

Flexibility and resilience are just as important as fences and feed.

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

Seeing my kids get to experience the outdoors and learn where our food comes from - the muddy boots, fresh air, and a sense of responsibility you just can't teach in a classroom — that's the real highlight and something I'm really proud of.

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

Back yourself. Don't wait to feel like an expert: start where you are, keep learning, and remember that passion counts just as much as experience.

There's no single way to be a "real farmer."

If you're putting in the work, showing up with heart, and respecting the land/animals then you belong here.



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Young Farmers are the future of New Zealand agriculture, so each issue we shine a spotlight on a Young Farmer's club member. Today we chat to Michaela Tamblyn.

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

I am with Marton Young Farmers and have been now for coming up three years.

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?

A highlight of being in Young Farmers would definitely be the people you get to meet and the experiences you're able to be a part of.

Being able to surround yourself with like-minded people really helps, especially because farming can be quite secluded, so it gives you a chance to chat to people who are often going through the same things as you.

3 How did you become involved in agriculture?

I've always lived in the country but never on a farm, however, I would find myself working on farms during the school holidays with docking etc.

It wasn't until COVID hit that I got my first job on a dairy farm close to home.

4 What is your job now?

I am now 2IC on a dairy farm in Colyton. We run 370 cows on a 174ha farm. I started this job almost four years ago and it's been one of the best things I could have done for myself!

I pretty much started with only knowing how to put cups on cows.

Now when I look back I realise how much I've learned and changed over the years.

I may have a few extra bags under my eyes from the early starts, but I truly wouldn't change it for the world.

When I first started I hardly knew how to confidently drive a manual car, now I am one of the main tractor drivers for all our dirt/grass work.

I remember a time when driving a tractor was never even a possibility in my head.

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?

Obviously with the ever-changing technology advances, there's no doubt farming will continue to

change with it, and although it's exciting to embrace these changes and be a part of it - it will definitely be a reality check to some, who are used to the days of some good old fashioned elbow grease and determination to get the job done.

I think personally, I would love to see some more motivated young females rolling their sleeves up and diving head-first into the Ag-industry.

I hope to see New Zealand continue to cement their place on the map, and I think that starts with young farmers clubs all around the country.

They are the people to do that - they have a chance to be the new generation and face of Agriculture in NZ, which is very exciting, and I am stoked to be involved.

My future is not yet planned out at this stage.

I will continue to learn and gain new experiences on-farm, and see what happens along the way.

I do hope to stay in the agriculture industry for many years to come.

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

My biggest inspiration in agriculture has definitely been my boss, Colin. I truly could not have found someone better to work for.

He has taught me that no matter what, bad things happen to everyone.

No matter how good you are at something, things can still go wrong, so move on and try not to do it again.

This has helped me a lot.

As someone who would stress over the small stuff, I now realise that won't get me anywhere.

The hours he works - I simply don't understand how he functions.

But never-the-less, he always finds the positives and even on days where nothing seems to be going right, he will always have a laugh and find a way to make it funny.

Something he told me right at the start of my farming career, when we were having lots of rain during calving - which as a lot would know can make for a tricky time - he reminded me that even in our worst, there will always be someone worse off than us in the farming community and to just be grateful for what was going our way.



Michaela Tamblyn has been a member of Marton Young Farmers for three years. PHOTO SUPPLIED

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Still in response mode:

Tasman farmers battling after dual flood events



Federated Farmers president Wayne Langford says the \$600,000 support package from the government is desperately needed. PHOTO SUPPLIED



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Nearly a month on from the first of two major floods that swept through the Tasman region in July 2025, the area remains firmly in response mode.

According to Richard Kempthorne, chairperson of the Rural Support Trust Top of the South branch, the second round of flooding dealt a harsh blow to properties already hit hard the first time.

“Some properties that were affected badly the first time were affected even worse with the second floods, it all just depended on how much water and where it cut in,” Kempthorne says.

The Trust has been busy assessing damage and surveying farmers, with a large number now seeking assistance.

“We have around 200 farmers who are wanting assistance clearing debris,” he said.

“They’ve got silt and gravel, and

they’ve got fences down and they would like to recover or rebuild.”

To meet that need, the Trust is helping coordinate the Enhance Task Force Green programme - two groups of workers who will offer practical, manual labour support to those most in need.

“We are going to try and try and prioritise so the ones that need help most get it first.

“Landowners want to know that they haven’t been forgotten, and things are happening.”

As the adrenaline wears off and the full scale of the damage and the long road ahead becomes clear, many are beginning to feel the weight of uncertainty.

“Up until now everyone has been taking a breath and just seeing what is going on, but now it’s starting to get into the raw end where people have been waiting, not knowing what to do, or not having the money to do it.”

Kempthorne said the local council has been responsive and engaged in efforts to repair infrastructure and plan for future resilience.

“There is huge roading damage that they are repairing, and some of the rivers need major work because if nothing happens, it just opens the door for the river to go in the wrong direction when we have the next flood.”

The impact isn’t limited to farming.

Tourism operators are also suffering as visitors avoid the region despite some areas, like Nelson, largely returning to normal.

“In Nelson things are pretty much back into a new normal situation, so it’s well worth coming.

“A lot of tourist operators are wanting to engage with people who are wanting to come back into the region for tourism,” Kempthorne said.

Federated Farmers welcome Government support

Federated Farmers have welcomed the announcement of a \$600,000 Government support package aimed at helping flood-affected farmers across the Nelson Tasman region.

“This funding is desperately needed to support recovery efforts on the ground and will make a real difference for farming families,” said Federated Farmers president Wayne Langford.

“We’re incredibly grateful that the Government have recognised this need early and taken practical steps that will allow clean-up work to get underway immediately.”

The package includes \$50,000 for the Farmers Adverse Events Trust, established by Federated Farmers, with donations from the farming community being matched dollar

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Two floods hit the Tasman region in July causing wide spread damage to properties and infrastructure. PHOTOS SUPPLIED

for dollar.

Vegetable Prices Set to Rise

Angus Simms, co-founder of vegie supplier Wonky Box says the floods highlight the vulnerability of the food chain and warns consumers can expect an increase in vegetable prices - although the effects may be delayed.

That's because it's not just what has been lost to flooding, but what can't be planted when soils are saturated, and tractors and crews can't access paddocks.

"This is particularly worrying for short-rotation vegetables like broccoli, lettuces, spinach

and cauliflower, which rely on continuous sowing to keep supply steady," Simms says.

"From a produce perspective, it's not necessarily something we will see the effects of right now, but we will definitely feel the pinch a little later, because none of the growers have been out planting.

"That's the real challenge."

He said the damage is widespread and will likely result in substantial flow-on effects at the checkout.

"It's not like it's affecting a single greens grower.

"It's affecting every grower and

their neighbour, which means we will see a domino effect and in a few months' time there will be a shortage of the likes of your local broccoli and lettuce."

The second round of flooding, which brought higher winds along with more rain, also damaged orchards, although most had completed harvest.

"Although orchards were fortunate to have harvested their fruit for the year, the challenge will be around infrastructure.

"There was damage to a lot of infrastructure around orchards, and there were a lot of trees going over."



Wonky Box co-founder Angus Simms is warning of a spike in vegetable prices as shortage looms post-flood.

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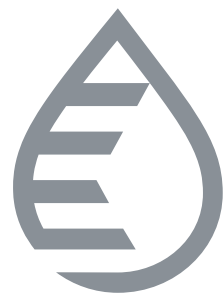
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Wairuna wetland shows big wins for water quality

PHIL EVEREST

The wetland constructed at Wairuna Farm on the McKenzie property on the south bank of the Hinds River is now almost two years old.

Some people will have taken the opportunity to ride through the area on the Longbeach Coastal Challenge bike ride.

From the period 20 September 2024 to 25 June 2025 the wetland has reduced the nitrate concentration of the water leaving the wetland by a massive 43 per cent.

During the growing season the wetland plants (carex secta, giant rush, jointed rush and raupo) have really extracted nitrogen.

Peak reduction occurred in December with a 61% reduction.

Water was entering the wetland at 8.66ppm N (parts per million nitrogen) and exiting at 3.40ppm.

The wetland trial, which is relatively small at a surface area of 647m², has clearly demonstrated to the Catchment Group the value of the wetland as a tool to remove nitrate from the waterways.

This project would not have been successful without the support of many within the community.

Lee Burbery from DairyNZ at Lincoln provided the design which focused on a low-cost approach



The wetland on Wairuna Farm is one of the few wetland sites in New Zealand where the true performance of the wetland is being monitored. PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Hinds Hekeao Lowlands Catchment Group facilitator Phil Everest says the group plan to keep monitoring the performance of the wetland for at least another year.

that could be replicated by other farmers.

Nick Vernon from Synlait Environmental Team helped navigate the ECan rules which enabled the wetland to be developed under a permitted activity.

Not having to go to the expense of consenting, which was anticipated to cost more than the construction cost, enabled the project to proceed.

The monitoring of the performance would not have been possible without the contribution of two real-time nitrate sensors; one supplied by the Ashburton Zone Committee and the other by MHV Water.

Murray Neutze from MHV Water has kept all the technology running and taken additional water samples to check on the technology.

There is a plan to keep

monitoring the performance of the wetland for at least another year.

This is one of the few wetland sites in New Zealand where the true performance of the wetland is being monitored.

The success of the Wairuna wetland will hopefully encourage others in the wider community to consider constructed wetlands as a mitigation tool for surface water nitrates where suitable sites are available.

The McKenzie farm team is looking to develop stage two based on the success of this initial trial.

It is hoped that the present review of the Resource Management Act (RMA) rules will enable the construction of wetlands without having to obtain expensive consents from ECan.

Phil Everest is facilitator for Hinds Hekeao Lowlands Catchment Group

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Idle gossip:

The cold truth about diesel warm-ups

CLAIRE INKSON

To warm up, or not to warm up, your diesel engine — that is the question.

It's a simple yet divisive topic that continues to split opinion among ute drivers across the country, especially during the colder months.

According to Rakaia Service Centre owner Scott Baker, the answer is yes - but not for long.

"I would start and run the vehicle for about 30 seconds to a minute.

"That gets the oil where it needs to be."

While frosty mornings might tempt drivers to let their utes idle for longer to enjoy a toasty cab, it's not helping the engine and could be costing more than it's worth.

"It's just using fuel," Baker says.

"All diesel engines have some type of pre-heat system - for example glow plugs.

The glow plugs in a modern vehicle will glow initially for a pre-determined time then pulse on and off after the vehicle has started."

Then there are the emission-reducing components like the Diesel Particulate Filter (DPF) and the Exhaust Gas Recirculation (EGR) valve, common in modern diesel engines.

The DPF acts like a soot-catching sponge, trapping tiny black particles before they exit the tailpipe.

The EGR valve recirculates some exhaust gases back into the engine to reduce combustion temperatures and lower nitrogen oxide emissions.

Some argue excessive idling clogs these systems, but Baker isn't convinced.

"Your EGR valve won't operate until the vehicle is at operating temperature anyway, and the DPF needs to heat up to a certain temperature before it can burn the particles off.

So generally, by the time you are driving it, everything is doing what it should."

Instead of focusing on warm-up rituals, Baker says the real key to engine longevity is good oil and regular servicing.

"Oils these days are so highly developed.

Most companies will have an oil selector website, or an 0800 number you can call and check.

It's not so bad when you take your vehicle to a workshop, because we look at those every day — that's how we decide what oils we need.

And if you looked at our shelf, it would be mind boggling because there are so many out there."



Modern utes should be serviced more often than the recommended kilometres — usually around 10,000. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON

Whether your ute is a rugged 1980s workhorse or a top-spec modern machine, using the correct oil and changing it regularly is essential.

Baker also stresses the importance of paying attention to service intervals by date, not just distance, especially for farm utes.

"A farmer could park in the paddock, walk over to check a trough and by the time he comes back it could have been idling for ten minutes — and that could be the equivalent of driving ten kilometres.

"Some of these vehicles are running five to six hours a day, which is the same as driving, really."

Even if a vehicle hasn't clocked up a lot of kilometres, it should still be serviced annually.

"You get a vehicle that has done 150,000 kilometres, and they

only bring it in for a service every three years because that's 10,000 kilometres."

Baker has seen it all - including what can go wrong when servicing is neglected or done incorrectly.

"Some people just use the same oil they chuck in the tractor, which isn't ideal."

While some modern vehicles recommend servicing every 30,000 kilometres, Baker advises a more cautious approach.

"My opinion, and probably the opinion of most mechanics, is to stick to changing your oil and filter every 10,000 kilometres."

After 15 years at the helm of Rakaia Service Centre - now operating from a new, larger site in the town's historic railway building - Baker and his wife Jody have seen firsthand the difference regular servicing makes.

"We have seen a lot of engine



Rakaia Service Centre owner Scott Baker says when it comes to maintaining your diesel, it's less warm-up, more service. PHOTO SUPPLIED

failures just due to lack of service."

It's a simple message, but one that could save diesel drivers a whole lot of heartache: skip the long warm-ups and stick to the service schedule.

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Leanne Williams

WHERE ARE YOU AND WHAT ARE YOU FARMING?

I'm a self-employed dairy farmer based in Fairlie, in the Mackenzie Country. I also work in rural sales - living the best of both worlds, whether I'm out with the cows or helping others with on-farm solutions, I'm always busy with something.

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

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

Hands down, it's a dream on a roadie - doesn't matter if it's on or off-road.

It tows so well, I sometimes have to remind myself there's actually something hitched on!

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

Always something country - usually a mix of Luke Combs, Cody Johnson, Zach Bryan, or Cooper Alan. If it's got a story and a guitar, it's playing.

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

Easy - Red Bull, Whittaker's chocolate, and pork crackling. That's the holy grail right there.

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

Back seat ... That's my mobile wardrobe and always a wee permanent stash of bailing twine. You never know when you'll need either!



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Striking the balance:

Practical policy for freshwater and farming

TRACY BROWN

As decisions around freshwater rules edge closer, the message from dairy farmers is clear.

Farmers want – and DairyNZ is strongly advocating for – sensible rules that provide certainty, a focus on ecosystem and human health outcomes rather than just strict nutrient numbers, support for catchment groups and practical mitigations, and policy settings that enable both environmental progress and the future of our dairy sector.

Thank you to everyone who has joined our webinars, spoken with us at catchment meetings, or sent in your views.

Your input is important as the first phase of the government's freshwater consultation wraps up at the end of July and DairyNZ prepares its submission.

Another opportunity will come later this year – likely October – when we see the first draft of the new rules.

What I'm hearing from those I talk with is that without a doubt, dairy remains a valued and valuable sector critical to New Zealand's future economic success – with more enabling policy a shared interest between DairyNZ

and the government.

The government's proposals include updates to Te Mana o te Wai, simpler wetland rules, a review of nitrogen limits, and more flexible ways to set freshwater objectives. These changes could reduce red tape, but only if they result in rules that are practical and workable on farm.

We support the consultation process and the goal of improving freshwater policy, but we are advocating for change that reflects on-farm realities and builds confidence for the future.

We support a shift away from rigid numerical limits. Instead, we want to see greater focus on ecosystem and human health outcomes.

We support better use of tools like certified and audited Freshwater Farm Plans.

More enabling rules around constructed wetlands is another priority.

The dairy sector is investing heavily in science-backed solutions to reduce its environmental footprint, including nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment losses.

Proven practices like using plantain, catch crops, good farming practices and stacked mitigations



Tracy Brown, DairyNZ Chairperson says DairyNZ has spent the past year preparing to provide a workable replacement to the existing policy.

through Low N Systems are already delivering results, such as the potential for nitrate reductions of up to 60%, with further gains possible with supportive policy. These efforts show the sector's strong commitment to improving freshwater quality while remaining economically viable.

DairyNZ has spent the past year

preparing to provide a workable replacement to the existing policy. Our team has developed an alternative freshwater framework to support a constructive, science-led response. We are pushing for four key outcomes: Practical, science-based rules; clearer focus on environmental and human health; farmer-led, catchment-

scale solutions that reward good practice; and a policy package trusted by farmers, communities and markets.

Beyond freshwater, we are involved in the wider RMA reform, where we have concerns. We've submitted on both recent Amendment Bills and the Fast-Track Approvals Bill, calling for enduring and enabling policy settings with pragmatic consenting pathways. We are also working with regional councils to ensure the pause on new freshwater plans is used to improve, not shelve, the evidence base for environmental limits.

We know that right now, many of you are doing your best to interpret complex rules while managing the day-to-day realities of farming.

And with calving underway or around the corner, it's all hands on deck.

In the meantime, keep doing the basics well: record nitrogen use, keep stock out of waterways, and implement your Freshwater Farm Plan.

Together, we can ensure the next generation of policy supports both a thriving dairy sector and a healthy environment.

Thank you for everything you do.

Tracy Brown is DairyNZ chairperson.



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North Canterbury's new Fed Farmers president

CLAIRE INKSON

With an eye to the future, all good farmers have a succession plan – and that's also the case with North Canterbury Federated Farmers.

Karl Dean's election as national dairy chair at the Federated Farmers AGM last week sees Bex Green step up as North Canterbury's president.

"Dairy farming is my passion, but I'm really excited that as president I'll get to broaden my horizons and come to grips with the issues in meat, wool and arable as well," Green says.

"In many respects, farmers are farmers no matter what we produce. Many of the issues, challenges or opportunities we have in front of us are shared."

Green, who contract milks 1000 cows with her husband Blair in Culverden, was the province's vice president under Caroline Amyes.

When Amyes stepped down in 2022, Green's third child was still a toddler, so Dean took over as president. Green stayed on as vice president and took on the province's dairy chair role.

"I have been waiting in the wings and learning the ropes from Karl and Caroline for a while, so naturally this was planned," she says.

"It's another step in my leadership journey, and I've been planning it for the last four years being vice president under Caroline and Karl."

"It's been a natural progression for me, and something I have had my sights on for a while, but one I haven't been ready for until now, with kids being young."

Now her three children, age twelve, ten and six are becoming more independent, Green is ready to step up her leadership journey.

"I'm super excited," she says.

"The dairy side I have a handle on; it's the meat and wool I am really excited to get a grip on and get to know better."

Green has also just been elected national dairy vice chair – the role Dean has just vacated.

She says that while some things will change, much remains familiar.

"I've been part of the National Dairy Executive for the past year, so in terms of that, nothing much will change."

"I'll put down my intentions for the national role at some point, whether that be in three years or six years, depending on how long Karl wants to do it, and if anyone else comes on board that's really passionate."

Now that she is finally provincial president, Green is looking forward to getting her feet on the ground and getting to grips with the role.

"I'll be focusing on establishing my own leadership style and getting the feel of my executive and what they want and expect from me."

Green also wants to get a better understanding of regional policy.

"My next priority will be understanding policy, finding my feet and getting to know the policy team."

"From there, I will spend six-12 months planting my voice and making sure I'm representing everyone well."

Green was named Federated Farmers 2024 Dairy Advocate of the Year for her leadership on issues such as a streamlined path to work in the dairy sector for immigrants.

She says engagement and communication with farmers is important for Federated Farmers.

"I feel that while we represent our farmers really well, both regionally and nationally, they don't always know how much we



The provincial president role has been in Bex Green's sights for some time – she's just been waiting for the right moment for her family and her farming business. PHOTO SUPPLIED

do."

Green says the Save our Sheep campaign is a good way for the organisation to highlight the work they do which often happens behind the scenes.

"It's about engaging with our farmers, not necessarily through events – we already have enough of those – but by sharing our knowledge and information about

what we are doing in a better way."

Green encourages other women who are passionate about the industry to step into leadership roles even if it feels outside of their comfort zone or in a male dominated organisation.

"I was really nervous when I stepped into the Feds role."

"I had come from Dairy Women's Network which is a

women-led organisation that empowers women, and Feds was so male dominated.

"But instead, I found this awesome community of like-minded people who are just as passionate about advocating for the ag industry as I am.

"Even though we are sometimes not the ones farming full-time, we still have a voice."



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From the newsroom to the boardroom

CLAIRE INKSON

“I love what I do, and I wouldn’t do it if I didn’t love it. That’s what I always come back to,” says Hannah Lynch, who has just marked six years with her feet firmly under the table at Synlait.

Lynch is Head of Strategy and Corporate Affairs for the Dunsandel-based dairy producer, and since January, also holds the title of Head of Milk Supply.

“What I love about Synlait is not just the variety of the challenge, but the complexity of the challenge.”

And no two days are the same. “The job can swing from being very operational to very strategic.”

Lynch’s career began in journalism, cutting her teeth as a currency and financial markets reporter for Business Desk.

She went on to work as a political reporter for a rural media company before joining NZX, where she rose to become Head of Communications, a role she says she “absolutely loved.”

Eventually, though, it was time to move on.

“I wanted more of a corporate affairs role.

“I was really interested in the

listed side of companies and wanted to work for a dual-listed business that had access to the Australian market.”

Synlait stood out: not only for its scale, but for producing something tangible.

“In a job like mine, it’s way easier to tell a story if you’re talking about something physical.”

But her time at Synlait hasn’t been without turbulence.

While the company appears to be regaining its footing, last year was a difficult one. Synlait faced serious financial pressure driven by high debt, soft demand, and a wave of supplier exit notices.

From the other side of the storm, Lynch reflects with clarity.

“You have moments when you work for businesses that are facing enormous challenges, and you think, how are we going to get through this? How am I going to get through this?”

“How am I going to deliver these deadlines for the CEO, the board, or our investors?”

“But ultimately, my reflection would be you build resilience, and you also learn the difference between what’s important, and what’s urgent.”

She says she’s learned to back

No two days are the same for Synlait’s Head of Milk Supply, Strategy and Corporate Affairs Hannah Lynch.

PHOTO SUPPLIED

herself, to stay agile, and to accept that not everything is within her control - lessons just as relevant in the boardroom as they are in the paddock.

“Companies go through large challenges, but people have challenges on the farm every day.

“It’s the same set of skills we use in the corporate world: resilience, adaptability, great communication, and building an excellent team around you.”

So, in a company still rebuilding from a year of financial strain and supplier cease notices, what does resilience in milk supply look like?

“In New Zealand, it’s about enhancing, evolving, and adding value to the service offering we give our farmers on farm.

“Resilience is about strengthening the partnership we have with them so we can support them to continue to have great farming practices where they can continue to gain the best money for their milk.”



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Hope and innovation take centre stage at inaugural Enviro Conference

CLAIRE INKSON

More than 250 rural professionals and farmers converged on the Ashburton Event Centre for the first-ever Enviro Conference, hosted by Enviro Collective.

Billed as “Future Farming Success”, the one-day event on July 15 was designed to arm attendees with practical tools and real-world strategies for thriving amid regulatory changes and environmental challenges.

Enviro Collective general manager Richard Fitzgerald said he was pleased with the turnout and engagement across the day.

“We had a lot of good feedback in terms of the topics and the presenters,” Fitzgerald said.

“There was a great representation of farmers and rural professionals - key influencers in the sector - so having them participate was really important.”

The conference featured a mix of keynote speakers, technical breakout sessions, and an Innovation Hub showcasing the latest in agri-tech.

Topics ranged from nitrogen and water management to land use diversification and resilience-building for the future.

Keynote presentations included economist Geoff Simmons, who explored the complexities of land use change in Canterbury, and Dr. Richard McDowell, whose session

focused on the role of freshwater quality in maintaining farming’s social licence.

“The keynote speakers framed the macro-view of the environmental conversation,” Fitzgerald said, “while the breakout sessions were more detailed and technical.”

“We tried to provide advanced content that would really stretch people, and I think farmers appreciated being extended in that way.”

Sessions were tailored across dairy, arable, water, and diversification streams, allowing attendees to customise their learning throughout the day.

The event came together with support from a number of regional partners including Barhill Chertsey Irrigation (BCI), Ashburton Lyndhurst Irrigation Limited (ALIL), Mayfield Hinds Valetta Irrigation (MHV), the Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective (MCCC), and Aoraki Environmental Consultancy (AEC).

Fitzgerald said collaboration was crucial in delivering a conference that balanced regulatory realities with an optimistic, future-focused tone.

“It may seem a little dramatic, but it’s about having hope: hope that we can progress with better outcomes for everybody.”

“Taking a positive view has really landed well with people across the board.”



Enviro Collective general manager Richard Fitzgerald.

Looking ahead, Fitzgerald plans to survey sponsors and attendees to identify improvements but is hopeful the Enviro Conference will become a regular fixture.

“We may do something again next year, but it could become an event that runs every second year. Either way, I think there’s strong appetite for it.”



Bec Riordan and Tim O'Sullivan from Donaghy's in the Innovation Hub. PHOTOS CLAIRE INKSON



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Southbridge dairy farmers embrace tech and tradition

CLAIRE INKSON

Southbridge dairy farmer Jason McKenzie and his wife Jade began their journey in the industry as 50/50 sharemilkers, progressing to farm ownership with the purchase of their first farm in 2007.

McKenzie said that while climbing the dairy ladder isn't as easy as it once was, it remains a viable path for newcomers to the industry.

"It is much harder now - the 50/50 jobs were really good for getting ahead.

"Land prices were a bit cheaper, and it was more doable.

"It's still possible, you just have to be a bit more creative."

The McKenzie's continued sharemilking until 2012, when they purchased a second conversion and made the move to Southbridge.

Today, their 388-hectare operation spans two adjoining properties, each with its own shed, milking a combined average of 1280 cows.

"We have been buying run-offs that are quite handy, so we are all self-contained now - we do our own wintering."

The couple operates on a traditional twice-a-day milking schedule but adapts as needed.

"We take cows down to once

a day when condition dictates," McKenzie said, noting that flexible milking is appealing to some.

"I can see why people would do flexible milking as it frees up time in the weekends.

But we have a roster that gives everyone the time off they need, and I quite like the routine."

Seven full-time staff are employed on the farm: three per shed, with one team member rotating between both. Well-equipped sheds help streamline operations.

"The sheds are well set up - they are 54 bale rotaries with cup removers and drafting systems, so we don't have huge milking times."

The McKenzie's supply Fonterra, which McKenzie says is performing well.

"They are doing a good job most of the time."

In a recent step towards tech adoption, the farm introduced cow collars, opting for the Allflex system.

Staff are currently being trained to make the most of the technology.

"We really want to use it for pre-mating heats.

We have had some excellent results with mating in the past, and then we dropped off a couple of years ago, so we are trying to get it back to the compact calving patterns we used to do half a dozen



Southbridge dairy farmer Jason McKenzie says that while climbing the dairy ladder isn't as easy as it once was, it remains a viable path for newcomers to the industry. PHOTO CLAIRE INKSON.

years ago.

"We think we will be able to get a good handle on that using the collar data."

McKenzie also supplements the herd with Vitalise pellets in the shed and says the farm has seen a notable reduction in metabolic issues since doing so.

"It took us about a month to get the rate right, but once we got it up to 100 grams per day, the metabolic problems dropped dramatically.

"It's definitely made a difference to be able to get that consistently into each cow."

It's all comes down to the delivery method, he says.

"If you want to get calcium or magnesium into your cows another way - how do you do it? In water, which they don't drink as much of when it rains, or if it's dust it gets windy, and you lose half of it.

"We find the Vitalise pellets just drop in front of them every day, and we know it's working."

McKenzie's for advice to the next generation of dairy farmers? Work hard and spend your money wisely.

"If you are good at your job, you will always get the better job.

"Find a good job, work hard at it and put your money into some sort of property, whether it's a house in town or land or building for investment - long term it will probably work out for you.

"New cars and boats are not what you should be looking for."



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NZ to host global gathering of dairy tech experts

CLAIRE INKSON

Christchurch will take centre stage this December as it hosts the 4th International Precision Dairy Farming Conference — the first time the event has been held in New Zealand.

From December 3-5, more than 300 delegates from 24 countries will converge to explore how cutting-edge technology is reshaping the dairy industry.

Delivered by DairyNZ in collaboration with leading research and industry partners, the conference aims to connect farmers, scientists, rural professionals, and agri-tech innovators.

This is the fourth time the event has been held internationally since 2016, following previous events in the Netherlands, the US, and Ireland.

“It is the first time it will be held in New Zealand,” says Dr Nicolas Lyons, DairyNZ’s Head of Science.

“Dairy is very big in New Zealand, so it’s very relevant to an international audience with New Zealand on the global stage.”

“We’re showcasing tools and insights grounded in farm reality, backed by research, and ready to support better decisions on-farm.”

Experts will present on topics

such as animal monitoring, sensor technology, and data use, alongside local farmers sharing their experiences with precision approaches in pasture management, reproduction, animal health, and labour efficiency.

Lyons describes precision dairy farming as “the ability to manage and measure things at a smaller scale than would be otherwise.”

“A lot of tasks on farm are either manual or repetitive, or we don’t have enough data to make accurate decisions, and collecting that data is time consuming.”

Through the use of sensors, wearables, and automated systems, farmers can now gather vital information across their farms.

“You get a better understanding of what is happening across farm - be that animals, pastures, paddocks or the environment. You can manage that better because you can understand much better what is happening.”

Lyons said the conference was an opportunity to bring important conversation to our shores, whilst showcasing New Zealand as a leader in dairy innovation.

“It’s also an opportunity to bring the experts here to learn from them, and so we can possibly partner with them in the future,

and we can leverage off their experience. It’s a win-win for everybody.”

The three-day programme includes farm visits, 120 accepted submissions, keynote presentations, and a grassroots farmer panel.

“Farm visits on the first day of the conference will focus on why and how farmers have adopted technology, and what problems they are trying to solve,” says Lyons.

“It’s seeing firsthand technology in action and talking to farms and staff around how they interact with technology, and how it’s impacted their daily operation.”

The farmer panel is another key element Lyons says will bring in the farmer voice to the conference.

“We will hear from farmers about what they are looking for in technology, what they struggle with when adopting technology, what research would they like to see more or less of.”

While precision dairy farming is not a one-size-fits-all solution, Lyons says it’s a powerful tool for the modern dairy industry and the conference provides an insight into what the future of dairy farming could look like.

“It’s opening people up to the possibilities of the kind of stimulating frontline work that is happening, and a peek through



Dr Nicolas Lyons, DairyNZ’s Head of Science says the conference will showcase tools and insights grounded in farm reality, backed by research, and ready to support better decisions on-farm. PHOTO SUPPLIED

the door.”

“We hope that farmers who attend this conference, and the comms that we generate before or after, will provide farmers with the confidence that technology can be

Visit www.precisiondairyfarmingconference.nz/registration to secure your place.

a good tool to address some of the issues facing farmers.”

Early bird registrations are now open for farmers, rural professionals, researchers, and students.



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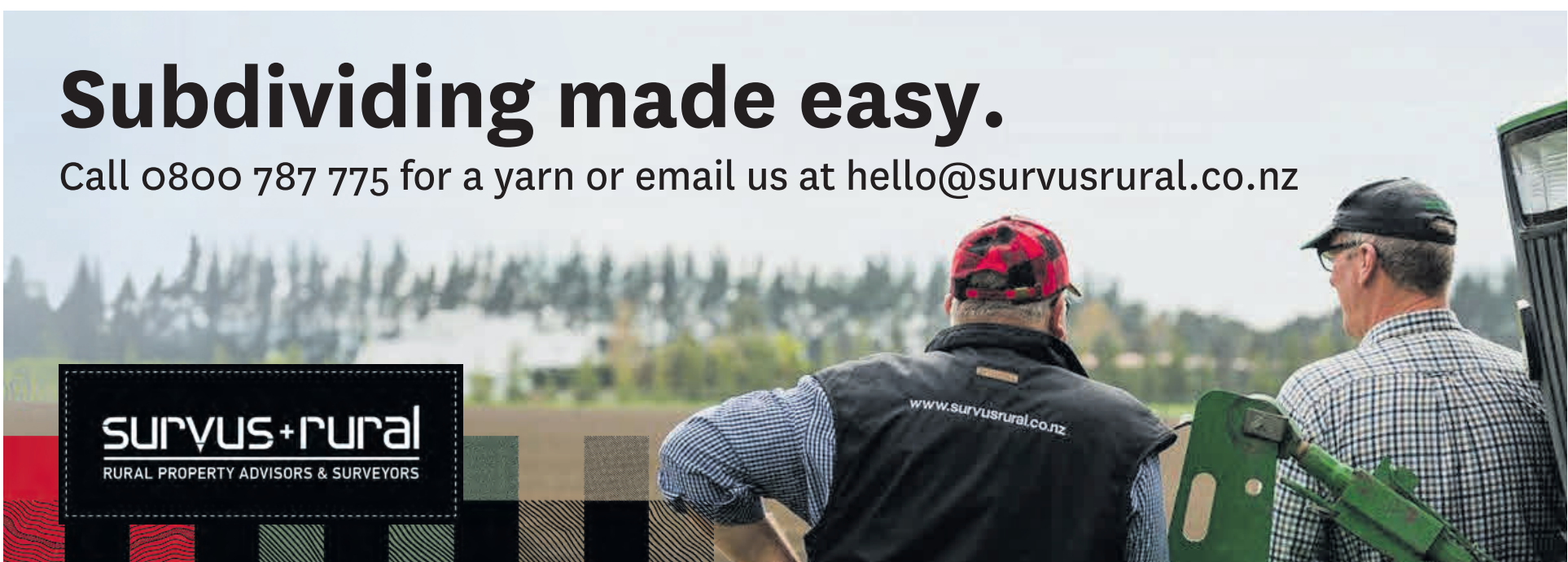
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The accidental aunty



Jae and Jodie Starling began hiring out their homestead for weddings after holding their own ceremony on the property. PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Claire Inkson
RURAL EDITOR

Jodie Starling says she didn't set out to own a wedding venue — and prefers that couples who choose her lifestyle property for their special day think of her more as a host.

"Think of me as the aunty who happens to have a beautiful property where you can hold the country rustic wedding of your dreams."

When Jodie and husband Jae bought their 14-acre block in Broomfield, North Canterbury, four years ago, they knew the property had to earn its keep.

"I used to have vision boards, and I'd be on Pinterest looking at how to make money from the land."

She considered everything from growing olives and truffles to sunflowers.

"We have the amount of land that people call a life sentence block. It's not big enough to make money off farming, but still requires a lot of work to maintain, and it's expensive to maintain."

At the time, Jodie was working in residential housing and Jae was

working in his current job as a crane operator.

Looking for a new chapter together, the couple discovered the property while travelling through Amberley.

"It was sort of an impulse buy which sounds very luxurious, but Jae and I had only been dating six months. We bought a lifestyle property and did a complete lifestyle change."

They didn't move onto the property for a year, and by then, they had even more exciting news.

"We thought right — we are moving onto a farm: we are going to be hobby farmers."

They named the place Starling Homestead, and it wasn't long before it became more than just a home.

Three years ago, Jodie and Jae were married there — giving rise to a whole new business idea.

"I was pregnant, we literally arrived, got married a month later and just eloped on the lawn under the olive trees."

"We had this big wedding planned and we realised that was going to cost too much money, and the cost of actually living on the farm was so much more than we anticipated."

After baby Remy was born and life on the farm settled into a rhythm, Jodie found herself once again thinking about ways to make the property work — this time around the demands of motherhood with a baby and then

ten-year-old.

"I thought, we could do weddings here, so we spent a bit of time tidying up the property — because it's a beautiful property. It had been a bit neglected, so it took us a while."

Today, Starling Homestead offers intimate weddings and elopements using the barn-style homestead, a rustic farm shed, and picturesque rural backdrops.

With a BYO model for food and drink, couples can keep costs down and style up.

"I don't like leading with the fact that we are cost effective, but we absolutely are."

The relaxed rural setting is especially popular with farming couples, and grooms who don't feel at home in traditional venues.

"Anyone can get married here, we cater to everyone."

"But when you get the typical male-female dynamic come here, it's amazing how men light up."

"My husband wouldn't feel comfortable in a fancy venue either, but a lot of blokes are used to this sort of setting and feel at ease here, which is lovely."

It's now been a year since Starling Homestead hosted its first wedding, and while the business — including rustic onsite accommodation — has grown quickly, juggling life and work hasn't always been easy.

"We have to be careful because the house still needs to be our home, which can be a challenge

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Country music's finest take the stage in Coal Miner's Daughter — The Story of Loretta Lynn & Friends

Dust off your cowboy boots and warm up those vocal cords — the smash-hit musical Coal Miner's Daughter — The Story of Loretta Lynn & Friends is heading to New Zealand!

This toe-tappin', heartstring-pullin' theatre experience pays tribute to the remarkable life and legacy of country music icon Loretta Lynn.

Starring acclaimed performer Amber Joy Poulton as Loretta, the show takes audiences from her humble beginnings in the hills of Kentucky to her rise to fame on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry.

"Loretta Lynn, arguably the most underrated country music star ... managed to push the envelope & record mostly songs that she had written or co-written," says Amber.

"Which in turn was the birth of controversial songs like You Ain't Woman Enough to Take My Man, Don't Come Home A-Drinkin', One's On The Way, The Pill."

But it wasn't all sass and controversy — Coal Miner's Daughter also explores Loretta's powerful collaborations with

country legends like Conway Twitty and Willie Nelson, both portrayed by the charismatic Denis Surmon, as well as her deep and defining friendship with Patsy Cline, played by Lizzie Moore.

Amber says, "It's her friendship with Patsy Cline that has my heart... Patsy was a protective influence for Loretta and without Patsy, it's quite possible there would be no Coal Miner's Daughter."

Backed by a stellar band, The Holy Men, audiences can expect to hear all the hits they know and love, including Crazy, Fist City, Walkin' After Midnight, and more.

"Loretta paved the way, all those years ago, for women like me to have a place on the main stage... I love portraying her life, her cheekiness, her sass & her heartbreak," says Amber.

As she puts it best: "If you like country music, you'll love this theatre experience. If you don't like country music, you will after."

Don't miss your chance to celebrate the music, the woman, and the legacy — Coal Miner's Daughter is a night you won't forget!

Amber Joy Poulton as LORETTA LYNN
Lizzie Moore as PATSY CLINE
Denis Surmon as CONWAY TWITTY



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Jodie has started hosting winter elopements inside the homestead during the cooler months.



Starling Homestead, with its laid back and rustic aesthetic, appeals to couples with rural roots.



Hosting weddings is a way for Jae and Jodie Starling to draw an income off their North Canterbury lifestyle property.

when your property is your business.

"I also struggle with switching off work hours, and a lot of that comes with social media."

Social media has played a big role in the venue's success.

While the business is on Instagram and Facebook, it's TikTok that has delivered the biggest return.

"I find TikTok quite easy in terms of creating content because you just show up.

"I've done TickToks in my dressing gown with no make up on, and I make it more about me than the business."

But showing up online comes with its own challenges.

"It gets addictive. The more you use it, the more it rewards you by pushing your content out so you end up in this vicious trap of trying to show up all the time.

"But on the positive, TikTok has absolutely made our business, it's incredibly effective advertising."

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Helping women find their wild



Claire Inkson

RURAL EDITOR

A South Island teacher-turned-cherry farmer is on a mission to help women find their wild - and she's not talking about yoga retreats or juice cleanses.

Samantha Matheson is the brains behind Wild Women Workshops: bite-sized sessions where women learn hands-on, practical skills often stereotypically "reserved for the boys" like using power tools, backing trailers, and even butchery.

"I like being on an orchard, and there are lots of things I get to do every day that most women don't get a chance to."

It all started when Matheson taught a friend with zero farming experience how to drive a tractor on the Cromwell orchard she runs with her partner.

"It was really empowering, seeing her confidence grow, and being a part of that."

That lightbulb moment got her thinking: What other skills do women secretly (or not-so-secretly) want to learn?

"I just started writing ideas down and came up with the foundation of what seemed like a cool idea."

"And because I'm a teacher, this is another form of education which I love."

There's zero room for condescending "let me do it for you, love" attitudes here - all Wild Women Workshops are run by women, for women.

"There is a huge need and want for women connecting with other women."

"This adds the concept of learning off other women who

already have the skills you want to learn."

It's not just about mastering "blokey" skills either.

Some workshops will revive vintage know-how that would make Grandma proud: think mending, crocheting, or knitting reusable cloths.

"A lot of the workshops are about saving money and being sustainable."

"I would love to learn how to crochet or knit and make our own kitchen cloths like our grandparents."

"It's money saving skills like that people are interested in."

This isn't a business venture, it's a passion project born from Matheson's own journey. After stepping back from full-time teaching last year to focus on mental health, creativity, and family, she found clarity.

"I'm still picking up relief teaching, but this is my year of creativity."

Each workshop is short and sweet (just 1 to 2 hours) and only asks for a small koha to cover costs like fuel.

To kick things off, Matheson is hosting an open day in early August on the orchard, giving women a chance to get a taste of what's on offer.

"We have things like target shooting with air rifles, a digger and a tractor: just more masculine things where it might take a woman a bit more courage to give a try."

And if that feels like a stretch? No worries. Watching is just fine.

"If you want to just come and have a look, maybe see an air rifle up close if you haven't before, or held one."

"It just builds empowerment."

"If they see other women having a go on a digger, they might think they can have a go too."

"Because often, we don't see women doing these things."

Want to find your wild? Check out Wild Women Workshops on Facebook.



Former teacher turned cherry farmer Samantha Matheson is the brains behind Wild Women Workshops where women teach other women practical skills. PHOTO SUPPLIED

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Should I take Co Enzyme Q10?

Imagine trying to drive your car after someone had crimped the fuel line from your fuel tank to your engine. The car would still run but would quickly lose power on a hill or under load.

This is much like our bodies when they have insufficient Co Enzyme Q10 (CoQ10). CoQ10 acts like the fuel line in your car by transporting energy within cell energy factories called mitochondria to make the energy we need.

Co Enzyme Q10 (CoQ10) is an essential vitamin-like substance mostly made in our liver. While we normally make all the CoQ10 we need, some people because of age, health problems or medications can benefit from taking good quality CoQ10. Be aware that the market is now flooded with low cost semi-synthetic CoQ10 which is chemically different from the naturally fermented CoQ10 that I recommend.

The most common reason for CoQ10 supplementation is for those using cholesterol lowering (statin)

medication. The side effects of statins are so common that they are diagnosable diseases called statin myopathy and statin neuropathy.

The most common side effects are muscle stiffness, pain and weakness. This can also cause general fatigue which often feels like a lack of motivation.

Statin inhibit the enzyme needed to make cholesterol. Unfortunately, this enzyme (HMG-CoA reductase) is also needed to make CoQ10. Restricting this enzyme reduces cholesterol but also CoQ10 by as much as 50%.

Drug companies are aware of this problem and hold patents for combining CoQ10 with statins. Until such drugs are available, I recommend those on statins supplement with 100-200mg of naturally fermented CoQ10. If people have low energy or have other health issues, I often add a Mitochondrial complex that includes high grade CoQ10.



Carrot Cake Loaf

Recipe by NZ Eggs

Difficulty: Easy

Prep time: 35 minutes

Cooking time: 55 minutes

This carrot cake loaf is soft, moist, and full of warm spice, with crunchy walnuts and sweet grated carrot in every bite. It's topped with a creamy caramelised white chocolate cream cheese frosting that takes it to the next level.

Perfect with a cup of tea, and just as good the next day (if there's any left!).

Ingredients

For the loaf:

- 3 large eggs
- 1 cup neutral oil (e.g. canola or sunflower)
- 1½ cups soft brown sugar, lightly packed
- 1 tsp vanilla paste
- 1½ cups grated carrot (about 3 medium carrots)
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- ½ tsp ground allspice
- 2 cups plain flour
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 1½ tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ cup roughly chopped walnuts, plus a small handful for decorating

For the frosting:

- 100 g caramelised white chocolate, chopped
- 150 g cream cheese, softened
- 50 g unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup icing sugar, sifted

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 185°C. Grease and line a loaf tin with baking paper. In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, oil, brown sugar, and vanilla until smooth and slightly thickened.
2. In a separate bowl, combine the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg and allspice. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and gently fold together until just combined.
3. Stir in the grated carrot and chopped nuts until evenly distributed.
4. Pour the batter into the prepared tin and smooth the top. Bake for 50-55 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Leave to cool in the tin for 10 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.
5. While the loaf cools, melt the caramelised white chocolate in short bursts in the microwave, stirring between each burst. Set aside to cool slightly. In a medium bowl, beat the softened butter and icing sugar until light and fluffy. Add the cream cheese and cooled white chocolate, and beat until just combined and smooth.
6. Spread the frosting generously over the cooled loaf and finish with a sprinkle of chopped nuts.

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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Wintering Well

LYNDA BRODIE

On the farm, winter has its own rhythm. Beneath the frost-covered paddocks and shorter days, there's a sense of anticipation.

We all know spring is coming.

Lambing, calving, and the busiest stretch on the farming calendar are just around the corner. It can feel like a race against time, weather, and energy.

Even in winter, the demands on and off farm never really stop.

You're up early in the dark, getting the kids off to the bus.

Still navigating muddy gateways, feeding out in the freezing wind.

Still juggling weekend sports, work, accounts, animal health, and the usual on-call pressures of farm life.

There's also a quieter emotional weight that's hard to put into words: the isolation, the pressure, and the sheer resilience it takes to keep going.

It's quiet. Often invisible. And for rural women especially, it can feel like the cost of doing life well - the cost of choosing this lifestyle.

Rural women are capable and committed - often the glue that holds the operation (and the family) together. And because they're so reliable, they're often the ones saying yes, again and again.

The chance for a proper break rarely presents itself.

Even during these colder, darker, shorter days, it's easy to keep pushing through - ignoring nature's signals (and maybe those from your body) to slow down and gather strength for what's ahead.

But what if you took your cues from nature and saw this season as a time to reset and build reserves for spring? Ask yourself what specifically gets in the way of enjoying spring? What drains your energy or feels overwhelming?

Then set yourself up for success.

We don't have to keep repeating the same patterns. We have choices - in what we do, how we do it, and how we respond to the pressure.

A helpful place to begin is noticing what gives and takes your energy. What matters most to you?

What would it look like to honour that more often?

Many of us have thoughts about productivity and self-worth that need updating. We can challenge the belief that we must always be available, always doing, always coping. Skills like setting boundaries, naming our needs, asking for support, and taking mindful breaks can help build a more sustainable way forward.

Stress doesn't always look like panic. Sometimes it's just an endless list, a tight chest, a short fuse.

Many rural women I know are "active relaxers" - they find calm in motion.

One of my clients created a Relaxation Menu with two lists: things that take under 20 minutes and those that take longer.

That way, even on busy days, she can still soothe her nervous system.

It can be as simple as drinking your morning cuppa on the verandah while listening to the birds, instead of sipping it on the run.

Or practising the phrase, "I'll think about that," instead of saying "yes" out of habit. These small shifts help you check in with yourself first - so you don't end up depleted, stretched too thin, or resentful.

Above all, please remember you are not alone. It's too easy for us to self-isolate, but we're not meant to carry it all quietly.

We all long to feel seen, heard, and understood.

Honest conversations can strengthen us, our families, and our communities.

Lynda Brodie is a connection coach who farms with her husband Russell south of Ashburton.



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Biodiversity Credits?

Written by Emma Warmerdam, Technician for Verity NZ based in Methven.

Last month, the Government announced its support for voluntary nature credits. Several privately funded pilot projects are now underway to test how a nature credit market could work in New Zealand. We wanted to explore this topic further and showcase how Verity NZ's carbon and co-benefit credits can already reward biodiversity gains in New Zealand.

The idea of "biodiversity credits" or "nature credits" has been kicking around in New Zealand for some time. The aim of a system like this is to address New Zealand's biodiversity crisis and support sustainable farming, forestry and tourism. Biodiversity credits would encourage investment to support landowners with protecting, maintaining and restoring indigenous biodiversity.

The big question has been how to quantify these biodiversity gains. How can we ensure these credits have integrity and are not the latest form of greenwashing? Buyers of credits will need to know what they're buying (what is the project doing?), are the benefits truly additional (what would have happened without the project?) and is there confidence that the credits are linked to a long-term impact (will the area associated with the credits remain protected for say the next 50-100 years?).

The concept of biodiversity credits funding much-needed conservation work is great, and supply has been flourishing overseas, however, demand has not taken off. A 2024 report by the Pollination Foundation in Australia estimated that between US\$325,000 and US\$1,870,000 worth of biodiversity credits had been sold worldwide. This is still a small market; in comparison, the voluntary carbon market is valued at US\$2 billion. Unlike carbon credits, which are used to offset emissions, biodiversity credits are not associated with offsetting. Therefore, there is less of an incentive for companies to purchase biodiversity credits.

Do you want to be rewarded for biodiversity projects on your property but don't want to wait around for the Government's trial results? Well, we have some good news, there are already ways for landowners to be rewarded for conservation through well-established voluntary carbon credits. This is where Verity NZ comes in. **We partner with farmers to design, register, implement and monitor carbon credit and co-benefit projects across New Zealand.** We believe



Natural regeneration resulting in biodiversity and ecosystem co-benefits.



A Verity NZ carbon credit and its co-benefits.

in embedding co-benefits into our projects, and biodiversity is but one of the many. Improving soil and freshwater health, while delivering community benefits, creating jobs and increasing the land's resilience to climate change are all part of what our projects aim to achieve.

We like to use the analogy of a **carbon credit being a vehicle for co-benefits**. The carbon credit 'truck' leads the way and connects the credit with the buyer while the associated co-benefits are trailers, filled

with precious cargo, increasing the value of the credit as a whole. Attaching co-benefits to carbon credits provides a greater incentive for businesses to buy your credits compared to 'plain' carbon credits or new biodiversity credits.

A carbon credit is earned for every tonne of carbon dioxide sequestered. Verity NZ measures the carbon sequestered and the other benefits being achieved. We use a combination of remote sensing, LiDAR and field work to collect this data.

What makes us unique is that we pay for all up-front 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. Verity NZ takes care of the whole process, from seed-to-credit.

Verity NZ's point of difference is that we are able to fund the up-front costs of our projects,

and we have buyers who are willing to pay a premium for our high-integrity credits due to the co-benefits associated with them.

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 protect our unique biodiversity and steward the land for the future. Verity NZ is the genuine one-stop-shop, seed-to-credit company who will deliver for you.