

RURAL GUARDIAN

South Island
wide



NOVEMBER 2022 EDITION

TO EVERY FARM IN THE SOUTH ISLAND



WILD VENISON

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COLOSSAL FARMS

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Emission plan heck!



Pat Deavoll RURAL REPORTER

The Government's new emissions plan for farmers is causing quite a ruckus!

The Government released its consultation document on He Waka Eke Noa (HWEN) the system of farm gate pricing devised to reduce emissions caused by farming last week.

The world-first scheme will see farmers paying for agricultural emissions in some form or the other by 2025.

Federated Farmers said it would be the death knell of small-town New Zealand, putting trees where farms used to be.

The plan aims to reduce sheep and beef farming in New Zealand by 20 per cent and dairy farming by 5 per cent to achieve the 'unscientific pulled-out-of-a-hat' national GHG targets, Feds says.



...the "death knell" of small town New Zealand, putting trees where farms used to be. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ) recognises that the government proposes to adopt a system for pricing agricultural emissions outside the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme (NZETS).

The farm-level pricing system is in line with the HWEN proposal but DINZ remains deeply concerned about the impact of prices on farmers who have no cost-effective way to reduce their emissions of methane and nitrous oxide.

The basics of the scheme are these, take note:

Agricultural emissions will be priced from 1 January 2025.

The Government is proposing a farm-level pricing system.

Methane is to be priced by weight and separately from nitrous oxide and CO₂. This is important as it recognises the short live nature of methane.

The system will incentivise actions to reduce emissions.

Some on-farm sequestration is to be recognised, but not in the way that the HWEN recommendation has proposed. Revenue collected from

agriculture greenhouse gases would be reinvested to assist agriculture management and reduce emissions.

DairyNZ strongly disagrees with some of the changes made to limit the recognition and reward farmers will get for their on-farm planting, by removing classes of sequestration like shelterbelts, woodlots and scattered trees.

It is also disappointed the Government has removed the ability for farmers to form collectives to work together to report, reduce or offset their emissions – a key mechanism that would drive the change that is needed.

Groundswell NZ co-founder Bryce McKenzie takes a stronger line, calling for New Zealand farmers to come together and demand the immediate resignations of industry group chairs.

McKenzie says the system will "bring sheep, beef, and deer farmers in particular to their knees and severely hamper dairy production."

Government consultation is now open and will run for six weeks, with the final decision to be announced in December. So get in and have your say! Stay strong.



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Venison hunting – boom or bust

Are deer a pest? Or a valuable resource? A game of two halves...



Pat Deavoll
RURAL REPORTER

The helicopter roves to and fro across the Lake Hawea hillside skimming the subalpine scrub and scree. It's evident from its methodical tracking that it is searching for something.

From the truck parked on the road far below, the machine is the size of a mosquito and the thump thump thump of its blades is barely discernable.

But a gunshot rings out, another and another, and the sound carries sharply to the truck on the wind.

The chopper high above lands on a small spur and a man, the shooter, jumps out, scrabbling for footing amongst the rocks. The pilot holds the helicopter steady on one skid; the engine gives a high-pitched whine.

The hunter drags the carcasses of the three shot deer through the scrub towards

the helicopter and struggles to attach them by the neck to a strop beneath the engine. He jumps back in and the rotors pick up with effort. The machine is back in the air, its ghoulish cargo swinging in slow circles below.

The chopper skirts the treetops, and glides down to the road end, where the truck waits. The deer are dropped in an ignominious heap, and the shooter, leaping out, sets about skinning and gutting them. He is skilful and swift at this. It doesn't take long.

After several more sorties through the afternoon, the pile of carcasses grows enough to satisfy the pilot. He has covered his overheads – primarily that of the helicopter which has cost him \$1600 an hour to keep in the air. He can pay the shooter. And he will make some money.

The bloody cache is loaded on the truck and transported along the gravel road to Wanaka where it is offloaded to be frozen and then sent off to a meat packer. From there the wild venison will be exported to Europe or the United States where it will grace the tables of a discerning few.

Continued on P4

Fact sheet

- Deer were introduced into New Zealand in 1851 in an ecosystem where they had no predators, food was plentiful, and – at first – they were legally protected from hunting.
- By 1910, farmers and foresters were worried about the impact of large herds of deer on the environment and recreational hunters being unable to control them.
- By the 1960s, wild deer populations were out of control in many areas hence the advent of live deer capture by helicopter for deer farming.
- By 1979 there were 800 deer farms, and the interest was so great that there were 1,540 a year later.
- Over the last decade, deer numbers have increased 34 percent on the North Island and 21 per cent on the South Island.
- Today there are an estimated 300,000 wild deer in the backcountry of both the North Island and South Island.
- This has been happening because hunting, both commercial and recreational, plus government control programmes, can't keep up with the animal's breeding rate.



After several more sorties through the afternoon, the pile of carcasses grows enough to satisfy the pilot.

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From P3

Not so many Kiwi restaurants though- wild venison is primarily for the overseas elite.

Red deer were introduced to New Zealand in 1851 as a sport for wealthy settlers.

But by the 1900s numbers had exploded, and the random browsing of vast herds was ruining the mountain vegetation and causing erosion on a giant scale.

Despite decades of ground shooting by government-employed hunters who killed thousands of deer between the 1930s and 1960s, little impression was made on overall deer numbers.

It wasn't until an adventurous few pioneered shooting deer from helicopters in the 1960s, supported by the development of an export wild venison market to Germany, that deer numbers were reined in.

The exploits of the pilots and shooters became a thing of legend. In underpowered machines, and where accidents and deaths were common, huge money was to be made.

Suddenly deer were no longer a pest but a valuable resource to be harvested and the tallies of the era were phenomenal. By 1968 hunter Mike Bennet had shot 10,000 deer while Jim Kane shot some 40,000 in four years.

The boom peaked in 1973 when some 140,000 deer were



The helicopter skims the mountainside, searching for its prey.

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

shot and airlifted out by 100 helicopters, all competing with each other. Even in the most remote areas no deer was safe.

By 1982 venison exports topped \$37 million. The market demand was peaking, but the deer were running out.

Today wild venison recovery for local restaurants and the European and US markets is an expensive undertaking. A Hughes 500D chopper costs upward of \$1600 an hour to operate, and hunters need to

shoot at least four deer an hour, delivered to the road end, to make it worthwhile. In remote areas like Fiordland, the flight back to the road could take time, creating more expense.

A Wanaka pilot, who did not want Rural Guardian to name him because of competitor reasons, says wild deer recovery is profitable, but not as a primary income.

It's feasible at certain times, he says.

"You couldn't run it as your

primary business. You can run it as a side business. We don't rely on it. We do it when the weather is right and when it's the right time of year.

"We do around 1500 and 2000 animals a year, but a lot of that is taken on game estates and private land. DOC has the least amount of deer on the land because it is open to public hunting. And those areas can be closed to commercial hunting around Christmas and Easter.

"The wild animal recovery –

we contract our own shooters, and we go out and shoot wild deer on conservation land, the trucks will pick them up and take them through to the abattoirs, and they will process them and export them overseas."

"There are factories in Nelson, one in Invercargill, and one in Wanaka that do our wild venison for local restaurants. Premium Game is one," he says.

"We also do it on private farmland, there is some farmland where the wild deer population builds up too much and it's impacting on crops and other livestock – we will go in and remove a portion of the herd for management control.

"Also in game estates, we sometimes lower the numbers for them."

Back in the 1960s and 1970s, it was pretty much open slather on shooting and recovering deer. Today, it's heavily regulated and the Department of Conservation's Wild Animal Recovery Operation (Waro) unit approves a small number in the South Island for recovery on public conservation lands.

DOC planning, permissions, and land director, Marie Long says the national Waro permit is for the recovery of carcasses for supply to MPI approved processors only.

"It's offered on a multi-year basis to applicants who meet the criteria," she says.

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“MPI sets buffer zones and no-take restrictions as a precautionary approach to hunting deer in areas subject to aerial 1080 operations. Waro cullers are informed as part of the consultation process before pest control operations and these areas are clearly defined on the pesticides summary as no-take zones.

“Wild animal recovery you need to have a Waro permit from DOC to access the conservation land,” says the Wanaka pilot. “Then you need a contract with a factory, for instance, we provide to Mountain River Venison. Our group which is the Southern Recovery Group consists of operators in Te Anau, Central Otago and Christchurch – we produce around about 5000 to 6000 wild deer a year.”

Sixteen thousand deer have been recovered annually under Waro concessions out of an estimated population of 300,000 wild deer New Zealand wide.

At 30kg of saleable meat yield per animal that’s 450 tonnes or 4 per cent of venison exports.

The deer industry itself has imposed regulations requiring every deer shot has a national provider identifier (NPI) – a unique number with a GPS reference and a tag showing the time and location of death.

This ensures the deer hasn’t

been shot in an area where poison has been laid for possums or taken from an unauthorised area, which does tend to happen. The catch-phrase is “bush-to-plate tracking”.

At around \$4.50 to \$6.50 a kilogram, with an average gutted animal weighing 48kg, plus \$50 for the velvet, an animal can be worth up to \$400. When the numbers work in the hunter’s favour, it’s good money.

Waro is a key tool alongside recreational hunting to control increasing deer numbers says Long.

“DOC monitoring reports show deer numbers are increasing across public conservation land. They eat native vegetation and they target their favourite species like broadleaf. This prevents regeneration and causes significant changes to the structure and composition of native ecosystems,” she says.

By the late 1980s the venison hunters had cleaned out the big herds and the days of grand tallies were over. As one hunter says, the industry was “kaput.”

“We were having a hard time making it pay; in fact, we weren’t making it pay. We were lucky to go on a sortie in the Hughes 500 and get five deer in two-and-a-half hours. I required 10 deer to break even with the helicopter. Things were getting quite desperate.”

Continued on P6



The pilot has covered his overheads – primarily that of the helicopter which has cost him \$1600 an hour to keep in the air.



Suddenly deer were no longer a pest but a valuable resource to be harvested.

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From P5

The hunters turned to live deer capture to populate deer farms. Initially, this involved jumping out of the chopper onto the deer – and injuries were common. But over time the use of net guns proved highly effective, spurring on the growth of deer farming in the 1980s and 1990s. Farms spelled the death knell of the shoot and recovery industry.

It's only in the past decade or so with the renewal of interest in wild venison and the development of overseas markets that shooting has become marginally viable. This is helped on by a resurgence in deer numbers which flourished when the shooting stopped in the 1980s.

"It only took five years before we saw mobs of 30 or more deer up on the tops and tracks were opening up again," a shooter says.

DOC says that without aerial hunting deer numbers could rise rapidly in as little as five years; it acknowledges the part helicopter shoots have to play in keeping the population



Today wild venison recovery for local restaurants and the European and US markets is an expensive undertaking.

under control. And the aerial shooters see what they do as part public service.

The boom and bust nature of the Waro industry means that Waro is only an effective management tool for keeping deer numbers down when venison prices are high enough to be profitable. Therefore

Waro activity can for years be non-existent then ramp up and become very competitive between operators when venison prices are high.

Hence New Zealand's recreational hunters are the most consistent form of deer control.

There is always controversy



Sixteen thousand deer have been recovered annually under Waro concessions.

between recreational hunting and commercial hunting, says the Wanaka pilot.

"We don't shoot big trophy stags because it aggravates the commercial hunters, we don't shoot the young deer because they aren't heavy enough to be worthwhile. We take a middle range of deer.

"In certain areas, there are hundreds of deer. In conservation areas, they filter up from farmland. So yes there is plenty of deer.

"But the problem is you are often dealing with emotive people who think you are killing everything and you are never going to change that."



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POD-LOCK® from UPL NZ good fit for Canterbury growers

Keeping a greater number of seedpods full right through to harvest is helping make savvy growers' wallets a little plumper too. The ingenious yield-maximising product making the difference is POD-LOCK a pod protecting sealer from sustainable agriculture solutions provider, UPL NZ Ltd.

POD-LOCK is a unique latex polymer blend. The adjuvant is specifically developed to dramatically reduce the quantity of seed shed from seed pods, which split before and during harvest. Already widely used by growers in the UK, Europe, North America, and Australia it was launched to the New Zealand market ahead of the 2009/10 harvest.

Mike Goodwin, UPL NZ Central South Island Regional Manager, says Canterbury seed crops producers were quick to catch on to the benefits of aptly named POD-LOCK. He says the product is a particularly good fit for local growers' needs and growing conditions. "It was launched with this region exactly in mind and it's good to see it's working very successfully here."

High value brassica (including oil seed rape), pea, and bean seed crops are particularly susceptible to shedding - also referred to in the industry as "shattering". This is a naturally occurring process exacerbated by factors including the weather and harvesting itself. Rain followed by the dry heat typical of Canterbury summers is a major factor contributing to yield-robbing seed shedding.

Seed losses, as a result of split pods, of 10-25% are common. In more extreme examples, losses of up to 70% have occurred.

Mike says POD-LOCK is more than paying for itself with demonstrated ROIs of between 50 and 60%. "Seed shedding can be really costly, especially in high value crops. Using POD-LOCK, you just don't get those big seed losses. There's a pretty solid ROI. And that's what it's all about nowadays - enhancing the profitability of the crop."

Trials in the UK (where the product is marketed as PODSTIK®) have shown a 200-500 kg/ha seed saving when the product is used. "When you're looking at a crop yielding 4 t/ha that's significant."

He says another benefit of applying the adjuvant is the minimisation of volunteer plants the following season. This helps keep paddocks cleaner for the next rotation - another time and money saver for growers. Anecdotally, fewer seeds on the ground also means the crop is less attractive to birds, Mike adds.

And, there's another string to the product's bow. Used in co-ordination with desiccants, Mike says POD-LOCK can be a useful tool, giving seed growers greater ability to coordinate harvesting around weather events, and to select the best harvest conditions without fear of compromising yield. "It gives that bit more certainty."

POD-LOCK looks set to have an even greater role to play in the future. With increasingly hot and dry summer conditions expected globally, pod sealers will have a vital role to play in increasing worldwide food security and protecting seed resources.

The adjuvant's specialised polymer blend works by forming a pliable netting that dries on the pod, creating a seal that helps keep the pod intact and strengthens the pod wall itself.

POD-LOCK does not impact plant senescence and has no adverse effects on seed maturity or, importantly, on the

quality of seed produced. It can be applied between BBCH 80 (when pods are still green and bendy) through to BBCH 89 (when pods are fully ripe, and seeds have hardened). The product can be mixed with a range of commonly used desiccants including glyphosate.

Mike says POD-LOCK is effective for about a month, although some UK field trials show efficacy for up to 8 weeks after application. Mike also recommends re-spraying if heavy rain occurs.

For maximum benefit, POD-LOCK should be applied in 150-300 L/ha, with 300 L/ha water volume recommended for use on dense crops. POD-LOCK is effective at such low use rates as it bridges the upper pod suture line. This is the point where the pod starts to split when mature, or when repeatedly wetted and dried. By essentially 'sticking' this area together the upper suture is prevented from opening which prevents seed loss. POD-LOCK does not have to

cover the whole pod to be effective.

POD-LOCK doesn't translocate within the plant but sticks where it lands. And, as it has no active, it has no residue limit; being broken down naturally over time by weathering and sunlight.

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Muzzle Station, the back of beyond, but it's home for Hamish



Pat Deavoll
RURAL REPORTER

On a bend in the Clarence River, tucked between the Inland and Seaward Kaikoura ranges under the distant towers of Mt Tapuaenuku is New Zealand's most remote high

country station.

Muzzle Station is only accessible by 50 kilometres of rugged, muddy 4WD track that connects it to the Inland Kaikoura road. The track crosses a 1300 metre pass on the Seaward Range and also the Clarence River.

It takes about three hours to get from Kaikoura to Muzzle and that's on a good day when the river is fordable and the pass ice and mud free. Deep snow makes it impassable for much of the winter. The only other option, taken during the

winter months, is to fly back and forward in a plane.

So why would a 20 year old guy, Hamish Foster, kind of in his prime, when a social life and a girlfriend are beckoning, want to live in such a place?

When I first contacted Hamish by phone, it soon became obvious that despite the decades between us, that we had heaps in common. We had both been brought up on North Canterbury sheep farms within 20 kms of each other. Hamish's father Jock and my brother Bill

Byrch, top dressing pilot of Motunau Ag Air knew each other well. Bill had mentored Hamish in getting his private pilot's licence. We also shared a love of the backcountry. And because of my moto trips in that region, I knew much of the lie of the land on Muzzle.

Hamish is 20 years old and has been at Muzzle since January two years ago- that's two and a half years. He is a pilot.

"I came straight from boarding school in Christchurch - I was only meant to be here

for a month or two to help out with lambing and I sort of never left," he says.

So why did you stay Hamish? "I guess it was the isolation and the work is pretty awesome here. It's unique. Especially for me with my flying there are not many places where you can be both a shepherd and a pilot.

"One day I could be away mustering, the next day I could be flying out to Kaikoura to pick up the groceries or bring the vet it- something like that."

Continued on P10

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Hamish regularly carries his dogs in the back of his plane on the trip out to Kaikoura.

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Navigating the rural landscape

Ben Speedy is ASB's General Manager, Rural.

Read his opinion on the state of our farming industry and how ASB can contribute to its well-being.

What is the general mood of farmers across the country?

At the moment it is quite the tail of two islands with the North Island drowning in rain and the South Island having a good start to the season.

Beyond this, we are seeing clients utilise high commodity prices by repaying an unprecedented amount of debt, investing in farm initiatives around sustainability and productivity, and looking beyond the farm gate for further investment opportunities.

Other topics on people's minds are managing through the tight labour market, rising farm working expenses, understanding environmental legislation, and the perpetual challenge of farm succession.

Will we see a large increase in farm values this spring?

If we took a pure supply and demand approach, the answer would be yes, as we continue to see a trend of fewer farms available for purchase, and more customers in a position to purchase them. However,

purchaser sentiment is impacting on the ability to attract staff to run the property, and environmental considerations, which is interestingly driving both demand (such as dairy support), and conservatism, especially about how emissions will be priced and the ability to farm within new regulations. **Sustainability appears to be a key focus for ASB right now; why is that?**

All NZ businesses, not just food and fibre, are working through the complexities of climate change, be it the physical challenges of more droughts, flooding etc or understanding emissions and what this means to businesses in the short and long term.

Our customers need support, and therefore we are designing products such as our market-leading Sustainability Loan and building banker capability to ensure we can support customers through any required change.

What advice would you give to customers who are thinking through sustainability?

The first thing to do is to think about sustainability in a much broader sense. We encourage customers to



Ben Speedy is ASB's General Manager, Rural. "At the moment it is quite the tail of two islands..." PHOTO: SUPPLIED

think about their business sustainability through three interrelated pillars: being financial, environmental, and social (social relates to your family, staff, customers and communities).

Each of these pillars are then shaped by the time horizon for which you want your business to be sustainable, for example a customer creating an inter-generational business will have a much longer horizon than someone looking to exit the industry in the next 12 months.

It is then the inter-relationship of the pillars that enable strong business decisions. For example, changes to winter grazing policies

and increased input costs are making less land available for winter grazing – it is therefore important to think about how you manage this challenge in a financially sustainable way in the short term (which could be paying more) or the long term, which might mean you are better off purchasing a runoff.

Succession continues to be a key challenge for the industry – are we making progress?

In many ways, the success of our industry makes succession harder each year, as the value of the asset increases.

In short, we are making progress, but for three in five farming families, succession remains firmly on people's

minds.

From an ASB perspective, we are making changes to our risk appetite to make it easier for more people to get into farming, but I do wonder if we need to see some greater structural changes in order to enable aspiring farmers the opportunity to grow more wealth within the industry, rather than seeing that capital flow into assets outside of the industry, such as housing, which potentially is lost to the industry.

With many farmers ageing, a greater desire to see equitable wealth transfer to all children, a growing proportion of aspiring farmers without family backing, and the challenge of understanding evolving legislation, maybe now is the best time to see some structural changes to the farm ownership model.

Moving forward I see a greater emergence of longer-term leases supported by the enablement of farm managers buying into and ultimately obtaining full ownership of the management company of the farm.

Such a change would solve some immediate challenges and ultimately enable a new wave of farmers to grow wealth within the industry.

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ASB
ONE STEP AHEAD





Hamish's 70 year old Piper Pacer regularly makes trips between Kaikoura and Muzzle Station.



The majority of Hamish's work is with stock – with the usual tools of the trade.

From P8

Hamish has his own plane – a 1953 Piper Pacer which he bought in April last year. His truck stays at Kaikoura and he flies to and fro with his dogs and sometimes a ram for the farm on the back seat.

“Or I fly to mum and dad’s (at Scargill, North Canterbury) or sometimes to Bill’s (at

Motunau) and borrow a car to go into town (Christchurch) for the weekend,” he says.

The job- the majority is stock work, but in the winter there is maintenance. In the summer Hamish is out mustering either on horse or on foot.

“We will drive out to the blocks and then walk or ride from there,” he says.

“Up until two month ago we had helicopter here and we used to do quite a lot with that, being dropped off behind mobs, but that is being re built at the moment so it is out of action.

That is owned by the station,” Hamish says.

And what do you like about being in such a remote place?

“It’s not for everyone but I

definitely enjoy it,” Hamish says. “I think that most people who live here would say the same. The nearest person is two-and-a-half- hours drive away. But I love it- its spectacular and they’re good people to live with. It’s like a family- you live with them and you work with them. We eat lunch and dinner together every

night which is pretty good.

“There is me as the only shepherd, and an older fella Lance who has been here for a number of years who does everything except stock work- tractor driving, fencing, spraying weeds, etc. And then there are the owners, Guy and Fiona.

Continued on P12

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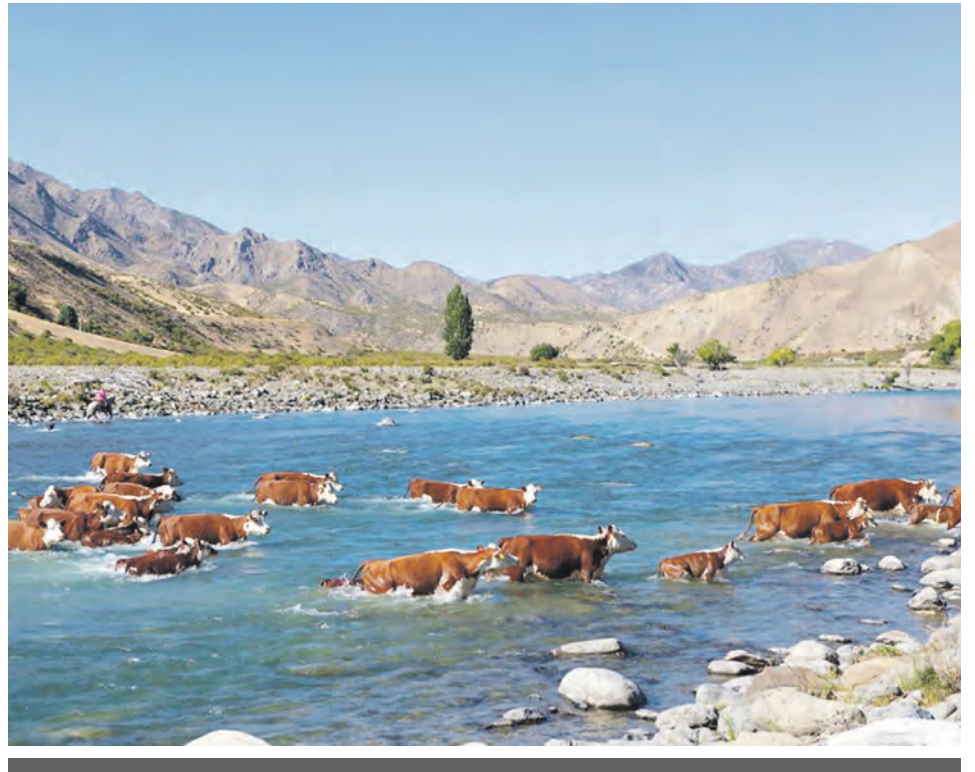
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The road in to Muzzle Station is more suited to motorbikes than stock trucks.



Muzzle Station has 960 hereford cows and finishes everything themselves. There are about 1800 cattle on the property at any one time.

From P10

"There is a full-time teacher for the kids.

"And owners Fiona and Guy work as well. So the three of us do the stock work and for the big jobs they bring in a couple of local fellas to give us a hand for the likes of calf weaning and marking etc."

The property includes 6000 hectares plus a 6000-hectare 30-year lease block with Clarence Reserve on the south side of

the Clarence River.

Stock numbers include 6500 merino sheep. The lambs are kept and shorn in the spring, then sent onwards from there. Because the wool is worth so much we keep them on, says Hamish. Then they are walked out of the property because we can't get a stock truck in here.

"We have 960 hereford cows and finish everything ourselves, so all up there are about 1800

cattle on the property at any one time," Hamish says.

"There is a small 130ha farm in Kaikoura where Fiona's parents now live, and that's where the final finishing is done. There is another farm out there that is run by a manager."

The cattle were walked all the way to the Kaikoura farm but now, because of traffic congestion, the animals are walked to the road-end where there is a set of yards and

then trucked to the finishing property.

It takes two days to walk the stock to the road end. The track is not suitable for a large truck and trailer but the station has a "small to medium size" truck to cart fuel and supplies in - stuff that doesn't fit in the plane.

"The bulls and the horses are taken out by truck. Anything that is too wild gets a ride out," Hamish says.

So why does this lifestyle of remoteness and hard work suit this 20-year-old? Obviously Hamish is a pretty special young guy. Next year he plans to take four months out to complete his commercial pilot's license. Then he has options - maybe he will become a commercial pilot? It will be interesting to see where he takes his career from here. In the meantime he is more than happy at Muzzle.

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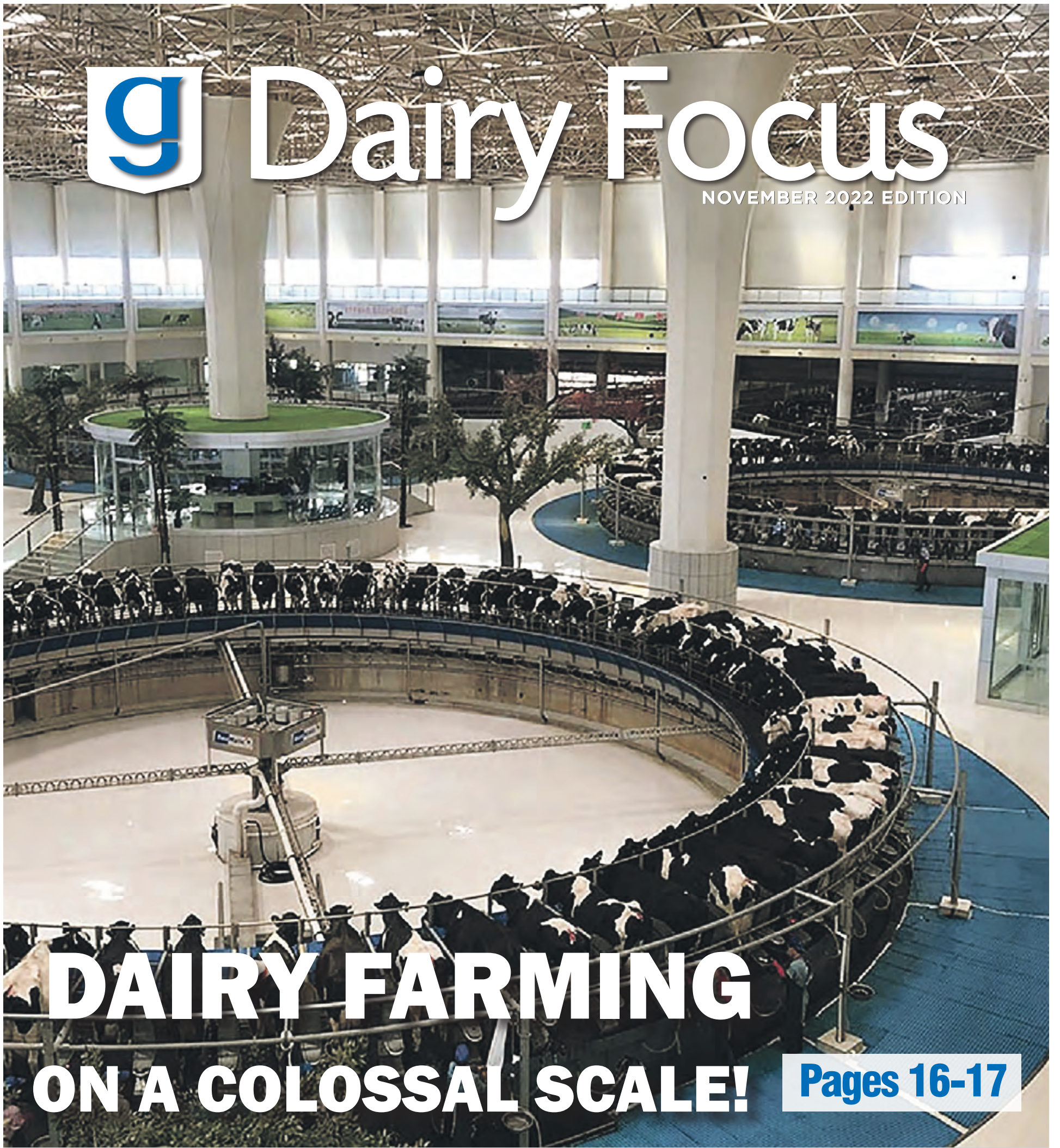
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Dairy Focus

NOVEMBER 2022 EDITION



DAIRY FARMING ON A COLOSSAL SCALE!

Pages 16-17



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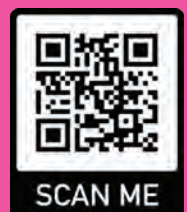
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China: farming on a colossal scale

China's dairy farming industry has transformed over the last two decades and today the main trend is big-scale farming.



Pat Deavoll **RURAL REPORTER**

In 2019 the annual milk production in China was 32 billion kg and according to the 'China Dairy Industry Statistics 2020,' the 25 largest farming companies of milk delivered 9.4 billion kg of the country's production or contributed 29 per cent. These farming companies had 1.7 million dairy cattle or on average nearly 68 thousand animals each.

Behind these big numbers are several dairy farms ranging from 1,000 to 20,000 dairy cows. The biggest dairy farming companies are Modern Farming and Youran Farming, with 230,000 animals on 26 farms, while the others boasted 135,000 cows on 40 farms in 2019. Then several dairy farming companies have between 50,000-100,000 cows: Huishan Dairy with 90,000 dairy cows, Shengmu with 67,000 cows, and

Saikexing with 65,000 cows in 2019. The Chifeng AustAsia Modern Farm was the highest-yielding dairy farm in China in 2020 with an average yield of 13,654 kg per cow. When looking at average farm sizes, the AustAsia farms are the largest farms with an average stock of 12,291 animals divided on seven farming operations in different places in China. Then several farming companies have around 8,000 animals: these are

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Yuansheng Tai, Modern Farming and Fonterra.

But the AustAsia Farms are not only the largest on average, they also have the highest average yield, with 12,600 kg per cow per year in 2019.

In 2019, the average yield of the 25 biggest dairy farming companies was 10.2 tonnes of milk per cow compared to the average of eight tonnes per cow.

China's single largest dairy farm is the Bengbu Farm in Anhui province owned by Modern Farming. This single farm has about 40,000 animals and space for 20,000 adult cows to be milked by eight rotary milking systems all connected to one single tank-room area.

Even though this might seem like a huge farm, an even bigger one is under construction and partly operational now in the Inner Mongolia province. This farm will, when it is fully built, house 45,000 dairy cows and become the single largest dairy farm in the world. The total investment in this farm is estimated to be 2.8 billion Chinese Yuan or about NZ\$700m.

Considering the current trend in China, it seems that the farming companies will become even bigger in the near future. Leading the way is the company Modern Farming. This company had 233,000 animals in 2019 but according to Modern Farming's '5-Year Leadership Plan', the intention was that in 2025 the company should have doubled both the number of animals and milk production to an astonishing 500,000 animals and an annual production of 3.6 billion kg.

The company is already well on its way to reach this future goal as it has, since the release of the '5-Year Leadership Plan', taken over the companies Fuyuan International and Zhongyuan Dairy. After the completion of the acquisition of these

two companies, the total number of animals at Modern Farming will be over 330,000 and the yearly production will exceed 2 billion kg of milk.

Mergers seem to be one of the ways forward for the big Chinese dairy farming companies and in October of 2020 the company Youran Farming acquired the entire equity of the farming operations of Fonterra in China.

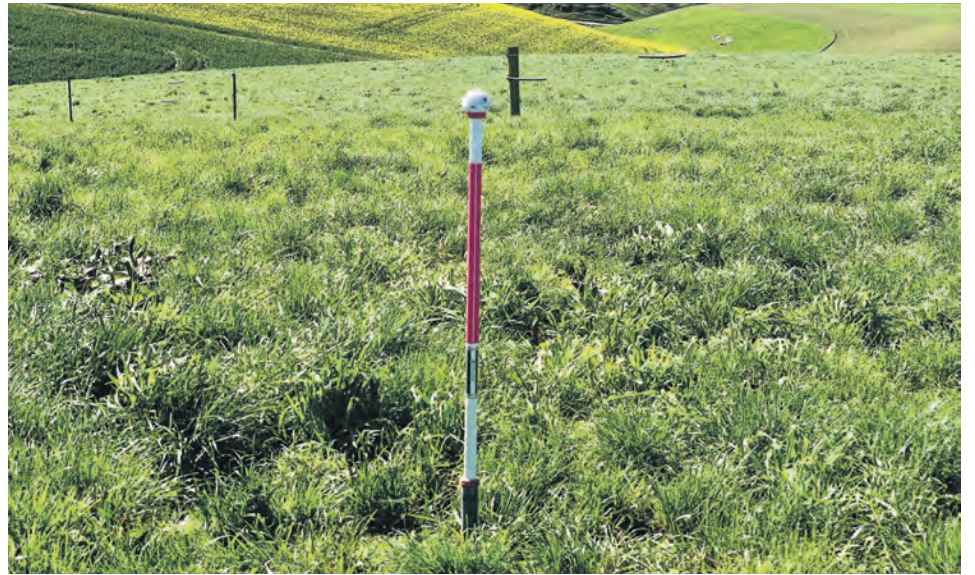
At that time Fonterra China operated six farms with 54,900 animals and these farms were sold to Youran Farming for the price of 2.3 billion Yuan or about NZ\$700m. After the merger, Youran Farming has 67 farms with approximately 308,000 animals and a milk production of about 1.6 billion kg.

Why big scale farms?

This trend in milk production in China is quite unique but the reason for this should not come as a surprise- as this is a way forward in a country that is in huge demand for dairy products. Benefits of big scale farming are:

- The centralised purchase by large-scale farming companies gives them power to stabilise prices and quality of forage and feed and makes them less vulnerable to fluctuations of feed prices.
- Those companies have complete setup of staff and can have experts in each specific fields within the dairy farming operation. This leads to proper and systematic management of the farm personnel and gives those companies' the ability to ensure training of employees to be as efficient as possible.
- Big scale farms give opportunities for specialised work areas where each employee has specific and uniform tasks, leading to high professionalism and productivity by both animals and employees.

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Christchurch, 13 October: It's all go at local agtech pioneer Farmote Systems this spring as demand surges for automated pasture monitoring.

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Founder Richard Barton says his team is putting in big hours to build and install the bright pink Motes that are now being sought from Oamaru to Culverden.

Fresh investment from Gallagher and Barenbrug earlier this year helped the Christchurch-based company scale-up production and staff, and Richard is now preparing for further growth.

"We're keen to raise more capital so we can expand into other areas of New Zealand - that's always been our plan.

"The more Motes we install, the more excited we get about the future of this technology, and what it can do for NZ farmers."

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Richard started Farmote Systems from scratch five years ago, convinced there had to be a better way to use latest developments in sensing technology and cube satellites to help farmers make the right grazing decisions.

"Good pasture management, based on knowing how much grass is growing at any one time, is vital to optimising dairy herd performance, productivity and profitability, and to making the most of farm grown feed," he says.

"What really struck me in the early days of developing our system was that so many farmers knew the value of pasture measurement, but struggled to find time to do it.

"They also worried about getting it right. We're here to fix that."

Richard and his team handle installation, training and maintenance for the system; all farmers have to do is log onto a mobile-friendly website from their phone, tablet or computer, and quickly update the paddocks that have been grazed to see their live data.

For more detail visit www.farmote.com.



According to new data the Chifeng AustAsia Modern Farm is the highest-yielding dairy farm.

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"It's allowed us to set up correct size breaks, and utilise that feed a lot better."

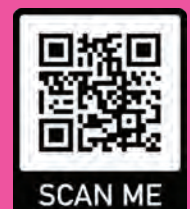
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What are the fertiliser specs?



Pat Deavoll RURAL REPORTER

Since modern agricultural practice began, New Zealand farmers have been supplementing the soil's natural nutrient level with fertiliser to improve the land's production potential.

Nitrogen use

Most nitrogen used in New Zealand is applied to dairy and cropping farms and a limited number of drystock farms. Urea is the dominant form of nitrogen fertiliser used. Prior to the 1990s, pastoral systems were almost solely reliant on clover to fix nitrogen

Overall, nitrogen use has increased over time due to the intensification of dairy farm systems in combination with an increased area in dairying. However, production methods have improved and the emphasis on environmental accountability is increasing. This has led to marked improvements in production per unit of nitrogen applied. Improvements in efficient use of fertiliser and other

nutrient sources are likely to continue as research and development evolves.

Phosphorus use

New Zealand pastoral soils are naturally low in phosphorus and sulphur. Both these elements are provided by superphosphate fertiliser. New Zealand began importing phosphate fertiliser in 1867, with its first shipment of guano from the Pacific Islands. Superphosphate manufacturing commenced near Dunedin in 1881.

Phosphorus use has declined since a peak from 2003 to 2005. This reflects the impact of a significant price rise in 2008/09 and economic pressures, particularly for sheep and beef farmers receiving lower returns at that time. The moderate usage also reflects the increasing focus on nutrient budgets. This involves using fertiliser more strategically than ever before, as farmers learn how to maintain productivity while using less.

Potassium use

Potassium is an essential nutrient for keeping pastures productive and maintaining their legume component. Potassium fertiliser is required to replace the losses that occur through livestock urine and dung, leaching, transport to farm tracks and yards, and sale of meat, milk and wool.

DRONE SPRAYING AND TOP DRESSING

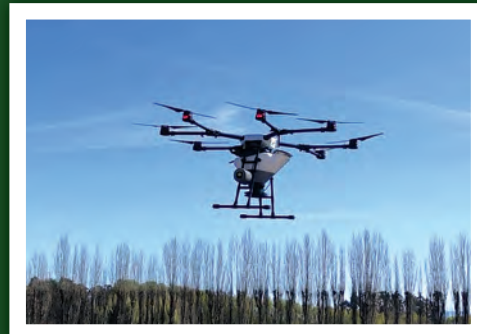


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Most nitrogen used in New Zealand is applied to dairy and cropping farms.

Bill Byrch of Motunau Ag Air specialises in aerial fertiliser application. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

Lime use

Leaching, decomposing organic matter, erosion, and plant uptake of essential nutrients can all contribute to the acidification of soils over time. Soil pH affects nutrient availability. Plants are able to use nutrients more efficiently in soils with the right pH. Applying lime or dolomite restores the soil pH. Legumes are especially sensitive to low pH and growth

will decline as the soil becomes more acidic.

As urea dissolves, it goes through a number of chemical changes. The conversion of urea to the ammonium and then nitrate forms of nitrogen, can result in significant losses to the atmosphere as ammonia. Urea fertiliser coated with a urease inhibitor has been sold in New Zealand since 2001. Use has increased significantly over the

past few years. This is a positive step for the environment as it reduces volatilisation losses of ammonia from urea use, maximises nitrogen available for uptake and contributes to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. Fertiliser use by farm system

In 2018, greenhouse gas emissions associated with nitrogen fertiliser represented 6.1 per cent of all agricultural

emissions and emissions from applied lime (and dolomite) 1.3 per cent of all agricultural emissions.

The New Zealand Greenhouse Gas Inventory calculates the emissions for different forms of nitrogen fertiliser based on agreed emission factors. The primary source of emissions is nitrous oxide lost directly following application. A small proportion of the nitrogen

applied is volatilised to the atmosphere as indirect losses by denitrification. Further losses occur following leaching. The use of urea-based fertiliser also results in direct CO₂ emissions management.

17,103 farms now have formal nutrient planning documentation in place - either a nutrient budget, a nutrient management plan or a Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) document.

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Words of wisdom for farm teams to stay in top form

A big focus for dairy farm teams is keeping cows in great condition. But to take good care of their cows, farmers also need to stay in top form themselves.

To mark Mental Health Awareness week (two weeks ago), Taranaki dairy farmer Kane Brisco joined a recent DairyNZ podcast (www.dairynz.co.nz/wellbeing) to share some timely advice on how farmers could take care of themselves.

Brisco says he went through some challenging times as a sharemilker but he turned things around and rekindled his passion for farming, and life, by making some simple changes to his lifestyle and approach to dealing with stress.

"It got to a point where I couldn't see a light at the end of the tunnel. I lost my passion for farming, and got close to walking away from it," he says.

DairyNZ general manager farm performance Sarah Speight says Kane's advice is particularly timely for dairy farm teams, as they've just come through the busiest period of the farming year – calving.

"Taking time out is

particularly important for both farm owners and staff in the short gap between finishing calving and the start of mating," says Speight.

"Finding out what your staff want to achieve – both personally and professionally – and considering how you can support them is also key to making your staff feel happy and valued. For example, if they love sport can you support them by adjusting your roster so they can attend practice and games."

Brisco's tips to improve your condition score

Get fit:

Brisco rebuilt his love for farming by starting boxing. Today, he has an on-farm gym and uses farm equipment like tractor tyres and fence posts as part of his fitness routine.

Staying fit helps him cope with the physical and mental challenges he faces day-to-day. "Whether it's crossfit, running or pilates, you'll find your passion," he says.

Eat well

Farmers know that ensuring your cows are getting the right nutrition is crucial to achieving

good body condition, and being highly productive. The same goes for you too!

Brisco says eating well was the next key step he took after getting fit to help him stay well.

Take time out

"Time out with family to do things you enjoy, and getting off the farm is really important to relax," says Brisco.

"Balancing commitments to the farm, family and yourself isn't easy, and you have to keep working at it."

Reframe how you see challenges

Brisco says how we react and deal with challenges has a big impact on stress levels.

"Instead of getting angry when something doesn't go the way I want it to, I think about what I want to achieve longer-term and then I can break down how I want to get there. That means you switch from thinking negatively to problem-solving and developing constructive ideas."

It's ok to say you're not ok

Brisco encourages farm owners and managers to be open about the pressures they feel.



Kane Brisco uses farm equipment like tractor tyres and fence posts as part of his fitness routine. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

"Sharing how you're feeling encourages other people in the farm team to speak up when

they're feeling stressed. That helps everyone better address issues when they come up."

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Irrigation in New Zealand – what is the history?

Large-scale irrigation in New Zealand began in the late 19th century. During the Great Depression of the 1930's, several storage and irrigation projects, such as the Rangitata Diversion Race, were built using government funding. The majority of major schemes were constructed after 1960 in the Canterbury and Central Otago regions.

The rationale for government involvement in developing, subsidising and maintaining community irrigation schemes changed from period to period.

Between 1910 and 1935, New Zealand government involvement followed the history of government assistance of irrigation by colonial governments in Australia. Policies aimed to mitigate

drought, take advantage of existing water rights and reclaim mining land.

After 1935, the first Labour government expanded the irrigation programme to boost employment and make greater use of the water resource.

In the 1950's, a select committee concluded that direct government intervention was necessary because individual farmers could not obtain the required finance, technology and labour, despite concerns being raised about the financial implications of the schemes.

From the 1960's to 1980's, community schemes were increasingly viewed as a farm management tool to intensify agricultural production, and new irrigation schemes a being in the national interest by virtue of having economy-wide benefits.

In 1987, questions were raised about the national benefit and central government's ability to manage and recover costs. A risk that government intervention could distort incentives and crowd out private investment also became apparent.

In 1988, the central government began to transfer ownership of the Crown schemes to farmers. No schemes now remain in Crown ownership. In 1991, responsibility for approving schemes was devolved to local government under the Resource Management Act 1991.

Central government instead focused its efforts on funding science and technology development, and on facilitating the planning and proposal

development process, through initiatives such as the Sustainable Farming Fund and the Community Irrigation Fund.

Several major schemes have been developed since devolution, including Opuha (1998, 16,000 ha), Waimakariri (1999, 18,000ha), North Otago Stage 1 (2006, 10,000ha), and the Wai-iti Valley Augmentation Dam (800,000m³), which also opened in 2006.

The sharply contrasting ways in which community irrigation schemes in New Zealand were developed and managed before and after 1990 illustrate the operation of decentralised vis-a-vis centralised (planning) industry governance systems.

While the evidence is not easily quantifiable, what evidence there is suggests that the shift to a decentralised system that took place about 1990 coincides with improved irrigation efficiency.

Today, farmer-owned companies - rather than state-owned - are responsible and accountable for scheme development and management. In combination with the RMA - which enables a decentralised approach to resource use - this has facilitated innovation in scheme design, more efficient management, and better water use. It has also revealed more precisely the value of water in irrigation. This decentralised system has also highlighted the difficulties for many communities to raise early commitment and funding to determine the viability.



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Several major schemes have been developed since devolution, including Opuha (1998, 16,000 ha). PHOTO: SUPPLIED

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How we irrigate



One of the most popular means of irrigating is centre pivot. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Irrigation comes in many shapes and forms. Old technologies are rapidly being replaced by more efficient means of transporting water and applying it.

A water permit/consent must be granted. All irrigation takes in New Zealand are regulated to ensure the sustainability of our water resources. Water 'take and use' describes the site-specific conditions that need to be followed. For example, a fish screen is often required before water is allowed to be removed from a river.

All takes from New Zealand rivers have a 'minimum flow' applied to them. This means when a river's flow drops below a certain level (the threshold at which aquatic life is maintained) the water take must stop. The permit also states how much water can be removed at any one time (a maximum rate), and

over the irrigation season (a seasonal volume). The permit will also specify what the water is to be used for.

In 2010 a new law was passed which requires measurement of all irrigation takes. Irrigators now have to submit their water use data, and can be fined or prosecuted if they fail to do so or renege on the conditions of their water permit.

The last step is irrigating the land. This stage requires a lot of planning to ensure water is used responsibly and sustainably. Different technologies and irrigator types are used depending on the landscape and crop to be irrigated.

The different ways a farm can irrigate are: centre pivot and linear move irrigators; traveling irrigators; spray lines and long lateral; solid set sprinklers; dripline; and micro sprinklers.



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Farm vehicle maintenance – all you need to know

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 we've gathered some best favorite maintenance tips to help you remain organized and keep your equipment in optimal shape. Follow these maintenance tips to protect your farm equipment:

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.

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.

While you are doing oil changes, consider having a professional oil analysis done. This is a simple test that can diagnose and prevent larger issues down the road. All you need to do is bring in a small oil sample to your dealer for testing.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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



Create a farm equipment maintenance checklist for regular tasks that should be completed monthly or annually.



Tractors and other machines also need regular oil changes to keep running optimally.



Regularly inspect trailer hitches and the couplings on all trailers and equipment that you pull. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

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noises and other tell-tale signs of damage indicate that maintenance may be required. It's best to take care of these issues before they become worse problems.

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

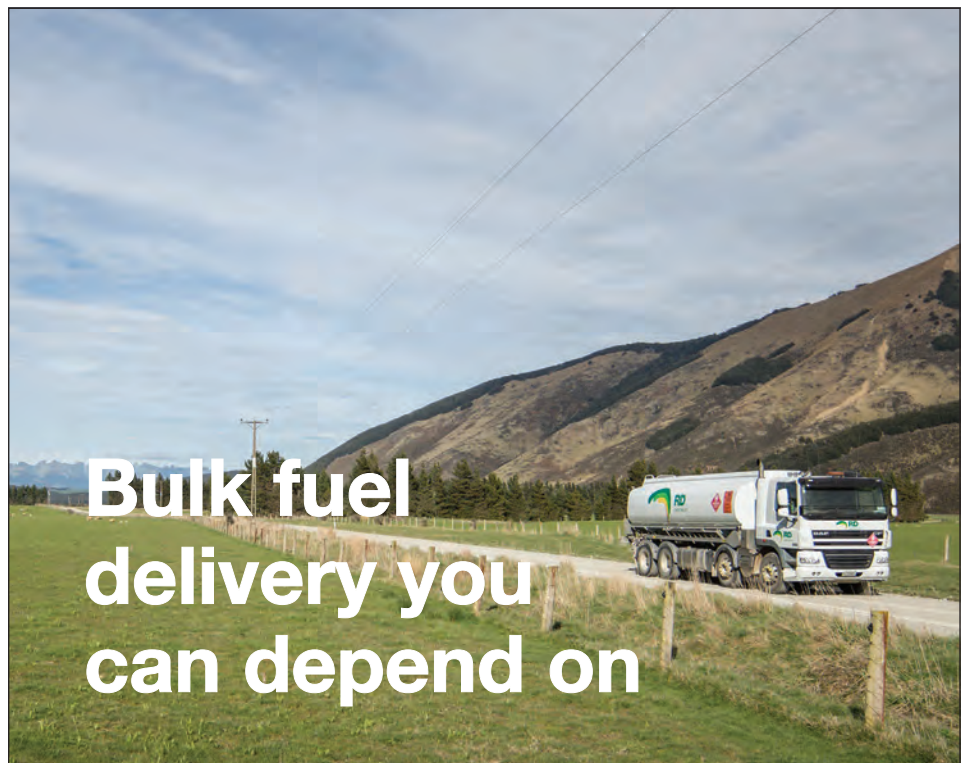
the weather can help preserve your investment and keep it running much longer.

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.



Preventative maintenance of farm tools and equipment also involves keeping them protected from the elements.



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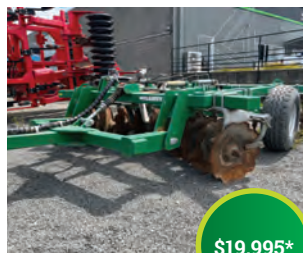
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Rural People celebrates 6th birthday with pride

On November 1, 2022, Rural People Ltd celebrates its 6th birthday. That may not mean much to most people but Paula Hems, the owner, is proud of her achievements to keep her business going, despite the adversity she's had to navigate through over the past three years. This is what Paula told *Dairy Focus*.

Things changed with Covid and to keep a small business going in those times has meant we have had to change the way we do things.

I initially started the business to support dairy farmers with their staffing needs. However, with the candidate-poor market we have suffered since Covid closed the borders, I have diversified into offering dairy farmers a lot more with regards to HR services and education on the best ways to retain their staff.

Retention is far cheaper than recruitment. Upskilling and training are a big part of keeping an employee happy and feeling like they are achieving. Our focus has been to assist farmers by keeping them on top of

performance reviews and such.

In our industry, there are two ways of recruiting. You can be what we call "bums-on-seats", where the recruiter puts anyone in the job to make a fee. Or you can be what we are - a professional services company specialising in recruitment and HR consulting.

The difference is we sit down with our clients and get a good understanding of their business so that we can become an extension of it.

We see ourselves as their HR department and we go about matching the candidate not just to a skill set, but to the things you can't teach such as ethics, morals, and personality.

After we place a person on

a farm, we stay in touch with both the client and candidate to ensure everyone is happy. If issues do arise, we go back to the farm to find solutions.

We never finish recruiting and say, "see you then, have a nice life". This is what makes our clients come back to us time and time again for honest and open discussion.

So, to celebrate our birthday, we would like to offer new clients a free farm visit for us to assess and advise on their staffing and general farming needs. We have our own in-house farm consultant, who has over 30 years' experience, further enhancing our range of services. To take advantage of this offer, please feel free to contact us.

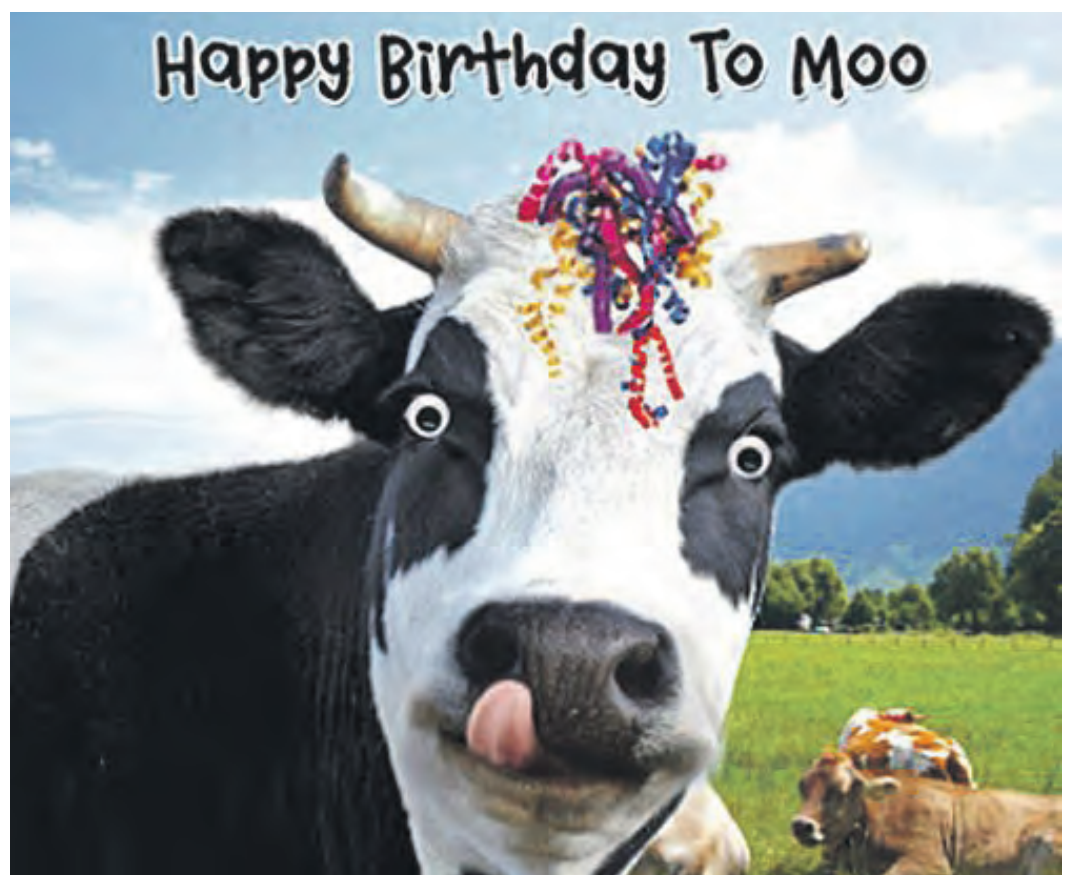


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Rural People are passionate about working with the Dairy Farmers of New Zealand

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Beginner's guide to showing cattle

Want to win a ribbon or even a championship with your cattle? Take a read.

Primer for first timers

Preparing for and showing cattle can be an extremely rewarding and educational experience for young people. Responsibility, patience, good sportsmanship, good organization, confidence, respect for animals and people alike – the list of benefits is a long one.

Setting goals

Perhaps your goal is to win a champion ribbon. Nothing wrong with setting high goals – we all do it and having something to work toward can be a motivating factor that can lead to success. If you don't win a champion ribbon the first time out, the next time you'll groom a little finer, and handle with a little more control and confidence.

After all, that champion ribbon will bring notice to your animal. Positive notice. It also will tell folks that you are a responsible, skilled, and serious handler who knows how to care for his animal and presents an

attractive product that, well, wins ribbons. Recognition can possibly lead to financial gain. What are your goals for the animal after the show season? To sell it? Or become a member of a replacement herd? Some farmers show cattle to showcase their herd genetics. A champion ribbon is a fine goal in and of itself. It may lead to other successes, as well.

Halter breaking

Halter breaking is all about patience and practice. Go slow and don't rush the process. You never ever want to hit your animal. Your goal is to earn the animal's trust and respect. You're building a relationship with your animal and that takes time, plain and simple. Have a gentle, compassionate hand and be willing to devote time to the worthwhile effort of teaching your animal to respect the halter.

Teaching to lead

It shouldn't take much more than a week to teach your animal to lead. Always stand on the left side of



Perhaps your goal is to win a champion ribbon

your animal and use gentle pressure to teach your animal to respond by slightly pulling on the halter. Never yank. Once the animal is moving, release the pressure.

Preparing for the show ring

A show stick is a very useful

tool when teaching your animal how to present itself. To pose a calf or heifer, the front feet should be squarely aligned beneath the shoulders with the hind leg closest to the judge positioned slightly back. You don't want your animal to be

too stretched out. Rather, your animal should be balanced. Once you're in the ring, you may need to reposition its feet as judges perform their inspections. Do it discreetly and gently.

Continued on P28

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To maximize your chances of success in the ring, you'll want your animal looking its best.



Halter breaking is all about patience and practice.

From P27
Standard preparation and show supplies

To maximize your chances of success in the ring, you'll want your animal looking its best. Proper hoof care means keeping them trimmed. White spots should be bright and clean. The tail should be brushed and fluffy. The coat

should be clipped and groomed and looking the best you can get it.

Before the start of the show season, make sure you've clipped your animal of its winter coat and begin training the animal's topline hair. Then, a couple days before the show, clip the animal for the final time taking particular care to

get it looking exactly the way you want.

The basics of showmanship

Once in the ring, it's time to let everyone see the results of all the hard work you've done. The ring should be big enough to allow everyone in the class adequate space, but that may not always be the case. Whenever possible, leave

several feet between you and the handler in front of you. Don't tailgate and don't lag behind. Keep a steady pace consistent with the flow of everyone else. Do not pass the handler in front of you if they're moving too slowly or their animal is unruly.

The end result

With any luck, you'll take

home a ribbon – maybe even top prize in your class. If you don't happen to place this time, be thoughtful about what you can do next time to improve on your performance. At the end of the day, the judge's decision is the judge's decision. The best you can do is the best you can do – that's usually enough to impress just about anyone.



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Watching the judges? What are they looking for in sheep?

Don't let the curls fool you, sheep aren't judged on which is the cutest, softest, or fluffiest; beneath that heap of wool is a market lamb or a breeding stock animal looking to win some blue ribbons.

To judge a market lamb, which is intended for slaughter at about 40 kg, you look for the degree of muscling, degree of finish, balance and style, frame size, and soundness and structure – in that order. For a breeding ewe you look for balance and style, frame size, soundness and structure, degree of muscling, degree of leanness, and wool – in that order.

So no need to be sheepish, once you get past all the wool it's easy. Let's dive in on learning how to judge sheep and knowing what to know at your next livestock show.

Degree of muscling

To evaluate the degree of muscle, take a look at the thickness through the center of the rear legs, the width between them as the animal stands, the length and width of the loin,

the length of the hind saddle, and the shape over their rack.

First take a rear-view look at your animal, and measure the widest part. The widest part should be muscle from hip to hip, and that width should carry through the legs – your sheep should look square.

The loin is set between the back of the ribs and the hips, and it is an important muscle for locomotion, so a nice long, wide loin is what you're looking for.

The hind saddle is basically just the rear half of the animal starting at the last rib, and it contains all the best cuts of meat such as the loin, sirloin, and legs.

The fore saddle is from the last rib up to the base of the neck, and what you want is to have a slightly longer hind saddle than fore saddle.

And finally the rack is the rack of ribs, and a wide rack is ideal, and the ability to feel the grooves of muscles as you run your hand from the fore ribs to rear ribs.

Continued on P30



Beneath that heap of wool is a market lamb or a breeding stock animal looking to win some blue ribbons

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From P29

Degree of finish

The degree of finish is related to the degree of muscle, frame size, and stage of maturity. Basically, the ideal market lamb will have a good degree of muscle, which fits cleanly in its frame, and the animal should be at the right size for their age.

Market lambs are normally ready for slaughter no later than six months, so it's best if they hit their prime within that time period.

You can evaluate finish on an individual basis, but when comparing sheep in a class, you'll probably use degree of finish to help you rank them.

Balance and style

For balance and style, evaluate the body width, depth, and length. You actually don't want the width of your sheep to be completely even throughout; more width in the more desirable cuts is better, meaning that the widest part of your sheep should be in the center of the leg muscle, and they should get gradually narrower through the front end.

For depth, measure from the top of

the back to the bottom of the belly, and the belly should be at the same level all the way from the chest to the teats.

Your sheep should look like a big barrel. Your sheep also gets balance and style points from a wide, level chest floor, angularity over the shoulders, a straight topline, and a high set to the neck.

Frame size

Frame size is important because if the ideal slaughter-ready lamb is around 40 kg that lamb should be at that weight without being too fat. So ask yourself if your lamb is tall and long enough to have the capacity to grow a big rack of ribs, loins, and legs.

Frame size is important for breeding ewes because they need to be able to comfortably carry lambs throughout pregnancy, and have the capacity to feed them. The ideal animal will not look stocky, stubby, or gangly.

Soundness and structure

The soundness and structure concerns the animal's ability to move around comfortably for years to come, so evaluate the feet, pasterns, hocks, knees, rump, and shoulders.



To evaluate the degree of muscle, take a look at the thickness through the centre of the rear legs, and the width between them as the animal stands. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED



The rack is the rack of ribs, and a wide rack is ideal.






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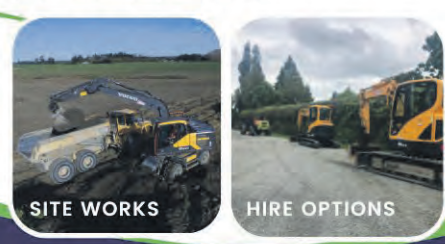
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All toes should be pointed forward, and pasterns should be about a 45 degree angle from the ground. The knees should be straight and pointing forward just like the toes. When standing comfortably on their own, the farthest point on the twist should fall exactly in line with the point of the hock, if the hock is further out than the twist the animal is sickle, and if it is further in than the twist your animal is posty.

The top of the shoulders should be in line with the front of the rump, but from hips to dock you want a slight slope downward. Also evaluate the length of the rump. A lot of length from flank to twist is ideal, and remember, this is one of the best cuts of meat from your market lamb, so you want lots of room.

Degree of leanness

The degree of leanness is evaluating the fat cover. The thickest fat cover on your animal should be over its back, and ideally, it would be a centimeter thick or a little less, so when preparing your animal for show, make sure that they don't have any excess fat. Besides, sheep don't need much fat, they have all that wool to keep them insulated and warm.

Wool

Wool isn't very important on market lambs that are intended for slaughter, but it is important for breeds that are meant to be raised for their wool. Wool is judged on character, color, uniformity, and wastiness.



For balance and style, evaluate the body width, depth, and length.



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Live yeast product to boost milk production on show

Few technologies increase milk production, improve fertility, and reduce effluent in dairy herds.

As farmers face increasing feed costs and tighter environmental regulations a live yeast product being used on New Zealand dairy farms through a patented system is increasing milk production, improving herd fertility, and reducing the amount of effluent produced. This product will be on show at the Ashburton Show later in the month.

Animal health and feed additive company RCI has installed its Suredose system on 12 farms in the South Island and is collecting data for research into the effectiveness of the Vistacell yeast when delivered using Suredose.

Suredose uses compressed air from a rotary cow shed system to deliver the Vistacell yeast to cows at the optimal dose in their feed as they enter a rotary shed. The patented technology has been in Beta testing since 2019 and RCI will soon have data from over one million doses given to 16,000 cows in

the New Zealand group.

"Live yeasts are well known for improving a cow's rumen function, but we know it needs to be given in specific doses to be effective. There has been no data studies to show the value farmers get from the products which is why we have developed this system," says Brett Ruth, Managing Director RCI.

Suredose allows farmers to capture data from their milk metres to show how their herds are performing using the Vistacell yeast. Farmers using the product report significant results.

John Wyatt, a contract milker for Premier Dairies in Southland, has used the Suredose system since November 2021 on 1000 cows. Since using the Vistacell yeast in his 50-bale rotary shed through the Suredose system his production has increased six percent this year and his six-week in-calf rate has improved by four percent.

"Our cows' body condition scores have improved, we calved earlier, and our milk production is up on last year to date," says



Suredose: I think the yeast is helping them use the feed we're giving them more efficiently. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Wyatt.

His herd had produced 57,812kgs/MS by this time last season and has increased to 61,300kgs/MS to date this season. He also noticed his effluent pond was not crusting over like it normally would.

"It suggests to me the yeast is getting into the cow's rumen creating a more efficient animal, whether that's more milk, better body condition or getting in calf quicker," says Wyatt.

"As a contract milker, more days in milk equals better returns and we saw our six-week in-calf rate improve last season after using Vistacell,"

says Wyatt.

Donald Smith has used Vistacell in the Suredose system on his herd of 640 cows in Canterbury and says his empty rate has improved from 12.5 percent to 10 percent.

"The herd is in much better condition, and the cows are much more content. I think the yeast is helping them use the feed we're giving them more efficiently," says Smith.

RCI will demonstrate the Suredose system and share research trial results at upcoming South Island Fieldays and at the National Fieldays at Mystery Creek in November.

The company is wanting more farmers to use the system and add to their data collection, so RCI is offering farmers six weeks free Vistacell product when they sign up and agree to share data with the company.

The Suredose system, which works in rotary sheds, will be installed on their farms but remains owned by RCI.

"With increasing feed costs and environmental regulations, farmers need mitigation solutions, and they want to be sure they're getting the most out of their feed. Our testing shows the Suredose system is delivering both," says Ruth. "This system has potential to help address many of the challenges coming at dairy farmers and we're keen to work with more New Zealand farmers to help them gain the benefits from this system," he says.

Alongside data being collected from New Zealand herds, RCI is also planning further research in Australia to measure reduction in effluent produced and methane outputs when using the Vistacell yeast in the Suredose system.

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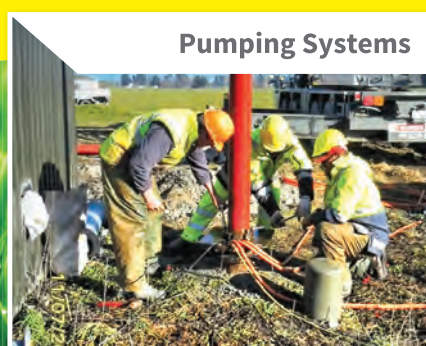
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Dog trials: a premier event at the show

Sheepdog trials are a competitive sport at the heart of every agricultural show in which handlers direct their dogs to move sheep around the show ring and into fences and/or enclosures. There will be plenty of this at the Ashburton Show so be sure to get there early on Friday 28 to watch the competitors and their dogs take to the course.

Three sheep are always used in New Zealand, as this is the most challenging combination for the dog: the sheep form a two-and-one, with the single sheep always being unpredictable.

Dog trials are part of New Zealand farming history and probably date back to a trial in Wanaka in 1867. There are reports of trials at Waitangi and Te Aka in 1868, at Wanaka in 1869 and Haldon Station in the Mackenzie Country, in 1870 – all before an 1873 trial at Bala in North Wales, which is claimed to be the first ever. The first huntaway events were at Black Forest station near Lake Benmore, in 1870.

Dog trialling in New Zealand is controlled by the New Zealand Sheep Dog Trial Association (NZSDTA), which started in 1940 and is made up of affiliated member clubs. The meetings start with the summer A & P (agricultural and pastoral) shows and culminate in regional and national finals around June (winter). There are shepherds' trials and maiden dog trials for less experienced handlers throughout the year.

Standard classes

There are four standard classes for trials run under the NZSDTA.

Class 1: Heading dogs – long head or long pull

The dog has to cast out, lift (move) and pull (drive) the sheep, usually held on a distant hill (but not in the case of the show of course), in a straight line into a ring of 20–30 metres' diameter on a flat area, towards the handler. Time allowed is 9–14 minutes.

Class 2: Heading dogs – short head and yard

The dog has to cast out, lift and pull the sheep, which are held much nearer than in the long head, towards a marked quadrangle. It then has to drive the sheep along a pegged lane, through hurdles and work them into a 2-metre-square yard or pen. The handler is restricted to holding the gate. Time allowed is 10–14 minutes.

Class 3: Huntaways – zigzag hunt

The sheep are released at the bottom of a steep hill (obviously, again, not at the show) and the dog has to drive (hunt) them up a zigzag marked course. The dog must always 'face-up' and bark at the sheep and not the handler. Time allowed is 8–10 minutes.

Class 4: Huntaways – straight hunt

In this event the only markers are at the top of the course. The sheep have to be hunted directly up the centre of the course to the top markers, in as straight a line as possible. Time allowed is 8–10 minutes.

Dog trials are fascinating, believe me, even to the uninitiated. They make for a terrific viewer event. As I said, the trials at the Ashburton Show start early morning on Friday 28 October. So if you are interested, make the effort to get up early and head down to the showgrounds.



Three sheep are always used in New Zealand, as this is the most challenging combination for the dog.

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED



Dog trials are part of New Zealand farming history and probably date back to a trial in Wanaka in 1867.

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Smart crops will be needed by 2030 to feed the world

Climate change and population growth will drive the need for 'smart' crops to meet food demands, according to GlobalData.

The leading data and analytics company notes that the huge amount of data that would be needed to ensure the highest crop efficiency will lead to greater automation in farming by 2030.

Fourth agricultural revolution brings automated, self-regulating crops by 2030

GlobalData's latest report, 'Tech in 2030 – Thematic Research', predicts that 2030's farms will become 'smart', driven by the need to produce more food on less land. To maximise yield, farms will need to collect and monitor huge amounts of data from their crops and livestock. For example, to grow wheat in a paddock effectively, growth rate, nutritional content, fluid intake, and soil quality should be recorded, and collected via numerous sensors. This data will be fed into agriculture technology platforms, which combined Internet of Things (IoT) and automation in order



Agricultural drones are unmanned aerial vehicles used in agriculture for yield optimization and monitoring.

for the crops to self regulate.

Rachel Foster Jones at GlobalData, says, "Multiple issues are currently putting pressure on agriculture: climate change is threatening capacity, population growth is accelerating, the amount of available land is reducing, and labour shortages are worsening. Agriculture technology will promise a much-needed solution."

Smart greenhouses already on the rise; smart greenhouse jobs triple in a year

GlobalData's report

highlights that we are already seeing growth in agricultural technology. Hiring for smart greenhouse-related roles has more than tripled from 2021.

Foster Jones says, "Investment in smart greenhouses is only going to increase as the challenges facing the agricultural sector calls for more automation. As automation increases, farmers will be hired more and more for their technical expertise and data processing skills, as well as their knowledge of the agricultural



By the 2030's farms will become 'smart', driven by the need to produce more food on less land. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

process. Current young farmers should start up skilling now to give themselves an edge."

Agricultural drones already seeing rapid innovation

GlobalData's report also reveals that the agricultural drone industry is the fastest growing among the non-military drone segments, in terms of the number of patents. Agricultural drone related patents have experienced a 14-fold increase between 2015 and 2021.

Foster Jones says, "Currently, drones conduct imaging

and monitoring tasks for farms. However, there is rapid innovation in this area. Modular-based innovation will mean that drones will be able to undertake advanced crop spraying and terrain monitoring by 2030. The labour crisis and skills shortage will bolster agriculture drone demand, as they will be able to undertake time-consuming tasks."

Agricultural drones are unmanned aerial vehicles used in agriculture for yield optimization and monitoring.

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Regenerative agriculture – could this be the way of the future?



Pat Deavoll RURAL REPORTER

Regenerative agriculture is a system of farming principles and practices that seeks to rehabilitate and enhance the entire ecosystem of the farm by placing a heavy premium on soil health with attention also paid to water management, fertilizer use, and more. It is a method of farming that improves the resources it uses, rather than destroying or depleting them.

Regenerative agriculture practices increase soil biodiversity and organic matter, leading to more resilient soils that can better withstand climate change impacts like flooding and drought. Healthy soils beget strong yields and nutrient-rich crops. It also diminishes erosion and runoff, leading to improved water quality on and off the farm.

Importantly, regenerative agriculture practices also help us fight the climate crisis by pulling carbon

from the atmosphere and sequestering it in the ground.

The health and vitality of soil everywhere, from the smallest backyard garden to the largest high country farm, plays an integral role in food production – and it's threatened by the climate crisis.

In addition to rising temperatures that are themselves changing where and how things can be grown, the climate crisis has fundamentally altered the water cycle around the world. The result is shifting precipitation patterns and increased evaporation that causes more-frequent powerful rainfall events and more severe droughts.

Extreme downpours can lead to polluted runoff and erosion because the ground simply isn't able to absorb the precipitation at the rate it's falling. And at a certain point of inundation, plants can drown. On the other end of the spectrum, less stable precipitation together with increased heat is causing more and more drought.

Regenerative agriculture allows farmers to play an active role in mitigating an existential threat to their livelihoods.

When plants photosynthesize, they take carbon dioxide from the air and – using the sun's energy, water,

and nutrients from the soil – transform it into carbon the plant uses to grow leaves, stems, and roots. The excess carbon created through this process is transported down the plant and is stored in the surrounding soil, sequestering the carbon in the ground. This carbon in the soil is known as soil organic carbon and it feeds microbes and fungi, which in turn provide nutrients for the plant. Soil

organic carbon is the main component of soil organic matter, providing more structure to the soil and allowing it to store more water.

For farmers, regenerative agriculture is thus a win-win – it's an approach that leads to better, more resilient crops grown using sustainable methods that at the same time fight a crisis that presents a threat to all agriculture.

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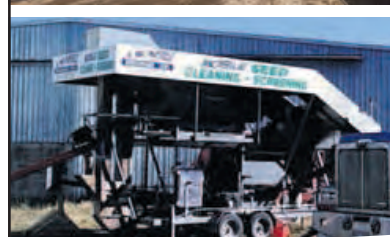
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Keep your cows inside? Watch for inadequate ventilation

Housing conditions can have a significant impact on dairy cow productivity, health and welfare.

It can affect yields and farm profitability, which will also have a negative effect on the farm carbon footprint.

Inadequate ventilation is a significant risk factor for the dairy herd, contributing to a range of conditions such as pneumonia, mastitis and digital dermatitis. It's worth taking a look at housing and

considering if any improvements could be made to increase airflow and ventilation, benefitting herd health and productivity.

Milking cows produce a lot of heat that has to be dissipated. This is done by evaporating moisture from their lungs when breathing out and as sweat through their skin (above 20 C degrees).

These actions increase the humidity of the surrounding air. However, as air humidity increases, the effectiveness of

cooling is reduced. Therefore this air must be removed and replaced with clean fresh air.

Removing this stale air also reduces the risk of disease spread through the shed - in a poorly ventilated environment, pathogens can survive for relatively long periods because of the more humid conditions.

This damp air also causes the humidity of cubicle beds and floors to increase. This can lead to increased cases of digital dermatitis and mastitis.

Small alterations to sheds can help to make a massive difference to airflow and subsequent animal health and welfare.

Cows perform optimally at 5C and begin to experience heat stress at 20C, presuming low humidity. Heat stress can become a real issue for herds housed year-round. The problem is made worse in that hot days tend to have little or no wind to help drive air through the shed. The use of fans can help to move air through the shed and are especially important in the collecting yard.

On hot days cows should not be kept tight e.g. with backing gates, but instead allow them to have space to reduce heat transfer between cows. In extreme circumstances a sprinkler system could be used, however this is not without additional problems as it could further increase the humidity of the shed.

Excessive wind can cause draughts which cows find unpleasant. This is particularly important in cold weather, as cows will begin to use energy to maintain body temperature below -5 C.

Other buildings nearby can obstruct airflow into the shed so carefully consider the site of any new builds in relation to existing sheds.

Air outlet is also particularly important. An open ridge along the shed helps to remove stale air. This air rises due to the heat of the animals, creating the 'stack effect'. The wind passing over the ridge creates a vacuum helping to draw the warm air out the top and draws in fresh air from lower down. The shed should not smell of dung, the air should be fresh.

The stocking rate of a shed can have a big impact on the success of the ventilation. If the shed is overcrowded then airflow may not be sufficient to move the stale air created by these cows.

However, in large sheds, lower stocking rates can be an issue. With a reduced number of cows, the stack effect can fail in getting the stale air out of the top of the shed. In this case fans may be required to force the air out.

Cobwebs provide a good indicator of poor ventilation in a shed, however, the use of plumbers smoke bombs are an excellent way to establish where the dead pockets of air are in the shed. The smoke from these should completely clear within two to three minutes from the shed. Aim to carry this out on a day with little wind and high humidity.

Check water troughs are working properly without leaks, and that there are no leaks from overflowing gutters. This will minimise additional sources of moisture in the shed and can also help to keep bedding dry.

If making changes to a shed, do a small section first to assess the effectiveness.

A farm buildings specialist can suggest improvements to current buildings or help in the design of new sheds to ensure there is sufficient ventilation for the stock being housed.

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Milking cows produce a lot of heat that has to be dissipated.

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The farmer's lot is not easy...



Pat Deavoll **RURAL REPORTER**

Farmers are forever getting it in the neck for being a bunch of whiners. They are seen as operating in a constant

state of discontent. Too much rain, or not enough rain. Crossbred wool on a downward spiral. The gross domestic product teetering on the verge of collapse. The price of grain too low; the cost of fertiliser too high. Too much compliance. The list of complaints seemed endless.

I beg to differ. Sure, the ups and downs of farming make the news, but farmers have it far from easy, even in this day of uber-technology and precision farming.

I grew up on a sheep farm in North Canterbury, and I still think of my father,

who farmed from the 1950s through to the 2000s, as being the hardest-working, most uncomplaining person I've ever known.

In the rain, the nor'wester, the dust ... whatever the weather threw at him he was out there. It was no surprise he got skin cancer in his later years. He also ended up with chronic arthritis from the sheer physicality of his work, and a couple of nasty accidents involving the tractor.

Back in those days, there wasn't the technology or the contractors around farming there is today. Making hay involved small square bales and carting and stacking them by hand. This was a lengthy process, unlike today where hay bales are large and manhandled by a front end loader.

My father would crutch his own lambs, with the help of us kids. My sister and I would fight over a stand and crutch, rather ineffectually, alongside him. He would also class his own wool, a skill that not many have these days.

In the very early days, he would do his own dipping in a small round concrete dip. The sheep would slide down a chute into the dip and be dunked by the "dunker". This method was really time-consuming, physical and seemed to take weeks to finish. It was a big relief and step forward when a contract mobile dipping unit came to the district.

I talked to a few modern-day

farmers to get an idea of their lot. They agreed that when you commit yourself to a "biological system" that involves you 24-7, there are times when you are going to be working huge hours.

There is an innate understanding amongst farmers and their families that that's what's required. New and emerging technology hasn't freed up their time, it has just sped up the pace they work at.

It's no wonder the statistics around farmer mental health and suicide are high. There is little chance to get off the farm, to socialise and share the burden.

If I were to single out the most significant change between the farming generations, it would be compliance. Farmers must educate themselves around issues like water quality, nitrate levels, greenhouse gas emissions, and health and safety as they will be audited, and often the farmer's opinion on these matters is irrelevant.

I only ever remember my father complaining about his lot once. It was sometime in the 1980s in the middle of the droughts, around the time government subsidies were lifted. It was a stinking hot day, it was blowing a nor'west gale, and the place was parched. We were walking up the paddock, and he said simply "sometimes I hate farming."

At the time it broke my heart. I never heard him complain again.



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My dad, Brem Byrch, 70 years a North Canterbury dryland farmer, who finished his life with chronic arthritis and skin cancer from decades on the farm.

PHOTO: PAT DEAVOLL

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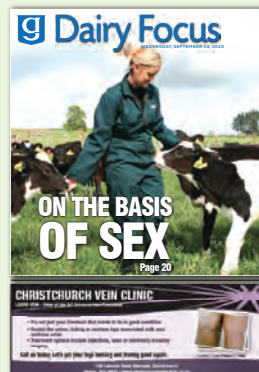
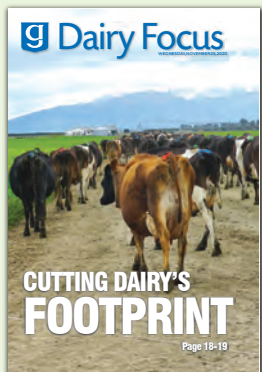


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