

# RURAL GUARDIAN

South Island  
wide



SATURDAY, JULY 30, 2022

TO EVERY FARM IN THE SOUTH ISLAND



MT SOMERS STATION P20-21



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## TALL TALES FROM THE VEGETABLE PATCH

Page 41

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# What's woke about making money?



**Pat Deavoll** RURAL REPORTER

Many of you will have watched an episode of Country Calendar a few weeks back which featured Geoff and Justine Ross of Lake Hawea Station.

The episode created quite the furore with many commenting negatively on the Ross's farming methods on the TVNZ Facebook page. The last time I looked there were just shy of 1000 posts.

One post said: "Very disappointed. Let's see real farming, Country Calendar, real people with real mortgages and real challenges. The shearing of the sheep, what a joke, slippery white boards, classical music, mattresses at the bottom of the chutes. These people don't know sheep."



But another said: "What? Wow! I thought the programme was fantastic, and enjoyed it so much that I watched the repeat on TV ONE again today. Well done to their conservation measures and thinking outside the box!"

These about sums things up. A divided opinion.

TVNZ's response was to say: "Although this was our highest-rating episode of the

year, most of your comments are negative. Hyundai Country Calendar is about all sorts of rural people, rich and poor, doing all sorts of things - sometimes very different from the norm. We think it's good to show what different types of people are doing on the land and let them have their say. Be aware that no one tells us what stories we should do, or how we should

handle them, which is why we read and think about what you say."

That's telling it. When Rural Guardian approached Geoff Ross he was happy to put his views across, mainly in a bid to set the record straight.

We discovered his methods were in fact, calculated and in the best interests of the farm as a going concern, and played to the markets he was supplying. Geoff says making money is not usually a part of any definition of woke, of which many accused the Ross's of.

For instance, painting the shearing shed board white to emphasise any harm to the sheep, supplying them with mattresses at the bottom of the chute, and paying shearers on sheep experience were all means of giving their wool a premium on the offshore market. These days many overseas buyers want to know their wool comes from a farm where animal welfare is priority. Hence the premium.

Pages 3-6 feature the Ross's and hopefully this will turn around some of their detractors.



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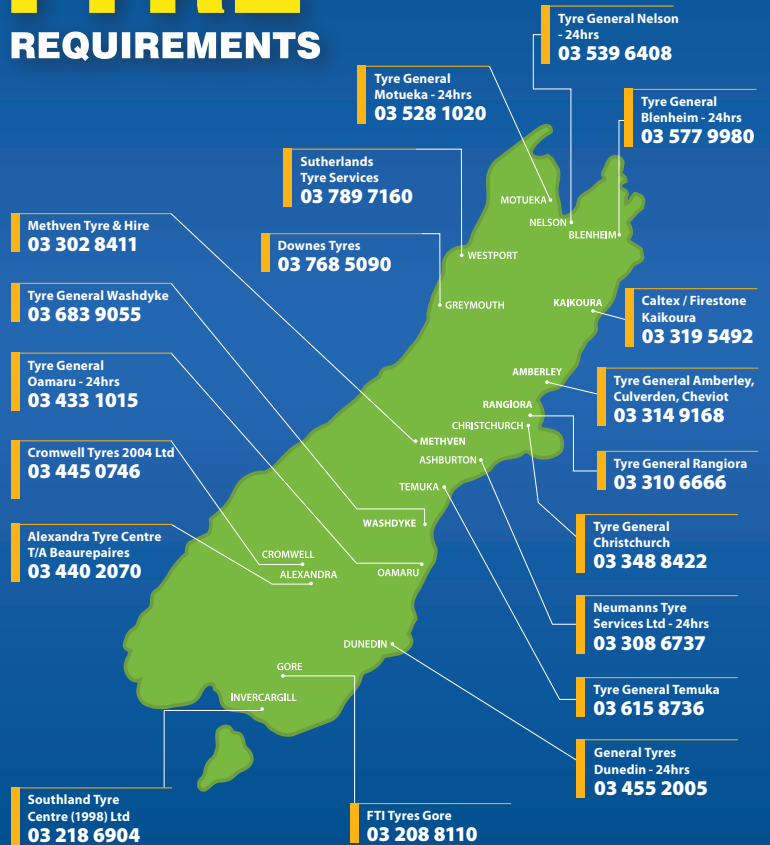
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# Lake Hawea Station: we are natural disruptors

**Geoff Ross: Making money is not usually part of any definition of woke**

A few weeks ago, Country Calendar featured Wanaka high country farm, Lake Hawea Station.

The episode created a furor on social media, some saying that Geoff and Justine Ross's unconventional method of farming their property was "woke". This must have been upsetting for the couple.

Rural Guardian approached the couple for an interview and discovered that their methods were in fact, calculated and in the best interests of the farm as a going concern, and played to the markets they were supplying. Geoff says making money is not usually part of any definition of woke.

"Farming also has a really important role to play in slowing climate change," says Geoff. "Whilst some view farming as part of the climate change problem, by being climate positive we can demonstrate its part of the solution - and justify a premium by this."



Geoff and Justine Ross have owned Lake Hawea Station since 2019.

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

Geoff and Justine spent decades as successful urban entrepreneurs before buying Lake Hawea Station in 2019.

The farm covers more than 6500 hectares and runs 10,000 merino sheep and 220 head of angus cows and their

young stock. Stock numbers are increasing.

"There was one night just sitting at a laptop for what

seemed the thousandth time that we realized it was time to move," says Geoff. "We were raising teenage boys and we wanted them to have a slightly different lens on our country. I was farm born and raised and Justine's parents were from a farm so we were always intending to circle back."

The couple has never shied from big ventures including founding the well-known vodka brand 42 Below. But nothing beat the challenge of farming.

"I think this has been the single biggest undertaking of our lifetime," says Justine. "It has been incredibly hard. Our respect for the farming community is immense. And also, I think because we are natural disruptors, we couldn't arrive at the sector and not ask some questions."

Geoff and Justine have set some big environmental goals and Lake Hawea Station has become Australasia's first carbon-zero farm.

*Continued on P4*

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Geoff and Justine have painted the board white in an effort to show any cuts and bruises to the sheep.

*From P3*

“Our current position at Lake Hawea Station is that we are just over two times climate positive,” says Geoff. “We emit 2500 tonnes of greenhouse gas every year, most of that via emissions from the stock. But we sequester via the trees we have planted over 5500 tonnes of carbon every year. Our goal is to make those ten times.

“We calculated our carbon emissions for two reasons.

One is because it is the right thing to do. We also did it for commercial reasons- we have been searching for what is going to make New Zealand food and fibre distinct and get us out of the commodities racket. And here we have the ability to create climate-positive food and fibre and also premiums.”

Geoff and Justine decided to make changes in the woolshed, also in a bid to create a premium

for their wool on the overseas market. Surprisingly the couple found that many offshore consumers think shearing is a brutal activity. So, they talked with fashion brands and said “if we can disprove this would you pay more/” They agreed.

Justine says “The reality of shearing merinos- they have the nodules; they have the wrinkly skin. And we wanted to know if we were hurting the animals or bruising them in

any way. And so, all the boards got painted white so that this would be evident. A confronting reminder to all of us that the sheep must be shorn slowly and compassionately.

“I didn’t understand why the sheep would be pushed down the chutes and land on gravel so we put down mattresses that they could land on,” she says.

“There were also trials with more chill music. All sorts of music now get played in

the shed- not just hard rock. As we move into a different model where compassion for the animals is at the center of everything we do, it is more about gentle music that makes the environment feel calmer.”

Another idea of Justine’s is a score card for each shearer which is all about a better experience for the sheep. Rather than the gang trying to compete with each other for the most sheep sheared in a day,

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she has incentivized the score on the experience of the sheep. It is working well- the score is added up at the end of the day, and the shearer can do a nicer job and still get paid the same.

"It's a win-win for us and a win-win for the sheep," she says.

Part of the driver for better animal welfare is the demand for buying the farm's wool. In New Zealand we think that shearing is a pretty relaxed calming experience for the sheep.

Shearing is something that is good for the animal welfare of the sheep," Justine says.

Geoff believes that selling wool is all about having the right partnerships.

"Even in uncertain times the appetite for natural fibre- something that is soft and strong and breathable- remains very healthy," he says. "And what we are doing is having a strong relationship with our customers so we can provide them with assets that help them market their garments. This helps build a premium for them and ultimately a premium for the farmer."

Lake Hawea Station is Australasia's first certified carbon zero farm. A key part of farming more sustainably here is a switch to the regenerative agriculture system.

"Our take on regen is really about diversity. I think nature has done a pretty good job over the last million years of using



For Geoff, the autumn muster is the highlight of the year.

diversity to produce strong resilient ecosystems," says Geoff.

"We make an assessment as to whether the soil is bacterial dominant or fungi dominant. If it's bacterial dominant, we add some humates to balance it."

Geoff goes straight in with the direct drill with plants that have been proven like chicory and clovers and vetch.

"We have plants that are there to feed the stock but also plants that feed the soil," he says.

"Understanding the quality of the pasture is critical. We test for dry matter and metabolized energy. So, we can see what it is likely to do for our stock this winter.

"When you put stock into a regen paddock, they are like kids in a candy store- they just

go crazy. It's like open access to the salad bar," he says.

"New Zealand has become very good at running systems based on ryegrass and clover. The exciting thing about regenerative systems is that they can reduce your inputs- certainly fewer fertilizer needs and fewer tractor hours. And the cool thing we are starting to see is those livestock gains."

"We run a pretty low maintenance model on our 200 angus cows," Geoff says. "Low input. So basically, they are just doing a job- mulching scrubby blocks, creating grazing for sheep and pasture quality. Tidy up the rough stuff instead of a man on a tractor using up diesel."

Perhaps the biggest effort on the station is going into planting native trees. This is Justine's pet project.

"I asked David Norton who did our environmental plan what he most wanted, and he said reforestation," she says. "The beech, the kowhai.

"So far we have planted over 17,000 trees and it has been pretty patchy. We have had to source them from outside of the station and it has been incredibly expensive, and they haven't all done that well. So, the idea is that we can grow them here with seeds we have taken off the station and then put them in soil that is sourced from the station as well. So that above and below the ground are working together. And hopefully, they will have a better shot."

Justine accepts they are playing the long game. It's legacy thinking. We must do what's right for our country and the ecosystem and the planet, she says. The short-term thinking, we can't afford that luxury.

Continued on P6

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As we move into a different model where compassion for the animals is at the center of everything we do, it is more about gentle music in the shearing shed that makes the environment feel calmer.



Geoff and Justine decided to make changes in the woolshed, also in a bid to create a premium for their wool.

From P5

“When you go down to the mature grove and you see the huge kowhai you see what can be,” she says.

“The autumn muster is the best part of the job, it’s what keeps you interested, I never miss it,” says Geoff.

“This is for me the best day of the year. We have a fantastic team and a great exchange programme going with other stations in the district. This year we had a young guy from Glen Dene Station, our neighbor across the lake helping us out and we do the same for Glen Dene and Mt Burke as well.

“A drone is a big help- it can be dropped into a gully to bring the sheep up to an elevation where the sheepdogs can take over.

“The autumn muster is a time when you can go out and reconnect with the ewes who have been out all summer, get to bring them home for a good seaweed tonic, and then a visit with the ram in a couple of weeks.”

Geoff says the first muster as new owners was pretty overwhelming.

“It’s a big county and we didn’t really know the mustering routes, but the sheep help you out, they have

a homing instinct and a set way they like to travel so if you trust them, it goes pretty smoothly,” he says.

The family has developed their own conservation plan regarding deer.

“We decided to leave the animals until they are over a certain age to build up a nice healthy population. We have worked out we want to be taking about 30 hinds off the property a year to keep a stable population. This takes a fair bit of effort, especially if we aren’t using a helicopter,” Geoff says.

“Hunting is essential to the sustainability of the farm. It has to be done because all the

introduced ungulates on the farm aren’t native or original. And they do plenty of harm to the native flora.”

Telling their story to tourists and on social media is important to Justine and Geoff.

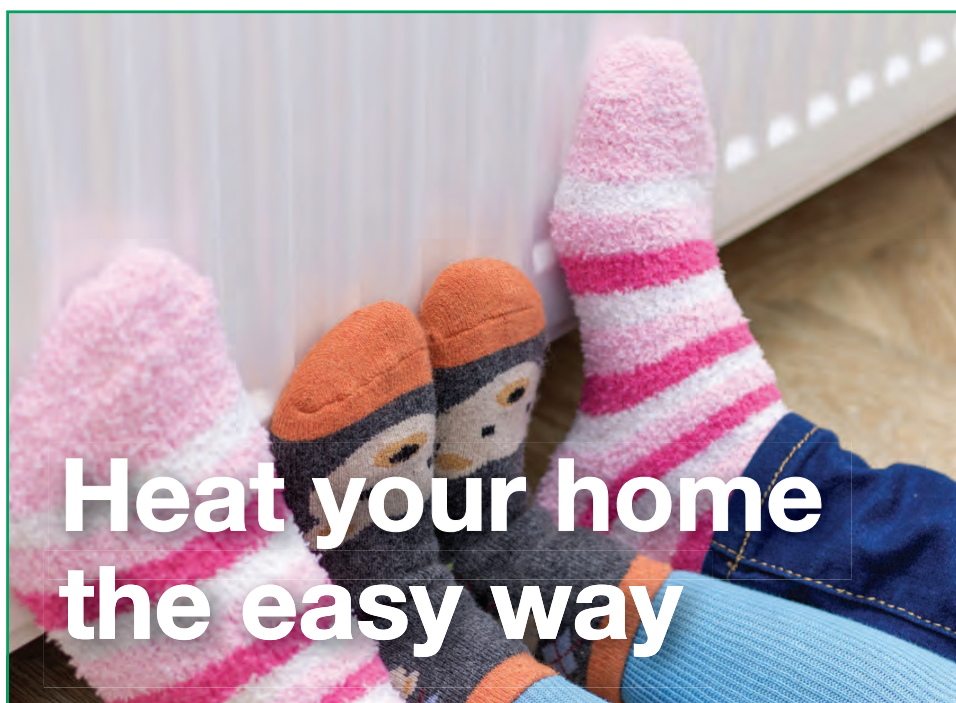
“I hope that guests take away this idea that they can educate themselves on the climate crisis and then do what they can to make a contribution. Not everyone can buy a sheep and beef property and do farming as activism but there are things, we can all do,” Justine says.

“If you drive through a city block you can see the brands and businesses on every mile of road. But you don’t see that

in rural New Zealand so you don’t know what’s going on. There are 50,000 farms in New Zealand- now imagine if 50,000 farms told their story to a global audience.

“We have over 2000 followers who are offshore, multiply that by 50,000 farms and that is 100 million global consumers engaged with what we do.

“We get a huge amount of feedback from our Instagram site and customers from all over the world are giving us feedback, on what we are doing, and it is starting to generate inquiries, our wool clients have come to us based on what they have seen on our social media.”



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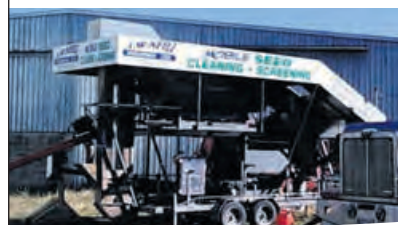
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# Forestry poses challenges and opportunities for farmers

A hot topic nationwide for many in the farming fraternity is trees. We receive inquiries almost daily from farmers considering selling sheep and beef hill country, encouraged by the premium forestry companies are paying to acquire suitable property.

Demand is unprecedented, both for land to plant production forests, and land suitable for trees that will generate carbon credits under the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

East and South Otago appeal to those involved in production forestry: the temperate climate, low altitude, and proximity to the port have encouraged the main forestry companies to take an interest.

Despite low prices for logs at present, investment from local, national and overseas companies continues steadily: rotation cycles of 25 to 35 years even out peaks and troughs to provide assurance on stable long term returns that give these companies the confidence to invest.

One potential change that



Despite low prices for logs at present, investment from local, national, and overseas companies continues steadily. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

may impact on this trend is if the government removes the exemption on forestry from rules on overseas investment. If so, any transaction on land for forestry will be treated as a normal overseas investment application.

In effect, this would place a financial hurdle in front of those overseas investors applying to purchase such land. Industry expectation is that this change will be announced

in the next few weeks. While this would test the appetite of investors, it is unlikely to diminish the overall trend.

Understandably, some in the sheep and beef sector are unhappy with the conversion of farms to forestry, fearing a negative impact on rural communities.

Others are seeing the upside. Planting or regenerating the less easily grazed parts of a farm for carbon sequestration,

therefore earning ETS revenue and reducing the carbon footprint of pastoral farming, is an option we discuss regularly with farmers. Lake Hawea Station gained considerable attention recently when the news media profiled their endeavours to become carbon neutral.

While we have enough experience of the general principles of land use conversion to assist anyone

buying or selling a farm, like anything new and different, to really understand how to use the ETS to your advantage requires particular expertise and detailed practical knowledge of the system.

Fortunately, there are several professional forestry companies and environmental consultants that have developed methods to assess the viability of forests and potential forest land.

These are the people providing farmers with the information they need to make sound decisions on how best to use carbon sequestration or production forestry to future proof and diversify revenue from a farm.

Change is constant in farming, and always has been. Those who take a rational approach to research and understand the threats, trends and opportunities presented here will negotiate this particular change in the best shape.

*Craig Bates is Otago Sales Manager for PGG Wrightson Real Estate Limited.*

## Keep safe when digging or moving equipment

Overhead and underground power lines can be easy to forget about when digging or moving farm machinery around your property.

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# Molloy Agriculture: Making life

## Molloy Agriculture: continually upgrading over 37 years

David and Sonia Molloy began Molloy Agriculture Limited as owner operators in 1985 putting their first spray unit on a J1 Bedford. In 37 years since, they have taken the company from strength to strength and now employ a team of 30 and operate a fleet of 15 sprayers. Molloy Agriculture now offers a comprehensive service from agronomy, through soil testing, to seed and chemical supply and application.

Molloy Agriculture's services aim to make life easier for farmers through having agronomists on the ground which can provide advice on the best option from crop planning, fertiliser recommendations, in field agronomy, gross margins and budgeting. Agronomists or the farmer can then deal directly with the Bateman or Truck Dispatch Managers to ensure the right timing and products are being applied. Molloy Agriculture can look after the chemical supply and management to take away the challenge of compliance. On site they have an AgRecovery



Molloy Agriculture Fleet.

hub which takes all chemical containers with the AgRecovery logo on them which they then recycle. This is a free service and there are no costs at all to the farmer.

Since Molloy Agriculture started mixing liquid fertiliser in 2008, the demand for liquid fertiliser has only grown with it needing the team to continue

to upgrade their technologies. Precision farming has been a big improvement for Molloy Agriculture which provides proof of placement and reports to farmers accurately where and when an application goes on. With computerised sprayers, they can ensure the liquid Nitrogen is going on with pinpoint accuracy and consistent rates right across

the 24m boom. Recently Molloy Agriculture's vehicles have passed the Spreadmark testing certificate which recognises the vehicle accuracy on placement of nutrients.

Molloy Agriculture have not forgotten their roots, they are still specialist spray applicators. Their fleet of Bateman self-propelled sprayers and Isuzu

spray trucks is updated constantly and guarantees the right vehicle for your job. They are all equipped with multiple nozzles ensuring that no matter the job, Molloy Agriculture has the correct nozzles for the application.

For more information on Molloy Agriculture's services, give the team a call.

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# easier for Canterbury farmers

## Falstone Dairies Ltd takes proactive approach to farming with Flowfert N

New technologies are becoming key into helping farmers achieve environmental targets and improve efficiency and sustainability on farm.

Falstone Dairies 50/50 Sharemilker, Eugene Cronin has taken a proactive approach to farm more sustainably with a focus on using nitrogen and sulphur inputs more effectively.

Eugene and Sarah Cronin milk 500 cows on an irrigated dairy farm in Mid Canterbury. Eugene has been there with his wife Sarah and children Eoghan, Olive and Vaughn for the past three years and they have just started their second three-year term share milking on the property.

Falstone Dairies Ltd has a strong focus on nutrient timing and application.

“Now more than ever with increasing costs and environmental pressures we need to be sure that every unit of nitrogen applied is being converted to kg DM and milk solids,” says Eugene. Regular



FlowFert mixing plant on site at Molloy Agriculture.

soil testing and timing of application is key but one of their biggest focuses is the efficiency and accuracy of how their nitrogen is being applied.

For the past three years, Eugene has been getting eight rounds of Flowfert N applied through one of Molloy Agriculture’s spray units. Flowfert N is 18 per

cent nitrogen which can be applied throughout the year. Molloy Agriculture, along with Ravensdown, have also developed Flowfert N+S which is dissolved ammonium sulphate which is a popular product in the spring to encourage early pasture growth. “Through applying Liquid N we are able to put our N on little and often

which works well with our system.” says Eugene.

In 2008 Molloy Agriculture started mixing fertiliser and is now a Ravensdown liquid fertiliser consignment store. Today the plant can manufacture 75,000 litres per day and has storage for a further 210,000 litres.

Molloy Agriculture dispatch their products through a

calibrated flow meter into either of their tankers, sprayers, client’s sprayer, or 1000 litre IBC shuttles. Their truck and trailer unit have 26,500 L capacity in order to deliver the product to storage tanks on farms. They also have a 4000L unit for smaller jobs.

Through using Flowfert N, Falstone dairies are able to track exactly where their N is going with consistent application rates across the 24m boom width right up to the field margin, eliminating product wastage and misses and increasing the accuracy in which the N is being applied.

Along with their AgRecovery recycling site, Molloy Agriculture have a strong sustainability focus and are pleased to be able to help farmers like Eugene and Sarah reach their environmental targets through increasing N use efficiencies. For more information on Flowfert N or Flowfert N+S call the team at Molloy Agriculture.

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# Hip hip hooray – it's Rakaia School's 150th Jubilee!

## I walk backward into the future with my eyes fixed on my past



Pat Deavoll  
RURAL REPORTER

The little Mid Canterbury rural township of Rakaia is due a special and much-deserved treat this Labour Weekend, when it celebrates the 150th Jubilee of its school.

The Rakaia School has been educating children from the town and surrounding farming communities since 1872. Ever since, it has remained an orakaia, or a place that brings everyone together.

Back in the early days' children often left school as young as 11 to go to work on family farms, particularly the boys. The girls left to do domestic work. Or milked the house cows.

Children would ride their ponies, or horse and gig, to Rakaia School. The horses would be housed in a rudimentary paddock for the day- just two strands of barb wire- until it was time to go home. If the children didn't ride, they would walk.

Carolyn Nordqvist, Carol Mucke, and Dawn Whiting all attended the school in the 1960s. Their teacher was Fraser Barton and Nordqvist remembers the discipline and "what would happen if I misbehaved."

"A common reprimand was to send us out, with our desks, to sit under the goal posts and be made to stay there all alone," she said.

Mucke said, "We'd begin with the times' table using chalk on a black board and had to avoid having chalk thrown at us."

Whiting, who was very sporting, said she enjoyed journeying to other rural



An aerial view of the modern-day Rakaia School, 2022.

PHOTO: RAKAIA SCHOOL

schools to compete.

All three women are on the jubilee organising committee and have spent hundreds of hours preparing for the event.

Morgan Platt, deputy principal of the school and jubilee committee chairman said the Labour Weekend event

would be as follows:

"Friday evening is a good ole' catch up with cash bar from 5.30pm. People can pick up registration packs here.

"Saturday starts with a street parade at 10am going to the school grounds. There is more catch-up time available.

"At 1pm there will be official speeches, the cutting of a cake followed by decade photos and afternoon tea," he said.

"On Saturday evening, at the Community Centre, there will be a grazing table, a cash bar, a live band, and some more catch-up stories.



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“Come Sunday at 10.30am there will be a reflection service to finish the weekend.”

The school has always been connected to the Rakaia River. The school is on Dunford Street, a salute to the original punter who provided service across the river in the 1800s. Ever since it opened on 25 March 1939, the Rakaia River Bridge has retained its title as New Zealand’s longest bridge—something all school students to this day are very proud of.

While Rakaia has changed since the centenary in 1972 when 600 former students and their families gathered to celebrate, the jubilee organisers believe the town will hold fond memories for many.

“Rakaia’s grown because of farming, particularly dairy, and the business hub is important to serve the rural community,” Platt said.

“It’s also a stopping-off place for travelers and ideal for lifestylers as it’s close to Ashburton and Christchurch.”

Alumni of the school who have performed to a high degree are ploughman Allan Manson, world champion jet boater Mark Cromie, shearer Grant Smith, and renowned Maori carver Riki Manuel. The school has also produced some celebrated rugby players over the years.

What’s more, believe it or not, the sixth generation of the Mead family is now attending the school.

Nordqvist said the school has journeyed through three major wars, the snowfall of 1976, devastating earthquakes, and most of all, the latest Covid outbreak. And it has survived and cemented some great memories and steadfast friendships over the years.

While no foundation pupils will attend—the youngest would have been 155



From left, Carolyn Nordqvist, Dawn Whiting, and Carol Muckle, the nerve centre of planning for the Rakaia School 150th Jubilee.

PHOTO: ASHBURTON GUARDIAN

years—ages of attendees will range from 97-year-old David Cornelius to the latest 5-year-old at the school.

The Jubilee Committee has used a haka to help guide them and remind them of the importance of the history of Rakaia School. Kia whakatomuri te haere wakame - I walk backward into the future with my eyes fixed on my past.

This is an important remembrance of te ao Maori conceptualisations of time, where past, present, and future are interwoven, said Platt.

“Also to remind us that we are only as strong as the foundations that have been set by those before us.”

People can register to attend via the Rakaia School website: <https://rakaia.school.nz/150th-jubilee/>

So, if you have a connection with the school, or just want to be part of this historic event, get your registration in.

The promotional logo for the event.

PHOTO: RAKAIA SCHOOL



The school role of 1933, in the middle of the depression. Some rather sombre children.

# High-country shepherd represents New Zealand



Pat Deavoll  
RURAL REPORTER

High-country shepherd Taylor Bird is the only Kiwi in a field of nine Australians to compete in the finals of the first Cobber Challenge Relay dog trials held in Queensland, Australia.

The 19-year-old's 'Team Hakatere Station' is made up of four dogs – two huntaways and two heading dogs.

"At Hakatere Station we run 12,000 ewes, 800 cattle, and an angus bull stud up in the mountains near Mt Somers. I've been working here for a year with five staff," Bird said.

"At my last job, I started the team. These are my four running dogs. I have another four young dogs that are doing a bit of work. All my dogs come to work with me every day; they're basically with me 24/7. The huntaways are the noise makers, and as their name suggests, they push

stock away; whereas the heading dogs, they bring the stock to you."

His dogs are called Moss, Tom, Kate, and Bruno.

No matter where you run Moss, you have full confidence that he'll bring the stock to you, Bird said.

"Tom has always had a passion for work. There is nothing else he wants to be doing; he'll fall over before he stops working.

"Kate is a yard dog plus she does some paddock work. The heavy hitter on the team, she has a lot of punch and can move anything.

"Bruno can go anywhere and do anything. He's a real natural who was easy to train. He's my main mustering dog, and the one that gets me out of sticky situations most of the time."

Farmers have nominated teams of two, three, or four dogs. Each day of the three-week competition, the farmer will select one of their nominated dogs to wear a GPS collar, to track how far, fast, and how long they work. The results will be combined to crown the winning team.

Their data is uploaded daily to the Cobber Challenge website so fans can follow along with their favourite working dog teams.



Taylor Bird with his competitive team: Moss, Tom, Kate, and Bruno.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED



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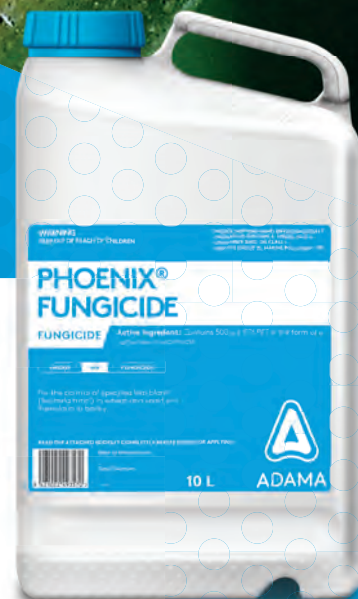


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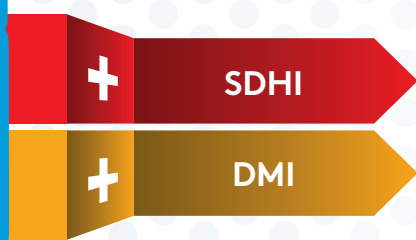
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Healthy animals winter better, and are more likely to reach spring in the right condition, which then creates a cascading set of benefits for the coming season.

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\* Based on feeding 7.5tDM/ha (3kgDM/cow/day) good silage with 17% crude protein @ \$0.40/kgDM, versus good hay with 15% crude protein @ \$0.25/kgDM; We recommend feed testing crops & supplement before setting diet.

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# Catch crops will use the N before you lose it



Sowing date	Southland	Canterbury
June	22%	41%
July	17%	33%
August	8%	26%
September	0%	14%

utilise loosely held nutrients, such as nitrate nitrogen, before it descends further down the soil profile and out of the farming system.

Trials conducted by Dairy NZ have shown catch crop biomass contains up to 89kgN/ha at the time of harvest, that's the equivalent of approximately 200kg/ha Urea or \$266/ha of N fertiliser value. As well as offering environmental benefits, catch crops can also benefit the farm system economically producing a gross margin up to \$1261/ha (source Dairy NZ) or feed for as little as 8.1c/kgDM.

Catch crops are most effective when sown as early as possible, when conditions allow, after the winter feed crop. There is a strong relationship between time of sowing and reduction of N leaching as shown for oats in the table provided (source, Dairy NZ)

**Some additional points to consider about catch crops:**

- Try to minimise tillage if winter pugging is low and drill deep (3cm) to limit pulling from birds
- Aim for high plant populations greater than 300/m<sup>2</sup> as time to canopy closure is reduced
- Apply a small amount of P

at drilling (50-75kgs) to aid establishment.

- Harvest as green chop silage (booting stage) for maximum yield and quality

We currently have a wide range of cereals and Italian ryegrass seed available so get on the front foot this spring and talk to Catalyst Performance Agronomy about how catch cropping can benefit your farm system and help you make the most from your land. Visit [catalystag.co.nz/our-team](http://catalystag.co.nz/our-team) to contact a Catalyst agronomist in your region.

*Words supplied by Catalyst Performance Agronomy*

Are you about to finish your winter feed crop? Use the N before you lose it! Catch crops are an efficient tool to extract mineral nitrogen and other nutrients before it has the potential to be lost via leaching or soil run off.

What is a catch crop? It is a 'winter active' cereal or grass species that can germinate

and establish at colder soil temperatures. Oats, barley, triticale, and italian ryegrass are all examples of species which can be utilised in a catch crop following a winter feed crop for either green chop or whole crop silage, grain, grazing and green mulch manure. These species these have large fibrous roots which

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# We have some of the best trade negotiators on the planet, but...



Sri Lanka's crisis is in part precipitated by the government's ban on the importation of synthetic nitrogen fertilisers and pesticides in a bid to make the country 100 per cent organic leading to a collapse in agricultural output, says William Rolleston

We have some of the best trade negotiators on the planet who argue from a position of reason and evidence.

It seems clear to me that our negotiators have had to balance trade volume quotas with the desire of the EU to enforce their practices and beliefs on New Zealand farmers. Countries which are outside the EU but trade freely with the EU such as Norway have had to enact around 60 per cent of the EU directives (rules) for that privilege. Many of those rules, with respect to the environment, limit inputs rather than control effects as we do.

New Zealand farmers would find such prescriptive rules hard to swallow, just as UK farmers did, many of whom voted Brexit. Attempts to impose agricultural input controls have also been met with hostility in the Netherlands where supermarket shelves are running low and roads have been blocked by thousands of angry farmers protesting at nitrogen input caps. Sri Lanka's crisis is in part precipitated by the government's ban on the importation of synthetic nitrogen fertilisers and pesticides in a bid to make the country 100 per cent organic leading to a collapse in agricultural output and a resulting food and balance of payments crisis.

During the Paris climate change talks, I witnessed French farmers contending, without any hint of irony, that African farmers should meet the same rules and environmental standards as the French farmers in order to "level the playing field" and have "fair trade". They did not consider for a moment that their African counterparts would have to also remain competitive without the benefit of roads, electricity and the government subsidies enjoyed by the French farmers. Our negotiators would have faced a similar but more subtle logic.

In relation to the EU beef market the quotas at 0.1 per cent of EU consumption are a rounding error they are so small. It seems our trade negotiators have considered that it was worth sacrificing volume to avoid the worst of EU requirements which may

not have been fit for purpose in New Zealand.

The EU is widely criticised for its hazard-based, rather than risk-based, rules and its unscientific use of the precautionary principle when it comes to politically sensitive issues such as pesticides and genetic technologies (GMOs). It is unclear at the time of writing if the agreement has limited New Zealand farmers' ability to use new genetic technologies (once they become approved in New Zealand) or whether pesticides such as neonicotinoids will be restricted to comply with an EU narrative - a narrative which is articulated here in Aotearoa by the more extreme and fundamentalist factions of the environmental movement.

Of concern within the agreement is the ability of the EU to use the politically weaponised precautionary principle and the "special transparency requirements" to involve civil society in dispute settlements over sustainability. This again is a deviation from the objective and science based international trade regulation which New Zealand, through the World Trade Organisation, has tried so hard to bed in. It risks the restriction of farmer choice and potentially erodes New Zealand's sovereign right to make our own decisions based on science and the principles of risk management balancing our social, environmental and economic outcomes. Depending on the fine print in the agreement we can expect to see the big multinational NGOs such as Greenpeace hold greater sway over New Zealand farmers as a result.

We still have a trade deal with the USA to negotiate. The compromises we have made will send a negative signal that we are willing to compromise our livestock farmers.

The EU was always going to be hard and I am sure our negotiators did as well as they could against significant odds. The question for our biggest export earners is should the Prime Minister have walked away from this deal. Many New Zealand livestock farmers will feel the answer is yes.

— William Rolleston






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# Award winner, looking for a way to help farmers



Pat Deavoll  
RURAL REPORTER

The Keith Andrews Innovation Award winner at the 2022 NZ Groundspreaders Awards, Jon Jackson, is all too familiar with the innovator's journey of trial and error. The Ashburton agricultural contractor (Jackson Spreading) is aware of the knockers and naysayers, but he rose above all of that, because of his desire to do things better, smarter, and more efficiently.

This drove him to realise his vision and improve things for the benefit of all in the ground spread industry. Jackson's wife's grandmother cut out an article in the newspaper about a new machine being developed that utilised two key technologies to get more out of fertiliser and reduce losses to the environment.

He flew north to take a look, worked with the company to meet ground spreader demands and is now an ambassador for the technology, promoting it to his peers and farmers alike. Jackson is highly regarded by his fellow ground spreaders for his selfless ambition and his knowledge. His expertise is of immense value to the ground spreading sector.

So why did you win the award?  
"For innovation, so we used crop spec cameras which look at the rate of fertiliser that our trucks apply.

"It decides how much nitrogen is in the grass and then applies it so that there is no wastage.

"Then we have a machine called Spkiey which detects the urine patches and harvests the nitrogen out of these. This reduces leaching so it doesn't get down into the water table.

"These are two very new pieces of technology that not too many people have tried."

The crop spec cameras have been around for a wee while, he said. They are mostly used on crops and Jackson needed to do



Left to right: Jon Jackson, Erwin Stolze, Keith Andrews Dealer principal – Hamilton, Groundspread NZ (incoming) VP Nicky Hyslop, and Groundspread NZ (outgoing) VP Grant Anderson. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

a trial on New Zealand pasture. He did this with Agritech and a whole bunch of partners and got a peer review paper out of it.

"We were the first organisation to use these cameras on pasture commercially- that was pretty cool!"

Spkiey has been around for a while and just needed someone

to take it up. The first machines weren't good enough to be commercial machines, Jackson said. Now he has a commercial machine which is high capacity.

"We have had the fertilising spreader trucks now for nine years and pretty much with N-caps and the government enforcing its rules and

regulations (they keep moving the goal posts) we were looking for a way to help the farmers.

"And with the price of fertiliser we needed to do things smarter. And these are two ways we can use what we are leaving behind. Mostly it's environmental but there is a cost-benefit for farmers."

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# Feeding turnips to cattle

Turnips are a member of the brassica family of plants, which also includes rape, kale, and swedes. They are an annual forb, neither a legume nor a grass, and, in general, are cold, drought and heat tolerant, and resistant to aphids while providing excellent forage quality.

Turnips have a valuable place as a grazing forage for many stock types and classes, including sheep in areas where cold temperatures limit grass growth in late autumn and winter. To prevent wastage, stock are normally break-fed on root crops and are sometimes sown in conjunction with grass to reduce the risk of associated health issues and to add bulk and quality.

At an approximate cost of \$0.07 cents kg/DM (compared to around \$0.12 cents a kg/DM for home-grown maize silage), turnips are very economic. Turnips are also a low input crop because the stock harvests them for you. Turnips vary in yield (5-8 tonne DM/Ha), maturity (estimated average days to grazing 60-90 days), size, keeping, and quality of the bulb.

There are potential health issues with cattle grazing



turnips. These include nitrate poisoning, ruminal acidosis, bloat, red water, choke, polioencephalomalacia, diarrhoea, copper and/or selenium deficiency and photosensitisation.

In New Zealand, photosensitisation due to grazing of turnips in summer, especially if they are under drought stress, is the most common health problem seen. The risks from feeding turnips

are greatest when:

- They are fed before maturity
  - Excess sulphur or nitrogen fertiliser has been applied
  - They have been stressed by disease or water restrictions
- However, with correct

grazing management, the risks can be minimised. Most problems occur within the first two weeks of introduction to turnips, so allow cows to adapt to the crop.

For the first 10-14 days, cattle should be 'filled up' with pasture or supplements (hay or silage) before accessing the turnips. All cows should go onto the turnips together to prevent gorging by a few; initial time on the crop should be 1-2 hours or less. Finally, ensure that adequate voltage is maintained with double fence breaks to prevent breakouts. Graze the crop at the optimal stage of maturity for the species/cultivar as immature or over-mature crops can be dangerous.

As an added note, for dairy cows after the transition period, standard practice is to allow access after the morning milking. This avoids milk taint caused by feeding the crop close to the afternoon milking, but can mean that cows go on hungry and that the first milkers can be at increased risk. If possible, provide alternative feed prior to access and feed only 35 per cent of the diet as turnips for milking cows.

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# Dairy Focus

SATURDAY, JULY 30, 2022



## MT SOMERS STATION: MIXING IT UP

Pages 20-21

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# Mt Somers couple master farming diversification



The property runs from the Ashburton River up to the boundary of the conservation park at the base of Mt Somers at an altitude of 700 metres.

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED



Pat Deavoll **RURAL REPORTER**

No one will ever call Mid Canterbury farmers Kate and David Acland lazy. Not only do they run a 3800ha mixed livestock finishing farm with 12,000 stock units; they have tacked onto the family enterprise a dairy operation, an apiary, a Marlborough winery,

and a local cafe and farm store.

They have also recently taken on extra responsibilities: David as Federated Farmers Mid Canterbury Provincial President and Kate as the new Deputy Chair of the Beef + Lamb board.

The Aclands farm Mt Somers Station, having completed family succession five years ago by buying the balance of the property from David's brothers.

"We have been fortunate with farm succession. My family has always been very open with talking about it. From as early as 2005 everyone was working towards the goal of us taking

over the farm," says David.

"Our initial foray into diversification was the development of the dairy platform in 2012," he says.

"It was a means of providing a decent cash return for the shareholders of that section of the farm which were my brothers and me.

"It meant my brothers could have their money early and develop their businesses. And for us to have a source of equity to buy them out."

Schemes interest the Aclands. Diversification has been their strategy since 2012. They are spreading their income and are

not at the mercy of any single industry.

"Driving our business to grow and intensify while staying true to our farming values is a challenge, but opportunities such as beekeeping allow us a whole new revenue stream without affecting the core business of the farm or affecting the environment."

But diversification isn't new to the Acland family. His father Mark was always "looking for the next big thing," says David.

The Ritchey ear tag, charolais cattle, massive embryo transplants and live

sheep export in the 1980s, and live deer capture; Mark was involved in all these initiatives.

The property runs from the Ashburton River up to the boundary of the conservation park at the base of Mt Somers at an altitude of 700 metres.

About 800 hectares have been locked up in reserve since 1983. There is no covenant, and this was done by choice, says David.

The 350ha, 900 cow dairy platform is on the lower terraces of the property, and there are about 200ha of forestry and 150ha of rolling downs. The remaining 2200ha is easy-rolling country.






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The property is summer-safe, but winter is a different story. "Snow is the challenge for us," David says.

"In the 2015 snowfall, we were struggling to feed fodder beet to the dairy cows and didn't want to have to transition them. I was scraping snow off the fodder beet when the neighbour came up with the idea of using the discs. We disced the snow and beet up and did the same with the sheep on the swedes. It saved us."

The property runs 9000 romney ewes and 3000 hoggets.

"We are a breeding finishing operation, and we sell store lambs. Wool is still an important component of our sheep operation. It is the one thing that has a lot of upside in the future. And out of our lambswool we produce our own lambswool blankets. That came out of wanting to do something

with our wool."

Historically Mt Somers has had a beef trading operation and these days beef semen and beef bulls are put across the dairy herd, and anything not required as a replacement is hand-reared. Calves are kept in large open barns for up to 12 weeks with gradual access to the outdoors.

"We will either be selling these before the first winter as calves weaned or carrying them through the first winter and finishing them by the second winter. That way we have the option of trading them out. Our hope is that we will be able to get the bobby calf out of our system."

The dairy farm milks 850 kiwi cross cows with a stocking rate of 2.8per hectare, considerably lower than the Canterbury average, says David.

"We are a lot lower producing

and sit at around 1100kgms per hectare. But we are also quite low input and have weathered the storm over the last few years.

"All winter grazing is done on the station and feed like barley is grown here. We are PK-free.

"We are trying to get to the stage where we grow good dairy cross animals. We are trying to use beef semen over as many cows as possible so those animals can be used in a beef operation.

"And we are using only the best of our cows for dairy genetic replacements.

Another initiative the Aclands have grabbed with both hands is manuka honey. There is a large stand of manuka on the property, says David.

"We are working towards 600 hives, he says.

"We have our own honey brand. Just small volumes-

most of our honey is sold to a wholesaler."

And what about the wine?

Kate started the Marlborough Sugarloaf Wine label in 2005, and in 2007 borrowed to buy a seven-hectare vineyard and packinghouse. She developed this into a winery, but the 2008 downturn in the business hit hard. Unfazed, she changed direction identifying a shortage of winemaking venues for small and medium producers in Marlborough. Contract wine production became the major strength of the business.

The couple has taken on the lease of another 14ha of vines and is shifting the focus back to their label. Kate makes two trips to Marlborough a month, and during the high season, the whole family moves up, with David commuting back to Mt Somers.

To top off their "empire," five

years ago the Aclands bought the 140-year-old Staveley Store and fitted it out as a cafe and farm shop. They sell their farm produce, which includes a branded line of lamb and venison

So why do the Aclands gallop along at such a pace?

"We get asked all the time how we do it," says David. "The most important thing is that we love what we do. We work well together as a team.

"Kate and I very much farm the operation as a team, and we have a good team of people who work for us. That allows me to take on the provincial presidency role. I can get off-farm and the farm will carry on.

"We both have our areas of responsibility and are fully engaged in every aspect of every business. We have to be because the task we have taken on is too much for one person."



Shearing time at Mt Somers Station.



David Acland not only farms the property but is the Federated Farmers Mid Canterbury Provincial president.



Kate Acland: farmer, vintner, and Deputy Chair of the B+L Board.



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# Boost your production by herd testing with CRV

Some dairy farmers could be missing out on up to 160kgMS of production because they are not herd testing. While the number of cows being herd tested jumped by 1.2 per cent last season, many farmers may still not realise its value.

CRV herd testing manager Mark Redgate wants to change that.

For some dairy farmers, herd testing can be another job to add to the list. They may not see the upsides.

"I wouldn't spend money on things that don't improve my profit. But making money is the result of making enough of the right decisions," he says.

"The other thing to remember is that some key information and insights are hidden. You can't know what's really going on with an individual animal without this kind of testing."

## The gap between best and worst performers

160kgMS is a stat Redgate likes to talk about with farmers. 160kgMS per year is the production difference

between the top 20 per cent of a farmer's cows and the bottom 20 per cent.

It makes financial sense to know which cows are in the top 20 per cent. You breed from these animals to increase the productivity of your herd.

Knowing which cows are in the bottom 20 per cent can also be profitable. The worst performers can be culled or bred for dairy beef, while animals with genetic potential can be inseminated with sexed semen or targeted with specific traits to boost the productivity potential of their progeny.

## But which ones are which?

When Redgate talks about identifying the top and bottom performers, many farmers feel confident they know their cows.

Unfortunately, looks can be deceiving, Redgate explains.

"Take the cow with high milk volume. Her quantities suggest she's a good money earner, but farmers are not paid strictly by volume; they're paid on milk fat and milk protein, neither of which can be discerned with the naked eye.



Mark Redgate

"But a test of 30ml of milk from that cow will reveal the exact composition of her milk and the true profitability of that animal.

"The same is true for animal health. We've tested herds and discovered cows that were carrying mastitis but were asymptomatic. That means these cows weren't going down sick themselves but were happily spreading mastitis throughout the herd.

"There's no way to detect

that visually. But we can spot a dangerous somatic cell count from that 30ml test of milk.

From the same 30ml milk sample, additional testing can be carried out for BVD and Johnes disease, cows'.

## An essential addition to your 'to do' list

"We understand that farmers are constantly battling an endless list of things to do. They've got cows that are empty, and animals struggling with eczema. The idea of spending money on a herd test seems more trouble than it's worth, especially if that test might lead to the culling of animals. But this is precisely where a herd test shines.

"In a herd's bottom 20 per cent, there are animals that will continually drain resources and cost farmers money. But there are also animals in that lower 20 with the genetic potential to be among a farmer's best performers.

"Not only will a herd test separate the definite losers from the potential winners, but it will also tell us what specific

breeding traits need to be used to make sure their offspring are healthy and efficient."

## No people to spare? No worries!

Some companies require farmers to self-sample for a herd test. Many don't have the time or the people to spare, especially when Covid, border closures and a low unemployment rate have been causing industry-wide labour shortages.

CRV takes a different approach.

"We supply herd testing technicians, who come out to the farm and collect the samples. We can even measure individual cow milk yield right there and then on the farm. There's almost nothing the farmer needs to do.

"As I said earlier, farming is a business and being profitable is the result of making decisions that lead to better milk, and more of it. That's what herd testing is about – giving farmers crucial information to help them achieve the goals of their farm business."

## Three reasons to herd test with CRV

### Less stress

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# Elbow Deep



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## Can we keep Foot and Mouth out?

There is no question that a disease outbreak is bad for business, just ask the New Zealand tourism industry and any number of hospitality providers, many of whom lost their livelihoods due to the ongoing Covid pandemic.

A disease outbreak is also extremely expensive. New Zealand taxpayers have spent \$350 million so far in an attempt to eradicate Mycoplasma Bovis (M.Bovis) from our shores.

Add to that the extreme stress and mental anguish felt by everyone affected by these outbreaks and one lesson becomes abundantly clear; it's far better to keep disease out of the country than it is to deal with it once it arrives. We haven't managed to do that with Monkey Pox, but I certainly hope for all of our sakes we can do it with Foot and Mouth Disease.

I have become increasingly cautious when it comes to disease on farms. I recently received a phone call from a fellow farmer who couldn't bring his heifers home from grazing due to suspected M. Bovis. One of the heifers had calved but the calf had died and he had no way to milk her. He wanted to buy a couple of calves to suckle from the new mother and give her some relief.

Obviously, I wasn't going to take money off someone in that situation, but nor was I going to let them on the farm, so I left the calves in a trailer at the gate for him to collect such was my paranoia.

From a purely financial perspective, farmers came through the Covid enforced closure of our borders relatively unscathed. The global pandemic boosted commodity prices to the point

that dairy farmers enjoyed a record payout. Even now sustained demand for our products combined with a low New Zealand dollar is shielding us from the full brunt of high inflation and skyrocketing input costs.

Some commentators were quick to point out that it was agriculture's export receipts that kept New Zealand solvent while our borders were closed, and ironically it could be the reopening of those same borders which could see those receipts dry up and plunge us into a recession the likes of which we have never seen before.

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), which causes severe lameness and death in cloven-hoof animals, has made its way to China, Indonesia and now Malaysia. More concerning, infected cattle have been wandering in and out of tourist areas in the holiday hotspot of Bali.

The Balinese walk their cattle during the day to graze, so there are countless opportunities for tourists to come across discharge from cattle shedding the virus, if not the cattle themselves.

No one quite knows the possible impact a Food and Mouth outbreak could have on our economy. In recent days MPI and agri commentators have suggested it could be anywhere from \$10 - \$15 billion, Australian officials have put the cost of the disease reaching their shores much higher. It is unknown what the longer-term impact would be as it would possibly take decades to rebuild the industry.

On a personal basis, it is hard to quite comprehend the impact. On my farm, I would have to kill around 1,250 animals. I



It's far better to keep disease out of the country than it is to deal with it once it arrives. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

would have to lay off five full times workers and I would no longer pay all the local businesses that support the farm. The vet, grazier, engineer, mechanic, and many others would lose a large source of income. With the entire herd slaughtered there would be no milk income, around \$4 million this season based on a \$9.50 per kgMS milk price, and no way to pay the mortgage. The only asset of value would be the land but as the countryside would be covered in farms where farmers have simply lost the ability to earn a living, the value would be dramatically diminished if a buyer could be found.

A possible outbreak has the makings of a perfect storm for New Zealand; it's the busiest time of year for many farmers,

border staff are suddenly busy again with international flights after an extended quiet period, and the government is distracted by various crises including the ongoing Covid, M.Bovis and Monkey Pox outbreaks.

It's a storm that would be very difficult to weather. In 2001 the United Kingdom suffered an outbreak of FMD caused by pigs being fed swill that had not been heart sterilized. Eleven months later, with funeral pyres burning endlessly throughout, over six million sheep and cattle had been killed at an estimated cost of \$13 billion. Farmers were not the only ones to suffer, with tourism being severely impacted as well.

Last week the Australian Government announced tough new precautions and funding to keep the disease out as they

estimate an outbreak would cost their economy \$80 billion. Every passenger arriving in Australia from Indonesia is now being risk profiled, they have increased the number of biosecurity staff at airports and mail centers, and are providing support to Indonesia to reduce the scale of the outbreak.

For the sake of our economy, I hope our Government makes the same commitment as the Australian Minister of Agriculture and pledges to doing everything they can to keep the disease out. If not, the battle to eradicate M.Bovis will seem like a cheap game of tiddlywinks in comparison to fighting Foot and Mouth.

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# Metabolics a precursor to herd diseases

A major issue in New Zealand cows are the diseases of mastitis and metritis. One of the main reasons is clinical and sub-clinical milk fever.

Approximately 40% of the herd will experience either clinical or sub clinical milk fever. While cows are rarely culled (outside of deaths) for milk fever itself, they are regularly culled for other reasons that are caused by milk fever.

We know that herds with high incidence of metabolics have poor health, but is it related? Published research has shown milk fever, clinical or sub clinical, directly increases the incidence of many diseases. In one study early-stage mastitis increased the odds ratio by 8.1 and in the case of retained fetal membranes, which lead to metritis, the increase was 3.2 (Curtis 1983).

Mastitis and metritis are major reasons for cows leaving the herd and costing money. We can't sell the milk, we need to treat them (costing time spent by staff), and their chance of getting in calf is much less, especially in our seasonal systems.

Why does milk fever



Approximately 40% of the herd will experience either clinical or sub clinical milk fever.

increase the risk of these diseases? The first reason is immunity. Research has shown that low blood calcium reduces a measure of immunity called "neutrophil oxidative burst" which means the ability of neutrophils to destroy

pathogens or disease-causing cells (Martinez 2014). This basically means cows with low blood calcium have less chance in resisting/ fighting infection. The second is smooth muscle strength which calcium is critical for. Smooth muscles

are often the first muscles to lose strength when calcium is deficient and the ones we are concerned about are in the uterus and the teat sphincters. Poor teat sphincter closure means easy access for bugs post milking, and for the

uterus it means the inability to crunch down and expel the placenta cleanly. At the end of the season when reflecting on why cows have left the herd, think past the initial symptom and focus on the cause.

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# Trapping must be ongoing and sustained



Mary Ralston FOREST AND BIRD

Trapping isn't just for the bush. Getting rid of predators in urban areas is crucial too.

That's one of the messages Predator Free 2050 wants to get across. The effort to make New Zealand predator-free by 2050 needs to happen everywhere – urban areas, farmland, and the conservation estate.

Urban areas have a strong role to play, says Predator Free 2050 ranger Tim Exton. Many townships have particular wildlife or rare species that need protection, and there's often a willing pool of people and community groups able to get involved.

"The yellow-eyed and little blue penguins in Oamaru benefit immensely from

predator trapping," says Tim. "But it's not enough to trap just around the colonies because there is a constant re-supply of predators from the surrounding town. Ideally, there needs to be a buffer zone. Where members of the public trap predators in their backyards and local parks, there is a lower rate of reinvasion of predators into the area where the penguins nest and the effort also benefits other wildlife."

In Geraldine and Pleasant Point, the long-tailed bat is the local focus for trappers. This tiny bat is a threatened species, now only found in a few locations and these towns are lucky to have them in their area. Their size and tree-nesting habit mean they are very vulnerable to predators.

Rats and mice have small territories, says Tim. They often only venture 50 meters away from the base. This means that to get rid of them, a concerted effort rather than a piecemeal approach has to be made, and that's where town dwellers can really make a difference. If we're serious



about New Zealand becoming predator-free, everyone needs to trap in their backyard.

Trapping is a good family activity, and the old-fashioned wooden Victor rat trap is a great tool. It will catch stoats and weasels as well as rats, and it's cheap and sturdy. Children can get started with the modern

plastic versions of mice and rat traps that are easier to set.

There are also trap "libraries". They have been established in Geraldine and Pleasant Point with a variety of traps available for hire – rat tunnels, live capture traps for cats, Timms traps, and Flipping Timmy possum

traps – so there's something there for everyone, whether a beginner or experienced. It's a great way for people to get started and hopefully there will be many borrowers who keep going so the effort is sustained.

The library system has proven to be very successful, and some people have been such converts that they have been given their trap to keep. The libraries have been funded by the Department of Conservation and Environment Canterbury, and the Geraldine Menz Shed members have helped by making made wooden trap boxes; in Pleasant Point, the Lions Club members are going to do the same. The Lions have also got on board by trapping in the local public parks and publicising the benefits of trapping. Predator-free local golf courses are in their sights too.

Public buy-in like this is fantastic, says Tim. Trapping has to be an ongoing, sustained practice to be successful, and at the moment this is part of the path to becoming predator-free.

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# New chief executive appointed



**Jill Gower: We lean heavily on the sector for advice and our efforts have converted many detractors into advocates** PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Jill Gower has been appointed chief executive of Overseer Limited, the organisation behind the award-winning farm planning and management tool OverseerFM.

Gower is Overseer Limited's former company secretary and has worked at Overseer for three years.

Ian Clarke, board chair of Overseer Limited, said the board was impressed by Gower's vision for OverseerFM.

"Jill clearly recognises the critical role OverseerFM can play in helping farmers and growers make better decisions to improve their farm's environmental sustainability and productivity."

Gower said she was looking forward to consolidating and building the core business, but also taking advantage of emerging opportunities.

"It has certainly been a challenging couple of years; however, the light is starting to shine on OverseerFM's value as a decision support tool.

"That's a relief to the team because knowing that

OverseerFM helps farmers and growers respond to the enormous pressures on them personally, on their businesses, and on our environment is what gets us out of bed in the morning.

"Many farmers have been using OverseerFM not by choice and they haven't been shy about telling us so. We can't control how the tool is used so the question became 'what can we do to ensure using OverseerFM is easy to use and worthwhile?'"

"We lean heavily on the sector for advice and our efforts have converted many detractors into advocates, but we have a way to go yet.

"Our focus for the next year is making sure the value-add features in OverseerFM are highly visible, that everyone understands how to best use OverseerFM, and that any future improvements offer serious bang for buck."

Gower replaced Caroline Read, who left Overseer Limited in February 2022 to take up a new role.

# Pasture invention a win:win

## New device looks after grass, and much more

Watching grass grow has never been easier for some Canterbury farmers, and their cows and staff are better off too.

They're using the new Farmote System to send real-time, objective daily pasture measurements, in all conditions, to their mobile devices.

It saves time and labour, and gives them the data they need to allocate the right amount of pasture to their cows at the right time, all season long.

### Better condition

Herd condition at dry off this past autumn was the best and most consistent contract milker Clint Carter has achieved on a fully irrigated dairy platform between Darfield and Sheffield.

The Farmote System was installed early February. Clint says it brought a new level of precision to feed budgeting which helped get most cows to their target condition at the end of the season, with few outliers.

"If we're targeting 18 kg dry matter per cow, per day, we can now make sure that's exactly what they're getting, because we can see how daily growth is matching demand."

### Utilisation up

He's still walking the farm regularly, to make sure Farmote System data aligns with his own pasture growth expectations, but says he and the team don't miss platemetering.

"Overall I'm really liking it. I particularly like being able to look at our seven day growth rate on a daily basis. It's allowed us to set up correct size breaks, and utilise that feed a lot better."

Milking a bigger herd on more land this season – 1200 cows and 360ha effective – Clint and his full time team of four, plus a calf rearer, aim to produce



**Richard Barton – 6000ha and counting.**

460kg milksolids per cow on a System 2. Last year they did 430kg milksolids per cow.

### Tried the rest

Responsible for 2500 cows and 11 staff across two farms in two different districts, contract milker Siddharth Vaishnav is all about efficiency, reliability and making it easy for his team to self-manage.

Previously they've used platemeters, a tow-behind mechanical pasture meter and another satellite service to try and get consistent, accurate grass growth data.

After using the Farmote System for six months on the smaller farm at Morven, results were good enough to extend the system to the bigger, more recently contracted farm near Oamaru.

Both have flat and rolling contour.

### Labour saver

"We can't use the tow-behind across 600ha, it's just not practical, and Farmote is more accurate and reliable," Siddharth says. "We're saving labour, using time more efficiently, and we're able to access records daily – that's not possible with other devices."

With continued development and a competent, stable team capable of running the unit on their own, the Morven farm has gone from 260kg milksolids per cow in 2017 to 390kg last season, on a System 3. The ultimate goal is 420kg.

Siddharth's aim is to now duplicate this level of improvement, gain and staff consistency on the Oamaru farm, with a goal of 450kg milksolids per cow.

### Gaining ground

With recent investment from Gallagher and Barenbrug, Christchurch-based Farmote Systems has hired four new staff and moved to a larger headquarters.

Founder Richard Barton says it's an exciting time for all those involved with the breakthrough pasture technology, which is a world-first.

"We're now across 6000ha in Canterbury, and looking forward to working with more farmers to get the best out of their pasture this coming season."

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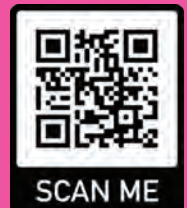
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*"We're saving labour, using time more efficiently"*

# Team effort to deal with plastic

Nation-wide farm plastics recycler Plasback is helping an Ashburton business solve a daunting problem – cleaning up a massive stockpile of waste plastic.

Plasback was working with specialist company Southern Xpress to bale and remove about 1000 tonnes of silage wrap, silage covers, and baler twine that had been accumulating for several years.

The story began in 2018, when the Chinese government banned imports of waste plastic. For decades China had imported and processed about half of the world's scrap plastic. When it abruptly stopped, it disrupted recyclers around the globe.

One that was hit particularly hard was Wastebusters, a charitable trust based in Ashburton that collected a range of farm plastics as well as other recyclables and waste from farms throughout Mid-Canterbury.

The loss of revenue from its exported plastic was enough of a setback that Wastebusters was set to shut down. Coming to the rescue were Brent and Maureen McLaren.

Brent and Maureen had the contract to compost the



The people behind the clean-up effort from left: Kyle Woods (Southern Xpress), Neal Shaw (Plasback), Bruce McDowell (Southern Xpress) and Brent McLaren (Wastebusters). PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

green waste that Wastebusters collected. Rather than lose a big chunk of their income if Wastebusters were to stop trading, they took over its operation.

"We provide farmers large wooden bins so they can separate their waste," Brent said.

"When they are full, we collect the bins from the farm or they can bring them into our yard.

"Since we took over Wastebusters, we have increased the number of bins on farms by 50 percent. We now have about 1500 bins in circulation. Some large operations have more than

20 bins on multiple farms."

Although the business has expanded, Brent and Maureen are not able to resume exporting farm plastic.

Brent said at one point they were in discussion with an entrepreneur who planned to set up a pyrolysis plant that

would turn waste plastic into diesel. That fell through, and Wastebusters' stockpiles grew so much that it became difficult to process some other material on the main collection site.

When Plasback commercial manager Neal Shaw learned of the problem, he approached Brent and Maureen to see if together they could come up with a solution. With some creative thinking and goodwill on both sides, they agreed on a way forward.

Wastebusters is providing the plastic at no cost to Plasback, and in turn Plasback is covering the cost of processing it and shipping it overseas. Neither party is making a financial gain, but they are addressing a significant waste issue that could impact the local environment.

Another part of the agreement was that Wastebusters had now become Plasback's collection contractor for Mid Canterbury. This means it collected silage wrap, silage covers, twine, and other waste plastic from farms using Plasback's bin and liner system.

"Plasback had the capacity to take on the huge job of dealing with Wastebusters' stockpile. We

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Waste plastic can be a blight on New Zealand's clean, green image.



Loading the loose plastic at the Wastebusters site is a messy and time-consuming job. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

collect more than 5000 tonnes of plastic every year and we have both local and overseas partners to recycle the product," Shaw said.

"In addition to the sheer amount of plastic Wastebusters had collected was the fact that it was in stacks of loose sheets. When farmers put their recyclable material in our plastic liners, it is easier to handle, has less contamination, and is more presentable to our overseas clients," he said.

Southern Xpress was playing a vital role in the clean-up effort. The Christchurch company ran a unique mobile baler designed to bale tyres to ship overseas for recycling. It had carried out a number of contracts for Plasback to bale farm plastic in both the South

and North Islands.

Southern Xpress operations manager Kyle Woods said the company's custom-built baler could produce bales weighing up to 2 tonnes.

"Because the baler is mobile, we can bale the waste material wherever it is. It is much cheaper to transport bales than bulk waste," Wood said.

"Late last year we did a trial run at Wastebusters and decided that yes, we could do the job. Brent is making it easier by using a digger to sort the plastic so that I can load it into the baler."

With about 25 percent through the Wastebusters job, Southern Xpress has produced 127 bales of plastic, each of which weighed about 1.8 tonne.

Plasback was the only recycler accredited by the New Zealand government that collected silage wrap and other plastic direct from farms. It had a network of 13 contractors who do this throughout the country.

Shaw said Wastebusters' experience was a cautionary tale for other regional bodies looking to set up recycling schemes.

"Loose bale wrap is particularly difficult to handle, which adds costs to the process. This can be mitigated if farmers make the effort to bag the product on-farm before collection.

"It is great that more farmers now want to do the right thing with their plastic, but there are a number of risks involved in recycling. These include

fluctuating markets and the increasing cost of shipping in New Zealand and internationally.

"Under government legislation, a product stewardship scheme for farm plastic will be in place by 2024. There are still elements in the farming community who refuse to help pay the cost of recycling and continue to burn or bury their waste.

"Ultimately this will hurt the entire farming sector. If we do not solve the problem voluntarily, then the government will impose a levy and farmers will cover the cost of recovery when they purchase the product.

"The problem is that the levy is likely to be two or three times what we charge to collect from farms today," Shaw said.

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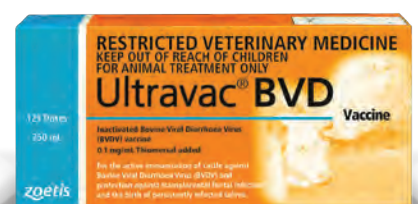


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<sup>1</sup> R Packianathan, WJ Clough, A Hodge, DK Holz, J Huang, GL Bryant & C Colantoni (2017): Prevention of fetal infection in heifers challenged with bovine viral diarrhoea virus type 1a by vaccination with a type 1c or type 1a vaccine, New Zealand Veterinary Journal, DOI:10.1080/00480169.2017.1291376. Zoetis New Zealand Limited. Tel: 0800 963 847; www.zoetis.co.nz. ULTRAVAC is a registered trade mark of Zoetis Inc. or its subsidiaries. ACVM No. A10730: RVM; Available only under Veterinary Authorisation.



# Keep on top of your farm vehicle maintenance

Every farmer knows the importance of having quality farming equipment that is in good working order at all times. When something goes wrong, it can mean downtime and serious losses in productivity, crops, and income. A malfunctioning tractor, combine or another piece of equipment can mean an extra trip for repairs or waiting on a service call, all while getting behind on important farm chores.

Fortunately, keeping up with preventative maintenance of farm equipment can help prevent some of these disturbances, keeping your farm running smoothly and decreasing downtime.

Proper maintenance of farm machinery and equipment is crucial, and here are some maintenance tips to help you remain organized and keep your equipment in optimal shape.

## 1. KEEP ALL DOCUMENTS ORGANIZED

Whether you use a home office, a shed or a corner of a barn, make sure you have an organized system for keeping any records and

documents – including receipts, owner's manuals, dealership information, warranties and service records. Keep accurate records of all repairs and maintenance work, whether you perform it yourself or hire a professional.

Create a farm equipment maintenance checklist for regular tasks that should be completed monthly or annually. You can also make a chart to plan any upcoming maintenance routines, and keep it displayed on the wall. Use a filing system for all other records and documents.

## 2. PERFORM REGULAR OIL CHANGES

Many types of farm equipment need similar maintenance performed on regular schedules, just like your car. Tractors and other machines also need regular oil changes to keep running optimally, so be sure to keep up a regular schedule of oil changes for all your farm equipment. Be sure to check any oil filters and replace them as recommended by the manufacturer.



A malfunctioning tractor, combine or another piece of equipment can mean an extra trip for repairs or waiting on a service call. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

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**3. LUBRICATE MOVING PARTS**

Farm machinery is complex, with many moving parts. Keep your equipment in good working order by lubricating all moving parts regularly. The frequency may depend on your local climate and the manufacturer's recommendations.

**4. CHECK ALL HITCHES AND TIRES**

Regularly inspect trailer hitches and the couplings on all trailers and equipment that you pull, as well as on any tractors, trucks or ATVs that you use to pull the equipment. Ensure these parts are working properly and can securely connect. Clean off any excess dirt or rust, if possible.

In addition, inspect the tires on all your farm machinery. Check the treads for signs of wear, and make sure tires are all inflated to the recommended level. Don't forget about the spare tires during your check-ins, and make arrangements to replace any tires that are worn out. Having quality tires that are inflated properly helps your machines run more efficiently, and it can save you a bit on gas mileage.

**5. INSPECT ANY LIGHTS ON THE VEHICLES AND THE BATTERIES**

Check all brake lights, signal lights and any other lighting on your equipment. Attach trailers and ensure all lights are working on these as well. If you have another person help you complete this task, it may be easier and quicker. Properly working lights ensure your equipment operates safely.

Inside the equipment, watch for signs of corrosion on any of your batteries. This can lead to stalling and loss of power to the vehicle. Check batteries to make sure they are charged, if possible. If you have some equipment that is only used seasonally, consider storing the batteries indoors while the machinery is not in use – especially if you don't have room indoors for the whole vehicle. This can protect your batteries' life spans.

**6. CALIBRATE SPECIAL EQUIPMENT**

If you use devices that have thermometers, scales, metal detectors or other specialized equipment, make sure to check the devices and recalibrate at regular intervals to keep everything safe and accurate.

**7. KEEP MACHINERY CLEAN**

This may seem counterproductive on a farm, where everything tends to get dirty constantly, but occasionally cleaning off your farm equipment can help protect it. This is especially important at the end of a season or right before storing the equipment to prevent staining and rust spots from forming. You can use a broom to gently brush away debris like grass or hay on things like hay equipment, and then use a hose to wash off any accumulated dirt and dust.

**8. INSPECT FOR DAMAGE**

Farm machinery handles a lot and can easily be damaged from regular use. After every use, or at least before storing and at regular intervals, inspect your equipment for any signs

of damage. Loose pieces, strange noises and other telltale signs of damage indicate that maintenance may be required. It's best to take care of these issues before they become worse problems.

**9. STORE EQUIPMENT INDOORS WHEN POSSIBLE**

Preventative maintenance of farm tools and equipment also involves keeping them protected from the elements. If you have a garage or barn for your equipment, this is the best option for proper storage when not in use. If you do not have room to store equipment inside, consider other options, such as an overhang, that can keep rain and snow off the machinery.

If the equipment must stay outside, you can cover it with tarps to offer some protection. Anything you can do to protect

your equipment from the weather can help preserve your investment and keep it running much longer.

**10. AVOID CUSTOMIZING OR MODIFYING ENGINES**

For many farmers, it can be tempting to try to attempt larger repairs themselves or modify farm equipment to better suit their purposes. While this may have worked with older equipment, today's machines have internal computers and complicated parts that can be easily damaged with modifications. Additionally, this type of "fix" is likely to void any warranties you may have, and it is not recommended by manufacturers and dealers. If you are wondering about a specific modification, check with your dealer first for solutions.



If you use devices that have thermometers, scales, metal detectors or other specialized equipment, make sure to check the devices and recalibrate at regular intervals.

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# Farm machinery - whats the deal?

Modern farmers have a huge range of equipment options for the various activities they do on an annual basis. From high-tech combine harvesters to simple tractors, the various kinds of farm equipment available can meet the needs of small-scale homesteaders and industrial-size farming operations alike.

While all the equipment available may seem confusing, knowing about the basic farm equipment options can be an enormous help. If you're looking into purchasing new or used farm equipment, take a look at this guide.

## FARMING VEHICLES

Of the different types of farm equipment and their uses, vehicles are the most important and represent the largest investment.

### 1. TRACTORS

To say that "tractor" is a broad category is an understatement. The primary purpose of a tractor is to pull farm equipment, but modern tractors can be outfitted with a variety of attachments to suit just about any farming need.

### 2. COMBINE OR HARVESTER

Grain farmers require combines, also known as

harvesters or combine harvesters, that help to harvest their crops efficiently. Even small-scale grain farmers can benefit greatly by using a combine.

There is a huge array of combines and combine attachments to meet the needs of any farm. Many newer combines are even able to track yield data, showing which areas of the field did well and which areas did poorly so that these issues can be addressed the following year.

### 3. ATV OR UTV

All-terrain vehicles, also known as ATVs or four-wheelers, are becoming increasingly common on farms of all sizes, as are utility vehicles or UTVs. These smaller vehicles can move across rough terrain more effectively than most road vehicles and more quickly than a typical tractor.

### TRACTOR ATTACHMENTS

Tractor attachments are attached to tractors or pulled behind them to add a new level of functionality. Their uses range widely from soil management to seeding. The different types of farm machinery attachments are detailed below.

#### 1. PLOUGHS

A plough is a large tractor attachment that drags behind the tractor, using long blades



To say that "tractor" is a broad category is an understatement.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

to cut furrows in the soil. This process not only loosens and turns the soil, but also helps kill off any surface vegetation that is not intended to be there.

The concept of a plough may seem simple enough, but there are a variety of different plough types. Each plough type is suited to a specific soil type, soil condition and crop type

#### 2. HARROWS

Where ploughing primes the soil, harrowing further agitates it in preparation for agricultural work. These attachments break down clumps of soil, make the soil surface level and

redistribute crop and weed residue to make it easier for new plants to take root and grow.

### 3. FERTILIZER SPREADERS

Fertilizer spreaders function as the name suggests — they spread fertilizer across a field. While there are fertilizer spreaders that can be run separately, most farming operations require a tractor-run fertilizer spreader for quick, evenly distributed fertilization.

### 4. SEEDERS

Seeders, as the name would suggest, are designed to spread seeds across large plots of land

quickly and efficiently. While small farms may use small mechanical seeders or even hand-seeding methods, tractor-pulled seeders are most commonly used in large-scale farms today.

### 5. BALERS

Balers are essential for hay, and straw collection. These tractor attachments collect these materials and wrap them into more easily manageable bales.

Typically, square balers are less expensive than round balers, but the best type of baler for your farm, as well as the wrapping method you use, depends on your application.

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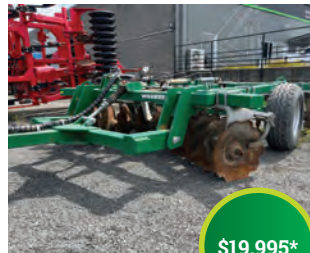
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# The rise of electric farm vehicles

Right now, the idea is getting considerable pushback, with a lack of electric tractors available. But change is happening rapidly, driven by both Government interventions and consumer demand. The Motor Industry Association says its expectation is that plug-in hybrid tractors "might be more widely available by 2025", with fully battery-powered

utes coming to market sometime after that.

It's not only tractors which are transitioning away from petrol and diesel and toward electric. Already on the market are fully electric utility all-terrain vehicles. These are an economical and often safer alternative to a quad bike; they're also far quieter than a diesel vehicle and they can tow over 200kg.

Electric tractors are also gaining traction in the agricultural sector, with several large manufacturers offering EV tractor models. These tractors have lower maintenance costs, are quieter, less smelly, and far more efficient to operate. There is also a potential safety benefit, as drive shafts and hydraulics are replaced by electrical interfaces, leaving fewer

hazards to catch on clothing or equipment, as well as a lower risk of high-pressure oil leaks.

And the very latest electric tractors take it one step further by being completely autonomous. John Deere calls these 'the future of farming' and says its models cause less damage to the soil than traditional tractors due to their design and weight.



The John Deere electric tractor- the future of farming. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

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# Supervising your heifers during calving

Heifers should be observed at least twice daily during calving, more often if practical. Assistance can then be given early if needed.

To be born alive, the calf must be delivered within approximately four hours after the appearance of the water bag. Early assistance can avoid deaths, calving paralysis, and uterine prolapse in heifers.

Heifers should be kept close to cattle yards during calving, so that early assistance may be given if needed. The labour required for supervision can be kept to a minimum if the heifers are joined to calve over a short period (6 to 8 weeks). Keeping the heifers in a small paddock close to the house during calving can also reduce the time required for frequent observation.

Calving difficulty can be induced by disturbance. Hence, frequent checking must disturb the heifers as little as possible. Reasonably quiet cattle may be inspected by slowly riding through the mob on a horse. Binoculars are an option for excitable cattle.

## Giving assistance to heifers during birth

The calf should normally be born within two hours of the appearance of the water bag. If the calf is not born within three hours of the appearance of the water bag, the heifer should be examined. If there is any doubt about the time of the appearance of the water bag, an examination should be carried out immediately.

The decision to give assistance should be based firstly on the position of the calf. If a hind leg is visible or if only one foreleg is presented, or if there is any other evidence of malpresentation of the calf, assistance should be given immediately. The calf's chance of survival is greater if



assistance is given early.

If the position of the calf appears normal, with the head resting on the front legs, then the condition of the heifer should be considered.

A heifer that has ceased straining and appears weak or exhausted should be assisted immediately. If the heifer is straining vigorously, and the birth appears to be progressing normally, the heifer should be left alone for approximately one hour. If there has been no real progress after the hour has elapsed, assistance may be required.

## Calling in the vet

- A vet should be called if:
- a heifer is found to have difficulty calving
  - the birth appears to be breech
  - the heifer's condition has become weak.

A vet may be required to correct difficult calving and

to prescribe and administer any veterinary drugs required to assist with calf and heifer survival during and after calving.

## Post difficult birth

After a difficult birth, young cows in particular often desert their calves. It is wise to keep the cow and calf confined in a small area after assistance has been given.

They can then be watched and should not be allowed back with the main herd until the cow has accepted the calf and will allow it to suck. Sometimes it may be necessary to hold the cow in a crush or race and force her to allow the calf to drink for the first few days.

## Management after calving

Once they have calved successfully young cows are required to produce a good supply of milk and become pregnant again soon after. To

achieve this, they must be well fed from calving until the end of mating.

## Milk production

The main factor determining how well calves grow is the amount of milk their mothers produce. This in turn depends on such things as the age and breed of the cow, but it is also influenced by feeding management.

Young cows produce less milk than mature cows. Consequently, the growth rate of calves from two-year-old or three-year-old cows is normally 10 to 15 per cent less than that of calves from cows aged five or six.

Nevertheless, young cows can produce good calves if they are well fed after calving. Feed intake before calving has a relatively small influence on milk yield, but after calving the effect is enormous. Once they start to produce milk, cows of

any age need at least twice as much food energy as they did before calving. If they don't get this, they will lose weight and their milk production will be depressed.

## Fertility of cows after calving

Cows must be well fed after calving. Although maximum fertility requires cows to be gaining weight from calving to the end of mating, it is likely that cows calving in autumn will lose weight from calving to joining, despite being fed. However, adequate fertility will be obtained if cows are calved in condition score 3, to join at condition score 2.5. It is therefore important to ensure that cows calve in good enough condition to allow for weight loss and yet still ensure adequate condition for joining.

After they calve, cows have only about 80 days in which to become pregnant if they are to

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calve again within 12 months. Whether they achieve this level of fertility depends on how soon after calving they come on heat again. This is largely determined by the breed of cow, the amount of milk produced, age, and feeding management before and after calving.

Milk production places cows of any age under much greater stress than pregnancy or any other body function. High milk-producing breeds and strains of cattle take longer to start cycling again after calving than lower milk producers.

Mature cows usually take about 60 days to come on heat again after calving; young cows may take 90 days or more. The reason is that young cows, particularly those calving at two years of age, are in a very delicate nutritional situation after calving. They require nutrients not only for milk production, but also for their own body growth and development. In contrast to this, the mature cow can, to some extent at least, 'milk off her own back'.

Nutritional management both before and after calving has a great impact on cow fertility. Cows that are not well-fed during pregnancy take longer to start cycling again after calving than cows that are well fed. Ideally, cows should calve in medium body condition, preferably in condition score 2.5 to 3.0.



Heifers should be kept close to cattle yards during calving, so that early assistance may be given if needed.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

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Building materials have an environmental impact at every step of the building process – from extraction of raw materials to processing and manufacturing, transportation, construction, and eventual disposal at the end of a building's useful life.

The impact can be significant – some materials require large amounts of energy in their production, and others may be polluting or hazardous to building occupants.

## New Zealand statutory requirements

A key purpose of the Building Act 2004 is that buildings are designed, constructed, and used in ways that promote sustainable development. Under the Act, designers, builders, local authorities and building owners must consider:

- minimising waste during



Building materials have an environmental impact at every step of the building process. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

- construction
- using sustainable materials
- using safe and healthy materials
- energy conservation and efficiency of materials and systems
- the durability of materials.

## Climate change and greenhouse gas emissions

Building design and material selection both have a role to

play in our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Economic growth around the world has resulted in increasing levels of gas emissions such as carbon dioxide being added to the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels. These emissions are acting like a greenhouse, lifting temperatures. The result over time is rising sea levels, stronger storms, and more



Many New Zealand houses currently produce too much carbon dioxide.

extreme rainfall.

With other countries around the world, New Zealand has committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Buildings contribute to emissions from the energy used when they are occupied and when construction materials are extracted/processed, transported, and installed.

The building industry will

also be affected by the push to reduce New Zealand's greenhouse gas emissions that is now set in law.

A research study that included input from BRANZ scientists calculated how much carbon dioxide new houses can emit to help meet 2050 climate targets. New Zealand houses currently produce five times too much carbon dioxide.

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# Lamb rearing with Milligans feeds

Inland from Mt Somers, in the Ashburton Gorge, lies Castle Ridge Station. This high country property covers approximately 5900 hectares of high altitude land, starting some 700m above sea level. It is exposed, with very little shelter, and a short growing season. Kerry Harmer, along with her husband Paul, farm this land with a herd of approximately 600 Angus beef cattle, and more than 14,000 Merino ewes. Of those ewes, 12,000 are mated to a Poll Dorset ram.

While the ewes generally yield a scanning rate of more than 140%, in Mrs Harmer's own words 'Merino's don't make the best mothers as they don't count very well!' And in the somewhat harsh conditions that high country properties like Castle Ridge often get at lambing time, the wee new-borns don't really stand a chance if mum forgets they exist.

Mrs Harmer hated seeing lambs dying for no real reason, so set about finding a solution - and that solution was lamb rearing. She and her team would bucket-feed up to 120 orphaned lambs or lambs of multiples and after many years, in 2012, Castle Ridge Station bought its first automatic lamb feeder. They now operated 3 auto-feeders and rear between 700 to 800 lambs who would otherwise not survive.

Castle Ridge Station has used Milligans Multi Milk Replacer, a casein-based product, since they first started lamb rearing. Milligans MMR is suitable for lambs, goat kids, cria

and foals (among others) and Mrs Harmer says they have always found it to be really easy to mix and, most importantly, the lambs do well on it. As numbers of lambs at Castle Ridge grew they started to yoghurtise the mix, which she said helped reduced the abomasal bloat risk. With that change to automatic lamb feeders back in 2012 it was decided to move towards a whey product, too. All lambs are still started on the MMR for the first couple of weeks, before moving to the GOMulti product (which is a 50:50 casein/whey blended product) and then onto GOLamb Whey which helps further reduce the instances of lamb bloat. Mrs Harmer says "this works really well for us, and the product is always consistent."

Along with the milk replacers Castle Ridge Station also use the Milligans ExcelPlus Colostrum powder. "We have fine-tuned a system which seems to be very good at giving the lambs a really good start to reduce health issues later on. We like the higher IgG level in the Milligans ExcelPlus Colostrum and the fact that I can get it in bulk when needed," Mrs Harmer said.

"Milligans have been great to deal with and we work together to continually see how we can do things better, they are keen to look for solutions and new ideas," says Mrs Harmer. "We like that the company is NZ owned and operated, and that being local means supply tends to not be an issue."

- By Melissa Yockney

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# Winter Garden Inspirations



**Sheryl Stivens** **ECO EFFICIENCY**

Winter is upon us and the rain is falling as I write while a large pot of soup is bubbling away on the log burner behind me and our fox terrier pup Tinkerbelle is soaking up the warmth alongside the fire

We have just filled up the dehydrator with slices of winter Nelis's pears. They are such tasty little dark-skinned pears with sweet dense inners. It's a great way to make your homegrown fruit last year-round. You can dry fruit on slow heat in the oven if you don't have a dehydrator.

I'm about to put on my gumboots and head out to check on the tunnel house. It's 15+ years since we bought this tunnel house from a Nelson manufacturer, and it still has the original cover. The zip-up doors are well worn and have been replaced with recycled plastic shower doors. This spring

was a cold one and whilst researching how to replace the doors we had the bright idea of buying a metal-framed plastic house and erecting it inside the old tunnel house to essentially provide a twin-skinned growing space.

It has worked so well, and we have certainly grown a lot of food this summer in what we call our 'Bali House'. The warmth and humidity inside are just what many plants love and due to this, we are harvesting chilies, red peppers, and red capsicums in June and July which is extraordinary south of Ashburton.

This winter we also have a winter garden inside the old tunnel house for salad greens, cauliflower cabbage, and spring onions. With a chilly winter on the horizon, the smaller silver beet plants have been transplanted inside to grow in all-weather even if it snows.

There is nothing quite like picking fresh salad greens all year round. Parsley grown in containers on the veranda near the kitchen is a tasty nutritious winter food to add to soup, sauces, or salads.

Creating microclimates extends the range of food and useful plants you can grow and



We are harvesting chilies, red peppers, and red capsicums in June and July which is extraordinary south of Ashburton.

is a principle of permaculture design and application which we have put into practice here at Free Range Farm for over 40 years. One of the reasons we purchased this land in 1982 was the gravity-fed freshwater race flowing through the land that fitted our principles rather than relying on plastic pipes and pumps that are unreliable in high weather events and

create additional electricity costs. Initially, we grew organic grain and seed crops including old varieties of wheat, triticale, oats, barley, and peas, pinto beans, red Mexican beans, and herbs which fitted in well with our 500 organic laying hens, ducks, and animals' systems.

From humble beginnings, the tree crops we have planted including the nut trees, etc.



We have just filled up the dehydrator with slices of winter Nelis's pears.

many grown from seed foraged or traded with friends have eventually grown into a food forest with many heritage food and medicinal plants. Some exciting challenges we look forward to this winter include tapping our sugar maple trees and birch trees for the first time. Happy winter feasting and foraging to you and your family.

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It seems to be everywhere you turn someone is trying to put a stop to intensive farming.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

## View from the paddock



**Chris Murdoch** PROPERTY BROKERS

Well, here we are in mid-July and winter is now well underway but as we all know the coldest part of the winter is from the shortest day through to spring whenever that happens, sometimes early sometimes late.

We now have snow on the hills here and down south, storms and floods up north, and typical winter conditions. It is nice to see a good snowfall in the

mountains. It seems like to me we are getting fewer good falls every year and yet as an irrigated farming area of Canterbury, this snow is our lifeline.

Now it seems to be everywhere you turn someone is trying to put a stop to intensive farming. Now all eyes are on the dairy industry but once the environmentalists have had a good go at them our arable sector will be next to go under the spotlight.

I know I have commented on all these issues before, but it just seems that at every turn someone wants to cull dairy herds, stop intensive dairy support, reduce nitrogen use, stop irrigation, etc.

And yet our great leader said the other day when asked about how New Zealand was placed in our economic outlook, she told reporters that we were placed very well when compared to the rest of

the world because our export industries were at an all-time high. She didn't say "great job New Zealand farmers" when she knows that one in three NZ dollar's export earnings come from dairy, and a large portion of the rest comes from primary industry.

Surely the Government can see and understands you don't shoot the goose that lays the golden egg. If they do know this, they really do have a funny way of showing it.

All most farming businesses want is a fair shake, give them a bit more time to adjust. They must see that large steps have been taken to reduce N loss, use less water, get better production per stock unit up, and therefore reduce stock numbers.

NZ farmers are great innovators and are always looking for ways to be better

at what they do. That's why we are getting 180 per cent lambing and not 110 per cent as we were a few years ago; getting 500 kgs/MS/cow instead of 360 kgs/MS/cow. Getting huge yields off all crops from wheat through to cabbage. Spent millions on changing irrigation systems. All of this in the past couple of decades and going forward many more improvements will come. Just give them some time.

Farmers are people who adapt, they look for solutions, and they change their ways. They have had to over the years or they wouldn't have survived.

All they ask for is time to adapt and change. Don't just go out there and shoot the goose.

*The views expressed in this column are Chris' and do not reflect the opinion of his employer or Property Brokers.*



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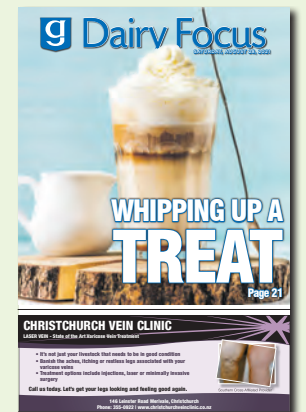
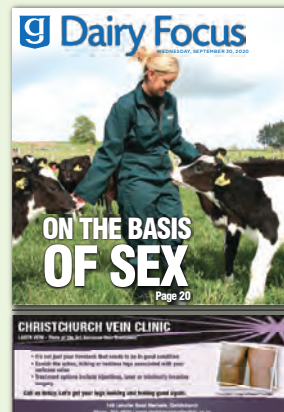
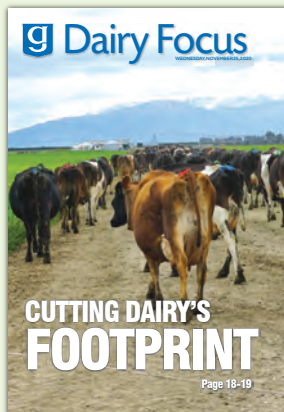
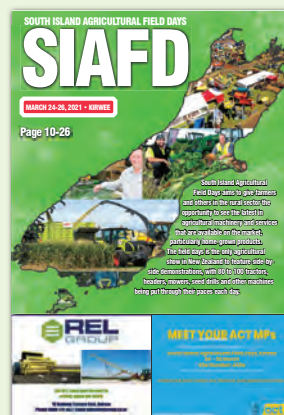
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